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**Anson Court, Burton-on-Trent
An Archaeological Evaluation**

by
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Introduction.

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken in advance of proposed redevelopment of land on the north side of Horninglow Street, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire (Fig.1). The work was commissioned by Ednaston Developments (Midlands) Ltd in order to provide an assessment of the archaeological implications of the development prior to the consideration of an application for planning consent, and was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit from 11th–15th March, 1991.

The proposed redevelopment entails the demolition of a number of standing buildings, in late-Georgian style, fronting Horninglow Street, and subsequent construction of office buildings in their place. The depth of the evaluation trenches was restricted to 1.50m, the predicted limit of the zone of disturbance. The site (Fig.1c) was one of known archaeological potential since No.186 Horninglow Street contains a rare medieval timber frame, and medieval remains may have been expected to survive both beneath the existing standing buildings and under the yards to the rear.

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- (1) To locate any medieval or earlier deposits both inside and outside the standing buildings (Nos 185–186a Horninglow Street).
- (2) To establish the depth of those deposits below the existing ground level.
- (3) To assess the survival, quality and significance of such deposits, particularly those to the rear of No.186, the area with the most potential for revealing evidence of medieval building foundations.
- (4) To determine both the extent of any archaeological constraint which may affect the design of the proposed development and/or the need for any further archaeological response.

The Archaeological Potential.

The place name indicates that Burton-on-Trent may have been a settlement by the Anglo-Saxon period or possibly earlier, whilst the medieval town was well established and had achieved borough status by 1187. Horninglow Street lies along the major route leading from the west to the crossing-point over the River Trent. The area of the west bank in the vicinity of a major crossing-point is likely to have been both a focus for settlement by the Anglo-Saxon period and a site of early medieval urban development.

A preliminary survey of the extant buildings at Nos 185–186a Horninglow Street was carried out in February 1991 (Staffordshire County Council Planning Department Report – March 1991). The relatively uniform width of the building frontages suggests a tenement pattern of land division, indicative of the existence of urban planning and probably buildings in this area in the medieval period. The late-Georgian style brick buildings which comprise Nos.185–186a could have been either built on the site of demolished medieval buildings or built reusing materials from the timber frames of earlier buildings. The survey confirmed that No. 186 contains a remarkable example of a rare and significant medieval timber frame. Since this provides evidence of a medieval building occupying one plot on the north side of Horninglow Street it is extremely probable that there were also other medieval buildings, occupying the plots on either side.

The survey yielded information concerning internal floor levels in No.186, indicating that aggradation has occurred since the medieval structure was built. This augured well for the chances of locating surviving building foundations from other structures, as well as more general archaeological deposits, both beneath the Georgian buildings and under the backyards to the north. A further encouraging

factor in indicating the potential survival of archaeological deposits was the shift of modern development in Burton away from the Horninglow Street area, leaving it comparatively undisturbed.

The Trial Trenches (Fig.1c)

The evaluation consisted of the excavation of four trenches, two in the car-park to the north of the existing buildings (Trenches 1 and 2) and two in the interior of No. 186 (Trenches 3 and 4). A JCB with breaker was used to remove brick, tarmac and concrete surfacing and modern overburden in Trenches 1 and 2. The remaining deposits were then excavated by hand down to a limit of 1.5m and an archive of drawings, photographs and written records produced for each of the trenches. In Trench 3, after using a chainsaw to remove the floor boards, all further excavation was carried out by hand. In Trench 4, a Kango Hammer was used to break up the tiled floor and the underlying bricks.

Trench 1 (Fig.2, Fig.3 – S2)

In order to assess as much as possible of the area adjacent to No.186, Trench 1 was excavated in an L-shape, accommodating the shape of the building. The southern arm measured approximately 6.8m x 1.5m and the eastern arm approximately 8.4m x 0.7m.

The machine removed the brick and tarmac and excavated the trench under archaeological supervision, to an average depth of 1.2m below the present ground surface (44.60m A.O.D.) in the southern arm of the trench and 1.4m below the present ground surface (44.30m A.O.D.) in the eastern arm. A sondage was excavated in the southern arm to a depth of 1.5m beneath the surface (44.24m A.O.D.). A small section of the eastern arm was shored to prevent the sides collapsing.

The earliest layer located was a natural red gravel (1006), overlain by a layer of clean, orange red clay (1005) approximately 0.25m thick and probably also natural. Overlying this was a layer of light brown silt (1004) cut by several negative features. The earliest group consisted of a linear feature (F7) and three pits (F4, F8 and F17), the most significant of these being F4, a 0.42m deep, circular feature measuring 0.8m across and

extending beyond the limit of the trench to the west. It was filled with three deposits: yellow clay (1022), dark brown silt (1012), and red, compact clay (1023). The brown silt and the yellow clay both contained sherds of pottery, lumps of stone and charcoal and several substantial pieces of slag. F7 was a shallow, linear feature, 0.5m across and 0.10m deep, and F8 a circular, bowl-shaped feature, 1.15m across and 0.28m deep. These two features were sectioned by the sondage and the remaining halves completely excavated by hand. F17 was a large circular feature, extending beyond the limits of the trench on both sides and measuring 2.6m across. However, F17 remained unexcavated since it lay below a depth of 1.5m. The fills of the latter three features were similar, consisting of a grey, charcoal-rich silt (1015, 1016, 1007), although F17 also contained a lens of red clay (1020). F7 and F8 both yielded small pieces of slag and sherds of pottery were recovered from all of them. The pottery from all four features has been dated from the medieval through to the early post-medieval periods, consisting mainly of buff ware fabric types. Several of the sherds from F4 are cooking pot/jar sherds (See Appendix I).

At the southern end of Trench 1 was a much-truncated, positive, linear feature (F1), 0.6m wide and 0.8m high, composed of compact, red clay containing fragments of sandstone (1010), which partially sealed F4. This was set in a shallow trench which cut 1004. Finds obtained from the clay make-up consisted of residual medieval pottery as well as 18th–19th century sherds. Cutting F1 was a small posthole (F2), 0.2m in diameter, filled with charcoal-rich clay (1011) containing 17th–18th-century pottery. A slightly larger posthole, (F5) filled with similar material (1013), was cut into 1004 to the north of F1. No datable material was recovered from this feature.

Overlying 1004 was a layer of dark brown silt (1002), cut by several modern features, most of which were only visible in section. F6 was a circular pit, 1.10m across, cutting through layers 1002 and 1004. This feature was half-sectioned and the dark, silty fill (1014) found to contain fragments of brick. Also cutting both 1002 and

1004 was a small pipe-trench (F15), a steep-sided cut (F10) filled with loam and charcoal (1009), and a pit (F18) containing 18th–19th century pottery. The latter feature (F18) cut into the medieval pit F17 and was itself cut by F16, another pipe-trench filled with modern debris (1018). The remaining features cut into 1002 were small cuts filled with brick (F3) and stone (F9). Overlying 1002 was a layer of modern make-up material (1001), on average 0.5m thick, sealed by brick in the southern arm and by tarmac in the eastern arm.

Trench 2 (Fig.3 – S3)

Trench 2, measuring approximately 5m x 0.6m, was located immediately to the west of No. 187 and to the north of Trench 1. The surface in this area consisted of a concrete raft 0.15m thick, which was removed by the JCB. The trench was then excavated down to a depth of 1.17m beneath the present ground surface (44.61m A.O.D.).

The earliest layer encountered was clean red brown silt (2003), overlain by a layer of red gravel (2002), 0.3m thick. Set into the gravel was a feature made of small stone slabs (F20). Cut into 2002 and 2003 were several modern features. At the northern end of the trench was a poorly-preserved brick surface (F19), overlain by the remnants of a wall (F14) made of rectangular blocks of stone set with mortar (2009). To the south of these features, and possibly cutting them, was a large, steep-sided cut (F21) filled with brick, mortar and stone debris (2005). In this cut was a brick well (F13) filled with silt and rubble (2004). The well was excavated to the 1.5m limit but as it extended below this depth further excavation was not possible.

At the southern end of the trench was a vertical cut (F12) filled with dark brown soil (2007), probably a construction trench for a brick wall (F11). A layer of modern levelling material (2001), 0.4m thick, overlay the entire trench which was sealed by the concrete raft (2000). The only finds from this trench were recovered during cleaning and consisted of 18th–20th-century pottery, tile and window glass.

Trench 3 (Fig.4)

Trench 3 measured 1.15m x 1.80m and was located in a room at the front of No. 186, in order

to assess any archaeological deposits associated with, or earlier than, the medieval building. An opening was made in the floorboards using a chainsaw and excavation then proceeded by hand.

The earliest layer located (at 44.86m A.O.D.) consisted of light brown silt with charcoal inclusions (3005), and was similar in appearance to the silt excavated to the north of the building (1004). This layer contained a sherd of fine, buff ware and a sherd of medieval cooking pot. Cut into the silt were four stakeholes (F303–306), no greater than 0.08m deep. F305 was slightly larger and more circular than the others, measuring 0.05m in diameter. Its fill consisted of very dark brown, charcoal-rich silt (3009). The other stakeholes were oval in shape, with average measurements of 0.04m x 0.02m and were filled with a similar, but less charcoal-rich, silt (3008) than F305. Along the north and north-western edges of the trench was a stone feature (F302), possibly a wall, set into yellow clay (3007). The stones (3006), visible in plan on the northern edge, were not set with mortar and were irregular in size, ranging from 0.25m x 0.10m to 0.15m x 0.15m (Fig.4 – Phase 1). Two of the stones showed evidence of burning. Due to the confined space and the limited excavation time it was not possible to explore this feature more fully.

Overlying 3005, in the centre of the trench, was a hearth-like feature (F301) consisting of a mixed deposit of burnt, red clay (3004) approximately 0.09m thick, which contained fragments of mortar and charcoal, several badly-burnt sherds of buffware type pottery and one sherd which may possibly be late-Saxon in date. Sitting in, and surrounded by, 3004 were the badly burnt remains of ?limestone slabs, approximately 0.06m thick (Fig.4 – Phase 2). The top of this feature lay at a depth of 44.89 A.O.D. The area of the slabs measured 0.5m x 0.6m and one sherd of buff ware pottery was recovered from among the slabs. In the south-east corner of the trench was a deposit of clean, buff-coloured clay (3003) which yielded no finds. The relationship of this layer to 3005 could not be determined.

Over 3004 was a layer of compact red clay (3001) with inclusions of brick, tile, mortar and

charcoal. Cut into 3001 in the south-west corner of the trench, and extending beyond its limits, was a small, 0.25m-deep, scoop with gently sloping sides (F300). Overlying 3001 was a thin layer of compacted clinker (3000), containing tile and mortar fragments and a sherd of 16th–17th century blackware pottery, overlain by modern soil and sawdust, which was in turn sealed by a brick floor on which the present wooden floor was then laid.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located in a back room of No. 186. An area approximately 2m x 1.3m was opened up through the quarry tiles that formed the floor, exposing a brick surface. A small hole measuring 0.4m x 0.4m was made through the bricks, to reveal a hitherto unsuspected cellar. A brief survey showed that the cellar consisted of two rooms, one of which was filled with rubbish and rubble. The other had a brick floor set onto natural sand and contained a severely rotted timber frame. No further assessment was possible at this stage.

Documentary Evidence.

It has been suggested that the medieval structure in No. 186 is unlikely to have been simply a house. One theory that has been postulated is that the width of the building facades of Nos. 185–186a may represent small shop units with chambers over the top (Staffordshire County Council Planning Department Report, March 1991). In this case, it was presumed that any associated accommodation, either in the form of a medieval hall or some other structure, would have been located to the rear of the shop units, either at right angles or parallel to them. The following map evidence, obtained from Staffordshire County Council Record Office and the Local Studies Section of Burton-on-Trent Library, demonstrates the chronological development of the building plots in the evaluation area.

The earliest map of Horninglow Street, a 'Speed-like' map from 1679, shows that the area was built up by this time while the Wyatt map of 1760 (Fig.5) shows definite evidence of burgage alignments along the High Street and Horninglow Street. The division of this part of Horninglow

Street into tenements is likely to have occurred at a comparatively early date since it is located in one of the suggested early-medieval town centres. The Wyatt map shows the plots now occupied by Nos. 185–186a to be two property divisions, No.185 occupying one of the plots and Nos. 186 and 186a the other. There is no evidence on the Wyatt map for structures to the rear of the street-frontage, indicating that the theory of associated accommodation to the rear is unproven, at least for the early-post-medieval period. Although the buildings shown on this map appear to be representations rather than accurate plans, the same building layout is still largely discernible on the 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps.

The Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1884 (Fig.5) shows considerable infilling of the tail-ends of the plots, all of which must have occurred between 1700 and the mid-19th century. This is a clear example of the climax of the burgage cycle occurring in the 19th century, when the subdivision of plots and building coverage reached a peak, before widespread slum-clearance in the 20th century. According to the Harrison map of 1870, what is now No.185 had by then become part of the Thompsons' Brewery and Nos.186 and 186a had become the Bear Inn, while most of the surrounding buildings were Maltings, Breweries or Inns. The Ordnance Survey maps of the 19th century are the only reliable, accurate source for original boundaries although these have been obscured by the 19th-century climax. Most of the boundaries shown on the 1760 map had been sub-divided lengthways by 1884 and the plot occupied by Nos.186 and 186a also appears to have been sub-divided widthways. The available maps do not give any indication of cellaring under the buildings under consideration but since most of them were associated with breweries or public houses it is likely that cellaring did occur at this period.

Summary and Conclusions

The results from Trench 1 show that some archaeological features have survived in the area immediately north of No. 186, mainly in the form of pits and postholes, although one truncated, positive feature was identified (F1). On the basis of the pottery evidence, four of these features

(F4, F7, F8 and F17) can be assigned to the medieval/early-post-medieval periods. Due to the restricted size of the area investigated it is not possible to make a definitive interpretation of these features but, taking into consideration the large quantities of slag recovered from F4, it would be reasonable to associate them with metal-working activities. The remaining features identified in Trench 1 can be no earlier than the 17th century and in most cases are probably considerably later.

The results from Trench 2 indicate that there is no surviving archaeology within the proposed zone of disturbance here, the natural clay silt occurring above the 1.5m limit in most of the trench and 19th–20th-century features penetrating below 1.5m at the north end of the trench.

The evidence from Trench 3 demonstrates the presence of good quality surviving archaeology towards the street frontage of No.186. The extremely small area investigated makes it difficult to interpret the remains with any degree of confidence, but it is clear from the pottery evidence that the features encountered here can be assigned to the medieval/early-post-medieval periods, if not actually earlier.

All that can be ascertained from the opening of Trench 4, and the limited examination here possible, is that cellars exist under both Nos.185 and 186, towards the rear of the properties.

The documentary evidence enables the archaeological results to be put into context, although any conclusions drawn from this must be very tentative. The map sources imply that, certainly in the early-post-medieval period, the plot areas to the rear of the street-frontage structures were not built on or infilled. This may tie in with the archaeological evidence in that the few possible medieval features encountered in Trench 1 could be interpreted as features associated with backyard tenements fronting Horninglow Street, while later features in both Trenches 1 and 2 could be associated with brewery activities of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Recommendations

The evaluation should provide the necessary data with which to make an assessment of the archaeological implications of the proposed redevelopment of Anson Court. Ideally, full recommendations regarding the need for any further archaeological involvement or constraints should be worked out in consultation between the developers and the planning authorities.

In the car-park to the rear of the extant buildings there should be no archaeological constraint providing that any ground disturbance envisaged as part of the new development will not penetrate deeper than 1.0m below the present ground surface. If the anticipated level of disturbance is to be lower, medieval horizons may be encountered; therefore inspection and monitoring during contractors groundworks would be of considerable value in this area, and must be seen as a minimum response.

The evidence from the trench at the back of No. 186 (Trench 4) and observation of the exterior of the buildings indicates that the rears of the buildings have been subject to deep disturbance from cellaring. However, towards the street frontage, there is very high archaeological potential and any grading down within the buildings is likely to disturb very significant archaeological horizons. Therefore preservation of this archaeology '*in situ*' should be considered. Should the proposed development scheme threaten to affect presently intact archaeological deposits, full excavation and recording ahead of these works should take place.

If any further archaeological involvement is required, then it is also recommended that an element of documentary research should be included as an integral part of the work programme. The cartographic coverage of the development of Burton is good from the late-17th century, and if these sources were investigated using the techniques of town-plan analysis derived from historical geography, in conjunction with other documentary sources, including relevant property-deeds, census material, wills and inventories etc., the origins and development of the medieval burgrave plots in this area may be more fully understood.

Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX I – THE FINDS

The Pottery (by V.Buteux)

Pottery was recovered from a number of contexts in Trenches 1 and 3, the most interesting being the buff wares which have been broadly dated to the medieval/early-post-medieval periods and a buffware rim which may be late-Saxon (recovered from the pit F4). The other pottery consists of one sherd of 16th–17th-century blackware, some sherds of 17th–18th century buff- and earthenware and a few fragments of modern pottery. The buffware sherds can be classified into the following different fabric types, bearing in mind that the classifications are relatively crude, having been made without the aid of a microscope.

Fabric 1

Buff/grey, iron-poor clay
Coarse quartz tempering
Some red (grog?) inclusions
Green lead glaze
Some sherds have voids

Fabric 2

As above but unglazed
Some sherds appear to have an orange slip but this may be a self-slip due to manufacturing and/or firing techniques
Can be quite orange – possibly two fabrics

Fabric 3

Buff to orange fabric
Quartz tempered
Lead orange/green glaze

Fabric 4

Iron-rich fabric – can be oxidised or reduced
Coarse quartz tempering
Some red (grog?) inclusions

Fabric 5

Reduced iron-rich fabric
Fine and occasional coarse quartz inclusions
Looks like medieval cooking pot fabric
12th–14th century?

Fabric 6

Buff/orange fabric
Fine sand tempered
Lead glaze

Discussion

The above fabric types would repay further post-excavation analysis, thus enabling a more precise date to be assigned to the material, as would the possible Saxon sherd. It would be of considerable value to relate this assemblage to the type-assemblages of medieval pottery from the nearby sites at Stafford and Rocester.

Other Finds

The only other finds from the trenches consisted of a small piece of marble from one of the pits (F4) and large quantities of metal-working slag. The vast majority of the slag recovered, again, came from the pit F4.

References

- Meeson, R. 1991 *Preliminary Archaeological Assessment of 185-186a, Horninglow Street, Burton-on-Trent*. Staffordshire County Council Planning Department.

Map Sources

- 1679 A Map of Burton-on-Trent (Draughtsman unknown)
1760 Wyatt's Plan of Burton-on-Trent
1884 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Plan. 1st ed.
1884 Ordnance Survey 1:500 Plan. 1st ed.

ANSON COURT Burton-on-Trent 1991

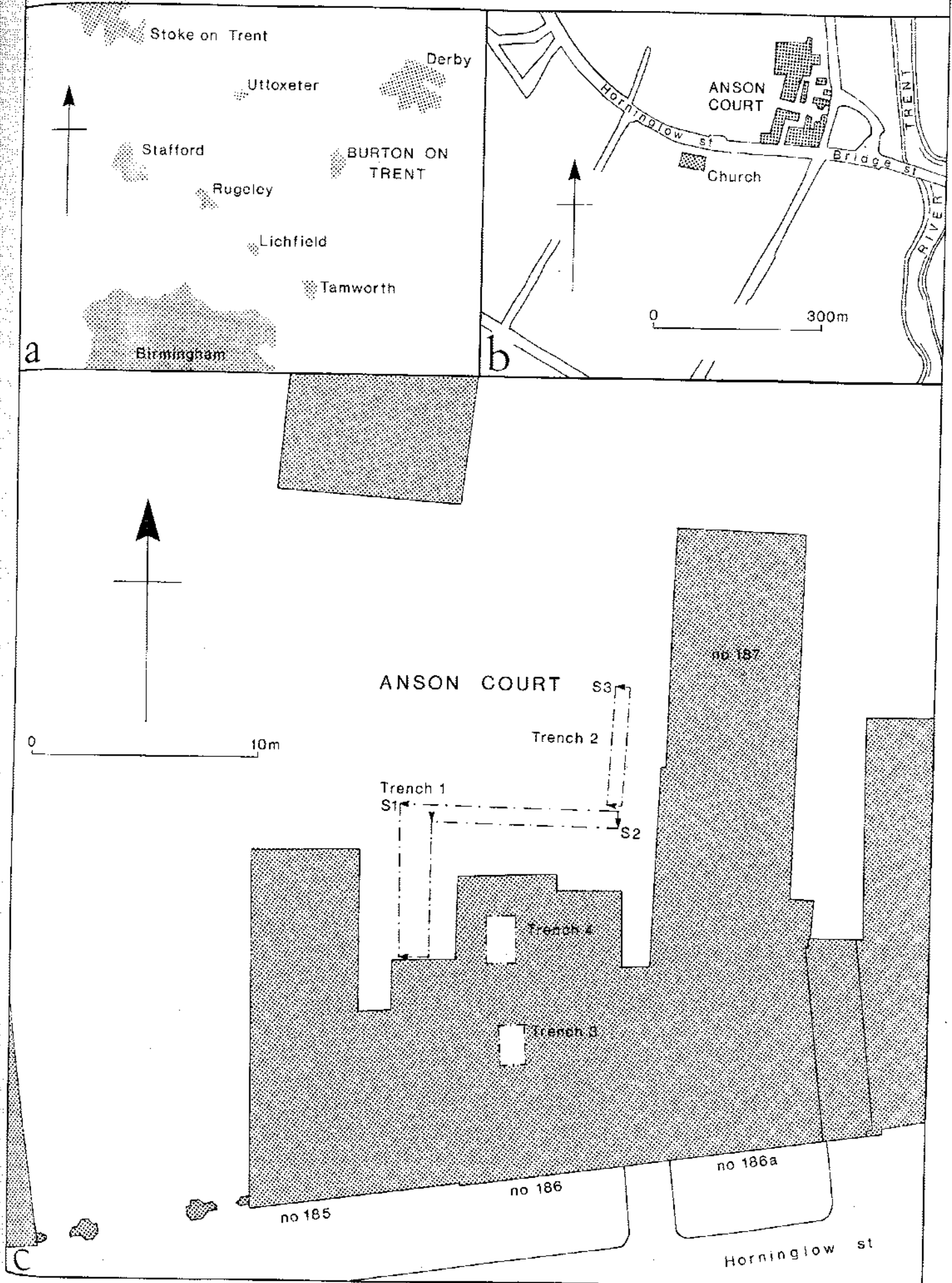
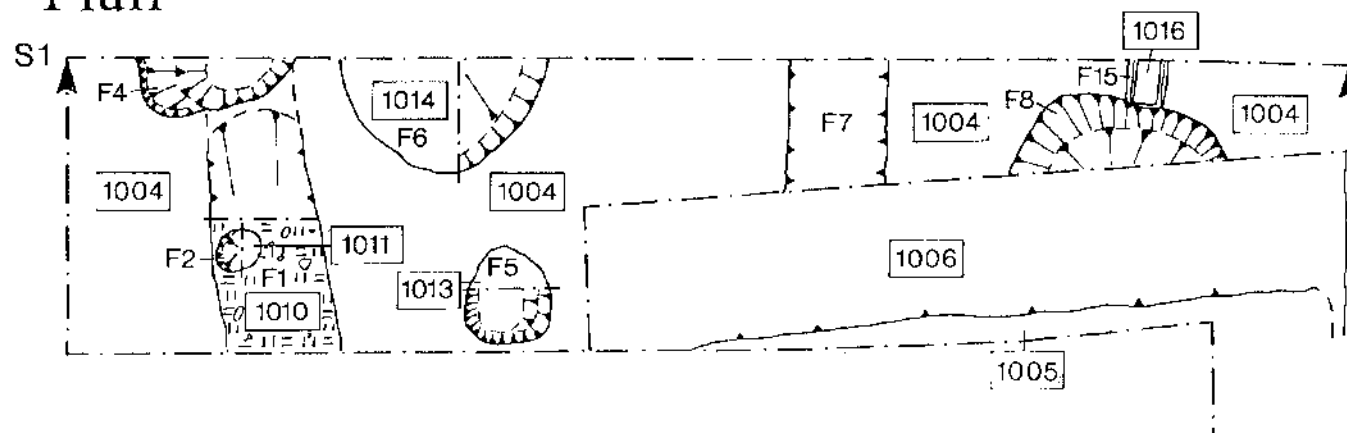


FIG 1

ANSON COURT Burton-on-Trent 1991

Trench 1 Plan & Section Plan



Key

- Brick
- Silt
- Sand
- Clay
- Loam
- Charcoal

S1

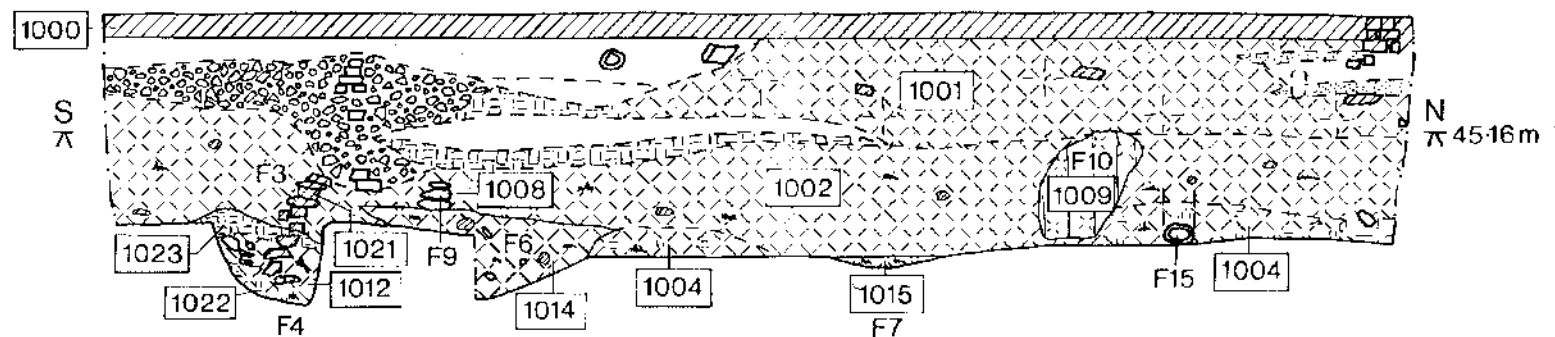
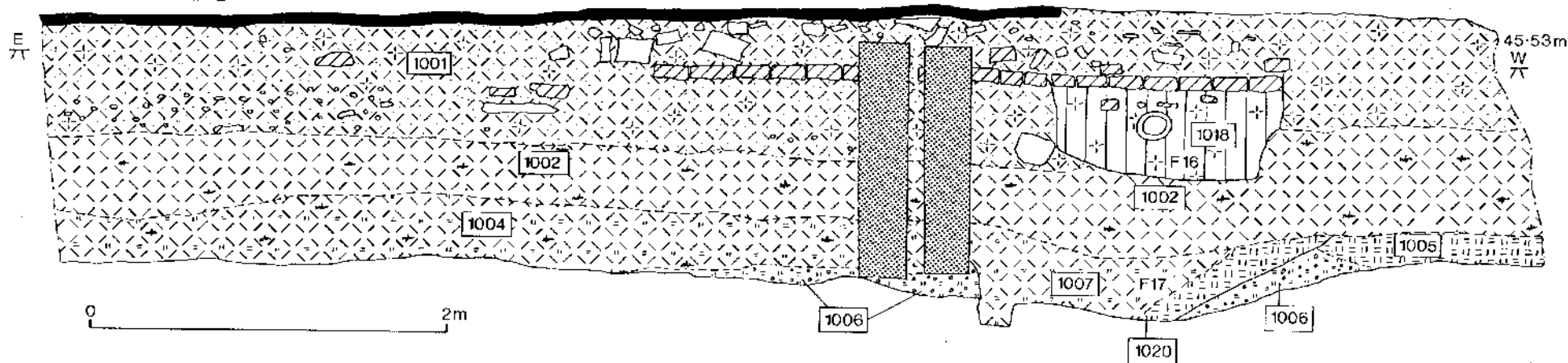


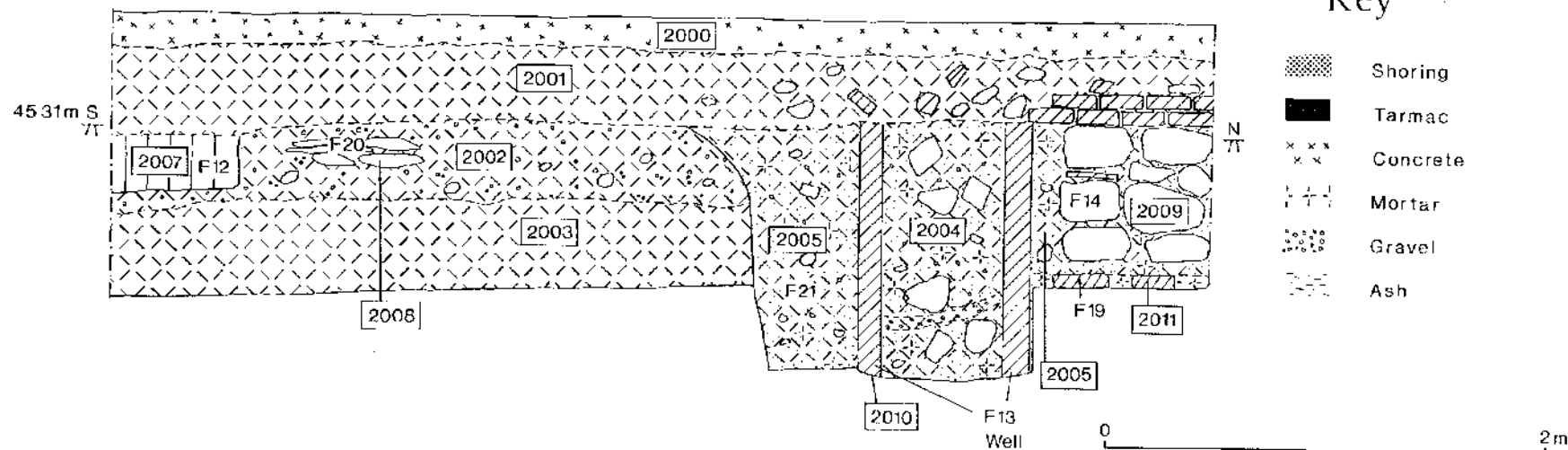
FIG 2

ANSON COURT Burton-on-Trent 1991

Sections S2 Trench 1



S3 Trench 2



Key

- Shoring
- Tarmac
- Concrete
- Mortar
- Gravel
- Ash

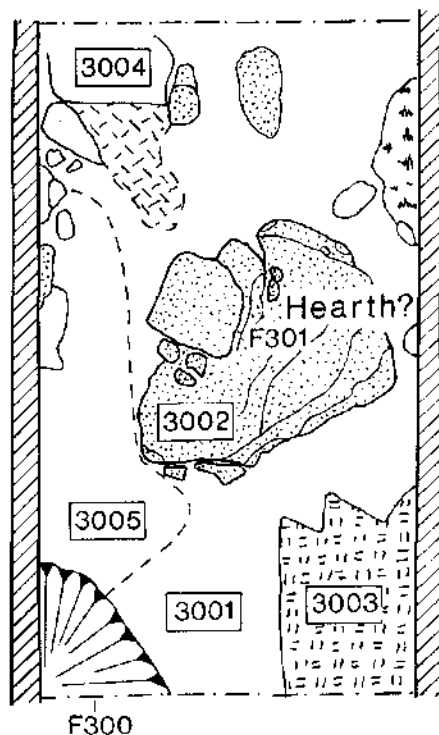
FIG 3

ANSON COURT

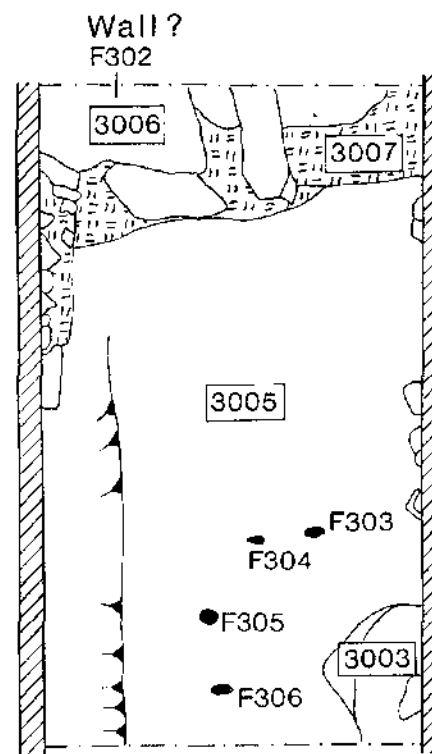
Burton-on-Trent 1991

Trench 3 Plans

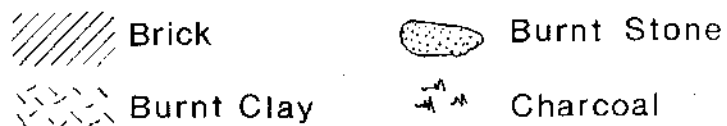
Phase 2



Phase 1



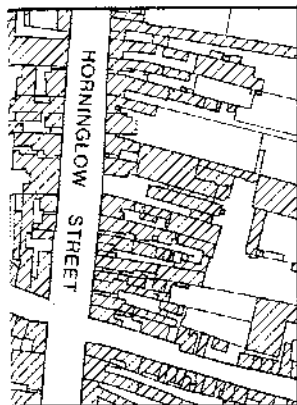
Key



0 1m

FIG 4

BURTON-ON-TRENT WYATT PLAN (Detail)



Inset - O.S. 1885

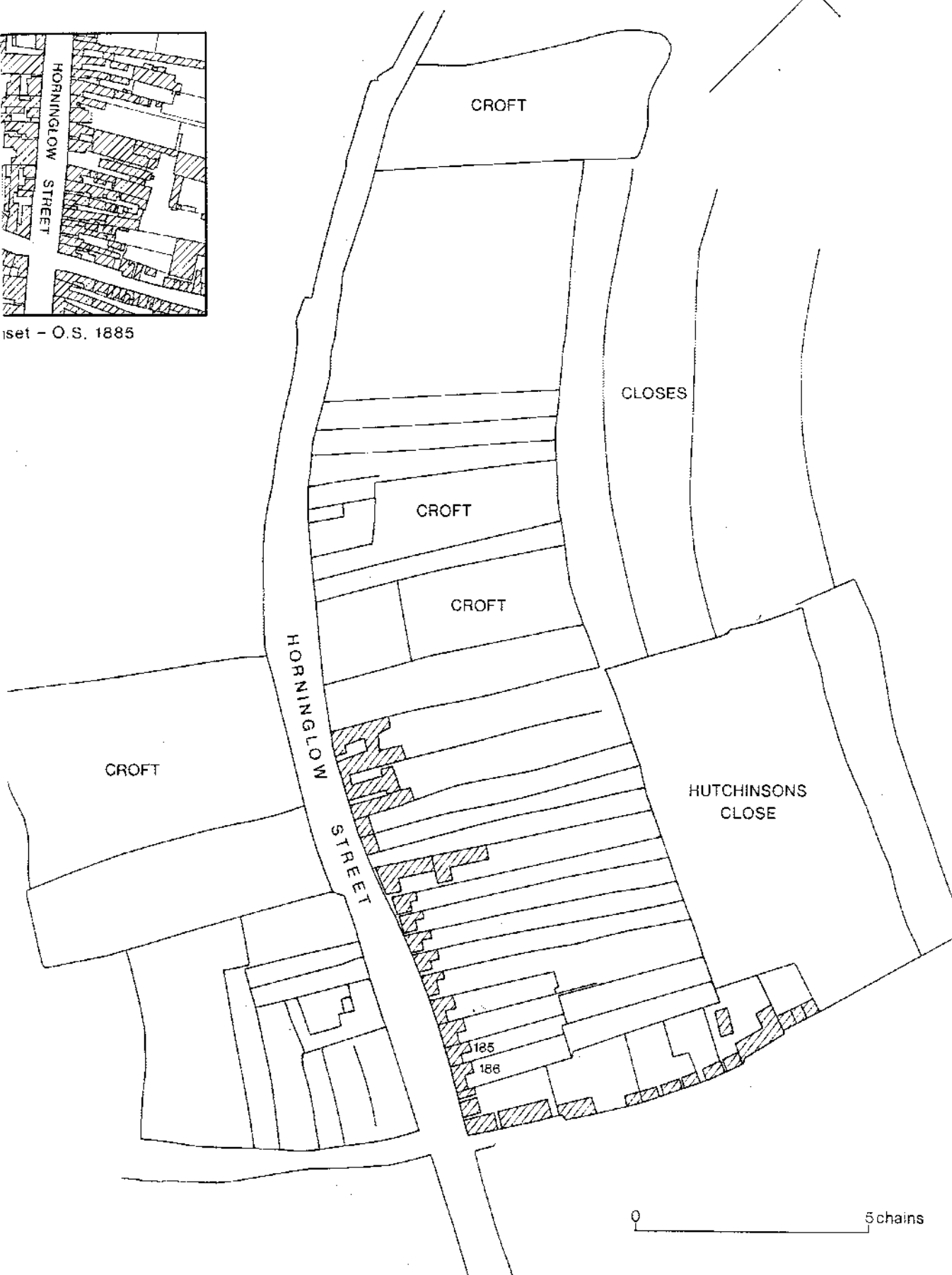


FIG 5