

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY  
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

The Former Hanson's Brewery Site  
High Street, Dudley  
West Midlands

An Archaeological Evaluation 1994

*B.U.F.A.U.*



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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by

Catharine A. Mould

with illustrations by

Mark Breedon and Nigel Dodds

For further information please contact:  
Simon Buteux, Peter Leach or Iain Ferris (Directors)  
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
The University of Birmingham  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham B15 2TT  
Tel: 021 414 5513  
Fax: 021 414 5516

THE FORMER HANSON'S BREWERY SITE

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## **1.0 Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation of the former Hanson's Brewery site was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in October 1994. The project was commissioned by Antal Development Services Limited on behalf of Netto Foodstores Limited. Planning permission for the construction of a Netto foodstore already existed, with an attached condition requiring that archaeological work should take place prior to commencement of the development. This report documents the results from a five day archaeological evaluation at the former Hanson's Brewery site and comprises a written descriptive and interpretative report, supplemented by scale plans, sections and level information. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a specification prepared by the Planning and Leisure Department of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Boland 1994).

## **2.0 The Site (Figures 1 and 2)**

The site of the former Hanson's Brewery is centred on NGR SO 9410 9008, within Dudley town centre, lying between High Street, Greystone Street and Stafford Street. Until recently the site housed a complex of brewery structures which dated from the mid-19th century to the present day. These structures were cleared to ground level, and the site stood vacant prior to commencement of the archaeological evaluation.

There is little documentation relating directly to this site. A map drawn up by Harry Court, c.1785, does suggest the presence of buildings, but no property divisions are shown. Treasure's Plan of the Town of Dudley, dated 1835, indicates buildings along all the frontages and it is likely that these are substantially the same as those represented on the 1883 Ordnance Survey 10.56 inches to the mile map (Boland 1994).

Although there was no archaeological evidence related directly to this development site, an east-west aligned property boundary had been observed within the main cellarage of the former brewery (Boland 1994). The date of this boundary is not known, but its survival within the main cellarage complex did suggest the potential for a more extensive preservation of archaeological deposits in those areas unaffected by the former brewery.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- a) establish the extent and nature of any surviving archaeological deposits
- b) to advise on the potential for preservation of significant deposits wherever possible in the context of the planning permission already granted
- c) to make recommendations for full archaeological recording of deposits where there would be unavoidable destruction by the development.

Prior to the archaeological evaluation it was known that cellarage on this site was extensive and details of affected areas had been provided by Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries. The archaeological evaluation trenches were located in order to confirm the presence of cellarage close to the street frontages and to establish the survival, extent and nature of any archaeological deposits in these areas and in those thought to be unaffected by recent development.

Fourteen trenches were mechanically excavated to the top of the uppermost archaeology, where it survived. A written, drawn and photographic record was maintained for all fourteen trenches and these records, along with a small assemblage of portable finds, now form the evaluation site archive.

### **4.0 Results (Figures 2 and 3)**

#### Trench 1

This trench (1.8m x 3.2m) was located partly within the known bounds of a former brewery structure in order to establish the extent of ground disturbance here. A clay drainage pipe and an east-west aligned service trench filled with grey hardcore were contacted at 96.91m AOD. No further excavation was conducted in this area.

#### Trench 2

A trench (3m x 4m) was mechanically excavated close to the southwestern site frontage in order to confirm the presence of cellaring. A fill of extremely loose and mixed destruction debris (blocks of masonry, loose machine bricks, timber, metal piping and wiring) was excavated to a depth of 96.37m AOD only. The full extent of this destruction debris is unknown, but it clearly represents collapsed material within a former cellar.

#### Trench 3

The first edition Ordnance Survey (1883) mapped a "court" area which followed the east-west alignment of Pitfield Street. The absence of documented structures suggested a potential for archaeological survival within this court or back-plot area.

Trench 3 (1.8m x 22.5m) was excavated to a maximum depth of 97.03m AOD. Although the eastern half of this trench reflected comprehensive cellar disturbance, there was some preservation of archaeological deposits towards the west, closer to the Pitfield Street access.

The natural clay horizon was contacted at 96.51m AOD. This was sealed by a black clay-silt layer (3013, also seen in Trenches 4-8 and 13) which contained early 18th-century pottery. Above this, a series of cinder, crushed brick and redeposited black clay-silt layers, truncated at only one point by a service trench, were sealed by two layers of hardcore which provided a level for the present tarmac surface.

#### Trench 4

This trench (3m x 4.2m) was excavated to establish whether cellaring was present within the western extent of the former brewery complex.

The eastern exterior wall of a former brewery structure was contacted at ground level (98.61m AOD). A hand-excavated sondage revealed that this wall was founded on top of an earlier yellow sandstone wall (98.25m AOD), also aligned north-south and flush with the street frontage. As this area of the site was designated for carparking, the sondage was excavated to a depth of 97.45m AOD only. This was not sufficient to contact the base of the sandstone wall or the natural clay horizon. A black clay-silt, equivalent to the deposit seen in Trenches 3, 5-8 and 12, extended over the remainder of Trench 4.

#### Trench 5 (Figure 3)

A thick concrete slab (5000) defined the western limit of Trench 5 (7m x 1.80m), which formed an L-shape with Trench 6 to the east. The natural clay horizon was contacted at the eastern limit at 97.08m AOD. It was overlain by a grey sandy clay-silt (5005) which sloped down towards Trench 7 (see 7004 below). Although not entirely clear in the section drawing, further investigation did suggest that a yellow sandstone wall foundation (F500), similar to that seen in Trenches 4 and 13, cut the grey deposit and that both were sealed by the characteristic black clay-silt (5004) seen over the majority of this site. This black clay-silt was overlain to the west by the thick concrete slab (5000), at the centre of the trench by a thin layer of orange hardcore (5003) and concrete (5002), and to the extreme east by destruction debris (5001).

#### Trench 6

Within this trench (1.80m x 13.7m) the natural clay was sealed by a black clay-silt (6006). At the southern end this clay-silt was directly overlain by destruction debris (6001). A pit (F606) filled with black cinders and ash cut 6006, and was in turn truncated by F605, the cut for a former wall. This east-west aligned wall was abutted by a flat machine brick surface (F604), which also abutted F603, a second wall cut. Two further wall cuts (F601 and F602), also associated with a machine brick layer (6003), were seen at the northern end of Trench 6. A layer of destruction debris (6001) extended over the whole area, also sealing a service trench (F600) seen in the south-facing section (see also Trench 9 below).

#### Trench 7 (Figure 3)

The presence of cellaring along the High Street frontage was to be investigated within Trenches 7 and 8. In Trench 7 (1.80m x 3m) the natural clay (7005, 96.50m AOD) was sealed by the grey sandy clay-silt deposit (7004) noted in Trench 5. Both of these layers were truncated in the south-facing section by a small pit (F700) filled with a clay-silt mixed with cinders, sandstone and pottery fragments. An irregular deposit of dirty clay and masonry (7001) overlay the pit and was itself sealed by a layer of destruction debris (7000 and 7002).

#### Trench 8

The natural clay (8006) lay at a high level (96.81m AOD) in the northern half of Trench 8 (2m x 5m). A sondage, excavated by hand to a depth of 96.74m AOD, did not contact the natural clay. Instead, a layer of grey sand-silt mixed with black cinders and ash was cut by a deep pit (F803) filled with consecutive layers of discarded metal waste, cinders, coal and a black sand-silt (8004). The northern half of F803 was truncated by the cut for an east-west aligned machine brick wall (F802). A layer of destruction debris extended over the whole of Trench 8.

#### Trench 9

This trench (2.4m x 10m) was located to establish the extent and depth of destruction adjacent to a former brewery building at the centre of the development site. The trench was mechanically excavated to a depth of 96.70m AOD. The

former brewery structure defined the southern limit to this trench in which three unmarked and unconnected service ducts were contacted. One of these was set in concrete and continued its alignment west to the Greystone Street frontage and southeast through Trench 6 and Trench 7.

#### Trench 10

This trench (1.80m x 6.20m) was excavated to investigate an area which appeared to be outside the former brewery. A very loose fill of destruction debris was removed to a depth of 98.04m AOD. A cellar wall which extended up to the Greystone Street frontage and an associated cross-wall were noted.

#### Trench 11

Trench 11 (2.20m x 4m), located outside the former brewery complex, was mechanically excavated to a depth of 96.67m AOD and was filled with the same destruction debris as seen in Trench 10.

#### Trench 12

A pocket of archaeological survival was noted at the centre of Trench 12 (1.80m x 9m). A mixed cinder and charcoal deposit (97.51m AOD) was sealed by the black clay-silt seen in Trenches 3-8 and 13. This clay-silt layer was overlain by a compact layer of crushed bricks which formed a level surface for two courses of yellow machine bricks aligned north-south. An upper layer of crushed material provided the foundation for a blue-black brick yard surface which extended south to Trench 13.

A thick concrete slab truncated archaeological survival to the west.

#### Trench 13 (Figure 13)

Although the blue-black brick yard surface seen in Trench 12 did extend over the western half of Trench 13 (2m x 10m), in this area it was founded directly over the black clay-silt layer (1303) seen in Trenches 3-8. This clay-silt was truncated by a service trench aligned slightly off north-south and which continued in both directions beyond the bounds of Trench 13. The eastern half of Trench 13 reflected a sequence of more intense activity.

A hand-excavated sondage revealed the weathered face of a pink sandstone wall aligned northwest-southeast (F1300, 97.04m AOD) with consecutive layers of cinders and clay-silt against its north side. This feature was overlain by a yellow sandstone wall (F1301) which followed the same alignment and which appeared similar to the two walls recorded in Trenches 4 and 5. To the east, a single line of roughly faced yellow sandstone blocks (F1305), also aligned northwest-southeast, marked the boundary between two areas of activity. A grey-black clay-silt to the south contained some charcoal, cinders and pottery fragments (1307), whilst to the north the area was covered by a black cinder deposit containing a concentration of metal waste only (1309). The boundary (F1305) continued its alignment southeast beyond the bounds of Trench 13 and it was truncated to the northwest by a small yard area (F1303).

The yellow sandstone wall (F1301) was overlain by a later brewery wall (F1302), also on a northwest-southeast alignment. A second brewery wall (F1304), aligned at a right angle to F1302, truncated the earlier boundary line (F1305) and the two black occupation layers (1307 and 1309). A layer of destruction debris (1300) extended over the whole trench.

#### Trench 14

Within this trench (2.4m x 4m), close to the Stafford Street frontage, a tiled floor and north-south aligned wall belonging to the former brewery were sealed by 1.42m of destruction debris.

## **5.0 Discussion**

There was no surviving evidence of any pre-medieval activity within the proposed development site.

### Medieval

Datable evidence of medieval activity was recorded in Trenches 5 and 7, with medieval pottery also being recovered from later, disturbed contexts in Trenches 3 and 13. The medieval deposits in Trenches 5 and 7 (5005 and 7004) comprised a grey sandy clay-silt subsoil which yielded fragments of exclusively medieval coarse cooking vessels. The undated pink sandstone feature (F1300) in Trench 13 may also represent medieval activity. Stratigraphically it is sealed by a deposit containing 17th-century pottery - a more certain interpretation is impossible at this stage due to this feature's limited exposure within a narrow sondage.

The very limited survival of medieval deposits may be due to post-medieval "clearance" in certain areas of the site. This is suggested in Trench 3 and more especially in Trench 8, where the natural clay horizon is directly overlain by only post-medieval deposits, whereas less than 8 metres to the south, in Trench 7, an intact medieval deposit is recorded. This suggestion of post-medieval clearance or scouring away of earlier deposits should also be considered against the absence of any medieval negative features cutting into the natural clay.

### Post-medieval

The c.1735 map by Harry Court indicated the presence of structures within the site and in 1835 structures were shown along the site frontages (Treasure 1835). Although it is the frontages which are most affected by later cellarage, the post-medieval deposits recorded in Trenches 3-8, 12 and 13 do confirm post-medieval occupation within the development site. It should also be noted that the degree of cellarage along the High Street frontage was much less than anticipated. One cellar which was contacted in the southern half of Trench 8 is thought to relate to the 19th-century structures mapped in 1835 and 1883.

A degree of continuity from the post-medieval period to the present is indicated by former brewery structures being constructed along the same alignment as that defined by the post-medieval yellow sandstone walls seen in Trenches 4, 5 and 13 (see Section 4).

Although it is difficult to discern the nature of post-medieval activity on this site it does appear that activity occurred within clearly defined boundaries (see Section 4, Trench 13) and that these boundaries have been respected up to the most recent development.

## **6.0 Implications and Proposals**

### **6.1 Implications**

The evaluation has identified a number of intact medieval and post-medieval deposits within the proposed development area. These surviving deposits have the potential to enhance our understanding of the chronology and character of medieval and post-medieval occupation of this site.

### **6.2 Proposals**

In terms of potential archaeological survival, the former brewery site may be divided into six zones. The implications and proposals for each of these zones are considered below.

### Zones A, C and D

Due to extensive cellaring associated with the former Hanson's Brewery and with earlier 19th-century structures (Ordnance Survey 1883) no archaeological deposits survived within these three zones and no further archaeological monitoring is required.

### Zones B and E

No intact medieval deposits were recorded in these zones. However, the recovery of medieval pottery from Trench 3 (albeit from a later context) and the survival of post-medieval deposits in all three trenches does indicate that archaeologically significant remains may lie within 0.40m of the modern ground surface. For this reason it is proposed that archaeological monitoring should be maintained during any groundworks within these zones which will have impact on layers more than 0.40m below the modern ground surface. This will ensure the proper recording of any significant archaeological discoveries and will allow the recovery of any finds which may require later specialist analysis.

### Zone F

As detailed in Section 4 above, intact medieval and post-medieval deposits were identified within Zone F. Although it is possible to identify these deposits within the confines of an archaeological evaluation, it was not possible in this case to discern their character or to establish the full extent of their survival. The survival of archaeological deposits within the medieval town of Dudley, and more especially within an area which lacks documented evidence regarding its history and usage, does suggest that further examination is necessary. The case for further excavation is greatly enhanced by the fact that the surviving medieval and post-medieval deposits lie within the footprint of the proposed foodstore.

The proposed development will affect *in situ* archaeological deposits of medieval and post-medieval date within Zone F and it is therefore recommended that an archaeological excavation is undertaken in advance of construction to permit the preservation of archaeological deposits by record. This will involve the hand-excavation of archaeological deposits within Zone F and the subsequent preparation of a detailed interpretative report for publication.

## **7.0 Acknowledgments**

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## **8.0 References**

- Boland, P. 1994 Former Hanson's Brewery Site, High Street, Dudley, West Midlands, Specification for Archaeological Fieldwork.
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- Ordnance Survey 1883 10.56 inches to the mile.
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# DUDLEY Hanson's Brewery

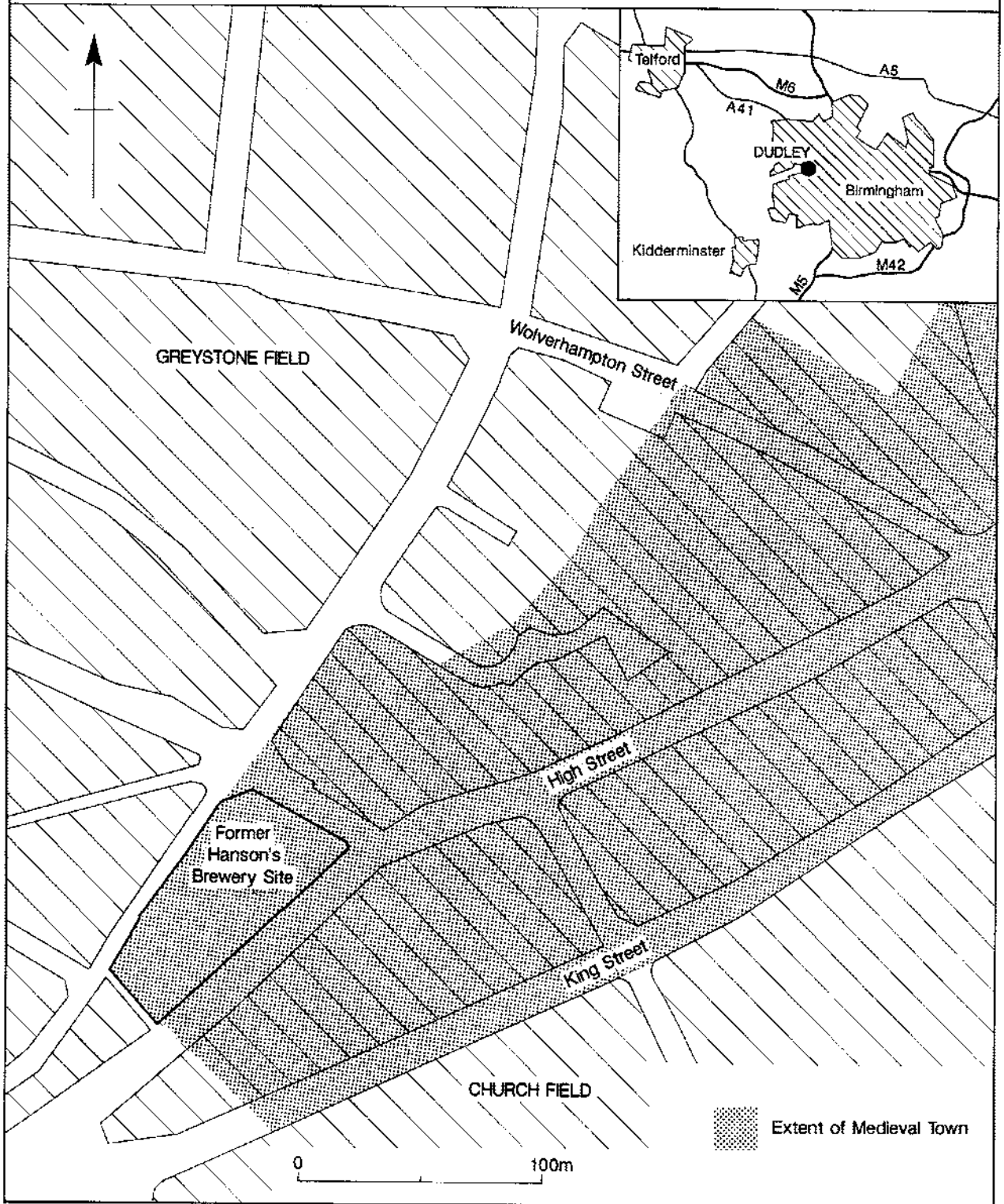


Fig.1

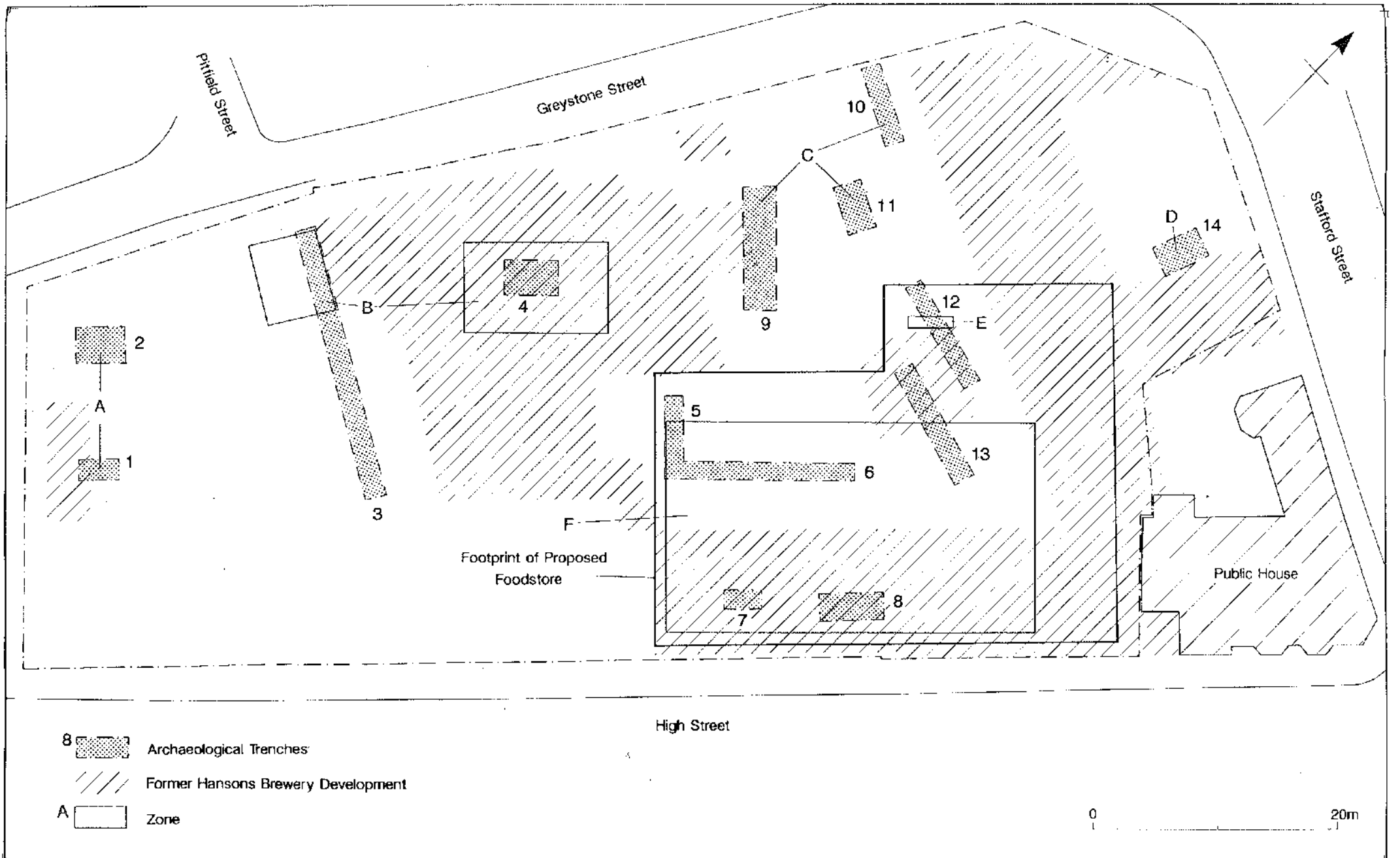


Fig.2

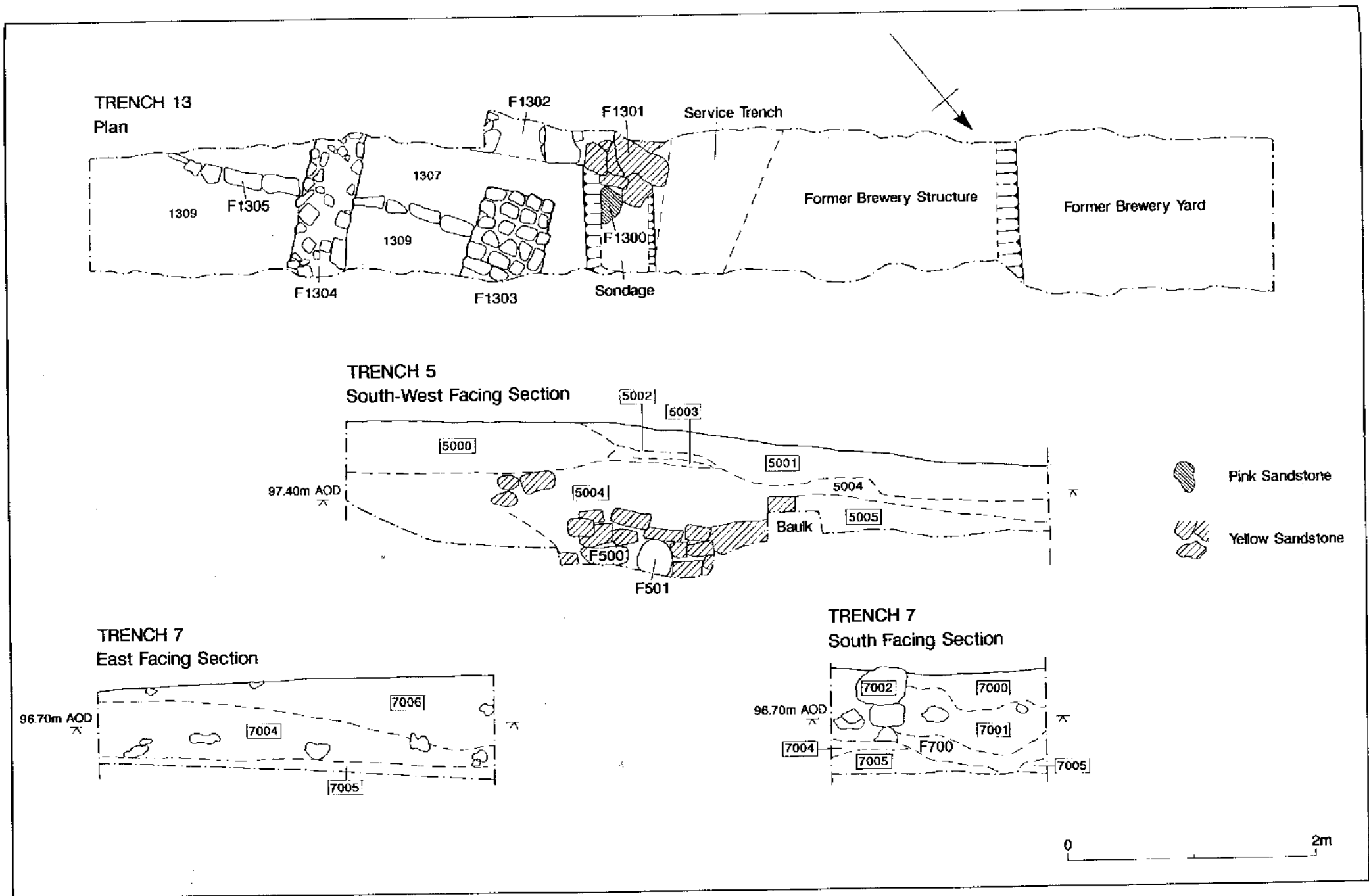


Fig.3