

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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**An Archaeological Evaluation  
at Beatties Car Park, School Street,  
Wolverhampton.**

by

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# **An Archaeological Evaluation at Beatties Car Park, School Street, Wolverhampton.**

## **Introduction**

In April 1995 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit were commissioned by Bryant Construction Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Beatties car park, School Street, Wolverhampton (Figure 1a). The work was carried out in advance of the construction of a new multi-storey car park for Beatties and in accordance with a brief supplied by West Midlands Sites and Monuments Record.

The site lies on land sloping gently southwards on the corner of School Street and Skinner Street (Figure 1b). An assessment of the archaeological potential of Wolverhampton has been undertaken by Nigel Baker (Baker N, 1980, The Archaeology of Wolverhampton). Information concerning the archaeological potential of the site was sparse. Cartographic evidence suggested that Town Well Fold, to the east of the site, may have been a focus of medieval settlement around a well or natural spring and that cloth preparation may have taken place in the vicinity (W.M.S.M.R Brief 1995).

## **Cartographic Evidence**

The earliest available relevant map evidence is the Issac Taylor map of 1751. This shows the site as open land called "The Tenters" and is depicted with a representation of a long drying frame with "Cock Close" to the north. The Puddle Brook, which appears to have been diverted from its natural course, forms the southern boundary of the site. The 1842 Tithe Apportionment map also shows the site as open land. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889 depicts two buildings on the Skinner Street frontage with two other buildings to the north. The third edition Ordnance Survey map of 1919 shows the site to be fully occupied by buildings. By the time of the 1957 O.S map all these buildings appear to have been demolished.

## **Methodology**

Four 15m long and 4m wide trenches were to be excavated (Figure 1b). A J.C.B 3CX mechanical excavator was used to remove modern overburden and rubble to either the top of any significant archaeological deposits or the natural sub-soil. All archaeological features and deposits were excavated manually. Contexts and features were recorded using pro-forma record cards, scale drawings and photographs.

## **Results**

### **Trench 1 (Figure 2)**

Beneath the 0.1m deep modern tarmac car park surface was a 0.20m deep make-up layer of gravel, ash and clinker (1000). In the north-east corner of the trench was a modern rectangular red brick rectangular structure. Under 1000 was a 0.70m deep dirty brown silty clay (1001) containing large amounts of brick fragments, pebbles, lumps of charcoal, sherds of 18th-20th century pottery, and a prehistoric struck flint flake. Under this was the natural yellowish brown sandy clay sub-soil (1002).

At the north end of the trench two modern pipe trenches cut 1002. To the south, exposed in the east facing, section was a modern brick wall 1m wide. Further south was a roughly square steep sided negative feature (F1) with a step in its western side

and a flat base, 0.40m wide and 0.40m deep filled with a dark brown sandy clay (1003) containing brick rubble and modern pottery. To the south, exposed in the east facing section of the trench, was a 1.60m diameter circular cut for a well (F2) narrowing to 0.70m wide at a depth of 0.50m. F2 was lined with mortar bonded bricks and filled with a 0.50m deep dark brown silty clay (1005) containing brick fragments and sherds of modern pottery. Below this was a yellowish brown sandy silt (1006) containing sherds of 19th and 20th century pottery excavated to a depth of 0.25m. To the east of F2 was F5, a steep sided roughly rectangular negative feature with a flat base, 0.40m wide and 0.14m deep filled with a dark brown sandy silt (1007) containing brick fragments and sherds of modern pottery. East of F5 was a small steep sided rectangular negative feature with a flat base (F4), 0.25m long, 0.15m wide and 0.13m deep filled with a brown silty clay (1008). In the south-west corner of the trench was a straight sided rectangular pit with a flat base (F3) extending beyond the west facing section, 0.95m wide and 0.5m deep and filled with brick rubble (1009). To the north a slight hollow in the natural sub-soil (1002) 3.50m wide and 0.14m deep was filled with a brown silty clay (1010) containing flecks of charcoal, sherds of 19th century pottery and small pebbles.

### Trench 2 (Figure 3)

Beneath the modern tarmac car park surface was a 0.10m deep make-up layer of crushed brick, gravel, ash and clinker (2000). In the south facing section and running parallel with it along the whole length of the trench was a brick wall belonging to a demolished 20th century building. Under (2000) was a brick yard surface (2001) 0.14m deep and set on a concrete foundation (2002) 0.15m deep. Beneath this was a 0.60m deep, dark brown sandy clay (2003) containing brick fragments, sherds of 18th-20th century pottery, flecks of charcoal, pebbles and one sherd of glazed medieval pottery. Below this was the disturbed natural yellowish-brown sandy clay sub-soil (2004). Three modern pipe trenches cut 2004.

Three square modern brick piers cut 2004, 1.35m wide and 2.50m, apart they were aligned parallel with the wall in the south-facing section and were almost certainly plinths for manholes. At the west end of trench a deposit of light brown sandy clay (2006) containing flecks of charcoal and fragments of brick, 0.2m deep, overlay 2004.

In the centre of the trench were two small square negative features. F13 was steep sided with a flat base, 0.45m wide and 0.10m deep filled with a greyish brown silty clay (2005) containing pebbles and flecks of charcoal. To the south F14 was steep sided with a flat base, 0.50m wide and 0.10m deep filled with a greyish brown silty clay (2007) containing flecks of charcoal and a fragment of clay pipe.

### Trench 3 (Figure 4)

Beneath the modern tarmac car park surface was a 0.20m deep make-up layer of gravel, ash and clinker (3000). Under this to the south was a brick yard surface overlying concrete foundations which proved impossible to excavate. Below this in the north of the trench was a brick cellar aligned east-west, filled with dumps of brick and mortar in a dark brown sandy clay matrix (3009) and a reddish brown clay (3008) containing large amounts of brick and tile. To the south of the cellar was a 0.65-0.80m deep layer of dark brown sandy clay (3001), becoming deeper towards the south and containing brick fragments, mortar, sherds of 18-20th century pottery, pebbles and flecks of charcoal. Under this was a very dark brown sandy clay (3002) 0.20-0.50m deep, becoming deeper to the south and containing large amounts of charcoal, brick fragments and pebbles. Beneath 3002 was a 0.40m deep layer of greyish brown compact silty clay (3003) containing pebbles and flecks of charcoal. This overlay the natural yellowish brown sandy clay sub-soil (3010).

Cut into 3010 in the north of the trench was a steep sided linear negative feature (F6), 0.8m wide and 0.6m deep, which was aligned northeast-southwest with steeply sloping sides and a slightly sloping base. It was filled with a brown clay silt (3004) and contained sherds 18th and 19th century pottery, brick fragments and flecks of charcoal and was cut by one of the cellar walls. To the south, extending beyond the east facing section, was a sub-rectangular negative feature (F7) with steep sides and a flat base 1.10m wide and 0.50m deep. This was filled with a greyish-brown clay silt (3005) and contained flecks of charcoal, pebbles and sherds of 19th century pottery.

To the east of F7 was F8, a small circular negative feature, 0.32m in diameter and 0.11m deep with steep sides and a flat base, which was filled with a greyish brown sandy silt (3006) and contained flecks of charcoal. To the south-east was F9, a small square negative feature with steeply sloping sides and a flat base, 0.21m wide and 0.10m deep, filled with a greyish brown sandy silt (3007) containing flecks of charcoal.

#### Trench 4

Below the modern tarmac car park surface was a 0.2m deep make-up layer of gravel, ash and clinker (4000). Under this was a dump of bricks and lumps of reinforced concrete in a brown ashy sand matrix (4001). Excavation of this context was halted at a depth of 3m below the current ground surface due to instability of the deposit and inflowing of ground water. A further attempt was made to excavate a trench (Trench 4a) further to the north, but similar problems were experienced.

#### **Conclusions and Implications**

All deposits and features located during the evaluation were of 19th century or later date. Information from a borehole survey (British Geotechnical, 1995) accords with the results of the trial trenching; deposits of rubble and disturbed sandy clay overlying a brown sandy clay which proved to be the natural glacial boulder clay. The modern brick structures located in Trenches 2 and 3 can all be related to buildings depicted on the third edition O.S map of 1919. It may be that the site has been thoroughly levelled at some stage or more likely was not built on until the 19th century as suggested by the cartographic evidence. There are no archaeological implications for the development of the site and no further work is recommended.

#### **Acknowledgements**

The evaluation was carried out by Kirsty Nichol, Bob Burrows, Derek Moss crop, Ed Newton, Jon Sterenberg and Dave Tyler, supervised by Laurence Jones. The project was monitored by Peter Leach who also edited the report. The figures were drawn by Laurence Jones. Thanks are due to Hilary White of West Midlands Sites and Monuments Record.

# School Street, Wolverhampton, 1995.

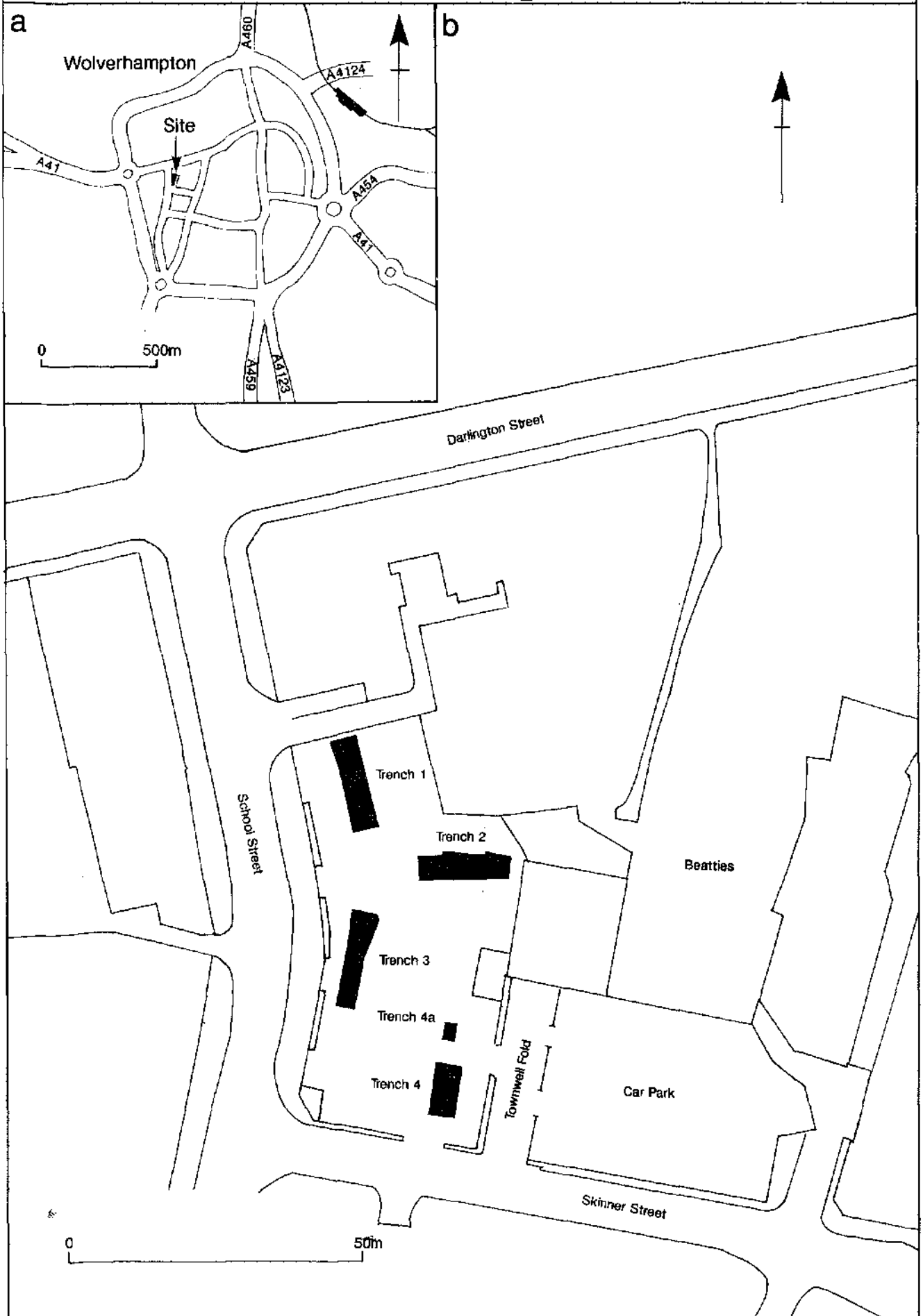


Figure 1

# Trench 1 Plan and Section

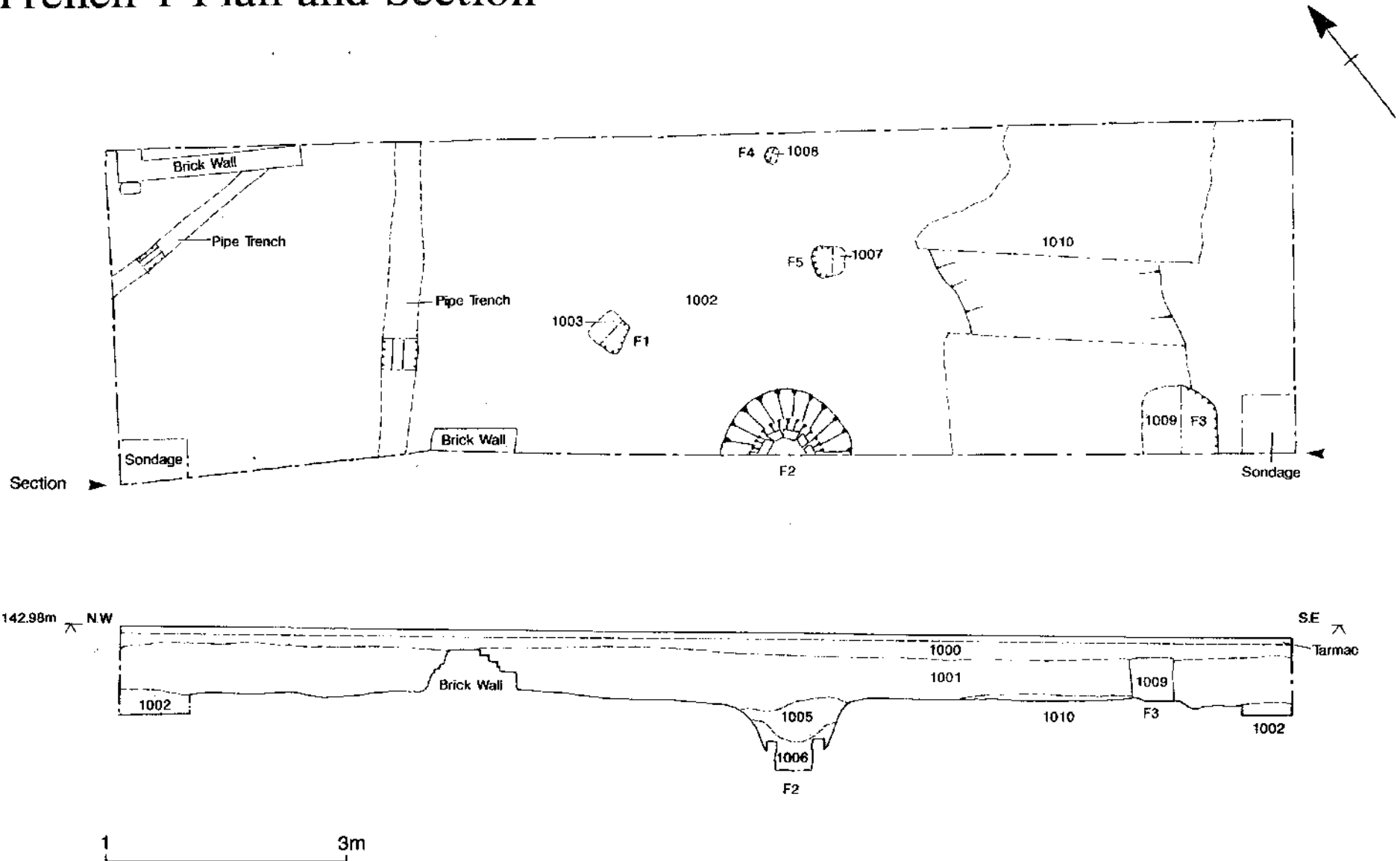


Figure 2

# Trench 2 Plan and Section

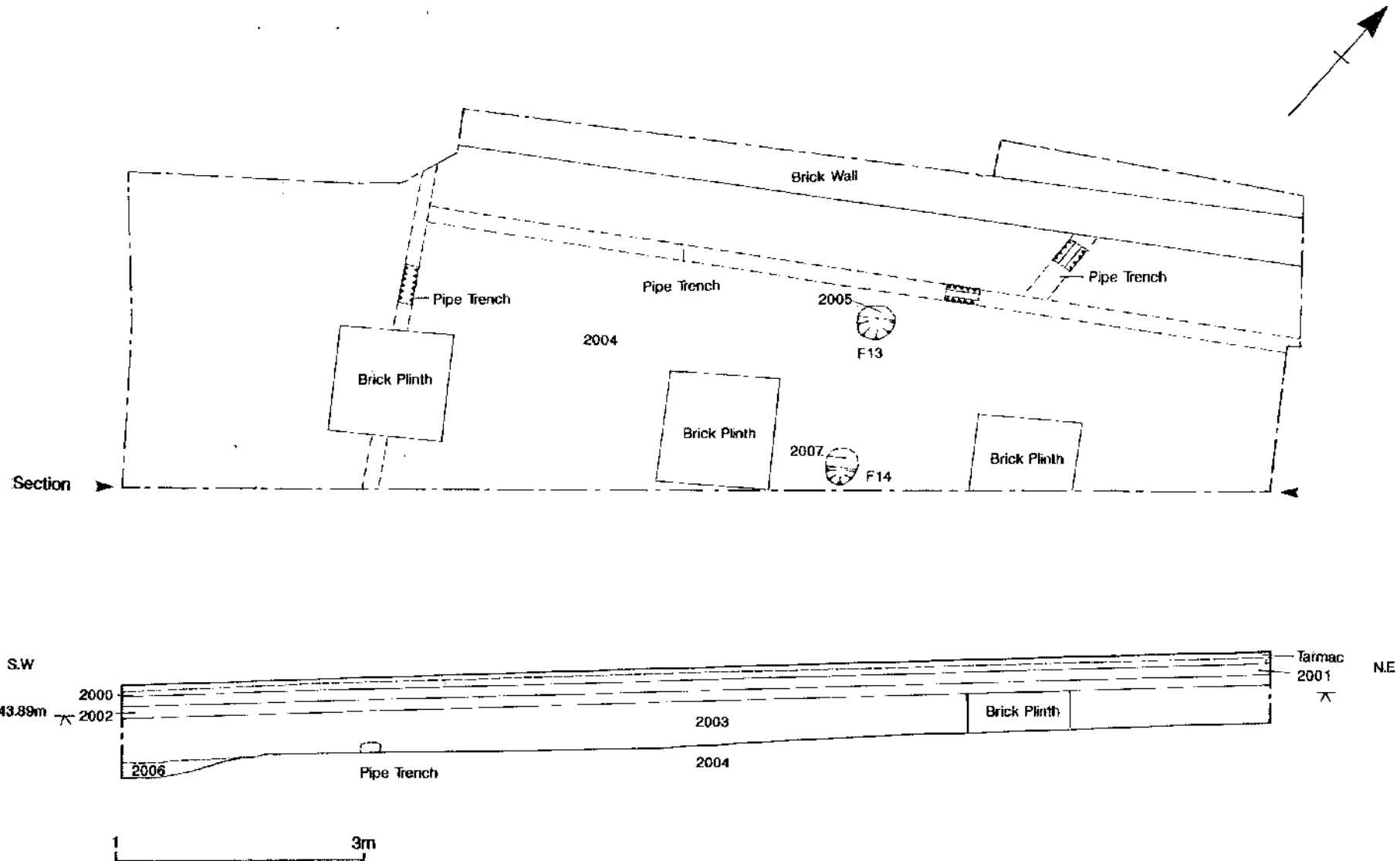


Figure 3

# Trench 3 Plan and Section

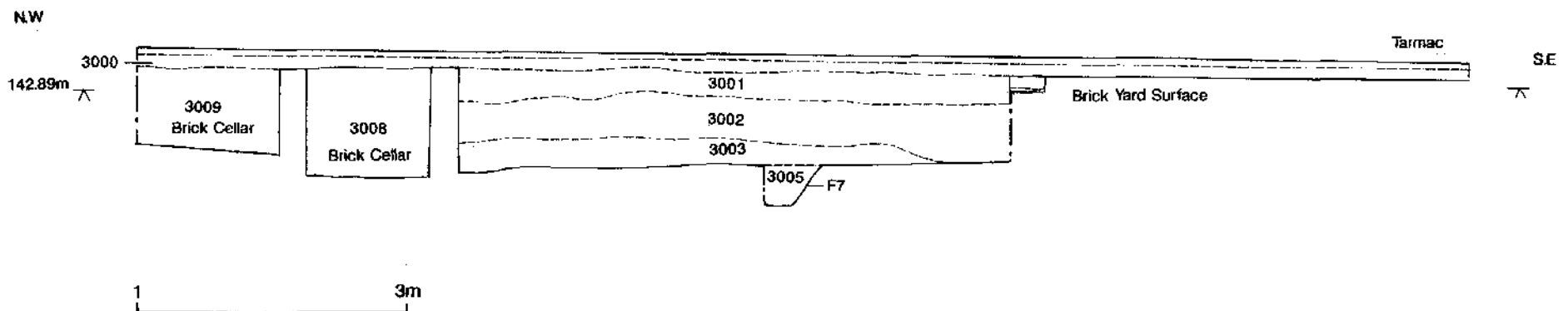
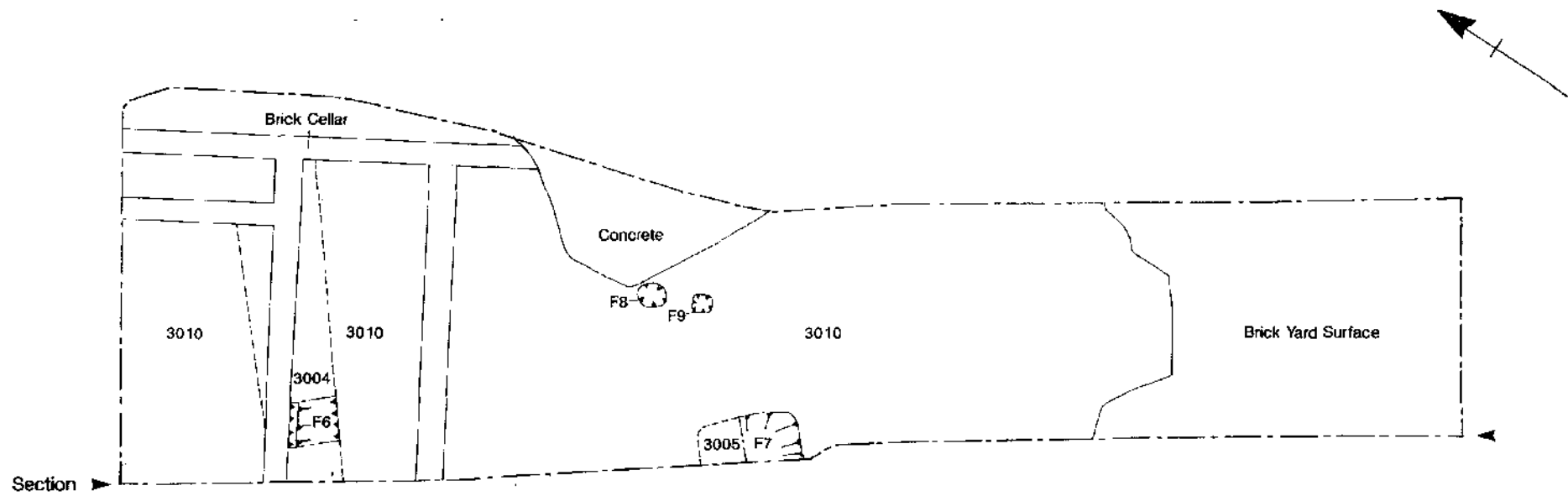


Figure 4