

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**THE GLEBELAND WORKS,
BATH STREET, WALSALL**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
1995/96**

B.U.F.A.U.



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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THE GLEBELAND WORKS, BATH STREET, WALSALL
An Archaeological Watching Brief

by

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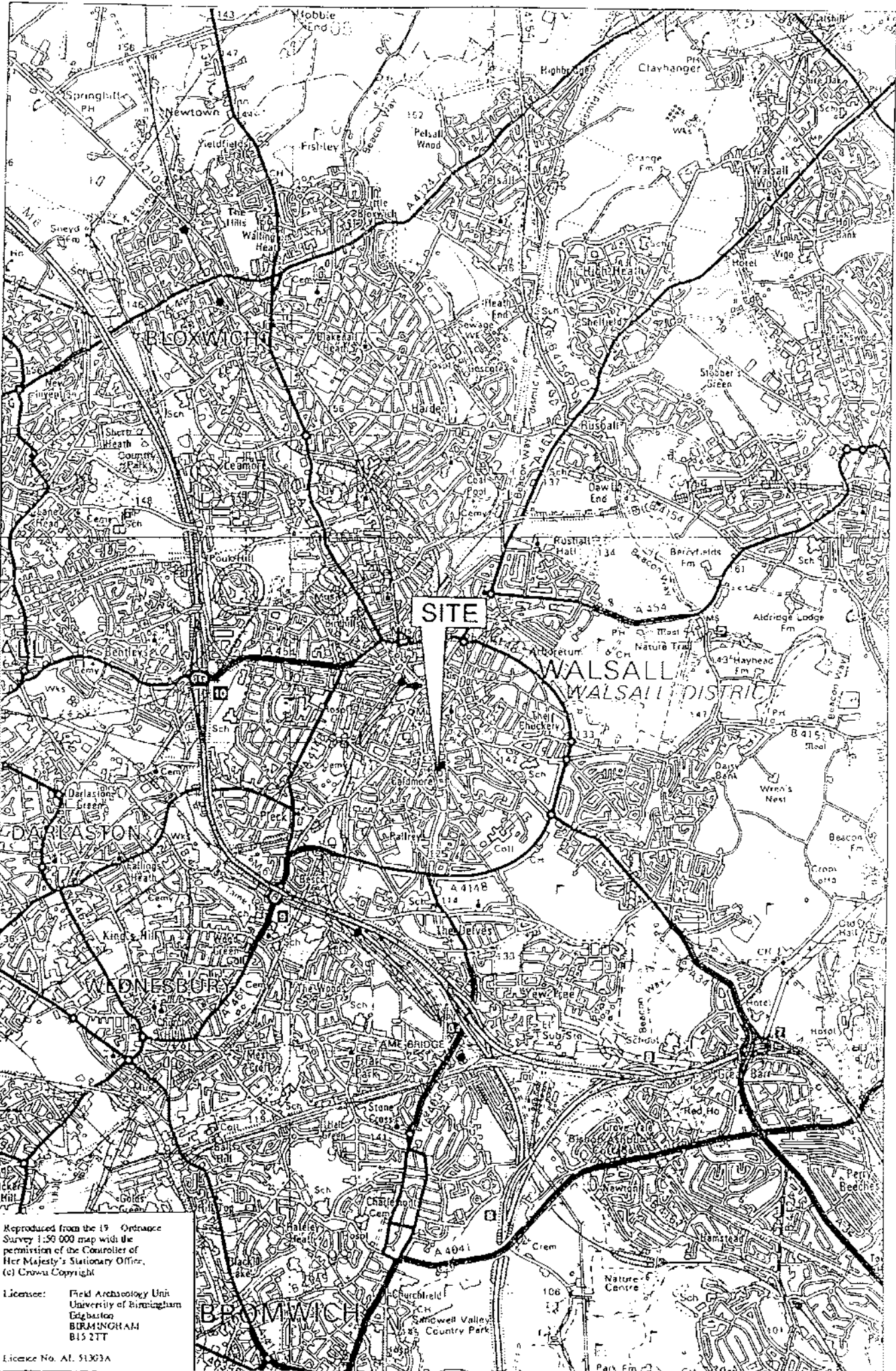
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1.0: SUMMARY

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief, carried out during excavations for a housing development on the site of the recently demolished Glebeland Works harness manufactory at Bath Street, Walsall (subsequently referred to as the study area; Figure 1).

The majority of activity encountered within the study area was associated with the below-ground foundations of the recently demolished works. The construction of these buildings had resulted in the almost wholesale destruction of any significant earlier remains which may have existed on the site.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the results of a watching brief at the former site of the Glebeland Works, situated on the corner of Bath Street and Windmill Street, in the area of Caldmore/Windmill, to the south of Walsall Town (centred at NGR. SP 014 979). The work was undertaken between September 1995 and January 1996 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU), on behalf of Demgate Holdings Plc.

In accordance with the guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (November 1990), a recommendation for an archaeological watching brief was made by the Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council as a condition of planning, following an application for the construction of 39 dwellings, an access road and associated works. The methodology of this watching brief conforms to a brief and schedule prepared by the West Midlands Sites and Monuments Record, Joint Data Team (February 1995) and to a project specification prepared by BUFAU (September 1995).

The aims of the watching brief were to record any significant archaeological structures and deposits exposed during site clearance and construction groundworks, and to determine the location, extent, date, character, significance and quality of any archaeological remains affected by the development. More specific aims were; i) to reconstruct the development history of the Glebeland Works, ii) to understand prior land use on the site, iii) to integrate the watching brief records with pre-existing documentation of the site, and iv) to produce a synthesised report documenting the watching brief.

3.0: THE STUDY AREA

The total area of development was approximately 7200 square metres, and encompassed the entire site of the former works. The study area is located on ground which slopes gradually from the east at 155m. AOD to 149.75m. AOD in the west. It is bounded to the north by Windmill Street, to the west by Bath Street, and to the south and east by the gardens to the rear of the properties fronting onto Sandwell Street and Doveridge Place.

4.0: PREVIOUS WORK

The Glebeland Works was a harness manufactory which ceased operations here, to move to new premises in 1995. The works was a multi-phase factory which had undergone various alterations and changes since its foundation in the mid-18th century. The factory consisted of several foundries and machine shops, as well as offices and warehouses. The oldest buildings on the site were situated on the corner

of Windmill Street and Bath Street. The works, which was located within an area containing a number of other industrial buildings associated with the regionally/nationally important saddlery manufacture, was considered to be of national importance.

As a condition of planning, prior to its demolition, a report on the history of the site, synthesising the results of documentary research, building recording, site survey, photography and video recording, was prepared by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (1994).

5.0: METHODOLOGY

The nature and extent of the site demanded a targeted approach to the undertaking of a watching brief. The demolition of standing structures having already taken place, the initial aim was to locate zones within the study area where any sub-surface structures or features relating either to the recently vacated works or its predecessors survived, or areas where the potential for preservation of earlier ground levels and deposits was greatest. To assist this process, special consideration was given to the archaeological study and assessment of the study area conducted by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (1994). A further opportunity to assess the target areas arose when the floors of the previous buildings were removed during the grading of the site in preparation for specific groundworks.

The developer liaised with BUFAU to facilitate the watching brief programme, which focused particularly on the groundworks affecting the targeted areas of greatest potential. For the purposes of salvage recording an initial period of ten days fieldwork was carried out. However, due to the extensive nature of the study area, and the duration of groundworks, a further five days fieldwork was required to complete an assessment of the state of preservation of below-ground deposits.

At least one archaeologist was required to monitor targeted areas during the grading of the site and the excavation of below-ground works. All significant deposits and remains were recorded. No important remains were encountered which required more extensive recording or justified any significant variation to the archaeological programme.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded using a single numbered context pro-forma written record (standard BUFAU format), and supported by scale drawings or measured sketches, and photographs.

6.0: WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

Stage 1: Grading of site

The removal of the floors during the grading of the site presented an opportunity to determine the potential for the survival of earlier structures or deposits within the study area. Once this process was completed the study area was divided into four zones (Figure 2).

Zone 1

This zone was situated in the north-eastern corner of the study area, the former site of Iron Foundries 1-3 and the Windmill Street Yard. Immediately visible were the walls of earlier cellars extending 4.0m. back from the Windmill Street frontage. The remainder of most of this area consisted of dark grey-brown ashy deposits and brick rubble. No significant earlier features were visible and it was considered to be of low archaeological potential.

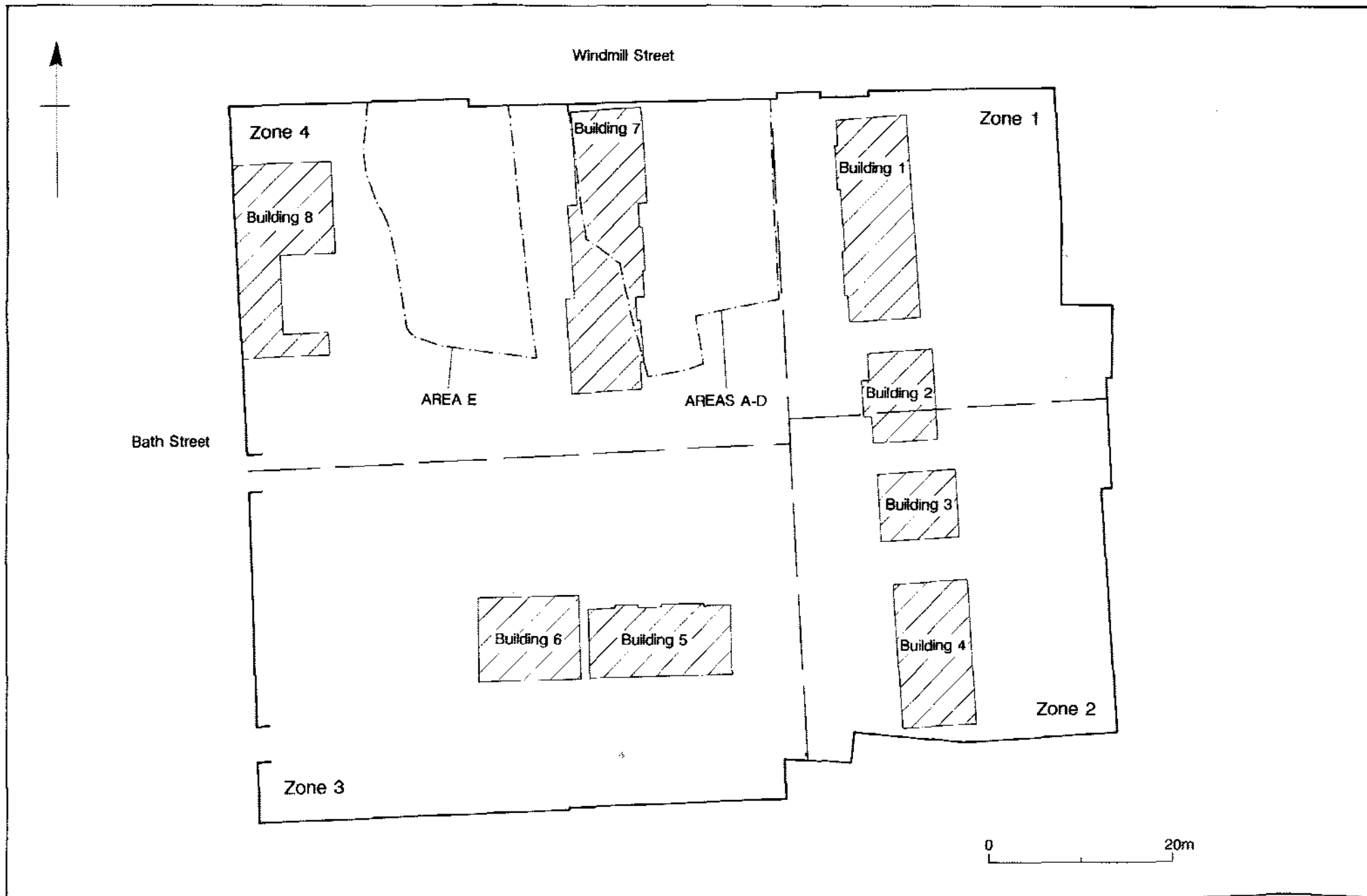


Fig. 2

Zone 2

This zone was situated in the south-eastern part of the study area. The cellars of the Stainless Steel and Former Carpenters Shops were visible in the extreme south-eastern corner of Zone 2. To the west of these, the ground appeared to have been artificially levelled using ash and clinker containing lenses of brick rubble. This deposit, which was later removed to facilitate groundworks, was presumably laid to counteract the natural slope and provide a level surface, creating a drop of c.1.0m. immediately to the west. The 1st edition OS map (1887; Figure 3) shows this area to be mostly undeveloped. This zone was also considered to be of low archaeological potential.

Zone 3

This zone was situated in the south western part of the study area. The concrete flooring was not removed during the initial grading of the site in the southern half of this zone. The cellar of the former Engineers Store, which is referred to in the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust report (1994) as containing a large cistern, could be seen to extend c.1.0m. below ground level in the extreme south-western corner of Zone 3. Again, the late development of this area suggested that earlier features were unlikely to be encountered.

Zone 4

Zone 4 was considered to represent the area where significant, earlier structures or deposits were most likely to be encountered. The phasing of the Glebeland Works buildings by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (1994) had suggested that the north-western corner of the site may have been the first to be developed and the 1887 OS map (Figure 3) illustrates that this area was the first to contain any substantial buildings associated with the works. It was therefore considered that Zone 4 should be examined in greater detail and that an opportunity to sample Zones 1-3 would be provided during the excavation of later groundworks.

Rapid cleaning following the removal of the Victorian pavier brick floors (1000) in Zone 4 revealed the foundations of the recently demolished buildings. The zone was subsequently divided into five sub-zones (Areas A-E; Figure 2), Areas A-D relating to the footings of buildings located in the eastern half of the zone, and Area E, covering a set of foundations associated with works buildings in its north-western corner.

Area A (Plate 1) was defined by the footings for what was formerly the Warehouse. Directly beneath the pavier flooring there was a deposit of black ash (1001), 0.10m. in depth. This deposit was underlain by a possible floor (1002) made of a rough concrete with brick, grit and ash inclusions.

Area B (Plate 2) was the site of Non-Ferrous Foundry No.2 and contained the foundations of two possible earlier structures (F1 and F2). F1 (Plate 5), which was situated in the south western corner of Area B, was rectangular in plan and open at its western end. It was made out of early, 2.5 inch thick hand-made/clamped bricks and measured 5.7m. (E-W) x 4.0m. (N-S). F2 (Plate 6) was made out of an early, 2.75 inch thick hand made/clamped brick with a very rough facing. This feature was located in the north-eastern corner of Area B and its orientation was slightly 'at odds' to the surrounding foundations. It was cut by the foundations (F3) of the staircase leading down from the Warehouse into Non-Ferrous Foundry No.2. The black ashy deposit (1001) encountered in Area B could be seen to overlie a lighter coloured ash (1003) which abutted the walls of the exposed foundations in Area B.

Area C (Plate 3), which was the site of the Barrel House and part of the Warehouse, was sub-divided into three sub-zones (Areas C1-C3). Area C1 (the western half of the Warehouse) contained the remains of two possible concrete machine bases. Machine Base 1 (Plate 8) was situated in the south eastern corner of Area C1 and measured 1.5m. square. Machine Base 2 (Plate 9; 2.0m. x 1.5m.) was located towards the south-western corner of Area C1. Both bases, which lacked any diagnostic features, were abutted by the black ashy deposit 1001. Area C2 contained a complex group of features which included two further machine bases. Machine Base 3 (Plate 10; 1.80m. x 0.60m.), which may have been the base of a lathe, was located in the south-eastern corner of Area C2, whilst Machine Base 4 (Plate 11), which measured 0.8m. square, was situated immediately to the north-west, and was surrounded by a black, oily waste deposit containing a number of metal buckles and fittings. The latter base was supported to the east by cast iron and wood, and metal pipes emerging from a void protruded from its southern side. Machinery may also have been housed in an irregular slab of concrete to the south of Machine Base 4. The features in Area C2 were abutted by a dark brown sandy silt and ash (1005) containing brick rubble, mortar, glass, and metal fittings. During the clearance of Area C3 several substantial blocks of concrete, orientated east-west (length 3.0m., width 0.50m., depth 0.60m.), were removed to facilitate future groundworks. These features, which are most likely to have been machine bases, were abutted by context 1005. A further possible concrete machine base, 12m. long and 0.10m. deep, abutted the eastern foundation wall of the Barrel House.

Like Area C, Area D (Plate 4), which was formerly the works storeroom, was also divided into sub-zones (Areas D1-D4). Unlike other parts of Zone 4 this area contained several structural elements which are not depicted on the plan of the site drawn up by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (1994). Area D1 was defined by two walls (F10 and F11) abutting the walls of the Former Stores. A rectangular ?machine base (Machine Base 5; Plate 12) measuring 1.35m. x 2.60m. and made of rough 3 inch thick ?early handmade/clamped bricks, with metal projections situated close to its corners, was located in the northern half of Area D1. Area D2 contained a floor (1007), which was made of a dark red, 2.75 inch thick, ?machine-cut floor brick. Abutting this floor, in the south-western corner of Area D2, was a structure (F4; Plate 7), measuring 1.3m. x 1.4m., the walls of which were made of an early 2.5 inch thick handmade/clamped brick. Immediately to the south of this, in Area D3, F4 was abutted and partly overlain by an irregularly shaped piece of concrete (Machine Base 6; Plate 7). Machine Base 6 was also abutting a structure (F5; Plate 7) to the south. Like F4, this structure was small (1.55m. x 1.40m.) but made of a later, orangey-red machine cut brick. The eastern part of Area D3 contained a floor (1008), which was made of black handmade/clamped bricks, earlier than those used in the make-up of 1007. There were no notable features in Area D4, where the Victorian pavier flooring (1000) was underlain by a dark deposit of ash and clinker (1006).

The removal of the pavier flooring in Area E did not reveal any features other than the foundation walls for the buildings depicted on the plan of the Glebeland Works prepared by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (1994).

Stage 2: Excavation of groundworks (Figure 2)

Buildings 1 and 2 (Zone 1)

The foundation trenches for Buildings 1 and 2 were 1.0m. deep. A mixed deposit of black ash and brick rubble (1009), which varied in depth from 0.10.-0.50m., was visible in the sections of these trenches. This was underlain by the natural orangey brown sand (1010). No archaeological features were cut into the natural ground in the foundation trenches for Buildings 1 and 2.

Buildings 3 and 4 (Zone 2)

The foundation trenches for Buildings 3 and 4 were 1.0m. deep. The trenches were cut into the natural orangey brown sand, which was overlain in some areas by a mixed deposit of ash, slag and brick rubble (1011), 0.10m.-0.20m. in depth. The majority of this latter deposit was removed during the grading of the site in preparation for groundworks. No archaeological features were cut into the natural ground in these trenches.

Buildings 5 and 6 (Zone 3)

The foundation trenches for Buildings 5 and 6 were 1.0m. deep. A dark grey ashy deposit (1012), 0.10m.-0.50m. in depth, was underlain by the natural orangey brown sand. No archaeological features were cut into the natural ground in the foundation trenches for Buildings 5 and 6.

Building 7 (Zone 4/Areas C and D)

Most of the foundation walls and machine bases encountered in this part of the study area (see above) were removed to stabilise the ground and facilitate groundworks. No earlier features were apparent during this rapid exercise which resulted in an overall mixing of deposits in Areas C and D. During groundworks the resulting deposit of black ash and brick rubble (1013) was seen to overly the natural orangey brown sand, which was encountered at a depth of approximately 1.0m. below ground level. Some wall footings had survived during the excavations and these were seen to be founded on the natural ground. No earlier features were observed.

Building 8 (Zone 4)

This building was planned to adjoin the retained facade of the building which had fronted onto Bath Street. The cellars of this structure occupied the majority of the area which would be affected by groundworks. The removal of the cellar floors (1017) revealed that they were founded on a 20-30mm. thick bed of ash and clinker (1014), which lay directly over the natural sand. The walls of the cellars did not extend below this depth. The profile of the eastern cellar wall (F6) was exposed in the southern foundation trench for Building 8. F6 extended 1.5m. below floor level and was abutted by a 0.25m. deep deposit of black ash and rubble (1016). The foundation trench for this wall (F7), which had been backfilled with clinker (1015), was cut into the natural sand. The western foundation wall for the Pipe Clip Assembly Shop (F8) was also visible in this trench. The southern foundation wall of the Buckle Assembly Shop (F9) was exposed in the west-facing section of the northernmost foundation trench for Building 8. This wall, which had been laid on the natural sand, extended 1.0m. below floor level and was abutted by a black ashy deposit. No significant earlier deposits were observed in the foundation trenches for Building 8.

7.0: THE FINDS

Approximately 30 items of horse harness/saddlery equipment were recovered (including buckles and circular and 'D'-shaped rings) 24 of which came from context 2000 in Area E. Possible evidence for the manufacture of horse equipment came from context 2002 in the form of a large lump of metalworking slag containing copper. Associated fragments of willow pattern, white wares and brown glazed pottery from Area E suggest a late-19th century date for this industrial activity.

Further items of horse equipment were recovered from Area C (contexts 1005 and 1006) where associated material, including a file and modern window glass, suggests a later date in the 20th century.

Also of note is a complete 19th century glass beer bottle with a ball in the neck, marked 'Alfred Simms Trade Mark Walsall' with the Walsall 'Bear and Staff' motif. This was found beneath the concrete floor of a structure situated towards the north-west corner of the site.

This site is important at both local and regional levels in view of the well documented saddlery trade in Walsall, one of the major manufacturing centres in Britain. Further study of the metal finds is recommended involving a search for parallels in the Walsall Leather Museum where this material should eventually be deposited.

Samples of brick were collected from the study area and form part of the site archive.

8.0: DISCUSSION

Zone 1

The 1st edition OS map (Figure 3) illustrates that this area was cluttered with small buildings in 1887. Apart from the cellar walls of the houses which formerly fronted onto Windmill Street, no below-ground remains associated with these earlier structures were encountered during excavations. This suggests that the majority of the area was cleared prior to the construction of the Iron Foundries, thus destroying any earlier stratigraphy and structures which may have existed.

Zones 2 and 3

Zones 2 and 3 were located in the southern part of the study area, the latest area to be developed as part of the works. It was considered unlikely that any earlier remains would be encountered in these areas. This conclusion was supported by the monitoring of the clearance of the area and the excavation of groundworks which did not identify any earlier features or deposits.

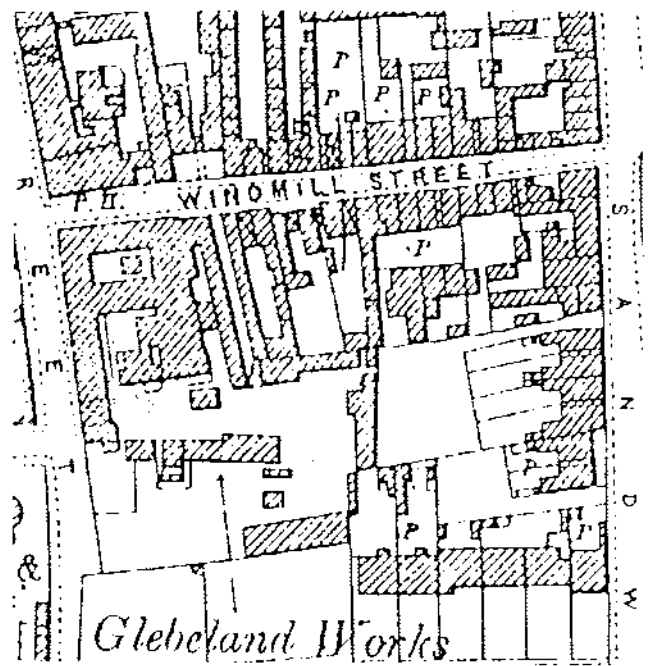
Zone 4

The two earlier structures (F1 and 2) encountered in Area B are depicted on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps (1887 and 1903, Figure 3). They were both made of locally handmade/clamped bricks which probably date from the early-19th century. The earlier walls and floors in Area D, which were encountered beneath the Former Stores, are not depicted on any of the OS map coverage. It is difficult to say anything about these features, or about the earlier structures encountered in Area B, other than that they may have formed part of a network of small workshops and yards possibly associated with businesses situated on the Windmill and Bath Street frontages. The machine bases in Area C2 may represent earlier activity, but are more likely to be associated with machinery which was removed from this part of the Barrel House (Ironbridge Trust 1994). The large concrete blocks which were encountered during excavations in Area C3 were presumably the footings for the heavy machinery which was housed in the southern half of the Barrel House.

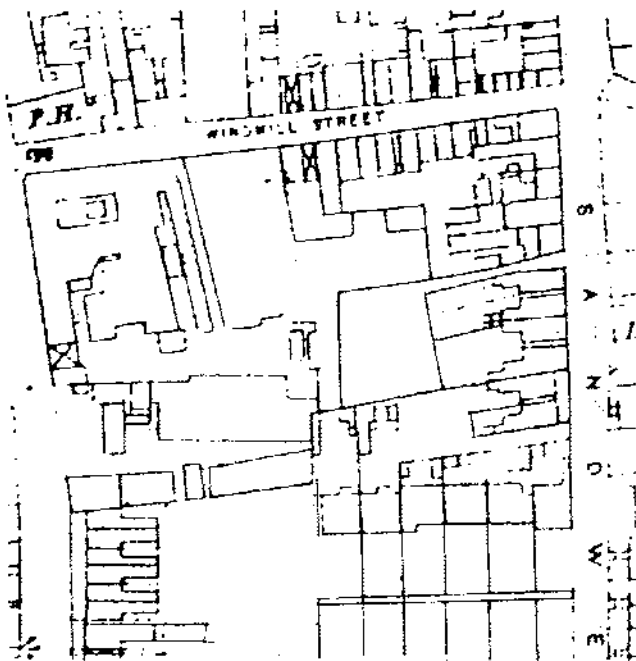
The excavation of groundworks in Zone 4 has shown that the foundations of the Glebeland Works buildings were quite substantial, and that for stability they were laid on the natural ground. This suggests a possibility of either clearance, or truncation, of any earlier deposits which may have existed prior to the works. The presence of very few earlier features beneath the floor levels, added to the fact that



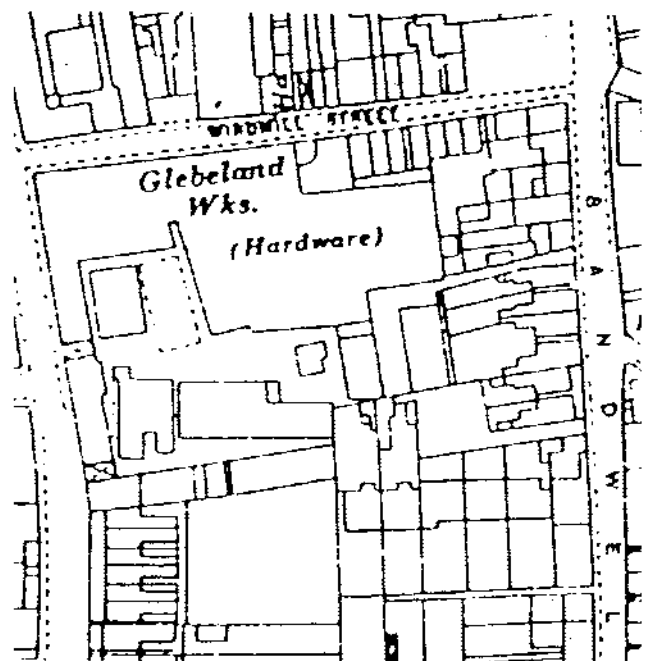
1887



1903



1916



1938

Fig. 3

no earlier deposits were encountered during the excavation of groundworks, strongly supports the former suggestion of clearance throughout most of Zone 4.

9.0: CONCLUSION

This watching brief has provided information to complement and enhance the extensive research and archive work carried out by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust at the Glebeland Works.

A composite plan of the structures and deposits encountered in Areas A-E is held in the site archive.

10.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The watching brief was carried out by Derek Moscrop with assistance from Laurence Jones, Jon Sterenberg and Christine Winter. Derek Moscrop compiled the report with a contribution on the finds by Lynne Bevan. The brick samples were examined by Steve Litherland and his comments are held in the site archive. The report was edited by Iain Ferris and the work was monitored by Peter Leach. The figures were prepared by Nigel Dodds. The co-operation of Derngate Plc. during the watching brief is gratefully acknowledged.

11.0: REFERENCES

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Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.*

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Archaeology Unit (1994) *Glebeland Works, Walsall: An Archaeological Study and Assessment* Ironbridge Archaeological Series No.43.

West Midlands Sites and Monuments Record, Joint Data Team (1995) *Brief for an archaeological watching brief and salvage recording at The Glebeland Works, Bath St., Walsall, West Midlands (SMR 6397).*

12.0: LIST OF FIGURES AND PLATES

Figure 1 Site location.

Figure 2 Zones 1-4, Areas A-E, and the location of groundworks.

Figure 3 Ordnance Survey maps (1887/1903/1916/1938).

Plate 1 Area A.

Plate 2 Area B.

Plate 3 Area C.

Plate 4 Area D.

Plate 5 Structure F1.

Plate 6 Structure F2.

Plate 7 Structures F4/F5 and Machine Base 6.

Plate 8 Machine Base 1.

Plate 9 Machine Base 2.

Plate 10 Machine Base 3.

Plate 11 Machine Base 4.

Plate 12 Machine Base 5.

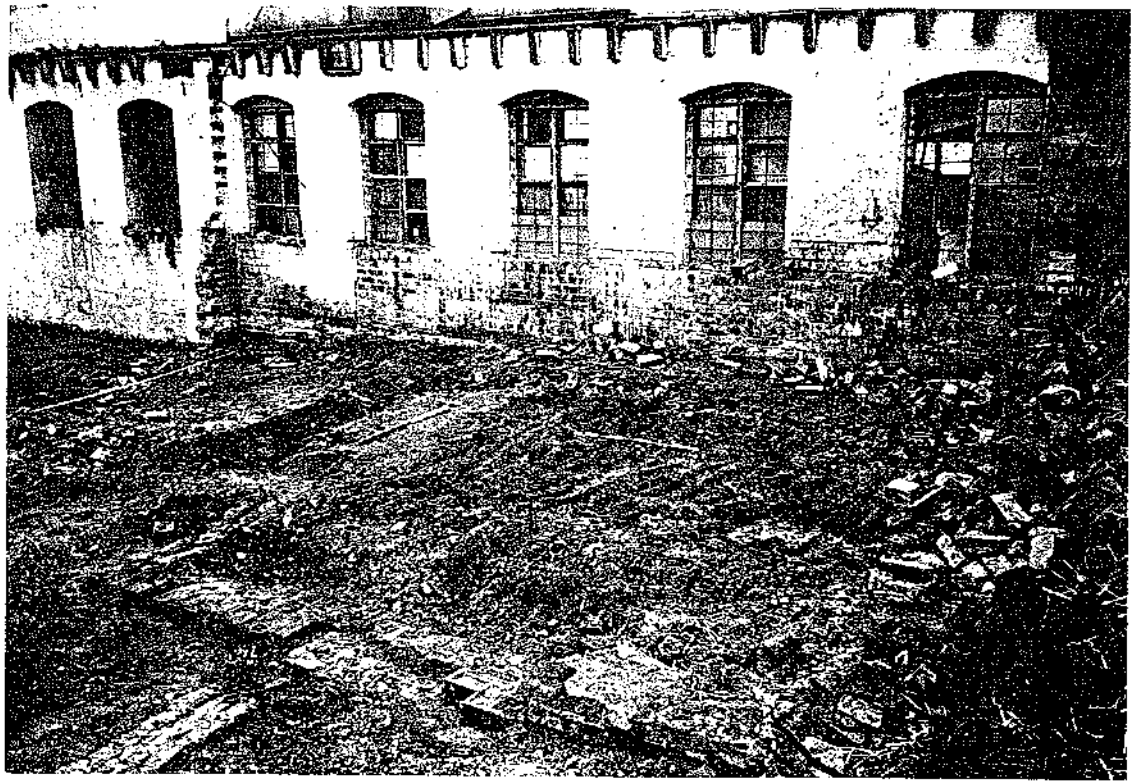


Plate 1

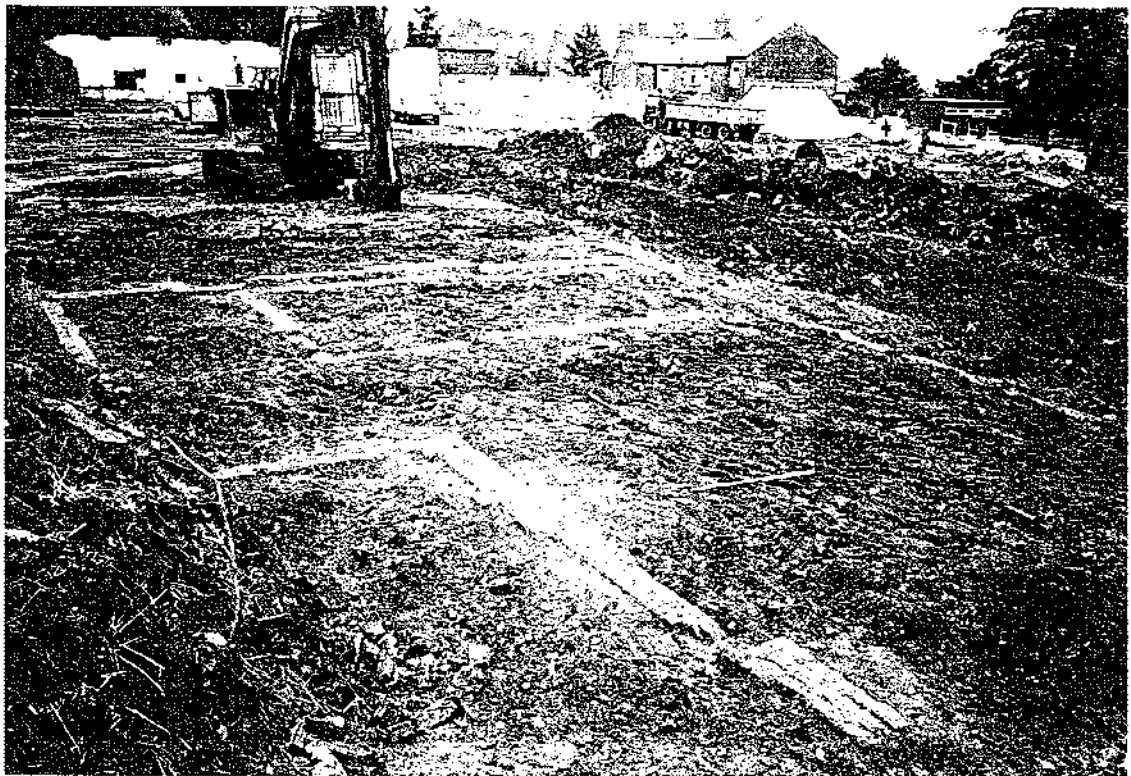


Plate 2



Plate 3

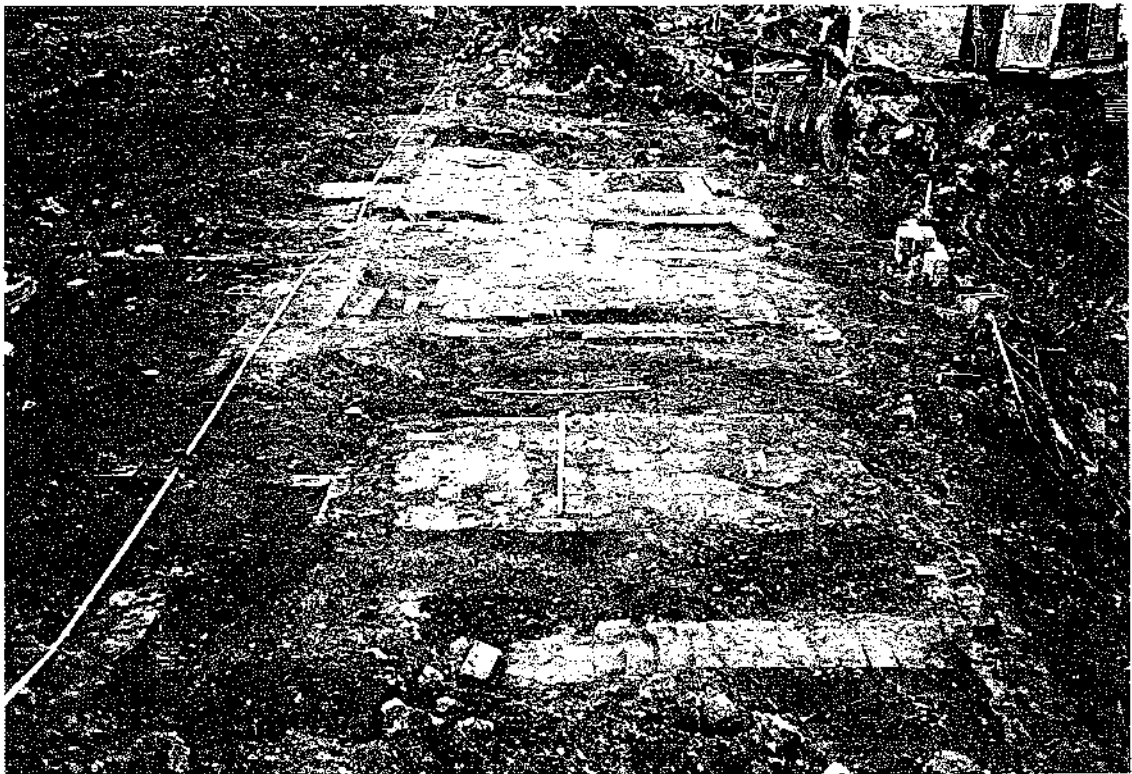


Plate 4

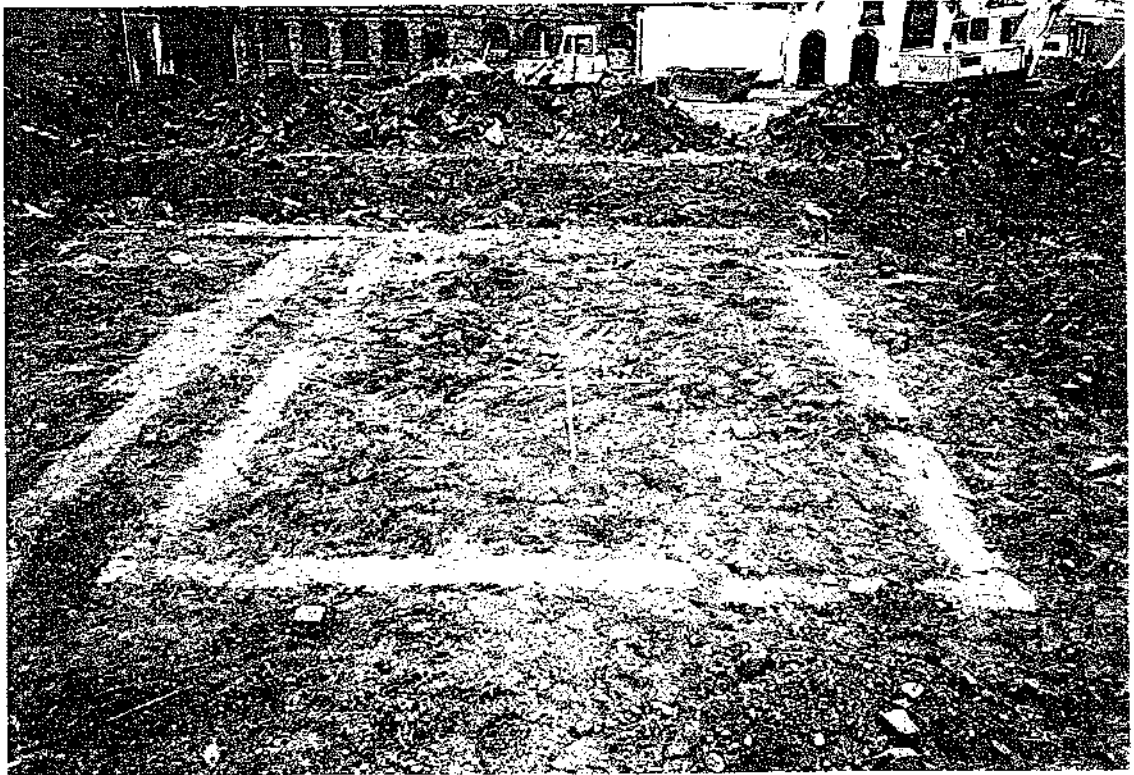


Plate 5

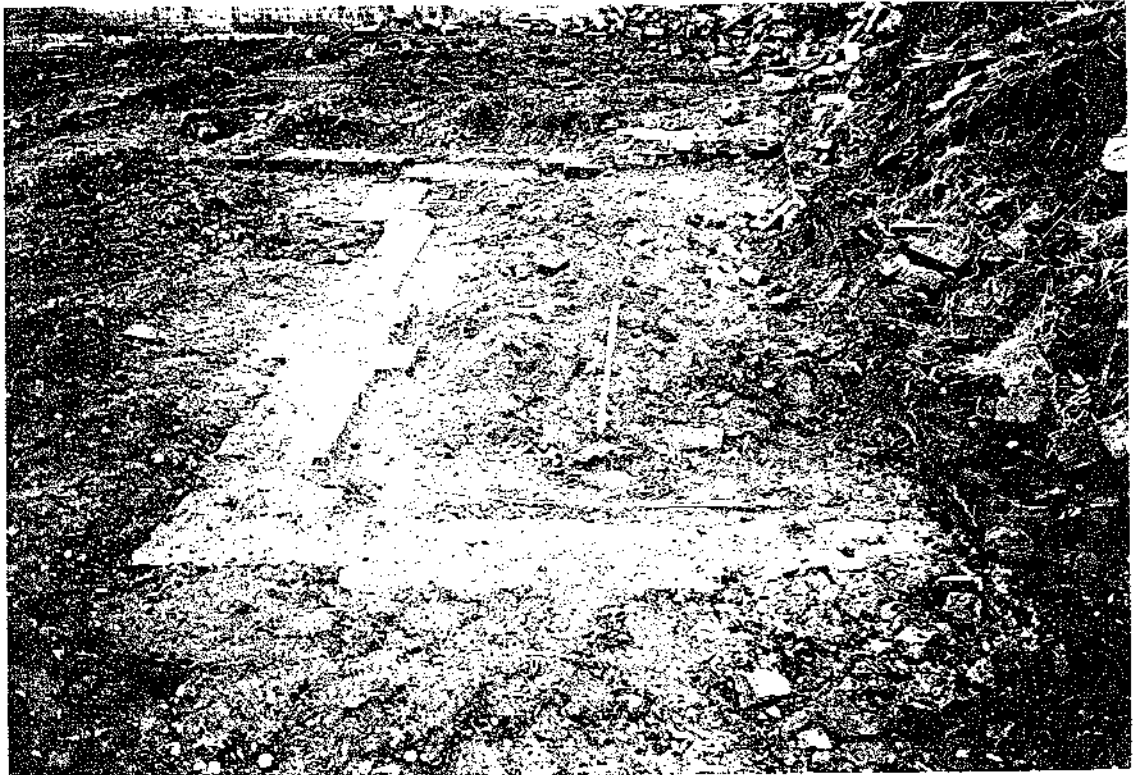


Plate 6

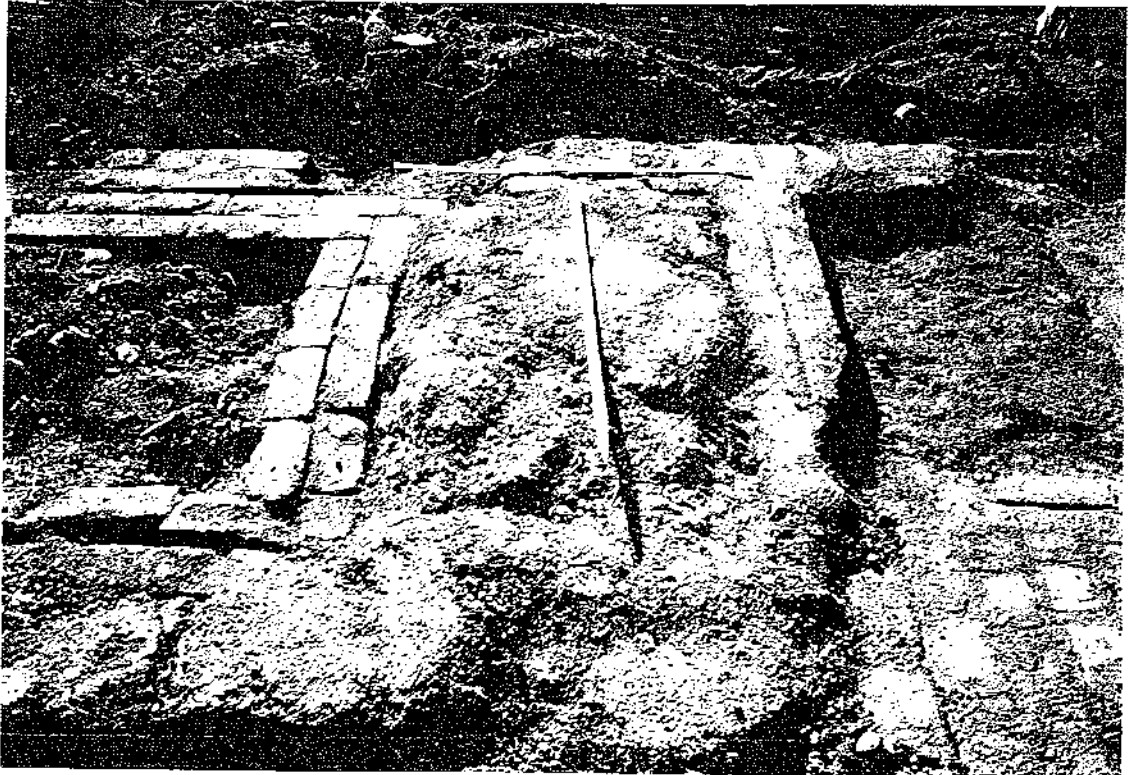


Plate 7



Plate 8

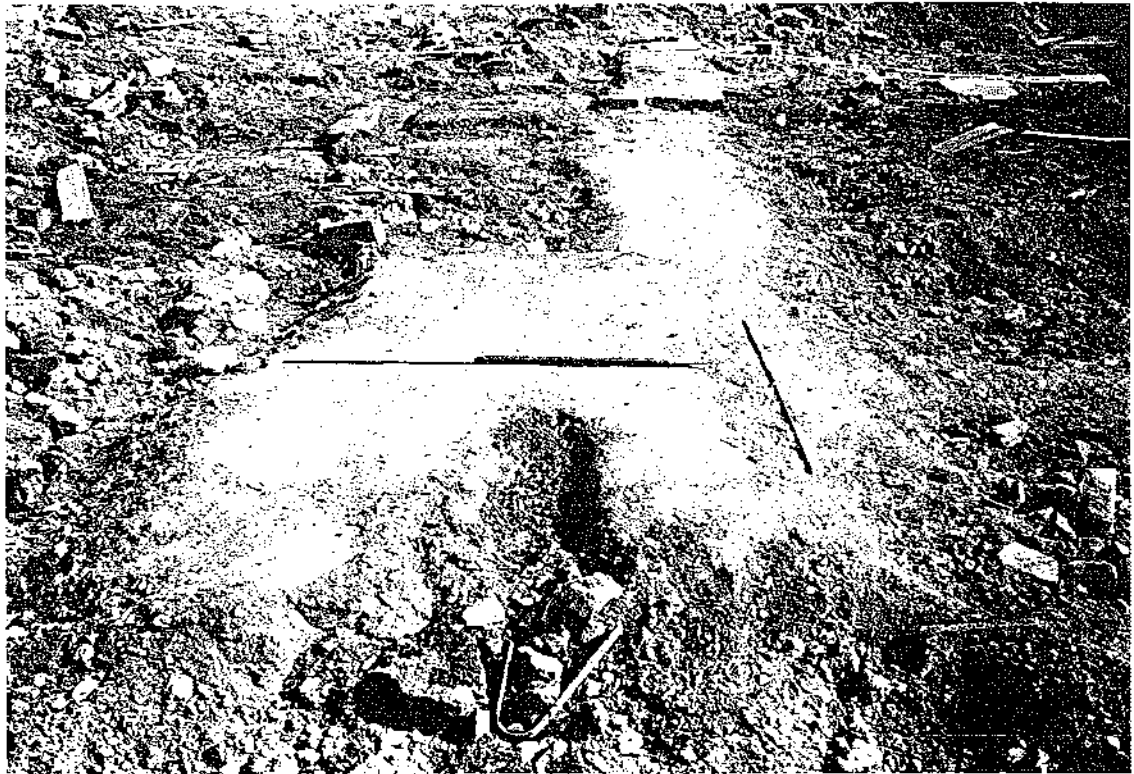


Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11

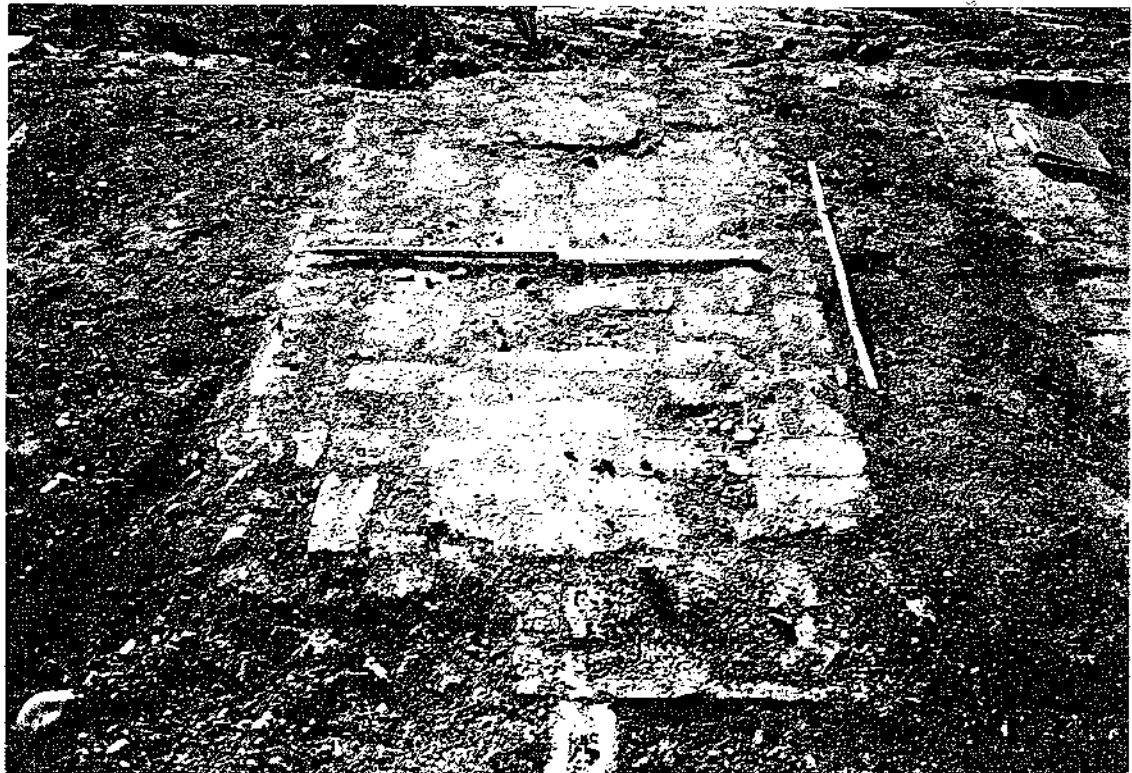


Plate 12