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Archaeological Work at the
Town Wharf, Walsall,

West Midlands (SMR 5894)

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GEORGE-HOTEL, WALSALL,

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TUESDAY, THE 13TH DAY OF JUNE, 1876,

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Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Project No. 408

December 1996

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**Archaeological Work at the
Town Wharf, Walsall,
West Midlands (SMR 5894)**

by
S.J. LITHERLAND

For further information please contact:
Simon Buteux, Iain Ferris or Peter Leach (Directors)
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.bham.ac.uk/BUFAU/>

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Contents

	Page
1. <u>Summary</u>	1
2. <u>Introduction</u>	1
2.1 The Site	1
2.2 Geology and Topography	2
2.3 Historical Background	2
2.4 An Assessment of Archaeological Survival	3
3. <u>Below-Ground Investigation</u>	3
3.1 Method	3
3.2 Results	3
3.3 Area I	3
3.4 Area II	5
3.5 Area III	5
4. <u>Buildings Survey</u>	7
4.1 Method	7
4.2 Area I	7
4.3 Area II	13
4.4 Area III	16
5. <u>Historical Synthesis</u>	19
5.1 Introduction	19
5.2 Early Post-Medieval Growth	19
5.3 The Canal Age	20
5.4 The Industrial Period	20
5.5 Post-Script	22
6. <u>Conclusions</u>	22
7. <u>Acknowledgements</u>	23
8. <u>References</u>	23

List of Figures

1. Site location and trench plan
2. Archaeological areas I, II and III
3. Archaeological Disturbance
4. Trench Ia - west-facing section
5. Trench II - south-facing section
6. Trench III - north-facing section
7. Trench V - plan
8. Trench V - east-facing section
9. Structure survey
10. Plan: Structures C/F, cellars
11. Plan: Structures C/F, first and second floors
12. Plan: Structure I, basement
- 13a. Plan: Structure K, ground and first-floor plan
- 13b. Plan: Structure L, ground and first-floor plan
14. Plan: Structure N, ground floor

List of Plates

1. Park Street Frontage
2. Park Street Frontage
3. Structures C and D
4. Structures E and F
5. Structure D, rear
6. Structure C, rear
7. Structure E, passage entry
8. Structure E, detail of rear
9. Structure D, detail of central bay purlin arrangement
10. Structure C, detail of outer bay purlin arrangement
11. Structure C, cellar detail
12. Thomas Street, Birmingham
13. Structure G
14. Structure I, Marsh Street elevation
15. Park Street, c.1950
16. Structure K, Marsh Street elevation
17. Structure K, rear elevation
18. Structure L., rear of Park Street
19. Structure L
20. Structure M, facade
21. Structure M, steel-frame construction
22. Structure M, detail of suspended ceiling
23. Structure M, detail of numbered panelling
24. Structure M, foyer music frieze
25. Structure M, foyer chandelier rose
26. Structure M, battery room
27. Structure M, battery room lights
28. Structure N, canal elevation
29. Structure N, south elevation
30. Town End Bank c.1875
31. Aerial Photography of Town End c.1930
32. The Grand, c.1900
33. The Grand and Her Majesty's Theatre, c.1920
34. Her Majesty's Theatre, c.1936

List of Maps

1. King, G. 1679 (WLSC M17)
2. The estate of the Countess Dowager of Montrath, 1763 (WLSC 143/18)
3. Mason, T. 1824 (WLSC 143/25)
4. Tithe Map 1840 (WLSC 143/25)
5. Artisans and Labourers Dwelling Act Improvement map (WLSC Acc445: 52/7)
6. 1876 Sale WLSC (410/1)
7. OS 1st ed. 1886
8. OS 2nd ed. 1903

WLSC is an abbreviation of Walsall Local Studies Centre.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK AT THE TOWN WHARF, WALSALL, WEST MIDLANDS (SMR 5894)

1 Summary

Archaeological work at the Town Wharf, Walsall, consisted of desk based assessment of archaeological survival, trial trenching and building recording, in advance of redevelopment and a watching brief during construction work on site. The aims of the project were to determine the nature, extent, survival and significance of below-ground archaeological deposits over the proposed development area; and to produce a record of the buildings which were to be demolished in advance of redevelopment. The results of the trial trenching demonstrated that archaeological survival was limited within the proposed development area. As a result, greater emphasis was placed upon documentary and cartographic records, together with the evidence discovered by the building survey, as a means of advancing our knowledge of the historical development of this part of Walsall. This has revealed a fascinating and complex pattern of change within the development area, which also sheds further light upon broader changes within the town itself over the last 700 to 800 years.

2 Introduction

The following report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out on behalf of Chartwell Land Development Limited by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit between November 1994 and April 1995 at the Town Wharf, Walsall, West Midlands. The archaeological evaluation was required by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council in advance of redevelopment of the site for multiple retail and associated development, and follows a brief prepared by Hilary White, the West Midlands Sites and Monuments and Development Control Officer (White 1994).

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were twofold. Firstly, to determine the nature, extent, significance and survival of below-ground archaeological deposits over the whole of the development area, so that the effects of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource could be assessed. Secondly, to provide a written, drawn and photographic record of the built environment. In addition, a watching brief was maintained during demolition and site works, for clarity the results of this phase of work are incorporated within the main text of the report.

An assessment was also made of the documentary and cartographic sources relevant to the development area in order to provide a broader context within which the results of the archaeological fieldwork might be understood. In particular it was hoped that archaeological investigation might be able to shed further light upon the early development of the periphery of the medieval town, and provide further information on the changing industrial, commercial and transport infra-structure of post-medieval Walsall.

2.1 The Site (NGR centre: SP 0110 9860; figures 1a - 1c)

The Town Wharf development area is in the north west part of Walsall town centre at the west end of Park Street. South of Wolverhampton Street, the disused Walsall terminus of a branch of the former Birmingham Canal Network is situated near Marsh Street. The canal, which was built in 1799, provided a focus for the overall development.

The archaeological report follows the division of the overall development site into three areas assigned by the ground investigation carried out by Geotechnical Engineering (Southern) Limited (1994, 1), these are depicted on figure 2.

Area I is defined within the street block bounded by Park Street, Station Street, Little Station Street and Marsh Street. Prior to redevelopment, this area was occupied by retail properties, including the Red Lion and Old Grand public houses, and a small car park to the south created by clearance of various back-plot structures.

Area II, a triangular plot of land bounded by Wolverhampton Street, Townend Street and Wisemore, was occupied by a disused cinema.

Area III, a plot west of Marsh Street and bounded by Wolverhampton Street, includes the disused branch of the Walsall canal, together with a dilapidated canal-side warehouse. The remaining area has been levelled and was the site of an NCP carpark prior to the redevelopment.

Also, each building within the overall development area was assigned an individual letter of identification (Structures A - N, Section 4 below).

2.2 Geology and Topography

The development area is bi-sected by an approximately north/south aligned geological unconformity which roughly follows Marsh Street. East of Marsh Street nodular beds of Wenlock Limestone are indicated, while to the west the site is underlain by grey shales of the Carboniferous coal measures (W.L.S.C 374/125). To the west of the development area, the limestone has been extensively mined. The geotechnical survey identified drift deposits of light brown boulder clay across the whole of the development area together with extensive disturbance from backfilled cellarage. The development area is situated on relatively flat ground which gently slopes to the south and south east.

2.3 Historical Background

The specific chronology of the early growth of Walsall is very uncertain. Walsall may be identifiable with the place-name 'Walesho' recorded in a will of 1002-4 (Baker 1989, 5), although settlement is not recorded in Domesday Book. The first certain record is in 1159, when Henry II granted the manor to Herbert le Rous (Ruffus), a royal official. In the 13th century evidence for the developing physical and administrative structure of the settlement begins to emerge, from records of the parish church, market and borough charter. The development area is broadly comparable to the historic district of Town End, first mentioned in 1557 (VCH Staffs xvii, 184).

There are two hypotheses concerning the early development of the town. Gould argues that the focus of several historic routes at Town End indicates that this was the site of the original settlement of Walsall, prior to the laying out of the medieval planned borough (Gould 1983). However, all other writers on Walsall, have regarded the parish church on its' hill-top site, as the most likely focus of early settlement. Dr Nigel Baker, a prominent historical geographer, argues that the network of roads converge on the western end of Park Street because it formed the westernmost extent of the planned historic town, parallel examples of which can be found in Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, and Lowesmoor, in Worcester (Baker 1989, 18).

Whatever the precise early growth of the town, the development area has straddled the westernmost edge of the historic borough and town for at least 700 years, a factor which has played a significant role in defining the shape and character of subsequent development within each of the three archaeological areas identified above. **Area I**, to the south of Park Street lies within the historic planned town. Park Street (probably named after the medieval park located to the south of the street) bears several hallmarks of a specific and deliberate planning event. It is a wide (18-21m/60-70ft) street with a distinctive and regular historic plot-pattern (recoverable from several 18th and 19th century maps of the town). In contrast, the historic plot pattern within **Area II**, which is just outside the borough, was very mixed, and **Area III** was probably not extensively developed until the arrival of the canal in the late-18th century.

2.4 An Assessment of Archaeological Deposit Survival

Prior to the commencement of on-site investigations a model of potential archaeological deposit survival was proposed based upon desk based research, the results of a cellar survey and information from the geotechnical boreholes and test pits. The results of this assessment provided the basis upon which the location of the trial trenches were decided (figures 1c and 3). The following section of the report provides a summary account of this phase of the archaeological evaluation.

3 Below-Ground Investigations (figure 1c)

3.1 Method

Following the stripping of superficial modern deposits including topsoil, recent building surfaces, or demolition material, the sections and bottoms of the trial trenches were cleaned and a sufficient sample manually excavated to establish the extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits. The stratigraphy of all trial trenches was recorded using a continuous numbered context system and BUFAU *pro-forma* record cards, even where no archaeological deposits were identified. All archaeological features and deposits were photographed and a full drawn record was maintained throughout at an appropriate scale.

3.2 Results The results from the evaluation trenching indicated extensive disturbance to archaeological deposits across a significant proportion of the proposed development area. Therefore while the following trench narratives present a summary of the results from each trial trench in turn, significant archaeological deposits were only encountered in three of the six evaluation trenches (Trenches Ia, III, and V). The text for these trenches should be read with reference to the accompanying plans and sections, and, in general, discussion begins with the earliest phases of activity recognised in each trench immediately overlying or cutting natural sub-surface deposits. In those trenches where disturbance had largely removed any potential archaeological deposits only a brief written summary is presented, although the full written, drawn and photographic record may be consulted within the overall project archive.

3.3 Area I

Inspection of the standing structures prior to excavation indicated that extensive disturbance had been caused to archaeological deposits along the Park Street frontage by cellaring. Therefore, three trenches were opened within the back-plots of the properties fronting Park Street in Area 1 prior to their demolition.

Trench I

Trench I, which measured a total of 24m by 2m, was located within the back-plot of 67 Park Street. The boundary between 67 Park Street and the Red Lion marked the easternmost extent of slum clearance in the late Victorian redevelopment of Park Street and Marsh Lane (Section 5.4, below). Trench I was positioned to avoid disturbance and levelling associated with this event and the footprint of a recently demolished back-plot building here. Trench I was divided into four sub-sections (Ia-Ic) because a large modern manhole and two east-west aligned partition walls of a late-19th century factory bisected the excavations.

Trench Ia (figure 4) Widespread disturbance by recent building foundations and services had severely truncated archaeological deposits in this trench. The only coherent stratigraphy was found in the west-facing section of the trench. The archaeology was divided into two sequences situated to the north and south of a large modern cut (F154).

The earliest activity to be identified was in the southern half of Trench Ia where an initial build up of garden soils (1100, 1101) which overlay the natural clay were cut by two rubbish pits (F152, F153). In turn the two pits (F152, F153) were sealed by another later episode of garden soil formation (1103).

Above the later garden soil formation (1103) a sequence of layers (1104, 1107 and 1108) underlay a modern concrete floor surface (1105) of the large three storey former tannery building demolished sometime after the 1960s. The large east-west aligned cut (F154) in the middle of Trench Ia represented the robbed out northern elevation of that building.

Structural activity prior to the construction of the late-19th century tannery was revealed in the northern half of the west-facing section of Trench Ia. An approximately north-south aligned wall (F160) was cut through 1100 at a slightly acute angle to two later walls above it (F156 and F157), which suggested that F160 was a truncated survival of an earlier, possibly late 18th/early 19th century, phase of building activity associated with the adjacent standing building (Structure L).

A later 19th century phase of building activity was seen directly above 1100 where a thin bedding layer (1114) had been laid for another north-south aligned wall, (F156). F156 was abutted by a brick floor (F162) extending east of Trench Ia towards Structure L. The north elevation of the structure associated with F156/F162 appears to have been open-ended, onto which a later structure (F157) with a sloping floor (F163) was abutted. The sloping floor (F163) implies a ramped access to the earlier building, and therefore presumably an industrial function.

Trenches Ib, Ic and Id All these trenches were located within the footprint of the large three-storey late-19th century tannery, demolished in the 1960s. Archaeological deposits had been scoured away by levelling and construction activity associated with this structure, which directly overlay the natural clay at a depth of c. 121.8m A.O.D.

Trench II (figure 5)

Trench II was positioned in an area of waste ground to the rear of Structure L which map evidence indicated had not been built on in the 19th century. This trench was divided in two sections by the three-course wide north-south aligned external wall of the tannery building seen in Trench I, which was left *in situ*. The east section of Trench II was outside the tannery, while the west section was similar to Trenches Ib, Ic and Id were inside this structure.

In the east side of Trench II natural clay was encountered after hand excavation of two mixed layers of clayey garden soil (2015 and 2016). The natural clay sloped away to the south east. In the east end of the trench 2015 was overlain by another deeper layer of garden soil (2014). Artefacts recovered from these garden soils were mainly 18th/19th in date. The depth of the deposit, together with the presence of some residual sherds of green-glazed medieval pottery, suggested that this area had been used for cultivation for a long time. The garden soils were overlain by an orange brown sandy clay (2013) which was truncated on its western side by a rubbish pit (F203, 2011/2012). The rubbish pit was situated in the middle of the trench and contained animal bone, 19th century sherds and demolition rubble. The pit was cut from the top of 2013 (just beneath the topsoil/clinker mantle 2007), and cut 2015 to the east and 2016 to the west. In turn F203 was cut to the west by F202, a large steep-sided construction cut for the external wall of the tannery building (F200). In the west side of Trench II the natural clay subsoil was observed at a depth of c.121.45m A.O.D, overlain by modern levelling material.

Trench III (figure 6)

Trench III was positioned to test survival of archaeological deposits within the area of the 1875/6 slum clearances.

The trench was excavated through a northwest/southeast aligned cut for a brick-lined culvert (F301) to reveal the top of the natural clay subsoil at a depth of c.121.95m A.O.D. The culvert was silted up with dark grey brown silt (3009) which overlay an orange clay/sand deposit (3010). Within a small trench it was difficult to discern the relationship of the cut for the culvert. Layers 3012 and 3011 appeared to abut the east side of the culvert. However, this relationship may equally have been caused by slumping against the culvert from layers cut by F301. The culvert was backfilled with a grey/brown sandy clay (3007), which in turn was overlain by a series of levelling deposits, possibly associated with the slum demolition of 1875/6, the uppermost of which (3001) provided a bedding layer for the brick yard surface (3000). The alignment of the culvert indicated that it probably dated from the period before the slum clearances.

3.4 Area II

No below-ground investigations were carried out within Area II given the probability of extensive disturbance caused by the construction of the Her Majesty's Theatre and the Savoy Cinema.

3.5 Area III

Below-ground investigations in Area III aimed to establish if archaeological deposits had survived here which either predated, or, were associated with the canal. A total of three trenches were dug by mechanical excavator. It was necessary to use a toothed 0.8m bucket to break through the compacted surface of the former NCP carpark, and several concrete and brick yard and floor surfaces. After removal of modern levelling deposits and demolition material a rapid assessment was made of the potential of the archaeology in each trench. A decision was then made whether or not this merited the doubling of the trench to facilitate the understanding and excavation of archaeological deposits exposed. This was necessary only in the case of Trench V.

Trench IV Trench IV was located to sample the survival of archaeological deposits behind the Wolverhampton Street frontage. Results from this trench were negative. The trench was machined to natural subsoil at a depth of c. 123.90m A.O.D. after removal of c.0.65m of modern levelling and demolition material. A 3m spur was

also excavated to confirm the depth of the natural sub-soil. A small quantity of modern pottery and glass was recovered.

Trench V (figures 7 and 8)

Trench V was located to test the survival of below-ground archaeological features and deposits associated with the canal wharf. A double-bucket width trench was excavated through several layers of levelling deposits and demolition material to a depth of 123.60m A.O.D. to expose patches of dirty natural clay sub-soil.

Three main phases of activity were identified within Trench V, none of which were found to predate the construction of the canal. The first episode was associated with a large scale levelling operation, probably associated with the construction of the wharf and warehouse area around the canal. Two phases of building activity were then identified. The first was associated with the cellar (F516) of an east-west orientated early 19th century structure situated near the canal. This was replaced in the later-Victorian period by a north-south aligned boundary wall (F514).

The extensive levelling deposits (5001-5003, 5022) consisted of the by-products of local heavy industry including coal, shale, clinker and slag. These deposits overlay and had severely contaminated the natural clay sub-soil. The quantity of these levelling deposits suggested that they had probably been brought to site by canal barge and then used to create a level area for the wharf.

The earliest structural activity identified within the trench was a roughly built brick-pavioured cellar (F516) cut through the levelling deposits mentioned above. Remains of a blocked brick-lined chute (5009) and a possible flight of brick access steps (5012) were located on the north side of the cellar. The original cellar would have continued back from the east-facing section of the trench; however, here it was bi-sected by a later, north-south aligned, machine-brick wall (F514). The foundation courses of this load-bearing double-brick thickness wall (F514) were exposed in the southern end of the east-facing section of Trench V. The surviving wall consisted of seven mortared-brick courses stepped in above the fourth course and built over a series of dumped deposits (5001-5004). Where the wall (F514) bisected the earlier cellar, a header course of bricks was laid on their side to keep the coursing of F514 regular. North of the cellar, the wall (F514) changed course slightly with a dog-leg to the west, and thereafter continued northwards with a shallower foundation which suggested this part of F514 was merely a boundary wall.

Trench VI

The final trench was located to test survival of archaeological deposits in the middle of Area III. The results were negative. Modern levelling and demolition deposits overlay the natural clay sub-soil. In the east end of the trench the foundation of a roughly built limestone wall on a perpendicular alignment to the Wolverhampton Street frontage was found to cut the natural subsoil. Limestone walls were a common feature in Walsall until comparatively recently, utilising waste material from the local limestone mines. The alignment of the wall suggests that it may be the survival of a boundary wall between two wharfs. Other features consisted of a modern drain cut and a steep-sided post-hole containing 19th century pottery in its fill.

4 Buildings Survey

4.1 Method

A total of 14 buildings were investigated. Each building was given a Structure letter for ease of recognition, these comprised Structures A - N located on figure 9. Only the Red Lion in Park Street was retained within the overall redevelopment. The building stock varied greatly in character, ranging from a large 1930s cinema, through various shops of late 18th to 1960s vintage, to a wharf-side warehouse and outbuildings in the backyards of other properties. A flexible recording strategy was therefore adopted, broadly based upon the guidelines of the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments England (RCIIME 1996). All structures were photographically recorded augmented where necessary by measured floor plans and elevations and supplemented by written fieldnotes.

The results of the survey are systematically presented for each building in turn. A written description of each building is provided together with supplementary floor plans and elevations, historic photographs and illustrations where appropriate. The full field record for each structure may be consulted from the overall site archive.

4.2 Area I (plates 1 and 2)

Structures A/B: The Old Grand and Quicksilver Entertainments

Type Post-war brick and concrete public house and commercial premises

Introduction Structure A was a two-storey, flat roofed building with large rectangular concrete-framed windows. Structural inspection indicated that the modern building was built over the cellars of the late-Victorian Old Grand Theatre. A second structural letter was therefore given to the cellars (Structure B). Archaeological recording of Structure A/B consisted of a photographic survey of the cellars augmented by documentary research.

Building history The Old Grand Theatre was built in 1890 to a design by Daniel Arkell of Birmingham. It seated 1800 and cost about £4000 to build. The theatre burnt down shortly after the brand new Savoy Cinema opened in 1937. There were proposals to erect a temporary licensed premises inside the burnt out shell of the theatre vaults in 1939 (WLSC 233/47), although it is unclear if this was built. As the war drew to a close plans were made for a large three storey Neo-Georgian public house to be constructed on the site. These proposals included a plan of the cellars indicating their function, and showed that during the war part of the cellars was an A.R.P. basement (WLSC 233/48). The Neo-Georgian building was never built, and the modern pub - first recorded on a Ordnance Survey map of 1961 - was the result of a scaling down of plans for the site.

Structures C/F: Nos. 59-67 Park Street (figures 10 and 11)

Type Urban Vernacular row of commercial/residential premises

Introduction Structures C/F comprised a row of four shops fronting onto Park Street. The following discussion treats the building as a single structure, with the use of structure letters to describe features unique to a particular property. The buildings were difficult to survey. In each shop the ground floor was stripped to maximise the available retail space, the lofts were packed with barbed wire to deter burglars, and most of the first and second floor rooms inaccessible because they were dangerous or full of rubbish.

Survey description The main elevation comprised two pairs of shops arranged either side of a central passage. From east to west these were: the Card Cabin (Structure C), the Smoke Shop (Structure D), a Dr. Martens shoe shop (Structure E), and Bargains Galore (Structure F). Above the modern shop fronts the description of the first and second storeys divide neatly in two.

The facades of Structure C and Structure D displayed several original architectural features of Late Georgian style (plate 3). The walls were built of Flemish bonded two and a half inch high brick. A stone string course formed a running sill beneath the first floor windows, while a second continuous moulded stone cornice formed a running lintel above the smaller second floor windows. The cornice was surmounted by a rendered brick parapet. Structure C had two windows on each floor, but Structure D only single, centrally located, windows. All the windows were six-light sashes, with heavy, slightly rebated frames, but light glazing bars. The first storey windows had rusticated stone lintels, divided into five panels, with a projecting, and slightly raised, central keystone.

The first and second storeys of Structure E and Structure F had been extensively altered in the Victorian period, although the blocked second storey windows indicated that the complete row had originally presented a balanced elevation to the street. The Victorian alterations included the slight lowering of the parapet, the insertion of large double-sash windows into the first floor with large wooden pediments over (since fallen off), and rendered brickwork (plate 4).

The rear elevation of the whole building consisted of the four gable-ended rear wings arranged in a continuous series. In contrast with the frontage, the two central bays at the rear of the building were larger than the bays on either side (plates 5 and 6). There was evidence of extensive repairs to the brickwork of the back wall, which was not regularly bonded and was three bricks wide. The rear windows had been largely replaced or bricked up during the life of the building, although the original design was probably a centrally located casement window on each floor. The outer premises had direct access to the backyard, whereas access to the central premises was off the central passageway (plates 7 and 8).

The roof was of turnerised slate. A single ridge-roof span ran parallel to the street frontage. The roof over the rear wings was jointed into front roof section at right-angles to the street frontage. Each wing had a skylight over the central staircase. The roof timbers included large roughly adzed oak wall-plates and a single set of large roughly-adzed oak purlins. The purlins were crudely set into the brick party walls of each structure. A single wooden roof-truss was situated in the centre of the front roof section, because the central party wall was constructed of light timber-framing above the ground floor passageway. The wooden roof-truss was a simple king-post design. A similar system of purlins and wall-plates supported the roof in each rear wing. The junction of both sets of purlins differed between the central bays and the two bays on either side. The purlins of the central bays were crudely nailed together, whereas the purlins from the rear bays on each side of the building were lower, and supported the roof structure parallel to the street frontage (plates 9 and 10).

Discussion and phasing It is possible to deduce a great deal about the original plan of the building from the evidence of the cellars and second floor (figures 10 and 11 and plate 11). A kink in the boundary with the Red Lion suggested that the original row was built to fit into an pre-existing plot pattern. Apart from this kink, the plan of the building is remarkably symmetrical, and reveals an ingenious use of space, particularly in the use of dog-legs in the party walls between the individual properties. The dog-legged plan accounts for both the wider central gables seen in the rear elevation, and the larger outer bay width to the street frontage, and represents an attempt to equalise the space allocation within each of the four structures to compensate the middle bays for encroachment of the passageway

through the centre of the building. If the later alterations are ignored, the internal arrangement of each property appears to have consisted of a front and rear room on each floor divided by the staircase. The staircases of the central bays were set slightly further back than those of the bays on either side. This made the area of the ground floor front rooms roughly the same in each of the individual properties. Nevertheless, the central properties were probably slightly inferior to the bays on either side. This can be seen in the provision of less cellar space and the single windows of the frontages.

A late 18th/early 19th century construction date for Structures C/F is likely. For example, comparison may be made with other buildings in Walsall which have been firmly dated within this period, such as the Ditchfield's Bakery, Ablewell Street, and 65-67 Ablewell Street. The late 18th/early 19th century was a period of significant growth in the size of Walsall, with several developments taking place adjacent to the town centre and the arrival of the canal in 1799. The classical style of the building would have matched several others in this part of Park Street which were built in the Georgian period (Section 5.3, below). The overall plan of the row is also typical of the urban vernacular architecture of this period, which was characterised by long, thin, buildings commonly arranged in horizontal groups or rows. Similarly, the provision of a passageway to other backplot buildings was a common Late Georgian feature. Court housing became associated with insanitary working-class accommodation in 19th century towns. The similarity of the rear elevation of Structures C/F and back-to-backs demolished in Thomas Street, Birmingham about 1882 is striking (plate 12). Although Structure C/F was not built as a back-to-back, it is possible this was a fairly commonplace regional design. Unfortunately, the extensive alterations to the ground floors of Structures C/F means that we cannot be certain if the row was occupied by shops from the outset, or if these were the result of later Victorian changes. These alterations were to expand the available ground floor retail space. In each building the central staircase was removed from the ground floor, and a new staircase fitted, which ran from the back of the building up the party wall. The abandonment of the upper storeys as living accommodation was a relatively recent phenomenon.

Structure G: The Red Lion, Park Street (plate 13)

Type Late Victorian brick public house

Introduction The Red Lion is a typically eclectic design of this period. Although modern alterations to the ground floor have detracted from the original design, this building was retained.

Survey description (from the listing report) Dated 1896, brick with stone and stucco dressings. Three storey building, incorporating three bays between octagonal pilasters on upper floors. Modern ground floor has two tripartite windows with central door decorated with pilasters, panels, and heavy brackets to dentil cornice. First floor windows with transom and mullion in moulded eaved surrounds, a moulded string course with ogee device in stucco. Moulded frieze and cornice with diminutive scroll pediment at centre. Upper windows as below, but with cambered arches. There is a frieze with floral device and dentil cornice below pierced parapet. Central bay raised with flanking volutes on parapet, name plaque, shaped gable and surmounting lion couchant. Ball finials to central pilasters, female figures in classical dress to end pilasters.

Building history The construction of the Red Lion in 1896 places it firmly within the context of the late Victorian improvements to Town End. The pub was ideally placed to tempt the theatre trade from the recently constructed Grand Theatre on the corner of Park Street and Station Street. The building replaced an earlier, and smaller, Red Lion on the same site depicted on the Ordnance Survey map of 1886.

Structure H: 71, Park Street

Type Post-war concrete framed commercial premises

Discussion Structure H was a three storey building with a large rear annexe which occupied the whole of the building plot. The shop was constructed in the late 1960s/early 1970s and replaced a smaller two-storey brick-built building with a prominent parapet and saddleback roof, stylistically comparable with other late-18th century building stock in Walsall (plate 15). The map accompanying the Artisans and Labourers Act Improvement of Town End of c.1880 is the earliest map on which the footprint of this building can be confidently identified showing a side alley to several structures in the backyard of the property, although this property was not demolished as part of that redevelopment.

Structure I: 73-79, Park Street (figure 12 and plate 14)

Type Late Victorian commercial/residential premises

Introduction Structure I comprised a large late-Victorian four-storey commercial premises, situated on the corner of Park Street and Marsh Street.

Survey description Constructed in good quality, finely pointed, Flemish bonded red brick, there were four main bays along the commercially important Park Street frontage and a curved bay topped by a turret on the junction with Marsh Street. Each bay was defined by projecting pillars and string-courses, which were also in brick. Modern shop fronts had been inserted along the rest of the ground floor. The first floor windows of the main bays of the building (along Park Street round the corner of the building and including the first bay of the Marsh Street frontage) had alternating triangular and open-topped plaster pediments, and decorated plaster surrounds. The second-floor windows in Park Street and along most of the Marsh Street frontage were muted in comparison, with flat-heads and apron detailing in brick only. In addition to the corner turret, the third storey attic rooms were lit by three dormer windows with decorated triangular window-heads towards Park Street, and two similar dormers above the first two bays fronting onto Marsh Street. All the windows above the ground-floor were original, with two, tall, opening, casements beneath a three-light head. Three smaller bays and a stair-light fronted onto Marsh Street. The only original ground-floor windows were found in the rear-most bay fronting Marsh Street, which had segmented brick arches. The rear elevation of the building was of plain whitewashed brick.

Internally, the ground floor, first floor, and second floor, had been extensively altered. However, the original plan of the cellars (and to a lesser extent the attic) had largely survived (figure 12), revealing the original division of the structure into four separate shops fronting onto Park Street. A line of redundant windows in the back-walls of the cellars of 73-77 Park Street showed that the rear cellars of these properties used to be lit from a sunken backyard which had since been blocked off, these rooms had fireplaces and were clearly once lived in. Access to the shops above would have been gained from the central staircases and W.Cs and coal bunkers were also situated here. There was a shared access to the sunken backyard. The premises on the corner of Park Street and Marsh Street had a completely different design, the rear-most ground floor bay on Marsh Street being used as a living area divided from the shop by the staircase bay. At ground floor level an original kitchen range was still *in situ*. Inspection of the attic accommodation revealed no evidence of heating in this area, therefore it seems likely the attic functioned as a store or work area, rather than accommodation.

Building history Map research established that Structure I was built sometime between 1875 and 1886 as a part of the Artisans and Labourers Dwelling Act improvement of Town End. Set together with other late Victorian buildings, such as the Whitehouse Cox Factory further down Marsh Street, the Marsh Street/Town End streetscape must have presented an air of clean respectability and industry at the turn of the century in stark contrast to the muddle of back-to-back and court housing which was swept away.

Structure J: 1 Marsh Street

Type Late Victorian residential brick building

Description Structure J was a late-Victorian two storey red-brick house with a modern shop front. Extensive alterations had been made to the property, which were probably contemporary with the construction of the modern shop front. However, the original function of the building as a residential house was still apparent. In addition to the ground and first floor accommodation, there was an attic lit by two windows set into the south-facing wall of the property, two cellars and a two storey rear-wing.

Map research indicated that this property was built as part of the late-Victorian improvement of Town End, and it is clearly visible on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886. Prior to the construction of Structure K the house overlooked a yard and smithy. It is probable that the owner of the smithy lived here.

Structure K: 1a, Marsh Street (figure 13a and plate 16)

Type Late Victorian industrial/distribution building

Introduction Structure K was last used as a vets surgery, but inspection indicated that it originally had a industrial/distribution function.

Survey description Ignoring the later alterations, the original structure consisted of a brick built central, double-bayed, two storey block with a hipped roof, and two adjoining single storey saddleback roofed wings. The north wing consisted of two bays with a central access between them. The south wing was only one bay in length, settlement of the end wall, coupled with the resulting lack of symmetry to the main elevation, indicated that the rest of the wing had probably been demolished.

Each bay was defined by projecting brick 'pillars' and moulded brick stringcourses. The central block had two windows to each bay and floor (the doorway a modern insertion). To the rear of the building three arches belonging to blocked openings in the wall were visible just above the modern roof-line of the extension to the vets surgery (plate 17), these were for cart access into and out of the building.

Further clues to the original distribution/warehouse function of the building were apparent upon internal inspection of the first floor of the central block of the building. Access to the first floor was via a modern trap-door and ladder. However, an earlier, and larger, trap-door was situated beneath a large circular lockable access port, and goods may have been raised or lowered onto carts from these openings. The storage space, which was open to the roof, used to be ventilated from a raised vent in the middle of the roof, which had since been removed. Two iron-stays inserted through the front and rear walls of the building prevented any lateral movement of the roof structure.

In the roof space above the northern wing the remains of a buttressed chimney flue indicated that one of the ground-floor rooms had been heated, and may have been a foreman's office. The chimney stack had been taken down to below the present roof-line, but the original timber former of the buttress was still *in situ*. The brickwork inside the roof space of the southern wing was painted which suggested that it was originally occupied. Inspection of an aerial photograph taken in the 1930s (plate 31) confirmed that this wing had two sets of dormer windows overlooking the yard to the rear.

Building history Documentary and map research established that Structure K post-dated Structure J, and was built sometime between 1886 and 1903. It is possible that the construction of Structure K may be related to the building of the large three-storey tanning factory (whose foundations were discovered in Trench Ib, Ic, and Id), because several of the rear boundaries between 65-79, Park Street in the vicinity of the tannery complex disappeared between the production of the 1st and 2nd editions of the Ordnance Survey mapping in the vicinity of the new factory.

Structure L: behind 61, Park Street (figure 13b)

Type *Urban Vernacular brick backplot building with later industrial function*

Introduction Situated in a backyard behind 61 Park Street, Structure L, whilst outwardly squalid and unpretentious, proved on closer inspection to have one of the most informative structural histories of all the properties investigated (plate 18). At least three phases of building were identified and these provided a bridge in architectural terms between the late-18th/early 19th century slum housing largely cleared away by the Artisan and Labourers Act improvements, and the late-Victorian and early 20th century colonisation of the backplots of the Park Street by industrial workshops and factories.

Survey description Structure L was the rump of a much larger group of buildings depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886. Of this group the building behind 63 Park Street had been recently demolished, and the structure nearest to the back of 61 Park Street had largely fallen down (plate 19).

The remaining building, which was surveyed in detail, proved to be a composite structure incorporating elements from several buildings. The principle build was in machine-cut red brick, with contemporary architectural details picked out in blue engineering brick around windows and doors in the southeast facing elevation. The northeast elevation facing the rear of 61 Park Street contained elements of a much earlier structure, built in smaller, hand-made, red brick (dimensions: 8.75 inches by 2.5 inches by 4 inches) which was similar to the brickwork in the Structures C/F on Park Street. Above the earlier build, a large chimney stack and inglenook for a kitchen range provided some structural stability to this dilapidated end of the building. At the opposite gable end of Structure L a garage door and a first floor window had been inserted through the main building fabric. The back of the structure consisted of the thick section of whitewashed walling three bricks wide up to the joist-level of the first floor. This also included elements of earlier brickwork, the thickness of the wall being accounted for by a later strengthening work. Above ground-floor level a thinner, double-thickness wall continued to the eaves line of the roof. This section of walling was of a very rough build, and was clearly never meant to be seen. Various blocked access-ways to the demolished adjacent structure, and several episodes of patching and repairs were also visible.

Discussion and phasing For clarity the following discussion presents a simplified analysis of the development of the structure (further details may be gleaned from the survey notebook in the overall project archive).

The earliest phase of Structure L was located towards the northeast end of the building. The alignment of this part of Structure L was slightly different to the later main build, being roughly square to the backs of the main range fronting Park Street. The lower brickwork of the kitchen range inglenook incorporated early brickwork; and this, together with the scale of the building, the purpose-built access between 61 and 63 Park Street, and the location of four water pumps on the Ordnance Survey map of 1886, suggests that the original building formed part of the living accommodation of a back-plot court.

The second main phase of build may be linked to the construction of the tannery works behind 63/67 Park Street around the turn of the century. The style is typical of small-scale late-Victorian industrial building in Walsall, with the use of blue engineering brick to define architectural detailing. The building was well-lit, and probably open plan inside, which suggests that it may have been used for office or industrial work, rather than storage.

The final phase identified was when the garage door was inserted into the end gable and other windows and doorways inserted on both the ground and first floors. Significant alterations were also made to the northeast end of the building, including the provision of a new staircase and repairs to the roof. The style of the work indicates it to be post-war in date, and it may be part of a change in use of the structure as a storeroom for the shop on 61 Park Street, which was the last use of the building prior to demolition.

4.3 Area II

Structure M: The Cinema

Introduction The cinema was the most complicated building to survey. With a building this size the main component of the archaeological record of the structure was a detailed photographic record, backed up by documentary research. The original architects plans for the building were located together with a set of notes made by the council building inspector during its construction (WLSC **). Following advice from the Architectural Recording Division of the RCHME, measured survey concentrated on recording the surviving original decor and the later phases of alteration to the building, particularly those associated with the conversion of the cinema into a three-screen complex. Analysis was also made of how the building functioned in terms of audience flow, safety and comfort, and adaption to technological changes within its lifetime.

Early building history The purpose-built cinema opened on 3rd October 1938 with a performance of *A Yank at Oxford* starring Robert Taylor and Vivien Leigh. The cinema replaced the former Her Majesty's Theatre which had been bought by Associated British Cinemas in 1936 and speedily closed and demolished. The new cinema, called The Savoy, was designed by A.B.C.'s principal architect William Glen in the fashionable Art Deco style of the period, and could accommodate 1358 in the stalls and 811 in the circle. It was built by Messrs. Fox and Company of Norton-on-Tees.

Survey description The architectural emphasis of the exterior was on functional simplicity, in complete contrast to the eclectic architectural mix of the earlier theatre (plate 20). The large expanses of exterior brickwork were of English Garden Wall bond; broken horizontally by projecting stringcourses, and vertically by a series of muted buttresses with simple plaster Deco-inspired coping along each side the building. The rear of the building accommodated the ancillary services, including offices and access stairways in turret-like bays. In addition, near the roof-line, a large duct was part of the ventilation system of the building.

The principle elevation, looking down Park Street boasted several classic Art Deco design elements. The centre-piece of the elevation was the five-light projecting semi-circular canopy and foyer. This was the entrance to the 'dream palace', via five pairs of swing doors. Above the canopy, decorative wrought-iron work provided ventilation behind the large projection-room situated above the foyer at the front of the building and overlooking the circle. In addition, two sets of curved iron-framed windows lighted the manager's suite of offices.

The backbone of the building was a massive steel frame which provided strength and fire safety (plate 21). Other modern construction techniques were used throughout the building. The roof was made of asbestos sheets, laid on a cantilevered steel frame for lightness and rigidity; and several of the internal stairs and steps within the auditorium were pre-cast concrete, designed to fit between the steel framing. Even the interior decoration largely consisted of pre-fabricated plasterwork, set onto wire backing for easy installation (plates 22 and 23).

The Interior The interior design of a purpose-built cinema was crucial to its overall function. Much has been written about the social and psychological function of the 'dream palace', and the rich internal decor of the classic 'Thirties cinema clearly functioned on a number of levels. Perhaps amongst the most important functions of the 'dream palace' was to act as a symbol of modernity, coincidentally providing an atmosphere of luxury which reinforced the 'escapist' theme of much of domestic and Hollywood film production at this time. Although, on a more practical level, these cinemas also provided an attractive venue for a night out and a justification of the cost of admission.

Limited soft-stripping in the foyer area and circle discovered most of the original decor was intact, but hidden from view by false ceilings and later casing. The foyer area would have been very impressive, with a terrazzo floor and bronze painted decorated pillars, and a central chandelier. Originally, there were two staircases, one on each side of the foyer giving access to the circle. Against the deep blue decor of the staircase walls there were several Art Deco friezes depicting musical instruments (plate 24). These were picked out in gold paint upon a light beige background, and placed within a white surround with bronze coloured edges. The left-hand side staircase had been blocked off in the 1970s, and the alternating stripes of cream, bronze and gold paint on the walls may have been original (plate 25).

Inside the foyer another set of three swing doors provided access from the foyer to the stalls. A blue and pink colour-scheme continued inside the auditorium, culminating in the spectacular screen and proscenium arch. Although badly mutilated during the alterations to the cinema in the 1970s, the screen edge was richly decorated with motifs of bass and treble clefs picked out in gold.

Within the circle area the original embossed ceiling had been retained within Screen 1 of the three-screen complex. The ceiling was painted a dark maroon, but this may have been redecorated as the ceiling around the original cinema screen was blue. The original side walls of the circle were divided into panels by projecting pillars, picked out in light brown paint against a beige background.

Services and Associated Features Various improvements in behind the scenes technology enabled the creation of the purpose-built cinema. The 'coming of sound' was a major impetus, audience figures soared, and the difficulties of adapting former theatre buildings undoubtedly contributed to their widespread demise. A cinema capable of seating in excess of 2000 people with a continuous daily programme, often beginning with the matinee and ending up to 12 hours later, also required a wide range of services to ensure the safety and comfort of the cinema-goer.

Effective ventilation was required, particularly in the days when smoking was still allowed in cinemas. This was provided in *The Savoy* by two massive extractor fans and several hundred metres of ducting masked by decorative grilles within the auditorium. One fan was connected to a system of ducts located over the suspended ceiling above the circle, while another fan located close to the managers offices, served the stalls underneath. Most of the equipment appeared to be original and can be seen marked on the architects plans of the building.

In addition to good quality air, an effective heating system was also required. In a basement at the rear of the cinema two large oil-fired boilers, one called *Adolf*, were connected to an extensive central heating system. While the oil-fired boilers may have been later replacements possibly of a coal-fired system, the cast-iron radiators inside the cinema were original.

In the event of total power failure an emergency back-up system of lighting was provided by an in-line series of 48 lead/acid batteries located beneath the main Projection Room (plate 26). The electric lights in the Battery Room were sealed inside glass covers to minimise the risk of igniting gases discharged from the batteries (plate 27).

The pit for the cinema organ was located at the front of the stalls underneath the original cinema screen. The organist could proceed unobserved through a system of passages at the rear of the cinema near the Boiler Room, to emerge from the floor at the start of a performance.

Audience Flow and Staff Provision A complex system of routeways enabled the cinema-goer to proceed quickly to their seat at the start a performance. Separate exit-routes eased the changeover between films and were important safety features, these were located around the edges of the auditorium in Spartan passages and flights of stairs which led to the sides and rear of the cinema. With the decline in audience numbers and the provision of better fire-fighting equipment in the post-war period the foyer was altered to serve as both the main entrance and exit point. The stalls were the cheaper seats in the cinema. In comparison with the circle, there was no special foyer area in which to wait and talk, and the provision of toilet facilities was slightly less convenient with access down flights of stairs or along passages. There was also probably some distinction between the seats at the front of the circle, which commanded the best views of the screen and were entered from a large staircase directly off the balcony foyer, and the seats at the very back near the projection box, which had to be climbed to via a long staircase, although there are always people who for various reasons want to sit at the very back of a cinema.

The staff of a 'Thirties cinema was large. Staff rooms were originally divided into male and female rooms, and the managers office - just off the Balcony Foyer in the circle area - had a glass partition for dealing directly with customers requests. The Projection Room staff had their own suite of rooms which were reached by a separate set of stairs with direct access to the outside of the cinema. The separate routeway was probably a deliberate safety feature to reduce the risk from fire from the projectors. The arrangement of the original projection room showed that there were originally three in-line projectors here.

Later Alterations and Recent History The main alterations to the cinema date from the early 1970s when the large single screen auditorium was sub-divided into three separate screens and a nightclub area. The circle area was least affected by the changes becoming the largest screen in the new cinema. A new projection screen was built on an inserted roof which now divided the circle from the stalls. The sides of the circle were then partitioned off with curtains in an effort to restore a sense of balance to the reduced length of the auditorium. A film poster for *Sitting Target* starring Oliver Reed was found in this disused seating area, and may have been one of the last films shown in the original single-screen theatre.

The stalls area was subdivided into two smaller cinemas and a nightclub. This was achieved by turning the front section of stalls into the second screen, using a reduced area of the original screen. The larger rear area of stalls under the circle was split in two, to create a third screen and a nightclub. A centrally placed projection room was also built which served both cinema 2 and cinema 3. The foyer was also reorganised. One of the flights of stairs to the circle and balcony foyer was boxed off, and a large pay box built which also functioned as a shop. Two of the five swinging entrance doors were also blocked off and a false ceiling considerably reduced the height of entrance foyer, masking the decorated friezes and pillars.

During the alterations no attempt was made to protect the original decor, which was either mutilated, or covered up behind false ceilings, curtains and plaster partitions. However, several friezes, together with parts of the screen surround were recovered by the Walsall Museum Service prior to demolition.

4.4 Area III

Structure N, the Canal-Side Warehouse (figure 14)

Type *Urban vernacular industrial/distribution building*

Introduction Due to insanitary conditions inside Structure N it was necessary to limit the scope of the survey of the building for health and safety reasons. The internal record of the building was limited to photographic coverage, but a measured ground-plan and drawings of the principal external elevations at a scale of 1:50 were compiled. Shortly after recording was completed the building was accidentally demolished during remedial work to the adjacent canal.

Survey description The building had a three bay plan, defined by internal party walls which were integral to main build. The eastern bay was two storey, the other bays single storey and open to the roof. The easternmost bay was adapted to provide living accommodation, presumably for the wharf or warehouse keeper. There was a kitchen, pantry, staircase, and two heated rooms on the ground floor, and two above. These domestic features were later, probably Victorian, additions carried out in 3" high machine-cut brick, the upper windows were incongruous, and clearly inserted through the oversailing brick eaves.

The central bay of the building was dominated by two large access doors, situated directly opposite each other. The north door opened directly onto the canal and still retained its sliding door mechanism. Goods were protected from the weather during loading by an overhanging projection of the roof here (plate 28). The south entrance was for loading to and from carts (plate 29). Remains of a raised timber floor sloping down from the cart access to the canal-side opening were still *in situ*. Both the southern door and the sloping floor were clearly later modifications to the building, these changes being intended to ease the loading of cart-borne goods onto, rather than off, the canal boats.

The western bay of the building had largely collapsed. Only the southern-facing elevation survived above ground-floor level. However, the plan of the bay was still discernible as a series of foundations and floor joists. A second large canal-side opening was situated within this bay, although access into the bay from the south was restricted to a normally-sized, now blocked doorway, and a second inserted doorway which provided access from the central bay. The remains of the floor in the westernmost bay were lower than the central bay, and there was ramped access between the two.

The primary build within the principal elevations was in 2.5" high, locally produced, clamped, red brick, typical of late 18th/early 19th century building in Walsall. The bonding was uneven and erratic, often consisting of between three and five stretcher courses between either Flemish-bonded (found mainly in the three-brick-thick sections of walling within the southern elevation), or English-bonded courses, (seen in the canal frontage, and the eastern gable, although this was much disturbed).

There was little trace of any window frames, but they were probably sash-type. Two blocked windows in the southern elevation of the eastern bay had segmented arches constructed from a single course of bricks laid side-on. In the same elevation of the central bay a small semi-circular arched window was blocked in. The windows in the ground floor of the eastern bay had shallower-curved arches constructed with a double row of bricks, the lower course laid side-on and the second course laid normally. The surviving doorway in the western bay of the southern elevation had a similar type of arch. In contrast, all the first floor windows in the east bay had flat heads because of the lack of space underneath the eaves of the roof.

Now open to the rafters the roof was originally covered in slate. A few surviving slates situated on the projection of the roof over the canal were of an extremely large size (c.12 inches wide and 24 inches tall). The internal party walls which divided the building into three bays also acted as trusses for a set of four roughly-adzed purlins arranged in pairs each side of the ridge-piece. The purlins of eastern bay were smaller and roughly nailed into the larger purlins spanning the warehouse. Perhaps the larger purlins supported a heavier large-slatted roof over the warehouse. Further support for the roof projection over the canal was provided by two beams built into each party wall beneath the height of the eaves, and a centrally located king-strut truss built, like the rafters, from sawn timber.

Discussion and phasing The phasing of the structure proposed here is of necessity somewhat tentative because vandalism and neglect had destroyed a great deal of the evidence. However, broadly speaking three main phases of change can be identified.

It is probable that the original phase 1 structure was constructed as a warehouse at about the same time that the canal was built at the end of the 18th century. This is consistent with the type of bricks used in the main build of the building. There are also similarities in the construction of the roof with other buildings of this date examined in Park Street, (e.g. paired roughly-adzed purlins and the use of walls as trusses). The structural relationship between the easternmost accommodation bay and the rest of the structure is open to debate. It can be seen on the aerial photograph taken in the 1930s that this bay was rendered and whitewashed to distinguish it from the rest of the warehouse, and there is some evidence to suggest that it may have been built later. For example the bonding of the east gable wall contained a higher percentage of header-bonded courses than the rest of the structure, also the purlins were smaller and crudely nailed to those of the central bay, while the Tithe Map depicts the building as not extending to the very end of the canal. However, the arguments for the eastern bay being built at the same time as the rest of structure appear stronger. No apparent break could be identified in the build of the north and south walls either side of the party wall between the central and eastern bays, secondly, this party wall was clearly bonded into both outer walls and was built in the same type of brick as the primary build, thirdly, the proportions of the present building broadly conform to those depicted on the Tithe Map which suggests that the end of the canal silted up, and lastly, it is possible that the differences between the builds of the central and eastern bays may be accounted for by later alterations, made when the bay was converted into living accommodation.

The second phase involved the conversion of the eastern bay into living accommodation. The bay was given an axial partition and a double-chimney was constructed to heat the front rooms, with a second chimney for the kitchen and pantry at the rear. A staircase, first floor rooms, and upstairs windows were also inserted. There is no evidence of the provision of heating prior to the phase 2 alterations; therefore, the eastern bay may have been converted from an office or store room. The structural division of the east bay from the rest of the building is clearly shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886, and the construction of the alterations is consistent with a mid-to-late-Victorian date.

The third phase involved the insertion of the large doors and sloping floor inside the central bay. Access to the central bay from the eastern accommodation area was probably blocked up at this time, although this blocking may have been associated with the alterations carried out as part of the phase 2 conversion. Possibly, the changes identified as phases 2 and 3 are roughly contemporary, although on balance it is more likely that the phase 3 work may date from the early part of this century and may indicate a change in the type of goods being processed through the building.

Building history As recently as 1985 Structure N was largely intact despite being disused for a decade, but by the time of the survey in 1995 the building was in a ruinous condition, open to the elements and extensively vandalised. The building was the last survivor of a much larger group of structures clustered around the terminus of the canal arm. The canal wharfs were a vital link in the bulk-distribution system of the town during the 19th and early 20th century. Standing at the end of the canal, Structure N controlled access into and out of the wharf on the southern side of the canal, which was accessible via a small lane listed as the Canal Company's road around 1880. This southern wharf was called the Free Wharf in 1840, but was later known as the Town Wharf, presumably in contrast to the other privately held wharfs. After the Second World War the canal went into terminal decline and in the mid 1970s the warehouse and adjacent coalyard closed.

5 Historical Synthesis

5.1 Introduction

The following section of the report is intended to provide an historical synthesis into which the specific archaeological and architectural evidence discovered by the evaluation may be placed.

While the results of the evaluation have not shed more light on the early development of Walsall (Section 2.3, above); nevertheless, excavation combined with building and historical survey has added a great deal to our understanding of the later history of the development area and the town, particularly from the 16th century onwards.

5.2 Early Post-Medieval Growth (c.1550 - 1799)

The first known map of Walsall by Gregory King whilst schematic depicts Park Street branching into three routes in the vicinity of the development area in 1679 (map 1). One route went to Walsall manor house and Wolverhampton, one to Birchills, and one to Bloxwich and Stafford. Although a few houses are shown beyond Park Street, this junction clearly formed the westernmost boundary of the 17th century town. By inference the end of Park Street was probably also the limit of the medieval planned borough, and therefore provides a firm historical dimension to the division of the overall development area into **Areas I, II and III**. The medieval park situated to the south of Park Street, and from which the *thorofare* derived its name, was disparked between 1541 and 1553 (VCH Staffs xvii, 184). This event probably freed land for development and may have provided a stimulus for growth in this area of Walsall. Documentary sources suggest that many of the buildings shown beyond Park Street in 1679 were probably late 16th and early 17th century encroachments by cottages upon land classified as 'waste' (VCH Staffs xvii, 183; S.R.O. D260/M/F/1/8, 1617). While it is possible that this encroachment may have began earlier than the written sources indicate, the documentation is not at odds with the idea of a period of expansion here in the later 16th century.

This process of encroachment can be followed into the 18th century and is shown in detail by a hand-drawn estate map of the properties of the Countess Dowager of Monrath surveyed in 1762 (map 2). Upwards of 17 cottages are depicted on the south side of 'Town End' - a district first mentioned in 1557 (VCH Staffs xvii, 183). In 1762 a freestanding pocket of buildings stood in the centre of the diverging street pattern. The pattern of this closely packed and somewhat haphazard development resembles another type of encroachment associated with the building of permanent lockable shops to replace market stalls within medieval marketplaces. The commercial potential of the incoming road network at Town End probably also shaped and encouraged the development of a distinctive suburb here, possibly providing important services to the established town. For example animals for market were often penned around the edge of a town and a *Pigfold Square* is shown here on Mason's map of 1824 (map 3), also relatively small-scale craft and industrial activities, including metal-working, and mining for limestone, ironstone, and clay, are known to have taken place in the immediate vicinity from at least the 16th century.

The land to the south of the properties fronting the south side of Park Street formerly covered by the park was divided into several crofts and closes and was probably a mixture of marshy pasture and rough land. At least one ironstone mine was located in the Marsh Street area, producing raw material for the emergent iron industry. The mine was leased from one Brasier between 1577 and 1581 (VCH Staffs, xvii, 190), and was probably one of several in Walsall remarked upon by John Leland when he visited the town around 1540 (VCH Staffs xvii, 190).

5.3 The Canal Age (c.1799 - 1850)

The arrival of the canal at the end of the 18th century connected the town to a nationwide transport system which allowed increased import and export of heavy industrial goods, including locally produced ironstone, limestone and coal. Both the Snape map of 1782, and the Mason map of 1824, chronicle the continued expansion of Walsall beyond the confines of the medieval borough. Marsh Lane on the south side of Park Street/Wolverhampton Street was the first road to develop from a track to marshy pasture near the town brook. After the canal was built it was quickly lined with buildings by 1824. The right-angled bend in the lane followed the parish and borough boundary here as it snaked around the backs of the properties on the south side of Park Street. At least two of the late 18th century buildings towards the west end of Park Street were quality late-Georgian houses of three storeys, including the former Grammar School and Park Hall House built in 1775. In contrast 'Town End Bank' first named on the Mason map of 1824, although no such topographical feature is visible today, was probably a mixture of poorer housing and workshops in the later 18th century and early 19th century. Pearce listed several curb and stirrup makers in the Town End area in his 1813 *History and Directory of Walsall*. Another clue to the social division between Park Street and Town End may be the place-name *Shitters Nick* on the Tithe map of Walsall surveyed around 1840 (WLSC M76), although what this referred to is unclear - was it the gaol mentioned here in 1612? (VCH Staffs xvii, 219).

The Tithe map and apportionment contains further detailed information of ownership, occupancy and land use in **Areas II and III** (map 4). Much of the early 19th century development of Walsall was carried out under the auspices of two men, Lord Bradford, who owned land to the south west of the town and built Bradford Street in 1831, and John Walhouse and his successors the barons Hatherton, who owned land to the north east. Most of **Area III** belonged to Lord Bradford and the construction of the canal may have formed one component of his grand plan to develop the town. In contrast, the majority of the small tenements, shops and workshops in **Area II** were held by a collection of individuals which probably reflects the earlier development of this part of Walsall.

5.4 The Industrial Period (c.1850 - 1950)

The arrival of the railway had a profound impact on the geography of the western side of Walsall. The railway and Station Street were both built in 1849 and several workshops related to the regionally important leatherworking industry dating from this period survive here. To make way for the railway the Georgian Grammar School was demolished together with many poorer houses in The Bury and Idle Alley occupied by gear workers and buckle and chain makers (Lewis and Woods 1987, 56). The commercial centre of the town shifted westwards away from the market under the church towards the railway. In 1855 the new development of Bridge Square, soon simply called The Bridge, was described as '*the centre and most strikingly beautiful portion of the town*' (VCH Staffs xvii, 149), in contrast Town End was described in 1867 as an area of '*smoke and lime-kilns, gasworks and Irish hordes*' (VCH Staffs xvii, 161). Social problems including poverty, disease, slum housing and prostitution characterised Town End, which might be dubbed the Kings Cross of Victorian Walsall.

In *Outcast London*, Gareth Steadman Jones chronicled the gradual ejection of the urban poor from the central parishes of the capital between 1840 and 1880, and many of the conflicting pressures within Victorian society he describes have equal applicability to this part of Walsall, albeit at a slightly later date. Town End was one of the first parts of the town to be subject to slum clearance. After the passing of the Artisans and Labourers Dwelling Act in 1875, the town council approved a plan to clear nearly 9000 square yards of land and displace about 600 people from around Town End Bank at a cost of £17,750 in 1876 (plate 30). The area affected

(map 5) contained 91 houses, five inns, two beer houses, seven retail shops with dwellings and five workshops. Commercial considerations as well as enlightened municipal planning probably lay behind the clearances undertaken by the town council, who Billy Meikle, a contemporary local historian and character dubbed the 'Walsall Vandals' for demolishing the seedier yet treasured parts of his town (Whitehouse n.d.). Land bounded by Wolverhampton Street, Marsh Lane and the canal, roughly equivalent to **Area III**, was also sold by auction in 1876. The particulars of the sale stress the low annual rents charged for the premises reflecting the low status of the area which included the Dun Cow inn, a pawnbrokers, two 'shoppings' or narrow malls in the back-plot of properties fronting Wolverhampton Street, houses, cottages, stables and outbuildings (map 6).

In contravention of the stated intentions of the 1875 Act accommodation for only 342 people was built elsewhere in the town and subsequently let at rents which were too high for those pushed out of the old slum area, but this was common practice. The buildings which replaced the slums were mainly commercial or industrial (map 7). A new street called Marsh Street was driven through the heart of the courts behind Park Street. The fine red-brick Whitehouse Cox factory was built on Marsh Street, as were a row of two storey houses demolished in the 1980s which used to be guest houses for touring actors. Other buildings included a smithy, and a large three-storey tannery behind Park Street which was demolished sometime after the 1960s. An aerial photograph taken in the early 1930s shows the results of the Victorian improvements at the end of Park Street which had created a densely packed but imposing and ordered townscape with tall commercial buildings fronting the street and industrial structures clustered behind (plate 31).

The improvement of Town End in the later 19th century was also reflected in changes in the type of entertainment available here. Given the 'Zola-esque' character of the pre-1875 courts in and around Town End it is not surprising that gin-palaces and beer houses rather than places of 'rational recreation' were a feature of the area before redevelopment. In 1873 Charles Crooke was holding theatrical performances in the Alexandra Concert Hall, his beer and wine shop on the corner of Park Street and Station Street. In 1879 The Alex was performing variety and was later renamed the Gaiety. However, The Gaiety was rebuilt in 1890 to a design by Daniel Arkell of Birmingham seating 1800 which cost around £4000 (plate 32). The new theatre briefly put on repertory and was aptly called the Grand. The ornately fronted Red Lion also dates from this period. By 1899 The Grand had reverted to variety, only to be converted to a cinema by 1931. The Grand burnt down shortly after the purpose-built Savoy Cinema opened at the head of Park Street (VCH Staffs xvii, 250).

The Savoy Cinema was built on the site of the Her Majesty's Theatre which Associated British Cinemas (A.B.C.) purchased in 1936, and promptly demolished. Her Majesty's Theatre was built in 1900 at the top of Park Street, and became the centre-piece of the late-Victorian redevelopment at Town End Bank (map 8). There had been earlier plans for a new town hall on the site which was cleared as part of the Artisans and Labourers Dwelling Act improvements but these had been shelved. The theatre designed by Messrs Owen and Ward of Birmingham and seating 2000 took nearly 4 years to build in an eclectic mix of architectural styles popular at the time (plate 33). By 1933 cinema had overtaken variety in entertainment popularity and Her Majesty's Theatre, like The Grand, showed films almost exclusively (plate 34). However, 'the coming of sound' which revolutionised film exhibition was a death knell for the converted theatres which were replaced almost wholesale by purpose-built auditoria. Simultaneously economies of scale within the industry were pushing out the independent exhibitor, and A.B.C. was one of the major cinema exhibitors in the country. The Savoy Cinema was also a large building capable of seating 1358 in the stalls and 811 in the circle, but unlike the Her Majesty's Theatre its planning and construction took less than 2 years.

The taped reminiscences of Len Wilson, a canal boatman in the 1930s, provide a personal impression of the Town Wharf area before the Second World War (WLSC 162/1/210). He remembered the warehouse (Structure N) was called Clews's Warehouse, and two boats called 'Greddenton' and 'Red Basten' operated from there. Other wharfs included Frank's Wharf, Boot and Lancaster, a coal wharf, and a sand wharf which supplied special red sand to the local iron foundries. There were several furnaces and lime-kilns along the tow-path, which tramps used to sleep in after the firing was over for the warmth. Slag from these furnaces and lime-kilns was also distributed from the wharfs and used as fertilizer in the country. There were also stables near the Town Wharf for the horses which used to pull the boats.

5.5 Post-script

By 1976, which was when the Len Wilson put his memories on tape, the Town Wharf was in decay, although two cranes were reputedly still standing close to the wharf. In 1995, at the time of the present survey, the rotting remains of a canal boat were still visible beneath the murky waters of the canal. However, the canal is to be refurbished and will once again provide a focus for the Town End area as it once did nearly 200 years earlier. From the medieval period onwards this area has been a barometer reflecting the broader economic fortunes of the town. Economic restructuring necessitated by the decline of heavy industry across the region has recast the geography of the West Midlands in general and Walsall in particular. The decline of the railway, and the closure of the canal in the post-war period effectively shifted the focus of the Central Business District of Walsall back eastwards away from this end of Park Street. However, the broad sweep of Park Street has remained eminently suited to shopping, and the commercial and leisure-based redevelopment of the Town Wharf will provide material for another on-going chapter in the history of this part of the town.

6 Conclusions

The results of this recent programme of above and below-ground archaeological research have been able to shed a great deal of light on the post-medieval history of the development area. In particular, the combination of evidence from trial trenching and building survey with relevant cartographic and documentary material has shown how relatively poor results from one area can be compensated by reference to other complimentary sources of evidence. While the results of the below-ground investigations were not as promising as first hoped, the evaluation has been able to demonstrate that the reasons for these large scale disturbances are largely specific to the development area. Therefore, the relative paucity of the below-ground archaeological evidence, relevant to the early development of the Town Wharf, cannot be taken as a broader picture for the rest of the town, and the conclusions of Dr Baker's assessment of the archaeological potential of Walsall still stand.

Indeed the results of the archaeological investigations have shown that above and below-ground evidence in Walsall has a great deal of potential to answer questions concerning the industrialisation of the West Midlands from the later medieval period into the industrial revolution. In addition to the evidence for the industrialisation of the town, the potential of integrated study of above and below-ground evidence for the development of post-medieval working-class and artisan housing is also significant in the town, particularly given the wealth of supporting documentary and cartographic data. Both these subjects have undoubted importance for the social and economic (and popular) history of Walsall and the region as a whole, and it is hoped that this project may have demonstrated some of the potential for, and the importance of, the formulation of archaeological research priorities concerning this subject matter.

7 Acknowledgements

The assistance of Hilary White, the West Midlands Sites and Monuments Officer, and Peter Arnold, the Conservation Officer of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, is gratefully acknowledged. Acknowledgement is also due to the other staff of Walsall M.B.C. who assisted the project from the outset, along with the help of Mr David Gregory of Chartwell Land. Finally, no historical study of Walsall would be complete without acknowledging the help and assistance of the staff of the Walsall Local Studies Centre. The team from BUFAU included Jon Sterenberg, and Edward Newton who assisted in the supervision of the work, and Robert Burrows, Tony Hanna, Derek Moscrop, Marianne Ridgeway and David Tyler. Mark Breedon and Nigel Dodds produced the figures.

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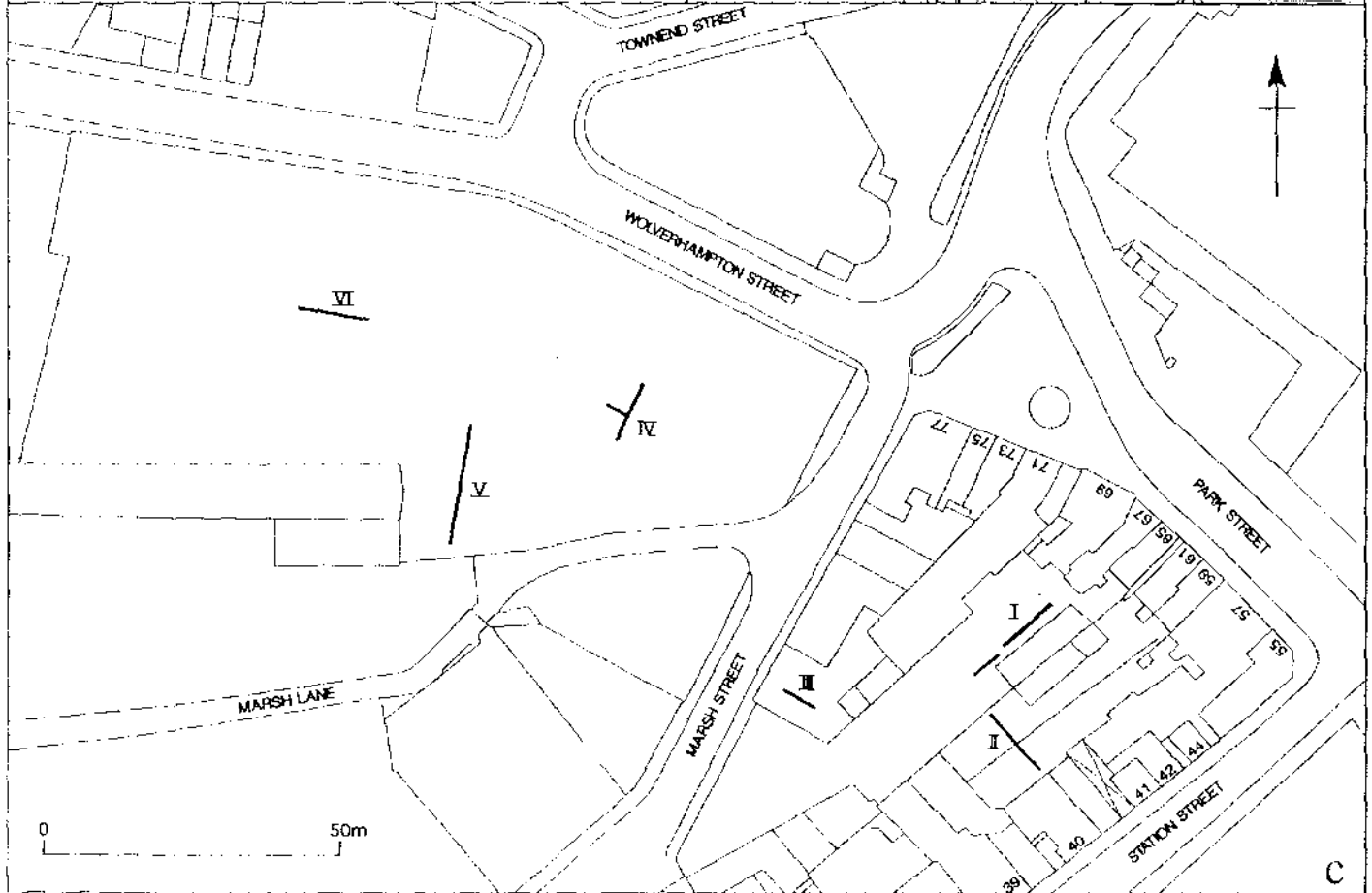
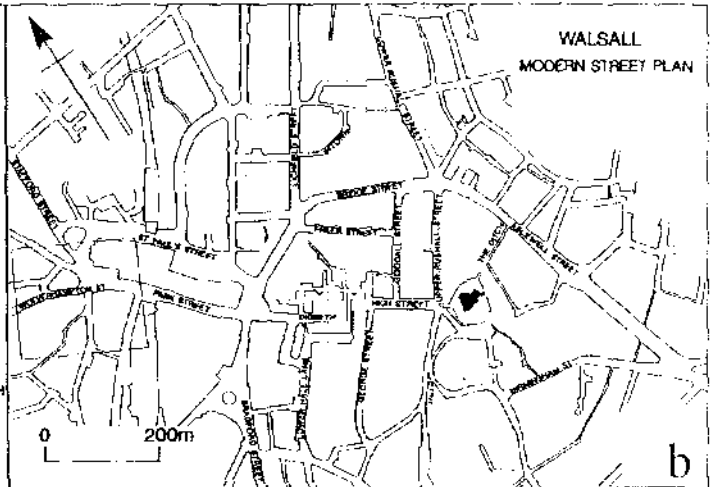
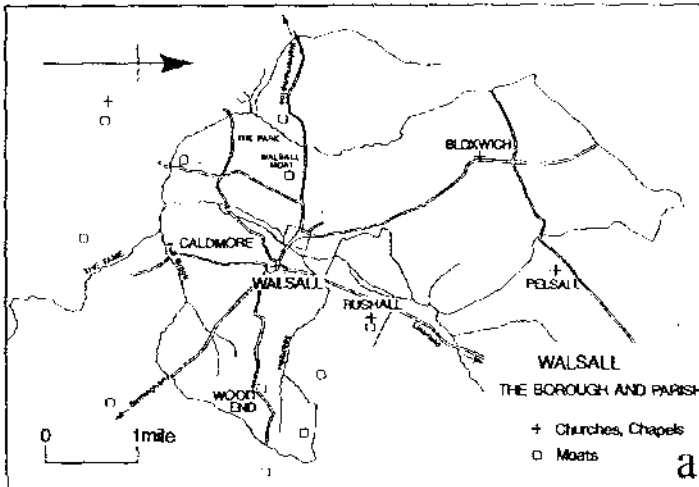
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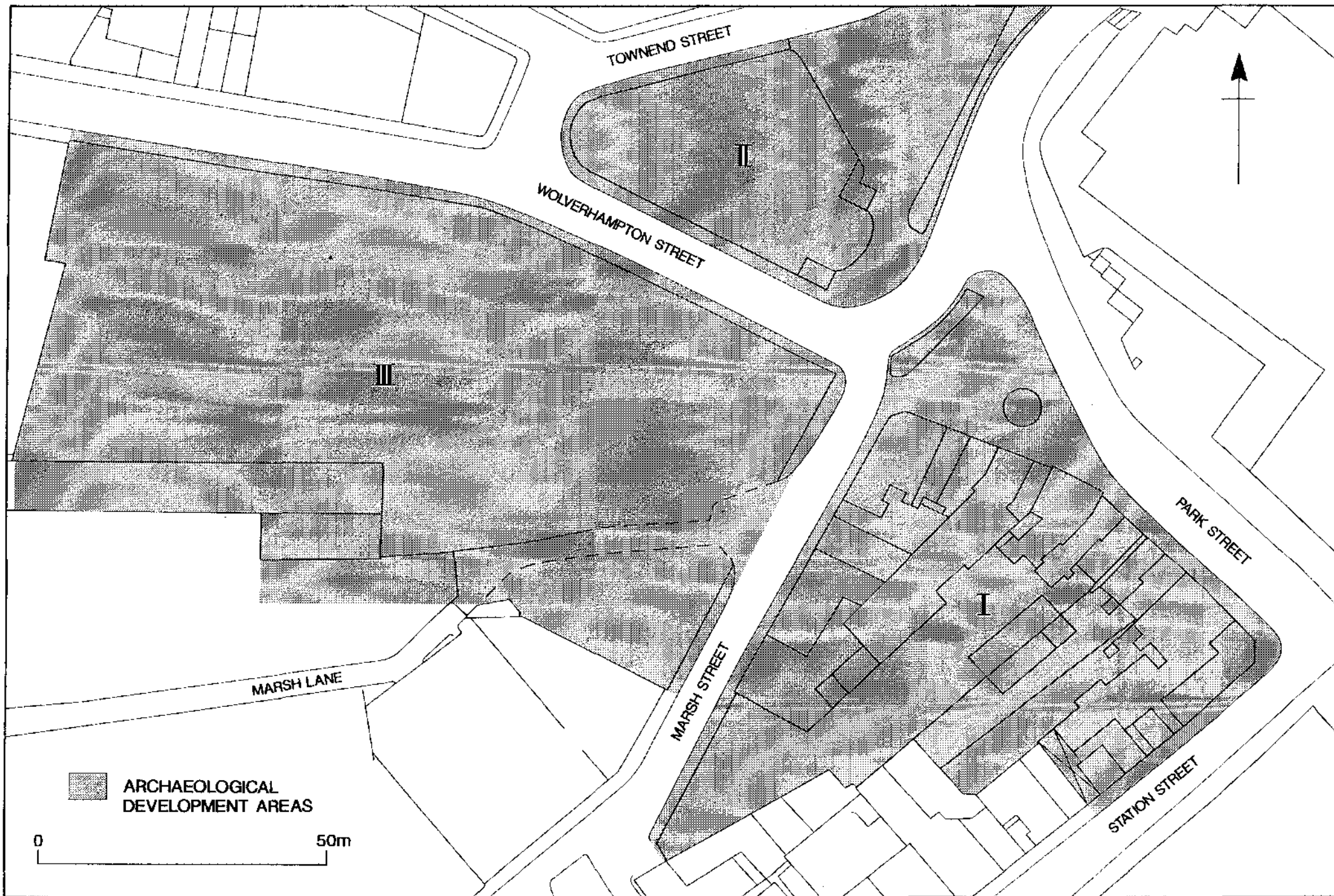


Figure 2

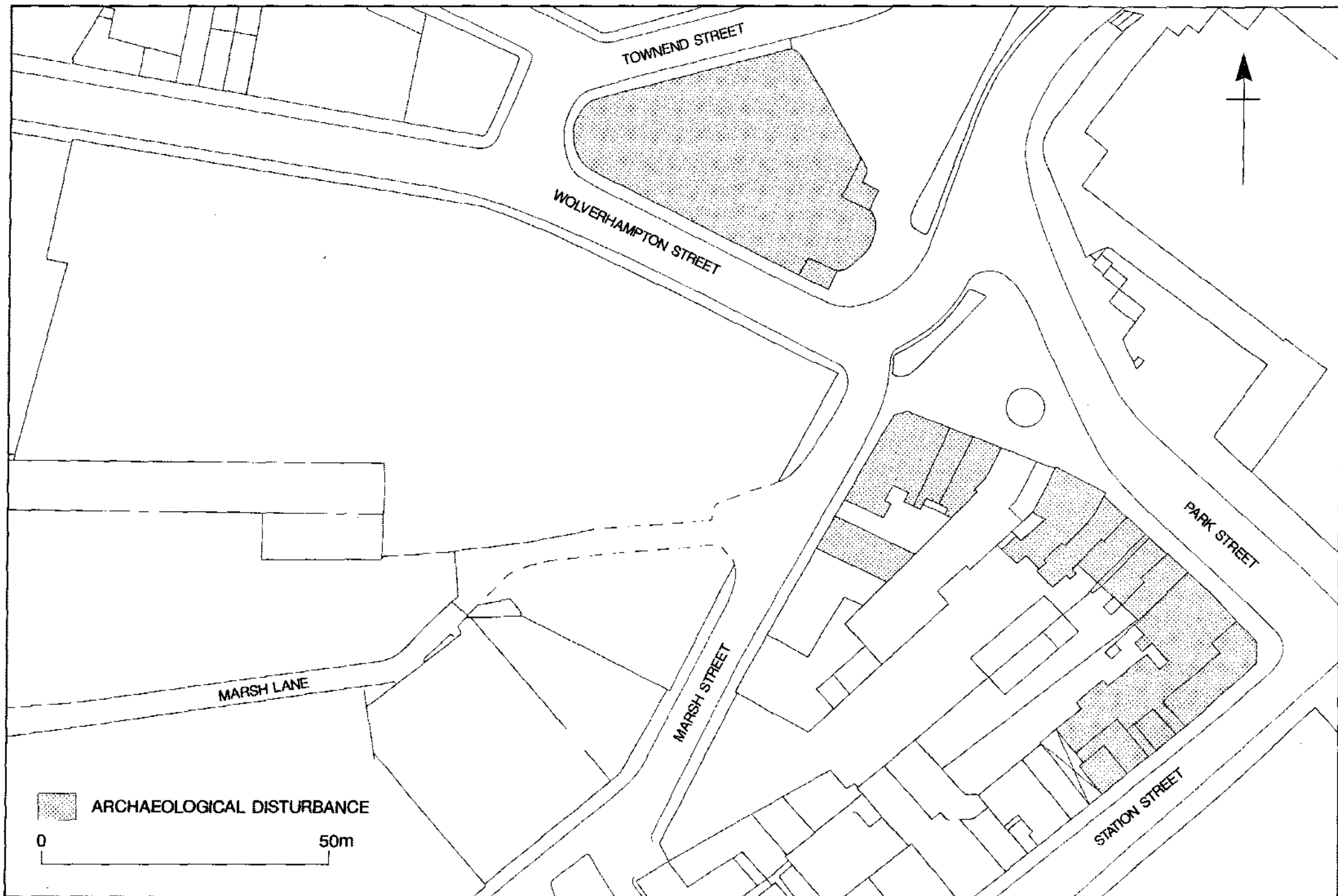


Figure 3

Trench 1a West Facing Section

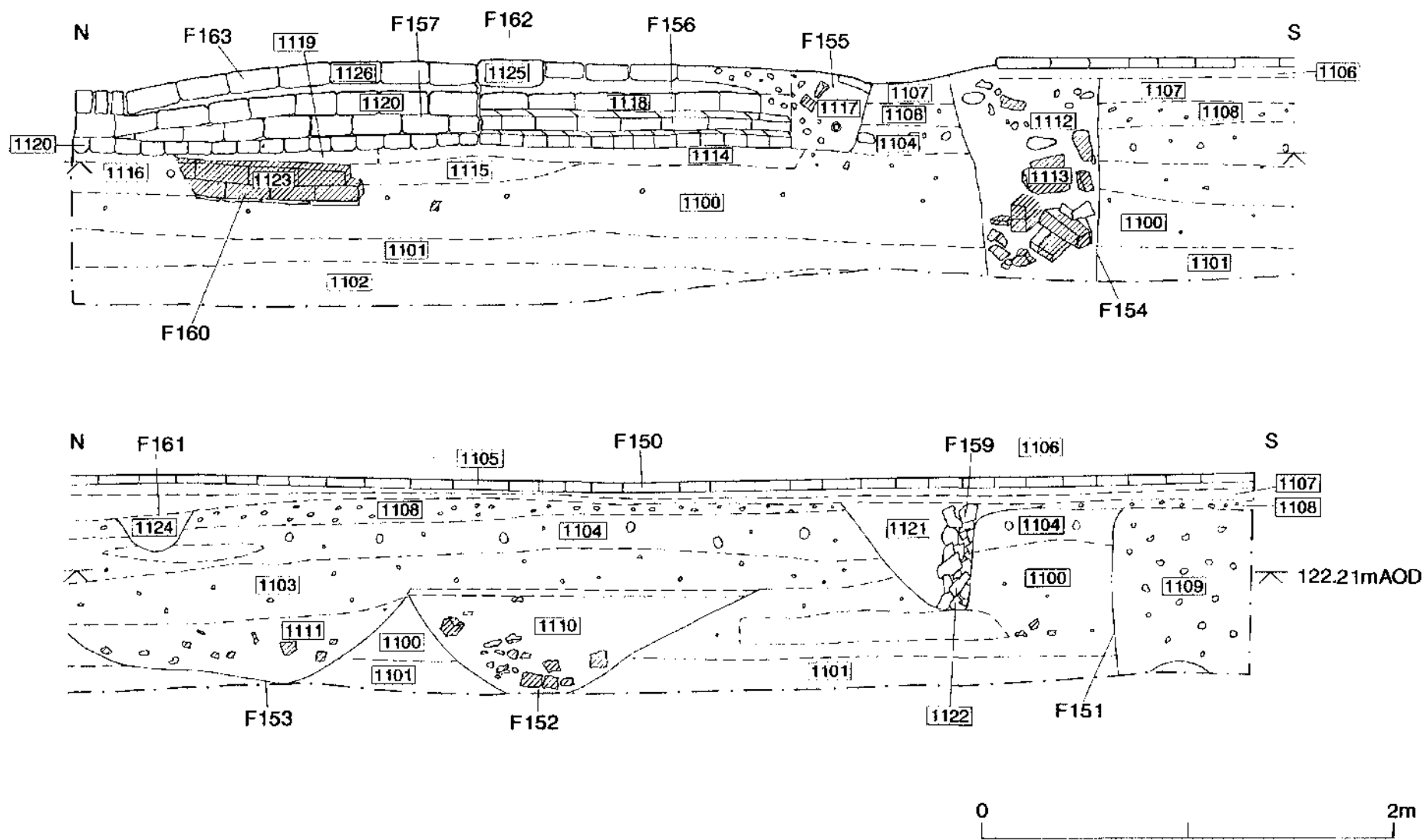


Figure 4

Trench II South Facing Section

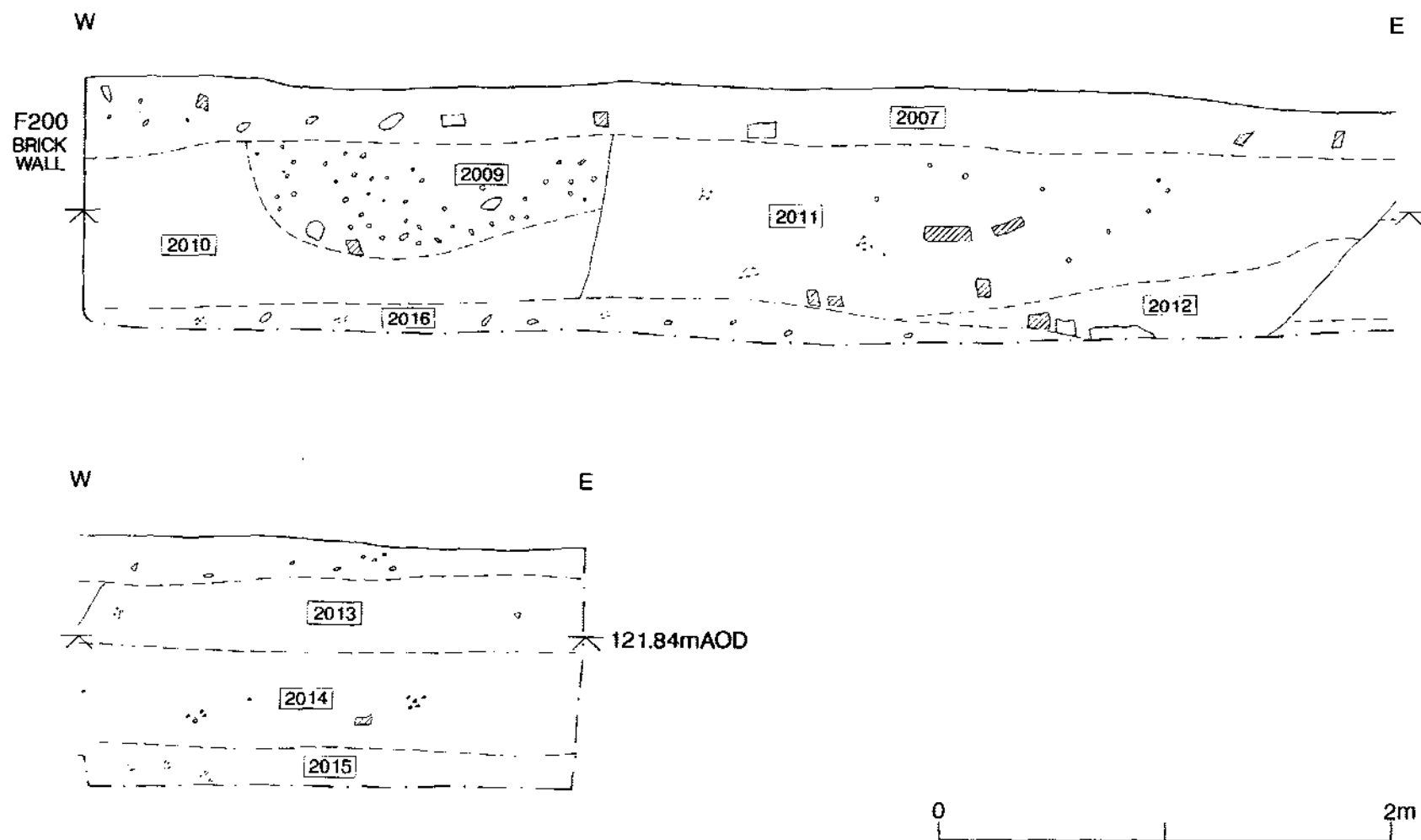


Figure 5

Trench III North Facing Section

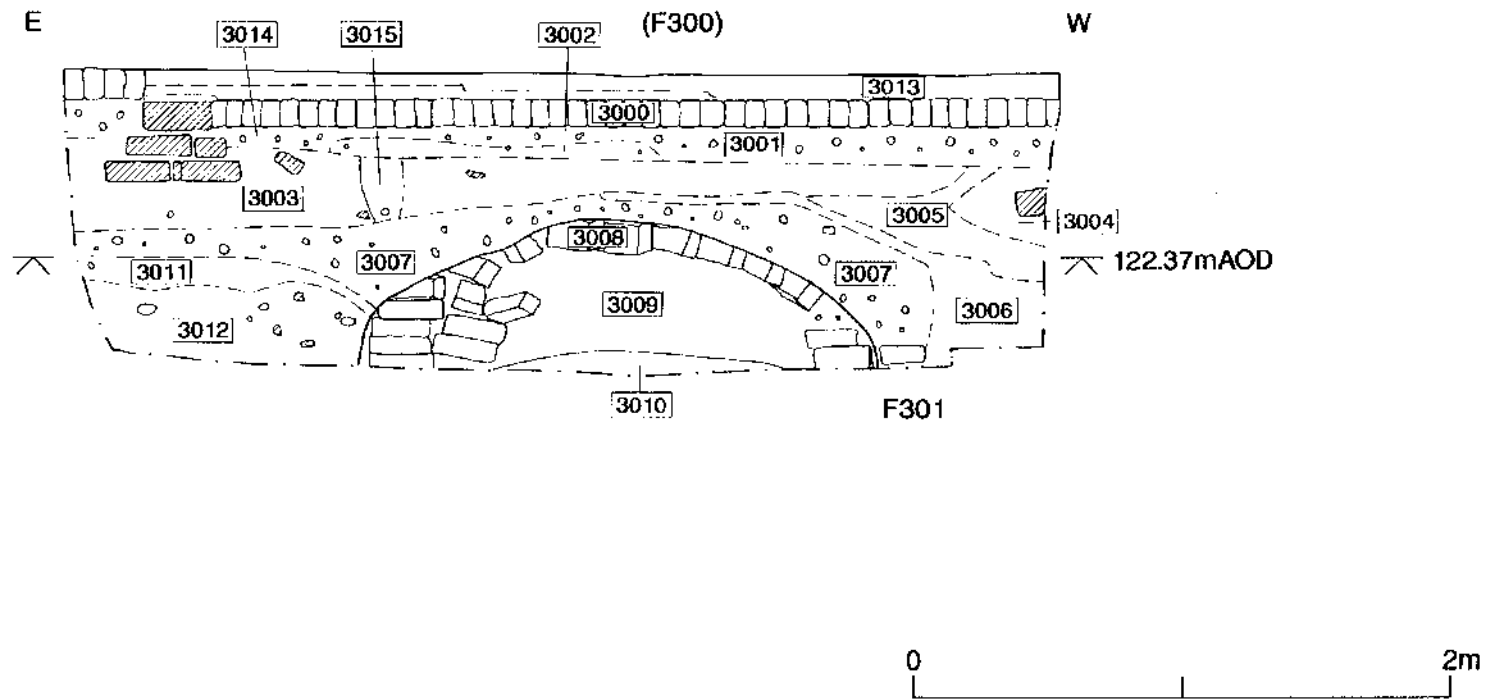


Figure 6

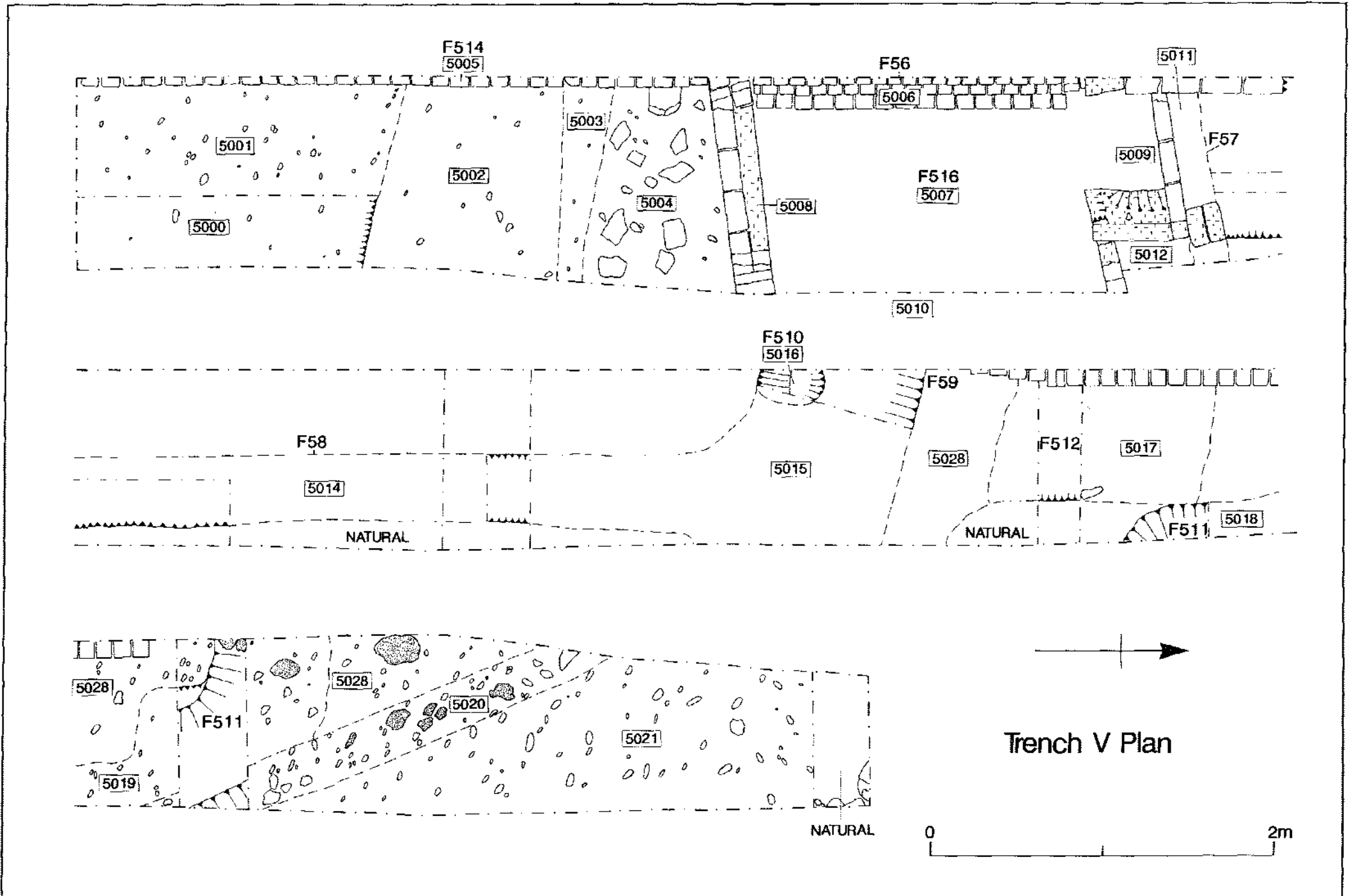


Figure 7

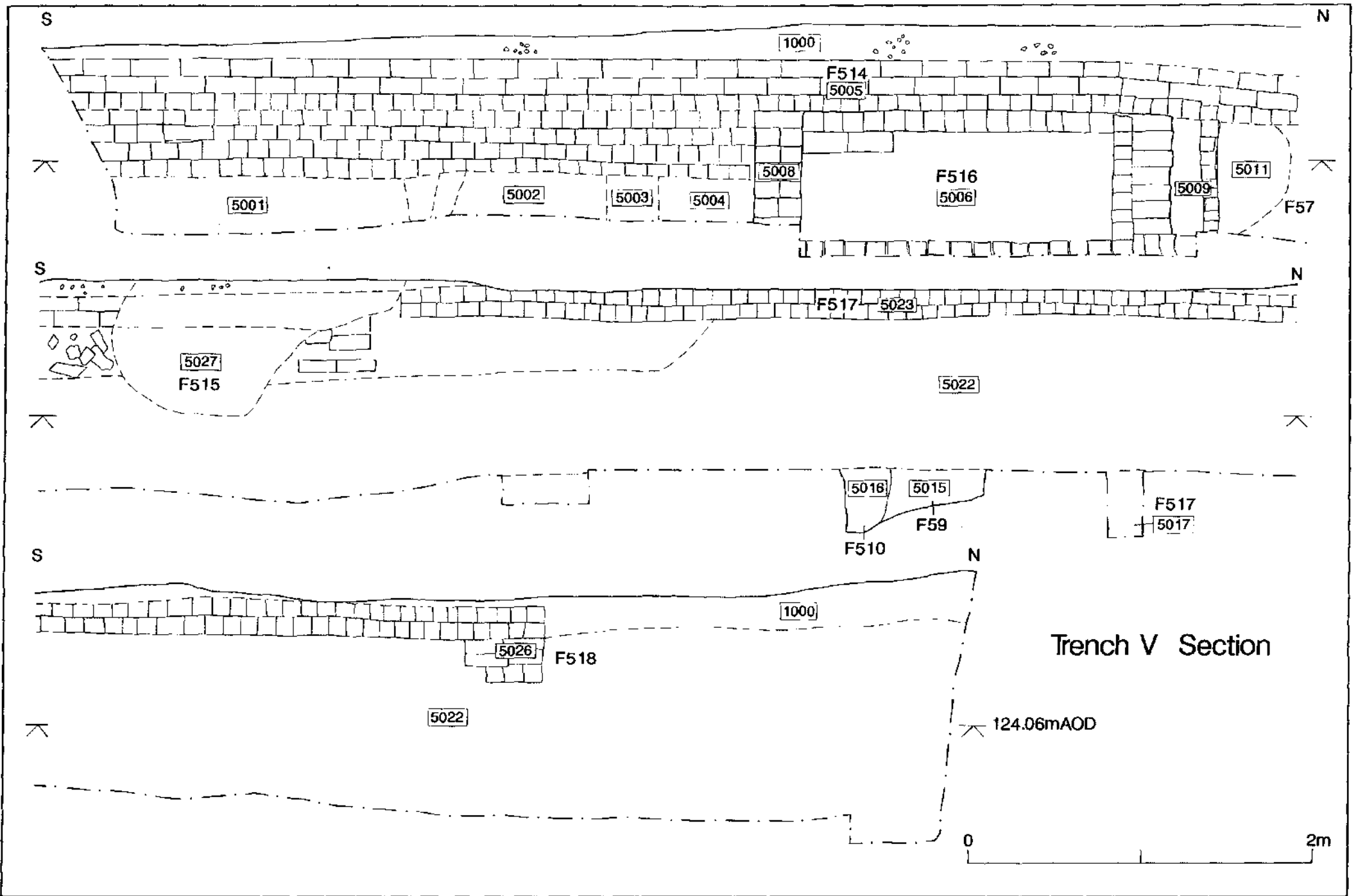


Figure 8

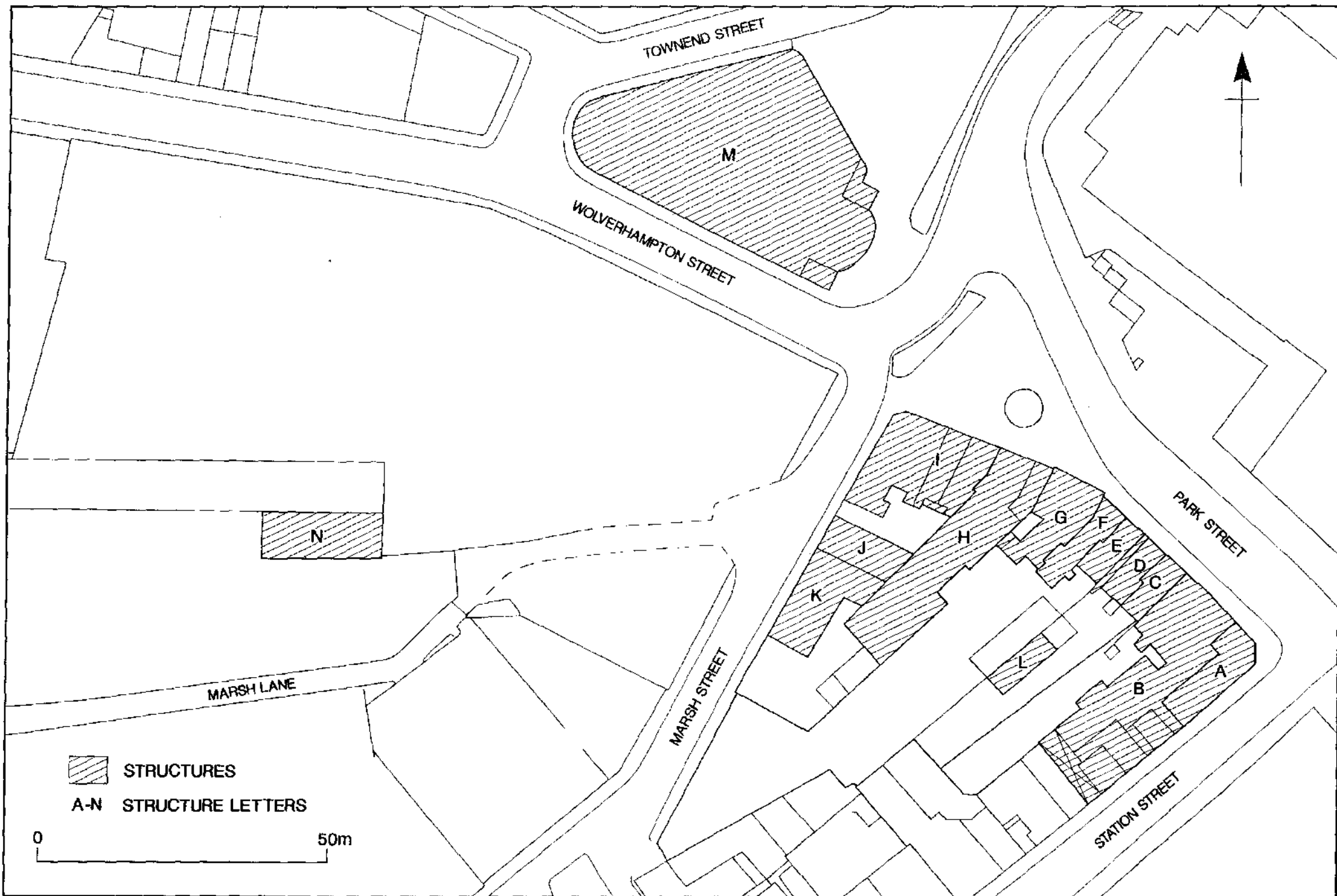


Figure 9

Structures C-F Basement Plan

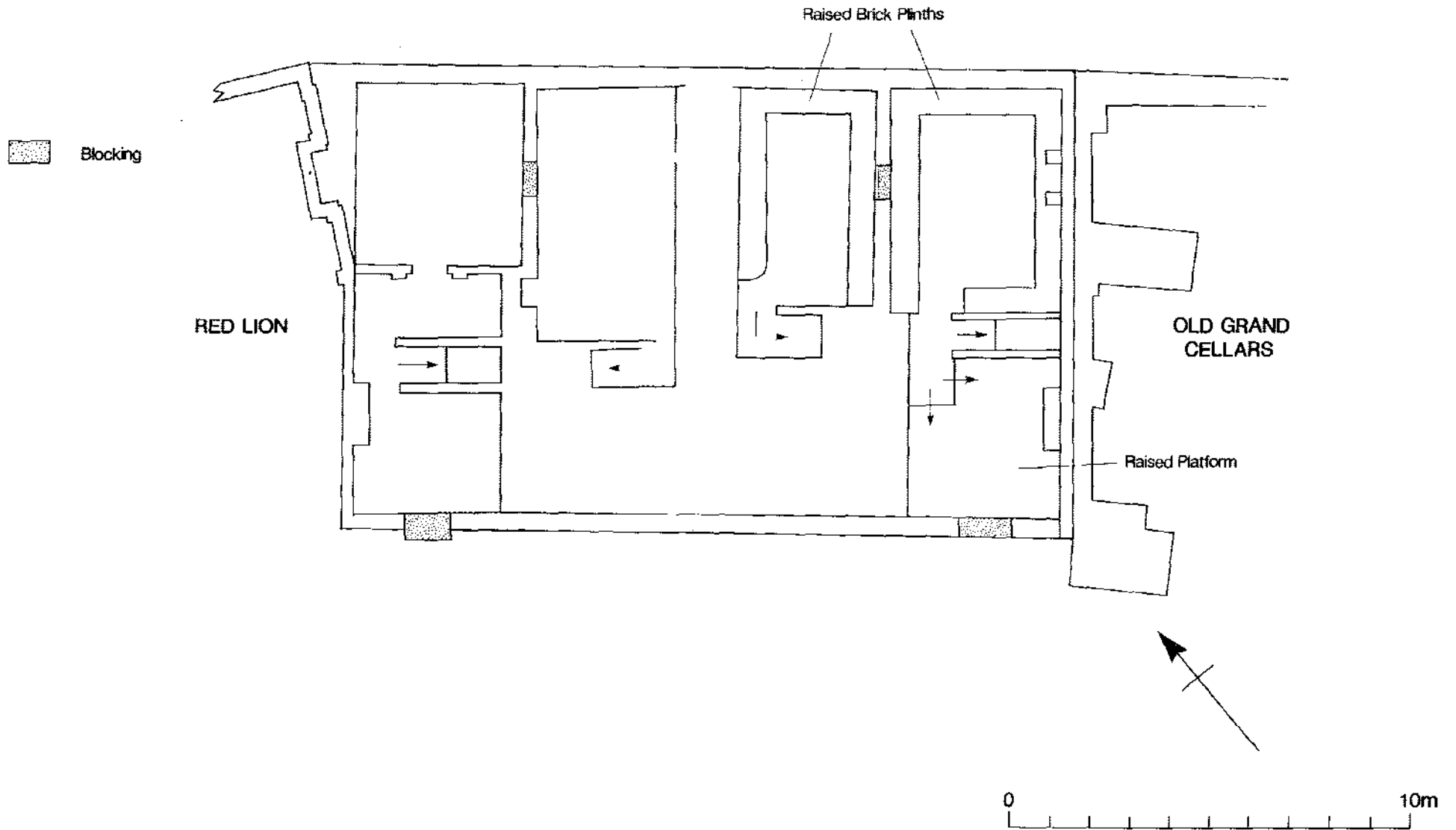
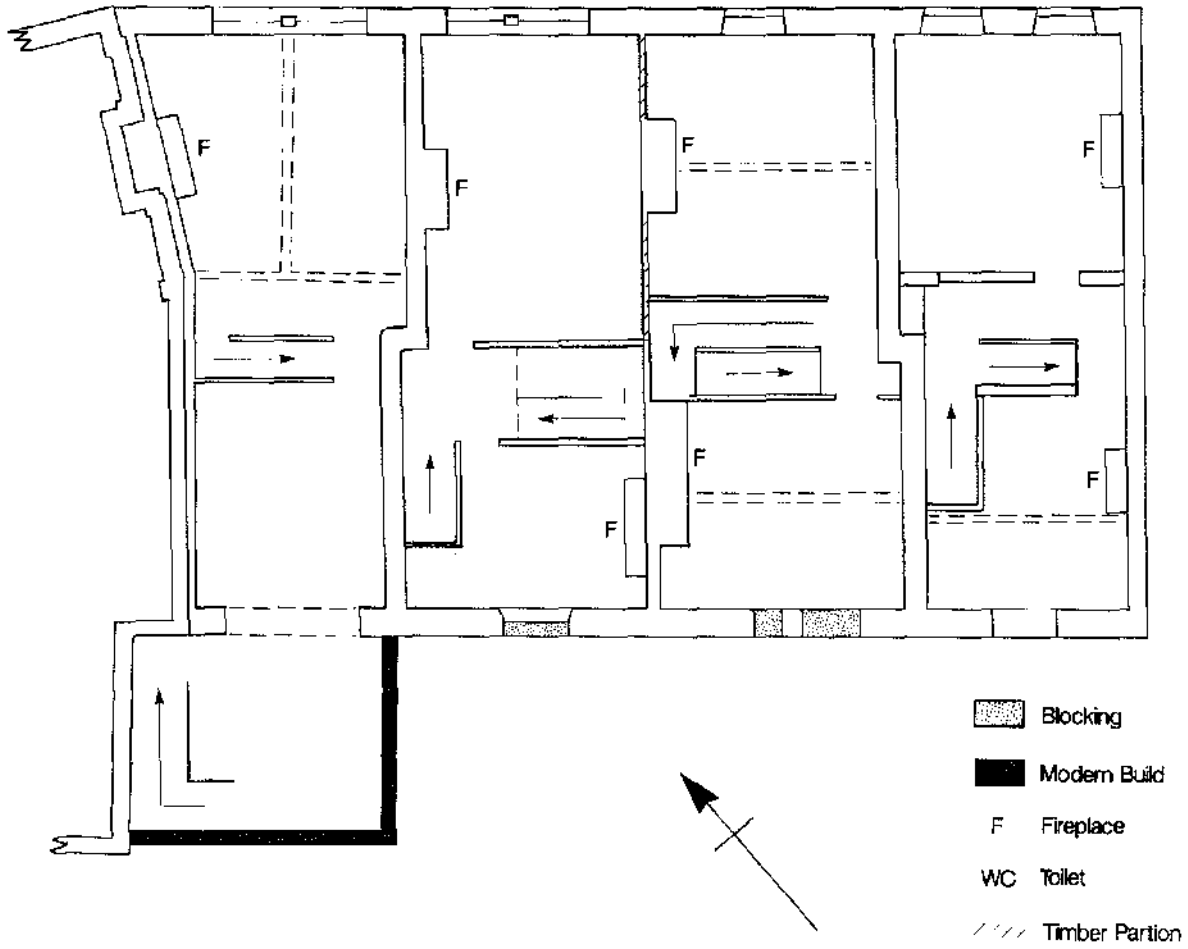


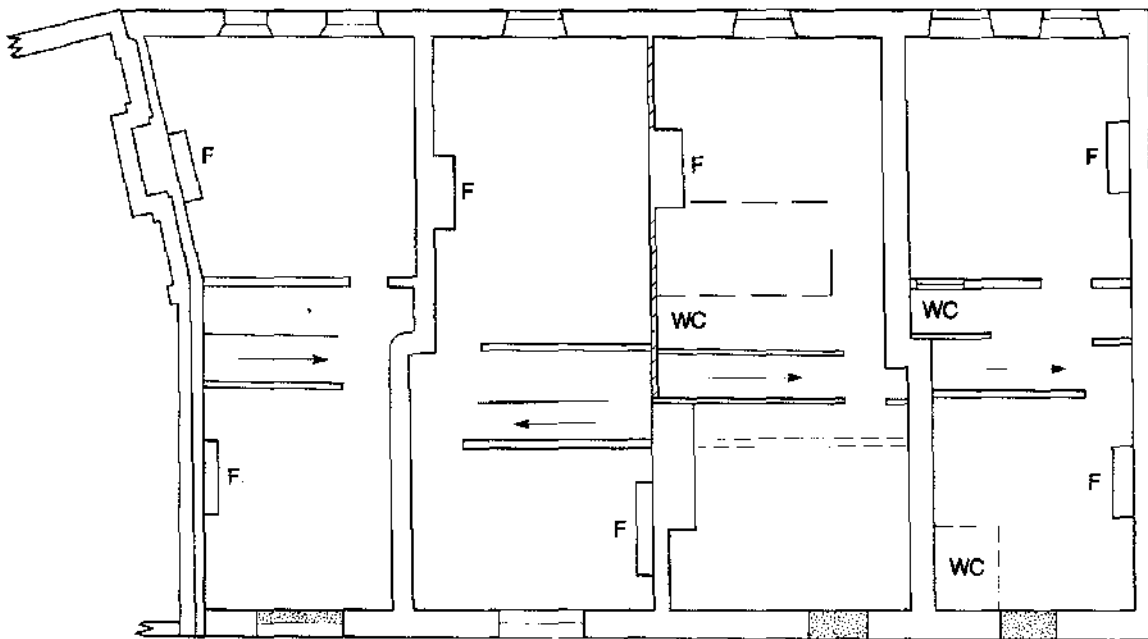
Figure 10

Structures C-F

1st Floor



2nd Floor



0 10m

Figure 11

Structure I

Basement Plan

- Modern Build
- F Fireplace
- WC Toilet

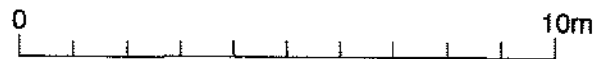
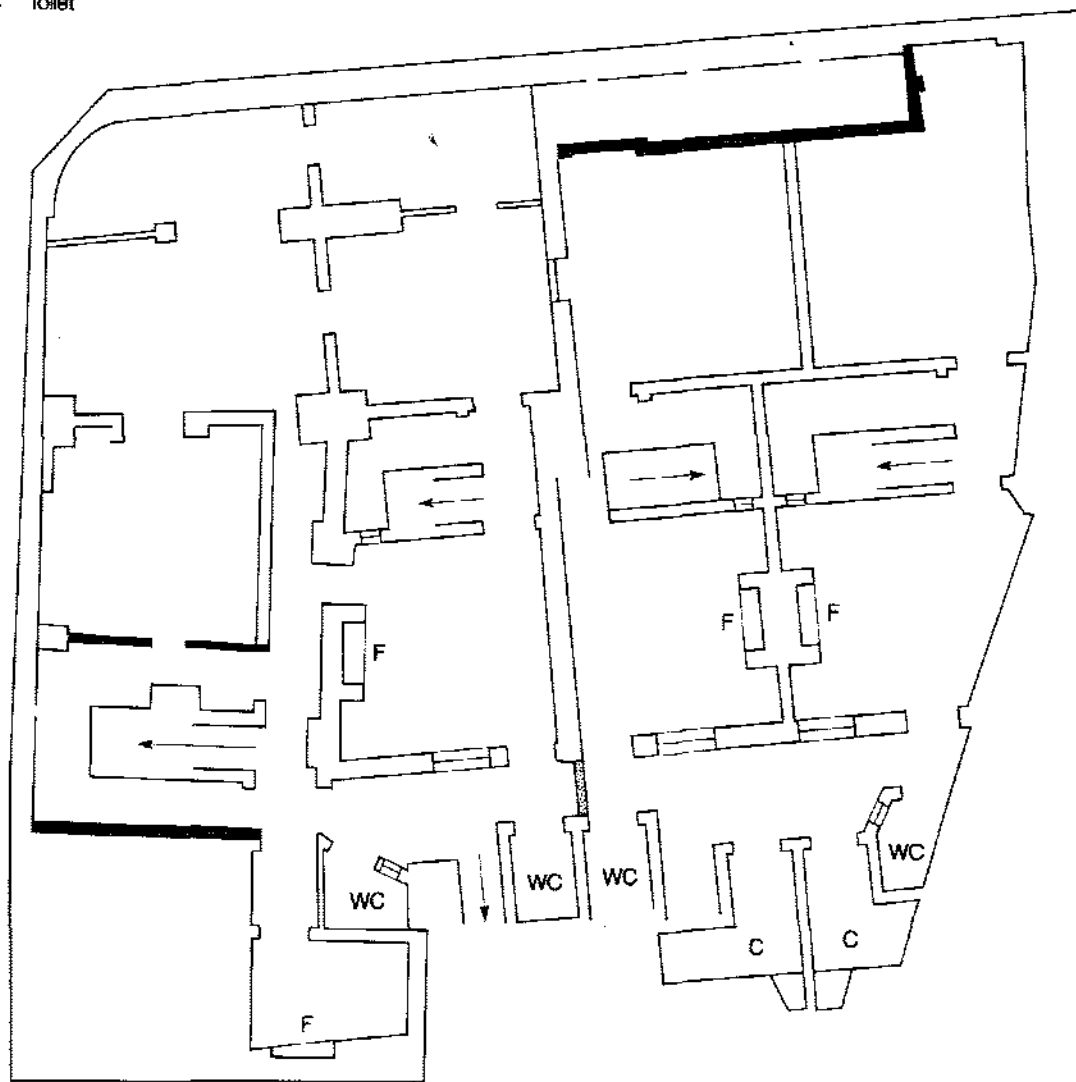
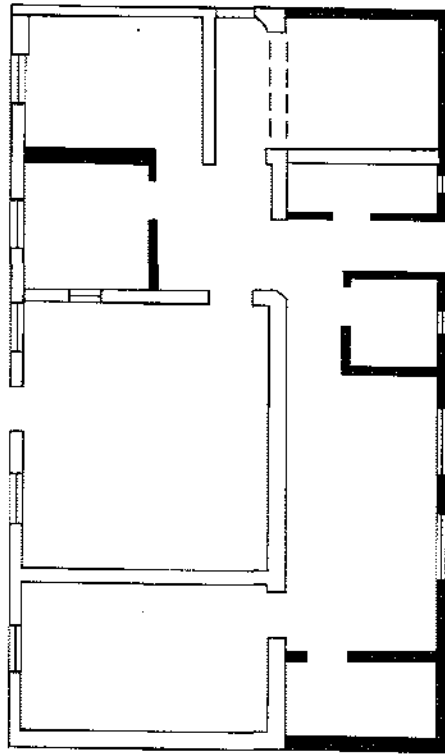
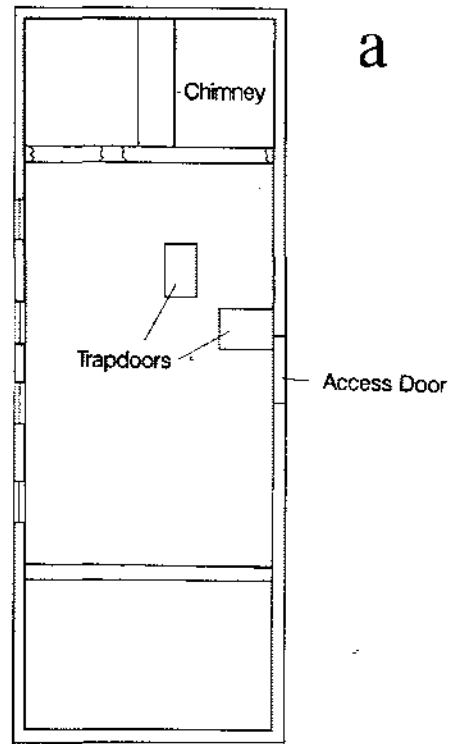


Figure 12

Structure K Ground Floor

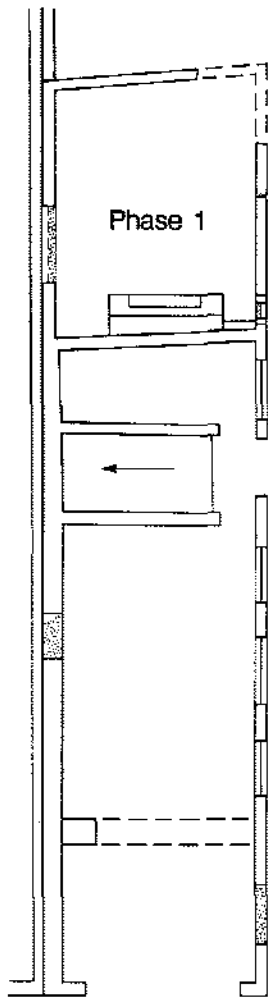


1st Floor

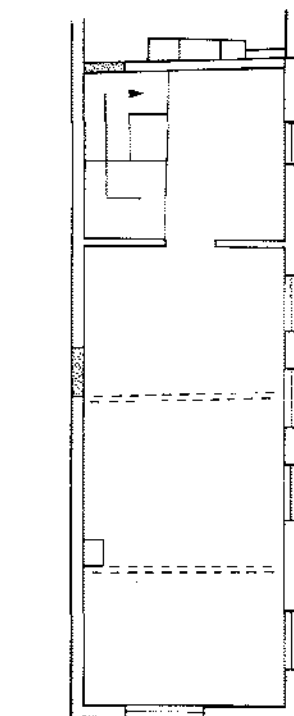


a

Structure L Ground Floor



1st Floor



b



-  Blocking
-  Modern Build



Figure 13

Structure N

Ground Floor Plan

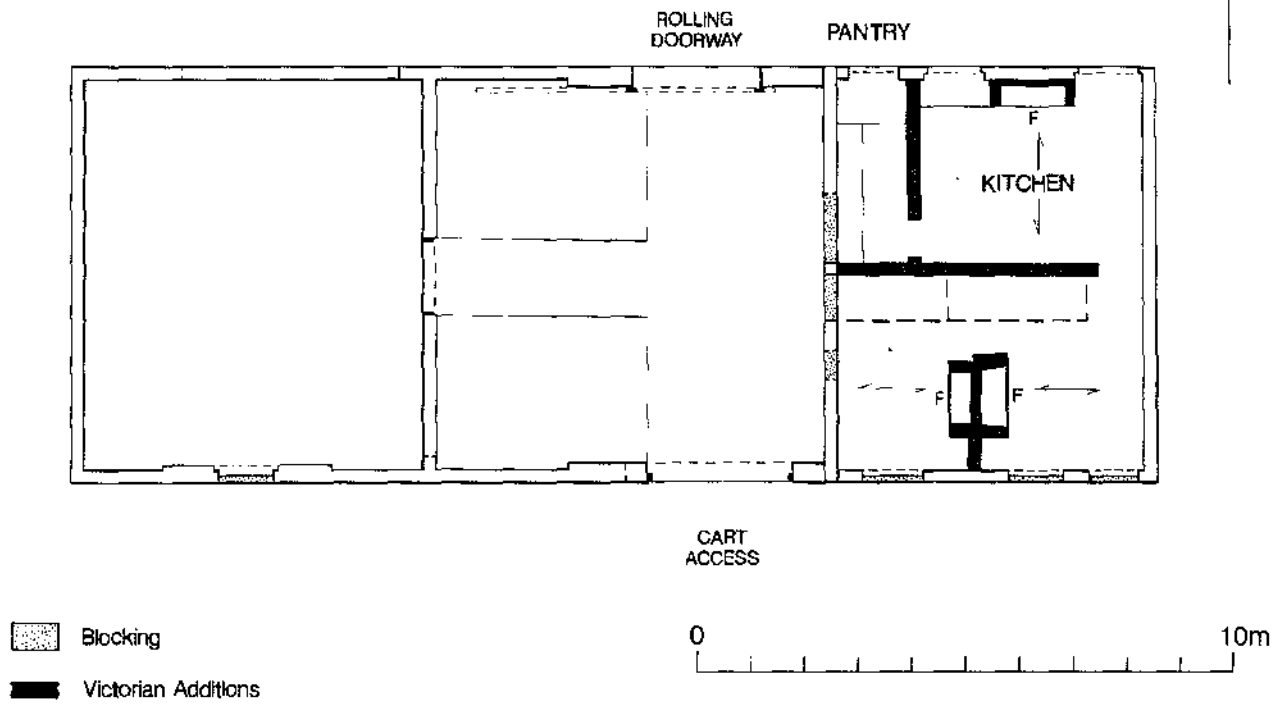


Figure 14

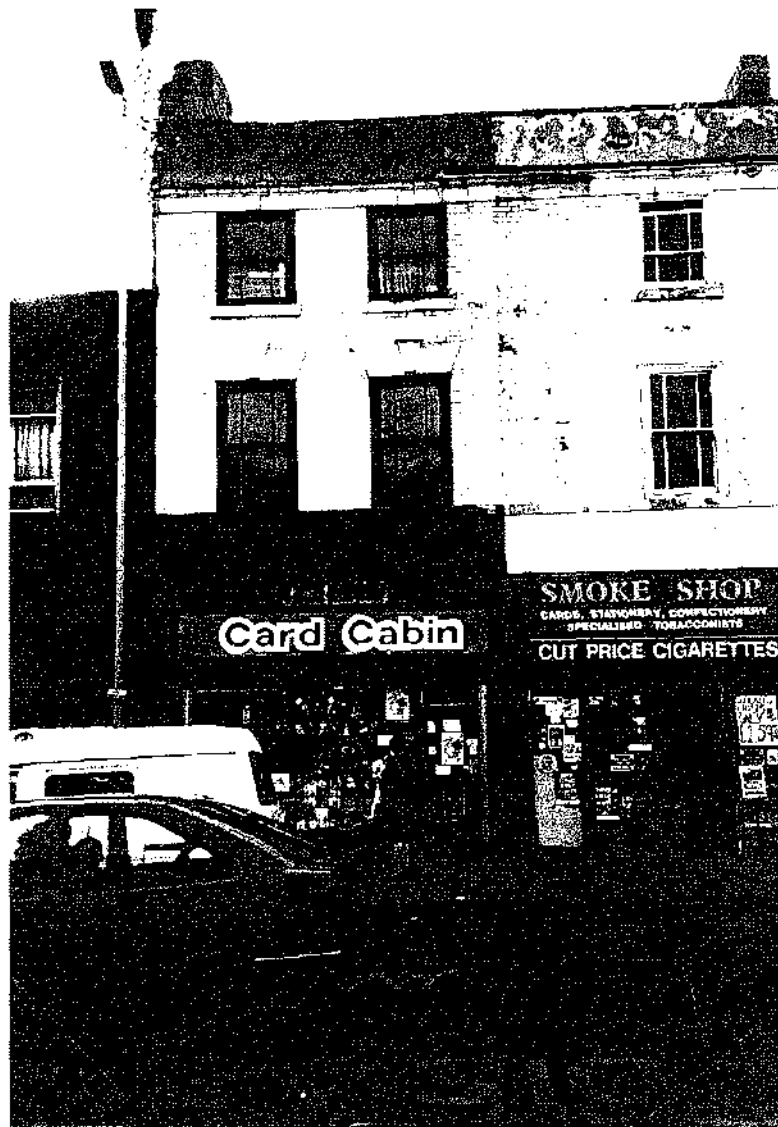


Plate 3 Struc. C & D



Plate 4 Struc. E & F

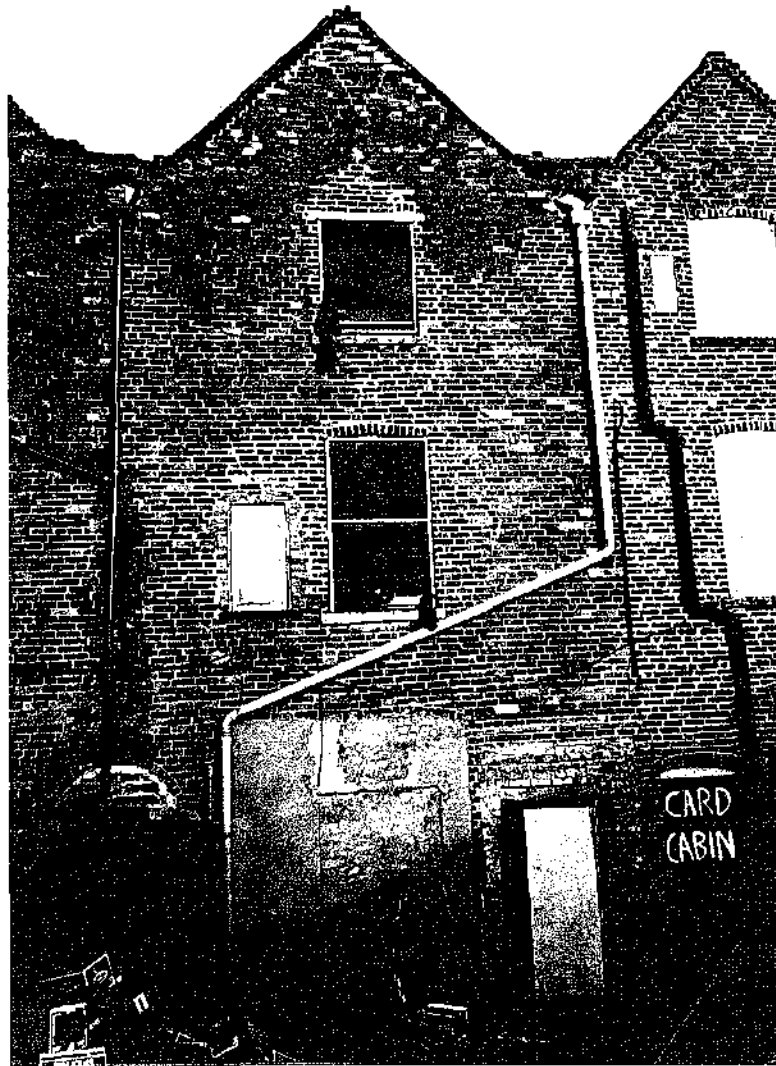


Plate 5 Struc. D

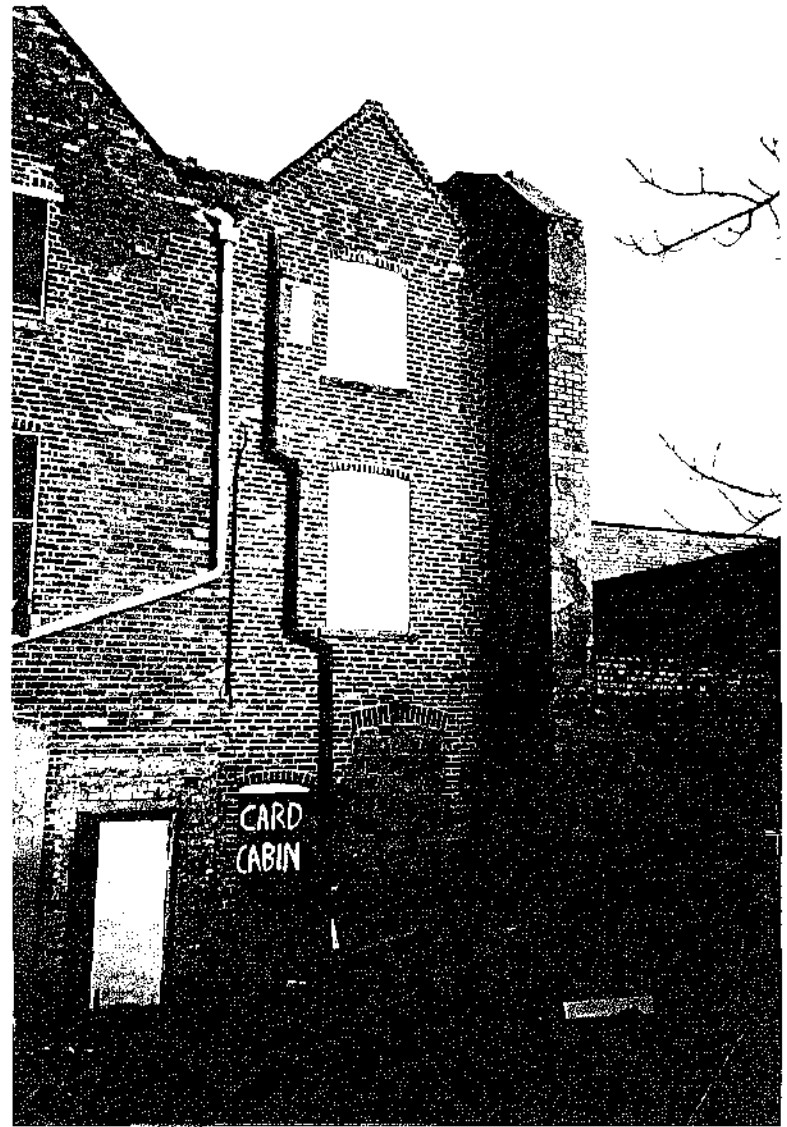


Plate 6 Struc. C



Plate 7 Struc. E



Plate 8 Struc. E



Plate 9 Struc. D

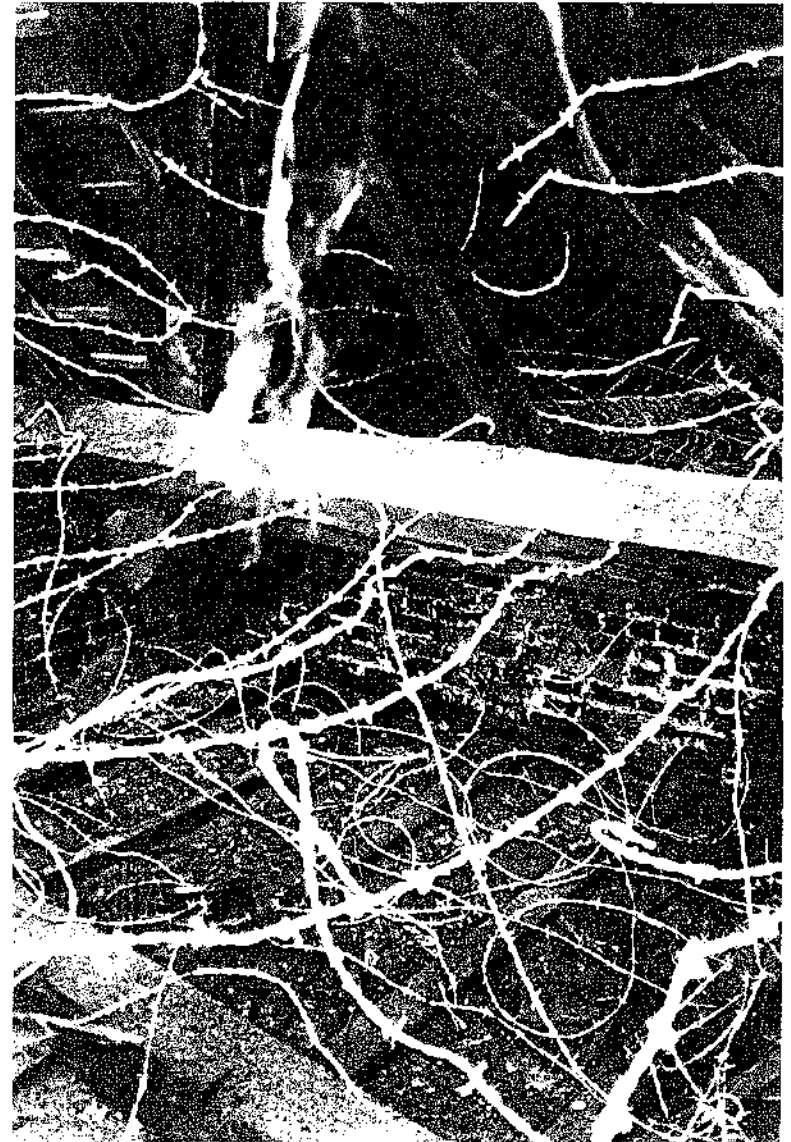


Plate 10 Struc. C

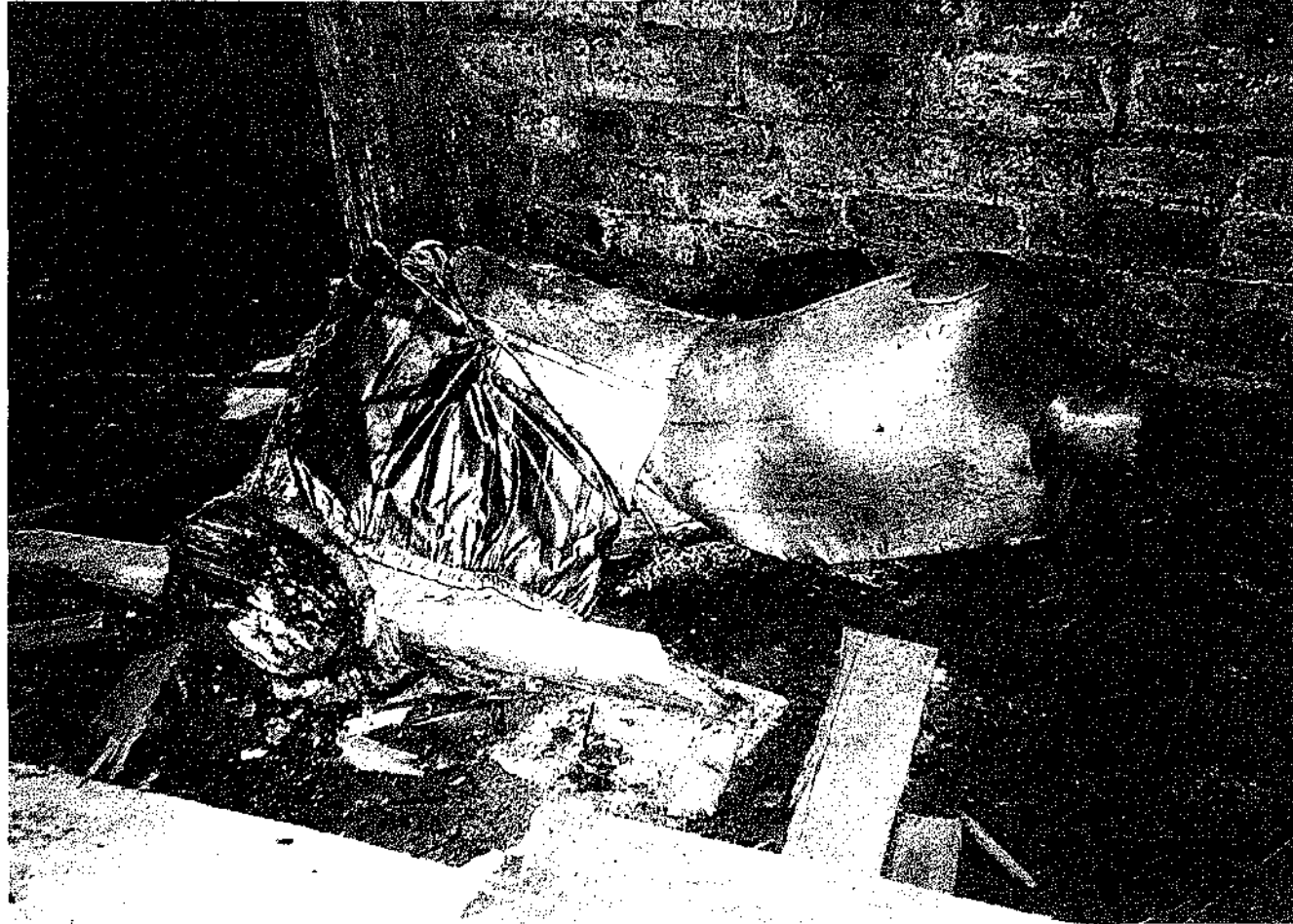


Plate 11 Struc. C



Plate 12 Thomas St.



Plate 13 Struc. G

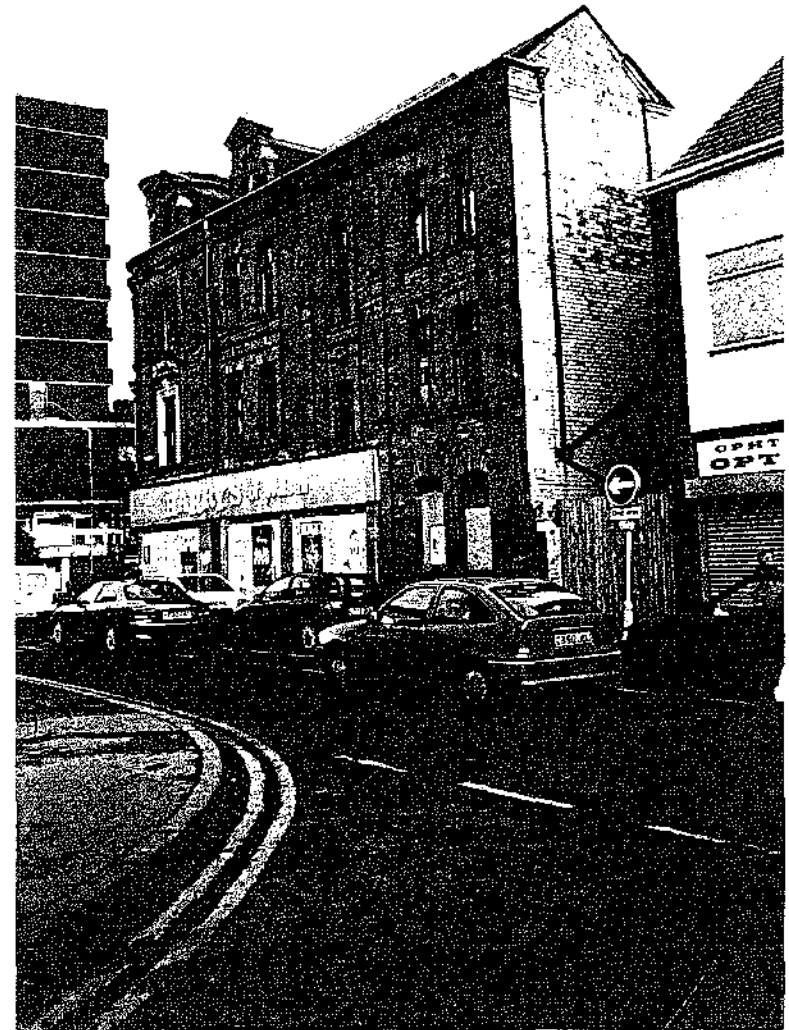


Plate 14 Struc. I



Plate 15 Park St. c. 1950



Plate 16 Struc. K

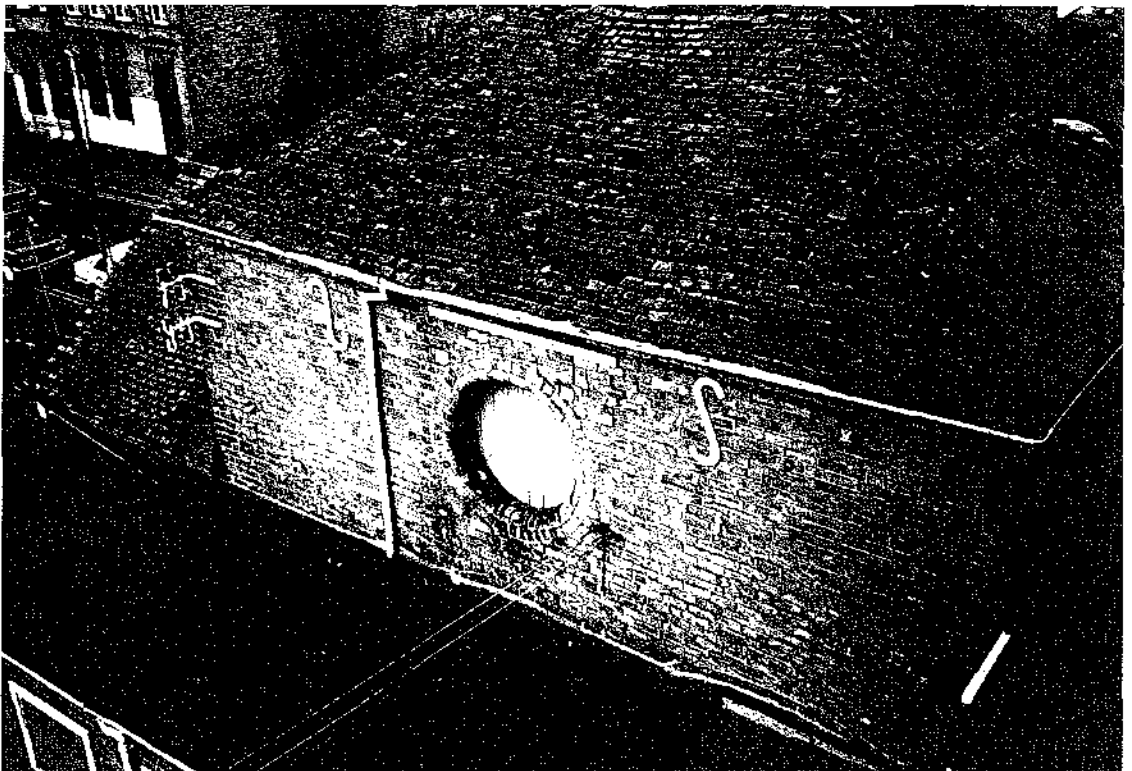


Plate 17 Struc. K



Plate 18 Struc. L



Plate 19 Struc. L



Plate 20 Struc. M

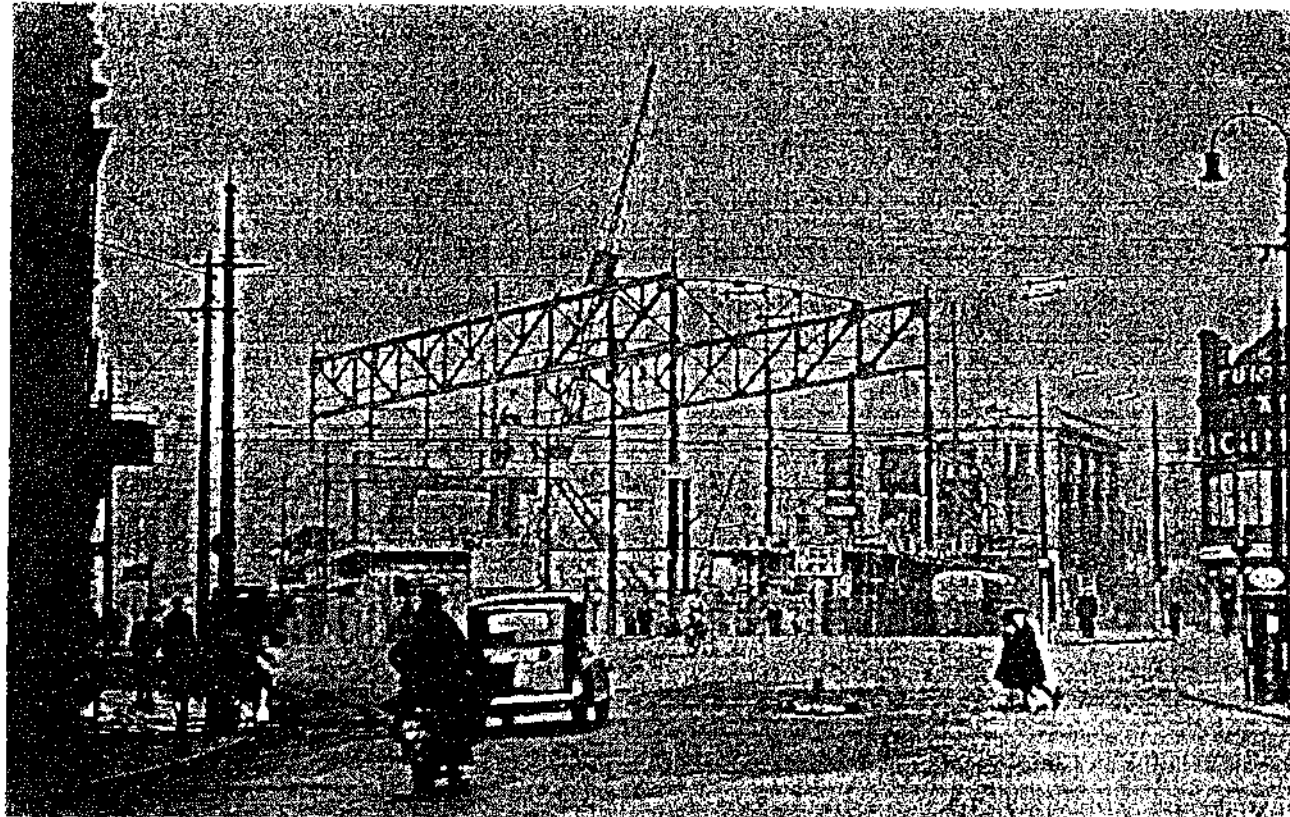


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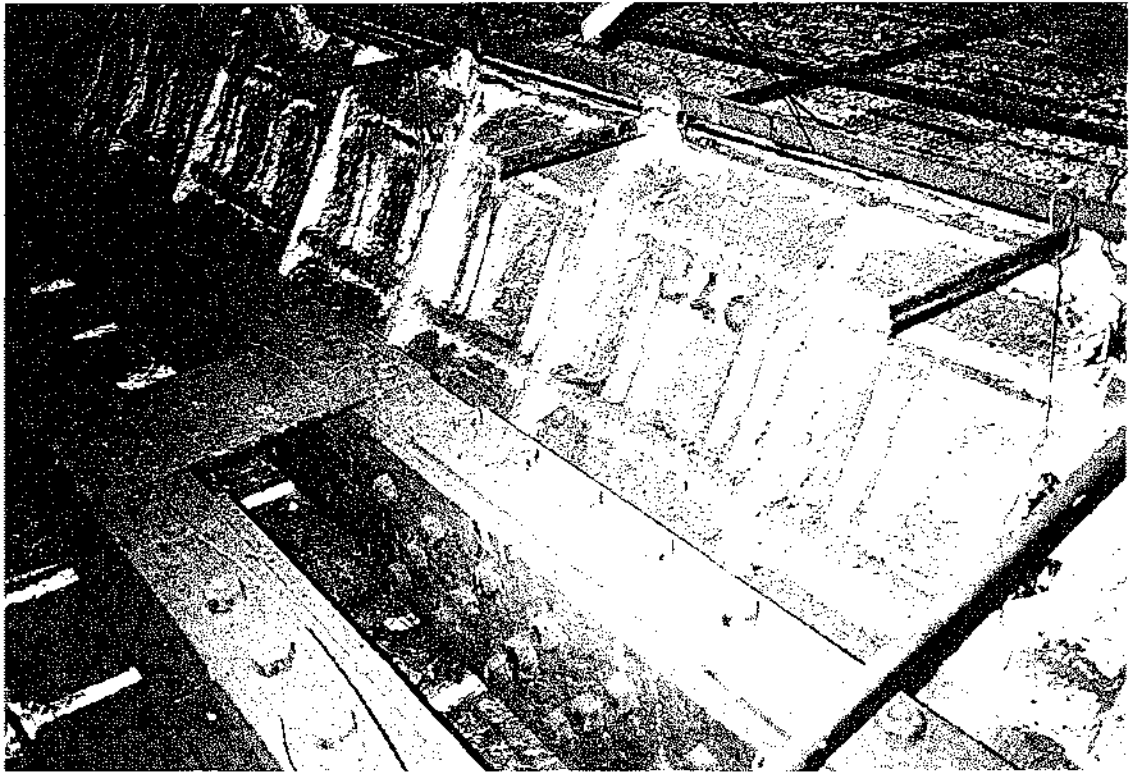


Plate 22 Struc. M



Plate 23 Struc. M

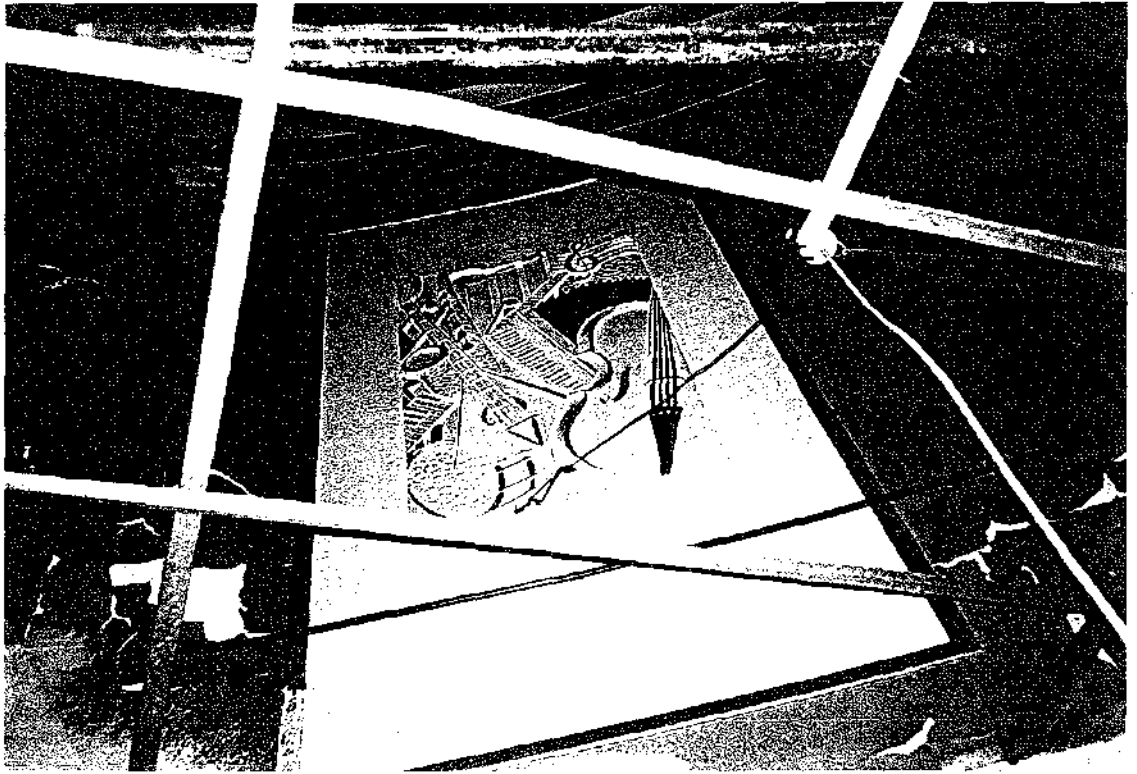


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Plate 25 Struc. M

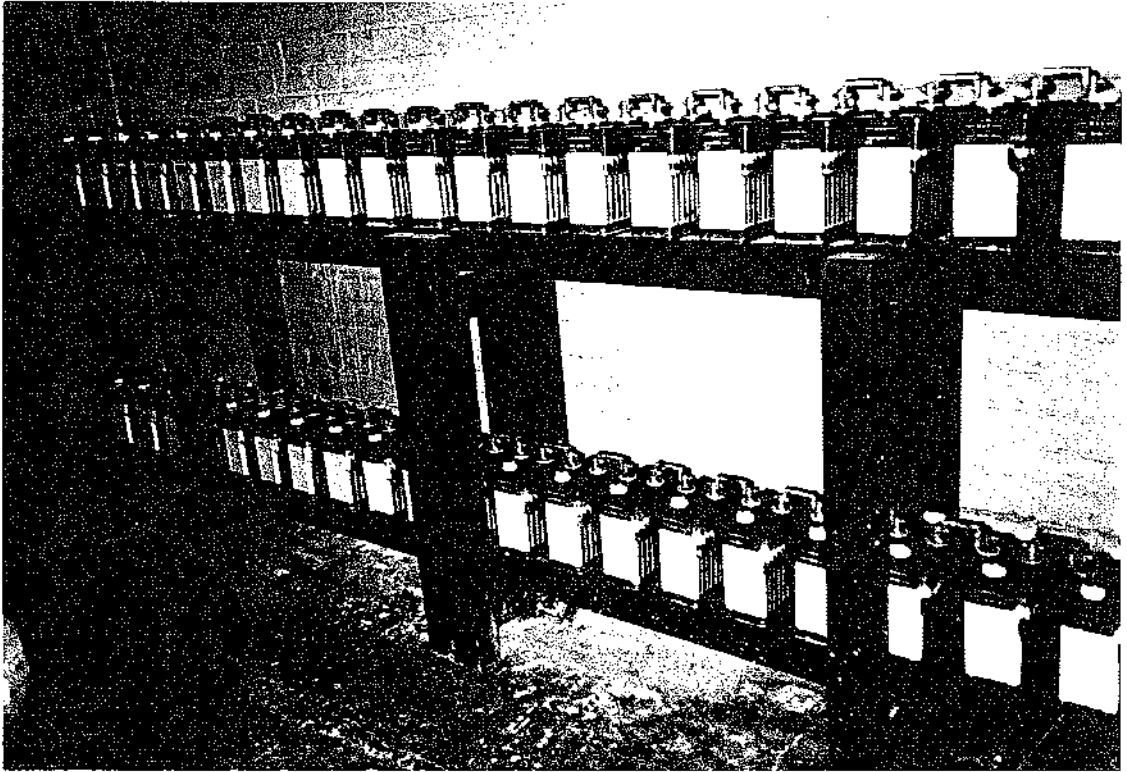


Plate 26 Struc. M



Plate 27 Struc. M

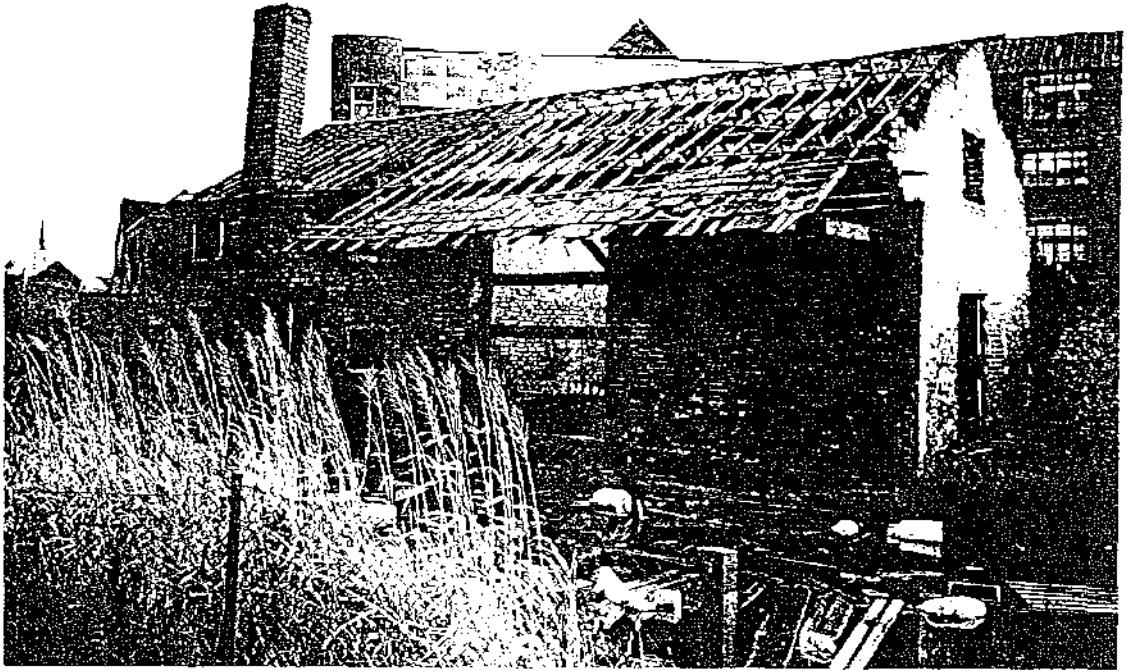


Plate 28 Struc. N



Plate 29 Struc. N



Plate 30 c.1875

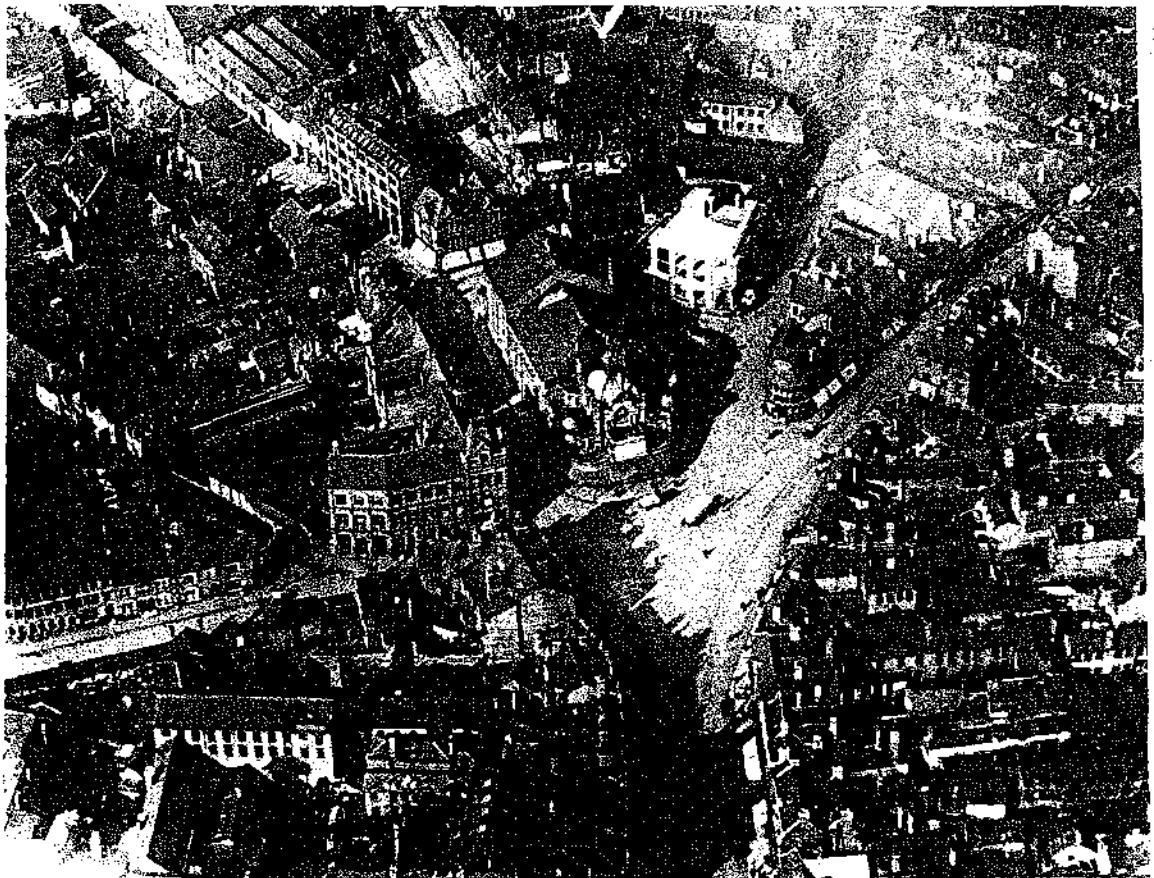


Plate 31 c.1930



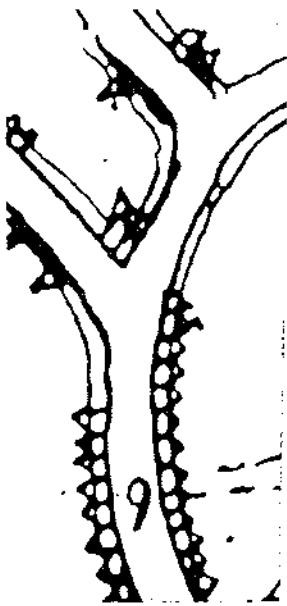
Plate 32 The Grand c.1900



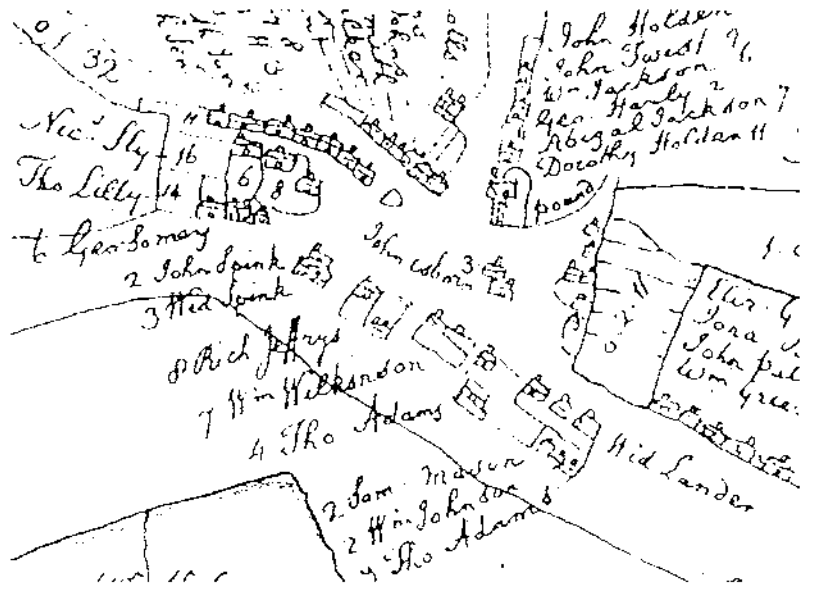
Plate 33 The Grand c.1920



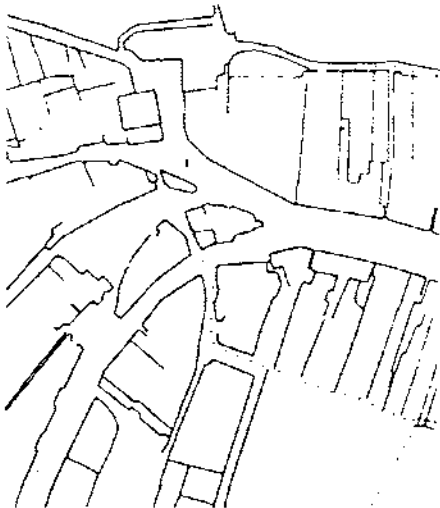
Plate 34 H.M. Theatre c.1936



Map 1 (1679)



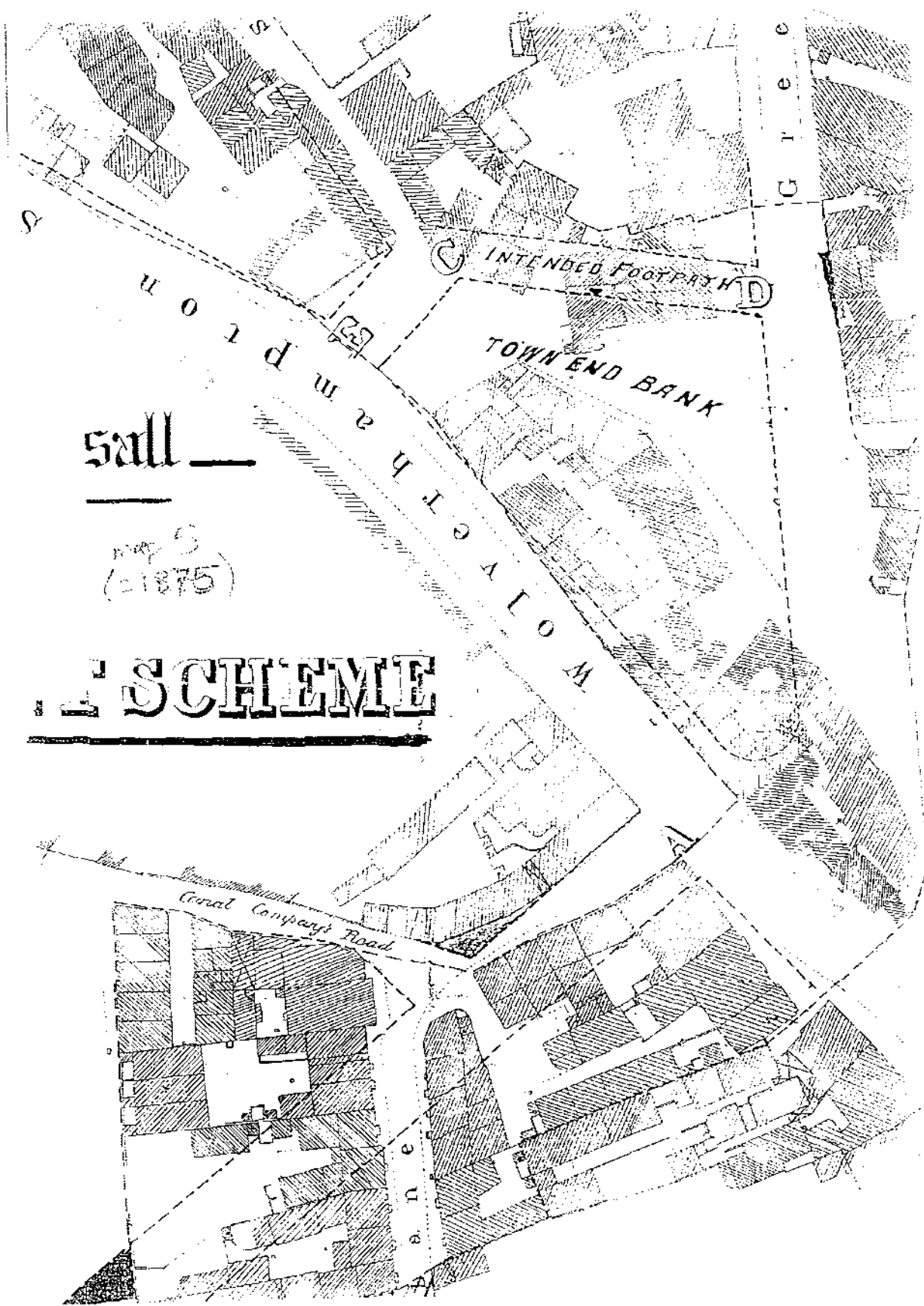
Map 2 (1763)



Map 3 (1824)



Map 4 c.1840

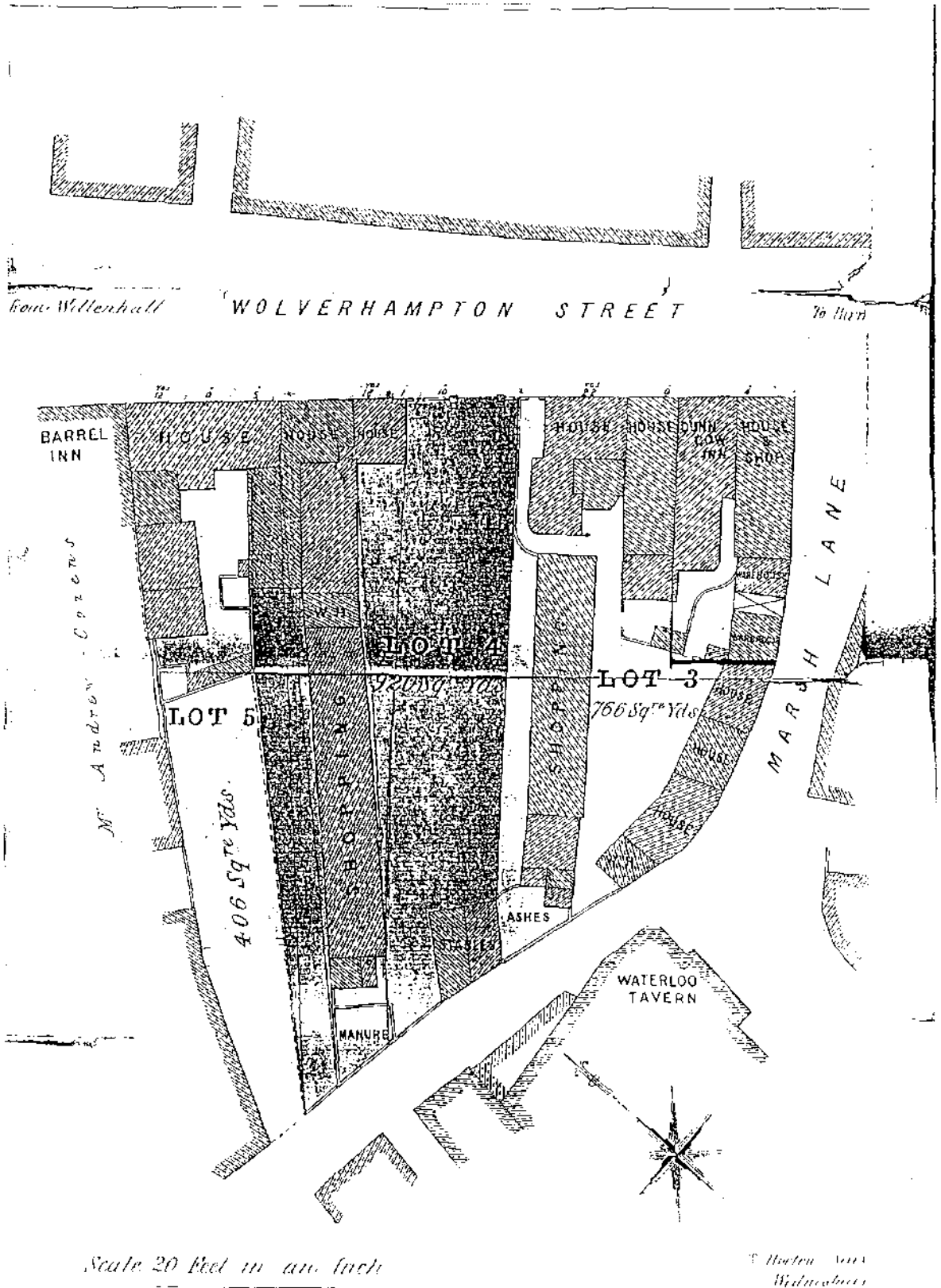


Scale

Map 5
(c.1875)

SCHEME

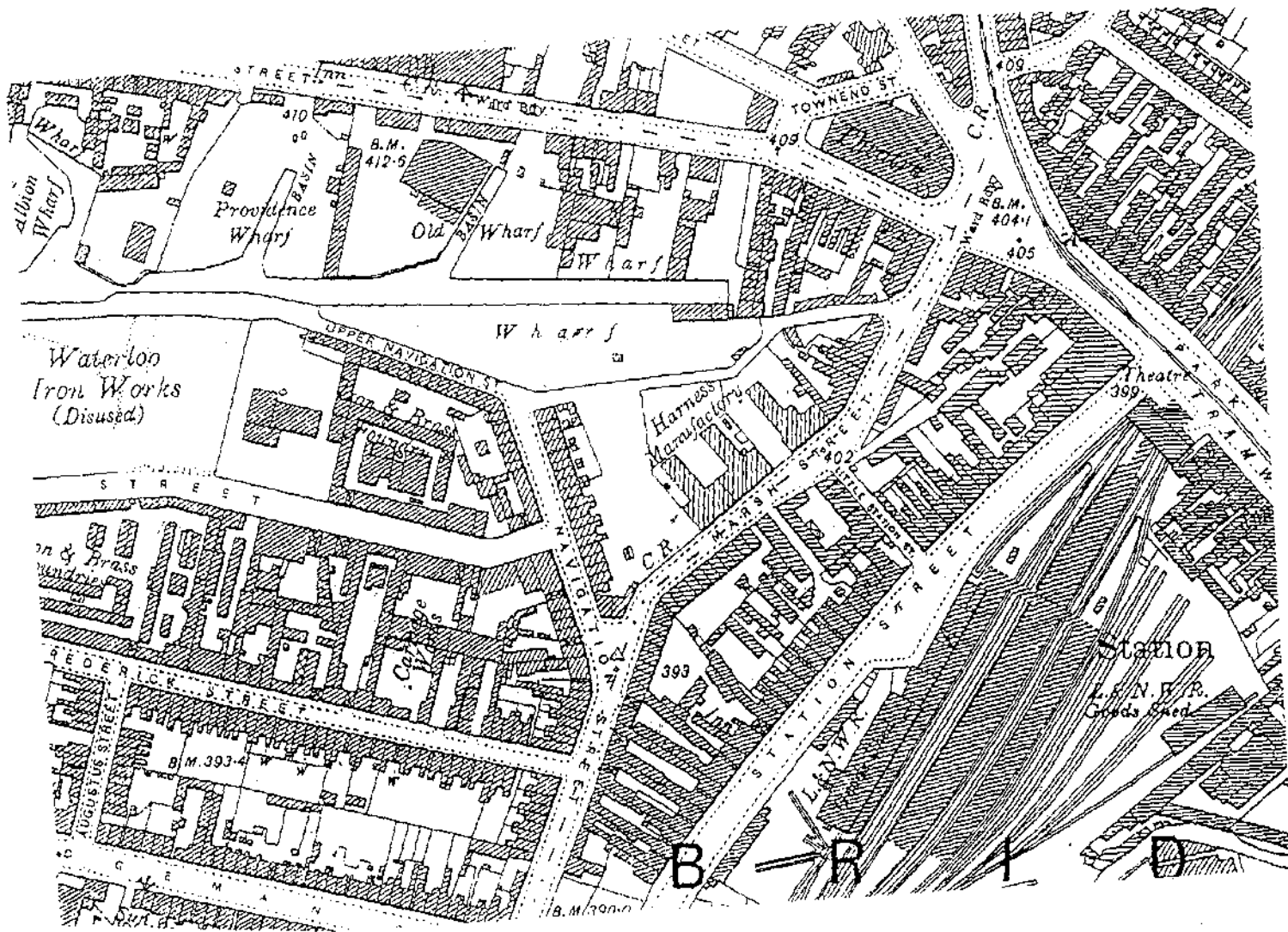
Map 5 c.1875



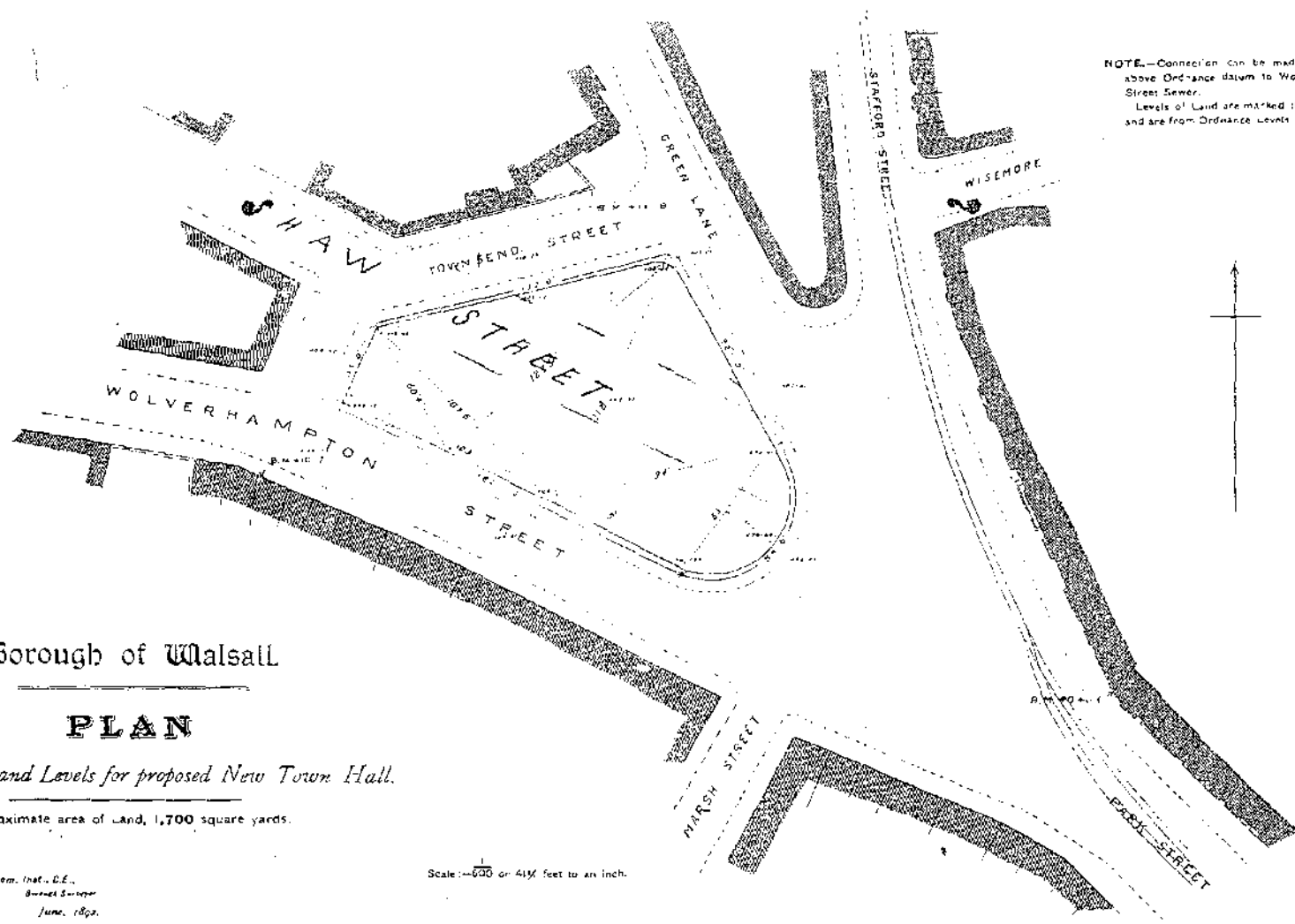
Map 6 (1876)



Map 7 c.1886



Map 8 (1903)



NOTE.—Connection can be made at 308.00 above Ordnance datum to Wolverhampton Street Sewer.
Levels of Land are marked thus—403.47 and are from Ordnance Levels.

Borough of Walsall

PLAN

Shewing Site and Levels for proposed New Town Hall.

Approximate area of Land, 1,700 square yards.

R. H. MIDDLETON, Assoc. Mem. Inst. C.E.,
Surveyor
June, 1892.

Scale:—600 or 413 feet to an inch.

Map 9 (1892)