

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

Farnborough Road, Castle Vale, Birmingham

An Archaeological Evaluation, 1996.

B.U.F.A.U.



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 454
January 1997

Farnborough Road, Castle Vale, Birmingham

An Archaeological Evaluation, 1996

by

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**FARNBOROUGH ROAD, CASTLE VALE, BIRMINGHAM
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, 1996.**

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An Archaeological Evaluation, 1996.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The archaeological potential of an area to the south of Farnborough Road, as identified in a Brief for archaeological field evaluation (hereafter 'the brief') prepared by the City Planning Archaeologist, Birmingham City Council, was examined by targeted trial trenching. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, and was funded by Castle Vale Housing Action Trust. The purpose of the evaluation was to define the nature, and significance of any archaeological deposits on the site associated with a medieval moated site, and later hall, recorded from documentary and map sources from the 13th century. Initially, the site of the moat and hall was plotted onto a modern ground plan, to allow the positioning of archaeological trial-trenches, to intercept and test the identified areas of archaeological potential.

Three trenches were excavated, using a combination of hand and machine excavation. Trench 1, located to the southwest of Argosy House recorded a sequence of recent, dumped deposits. The excavation of Trench 2, located to the north of Lysander House was abandoned because of waterlogging. Trench 3, located to the west of Comet House located a subsoil horizon at a depth of 2.25m below the modern ground surface, which was sealed by recent dumped soils. No features or artifacts of archaeological interest were identified by trenching. Although the results of this fieldwork were largely negative, it is nevertheless possible that remains of the moat and/or hall may survive beneath layers of modern dumped soils. These soils could not be fully excavated within trial-trenches for safety reasons. Archaeological remains could also survive in areas not tested by the evaluation. It is therefore recommended that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the development groundworks, to enable any features of archaeological interest exposed by machining to be identified and recorded.

1.0 INTRODUCTION (Figure 1)

This report describes the results of the archaeological evaluation of an area adjacent to Farnborough Road (hereafter 'the site'; centred on NGR SP 1466 9095), on and adjoining the site of Berwood Hall and moat (Birmingham SMR 02951). The site is currently occupied by landscaped lawns, car parking, and two high-rise housing blocks, Argosy House and Lysander House. The site would be affected by the renovation and redevelopment of the present Castle Vale Estate. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned to undertake the archaeological evaluation by Castle Vale Housing Action Trust, in accordance with the guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (November 1990). The methodology of this evaluation conforms to a Written Scheme of Investigation (Jones, 1996), prepared in consultation with the Planning Archaeologist of Birmingham City Council, and with the Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation prepared by the Planning Archaeologist (See Appendix). The project followed the requirements set down in the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation prepared by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

The purpose of the evaluation was:

(a) To define the nature, extent and significance of archaeological remains within the site, to permit the formulation of an appropriate mitigation strategy,

(b) In particular it was intended to provide information concerning the following specific objectives:

(i) To locate the site of Berwood Hall and moat relative to the modern buildings.

(ii) To determine the survival of the moat, and particularly the survival of any waterlogged deposits contained within the moat.

(iii) To determine the survival of buildings and other features within the area enclosed by the moat, the presence of a moat platform, and the potential for the survival of evidence of early medieval activity below such a moat platform.

(iv) To determine the nature of survival of buildings and other features outside the moat.

2.0 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Berwood is first mentioned in the reign of Henry II (circa 1160), when the manor and a hermitage there was given to the canons of Leicester Abbey by Sir Hugh de Arden. A chapel at Berwood Hall is mentioned in the 13th century, but had fallen into disuse by the 15th century. A survey at that time describes an old house outside the moat, and other buildings within it. Following dissolution in 1540, the property reverted to the crown and the buildings probably fell into disrepair. Berwood Hall was probably outside the moat, presumably to the south, where Berwood Hall Farm is located on the 1887 Ordnance Survey 25" map. This map also shows three sides of the moat to be extant at that time (Figure 3). Additionally, a map included in the 1730 edition of Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* shows Berwood Hall, (V.C.H. 1947, frontispiece).

No visible remains of the moat survive as the site would have been levelled for the construction of an airfield and factory. Berwood Hall Farm was still standing in 1926 (Plate 1) and is described as being of late 17th century date, although no longer in use as a farm. It is further described thus: "It stands still with its great barns...now quite small and insignificant, in striking contrast to the rows of huts and great iron buildings which surround it." (Mitchell 1926, 28). The site came within the City of Birmingham following boundary changes in 1931 (V.C.H. 1947, 61-63). The construction of the current Castle Vale Estate will have had an additional impact upon the archaeological remains, as Argosy House occupies the western part of the moat. The mounding-up of ground level around Argosy House suggests that any archaeological remains here may have been sealed and protected by dumping associated with post-construction levelling.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The brief (see Appendix) provided information regarding possible archaeological features and areas of potential interest. Trial trenches were positioned to test these areas, following consultation with the City Planning Archaeologist, and with the agreement of Castle Vale Housing Action Trust (Figure 2). Three trenches were excavated in total, each measuring 20m in length, and 1.6m in width. Trench 3 was subsequently extended by a length of 5m

southwards at its western end, after modern structural remains were located at the eastern limit of the trench, prohibiting further excavation.

The position of Berwood Hall and moat was plotted onto the modern ground plan, following a search of the cartographic evidence. Trench 1 was located to test the western arm of the moat, part of the area enclosed by the moat, and any outlying buildings of Berwood Hall. Trench 1 was relocated to the west to avoid an herbaceous landscaped border. Trench 2 was originally located to test the site of Berwood Hall, to the southeast of Trench 1 but was relocated 5m to the north to avoid gas and water services. Trench 3 was positioned to test the northern limit of the eastern arm of the moat, and the area within it. Its location was adjusted to avoid main electricity cables.

In each trench the overburden, comprising the topsoil and any modern material was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision, to expose the uppermost archaeological horizon or the uppermost level of the natural subsoil. In Trenches 1 and 3 excavation by machine to the maximum safe depth (1.20m) revealed deposits interpreted as modern in origin throughout, and a second stage of machine excavation was required. Following consultation with the City Planning Archaeologist test areas were identified within Trenches 1 and 3 and additional machine excavation was carried out under archaeological supervision. For safety reasons these test areas were backfilled immediately following the completion of recording. Following excavation of Trench 2, it rapidly filled with water. After the recording of Trench 2 it was immediately backfilled.

Recording was by means of printed pro-forma record sheets, photography, and drawn plans and sections at appropriate scales. This record is held in the archive.

4.0 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

Trench 1 (Figure. 3)

Trench 1, located at the west of the site, was aligned northeast-southwest, and was machined in two stages, as discussed above. The lowest deposit, encountered in a machine-dug test area at the southwestern end of the trench, was a dark grey-brown silty clay (1010) containing small rounded pebbles, recorded at a depth of 2.45m below the modern surface (at 82.15m AOD). Deposit 1010 was sealed by a layer, measuring 0.35m in depth, of dark grey-black cinder/charcoal (1009) containing a large quantity of brick rubble. Layer 1009 was sealed by a pale grey-brown silty clay (1008) 0.20m in depth. Layer 1008 was in turn sealed by a dark red-orange clay (1007), 0.30m in depth, containing small rounded stones and charcoal. Sealing layer 1007 was a dark grey-brown sand clay (1006) of maximum depth 1.0m, containing brick fragments and building debris. Layer 1006 was sealed by up to 0.75m of mid grey sandy silt (1002).

In a machine dug test area at the northeastern end of the trench, the lowest recorded deposit was a red clay (1013) containing small rounded stones at a depth of 2.25m beneath the modern ground surface. Layer 1013 was sealed by up to 0.55m of dark grey silt clay (1011). Layer 1011 was overlain by 1.10m of dark grey sandy clay (1005) including brick fragments,

charcoal/cinder, gravel and lenses of dark brown organic material. Also overlain by layer 1005, at the northeastern limit of the trench, was a localised light brown sandy deposit (1012). Layer 1005 was sealed by up to 0.38m of orange-red silty sand (1003), containing small rounded stones and brick fragments. Layer 1003 was sealed by layer 1002, also identified at the southwestern end of the trench, although this layer was much shallower (0.20-0.30m) at the the northeastern end. Layer 1002 was overlain by 0.10-0.15m of turf and topsoil (1001).

No features of archaeological interest were identified, and no artefacts were recovered from this trench.

Trench 2 (Not illustrated)

Trench 2 was located to the southeast of Trench 1, and was aligned approximately northeast to southwest. The lowest context recorded was a solid layer of bricks set in concrete (2005) at a depth of 0.70m below the modern surface (at 81.25m AOD) at the northeastern end of the trench. At the southwestern end of the trench was a dark brown sandy clay silt (2004), extensively disturbed by modern gravel filled soakaways. The latter deposits were overlain by up to 0.60m of dark brown sandy silt (2003). Layer 2004 was also overlain by 0.20m of red-orange clay (2002) containing brick fragments. Layers 2002 and 2003 were sealed by less than 0.10m of turf and topsoil (2001).

No features of archaeological interest were identified, or artefacts recovered from this trench, and due to flooding the trench was backfilled.

Trench 3 (Figure 3)

Trench 3 was aligned approximately northeast-southwest, and was subsequently extended by 5m to the south, forming an 'L- shape'. The extension replaced the northeastern end of Trench 3, where deposits of brick and concrete (3002 and 3003, not illustrated) prevented further excavation. The lowest deposit encountered was a mottled grey-orange sandy clay (3012) containing small rounded pebbles, recorded at a depth of 2.25m below the modern ground surface (at 81.50m AOD). This deposit was overlain by a green-grey sandy silt (3011) containing modern construction debris, up to 0.65m in depth. Layer 3011 was sealed by up to 0.75m of dark grey clay silt (3008) containing brick fragments. Layer 3008 was overlain by a localised light brown sand (3007) and by orange sand (3010). Layer 3010 contained a block of mortared bricks (3009) which was sealed by up to 0.65m of dark grey clay (3006), in turn overlain by 0.30m of red-orange sandy clay (3005). Layer 3005 was overlain by 0.20m of orange sand (3004) containing some stone paving sets. Layers 3002, 3003, and 3004 were sealed by 0.10-0.30m of turf and topsoil (3001).

No archaeological features were identified or artefacts recovered from this trench.

5.0 DISCUSSION

No features of archaeological significance were identified by the trial-trenching, despite the testing of areas of archaeological interest. Nor were any artefacts of medieval or early post-medieval date recovered.

The deposits found by this archaeological evaluation can be interpreted as representing a single event of dumping associated with the construction of the Castle Vale Estate, and the demolition of the pre-existing structures. Deposit 3012, recorded in Trench 3 at a depth of 2.25m below the modern surface, may be interpreted as representing the natural subsoil. The subsoil could not be located in Trenches 1 and 2, for safety reasons. Deposit 1010, recorded in Trench 1 at a depth of 2.45m below the modern surface was not found to include modern material and may represent a buried topsoil, although it could not be extensively sampled for safety reasons. All other recorded contexts are interpreted as of modern origin.

Due to the depth of modern overburden encountered, it was not possible to define the full depth of the recently made ground. It is possible that archaeological remains may survive in other areas of the moat, or hall areas, or that they are sealed beneath the layers of dumped soils.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS AND PROPOSALS

Despite the negative results provided by trial trenching it is possible that some further archaeological input, prior to redevelopment may be appropriate. Although no features or deposits of archaeological significance survive within 2m of the present ground level in the areas tested, it is possible that medieval or early post-medieval features and deposits associated with the moat or the hall survive at higher levels in areas not available for examination by the present trial-trenching. The modern dumped soils may have sealed and protected archaeological remains from later disturbance, although this remains to be proven.

It is recommended that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during development groundworks to monitor ground disturbances:

- 1) in areas not tested by the trial-trenching, and
- 2) dug below a depth of 2m in areas tested by trial-trenching.

This archaeological watching brief would involve the presence of an experienced archaeologist on site to observe and record any archaeological features exposed by the lowering of ground level, and the excavation of foundation, or other trenches, as above. The precise requirements of such an archaeological watching brief would be determined by the layout of the proposed development.

7.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was sponsored by Castle Vale Housing Action Trust. The excavation was supervised by the author, assisted by M. Allen and J. Hovey. The illustrations were prepared by M. Breedon. The project was monitored for Birmingham City Council by M. Hodder, and by A. Jones for BUFAU, who also edited this report.

8.0 REFERENCES

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V.C.II. 1947. *Warwickshire, Volume IV*.

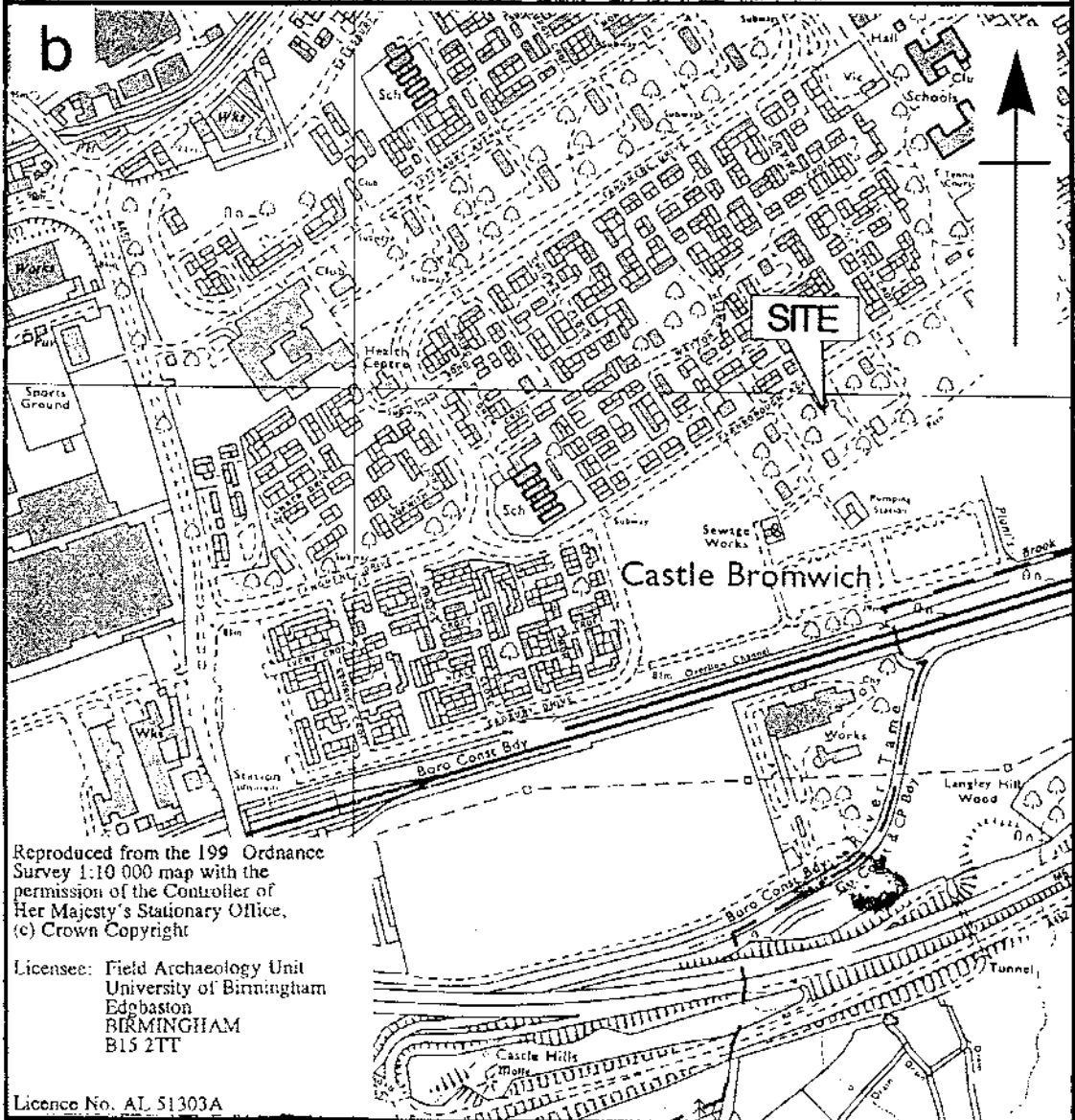
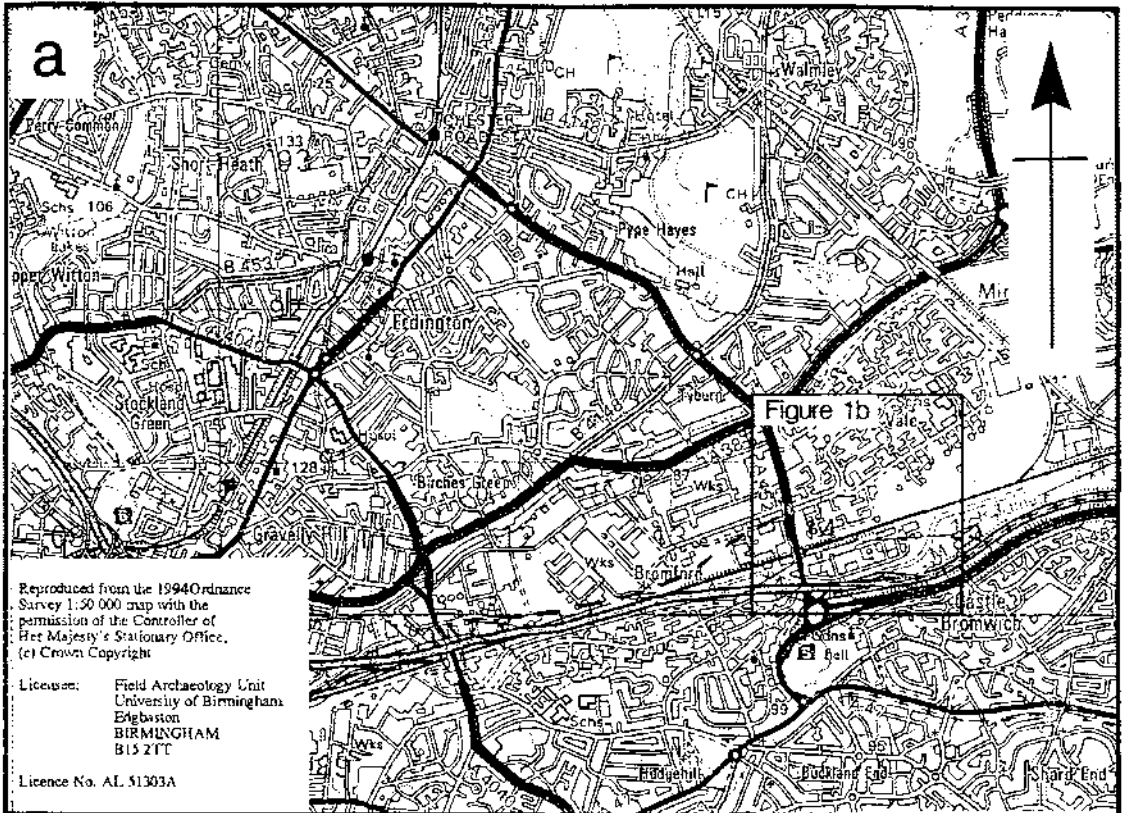


Figure 1

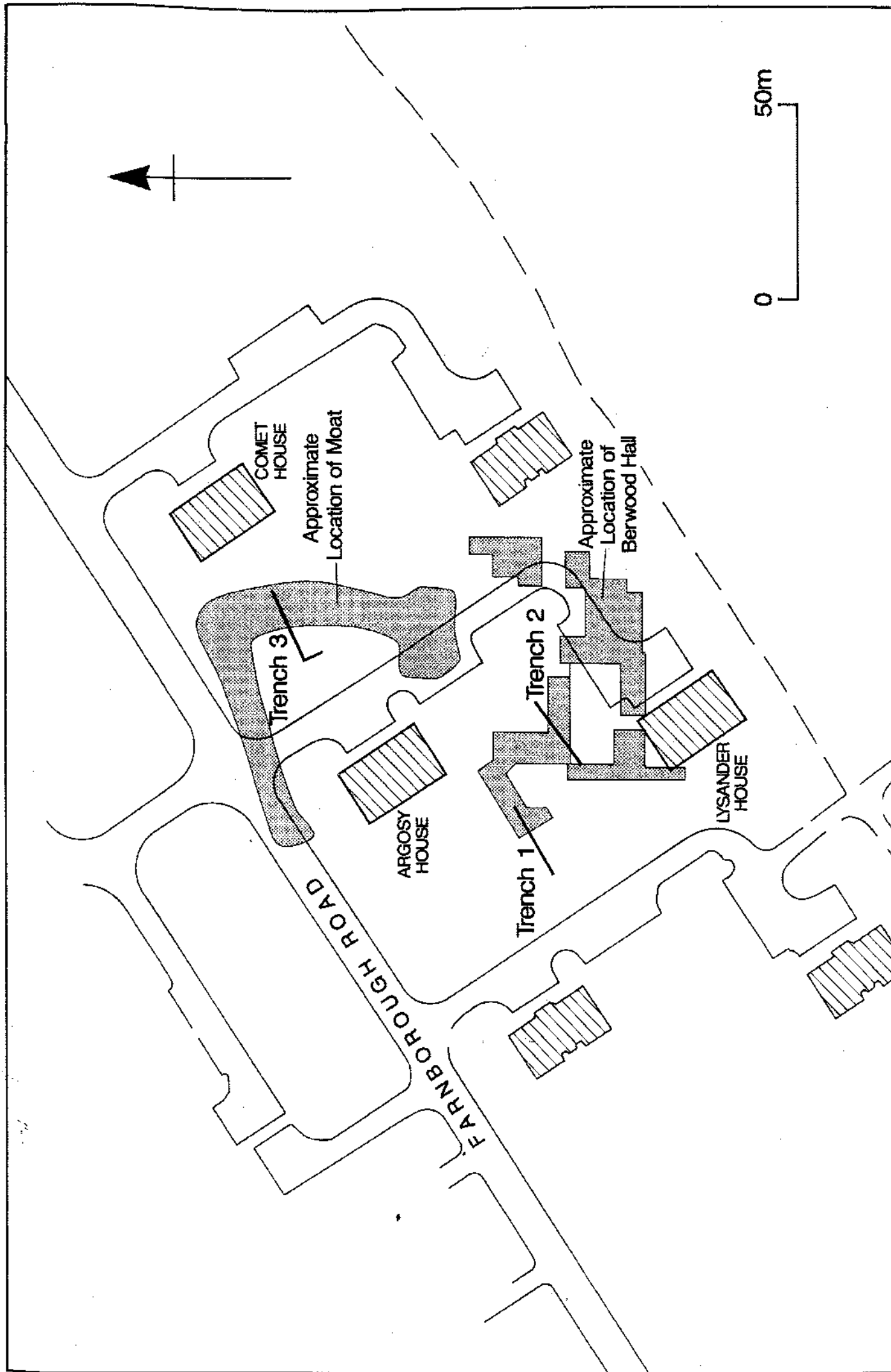
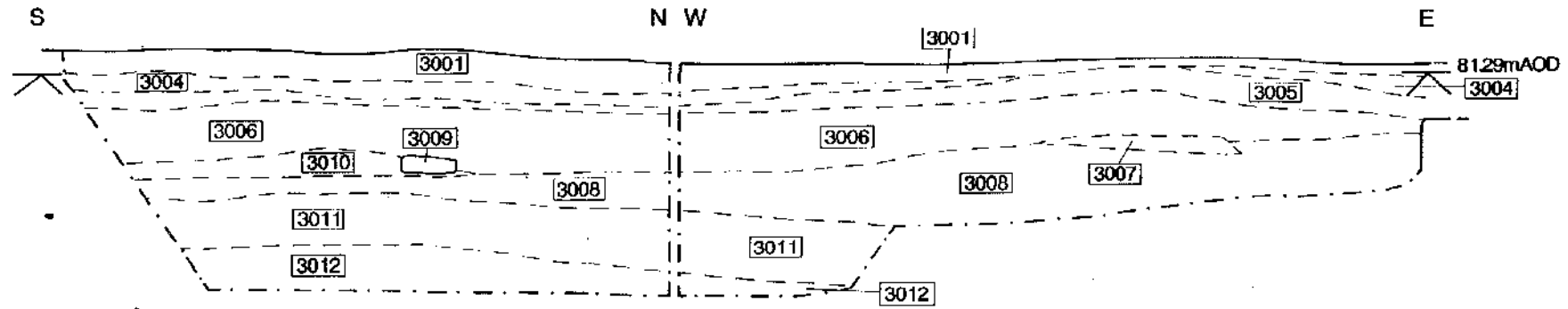


Figure 2

Trench 3



Trench 1

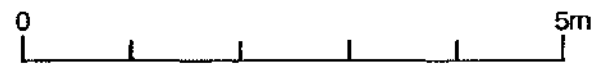
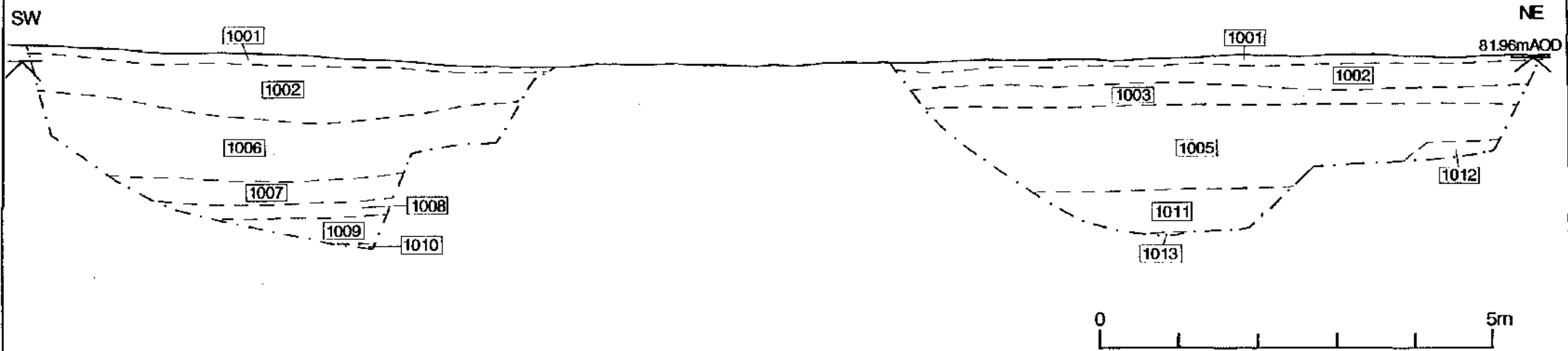


Figure 3



Berwood Hall 1926

APPENDIX

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

Site of Berwood Hall, Farnborough Road, Castle Vale, Birmingham(SMR WM 02951)

Brief for archaeological field evaluation in advance of consideration of development proposals

1.Summary

Proposed works on the site of Berwood Hall may affect below-ground archaeological remains. This brief is for an archaeological evaluation, consisting of excavated trenches, to provide information on the nature, survival and significance of the below-ground archaeology of the site so that the impact of proposed development can be assessed.

2.Site location and description

The site of Berwood Hall(NGR SP 14669095) is adjacent to Farnborough Road, and is currently occupied by two tower blocks, Argosy House and Lysander House, and a car park and grassed landscaped areas around and between them. No traces of the buildings or moat of Berwood Hall are visible on the surface.

3.Planning background

The whole of Castle Vale estate is currently being renovated and this work involves the removal and replacement of some existing buildings, and new landscaping and access.

4.Existing archaeological information

A hermitage and messuage in the manor of Berwood are mentioned in about 1160 when the manor was given to the canons of Leicester Abbey. A chapel of St Mary at Berwood Hall is mentioned in the mid 13th century but was disused by the beginning of the 15th century, when a survey lists the canons' hall, a bakehouse, a dormitory, an oven, two barns, a cowshed, and the old house beyond the precinct, i.e. outside the moat. The post-Dissolution house, Berwood Hall, was outside the moat, presumably on the site of or incorporating the "old house" or former agricultural buildings. Berwood Hall is said to have included 17th century fabric. The 1887 Ordnance Survey 25" map shows the northern and eastern arms of a moat and parts of the southern arm, with farm buildings, Berwood Hall, to the south. No buildings are shown in the area enclosed by the moat, but stone foundations, thought to be those of the chapel, are said to have been visible in the 1920s. The 1904 Ordnance Survey map shows only the eastern moat arm, north of farm buildings. The buildings and moat were removed and levelled for the construction of a wartime airfield.

Although no traces of the buildings or moat are visible on the surface, remains of them are likely to survive below ground and would be affected by any construction or landscaping work. The archaeological remains consist of the moat and deposits filling it, the site of buildings formerly surrounded by the moat, possibly on a raised platform, and the site of the buildings outside the moat. Part of the moat is likely to lie under Argosy House, but its southern and western arms and the area enclosed by them are in the present grassed area between Argosy House and Lysander House. The farm buildings shown on the 19th century maps are in the Lysander House part of the site and the grassed areas to its west. Archaeological remains will have been removed by the construction of the tower blocks, but the grassed areas around them are slightly raised, suggesting that material has been dumped onto the existing ground surface, therefore protecting and preserving archaeological deposits.

5.Requirements for work

The purpose of the evaluation is to define the nature, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of archaeological remains on the site, in order to determine the need for further archaeological investigation in advance of or during works on the site or in situ preservation by appropriate site layout or foundation design. The specific features to be addressed by the evaluation are as follows:

- (i) The precise location of the site in relation to modern buildings;
- (ii) The survival of the moat and of deposits within it, particularly deposits with organic survival;

- (ii) The survival and nature of remains of buildings and other structures in the area formerly enclosed by the moat, and the possible existence of a raised platform on which buildings were constructed and below which other features may survive;
- (iii) The survival and nature of remains of buildings and other structures in the area outside the moat occupied by the buildings of the later Berwood Hall.

6. Stages of work

The evaluation will consist of the following, in order to meet the requirements listed above:

- (i) The moat and farm buildings marked on the Ordnance Survey map of 1887 are to be accurately plotted onto the present 1:1250 map
- (ii) A trench at least 1.6m wide and at least 20m long is to be excavated in each of the following three locations: across the northern moat line and including the area enclosed by the moat; across the southern moat line and including the area enclosed by the moat; in the area of the later Berwood Hall and its farm buildings. The exact location of each trench is to be agreed on site with the Planning Archaeologist before commencement.

Surface deposits in each trench are to be mechanically removed, under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation is to be entirely manual. Excavation is to be sufficient to define and record, but not completely excavate, all archaeological features and deposits encountered. Deposits suitable for environmental analysis must be sampled and their potential assessed. Trenches are to be mechanically backfilled at the end of the evaluation. Finds are to be cleaned, marked and bagged and any remedial conservation undertaken.

7. Staffing

The evaluation is to be carried out in accordance with the Code of Conduct, Standards, Guidelines and practices of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and all staff are to be suitably qualified and experienced for their roles in the project. It is recommended that the project be undertaken under the direct supervision of a Member or Associate Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists with appropriate Areas of Competence.

8. Written Scheme of Investigation

Potential contractors should present a Written Scheme of Investigation which details methods and staffing. It is recommended that the proposal be submitted to the City Council's Planning Archaeologist before a contractor is commissioned, to ensure that it meets the requirements of the brief.

9. Monitoring

The evaluation must be carried out to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Architecture, Birmingham City Council, and will be monitored on his behalf by the Planning Archaeologist.

10. Reporting

The results of the evaluation are to be presented as a written report, containing appropriate illustrations, a summary of finds, and a copy of this brief. A copy of the report must be sent to the Planning Archaeologist.

11. Archive deposition

The written, drawn and photographic records of the evaluation, and any finds, must be deposited with an appropriate repository within a reasonable time of completion, following consultation with the Planning Archaeologist.

12. Publication

The written report will become publicly accessible, as part of the Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record, within six months of completion. The contractor must submit a short summary report for inclusion in *West Midlands Archaeology* and summary reports to appropriate national period journals.

DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE
BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
Date prepared: 13/11/96