

**Archaeological Recording
at 56, West Street,
Godmanchester
Cambridgeshire**

1997-1998

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 482
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Cambridgeshire**

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by
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Contents

	Page
1.0 Summary	1
2.0 Introduction	1
3.0 The Site and its Location	1
4.0 Aims	1
5.0 Method	2
6.0 Archaeological Results	2
7.0 The Roman Pottery <i>by C. Jane Evans</i>	3
7.1 Summary	
7.2 Method	
7.3 Discussion by feature	
8.0 Discussion	3
9.0 References	4
10.0 Acknowledgements	4

Tables

- 1 Summary of the pottery by feature/context.
- 2 Summary of fabrics represented.

Figures

- 1 Site Location.
- 2 Location of Trench 1 and Proposed Building Footprint.
- 3 Detail of Archaeological Features.

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1.0 Summary

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit carried out archaeological recording at 56, West Street prior to, and during, the construction of a bungalow in 1997 and 1998. Period Property Construction sponsored the work. Several archaeological features dating to the Roman period were identified. Prior to archaeological recording, it was thought that the site lay within the southwestern corner of the 1st-century Roman fort and ditch. However, the recorded features appear to post-date the Roman fort, and instead probably represent occupation contemporary with the later Roman settlement.

2.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation and watching brief undertaken at 56, West Street, Godmanchester. The work was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Period Property Construction to provide archaeological information in advance of proposed development of the site. The archaeological work was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994), *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994), with a Brief prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council (Austin 1996) and a Specification prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Jones 1997). This evaluation conformed to Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Department of Environment 1991).

3.0 The Site and its Location

The site comprised *c.* 0.1 hectare of domestic garden and was located on the western side of the Causeway, within the centre of present-day Godmanchester (Figure 1). The underlying geology of the site comprised first and second terrace gravels of the River Ouse.

4.0 Aims

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to determine the likely presence or absence of any archaeological deposits and features within the proposed building footprint, its associated drive, garage and service trenches. The evaluation and subsequent watching brief aimed to establish the extent, date and character of

surviving archaeological deposits and to assess their quality and significance. The two stages of work also aimed to preserve surviving archaeological features 'by record' and to reconstruct the history and use of the site.

5.0 Method

The archaeological work was carried out in two stages. The first stage involved the excavation of a single trench, measuring 1.60m x 10.50m, which was excavated to a depth of 1.65m, prior to the cutting of foundations. The second stage involved the observation of groundworks for the building foundations, garage, drive and associated services.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present, and contextual information was supplemented by scale drawings, plans, sections and photographs which, together with recovered artefacts, form the site archive. This is presently housed at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

6.0 Archaeological Results (Figures 2 and 3)

Three features were identified within the evaluation trial-trench (Trench 1). All of the features cut the light yellow-orange sand-gravel subsoil (1007). A 0.30m thick layer of green-brown sandy silt-gravel (1006) overlay the subsoil at the western end of the trench. A shallow pit (F100), which was filled with a charcoal-flecked, dark-brown, sand-silt deposit (1002) was cut by a northwest-southeast aligned U-shaped ditch (F101). The ditch was partially filled on its western side by the slumping of a green-brown, sand-gravel deposit (1004). A green-brown, organic sand deposit (1003) represented a later fill. A second northwest-southeast aligned ditch (F102) was recorded just over 1m to the west of F100 and F101. This U-shaped ditch had a waterlogged lower fill of black, organic, clayey sand-silt (1008) and an upper fill of moist, charcoal-flecked, brown-black clayey silt-sand (1005). A 0.50m thick layer of slightly compacted black-brown, sand-silt (1001) overlies all three features. This was sealed by a further 0.50m of topsoil (1000).

Monitoring of the foundation and service trenches identified a third northwest-southeast aligned ditch (F200). The lower fill of this U-shaped feature comprised a waterlogged and charcoal-flecked green-brown silt-sand (2004). It was overlaid by a thin deposit of charcoal-flecked, black-brown, silty gravel-sand which included large sub-rounded stones (2003). The layer of green-brown sandy silt-gravel which overlay the subsoil and which was recorded in the earlier trench (1006), was shown to extend north (2005). This layer (2005), and the ditch (F200) were sealed by a thick layer of slightly compacted black-brown, sand-silt (2001), overlaid by topsoil (2000).

7.0 The Roman Pottery by C. Jane Evans

7.1 Summary

Excavation of Trench 1 produced 17 sherds of pottery, weighing 158g, with a total rim EVE of 0.12 (Table 1). All of the pottery appears to be redeposited. The assemblage is abraded and fragmentary (average sherd weight 9g), and a range of fabrics was represented (Table 2). Only three form sherds were included, and none of the pottery was closely datable. The Lower Nene Valley grey and colour-coated wares date at least to the Antonine period, but at least one residual 1st-century sherd was noted and one possibly later sherd.

7.2 Method

The pottery was recorded using the fabric and form series devised for The Parks and London Road assemblages. It was fully quantified by count, weight and rim EVE. The data was not added to the existing databases, but is tabulated by context in the archive. None of the sherds are illustrated, although forms are cross-referenced with illustrated sherds from the other sites.

7.3 Discussion by feature

All the Nene Valley ware, apart from a single sherd in the topsoil (1000), came from two features, one of the U-shaped ditches (F101) and the pit which it cut (F100). A shelly-ware jar rim was found at the intersection of these two features, similar to a type produced at the late-3rd to early-4th-century kiln found at The Parks (Fig 0.JM19.12). The type was also common in late-3rd-century kilns at Harrold, Bedfordshire, although it appeared there earlier and continued to be produced into the early fourth century (Brown 1994, fig 29.164-73, fig.34.241-7). At least one residual 1st-century sherd was also included, in the later fill of F101 (1003). This was a scored body sherd from a large storage jar in a shelly fabric (Fabric H04.1). The occupation layer (1006) produced a single sherd in Godmanchester white-slipped ware (Fabric P05.1). This ware was produced at The Parks site, Godmanchester, in kiln 1, dated to the mid to late Antonine period. However, the ware could well have been produced over a much longer period in a number of other local kilns, and it would be unwise to date the layer on the evidence of one sherd. The second ditch (F102) produced 6 sherds of pottery. The absence of Nene Valley wares in this feature may be significant, reflecting a slightly earlier date, although once again it is impossible to draw firm conclusions.

8.0 Discussion

In effect, only a brief view of the archaeological deposits and features was obtained by the evaluation trench and by the subsequent monitoring of groundworks. A relatively small assemblage of artefacts was recovered by both phases of work and interpretation is, inevitably, limited by this small resource.

Although the site is located within an area of potential prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval archaeological survival, the recorded deposits and features were all dated

solely to the Roman period. No features relating to earlier activity or to a later settlement were identified. Prior to archaeological recording, it was thought that the site lay within the southwestern corner of the 1st-century Roman fort and ditch (Burnham and Wachter 1990, Austin 1996). However, the features encountered in the 1997 and 1998 stages of work appear to post-date the Roman fort, and instead probably represent occupation contemporary with the later Roman settlement. It is hoped that the increasing number of excavations carried out in Godmanchester over recent years will enable the West Street site to be placed within its local and regional context.

9.0 References

Austin, L. 1996 Brief for Archaeological Investigation: 56, West Street, Godmanchester, Huntingdon.

Brown, A. 1994 A Romano-British shell-gritted pottery and tile manufacturing site at Harrold, Bedfordshire. *Bedfordshire Archaeology* 2, 19-107.

Burnham, B.C. and Wachter, J. 1990 *The Small Towns of Roman Britain*.

Jones, A. 1997 *Archaeological Specification. Archaeological Evaluation and Salvage Recording, 56, West Street, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire*.

10.0 Acknowledgements

Period Property Construction sponsored this project and we are grateful to David Gee for his assistance on-site. Catharine Mould and Ellie Ramsey carried out the archaeological evaluation. Catharine Mould carried out the subsequent watching brief and wrote this report. Nigel Dodds prepared the illustrations and Gwilym Hughes edited the report.

Table 1: Summary of the pottery by feature/context

Feature	Context	Qty.	Wt.	Rim %
Topsoil	1000	1	03	
Layer	1001	1	05	
Layer	1006	1	04	
100	1002	1	11	
100/101	1009	4	32	11
101	1003	3	45	
102	1005	6	58	1
Total		17	158	12

Table 2: Summary of fabrics represented

Fabric name	Fabric Code	Qty.	Wt.	Rim %	Form
Lower Nene Valley c.c. ware (oxidised)	C03	2	14		
Lower Nene Valley grey ware (iron rich fabric)	G02.1	2	09		
?Lower Nene Valley pale sandy grey ware	G02.2	2	14	2	Fig 0.B/JC20.01
Fine sandy grey ware with blackened surface	G08.1	1	07		
'Black gritted' self coloured grey ware	G09.1	1	21		
Sandy grey ware	G09.4	2	14	1	Fig 0.J7.01
Shelly oxidised ware	H04.1	1	36		
Wheelmade shell and grog	H05.1	1	13	9	Fig 0.JM19.12
Sandy oxidised ware	O06.4	1	01		
Godmanchester white slipped, off-white ware	P05.1	1	04		
		1	05		
		1	15		
		1	05		
Total		17	158	12	

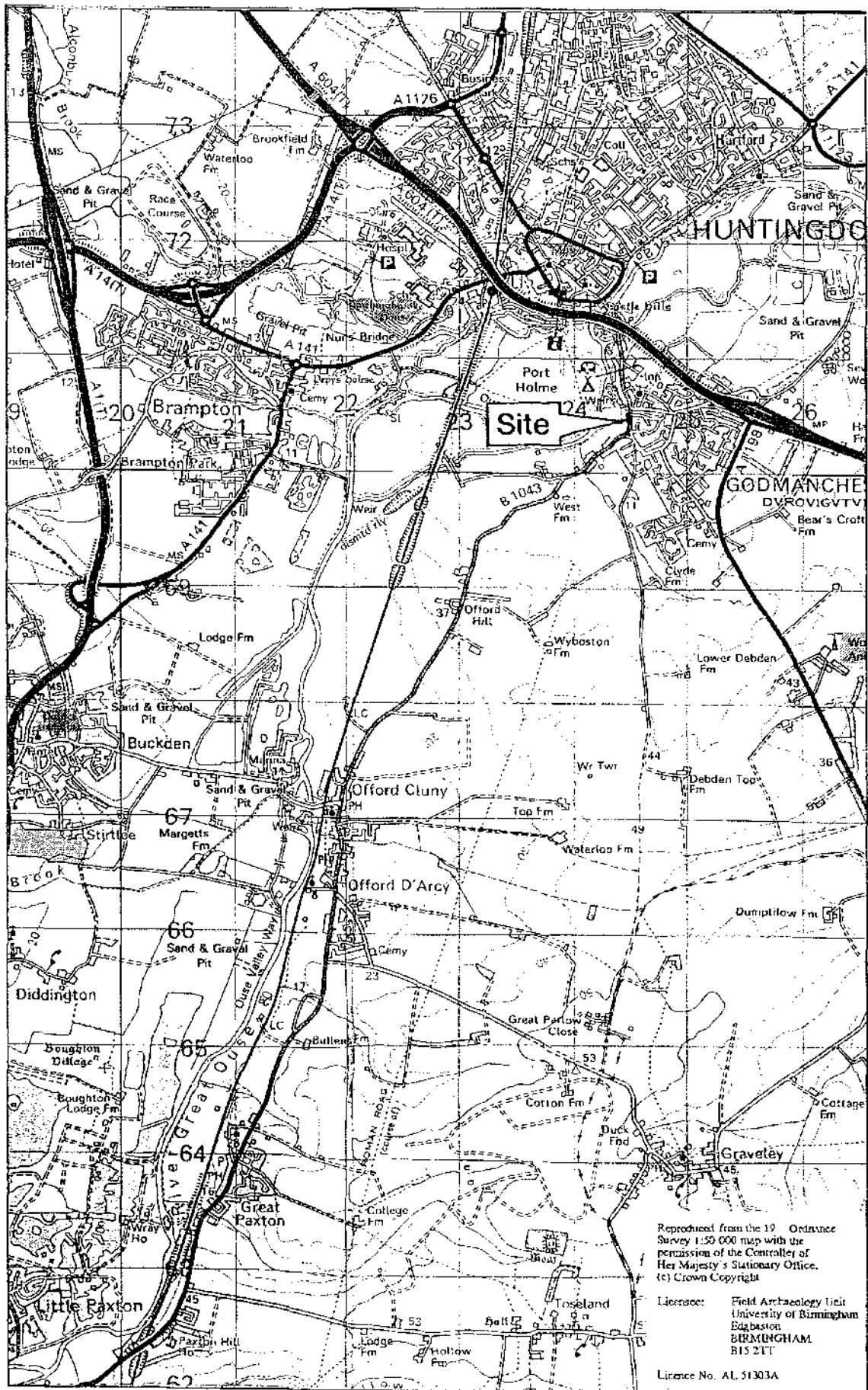


Fig 1

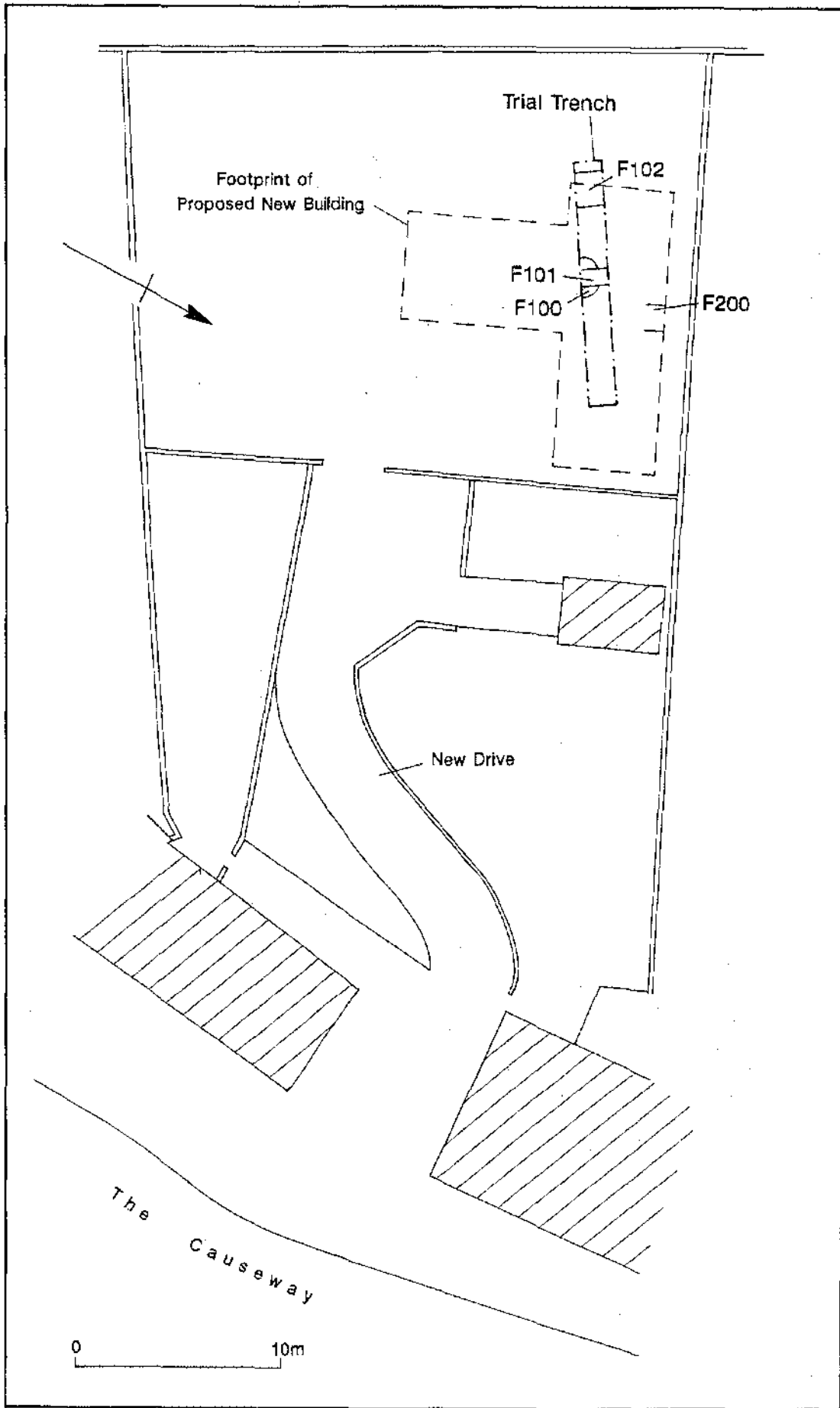


Fig.2

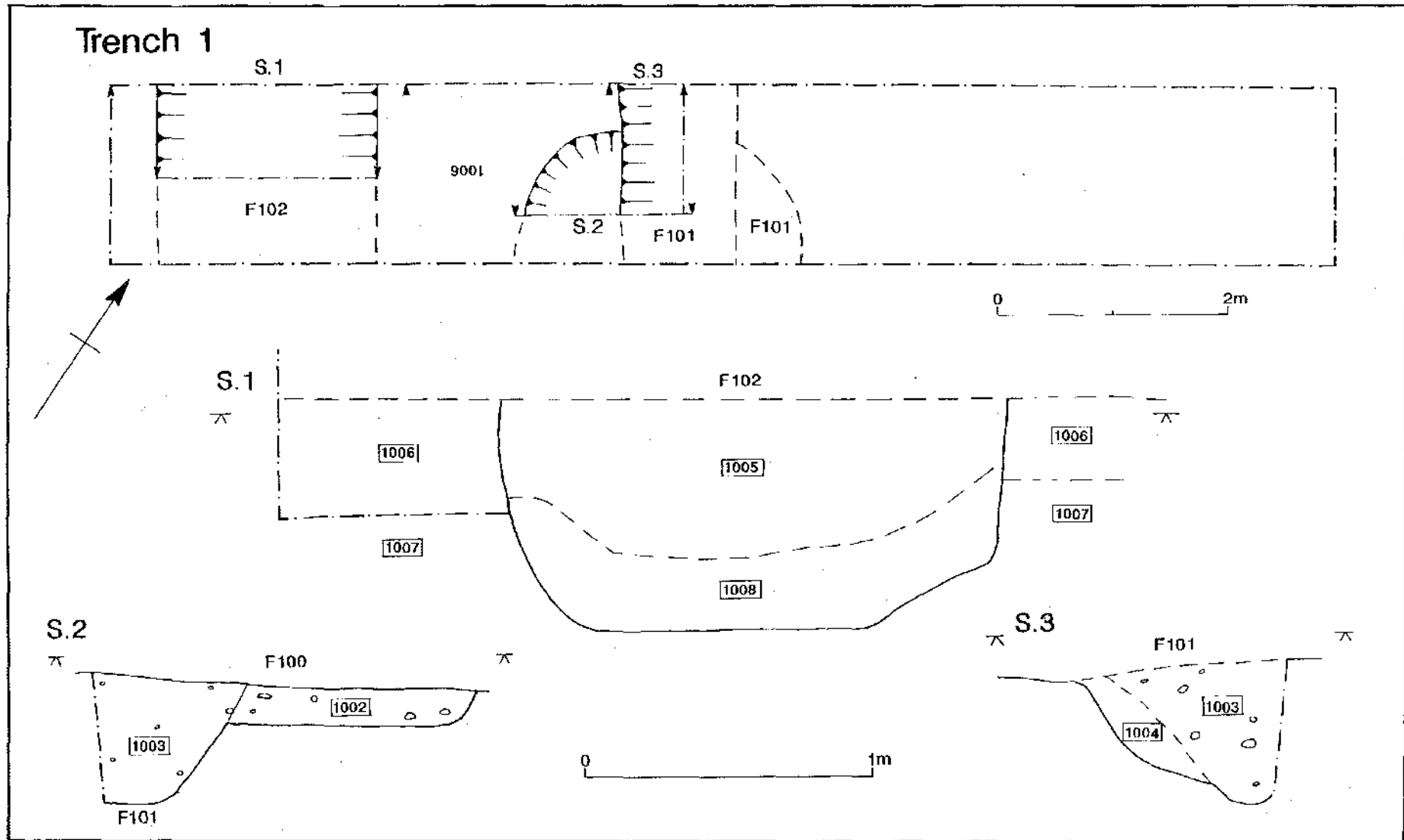


Fig.3