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**An Archaeological  
Evaluation at 7, Corbett  
Avenue, Droitwich,  
Worcestershire**

WSM.29566

*Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit*



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**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
7, Corbett Avenue, Droitwich, Worcestershire**

**WSM 29566**

by  
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### **1.0 Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at 7, Corbett Avenue, Droitwich, Worcestershire (NGR SO 90056296) prior to the construction of 21 luxury flats, in the period 10th – 17th August, 2000. An earlier desk-based assessment (Nichol 2000) identified the site as having potential archaeological survival. This report also stressed the importance of any archaeology present on the site.

The excavation of six trial-trenches within the proposed development site produced residual Roman and medieval pottery from all areas. A medieval ploughsoil was identified in the north-west of the site, and suggests the potential survival for discrete features of medieval and earlier in date in this part of the site. No features of the Roman or medieval period were encountered.

### **2.0 Introduction**

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken at 7, Corbett Avenue, Droitwich. The work was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Bryant Homes Mercia Ltd to provide archaeological information in advance of proposed development of the site (Planning Application Reference W/00/0173). The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999), a Brief prepared by Worcestershire Archaeological Service (Hartley 2000) and a Specification prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Ferris 2000). This evaluation conformed to Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Department of Environment 1991).

A desk-based assessment of the site was previously undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Nichol 2000). The results are reported on separately and incorporated into this report.

### **3.0 Site Location (Fig. 1)**

The site comprises an area of approximately 0.39 ha. of land at 7, Corbett Avenue, Droitwich, Worcestershire (centred on NGR. SO 90056296). Previous land-use was a residential nursing home and associated parking. Demolition of these buildings had been completed when the field evaluation took place.

### **4.0 Archaeological Background**

Corbett Avenue is situated near to the medieval settlement of Witton, which was centred on the site of the Church of St Mary's Witton (WSM 257), and to the historic core of Droitwich. Previous archaeological work at 36, Corbett Avenue in 1997 revealed significant archaeological deposits of 13th-century date and it was suggested that this site had been part of a farmyard complex (Nichol 2000). Roman pottery was also recovered from residual and unstratified contexts (WSM 24148).

## **5.0 Objectives**

The objectives of the archaeological evaluation were to determine the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits and features within the proposed development area. The evaluation aimed to establish the extent, date and character of surviving archaeological deposits and to assess their quality and significance in order to permit the formulation of a mitigation strategy, if appropriate.

## **6.0 Method (Fig. 2)**

Six trial-trenches (equivalent in area to approximately a 2% sample of the proposed development area) were excavated. The trenches were located to avoid services and other logistical problems. The topsoil and modern overburden were mechanically removed, under archaeological supervision, to the top of the natural subsoil.

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.

## **7.0 Archaeological Results (Figs. 3 & 4)**

### Trench 1

(1.8m x 9.6m, aligned north-east-south-west, excavated to a depth of 0.65m)

The natural red clay subsoil (1002) was exposed upon removal of 0.45m – 0.65m of topsoil (1000). A linear feature (F100) was identified running across the trench. It was irregular in shape and its fill (1003) was a grey brown silty-clay similar to the topsoil, suggesting it was root disturbance or animal activity. A drain cut was located at the north-east end of the trench. No archaeological features were identified.

#### Artefacts:

Two fragments of Roman pottery and two fragments of clay pipe were recovered from the cleaning layer in this trench (1001), along with tile from both the cleaning layer and from the fill of the linear feature F100.

### Trench 2

(1.8m x 12m, aligned north-east-south-west, excavated to a depth of 0.6m)

The natural red clay subsoil (2002) was exposed at the south-western end of the trench upon removal of 0.3m – 0.6m of topsoil (2000). Cut into the subsoil was an irregular feature (F203), approximately 0.26m wide and 0.14m deep. The fill (2007) contained no finds. Also identified at the south-west end of the trench was a land drain, aligned north-south. At the north-eastern end of the trench, the natural subsoil (2002) was overlain by a layer of redeposited red clay (2006), with a maximum depth of 0.4m. Cutting the subsoil at this end of the trench was a series of land drains aligned north-south and east-west, and a modern linear feature that cut the redeposited natural (F200). No archaeological features were identified.

**Artefacts:**

One fragment of medieval pottery and one fragment of tile were recovered from the topsoil (2000) in this trench. Tile, bottle glass and two fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from the fill of the modern linear feature F200. The redeposited subsoil (2006) also contained two fragments of medieval pottery.

**Trench 3**

(1.8m x 7.8m, aligned north-east-south-west, excavated to a depth of 0.8m)

The natural red clay subsoil (3002) was sealed by a layer of light brown-grey sandy silt (3003). This layer was approximately 0.14m – 0.3m deep, and contained no datable evidence. Overlying this layer throughout the trench was 0.5m of topsoil (3000). No archaeological features were identified.

**Artefacts:**

No artefacts were recovered from this trench.

**Trench 4**

(1.8m x 14m, aligned north-west-south-east, excavated to a depth of 0.25m)

The natural red clay subsoil (4002) was exposed upon removal of a 0.15m – 0.25m layer of topsoil that contained fragments of brick and rubble (4000). Cut into the subsoil on the north-eastern side of the trench was a square brick structure and a drain surrounded by concrete. Both were modern features and likely to be associated with the building. At the south-eastern end of the trench, another drain was identified (F402). This was only partially visible in plan, and ran parallel to the edge of the trench. A linear feature (F400), aligned north-east-south-west, was identified at the north-western end of the trench. This feature was 0.6m wide and 0.11m deep. The fill (4003) was similar to the topsoil, but contained a higher concentration of charcoal. The natural subsoil changed depth midway along the trench, with a vertical cut possibly indicating landscaping associated with the previous building.

**Artefacts:**

Two fragments of Roman pottery and one fragment of clay pipe were recovered from the topsoil (4000) in this trench. The fill of the linear feature F400 (4003) contained small amounts of tile, post-medieval pottery, clay pipe, slag, window glass and bone.

**Trench 5**

(1.8m x 8m, aligned north-east-south-west; 1.8m x 8.5m aligned north-west-south-east, excavated to a depth of 0.3m – 1.2m)

In the north-west-south-east arm of the trench, the natural red clay subsoil (5002) was exposed upon removal of approximately 0.3m of modern rubble. Three linear features (F500, F503, F504) were identified, parallel to each other, aligned north-east-south-west. A brick wall foundation formed the south-west edge of this trench section. A small, circular pit (F501) was located in the north-western end of this arm of the trench. The fill (5003) was a brown silt that contained modern building debris.

In the north-east-south-west arm of Trench 5, the natural subsoil was sealed by a 0.35m-deep layer of dark brown silt (5006) that contained pottery, tile fragments and a small amount of degraded bone. This layer was visible only in the south-east-facing section. A linear feature (F502), aligned north-east-south-west, was identified extending beyond the south-east-facing section. It was sealed by the dark brown silt layer (5006), and reflected a slope in the natural subsoil, not a discrete feature in itself. Sealing layer 5006 was a 0.15m-deep layer of mid-brown silt that contained occasional fragments of brick, tile and some ash (5005). This layer in turn was sealed by 0.7m of modern levelling deposits that included topsoil, clinker and tarmac (5000).

#### Artefacts:

The cleaning layer in this trench (5001) produced one fragment of Roman pottery (samian) and one fragment of medieval pottery. Two fragments of medieval pottery, two fragments of tile and one fragment of window glass were recovered from one of the linear features (F500). One fragment of Roman pottery and a small amount of tile and degraded bone was recovered from the fill of F502 (5004). The layer that sealed this feature (5006) produced 21 sherds of Roman pottery, a small amount of animal bone, and 15 fragments of very abraded tile that ranged in date from Roman to 15th century. Post-medieval pottery was recovered from the layer above (5005).

#### Trench 6

(1.8m x 12m, aligned north-west-south-east, excavated to a depth of 0.2m – 0.7m)

The natural red clay subsoil (6002) was exposed at the south-eastern end of the trench upon removal of 0.2m – 0.7m of mixed topsoil and modern demolition rubble (6000). The subsoil varied in depth due to modern disturbance, likely to be associated with the previous building. A large sub-circular feature with irregular edges and base (F600) was identified central to the trench. The fill (6003) was a very clean red silt, and it is possible that this was a variation in the natural subsoil. At the north-western end of the trench, the subsoil was cut by a series of parallel linear features (F601, F602, F603), aligned north-east-south-west. These features were 'U'-shaped, and were all approximately 0.3m deep, varying in width from 0.3m to 0.5m. Sealing these linear features was a dark grey brown silty layer (6008), approximately 0.3m deep. This layer contained a few fragments of brick and many stones, distributed mainly towards the base of the context. This layer in turn was overlain by a 0.2m-deep layer of redeposited red-brown clay subsoil (6007). Overlying this layer was topsoil and modern demolition rubble.

#### Artefacts:

A small amount of tile, degraded bone and one fragment of clay pipe were recovered from the series of linear features. No other finds were recovered from this trench.

## 8.0 Discussion

At the time of the compilation of the First Edition OS Map, the area of the proposed development was still under pasture. In 1927, when the Second Edition OS map was drawn, a substantial house set in grounds occupied the corner plot at number 7 (Nichol 2000). Although trenches 1,2,3 and 4 were located outside the building footprint, the lack of archaeological deposits within these trenches may be explained by ground reduction or disturbance in these areas associated with the construction of the original building, as evidenced by the layers of redeposited natural identified in the trenches to the north of the building, and by the possible landscaping in Trench 4 to the south. Residual pottery, however, of both Roman and medieval date was found within the topsoil, cleaning layers and modern features in these trenches.

The natural subsoil in the north-east-south-west arm of Trench 5 was exposed at a greater depth due to a rise in ground level towards the north-west end of the site. The layer identified at the base of this trench (5006) contained Roman pottery and very abraded Roman and medieval tile. This suggests that this layer is a medieval ploughsoil that has been sealed by modern overburden. This layer was visible only in the south-east-facing section; the north-west-facing section transected the building foundations and revealed only topsoil and modern building debris. The linear features identified in the north-west-south-east arm of Trench 5 were likely to be modern and associated with the building.

The linear features identified in Trench 6 were likely to be modern and associated with the building.

## 9.0 Implications and Recommendations

While most of the development site can now be shown to be of a low archaeological potential, the identification of a possible medieval ploughsoil in Trench 5 suggests a potential for survival of other deposits and features of medieval and earlier date on the north-west side of the site. This area, if likely to be affected by the construction of the apartments, or by landscaping, services or access, may need to be considered as requiring some form of mitigation response, either in the form of a design solution or possibly in the form of a watching brief, or a combination of the two. Any final decision on the need for mitigation will rest with the archaeological officers of Worcestershire County Council.

## 10.0 References

- Ferris, I. 2000 *Archaeological Specification: Archaeological Evaluation at 7, Corbett Avenue, Droitwich, Worcestershire.*
- Hartley, S. 2000 *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Work at 7, Corbett Avenue, Droitwich, Worcestershire.*
- Nichol, K. 2000 *7, Corbett Avenue, Droitwich: An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment.* BUFAU Report No. 721.

## **11.0 Acknowledgements**

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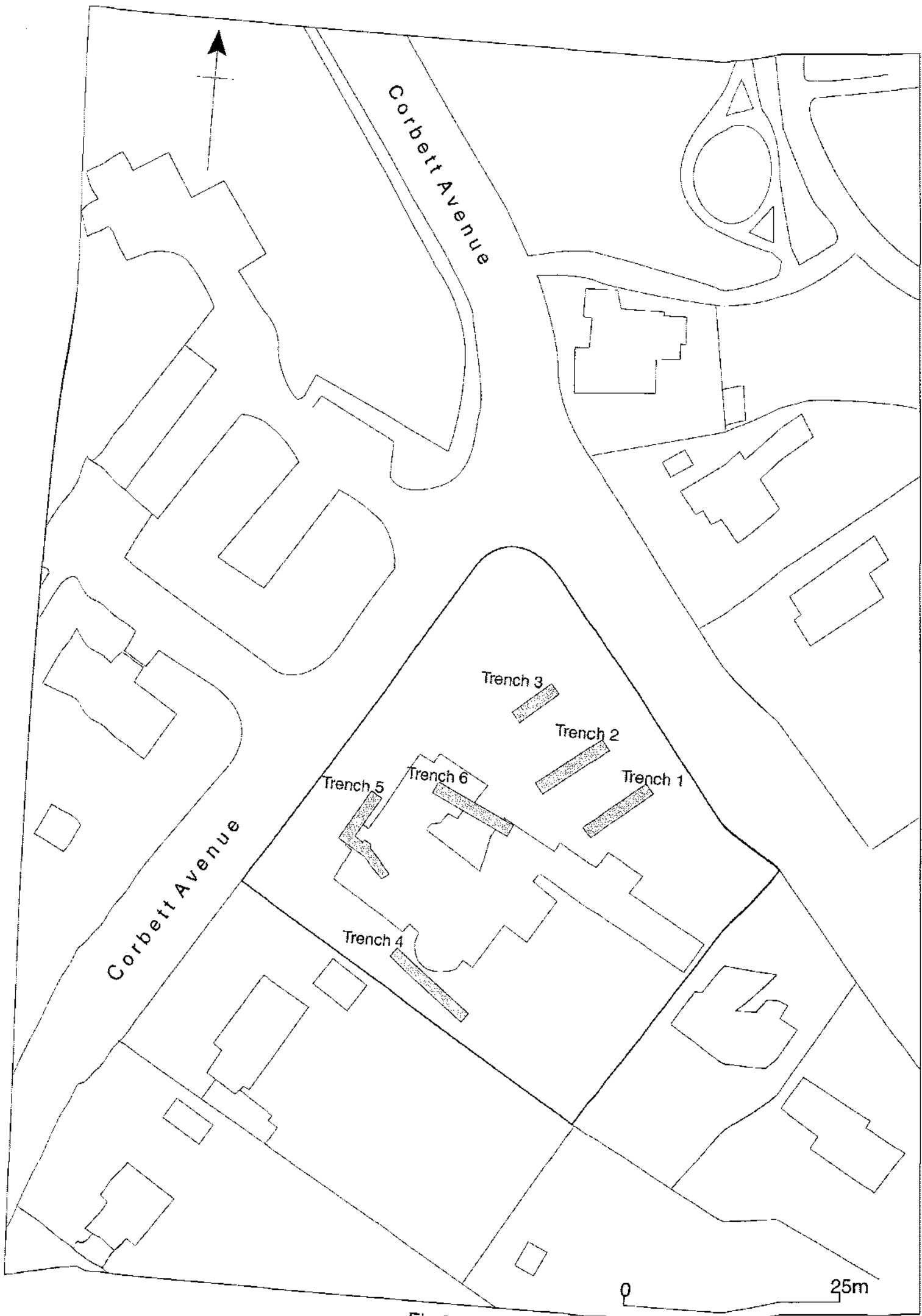


Fig.2

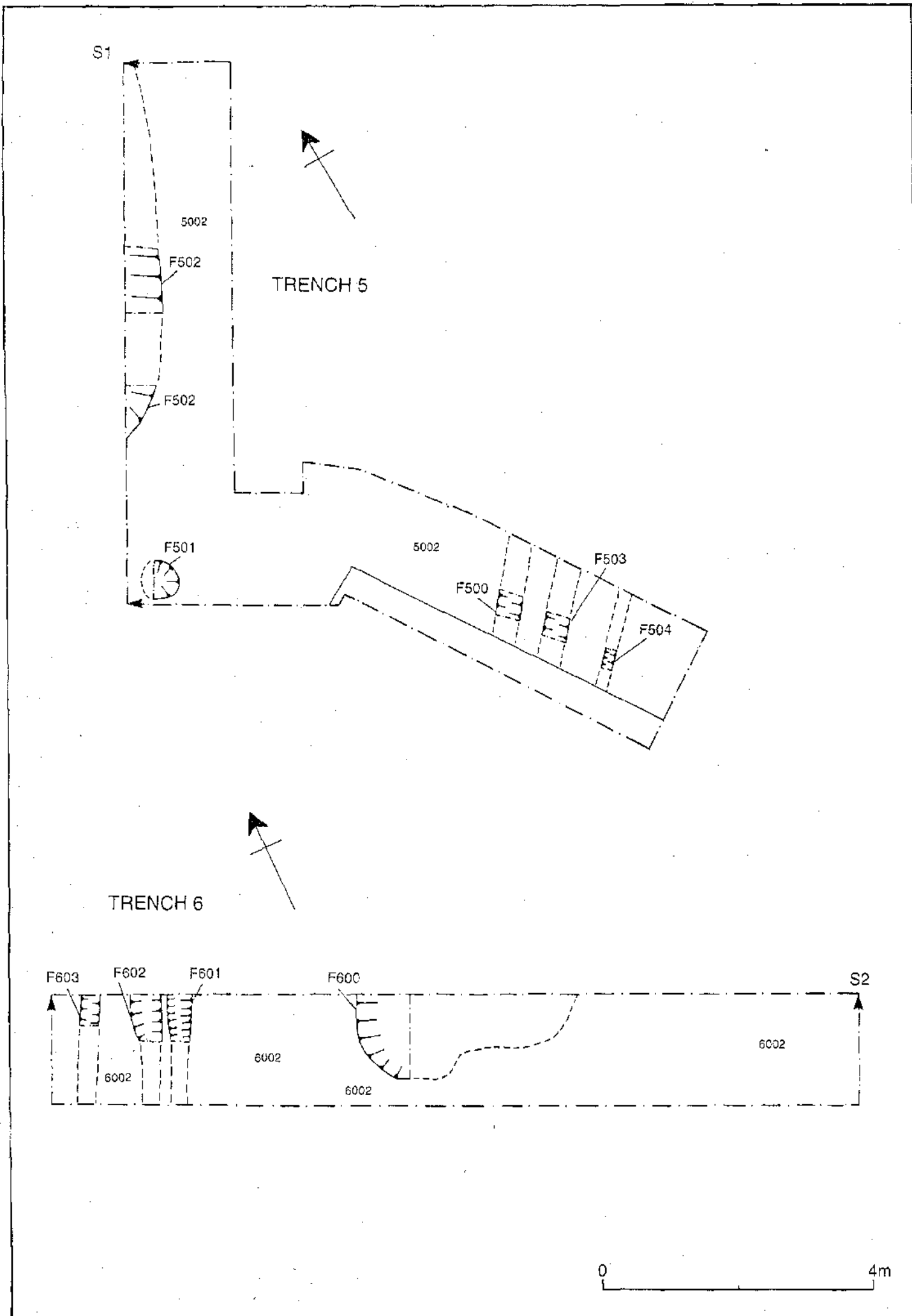


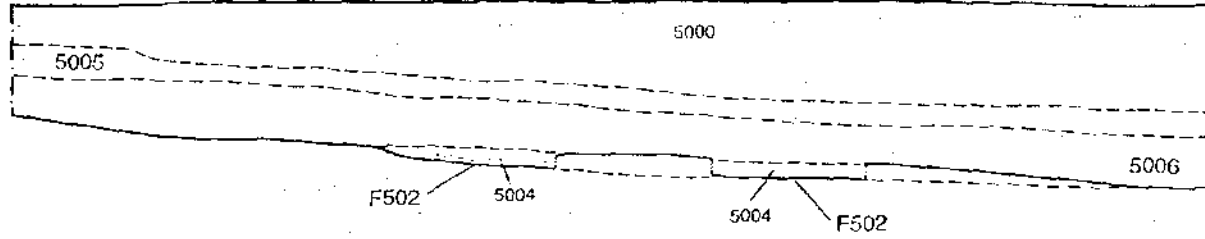
Fig.3

S1

TRENCH 5

SW

NE



S2

TRENCH 6

NW

SE

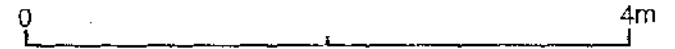
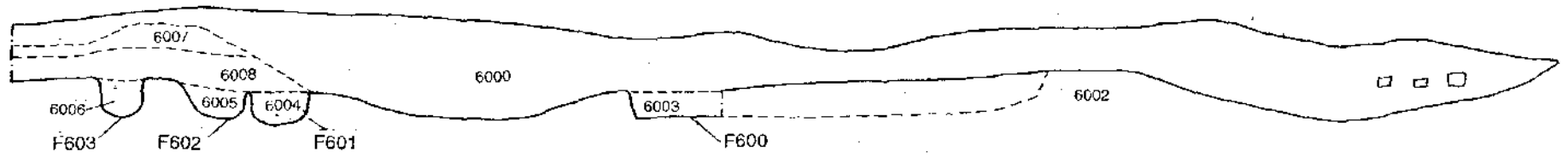


Fig.4