

**HSBC, 8 Market Square,  
Stafford:  
An Archaeological  
Excavation 2000**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
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An Archaeological Excavation 2000**

by  
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## **HSBC, 8 Market Street, Stafford: An Archaeological Excavation**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological excavation was undertaken at 8 Market Square, Stafford in August 2000, during refurbishment of the HSBC building. The proposed development was situated within the boundary of the medieval settlement at Stafford (PRN 765). An archaeological excavation to examine the potential for the recovery of archaeological deposits. The results of the excavation revealed that the basement of 8 Market Square had truncated any former archaeology within the proposed area of groundworks. No significant archaeological remains survived.*

### **Introduction**

This report details the results of the excavation of a trench within the basement of HSBC, 8 Market Square, Stafford (Figs. 1 and 2). Extensive internal refurbishment included the construction of a new lift and the forming of a new external door. This required the excavation of a hoist pit measuring 1.5m x 1.5m and excavated to a depth of 1.5m below the level of the existing basement.

The proposed development (Planning Application ref. 38889 and 388890) was situated within a medieval tenement plot with a high potential for the recovery of buried archaeological deposits. In line with guidance given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 a planning condition was placed on the development proposals. The planning condition required that an archaeological excavation should be undertaken prior to any groundworks taking place on the site.

Preservation insitu was not considered possible due to the nature of the works proposed. An evaluation was also not considered appropriate since trial trenches are normally larger than the area threatened by the hoist pit. Consequently, all deposits were fully excavated and preserved by record. This work was commissioned by Axis Architecture and Design Management limited on behalf of HSBC, and undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. The excavation was conducted in accordance with a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section of the County Archaeological Service (Staffordshire County Council, August 2000).

## **The Site**

The site is located on the south side of Market Square, fronting Greengate Street to the West (Figs. 1 and 2), the main commercial and historic artery in Stafford. The center of Stafford is located on a terrace of sand and gravel on the northern and eastern banks of the River Sow. The earliest evidence of settlement dates back to the prehistoric period, and has continued with varying degrees of intensity through the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods to the present day. The basement within the building (Fig. 3), however, appears to have truncated any archaeological deposits to a depth of more than two meters below the present ground surface. Since the site is situated within the boundary of the former medieval settlement there is a high potential for the presence of remains at this depth, particularly deeply stratified deposits, and wells, typical of medieval urban settlement deposits.

## **Aims**

The aim of the excavation was to preserve by record any archaeological remains likely to be disturbed within the area of the hoist pit, in order to contribute to an understanding of the nature, extent and significance of archaeological remains within the area.

## **Methodology**

Groundworks at the site consisted of the excavation of a single trench, approximately 2.00m long and 1.4m wide, within the basement of the property. Any significant archaeological deposits were to be excavated by hand and recorded on *pro-forma* record cards supplemented by scale plans, section drawings and photographs, where appropriate. Where no archaeological deposits were identified, the stratigraphy was to be recorded and photographed. These records comprise the site archive, which, at the time of writing, is stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

## **Results**

The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.6m below the level of the basement (totaling and depth of 2.6m below the level of the present ground surface). The lowest deposit encountered was a natural, orange sandy gravel (1007). A shallow, rounded depression (F100), approximately 0.28m in depth and 0.95m in width overlay this deposit. Feature F100 was interpreted as a natural undulation within the sand and gravel. Successive layers of orange sand and gravel with iron panning (1002 – 1006) overlay Feature F100. The basement floor was finally sealed by a layer of concrete (1001) approximately 0.08m in depth (Fig. 4)

No finds were recovered during the excavation and all deposits below the concrete basement floor (1002 to 1007) consisted of undisturbed natural.

## **Discussion**

No significant archaeological deposits were encountered during the course of the excavation. Any archaeological deposits have been truncated to a depth of over 2m within the footprint for the building. Ephemeral features and later stratigraphy has almost certainly been destroyed at this depth. However, since the building is within an area of intense Anglo Saxon and medieval occupation, the results of this excavation do not preclude the possibility that archaeological deposits have survived within other areas of the basement in the form of wells and pits.

## **Acknowledgements**

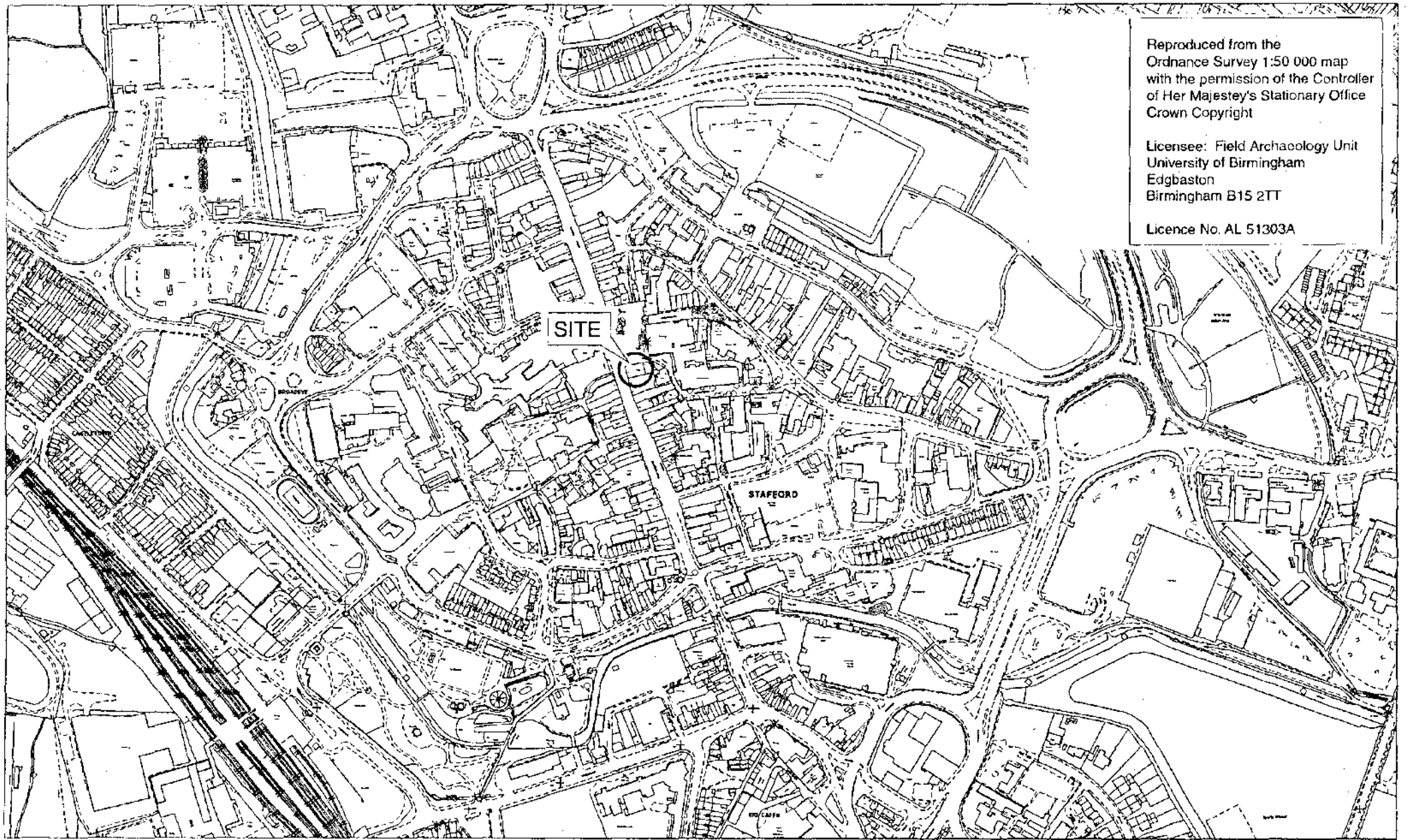
The Excavation was sponsored by IISBC Bank and was carried out by Richard Cuttler and Philip Mann. The report was written by Richard Cuttler and edited by Simon Buteaux. John Halsted prepared the illustrations.

## **References**

Staffordshire County Council 2000 *Brief for an Archaeological Excavation at HSBC, 8 Market Square, Stafford.*

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Fig.1

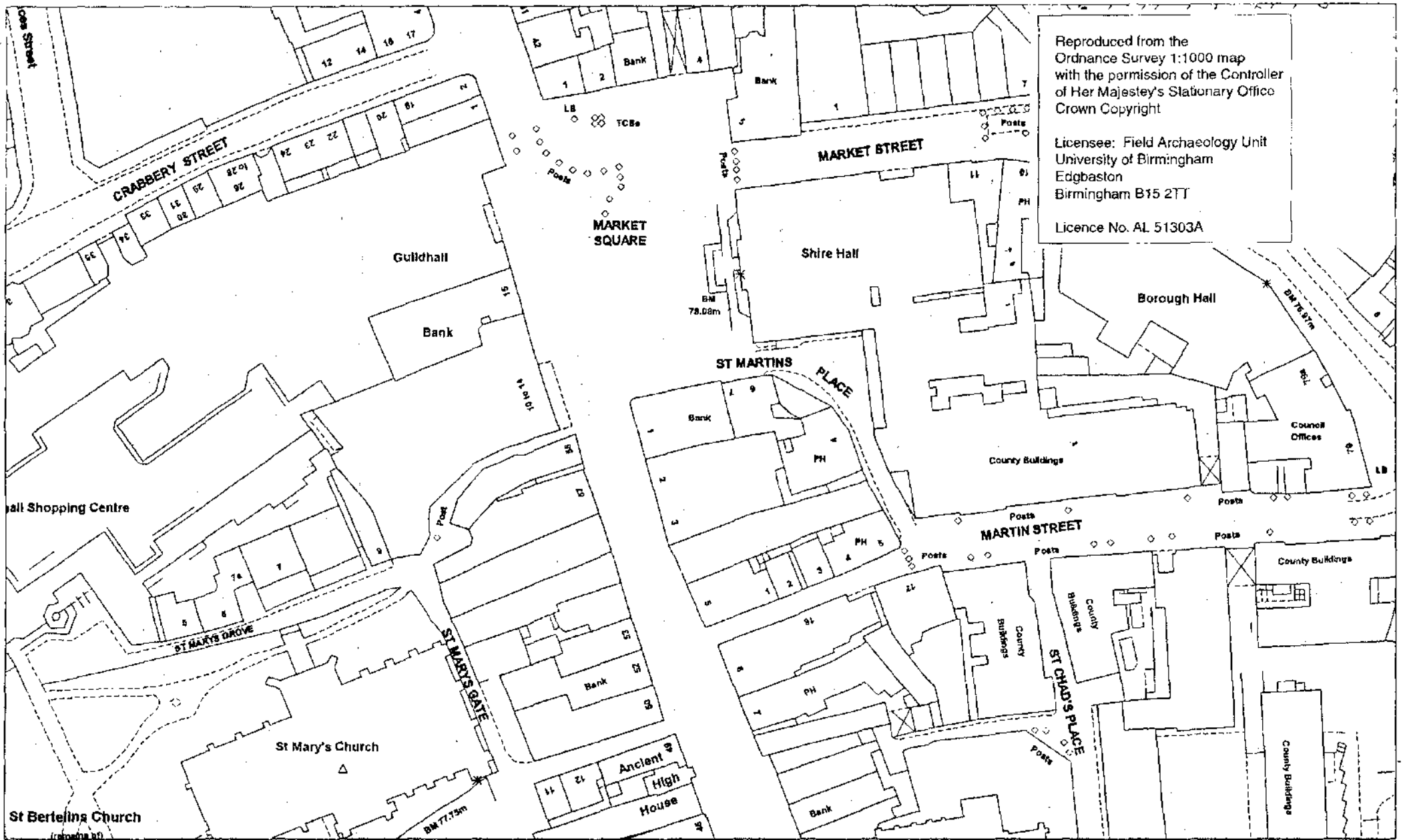
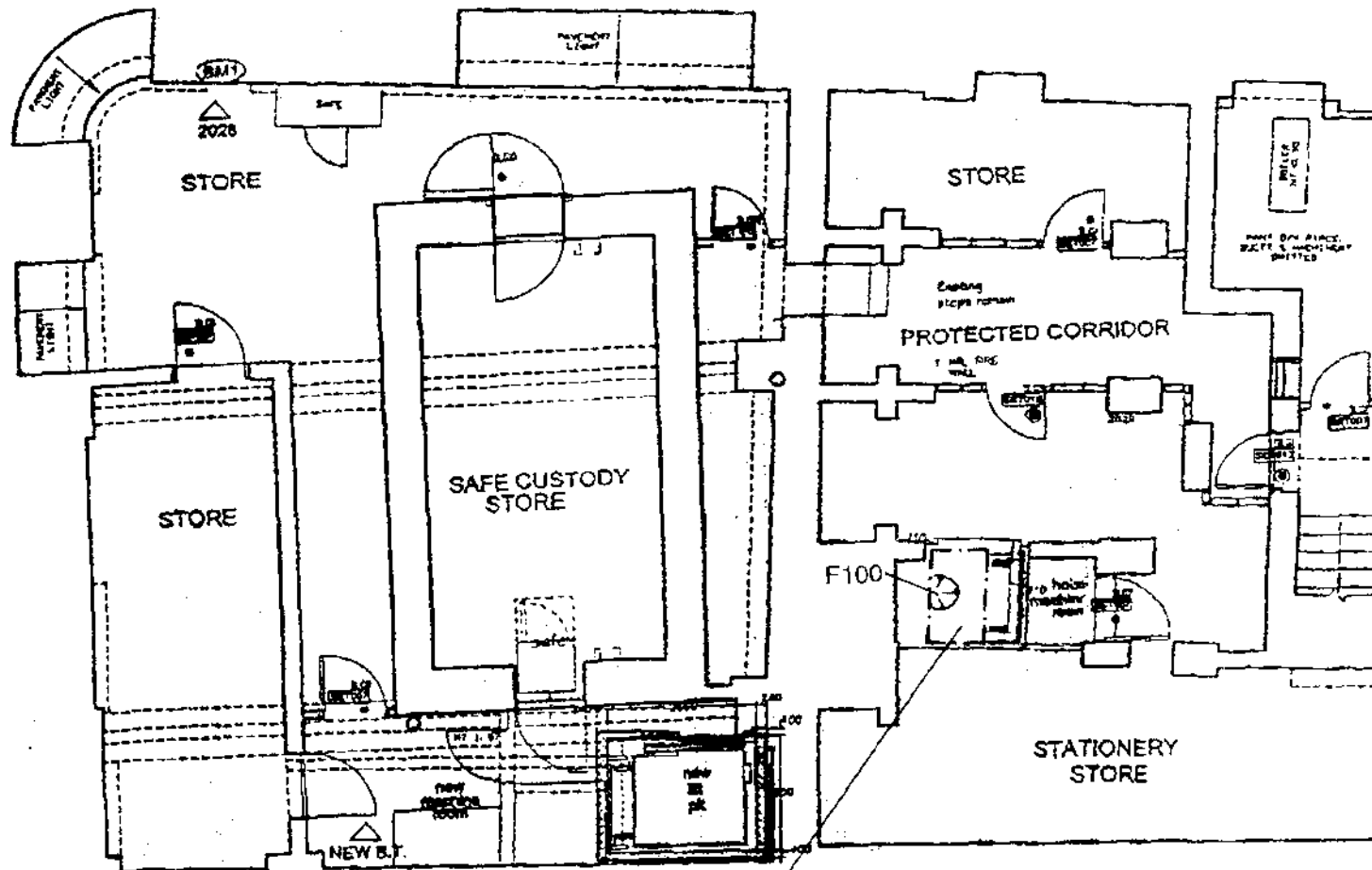


Fig.2



Area of Excavation

Based on plan supplied by Axis Architects

Fig.3



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W

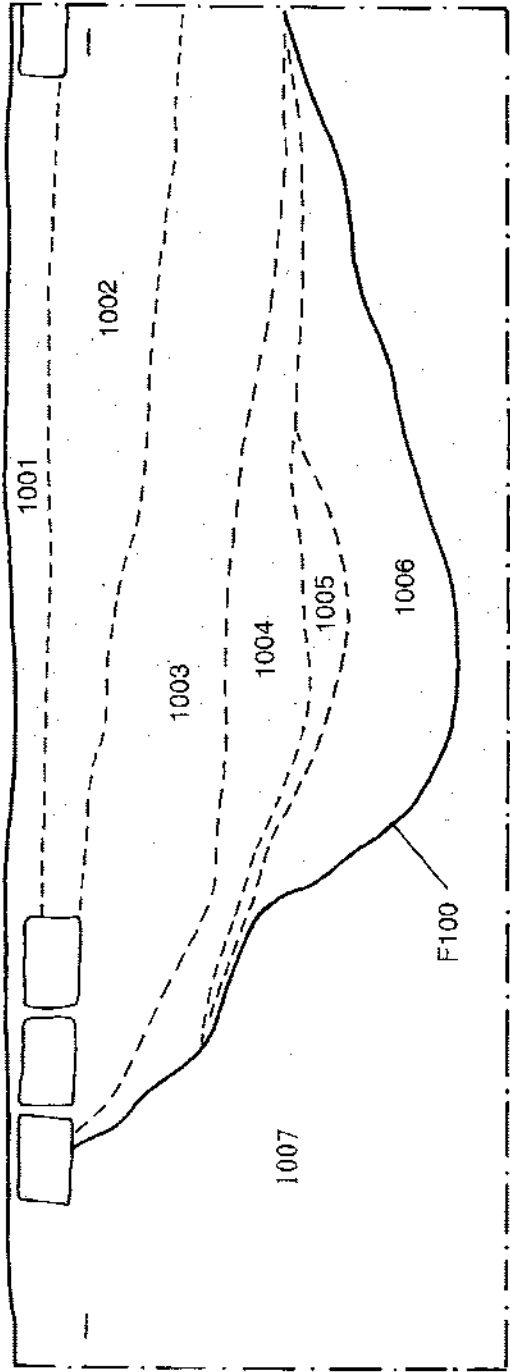


Fig.4