

**Tamworth Road, Sawley,  
Derbyshire:**

**an archaeological evaluation**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
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**Tamworth Road, Sawley,  
Derbyshire:**  
**an archaeological evaluation**

by  
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## **Tamworth Road, Sawley, Derbyshire: archaeological evaluation**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out in May 2001 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on behalf of Fairclough Homes in advance of an application for planning permission for a residential development. The development would involve the demolition of existing factory buildings at Tamworth Road, Sawley, in Derbyshire (NGR SK 447300/331500), and the erection of forty-two new dwellings. Four test trenches were located within the site following a desk-based assessment which identified areas of archaeological interest. The site was considered to have high archaeological potential due to its location close to the heart of the medieval village of Sawley. It was also considered a possibility that Sawley represented a shrunken medieval town or village. No Anglo-Saxon remains were encountered. A posthole was the only feature of possible medieval date. The foundations of buildings fronting onto Tamworth Road dated to the 18th and 19th centuries. A number of undated features were also recorded. Building recording was also undertaken on a cottage, which had been incorporated into later factory buildings. The surviving fabric of this proved to be mid to late 19th century in origin.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Fairclough Homes in advance of an application for planning permission involving demolition of existing buildings on the site, and the erection of new houses. The site is located in Sawley in southeast Derbyshire (Fig. 1). The aim of this report is to provide a description of the results of the evaluation in order to enable appropriate archaeological mitigation strategies to be devised. A desk-based assessment undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Watt 2001a) describes the historical background to the site.

The guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999) were followed, along with a specification prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Watt 2001b). The historical context of the site has been fully discussed in the desk-based assessment and is only summarised within this report.

### **2.0 Site Location (Figs. 1 and 2)**

The site, hereafter referred to as the Study Area, is in the centre of the old part of Sawley in the extreme southeast corner of Derbyshire (NGR SK 473 315). The southern edge of the Study Area lies within Sawley Conservation Area, as defined by Erewash Borough Council. The Study Area is bordered by Wilne Road to the north, Church Avenue to the east, Tamworth Road to the south, and Wilne Avenue to the west (Fig. 2). Figure 3, surveyed by Site Data (Sutton Coldfield) Ltd, shows the Study Area in greater detail.

### 3.0 Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the likely survival and significance of archaeological remains within the Study Area, to identify the need for any further archaeological work in advance of the proposed development, and to identify potential requirements for any *in situ* preservation of archaeological remains.

### 4.0 Method

For convenience of description, the Study Area has been divided into four Zones, A, B, C, and D (Fig. 2). These broadly follow the major boundaries of the original backplots shown on the Enclosure map of 1787.

- **Zone A.** The rear of the modern factory buildings covers the southern part of the zone. The northern part of the zone is concrete hard standing.
- **Zone B.** Tarmac-surfaced car-parking area surrounded in the north and east by modern factory buildings.
- **Zone C.** Contains late 19th/early 20th century buildings No. 366-368 Tamworth Road, and modern factory buildings.
- **Zone D.** Possible lace-making cottage with modern factory buildings across the northern half of the zone. The ground to the south of these buildings, in both Zones C and D is a tarmac-surfaced parking area.

### 5.0 Geology and Topography

Sawley, with Long Eaton about a mile to the northeast, lies in a shallow basin where the Derwent, Trent, Soar and Erewash rivers gather. Sawley's original settlement was sited on the well-drained gravel and loam terrace which lies above the flood level of the River Trent, which flows roughly east-west to the south of the village. The floodplain of the Trent is made up of alluvial sediments and is often waterlogged. To the south of the Trent is a low plateau of Mercia Mudstone. To the north of Sawley lies the steep edge of a low Triassic plateau.

### 6.0 Archaeological and Historical Context

No evidence of prehistoric activity was found for the Study Area itself. As the area around the site lies on the floodplains of the River Trent, archaeological features showing as cropmarks are rarely visible. Aerial photographic surveys during dry summers, however, have revealed extensive cropmarks on the Trent floodplain.

Roman activity in Sawley is evidenced by the Roman road from Derby (Little Chester) almost to the bank of the Trent, running to the west of the Study Area. An alleged Roman fort (SMR 22576) lies to the southeast of the Study Area, and within the Conservation Area.

As a village Sawley probably has its origins in Saxon times, with its focus being the church, sited in a very prominent position (a feature often associated with village forms

in Danelaw) and then expanded during medieval times. The name Sawley appears in the Domesday Book and a church may have existed at Sawley as early as the 7th century. The probable existence of a church in Sawley in the late Saxon period is an indication of the importance of the settlement, particularly since the settlement controlled a river crossing over the Trent. After the Norman Conquest, Sawley received a Norman bishop as lord of the manor and, in 1086, *Salle* was a manor in the Sec of Chester.

The evidence for the medieval period is not particularly good, but Sawley clearly remained a settlement of some importance still. By the 13th century, the manor of Sawley was separate from the prebendal manor of Lichfield. However, the bishop received substantial privileges and, in 1259, Sawley was constituted a town and received a charter to hold a market every Tuesday and a three-day Michaelmas fair. The plan of the village has classic elements of the medieval village or small town. The church and manor house, the road system and probable burgage plots combine to form this plan. The present Wilne Road, forming the northern border of the Study Area, was known as Back Street by 1787. Back Street is a name commonly used for service lanes, which often ran along the back of medieval burgage plots. The Sawley Enclosure map and award of 1787 shows the Study Area to be occupied by buildings in Zones B, C and D, fronting onto Tamworth Road.

The presence of floodplains to the south of the village of Sawley perhaps explains why the church, the oldest remaining feature of the village, retains its relative isolation at the southern tip of the settlement. Some villages are likely to have consisted of more than one unit of development. The church usually occupies the oldest site, perhaps dating from Saxon or Norman times. Then there may be an area regulated in the medieval period by a manorial lord, and later an 18th or 19th-century development in the vicinity of a railway or canal (Rowley 1978). This pattern is perhaps evidenced in part with Sawley. The village remained larger than its neighbour Long Eaton until the Midland Counties Railway arrived at Long Eaton in 1839, and then the Erewash Valley branch eight years later. This accompanied an influx of machine-lace workers into the latter town and a consequent boom effect on the industry there, with a corresponding decline in the importance of Sawley. The Study Area itself appears to have retained a similar character throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, undergoing only a small amount of development, involving some building construction and further division of plots. It was not until c.1960 that its character was changed dramatically by the demolition of then existing buildings and the construction of the current factory buildings.

## **7.0 Trial Trenching (Fig. 3)**

### *Objectives and Methods*

The objective of the archaeological evaluation was to determine the likely presence or absence of any archaeological deposits and features within the Study Area. The evaluation also aimed to establish the extent, date and character of surviving archaeological deposits and to assess their quality and significance. In particular, the evaluation aimed to assess the extent to which archaeological deposits had been

preserved or damaged by the buildings fronting onto the Tamworth Road and by later development. The evaluation was also intended to provide information concerning the depth of archaeological deposits and their implications for the proposed development.

Four trial-trenches were excavated. Within each trench the concrete surfaces, topsoil and modern overburden were mechanically removed with a JCB, under archaeological supervision, to the top of any significant archaeological features and deposits, or to the top of the natural subsoil. The sections and the base of the trenches were then cleaned by hand to define possible archaeological features.

Following the desk-based assessment (Watt 2000a) the trenches were originally located to test the areas of highest archaeological potential. These trench locations had to be modified to avoid disturbance to buildings and services. The bore-hole survey (Geotechnical Developments 2001) highlighted the presence of hydrocarbons suspended within the subsoil in the western half of Zone A. The northern halves of Zones B, C and D are currently occupied by factory buildings. The area evaluated was therefore concentrated within the eastern half of Zone A and the southern parts of Zones B and D.

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

#### **Trench 1 (Zone B, Fig.4)**

*(1.7m x 17m, aligned north-south, excavated to a depth of 1.0m)*

Trench 1 was aligned along the western boundary of the site

Grey-brown sand and gravel subsoil (1012) was recorded at a depth of 1.0m at the southern end of the Trench 1. At the northern end of the trench the subsoil was orange-brown in colour (1004) and recorded at a depth of 0.9m below the modern surface. Towards the southern end of the trench was an area of grey-black organic clay (1010) approximately 0.10m in depth. Two east-west aligned drystone walls composed of grey-green sandstone (F104, F105) were recorded approximately 2m apart. Both walls were composed of irregularly shaped stones, which measured up to 0.25m across and also contained brick fragments.

Four features were recorded cutting the subsoil at the northern end of Trench 1. The largest of these features (F100) was an ovoid pit. It measured a maximum of 0.70m in width, and 0.26m in depth. It was backfilled with silt (1005). To the south were two shallow circular cuts (F101 and F102) measuring approximately 0.35m across and 0.10m in depth. At the very western edge of the trench was a post-hole (F110) measuring approximately 0.48m across. This vertically-sided cut had two packing stones in its base.

A mixed layer of black ash with silty sand and building rubble (1003) sealed all the backfilled features and the subsoil. Layer 1003 included fragments of brick, plaster, and

concrete measuring approximately 0.6m in depth. Above were layers of tarmac and hardcore (1000, 1002) measuring a total of 0.30m in depth.

No artifacts were recovered from Trench 1.

### *Interpretation*

It seems likely that the organic clay is natural in origin. East-west aligned drystone walls F104 and F105 may represent the footings of demolished buildings fronting onto Tamworth Road. The brick inclusions suggest a post-medieval date. The largest of the negative features in the northern part of the trench (F100) is probably the result of root disturbance. The two small circular features (F101 and F102) are very shallow, and may be interpreted as the bases of heavily truncated post-settings, or as natural features. Ovoid feature (F110) appears to represent the remains of a post-hole. Assigning a date to these features is difficult due to the absence of finds. The remaining layers in Trench 1 relate to 19th and 20th century levelling and surfacing.

### **Trench 2 (Zone B, Fig.4)**

*(3.4m x 17m, aligned east-west, excavated to a depth of 1.0m)*

Trench 2 was located in the southern part of Zone B to examine the potential for the survival of archaeological remains fronting onto Tamworth Road.

Grey-brown natural sand and gravel (1045) was recorded at a depth of 1.0m below the modern surface at the western end of Trench 2. Since the Trench was shortened slightly due to the presence of services, the eastern end was correspondingly widened. At this end of the trench the natural gravel was encountered at a depth of 0.50m below the modern surface. The gravel (1045) was overlain by orange alluvial clay (1022) measuring 0.15m in depth.

Towards the centre of the trench was a square, brick-lined feature (F113), approximately 0.6m across. A drystone wall on a northeast-southwest axis was represented by a single course of substantial sandstone blocks (F112). This survived to a height of 0.20m. Further to the east was a single circular cut (F107), measuring 0.4m in diameter. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the surface of this feature during hand cleaning. To the southeast was a circular pit (F108). This feature measured 0.06m in depth and 0.57m in diameter. A single sherd of medieval pottery together with brick fragments were recovered from the fill (1015). This pit was truncated by a rectangular brick-lined structure, backfilled with ash (F109).

At the eastern end of Trench 2 was a layer of brown silt (1046, not illustrated), containing fragments of plaster and brick, overlain by a floor surface of quarry tiles (1032). The floor surface was at a depth of approximately 0.3m below the modern surface, and was edged to the north and east by concrete footings (1047).



Mixed layers of black ash with silty sand and building rubble (1020, 1021) sealed the backfilled features, and measured a depth of 0.45m. This layer was in turn sealed by layers of tarmac and hardcore (1018, 1019) measuring 0.30m in depth.

### *Interpretation*

Features F107 and F108 are probably the earliest features in this trench. Both were associated with medieval pottery. The northeast-southwest aligned wall (F112) probably forms the rear wall of a demolished building fronting onto Tamworth Road. This wall is undated. The tiled floor surface (1032) relates to a later structure. The tiles are typically late 19th century in style, and the footings suggest a later post-medieval date. The brick lined features (F109 and F113) are probably contemporary with the tiled floor. The remaining layers in Trench 2 relate to 19th and 20th century levelling and surfacing.

### **Trench 3 (Zone D, Fig 5)**

*(1.7m x 18.5m, aligned north-south, excavated to a depth of 1.5m)*

Trench 3 was aligned along the eastern edge of the study area, and was located to examine any evidence of properties fronting onto Tamworth Road, and also to test the potential of the back-plot area.

The orange sand (1039) subsoil was recorded at a depth of 0.8m at the southern end of the trench, and at a depth of 1.5m at the northern end of the trench. A wall (1024) survived for a length of 4m at the southern end of the trench. This wall was constructed from ashlar sandstone blocks, and survived two courses high (maximum height of 0.33m). To the north of the wall were two square-shaped cuts backfilled with black silt-sand (1026, 1027) and brick fragments. The largest of these (1027) may have been associated with the remains of a brick-built structure recorded in the western part of the trench.

In the northern part of the trench the subsoil was overlain by a layer of black silt (1038) which contained pottery, bone, brick, and fragments of clay pipe. This layer measured between 0.20m and 0.50m in depth. A layer of light brown sand and gravel (1037) sealed the black silt (1038) layer and measured 0.4m in depth. This was in turn sealed by a layer of brown silty-clay (1036) measuring 0.10m in depth.

A layer of dark brown silt-sand (1035) sealed the backfilled features, and varied between 0.20m and 0.50m in depth. This was overlain by layers of hardcore and rubble (1033, 1034) with a combined depth of 0.30m. Two service trenches (1025 and 1028) with an associated brick-built inspection shaft (1029) were also noted in Trench 3.

### *Interpretation*

Wall 1024 almost certainly relates to a property fronting Tamworth Road. The lack of artifactual evidence makes this difficult to put into the chronology of the site. However,

brick fragments were included in the mortar, suggesting a later post medieval date for the building. Pottery recovered from the earliest layer at the northern end of Trench 3 (1038) suggests an 18th century date for this activity. Deposits in this area may have survived better because of the undulation in the natural ground surface. The two square cuts (1026 and 1027) possibly relate to the footings of 19th century buildings. The remaining layers in Trench 3 are associated with 19th and 20th century levelling and surfacing.

#### **Trench 4 (Zone A, Fig 5)**

*(1.7m x 22m, aligned north-south, excavated to a depth of 1.4m)*

In the northern end of the trench the natural subsoil, a light orange sand and gravel (1040), was encountered at a depth of 0.67m below the modern surface. This subsoil was cut by a well-defined, north-south aligned ditch (F111). The ditch was cut with a U shaped profile to a depth of 0.36m. No artifacts were recovered from the light brown sandy fill (1030). The southern end of Trench 4 was excavated to a depth of 1.4m, at which level excavation ceased when a service trench (1044) was exposed, but the natural subsoil was not identified. A layer of dark brown silty-clay (1043) which contained brick rubble and measured 0.30m in depth sealed ditch F111 and the subsoil (1040). This layer was overlain by a layer of hardcore (1042) measuring 0.12m in depth and by a concrete surface (1041), measuring 0.25m in depth.

#### *Interpretation*

The lack of dating evidence from the ditch (F111) makes interpretation of the feature difficult. The alignment of the ditch suggests it may be a former plot boundary belonging to 18th and 19th century properties fronting onto Wilne Road. Any archaeological features that may have been present in the southern half of Trench 4 would have been destroyed by the cutting of service trench 1044.

#### **8.0 The finds by Annette Hancocks**

The finds assemblage recovered was small, but has nevertheless provided some dating evidence. One sherd comprised a single diagnostic base angle, from the cleaning surface of post-hole F107 (1014). This was a greyware sherd of quartz temper, demonstrating external sooting and of probable medieval date 11th-12th century AD. Further finds were recovered from feature F108 (1015). The material identified included a single flint flake, a medieval greyware body sherd with external sooting and two fragments of undiagnostic tile.

Additional finds were recovered from layers 1037 and 1038, and comprised pottery of late 18th/19th century date. This included saltglaze wares, blackware and trailed slipware. 1284g of animal bone was also recovered, along with seven clay pipe fragments and two fragments of tile. The assemblage is tabulated below:

Find type	Quantity	Weight (g)
Medieval pottery	2	36g
Post-medieval pottery	69	2103g
<i>Total pottery</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>2139g</i>
Tile	4	420g
Animal bone	13	1284g
Clay pipe	7	25g
Modern vessel glass	1	11g
Flint	2	11g

This potential of this assemblage is very limited.

## 9.0 Building assessment by Steve Litherland

The desk-top assessment (Watt 2001a) identified two buildings of potential historical interest within the proposed development area, a putative 19<sup>th</sup> century lacemaker's workshop (SMR 22555) and an early 20<sup>th</sup> century shoemaker's workshop (SMR 22556), which were briefly recorded in a gazetteer of industrial archaeological sites in Derbyshire (Fowkes 1986).

A staged approach was adopted in order to evaluate the buildings. The first stage consisted of a rapid visual inspection. This found that it was not possible to formally identify the shoemaker's workshop. The only candidate was part of a mixed range of buildings situated immediately behind No. 366/368 Tamworth Road. However, this structure was completely stripped to the brick walls and retained no historic interest. The putative early to mid 19th century lacemaker's workshop turned out to be mainly later 19th century in date. There was no structural evidence that it had been used for lacemaking, the lack of lighting suggesting that it was more likely to have been used as a store. However, a set of written notes and sketch plans was compiled, and a photographic record was made of any significant architectural details using colour print film. This forms part of the project archive. A brief summary of the evidence is presented below.

Three construction phases were identified. The earliest remnants of build consisted of discrete areas of clamped brick walling. It was clear that these had been incorporated as minor elements of a substantially later 19th century structure. To this building various 20th century alterations had been made. These mainly consisted of the cutting of new

openings for windows and doors and the strengthening of the floors with RSJs, and can be confidently ascribed to the period when this building was part of the drinks factory.

The evidence for a later 19th century date for the majority of the structure was:

- The use of regular flemish bond brick that measured 9¼ by 4½ by 2⅞ inches (i.e. not clamped brick).
- The character of the carpentry of the roof. This consisted of two trusses of sawn timber with bolted joints. The trusses had no tie beam so as not to impede access throughout the attic. Instead, the truss consisted of a collar and king post that supported a small ridge piece. A single pair of back purlins provided longitudinal support. These were simply bolted in the middle through an undersquinted butt in halved scarf.
- The evident reuse of two halves of a balanced sash window with small panes in the attic (Plate 1).

The workshop was a small one-and-a-half storey building that measured approximately 10m by 5m in plan. The building had two rooms on the ground floor with an open attic above. The west room had a cart opening spanned by a large wooden lintel. This was later blocked in and a pair of doors inserted, the easternmost giving access to a steeply rising set of stairs to the attic and a landing above. The eastern room occupied two thirds of the ground floor of the building, a low brick shelf with three arches situated against the east wall was the only original feature.

The proposed phasing ties with that of the map evidence that does not show this building before 1881. It is unlikely to have been used for lacemaking.

## 10.0 Discussion

No features of Prehistoric or Roman date were identified. River gravel deposits are often the focus of prehistoric activity due to the light soils and ease of access to water sources. Feature F111 in Trench 4 may relate to post medieval plot boundaries, however the lack of settlement debris within the fill may suggest the feature is earlier in date.

Given the close proximity of the Study Area to the historic core of the medieval village of Sawley, known to be of importance in both Saxon and medieval times, there is a paucity of below-ground archaeological remains dating from these periods. No Anglo-Saxon features were encountered. Medieval activity may be represented by features F107 and F108, which each produced a sherd of datable pottery. The desk based assessment suggests that the Study Area was located at the centre of the medieval village, and as such the evaluation might have been expected to find more features of medieval date. It may be possible that the area has been levelled down, prior to the construction of buildings in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This may account for the lack of medieval building remains. Trenches 1 and 3, however, investigated areas within possible backplot areas, where any features such as rubbish pits and wells may have been anticipated. The

absence of medieval pottery from these trenches may indicate levelling or that activity was sparse.

An alternative possibility is that the focus of the medieval village could have lain outside the Study Area. The church located to the south of the Study Area could have provided a focus for the settlement. Tamworth Road draws a fairly straight line between Long Eaton and Castle Donnington, although close to Sawley church the road curves round to the north. If this road was formerly aligned around the south side of the church, the focus of Anglo-Saxon/medieval Sawley would lie to the south. The flooding of the River Trent is well documented, and may have influenced the siting and layout of the village. Such possible flooding could have caused the migration of the settlement focus, since development to the south may have encroached into the floodplain.

The impact of 19th century development on the below-ground archaeology appears to have been slight within the areas tested by trenching, with no cellars encountered, and floor surfaces and walls of buildings post-dating the 17th century surviving well along the Tamworth Road frontage. It seems likely that these floor surfaces and walls relate to buildings identified on the Sawley Enclosure map and award of 1787, and on later Ordnance Survey maps.

## **11.0 Provisional recommendations**

The recommendations below provides an outline of the suggested archaeological mitigation measures which could be required in advance of development. The precise scope of the archaeological mitigation measures would be determined by the Planning Archaeologist, Derbyshire Council.

### **Zone A**

- It is recommended that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during any below-ground works deeper than 0.5m below the current ground level. Consideration may be given to the results of the bore hole study, which suggests the presence of hydrocarbons in the western half of the zone. This may have an adverse impact on any potential archaeological remains in this part of Zone A.

### **Zones B, C and D**

- It is recommended that an archaeological watching brief be carried out in the southern extent of these zones during any below-ground works deeper than 0.4m below the current ground level. The purpose of the watching brief would be to provide a record of any archaeological deposits or features which might be present, and to contribute towards an understanding of the history and the significance of the archaeology of the site as a whole. These aims would be achieved through a programme of archaeological monitoring visits to the site during contractors' below-ground works.

## 12.0 Acknowledgements

The project was sponsored by Fairclough Homes. The evaluation was supervised by Richard Cuttler, with the assistance of Erica Macey, Andy Rudge and Josh Williams. The site was monitored for Derbyshire County Council by Dr David Barrett. This report was written by Richard Cuttler and edited by Simon Buteux. The figures were prepared by Nigel Dodds. Chapter 6 contains a summary of the desk-based assessment results (Watt 2001a). The assessment of the pottery assemblage was by Annette Hancocks, and the building assessment by Steve Litherland

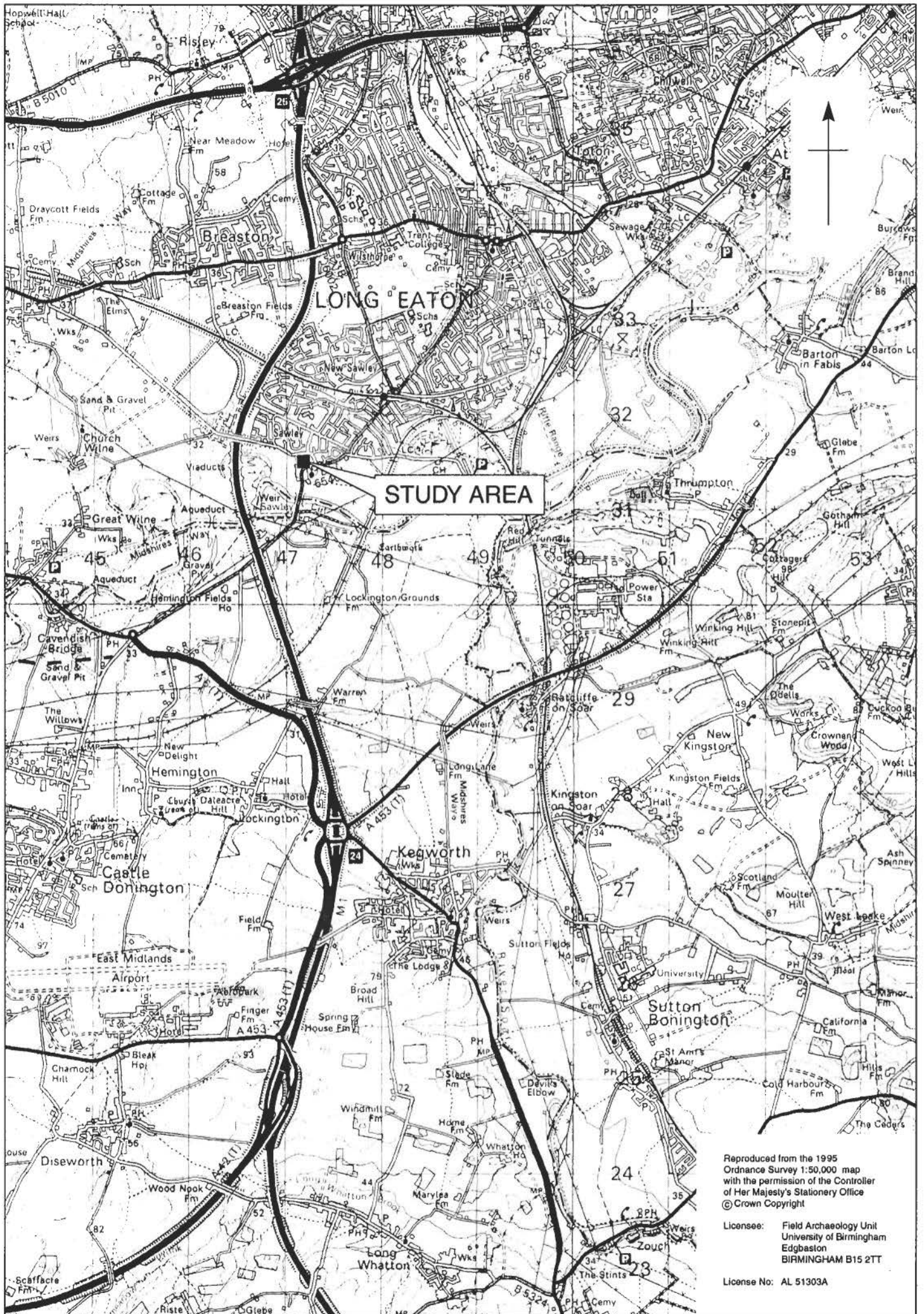
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Fig.1

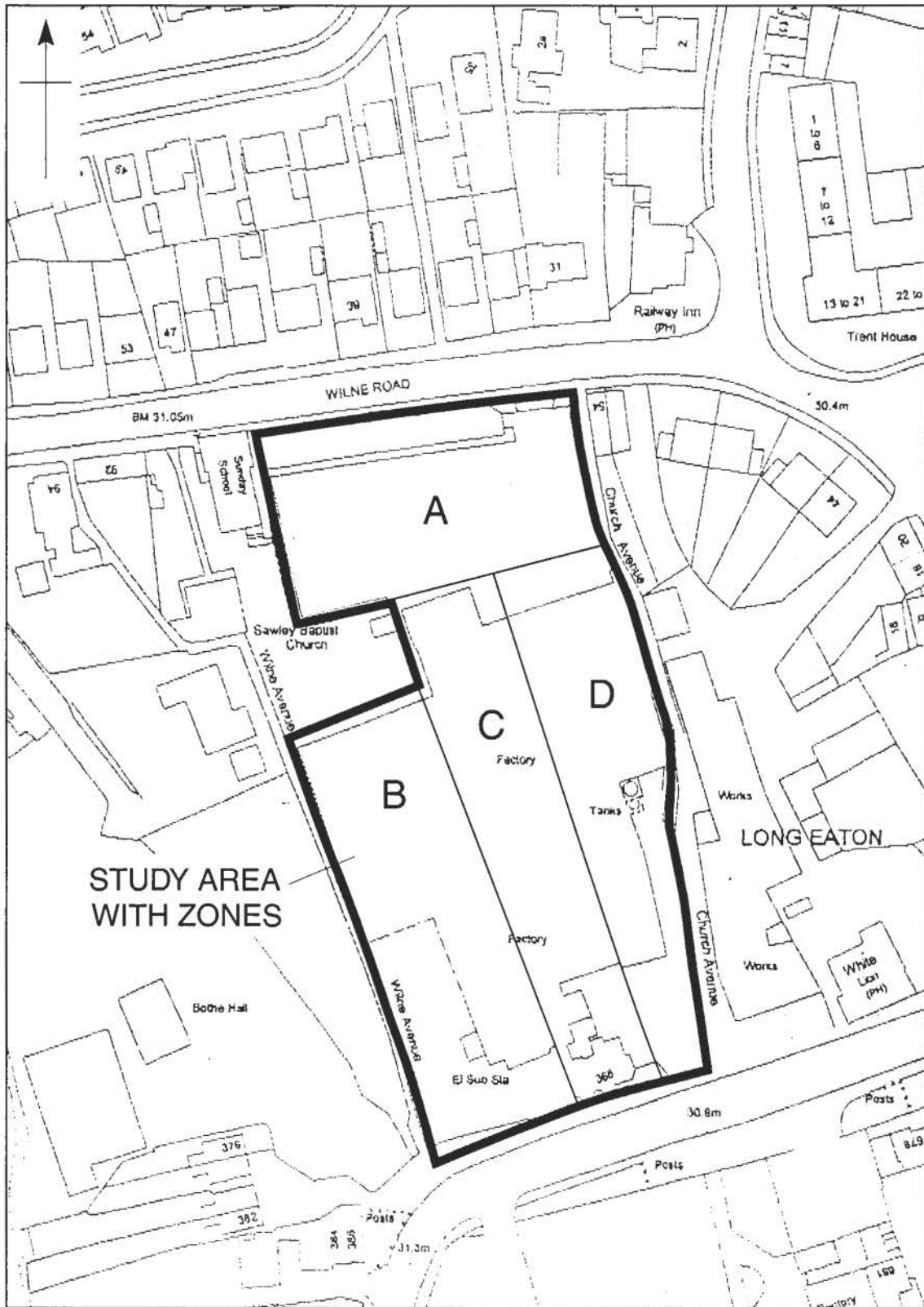


Fig.2



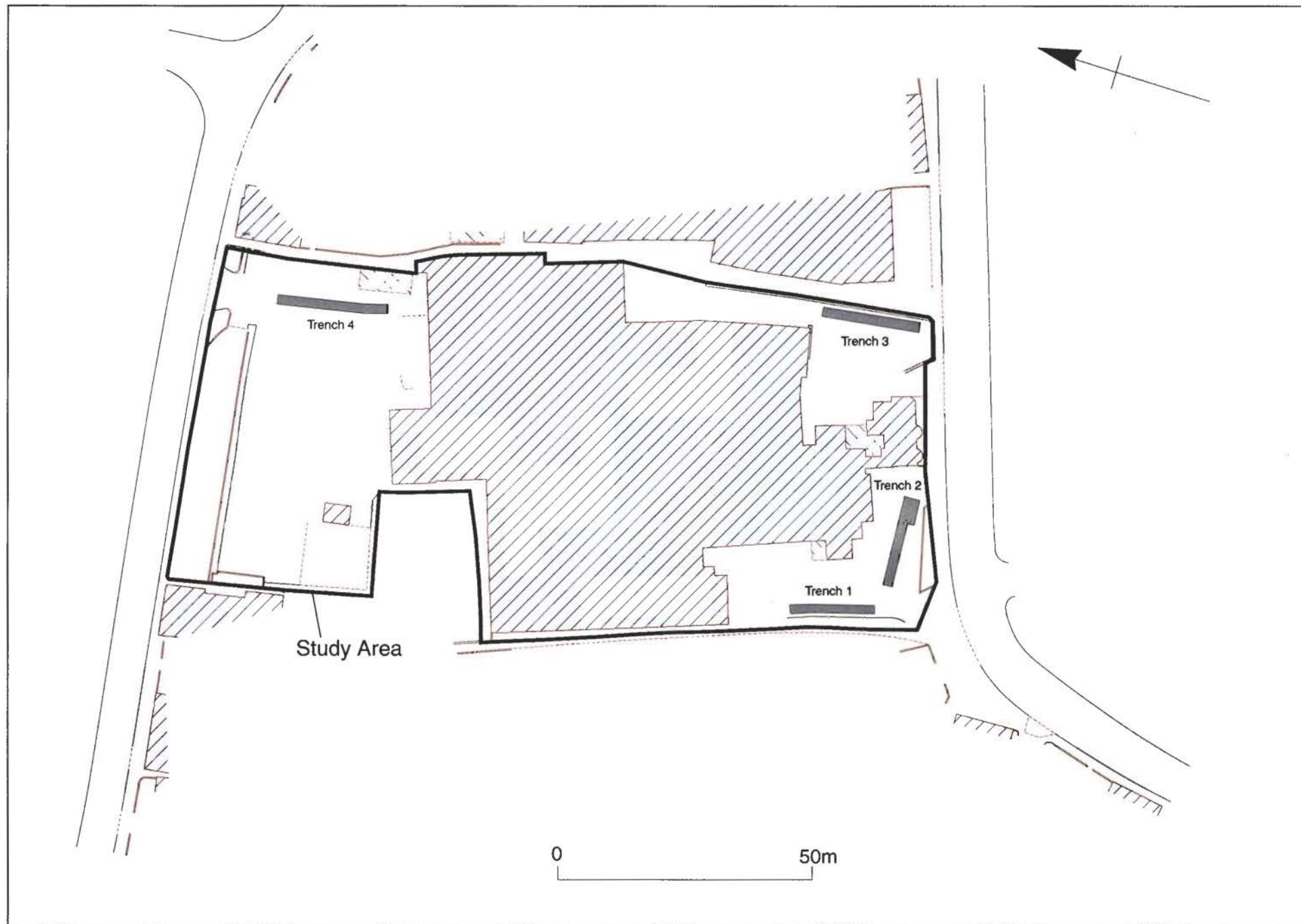


Fig.3

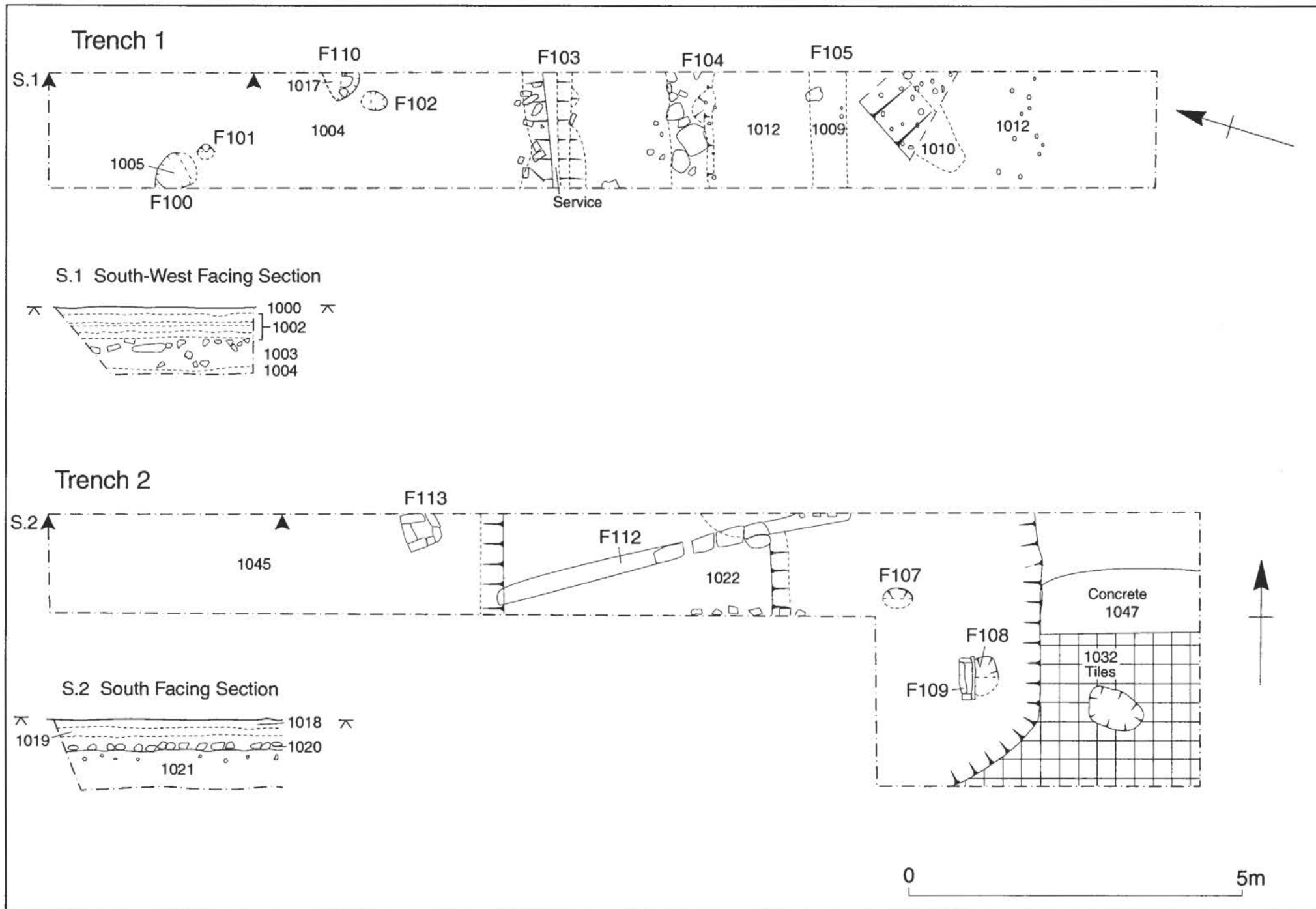


Fig.4

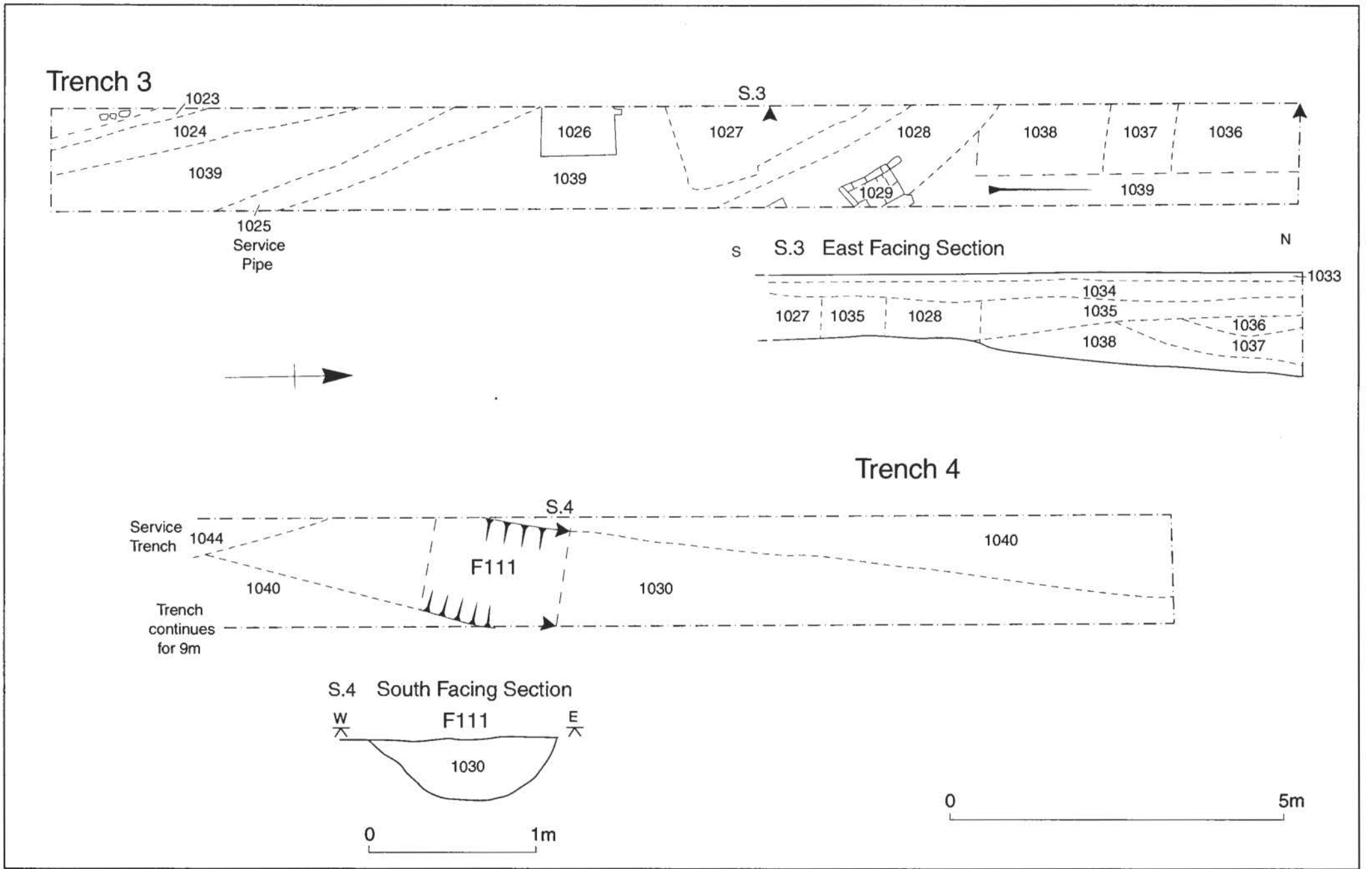


Fig.5



Plate 1