

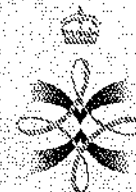
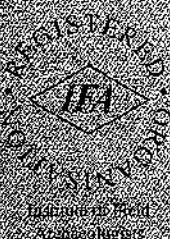


THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BIRMINGHAM

**The Manor, Hollycroft  
Crescent, Hinckley,  
Leicestershire:**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
2001**

*Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit*



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1996

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
Project No. 814.2  
August 2001

**The Manor, Hollycroft Crescent, Hinckley, Leicestershire:  
An Archaeological Evaluation 2001**

NGR SP 422 945

Site Code: X.A. 98 2001

by  
Laurence Jones

with contributions by Lynne Bevan and Malcom Hislop

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Fairclough Homes (Midlands) Limited  
The Pavillion,  
Amber Close,  
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## **Contents**

- 1.0 Summary
- 2.0 Introduction
- 3.0 Site location and description
- 4.0 Archaeological and historical background
- 5.0 Objectives
- 6.0 Method
- 7.0 Results
- 8.0 The Finds (by Lynne Bevan)
- 9.0 Building assessment (by Malcom Hislop)
- 10.0 Discussion
- 11.0 Provisional recommendations
- 12.0 Acknowledgements
- 13.0 References

## **List of Figures (at end of report)**

- 1: General location map
- 2: Location of test pits and trenches
- 3: Distribution of worked flint in test pits
- 4: Trench 10, plan and sections
- 5: Trench 11, plan and section (simplified); Trench 12, section

## **List of Plates**

- 1: Northwest elevation of 'the Manor'
- 2: Southwest elevation of 'the Manor'
- 3: Southeast elevation of former coach house
- 4: Southwest elevation of 'the Manor'
- 5: Southwest elevation of former coach house
- 6: Southwest and northwest elevations of 'the Manor'

Archaeologist, Leicestershire Museums Arts and Records Service and adheres to a brief prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 2001).

The site archive is currently held at BUFAU and will be deposited with the appropriate repository within a reasonable period of time after completion of the evaluation, subject to approval from the landowner.

### **3.0 Site location and description**

The site is located off Hollycroft Crescent about 1km to the northwest of Hinckley town centre in the southwest of Leicestershire (SP 422 945, Fig. 1). The site (Fig.2) is irregular in shape, bordered by Hollycroft Crescent to the southwest, residential development and allotments to the west, and residential development to the north and east. It is situated on an area of high ground. The highest point on the site is 121m AOD sloping down to the south to 114m AOD.

The solid geology comprises of Triassic rocks concealed by drift deposits, including Polesworth and Bromsgrove Sandstone formations, and Mercia Mudstone. The glacial drift comprises clays, sand and gravels. The post-glacial drift includes First River Terrace deposits and alluvium. The river terrace deposits comprise clayey gravel with flint and Bunter quartzite pebbles (British Geological Survey 1990).

### **4.0 Archaeological and historical background**

The desk-based assessment (Watt 2001) carried out prior to the to the evaluation gives the detailed archaeological and historical background and only a summary is provided here. No evidence of prehistoric activity was found within the site itself. The assessment found that the site lies within a landscape rich in prehistoric activity, including many finds of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age date and, together with its location on topographically and geologically favourable ground, it was considered that, although parts of the site have been disturbed, the potential for the existence of buried remains of this date was relatively high.

The site is on an area of high ground, and this topographical advantage, together with its geology of sand and gravel, makes it similar to other local areas, particularly to the south and west, where evidence of Palaeolithic activity has been discovered. The gravel contains flint, making it rich in material for the manufacture of implements in prehistoric times.

Evidence of Palaeolithic activity has been found close to the site, near Hollycroft Park, just to the southeast of the site. Here a peat bed contained prehistoric oak and birch, auroch bones, worked flint and a pot boiler. More auroch bones were found near Granville Road less than 1km south of the site. Other finds dating from the Palaeolithic period have been found in surrounding villages and towns, including Burbage to the

An archaeological evaluation south of Coventry Road, just over 2km southwest of the site (Thomas 1999) found inter-cutting linear ditches and gullies and some possible pits (SMR 49SW BV). Although no firm structural evidence was uncovered, many of the features contained charcoal and burnt stones, and the finds indicated a activity ranging from the Late Bronze Age through the Iron Age and into the early Romano-British period. Another evaluation, about 0.5km to the north of this site (SMR 49SW BW) found more gullies, postholes, and pits. Although the few finds were not dateable the proximity of this site to the evaluation site south of Coventry Road, (SMR 49SW BV) may indicate a similar occupation range. 1.5 km southeast of the site, in Burbage, a Middle Bronze Age side-looped spearhead and a Polden Hill-type pre-Flavian Romano-British brooch were found by Underwood and Conner (SMR 49SW X). About 0.9km to the southeast of the site, a possible Late Bronze Age copper alloy loop was found (SMR 49SW BC).

Miscellaneous finds from the Romano-British period have been discovered in Hinckley. These included: a coin hoard, 2.3km to the southwest of the site (SMR 49SW AG), two Roman coins (SMR 49SW AP) less than 1km to the south of the site and Roman pottery, tile fragments, tesserae, and a fragment of a flat quern were found further to the east near Park House (SMR 49SW U). Watling Street (SMR 49SW Y) runs from northwest to southeast along the southwestern edge of the present town.

The Anglo-Saxon period is represented by the find of two spearheads and a shield boss (SMR 49SW AQ) near Watling Street. The site lies outside the medieval historic core of Hinckley (SMR 49SW BH) and may have been part of the open fields in the medieval period. In the post-medieval period farming gave way to industry in the form of stocking-knitting. There is no evidence for any structures on the site until the 19<sup>th</sup> -century when the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 depicts Hollycroft House on the site. This appears to be of similar form to the current Manor Public House building.

## 5.0 Objectives

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to:

- establish the likely presence or absence of any archaeological deposits and features within the proposed development site.
- define the nature, extent and significance of surviving deposits and features.
- provide information to allow the formulation of a mitigation scheme, possibly involving further excavation and recording in advance of development, if appropriate.

The existing buildings on the site, including the Public House and its associated outbuildings were the subject of a rapid assessment and description by a buildings specialist in order to identify whether these buildings would merit further, more detailed, recording.

## 6.0 Method

The aims of the evaluation were achieved through the excavation of three archaeological trial-trenches and nine hand-dug test-pits. The trench and test-pit layout was agreed in advance with the client and with the Planning Archaeologist, LMARS. The ground investigation undertaken by Geotechnical Developments (UK) Ltd in 2001 was consulted when deciding upon the location of the trenches. The standing buildings on the site, including the Public House and its associated outbuildings were subject to a rapid assessment and description (section 9.0, below) by a buildings specialist in order to identify whether these buildings would merit further, more detailed, recording.

The trial-trenches (Tr.10-12) were each 15m x 1.6m wide. One was located in the overgrown rear garden of the Public House and the other two were situated in a car park area. The trenches were mechanically opened using a JCB 3CX excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and operating under constant archaeological supervision. Modern overburden was removed to the depth at which archaeological features first appeared or, where archaeological features were not present, to the depth of the top of natural subsoil. Subsequent cleaning and sample excavation was carried out by hand.

Nine test pits (Tp1-9) were excavated in the grassed, landscaped front garden area of the Public House and were laid out on a 15m grid. The test pits were 1m square and were dug by hand to the depth at which natural the natural subsoil was revealed. All the spoil from the test pits was hand-sieved in order to recover any artefacts present. The main purpose of the test pits was to test the potential for recovery of worked flint, mainly dating from the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods, which may have been contained within the topsoil. All finds recovered from the test pits were retained.

All archaeological deposits and features were sample excavated by hand. All deposits encountered were described fully on individual pro-forma context and feature recording cards. A drawn record was made of all features, at scales of 1:50, 1:20 or 1:10 in plan and 1:20 or 1:10 in section and profile, as appropriate. All trench sections were drawn even where no archaeological features or deposits were recorded. A full monochrome print and colour slide photographic record was maintained throughout. Finds were retained by individual context.

The standing buildings assessment was based on internal and external visual inspection. A basic photographic record using monochrome print and colour slide film was also undertaken.

## 7.0 Results

### 7.1 Test pits (Figs. 2 and 3)

A total of nine 1m square test pits were hand excavated. The natural red-brown sand subsoil was uncovered at 0.15-0.40m below the present ground surface. In test pit 1 the

natural subsoil (1001) was cut by a linear ditch or trench (F1) at least 0.60m wide and 0.35 deep with steep sides and a flat base, aligned northeast-southwest. It was filled with a reddish brown silty sand (1002) containing sherds of modern pottery. In all of the test pits the natural subsoil was sealed by topsoil (1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000, 6000, 7000, 8000 and 9000), which was shallower in test pits 7-9, close to the boundary with Hollycroft Crescent. Worked flint was recovered from the topsoil in test pits 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8. Sherds of medieval pottery were found in test pits 5 and 6. Post-medieval finds were recovered from all of the test pits. No archaeological features were visible in the test pits except for the modern ditch or trench F1, in test pit 1.

## 7.2 Trial-trenches (Fig.2)

### Trench 10 (Fig. 4)

This trench was aligned northwest-southeast and was 15m x 1.6m. The natural subsoil (10007) was a red-brown sandy clay, 0.75-1.05m below the present ground surface, deepest at the northwest end of the trench. This was sealed by a brown silty sand (10006), 0.50-0.95m deep, deepest at the northwest end of the trench. Layer 10006 was cut by a construction trench (F2) for a right-angled wall, extending beyond the Trial-trench, forming the southwest and northwest sides of a structure of probable 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The wall was composed of red bricks (10004) measuring 0.225 x 0.12m x 0.07m and was a single brick length wide and was at least 0.85m high. Inside the structure was a layer of brick rubble (10003), at least 0.25m deep. Wall F2 had a drain (F3) made of ceramic pipe sections (10005), inserted into the northwest side of the wall, and which rested on top of layer 10003. Within the structure, layer 10003 and drain F3 were sealed by a layer of brown sand (10002), 0.50m deep. This was overlain by a greyish brown sandy silt (10001), 0.40m deep. Layers 10001 and 10006 were sealed by a layer of former topsoil (10000), 0.15-0.40m deep, which was overlain by 0.05-0.10m of gravel.

### Trench 11 (Fig. 5)

This trench was orientated northwest-southeast and was 15m x 1.6m. The natural subsoil (11003) was a red-brown sand, 0.45-0.52m below the present car park surface. This was cut by two features. At the northwest end of the trench was a shallow linear ditch (F4), 0.71-0.90m wide and 0.11m deep, with steeply sloping sides and a narrow rounded base aligned north-south. It was filled with a reddish brown silty sand (11004) which contained a sherd of post-medieval pottery and fragments of tile. At the southeast end of the trench was a ditch (F5), 1.26m wide and 0.19m deep, with gently sloping sides and a rounded base orientated north-south. It was filled with a brown silty sand (11005) and contained a sherd of post-medieval pottery.

The natural subsoil 11003, and the features were sealed by a layer of brown silty sand (11002), 0.10-0.20m deep, containing worked flint and a fragment of tile. This was overlain by a layer of crushed stone (11001), 0.07m deep, and a layer of crushed brick (11000), 0.15m deep. This was capped by 0.10m of tarmac.

## Trench 12 (Fig. 5)

The trench was aligned northeast-southwest and was 15m x 1.6m. The natural subsoil (12003) was a red-brown sand, 0.57-0.77m below the present car park surface. This was sealed by a layer of brown silty sand (12002), 0.35-0.55m deep. Layer 12002 was overlain by a layer of crushed stone (12001), 0.07m deep, and a layer of crushed brick (12000), 0.15m deep. This was capped by 0.10m of tarmac. No archaeological features were visible and no finds were recovered.

## 8.0 The finds (by Lynne Bevan)

### 8.1 Flint

The prehistoric flint assemblage was small and generally chronologically undiagnostic, comprising only two cores and 23 flakes from the test pits. The quantification of finds by test pit and trench is shown below (Table 1). A further three flakes and a retouched blade fragment were residual and recovered from post-medieval contexts in trench 11. The retouched blade fragment and two of the flakes came from context 11002 and the other flake from context 11004.

#### Raw material

The assemblage was all made from a coarse pebble flint which probably originated from local river gravels. It was of a generally poor quality, ranging from light brown and grey to a darker grey in colour. The size of the flakes and cores were conditioned by the small size and quality of the raw material. That the cores were utilised beyond their apparent usefulness is suggestive of resource stress, that good quality flint was at a premium.

#### Dating

The blade fragment is probably of early Neolithic date in common with the two small multi-platform cores used for the production of small flakes and blades from test pit 6 (6000). Neolithic flints are fairly abundant in the area around Hinckley (Watt 2001, 5) and settlement sites have been identified at Sharnford and Mickle Hill, as well as mixed scatters containing Neolithic flints at the confluence of the River Soar and the Soar Brook and the Sapcote/Aston border (Watt 2001, 5).

#### Potential

The largest collection of flakes, 11 in total, came from test pit 5 (Fig. 3) but the smaller collection of eight items including two cores, from test pit 6 is probably of more interest in terms of identifying a locus of prehistoric activity on the site. While the cores and flakes attest to flintworking and the retouched blade fragment to other human activities during prehistory, none of this activity appears, on the available evidence, to have been of any intensity or duration.



| Tp/Tr.no Context | Flint                | Pottery | Fired Clay | Brick/ Tile | Clay Pipe | Bone/ Shell        | Glass | Slag/ Nails |
|------------------|----------------------|---------|------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|-------|-------------|
| 1/1000           |                      | 9       |            | 18          |           |                    | 2     |             |
| 1/1002           |                      | 3       |            |             |           |                    |       |             |
| 2/2000           | 3 flakes             | 5       | 8          | 4           |           |                    |       | 2 (nails)   |
| 3/3000           | 2 flakes             | 5       |            | 18          | 1 stem    | 3 (burnt)          | 1     | 3 (slag)    |
| 4/4000           |                      | 8       |            |             | 1 stem    |                    |       |             |
| 5/5000           | 11 flakes            | 37*     | 3          | 43          | 1 stem    | 4 bone/<br>1 shell | 7     | 1 (slag)    |
| 6/6000           | 2 cores,<br>6 flakes | 28*     |            | 31          | 1 stem    |                    | 23    | 14 (slag)   |
| 7/7000           |                      | 2       | 2          |             | 2 stems   |                    | 3     |             |
| 8/8000           | 1 flake              |         |            |             |           |                    | 3     |             |
| 9/9000           |                      | 1       |            | 6           | 2 stems   |                    | 5     |             |
| 11/11002         | 1 blade<br>2 flakes  |         |            | 1           |           |                    |       |             |
| 11/11004         | 1 flake              | 1       |            | 2           |           |                    |       |             |
| 11/11005         |                      | 1       |            |             |           |                    |       |             |
| Totals:          | 29                   | 100     | 13         | 123         | 8         | 7/1                | 44    | 18/2        |

(\* -includes 2 sherds of medieval pottery).

Table 1: Quantification of finds by test pit and trench

### 8.2 Pottery

A total of 98 small fragments of pottery were recovered from test-pitting and a further two fragments of pottery from trench 11 (contexts 11004 and 11005). The earliest pottery was medieval in date comprising part of a flat rim and three body fragments from a total of four separate coarse cooking vessels, two from each of test pits 5 and 6.

The remainder of the pottery was post-medieval in date. The assemblage included roughly equal quantities of white wares of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date and brown glazed wares of 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date, amounting to nearly 40% of the collection. Two sherds of blue and white patterned china of c. 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date came from test pit 1 (1000) and a yellow-glazed sherd of c.18<sup>th</sup> century date from test pit 6. The remainder of the collection consisted of assorted oxidised 'terracotta' fragments, the majority of which appear to have originated from plant pots, particularly in test pits 4 and 5.

A base fragment from a substantial brown glazed vessel of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century date was the only broadly datable sherd from trench 11 (11005). The small size of the thin oxidised sherd from context 11004 precluded identification beyond a general post-medieval date.

### 8.3 Glass

A total of 44 fragments of glass were recovered from the test pits, comprising nine fragments of window glass, 14 fragments from a brown glass pharmaceutical bottle, six fragments of brown and green bottle glass, 14 fragments of assorted clear glass of modern and a fragment of blue glass with a burnt, 'molten' appearance. With the exception of the brown glass pharmaceutical bottle which is of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date (test

pit 6), the glass is not generally datable but appears to be of relatively recent origin, particularly the clear glass fragments, the majority of which are modern.

#### *8.4 Other Finds*

Other finds from the test pits included 120 abraded fragments of brick and tile, over a third of which came from test pit 5. In addition three further fragments of tile were recovered from trench 11 (11004 x 2 and 11002 x 1). Thirteen fragments of fired clay, eight fragments from clay pipe stems, two nails and 18 fragments of slag were also recovered. The majority of slag, 14 pieces, came from test pit 6, suggesting that some form of industrial activity, not necessarily iron-working since the slag did not resemble smithing slag, was carried out in the vicinity. Seven fragments of undiagnostic animal bone, three of which were burnt, and an oyster shell, were also recovered.

### **9.0 Standing buildings assessment (by Malcolm Hislop)**

The Manor Public House was originally a large private house, and dates from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Watt 2001). It is built in a restrained Gothic style of red brick (Flemish bond) with painted stone dressings (window lintels and sills, and front door surround), and has a hipped roof, composed of alternating bands of plain and fish scale pattern clay tiles, and is crowned with crested ridge tiles. The building is roughly L-shaped, the principal orientation being approximately northeast-southwest, with the main entrance front to the southeast. As first built it appears to have comprised a two-storey main block towards the southwest, and a single storey service range to the northeast. Whereas the latter was a single range, the main house has a depth of two ranges and projects to the northwest. The variety of roofing shapes and alignments defies an easy definition of the plan. Towards the southwest and northwest are extensive late 20<sup>th</sup> century single-storey extensions to the Public House.

The entrance front (Plate 1) displays a dark brick stepped plinth and a plain dentilled eaves course. The left hand portion of the house is also adorned with a first floor window sill string with moulded dentils; it runs into, and is terminated by, a square label over the Gothic main doorway. This doorway is situated to the left of centre, and has a two-centred arch of two moulded orders (ogee, and concave and convex quarter round mouldings) terminating in pyramid stops. A leaded fanlight within the arch contains stained glass with flower and leaf motifs. The double doors contain narrow glass panels, the small upper lights containing 19<sup>th</sup> century stained glass. Projecting from the left-hand (southeast) corner of the original house is a cylindrical turret with conical roof. Between turret and doorway, at ground storey level is a blocked opening. Above this blocking and the doorway are a pair of gabled first floor windows that break through the eaves level; the gables are made of patterned brickwork, and have plain bargeboards. The windows of this front vary in size ranging from one to four lights, but characteristic of the first phase of the building are roll-moulded jambs and lintels, and ovolo-moulded mullions and transoms. Rising from the ridge are three brick chimney stacks.

A vertical building break at first floor level, in front of the right-hand chimneystack, suggests that the service block to the right began as a single-storey building. To the right of the break, although the roofing pattern matches that of the rest of the house, the ridgeline is slightly lower than to the left. In addition, the bricks are of a lighter hue and the windows are plainer in character, lacking the roll-moulded surrounds and ovolo-moulded mullions and transoms that characterise the fenestration of the main house and the lower storey of the service block. In the northeast elevation (Plate 4) the pitch of the original gable can be traced in the brickwork. Two inserted ground floor windows towards the right hand end of the building suggest that the lower storey may have been remodelled at this period.

The principal features of the southwest front (Plates 2 and 6) visible above the Public House extensions are a pair of hipped gables: that to the right (east) has a pair of cross windows beneath it, that to the left is conical and caps a six-light bow window. The 20<sup>th</sup> century extensions in the foreground are dominated to the south by three large canted bays with clay tile roofs, crested ridge tiles and apex finials. An octagonal cupola or lantern with lead covered roof and leaded lights containing some stained glass crown the ridge of the centre one. The roof frames over these bays incorporate jointed and pegged king posts, which are probably no later than *circa* 1850, and the conclusion to be drawn is that these structures and the cupola are re-used items taken from a now demolished building or buildings.

The interior has been mostly remodelled, and most original features removed, but one room (currently the games room) contains half height wooden panelling with a frieze of interlacing waves. A timber fireplace surround is flanked by Corinthian inspired columns, though the capitals have inward, rather than outward, curling volutes. A decorative plaster ceiling comprises a series of square panels, defined by moulded ribs, each containing a square fleuron. The centre panel is quatrefoil in shape with double ogee arms, and contains a central ceiling rose.

Approximately 15m northeast of the Manor is a former coachhouse (Plates 3 and 5). Now disused, the building appears to have served as stable, vehicle and servant accommodation. It is contemporary with the house (second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), and is built of similar materials. The walls are of red brick (Flemish bond), though the front elevation has been cement rendered, and the hipped clay tile roof has alternating bands of plain and fish scale tiles, and crested ridge tiles.

The two-storey building is aligned roughly northwest-southeast, facing southwest towards the former service yard. Attached to the northeast side are some low single storey buildings, and at the east end of the southwest front a single storey extension projects to the southwest. Roughly in the centre of the southwest front is a high segmental-headed doorway with boarded door and blocked overlight which leads into one of two ground floor rooms. Immediately to the left of it is second, lower, segmental arched doorway with boarded door and twentieth century glazed overlight; this gives access to a flight of stairs which lead to the first storey. Occupying most of the left-hand side of the lower story, and providing access to the second ground floor room, is a vehicle

entrance with steel lintel, probably inserted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first floor is emphasised by a dark brick band similar in character to the plinth of the house. At this level are three irregularly spaced windows, now boarded up.

Inside the southeast room a blocked entrance is visible in the north wall. It is immediately opposite the south door, suggesting that there was originally a through-passage at the northwest end of this cell. In the southeast corner is a loose box, comprising an iron frame with boarded sides and door. The ironwork is embossed with the name of the manufacturer: "Made by Young & Co., Merton Abbey, London SW10." The box was lit by one of two segmental-headed windows in the east wall. Disturbance in the brickwork of the north wall, and a slot in the corner post of the loose box, may indicate the former existence of a second loose box; this would have been lit to the east by the second window. The eastern room, then, housed at least one, and possibly two, hackneys. Both the western room and the first floor were inaccessible at the time of the evaluation, but the former would have provided accommodation for a cabriolet or similar wheeled vehicle, and the latter for servants.

## 10.0 Discussion

Evidence for the earliest activity at the site was demonstrated by the finds of flint artefacts comprising: a blade fragment from 11002, Trench 11 and two small multi-platform cores from 6000, test pit 6. These finds are probably of early Neolithic date and were used for the production of small flakes and blades. The other flint artefacts are flakes and are undiagnostic, but may date to a similar period.

Given that the site lies within a landscape of rich prehistoric activity, evidenced by the substantial number of finds of artefacts dating from the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods within the surrounding area these finds are not particularly significant. Although they do suggest flintworking and other activities were carried out on or near the site during prehistory, none of this activity appears, on the available evidence, to have been of any great intensity or particularly long-lived. There appears to be a slight increase in the density of flint artefacts in the northeast of the test pit area (Fig. 3), although this may be explained by the greater depth of topsoil here.

No evidence of features or deposits of a prehistoric date, which might relate to settlement or other activity was found.

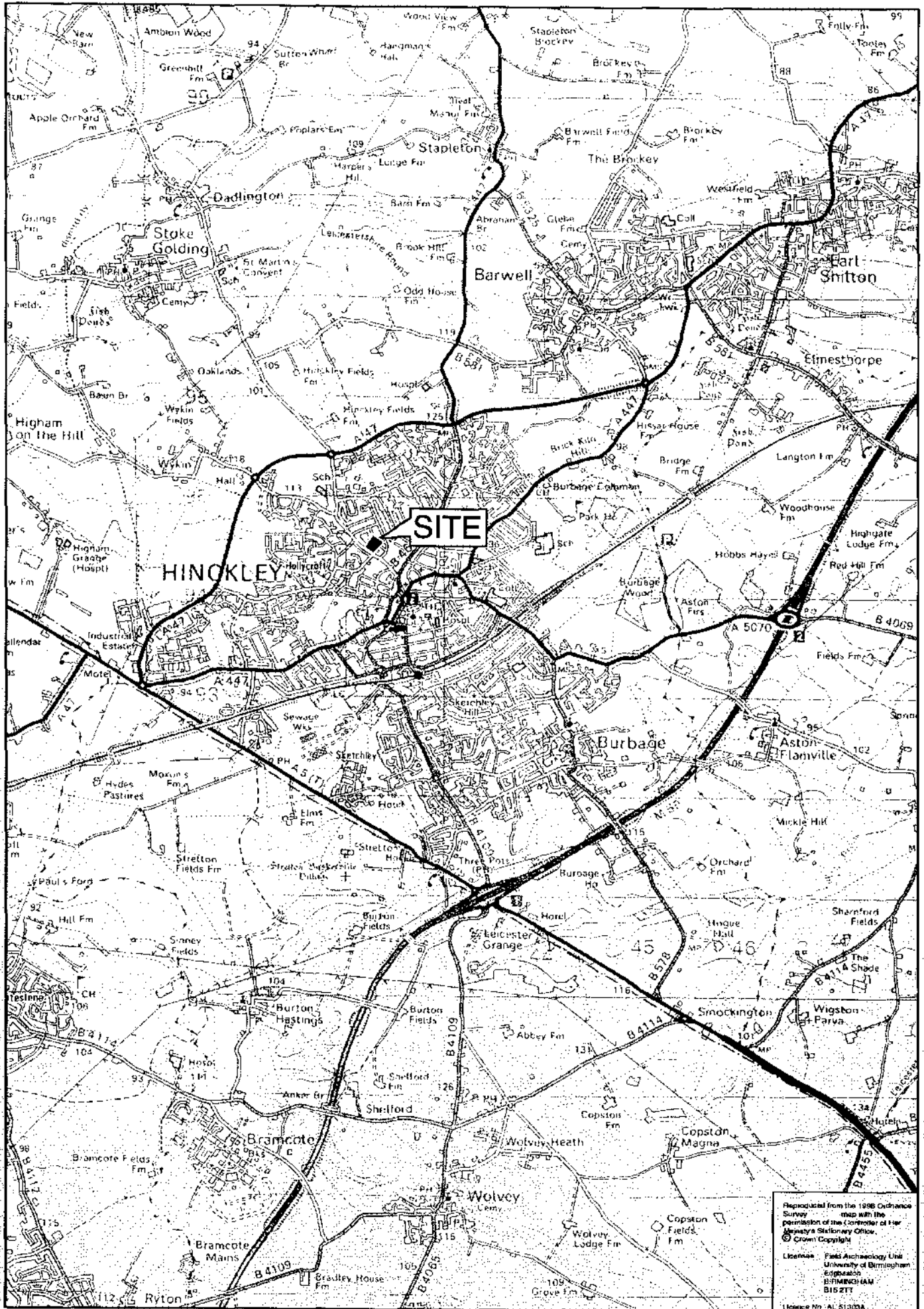
No features of Anglo-Saxon or medieval date were found. The sherds of medieval pottery recovered from the test pits 5 and 6 was badly abraded and may have been deposited as a result of the manuring of open fields during this period. Ditches F4 and F5 in Trench 11 are of post-medieval date, possibly 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century, and may relate to agricultural activities on the site, further evidenced by the post-medieval pottery from the test pits.

The remains of the brick structure in Trench 10 are probably the remains of a greenhouse depicted on the 1924 Ordnance Survey map.

Martin, J. 1982 *'Palaeolithic Leicestershire'* in Liddle, P. *'Leicester Archaeology - The Present State of Knowledge. Volume 1 to the End of the Roman Period'* Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service Archaeological Reports No. 4

Thomas, J. 1999 *An Archaeological Evaluation of Land off Coventry Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire* ULAS 99/115

Watt, S. 2001 *The Manor, Hollycroft Crescent, Hinckley, Leicestershire: an archaeological desk-based assessment.* BUFAU Report No. 814.



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Fig.1

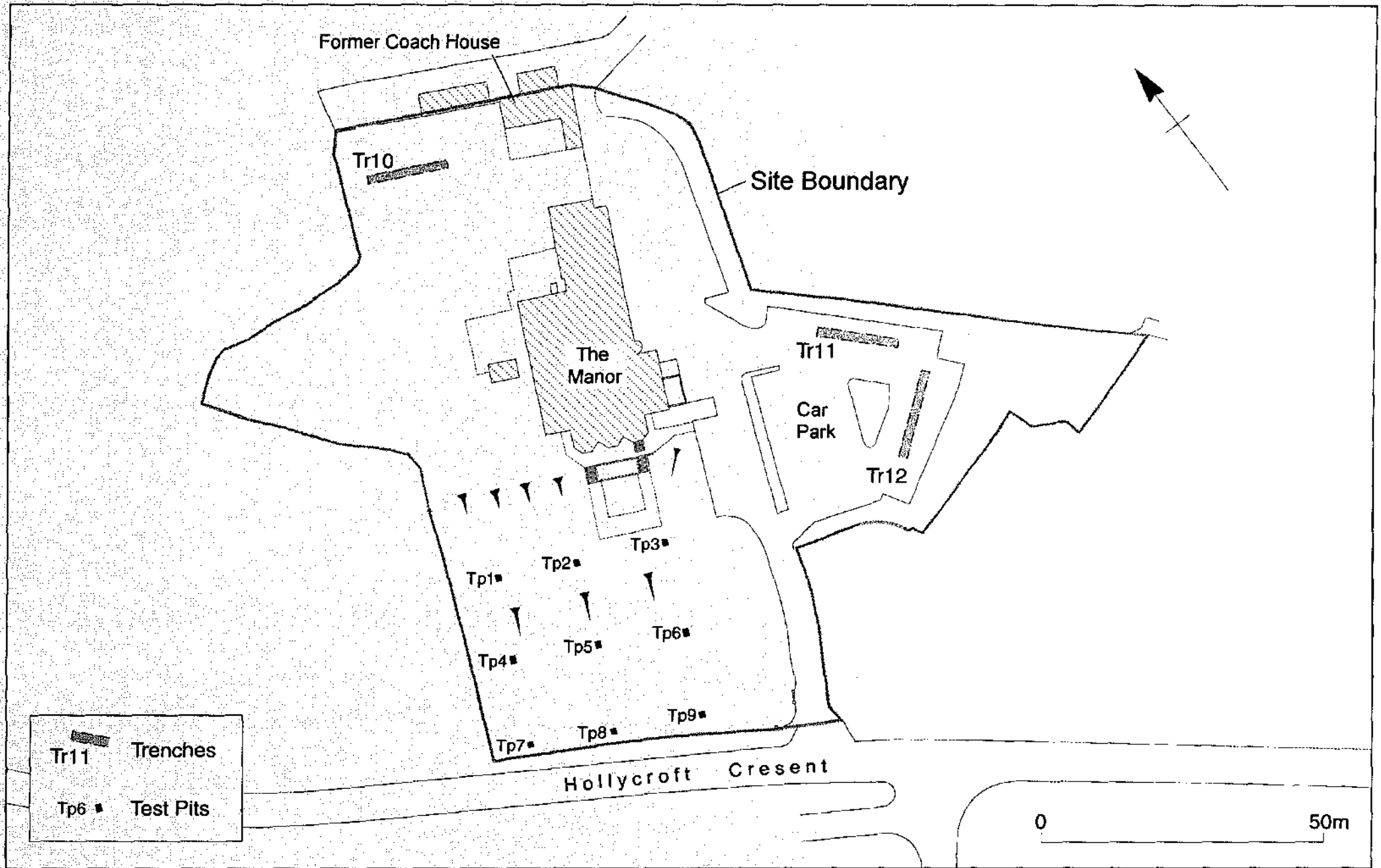


Fig.2

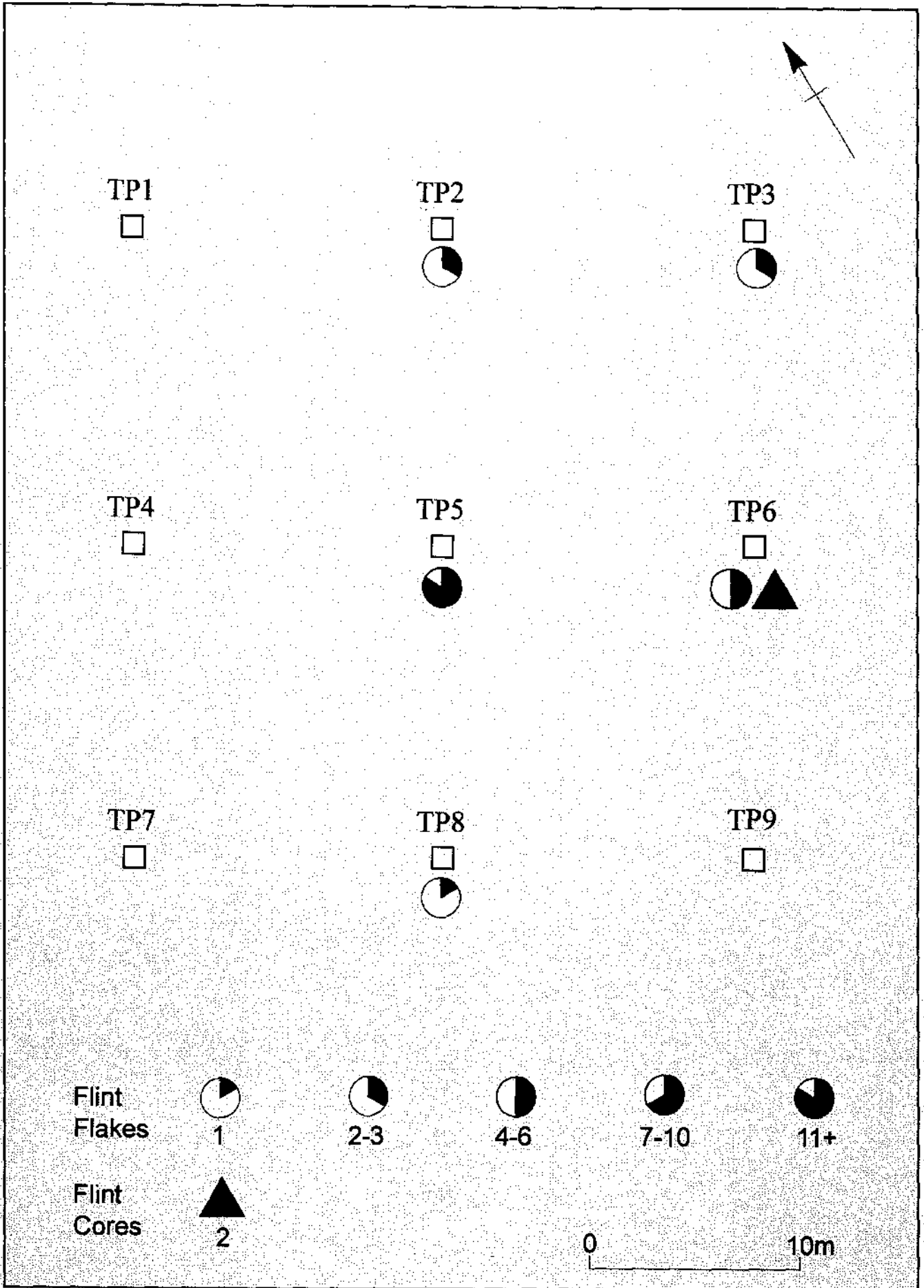


Fig.3



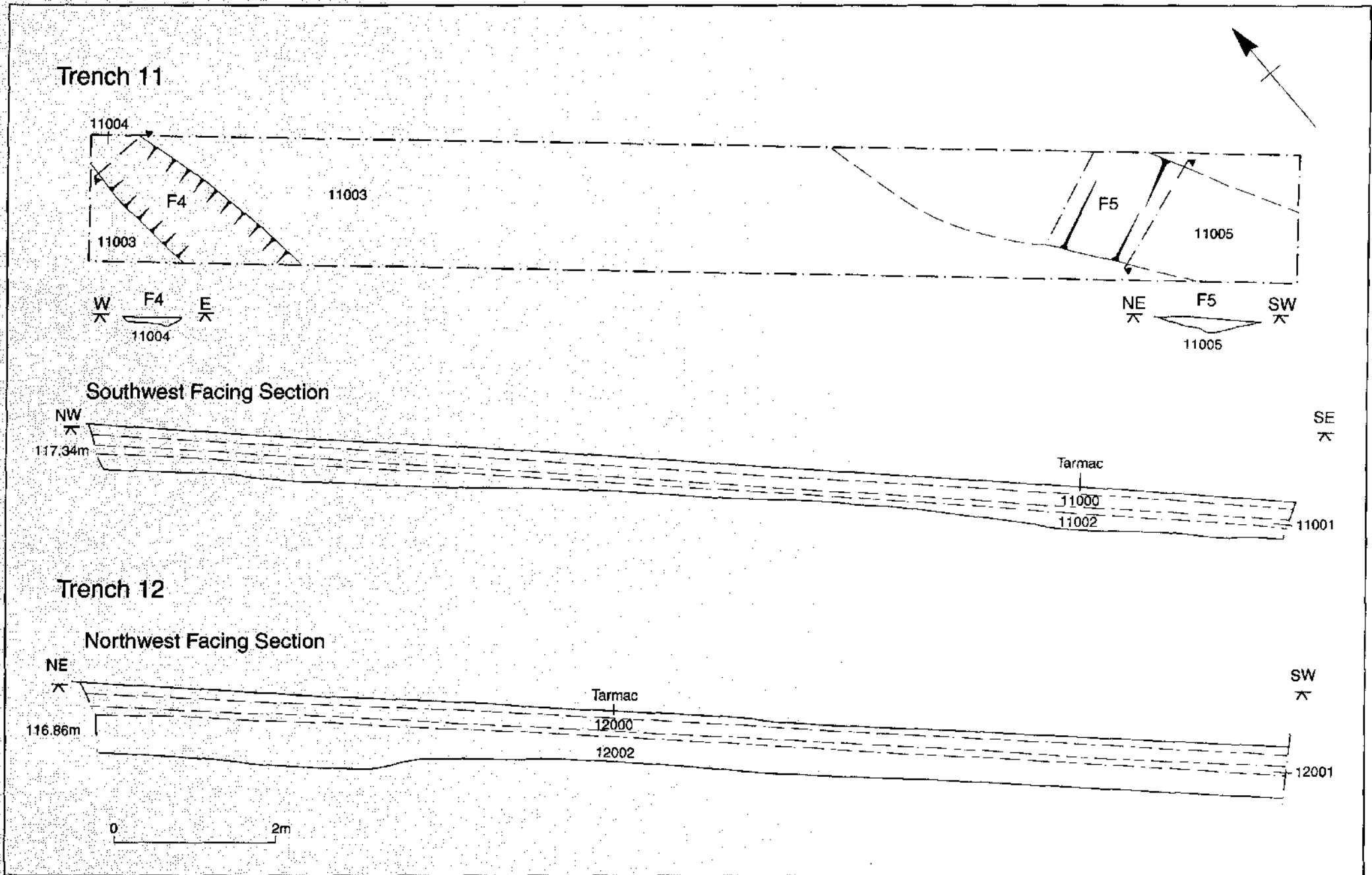


Fig.5



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6