

**South Street, St Neots,
Cambridgeshire
Investigations 2001-2**

Post Excavation Assessment

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**South Street, St Neots, Cambridgeshire
Archaeological Investigations 2001-2
Post-Excavation Assessment**

1.0: SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in late 2001 at 15/17 South Street, St Neots, Cambridgeshire (centred on NGR TL 51832/26017) by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Huntsbuild Ltd, in advance of a proposed residential development. Subsequently, a small-scale excavation was undertaken in early 2002 along the eastern frontage of South Street, which was originally laid out in the 12th century. The excavation was limited to investigation and recording of the uppermost deposits along the street frontage. The lower deposits in this area, as well as all deposits away from the frontage zone, not affected by the development, were to be preserved *in situ*.

Trial-trenching and excavation identified traces of buildings of 13th to mid-15th century date, adjoining the street frontage. The building remains included drystone walls and less substantial structures or outhouses represented by post-holes. Cobbled and tiled surfaces, as well as a number of pits and ditches of 13th to mid-15th century date were also identified. Later brick structures were recorded on the street frontage, overlying the earlier drystone walls.

This report provides a post-excavation assessment, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage 1991), intended to bring the results of the projects to publication.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation and small-scale excavation of approximately 380 square metres, located on the eastern side of South Street, St Neots, Cambridgeshire (centred on NGR TL 51832/26017, Figs. 1-2, hereafter 'the site'). Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) were commissioned to undertake the archaeological fieldwork by Huntsbuild Ltd., in advance of a proposed residential development, and in accordance with the guidelines contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16, Department of the Environment, November 1990).

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the nature, extent and significance of archaeological remains within the area proposed for development, to permit the formulation of a strategy to mitigate the effects of the development upon archaeological deposits, as appropriate. In particular, it was intended to test the potential of the site to contain evidence of Saxon and medieval settlement and industry. Given the proximity of the site to the Hen Brook and the River Great Ouse, information concerning alluvial deposits was also sought. The excavation, which was concentrated along the eastern frontage of South Street, was intended to elucidate the nature of the medieval and early

post-medieval activity in the area adjoining the street frontage. The excavation methodology conformed to a Design Brief prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council (Cambridgeshire CC 2001) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (BUFAU 2001) approved by the council.

The archaeological background has been discussed in the evaluation report (Martin 2001) and will not be repeated here. Trial-trenching identified traces of buildings of 13-14th century date adjoining the street frontage. The building remains included drystone walls, and less substantial structures represented by post-holes and post-pads. Traces of stone floors or yard surfaces of medieval date were also found. These medieval remains overlay possible levelling-up deposits. Later brick structures were recorded on the street frontage, overlying the earlier drystone walls.

3.0: METHODOLOGY (Fig. 3)

3.1 Evaluation

The four evaluation trenches were positioned to test the proposed development area as widely as possible. Two trenches (1-2) were excavated close to the South Street frontage, to test for the presence of structures and occupation deposits, and two further trenches (3-4) were excavated slightly to the rear of the frontage, to test for evidence of industrial activity, rubbish disposal and possible property boundaries in the backplot area. Trenches were re-located slightly to avoid possibly live services, which also limited the depth of investigation within part of Trench 1. The trenches measured a maximum of 2m in width, and were stepped for safety. Modern overburden in each trench was removed using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, operating under archaeological supervision. Following cleaning of the uppermost archaeological horizon, archaeological features were selectively sampled by hand excavation.

3.2 Excavation

Because the new dwellings were to be based on pile-and-beam foundations with raised floor levels, it was decided that preservation *in situ* of the identified archaeological features and deposits was possible over most of the development footprint. Only where the development required a general reduction in level, along the street frontage, was archaeological excavation necessary to mitigate the impact of the new build. Excavation was undertaken before demolition of the existing shop premises.

The area designated for archaeological excavation was stripped of overburden by a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket working under archaeological supervision. Following machining, the exposed archaeological features and deposits were cleaned by hand and a base-plan was prepared.

All excavation ceased at a depth of 0.535m below the existing shop floor in the northern half of the site (Area B, Fig. 3), and within 0.610m of the floor within the southern half

(Area A), following the maximum depth of disturbance required by the new build. Any archaeological deposits below these levels were not excavated since they would be preserved *in situ* below the new dwellings. For this reason, the full sequence of medieval activity was not recorded except in section within the trial-trenches.

The excavation sampling strategy was as follows:

- settlement features - minimum of 50%.
- linear features not associated with settlement were excavated sufficiently to allow an informed interpretation of their date and function.
- linear features associated with settlement - minimum 25% sample.
- discrete features, pits and post-holes - minimum 50% sample, although some industrial features, artifact-rich pits and wells might require further investigation.

Recording for the evaluation and area excavation was by means of BUFAU pre-printed pro-formas, for contexts and features. Plans were drawn at scales of 1:50 or 1:20 and sections at 1:10 or 1:20. The photographic record included monochrome prints, colour slides and colour prints. Bulk samples were collected from sealed datable contexts for the recovery of charred plant remains.

All context and feature numbers beginning with 1 to 4 refer to the evaluation and all context and feature numbers beginning with 5 refer to the excavation.

Subject to the approval of the landowner, it is proposed to deposit the archive in the Cambridgeshire County Council archive store.

4.0 RESULTS (Figs. 4-5)

4.1: Phasing

Based upon the stratigraphy and spot dating provided by this assessment four provisional phases of activity have been recorded:

- Phase 1 - Earlier medieval activity (12th to 13th century)
- Phase 2 - Later medieval settlement (13th to mid-15th century)
- Phase 3 - Post-medieval activity (16th to 18th century)
- Phase 4 - Modern activity (19th century onwards)

The simplified phase plans only illustrate the main features within each phase; layers are not included.

4.2: Area A

Phase 1 - Earlier medieval activity (12th to 13th century, not illustrated)

The earliest deposit encountered in this area was a dark brown sandy silt (2010) with some gravel scatters, recorded at a depth of approximately 1.10m below the modern ground surface. Its full depth could not be determined because the high water-table impeded further excavation. This layer was sealed by a deposit of dark brown to black clay silt (2009, 5051).

Phase 2 - Later medieval settlement and activity (13th to mid-15th century, Fig. 4)

The earliest Phase 2 layer encountered was a mid grey-brown sand-clay flecked with chalk (2008, 5000), which overlay Phase 1 layer 2009, 5051. The Phase 2 layer extended over the whole of Area A, though it varied in thickness, decreasing in depth towards the northern part of Area A. The layer was cut or overlain by four features (F508, F201, F202 and F507). Feature F200/F508 comprised a cobbled surface of large pebbles (5010) set in sandy mortar (5002), capped by large sandstone slabs and rough-hewn sandstone blocks (5011). This surface was aligned east-west, roughly at a right-angle to the street frontage. To the immediate south of feature F508 was a clay layer with white stony inclusions (5053), bedded into layer 2008/5000. Clay layer 5053 was sealed by a thin deposit of dark, charcoal-rich material (5052), the charcoal being concentrated along the southern edge of feature F200/F508. Sealing the charcoal spread (5052) and clay layer 5053 was a surface composed of broken tiles (F507). The eastern and southern edges of feature F507 were formed by tiles. A narrow, sub-circular cut, infilled with large pebbles (F201), was recorded at a distance of 1.4m to the northeast of the features F507 and F508, while to the east was a shallow, sub-circular patch of yellow clay (F202).

Traces of two possible phases of cobbled surfacing (5061, 5063) were encountered in the southern half of Area A. The earlier surface (5063) appeared to have been bedded into a pale brown sandy mortar (5062), and sealed by a green/brown clay which formed the matrix for the upper layer of cobbling (5061).

Across the northern half of Area A, overlying layer 2008/5000, was a gravel spread (5032) which had been cut by a number of features. The southernmost of these features was an east-west aligned ditch (F515) which butt-ended to the east. It was filled with a light grey clay (5034) which produced bone and pottery of late 13th to mid-15th century date. To the immediate north of this feature ran a shallow gully (F511), also roughly east-west aligned. It was filled with a brown/black clayey-silt (5031) which produced pottery of late 13th to mid-15th century date, bone and metal fragments. A small, shallow, sub-circular feature with a flat base (F516) was cut into the top of ditch F515 along its northern edge. Feature F516 was filled with a mix of clay and mortar (5046) and produced shell, animal bone and pottery.

Phase 3 - Post-medieval activity (16th to 18th century, Fig. 5)

Across the southern part of Area A, sealing layer 5000 was a layer of pale grey/brown clay (5028), with irregular patches of wood ash and carbonised wood. Sealing all Phase 2 features and deposits, as well as layer 5028, was a thick deposit of green-grey clay (2006, 5042, 5001, 5013, 5015) dated to the 18th century. Where this clay layer covered the Phase 2 features F507 and F508, were the remains of an east-west aligned red brick wall (F531). The surface of this clay layer was smeared with a very thin, black charcoal spread (5014) which showed a noticeable reddening and hardening towards its northern edge.

At the northern end of Area A was a very narrow, east-west aligned shallow slot (F509). It was cut through the clay layer (2006, 5042, 5001, 5013, 5015) and into the charcoal spread (5014) across the surface of the clay. The channel was filled with a mixture of loose dark silt and lumps of clay and burnt brick fragments (5016). Within the western side of Area A were two roughly east-west aligned red brick walls (F525, F527, not illustrated) of 17th or 18th century date which overlay the upper layer of cobbling (5061). A further, north-south aligned wall (F526, not illustrated) was recorded between the two east-west aligned walls.

In the northeastern corner of Area A was a very thin layer of black silt (5055), overlying Phase 2 gravel layer 5032. In turn, the silt layer was sealed by a deposit of mortar (5054, 5069) which formed a foundation for two sandstone slabs. Layers 5055 and 5054 abutted the grey/brown clay layer (5042) which sealed all Phase 2 activity in Area A. Mortar surface 5054 had also been used as the base for a layer of tile (2007, 5068).

Phase 4 - Modern activity (19th century onwards, not illustrated)

Phase 4 modern levelling/build up layers sealed the Phase 3 features and layers. In the easternmost half of Area A, in Trench 4, a modern dumped deposit (4002), measuring 1m in depth was recorded over the entire trench. All of these layers had been sealed by a modern concrete floor with a tiled surface.

4.3: Area B

Phase 1 - Earlier medieval activity (12th to 13th century, not illustrated)

The earliest deposit encountered in the eastern half of Area B was a dark brown silt-sand with gravel inclusions (3007) was recorded in Trench 3 at a depth of 1m below ground level. Above was a band of dark brown silt-clay (3006), at a depth of approximately 0.70m below the modern ground surface.

Phase 2 - Later medieval settlement (13th to mid-15th century, Fig. 4)

Phase 1 brown silt-clay layer (3006) was sealed by a dark grey silt deposit (3005) which had been cut by a small pit (F300). This was in turn truncated by levelling for a rough

surface, consisting of pebbles, chalk and sandstone (F301). The surface was L-shaped in plan.

In the western half of Area B the earliest deposit encountered was a dark grey-brown silt-clay (1019), with abundant charcoal flecking. This deposit was dated by pottery of 12th or 13th century date, although it also included two residual sherds of Early-Middle Saxon pottery. Deposit 1019 had been cut by two sandstone walls (F100, F103), and was overlain by a cobble spread (F106). Both walls were approximately aligned east-west, roughly at right-angles to the street frontage. The southern (F100) and northern (F103) walls both consisted of a single course of sandstone blocks, including both squared and roughly-hewn blocks. Just to the south of wall F103 was a cobble spread (F106), comprising both rounded and sub-rounded, river-washed pebbles (1012).

In the northernmost half of Area B the uppermost horizon of a black silt and sand deposit (5040) with much charcoal and occasional fragments of burnt clay was recorded. This layer, dated to the 13th and 14th centuries, had been cut by a stone-filled feature (F523), also filled with a black silt-sand (5036) with a heavy concentration of charcoal. Insufficient of this feature was exposed to determine its shape, extent and function. Sealing layer 5036 was a deposit of grey clayey silt (5035, 5045), with charcoal fragments. It produced pottery of 13th century date. This silt layer was in turn overlain by a loose, yellow sand, with clay and charcoal lenses (5037) which produced 15th century pottery. Above was a layer of gritty orange clayey sand (5039, 5024), which contained late 13th to mid 15th century pottery. This was cut by a shallow irregular scoop (F512) filled with a solid dirty-blue clay (5033). In the northeastern corner of Area B layer 5024 had also been truncated by two small, inter-cutting pits (F505, F504). The later of these pits (F504) produced a fragment of late 13th to mid-15th century pottery from its lower fill (5007). A small circular cut (F506) was identified in the base of feature F504, but the relationship between these two features could not be determined. This pit group was sealed by layers of grey/brown sandy silt (5021 and 5022).

Phase 3 - Post-medieval activity (16th to 18th century, Fig. 5)

Phase 2 sandstone walls (F100, F103) were both sealed by a layer of yellow-white mortar, intended to provide a foundation for a later, brick build, which followed the same position and alignment as the earlier builds. The southern brick wall (F102) survived to a maximum height of three courses and overlay wall F100. Northern brick wall F104 overlay drystone wall F103. These brick walls (F102, F104) were overlain by later phases of walling (F105; F520-F519 over F104 and F101, F521-F522 over F102) both of which followed the earlier east-west alignment. The later rebuilds were slightly offset from the earlier walls (F102, F104).

In the centre of Area B was a very compact surface (F510) comprising small pebbles, fragments of flint, brick and mortar (5026). It was approximately east-west aligned, and measured a minimum of 0.2m in depth. Its upper surface had been disturbed by later activity.

Phase 4 - modern (19th century onwards, not illustrated)

In Trench 3 a band of orange sandy gravel (3004) was overlain by a rubble build up (3003) which provided the foundation for the modern concrete floor surface.

The western half of Area B had been subjected to considerable disturbance in later periods, including the laying of cables and drains.

4.4: Discussion

No evidence of prehistoric or Roman activity was found.

Phase 1 was represented by layers 2009, 2010, 3006 and 3010 (Trenches 2 and 3, in the southern and northern halves of the site respectively), which may represent alluvial horizons or layers of deliberate build-up used to raise the ground level above the marshier conditions which could have prevailed around the nearby Hen Brook at an early date, and to counteract flooding. In the context of trial-trenching, however, it was not possible to investigate the character of these earlier deposits more thoroughly, and these lower deposits lay outside the scope of the subsequent excavation.

Phase 2 was represented by occupation layers, surfaces and buildings dating to the medieval period. The only evidence of Saxon activity was in the form of two sherds of residual pottery of Early-Middle Saxon date recovered from layer 1019 (Trench 1), which was dated to the 12th-13th centuries. The absence of St Neots shelly wares suggests that late Saxon activity on the site is not likely (Ratkai, below). The main focus of late Saxon activity in St Neots was the settlement excavated by Addyman (1973) to the east of the site, on the north bank of the Hen Brook. The evidence for possible Early or Middle Saxon activity on, or near to, the site and the absence of evidence for Late Saxon activity, may reflect a shift in settlement location during the Middle to Late Saxon periods away from the site, or its vicinity. Earlier medieval activity within the site is most likely to have been connected with the laying out of the market square in the 12th century. The subsequent expansion of St Neots as a trading centre, would have led to the development of the surrounding area with the creation of shops and stalls opening onto street frontages adjoining the market place.

The two slightly misaligned drystone walls (F100, F103) in Trench 1 may have formed part of structures fronting onto South Street, possibly even the stone foundations for a timber-framed building which may have formed a shop. Other evidence of structures was also found, in the form of the post-hole (F300), in Trench 3 and post-rests (F201, F202) in Trench 2. Feature F200/F508, made up of pebbles and sandstone blocks may also have been part of a stub wall for the sill beam of a timber-framed building. Like the sandstone walls (F100, F103) it was aligned at a right angle to the street. The curved, tiled surface (F507) abutting the sandstone wall (F508) may have been a step or a raised threshold. The cobbled layers (5061, 5063) in the west of Area A may represent surfaces or a single structure similar to feature F508. In Area A, features F515 and F511 cut into the gravel layer (5032), itself probably an earlier levelling/build-up layer. Feature F516 could be the

base of a pit or post-hole which has been truncated by later activity. Area B may also have been subjected to similar intense activity but any evidence for this may have been cut away by 17th and 18th century wall building and the laying of modern services.

Stone filled cut (F523) with the associated layer of blackened charcoal-rich silt (5040) may represent domestic or small-scale industrial activity within the northern half of the site. The stone surfaces observed in Trenches 1 and 3 (F301, F106) may represent internal floors. Surface F301 appeared to be L-shaped in plan, possibly suggesting that it was laid out respecting the corner of an earlier building, in which case post-hole F300 could have been the corner-post of a structure in the backplot area.

The pottery was mainly 13th to 15th century date, suggesting a *terminus ante quem* for occupation of around 1450 for this area of South Street (Ratkai below). However, it is possible that archaeological deposits of later medieval date have been removed by 17th and 18th century activity.

Phase 3 was represented by post-medieval re-building, in brick, and demonstrated striking evidence of continuity in property divisions from much earlier periods. The brick walls found in Trench 1 may be 18th century, or possibly earlier in date. A 17th century date could mean that the walls were associated with the great rebuilding of the town at this time, which involved the importation of massive quantities of soil, to counteract flooding. Walls F525, F527 and F526, visible in the western facing section of Area A may also represent 17th century rebuilding. The tiled surface (2007, 5068) in association with these walls may be the remains of an associated internal floor. Green clay layer 5001 observed in Area A had sealed the underlying medieval layers and features and may, therefore, represent levelling and/or building up of the ground for the creation of a surface in the 18th century. The black charcoal spread (5014) across the top of the clay layer may have been rake-out material derived from a nearby hearth.

Phase 4 was represented by a number of rubble/levelling layers and the laying of modern services. The western half of Area B had been particularly effected by the laying of cables and drains and as a consequence earlier archaeological deposits may have been removed. In Trench 4, in Area A, a deep layer of soil containing 19th century pottery, may be evidence of demolition and scouring-out of buildings to the rear of the site. The latest sequences of activity on the site involved the laying of the modern concrete floor and tiled surface.

5.0: ASSESSMENT

5.1 Quantification of data

The fieldwork records and finds are quantified in Tables 1-2.

TABLE 1: Quantification of paper archive

<i>Record type</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>	<i>Excavation</i>
Contexts	46	77
Features	14	31
Photographs, B and W	36	144
Colour slide	72	144
Drawings (A1-A4)	9	14
General	1 file	1 file

TABLE 2: Quantification of finds archive

<i>Find type</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>	<i>Excavation</i>
Saxon pottery	2	-
Medieval pottery	51	74
Post-medieval pottery	22	2
Animal bone	-	1kg
Flint	-	3
Copper alloy	-	4
Iron nails/ nail fragments	-	9

5.2: Factual data and statement of potential

5.2.1: Stratigraphic data

The medieval features and deposits were relatively well preserved, despite later, fairly intensive, activity on the site. The earliest deposits (identified by trial-trenching only) comprised waterlogged silts, either water-lain or deliberately dumped on the site. The features identified included drystone and brick walls, post-holes, post-pads and floor and yard surfaces. Horizontal stratigraphy was encountered in most areas of the site, features and deposits surviving within a few centimetres of the latest shop floor surface. In contrast, in Trench 4 in the southeast of the site was a deep modern disturbance, probably associated with the demolition of a 19th century wall, was identified.

5.2.2: Small finds by Lynne Bevan

A total of three humanly-struck flint flakes were recovered, none of which was chronologically-diagnostic. The copper alloy objects comprised a pin (layer 5000), and three fragments of plate (F511/5031). The pin was post-medieval in date, while the plate fragments are not datable. Two iron nails (F511/5031, F516/5046) and seven probable nail fragments (F511/5031) were also found. The iron objects were heavily corroded.

No further work is recommended on this material.

5.2.3: Medieval and post-medieval pottery by Stephanie Ratkai

Quantity

A total of two Saxon sherds, 125 medieval and 24 post medieval sherds, were recovered from the evaluation and excavation. Most of the sherds were small weighing less than 5g. Unless otherwise stated in the spot dating, the assemblage consisted of undiagnostic body or base sherds, nearly all of which were from cooking pots/jars. Three of the Bourne B type cooking pot rim sherds, from layers 2008 and 5000 could be paralleled at The Still, Ely (Spoerry and Hinman 1998, fig. 27, 54). This form is typical of Bourne B ware. A third rim from layer 5000 was of the simple everted type with a slight internal projection.

Range and variety

Most of the fabrics could be matched to pottery found at Buckden (Ratkai 2001), to the north of St Neots on the Great North Road and at Longstanton (Ratkai 2001), northwest of Cambridge, and at the Still, Ely (Spoerry and Hinman 1998). The largest component of the assemblage was Bourne B type ware, with few clearly local products. The paucity of Bourne D type ware suggests a *terminus ante quem* of c 1450 for the occupation of this area of South Street.

There were no St Neots shelly ware sherds, and hence no evidence for Late Saxon occupation. However, there were two Early-Middle Saxon sherds from layer 1019; one grano-diorite tempered, the other with sand, sandstone and calcareous temper. The fabric of the latter was not especially distinctive but the external surface appeared to have been burnished which makes an early date likely.

It is perhaps unusual that the commonest pottery from the site was not local. However, a similar pattern could be observed at Buckden and the importance of the Great North Road in facilitating the transport of pottery from the south Lincolnshire area to sites in Cambridgeshire should not be underestimated. This pattern has also been noted by Slowikowski (pers. comm.). The character of the assemblage is of the most basic, utilitarian kind, with a minimal number of jugs or glazed wares represented. The cooking pots were all undecorated with the exception of one of the Bourne B type cooking pots from layer 5000 which was decorated with incised wavy lines.

Assessment methodology

The pottery was collected by context, and is recorded on context-based assemblage summaries. All the medieval sherds were examined under x 20 magnification and divided into fabrics. The sherds were quantified by sherd count and rim count. Notes were made of any diagnostic sherds.

TABLE 3: Pottery assemblage

<i>Feature/layer</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Spot date</i>
Layer 1019	2 x Early-Middle Saxon	12th-13th century
	1 x shelly ware	
	1 x Bourne B type ware	
F201/2002	1 x shelly ware	13th-14th century
	1 x cooking pot, Bourne B type	
Layer 2008	9 x Bourne A/B ware (cooking pot rim, cf Spoerry and Hinman 1998, fig. 27.54)	14th century ?
	6 x Bourne B ware	
	1 x Sible Hedingham type ware	
	2 x Ely type ware	
	1 x smooth sandy type ware	
	1 x sandy reduced ware (1 cooking pot rim)	
	1 x shelly ware	
	3 x Bourne B type ware	
Layer 3005	1 x dark-on-light slipware	13th-14th century
	8 x black glazed coursewares	
Layer 4002	1 x industrial slipwares	18th-19th century
	1 x modern yellow ware	
	3 x brown stoneware	
	4 x utilitarian white wares	
	4 x transfer printed wares	
Layer 5000	31 x Bourne B type ware (3 cooking pot rims)	14th-mid 15th century
	5 x shelly ware (1 plain rim from wide mouthed bowl in local shelly fabric, one possibly Lyveden-Stannion sherd)	
	5 x Sible-Hedingham type ware	
	1 x sandy calcereous ware (possibly Medieval Ely ware)	
	1 x late medieval reduced ware	
	1 x glazed buff sandy (? South Lincolnshire)	
	1 x Bourne B type ware	
	1 x Bourne B type ware	
	1 x Bourne ? A type ware	
F508/5002	4 x Bourne B type ware	late 13th-mid 15th century
F504/5007	1 x Sible-Hedingham type ware	late 13th-mid 15th century
F511/5031	2 x Bourne B type ware	late 13th-mid 15th century
	9 x Bourne ? A type ware	
F515/5034	1 x Sible-Hedingham type ware (slashed strap handle)	late 13th-mid 15th century
Layer 5035	2x Boarstall-Brill (bowl rim-body	13th century
F523/5036	thin yellow glaze)	13th-14th century
	3 x Bourne ? D type ware (oolitic fabric)	
Layer 5037		15th century
	2 x Bourne B type ware	
	1 x Bourne B type ware	
	1 x Bourne B type ware	
Layer 5039		late 13th-mid 15th century
F516/5046		late 13th-mid 15th century
F518/5048		late 13th-mid 15th century

Statement of potential

The small sherd size and shortage of diagnostic sherds makes this assemblage unsuitable for further detailed study. A brief summary of this assessment should be included in the final report.

5.2.4: Animal bone by Emily Murray

Quantity, provenance and dating

A small collection, c 1kg of hand-collected animal bone was recovered. The animal bones derive principally from Area A, and from various Phase 2 feature fills and layers (5000, F515/5034, 5035 and F516/5046) and Phase 3 layer 5015. Two later deposits (5001, F511/5031) which produced animal bone and contained residual material. The two bulk samples from the evaluation contained oyster shells.

Range and variety

The species represented in the medieval assemblage are cattle, sheep/goat, pig, goose and domestic fowl and evidence for gnawing and butchery was noted. One fish bone fragment was also recovered. The pig elements included two deciduous incisors indicating the exploitation of immature animals, although an immature pig *ischium* (part of the pelvis) from feature F515 (5034), is suggestive of a bone from a modern (post-medieval) breed. This would indicate either contamination or residuality. This has been noted for other deposits on this site, including layer 5001 which also produced a pig bone from a modern breed. The same range of species were represented in the remaining post-medieval and medieval/post-medieval contexts.

Statement of potential

Given the small quantity of material involved, and the evident residuality, the animal bone assemblage is of little archaeological interest and no further work is recommended.

5.2.5: Charred plant remains by Marina Ciaraldi

Eight soil samples collected during evaluation and excavation (Table 4) were examined. The samples were assessed in order to establish:

- if and which organic remains were present
- how these were preserved
- their potential for understanding the site economy
- their potential in the reconstruction of the palaeoenvironment.

Assessment methodology

Although the samples collected were of a standard 20-litre size, only half of each sample was processed for the purpose of this assessment. The samples were processed by manual flotation. The flots were recovered on a 0.5mm mesh, they were then dried, and scanned under a low-power microscope. The residue, collected on a 1mm mesh, was then dried and quickly scanned by eye. Plants were identified without the use of a reference collection and, therefore, all identifications are only provisional.

Range and variety

The plant remains observed in the samples were mostly preserved as charred material, although some uncharred seeds, either modern or waterlogged, were also observed (Table 4). Plant remains were rather scarce with the exception of the samples from deposits 5000 and 5037. These contained well-preserved grains of bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum* s.l.) and barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.), a few seeds of weeds and some pulses including pea (*Pisum sativum* L.) and vetch/tare (*Pisum/Vicia/Lathyrus*). Some small bones and some fragments of edible shell were also recovered from the residue of these two samples. Their composition resembled overall that of the plant assemblage from two samples collected during the evaluation (Ciaraldi 2001). The sample from feature F504 (5007) contained some coal and slag and the sample from feature F505 (5008) contained fragments of a white substance which may be lime.

TABLE 4: List of samples assessed for charred plant remains

Feature/ context	Type of feature	Dating	Vol. Proc. (L.)	Notes
F504/5007	pit basal fill	L 13 th - M 15 th	7.5	A few barley grains and <i>Pisum/Vicia</i> seeds; Fragments of coal and slag
F505/5008	pit	med	10	Grains of barley and bread wheat; elder (<i>Sambucus</i> sp.) seeds either modern or waterlogged. Fragments of ?lime
5000	layer	M 14 th - M 15 th	10	Grains of barley and bread wheat, some pea (<i>Pisum sativa</i> L.) seeds. Some small bones and fragments of edible shells from the residue
5013	layer	undated	5	Small fragments of coal
5015	clay surface	18 th	5	Small fragments of coal and fragments of ? lime as in sample F505/5008
F516/5034	linear feature	L 13 th - M 15 th	10	A few waterlogged seeds of elder, <i>Conium</i> sp. and <i>Galium</i> sp.
5037	layer	15 th	10	Grains of barley and bread wheat, some pea (<i>Pisum sativa</i> L.) and vetch seeds and a few <i>Gramineae</i> seeds. Coal and some small bones

Statement of potential

The plant remains observed in the two richest samples, though not very abundant, represent an interesting assemblage and can provide useful information on the economy of the site during the 14-15th centuries. The presence of pulses is of particular importance since they are rarely found on archaeological sites. They seem to occur more often in archaeological sites from this region (e.g. Ciaraldi forthcoming). This is also supported by historical evidence which suggests that cultivation of pulses in fields and vegetable gardens was particularly common in the southeast of England (Campbell 1988). The presence of coal, slags and possible lime in features F504/5007, F505/5008 and in layer 5015 suggests that industrial activity on site (lime production?) might have been carried out on site.

It is recommended that the other half of samples from deposits 5000 and 5037 are further processed and analysed. The plant remains recovered from the two samples from the evaluation (Ciaraldi 2001) should also be examined and integrated in the final report.

6.0: UPDATED PROJECT DESIGN

6.1: General

Although admittedly derived from a small-scale archaeological investigation, the data from evaluation and excavation are of particular importance given the dearth of recent investigation within the historic settlement core of St Neots. Other recent work has investigated a post-medieval tannery, located on the southern fringe of the built-up area (Jones 2000). Within the town attention has been concentrated within the Saxon settlement (Addyman 1973), and within the medieval priory (Alexander 1994).

The data from the evaluation - which provided details of the medieval and post-medieval deposits, and the excavation - which contributed further details of the building layouts, and the medieval building sequence – are complimentary. The report should also include appropriate cross-reference to other medieval urban sequences (e.g. in Ely). As noted by Ciaraldi (above) further analysis of the soil samples will contribute useful information concerning the medieval site economy.

6.2: Updated aims

- 1) *Achieve an understanding of the medieval development of the South Street frontage, and the chronology of its development, particularly in relation to the medieval marketplace.*
- 2) *Contribute towards an understanding of the post-medieval development of this part of St Neots.*
- 3) *Contribute towards an understanding of the medieval development of the town of St Neots as a whole.*

7.0: PUBLICATION SYNOPSIS

It is proposed that the full report will be published in a volume in the British Archaeological Reports, British Series, which will also contain reports on other BUFAU sites excavated in Cambridgeshire.

EXCAVATIONS AT SOUTH STREET, ST NEOTS, 2001-2 by Helen Martin

with contributions by Marina Ciaraldi, Stephanie Ratkai and Emily Murray

The suggested layout of the report will be as follows:

Text

Summary (200 w)

Introduction, methodology, aims and background (2000 w)

Results and interpretation (3000 w, 4 plates)

Pottery (500 w)

Animal bone (100 w)

Charred plant remains (2000 w, 1 table)

Small finds (200 w)

Discussion (2000 w)

Conclusion (500 w)

Total 10,500 words; 1 table; 4 plates

Illustrations

- 1 Location
- 2 The site and its setting
- 3 Areas investigated by trial-trenching and excavation
- 4 Phase 2, simplified plan of main features
- 5 Phase 2 sections
- 6 Phase 3, simplified plan of main features
- 7 Phase 3 sections

8.0: TASK LIST

Preliminary analysis and reporting/illustration

<i>Task</i>	<i>Identification</i>	<i>Initials</i>	<i>No of days</i>
1	Site archive: update phasing and figure roughs	HM	0.25
2	Site archive: update Harris matrix	HM	0.25
3	Charred plant remains report	MC	3
4	Prepare illustrations	ND	2
5	Library research	HM	1
6	Update site description and interpretation	HM	1
7	Preparation of discussion	HM	1

Completion of first draft/deposition of archive

8	Internal edit of first draft	AEJ	0.5
9	Corrections to text	HM	0.5
10	Corrections to illustrations	ND	0.5
11	Submission for external refereeing	AEJ	-
12	Final revisions of text	HM	0.5
13	Preparation and dispatch of archive	KM	-

Key to initials: AEJ= A. Jones, Project Manager/Editor; HM=H. Martin, report author; ND=N. Dodds, illustrator; MC=M. Ciaraldi, charred plant remains specialist; KM, K. Muldoon, Archive/Records Supervisor.

9.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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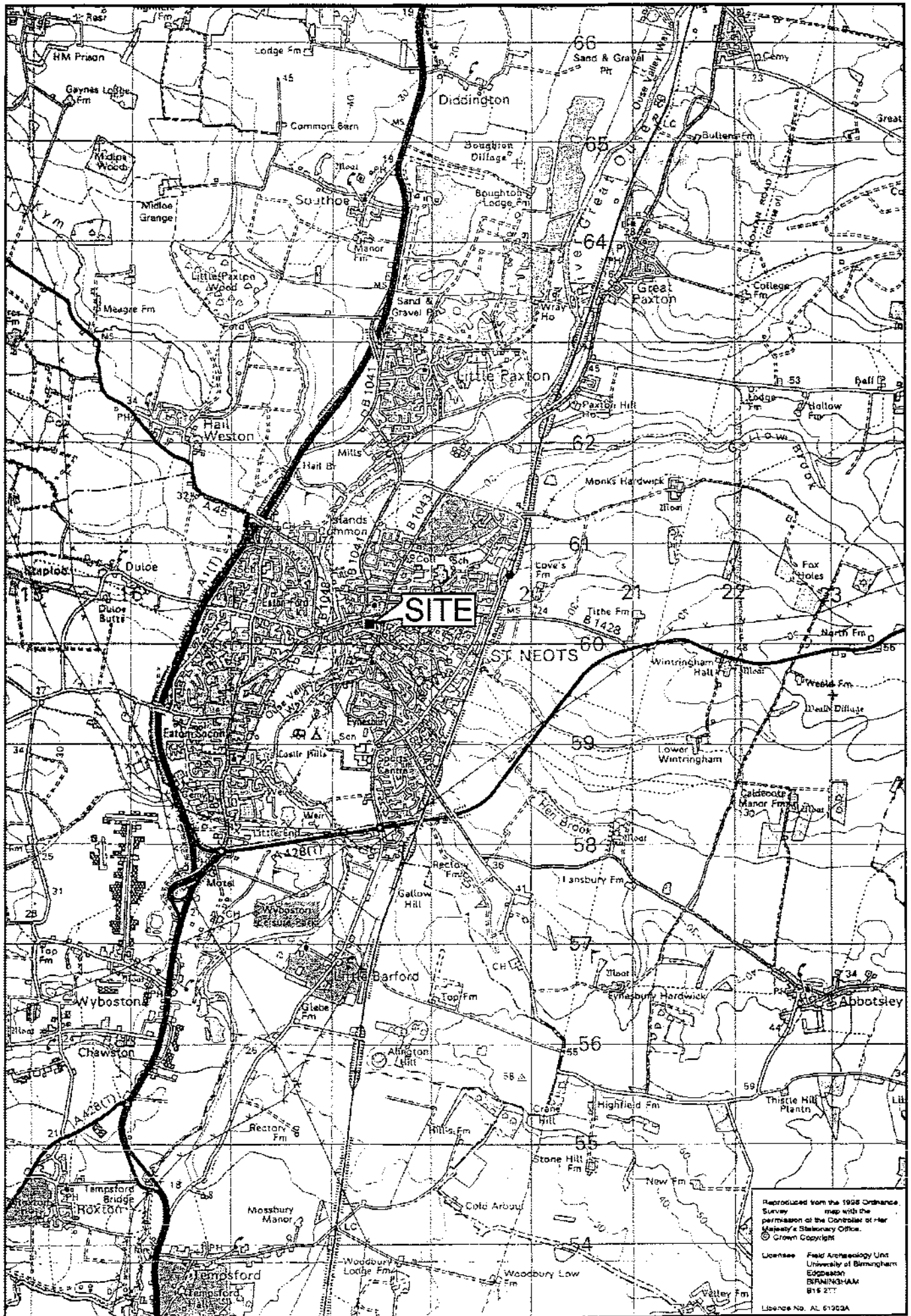


Fig.1

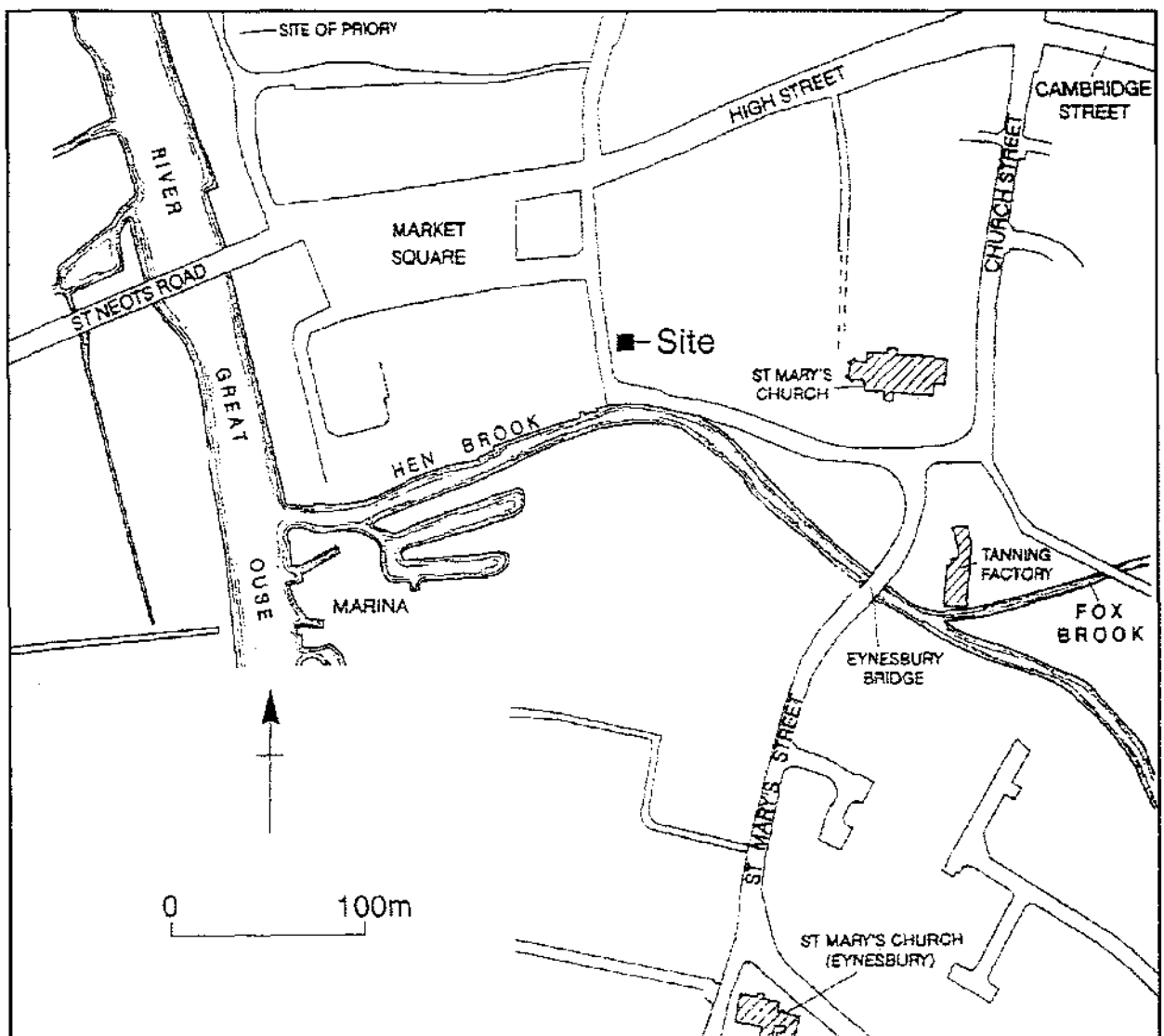


Fig.2

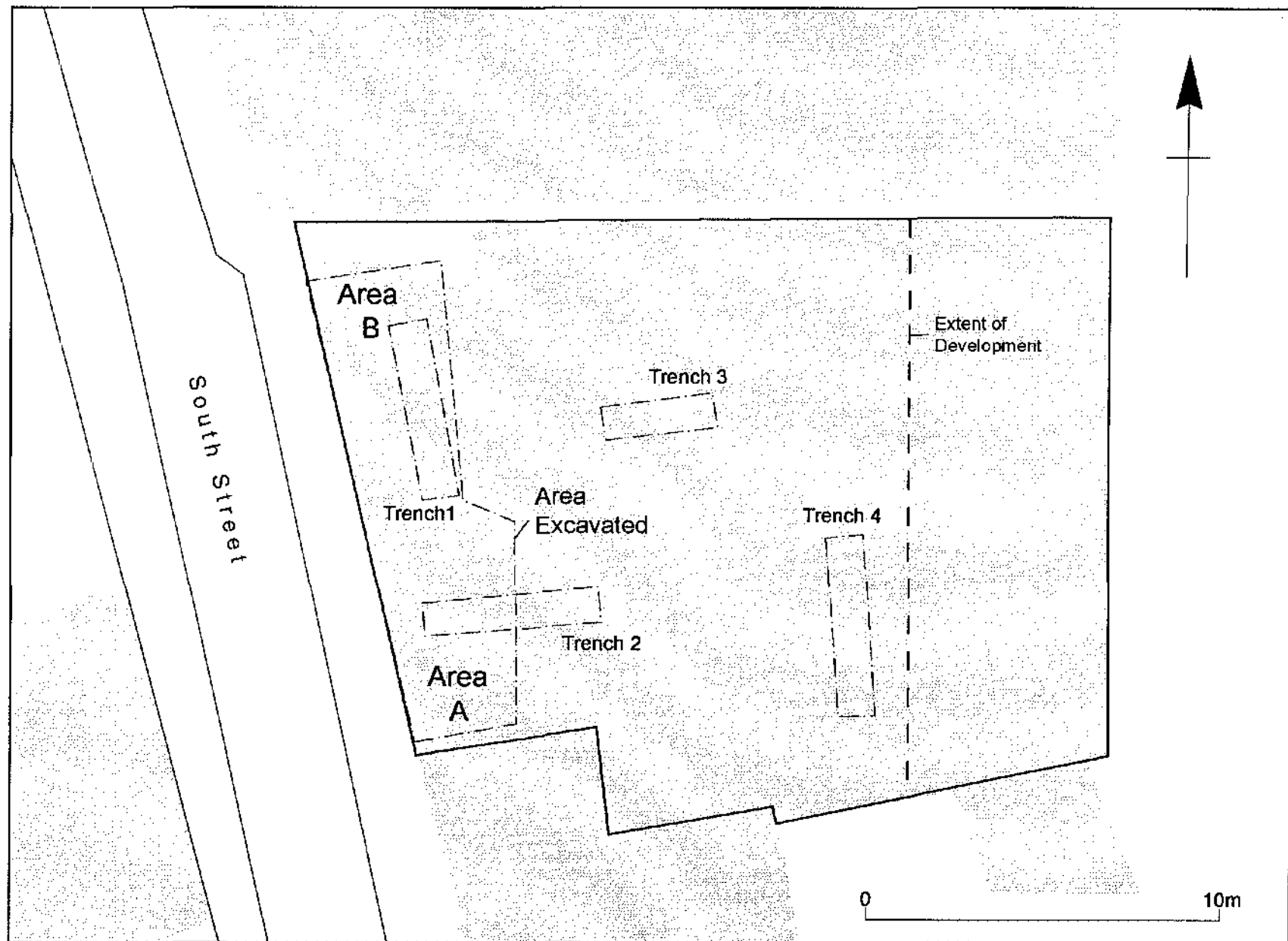


Fig.3

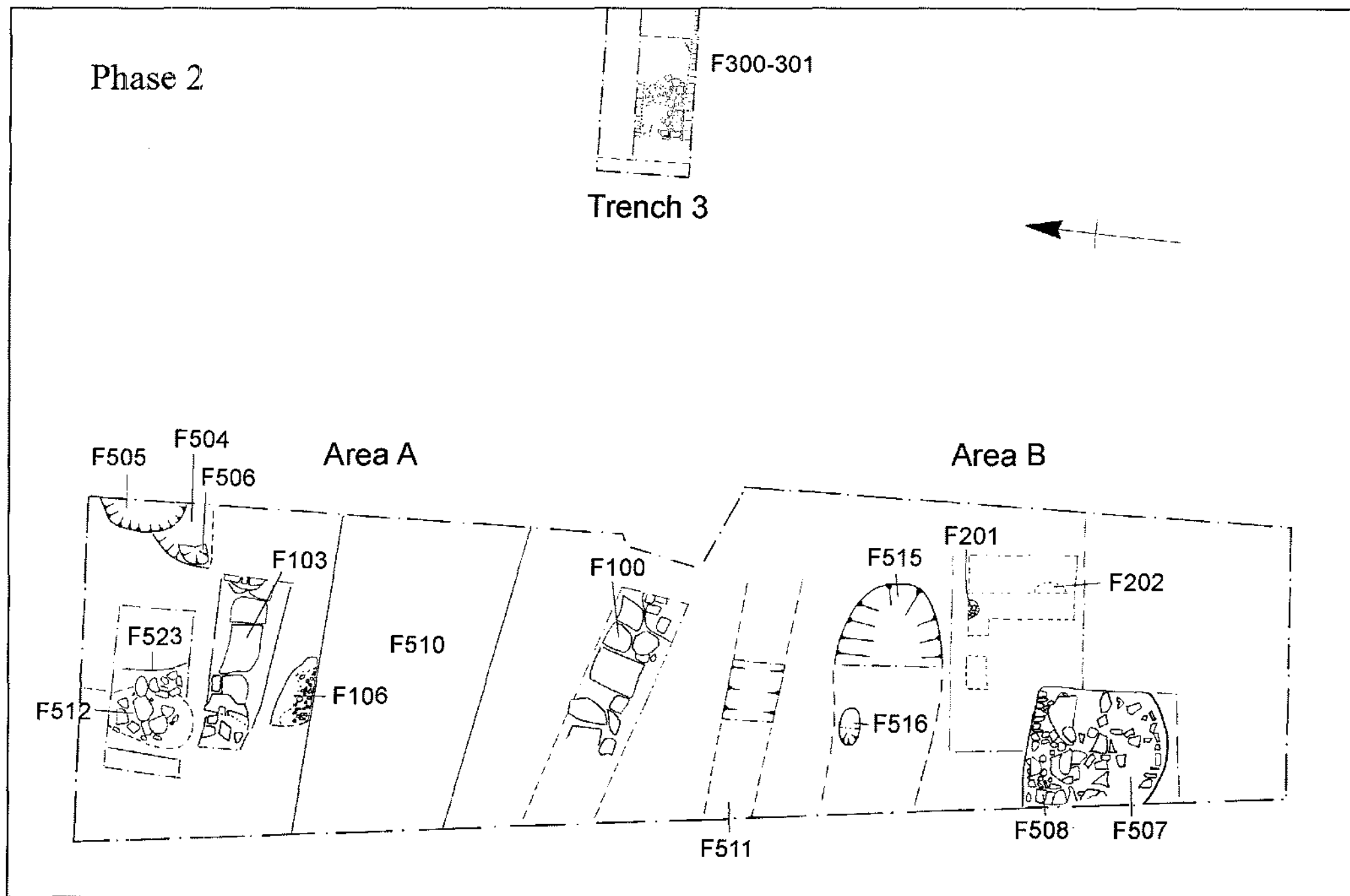


Fig.4

Phase 3

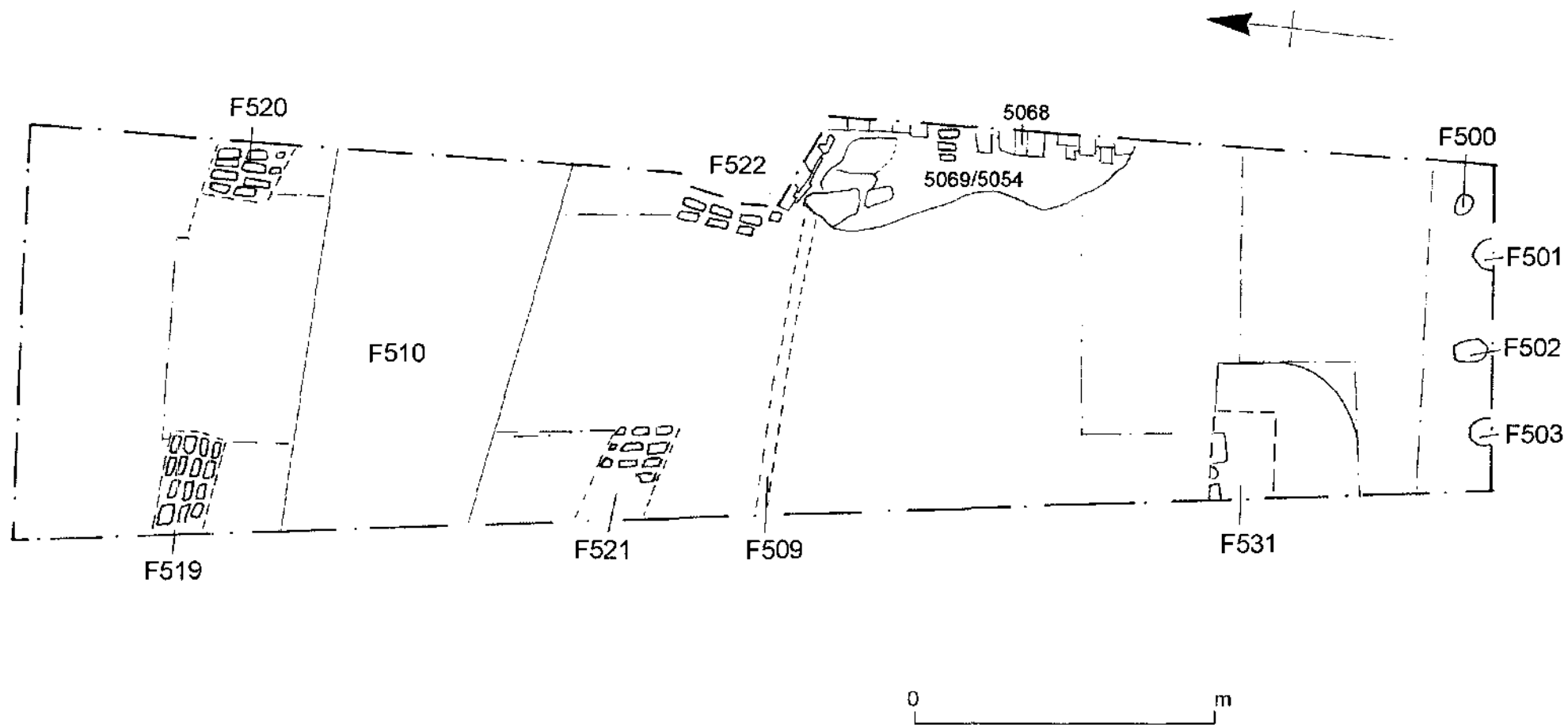


Fig.5