

**An archaeological
watching brief at the
Swan Hotel, 45/46
Greengate Street,
Stafford, 2002**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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**An archaeological watching brief at the Swan Hotel,
45/46 Greengate Street, Stafford, 2002**

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1.0 Summary

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Swan Hotel, 45/ 46 Greengate Street, Stafford, (NGR SJ 9220 2317) during March 2002. The work was commissioned by Jon Banks Associates on behalf of the Moat House, Acton Trussell and was carried out during the redevelopment and refurbishment of the hotel. In a service trench, near the rear of the building, sandstone blocks were recorded which had been reused as foundations for a wall of 19th century date and were probably associated with an earlier structure, perhaps of medieval or early post-medieval date. Three further 19th century walls were recorded in this trench along with a ditch of post-medieval date. Near the front of the building, in a trench dug for a lift shaft base, a sandstone wall was recorded and this was sealed by a sandstone floor. Both the wall and the floor were undated. A deposit overlying the natural, possibly the remains of a truncated pit, contained fragments of bricks of probable 17th century date. All other finds recovered were of late post-medieval or modern date.

2.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Birmingham Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) at the Swan Hotel, 45/46 Greengate Street, Stafford during March 2002. The work was commissioned by Jon Banks Associates on behalf of the Moat House, Acton Trussell. The watching brief was carried out during groundworks associated with the redevelopment and refurbishment of the Swan Hotel.

The watching brief was required as a condition for planning permission by Stafford Borough Council in order to comply with Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoF, 1990). The work was carried out in accordance with a brief prepared by Stafford Borough Council, Development Department (reference LW/543.1/41531) and followed the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999).

The site archive consists of one box of finds and one A4 folder. The archive is currently stored at BUFAU and will be placed with an appropriate repository, within a reasonable period of time, following completion of the project and subject to the approval of the landowner.

3.0 Site location and description (Figs. 1 and 2)

The Swan Hotel is a Grade II listed building located at 45/46 Greengate Street (NGR SJ 9220 2317) in the centre of the historic medieval core of Stafford on what was once one of the wealthiest late medieval and early post-medieval streets. The building is situated to the south of High House, a timber-framed structure dating to the 16th century. The underlying geology comprises river terrace deposits of sand and gravel.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The Swan Hotel is a Grade II listed building, and its frontage is predominantly Georgian in appearance. The present brick-built structure probably replaced an earlier timber-framed building, possibly dating to the late 16th century. Two dates are suggested for the brick building. Charles (1966) advocates an early date of between 1600-1650 whereas others, including Middlefell (2000), suggests a later, possibly mid-eighteenth century date. The building was an important coaching inn during the 18th and 19th centuries. The structure originally appears to have been composed of two separate houses and the present structure was created by arching over the gap between them, probably in the 18th century. In the mid to late 19th century the building appears to have undergone a large programme of extension.

5.0 Aims

The objectives of the archaeological watching brief, as stated in the brief prepared by Stafford Borough Council, Development Department, were to:

- monitor and observe all below-ground work including the excavation of a trench to house a new lift shaft and a trench for the installation of a python line
- record and, if possible, identify the nature and date of a possible sandstone wall found beneath floorboards in the area of the proposed lift shaft
- observe and record the removal of steps at the front of the hotel and any subsequent below ground, work proposed during the insertion of the ramp
- obtain a record of any surviving archaeological deposits and features uncovered during the construction and refurbishment of the building and the excavation of service trenches
- recover artefactual evidence and environmental material

6.0 Method

A qualified archaeologist monitored and observed all groundworks conducted whilst on site. All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Contextual information was recorded and supplemented by scale drawings, plans, sections and photographs which, together with the recovered artefacts, form the site archive. Features were assigned unique numbers from F100 onwards. Contexts were assigned unique numbers from 1000 onwards.

7.0 Results

Trench 1 (Fig. 4, Plates 4 and 5)

Trench 1 was located in the public lounge at the rear of the building and was hand excavated by contractors, for the installation of a python line into the cellar. The trench was 12.6m long and 0.60-0.80m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.60m below the present floor surface.

The natural subsoil was not reached during the excavation of the trench. A layer of dark greyish brown silty sand (1003/ 1004), containing a high proportion of charcoal, coal, clay pipe, small fragments of brick, a wooden stake, a sherd of post-medieval pottery and several sandstone blocks was revealed, 0.23-0.40m below the present floor surface, at least 0.36m thick. Layer 1003/ 1004 was cut by four linear features. At the southwest end of the trench was a northeast-southwest aligned brick wall (F104, Plate 3), 0.35m wide and 0.25m deep, which terminated within the trench. Two reused dressed sandstone blocks, one of which may have been a former capping stone for a plinth, appeared to have been incorporated in the foundations of F104. Wall F104 abutted a narrower northwest-southeast aligned brick wall (F103), 0.25m wide and 0.22m high.

To the northeast of F103 was a northwest-southeast orientated brick wall (F100) 0.36m wide and 0.22m high. Further northeast of F100 was a linear ditch or trench (F101) with vertical sides, 0.80m wide and at least 0.20m deep. It was filled with bricks and brick rubble within a brown sand matrix (1005). The base of F101 was not reached.

Overlying 1003/ 1004 was a badly disturbed 19th century brick floor and associated brick rubble (1002), 0.10-0.20m thick. A concrete floor (1001), up to 0.20m in depth, scaled 1002 and above this were two mortared modern ceramic tile floors (1000), the later forming the present floor surface. The existing brick and concrete cellar wall, was located at the northeast end of the trench.

Trench 2 (Fig. 5, Plates 4 and 5)

Trench 2 was located between the bistro and reception lounge. The trench was hand excavated as part of the construction of the base of a lift shaft. It was 2.0m x 2.0m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.75m.

The natural red sandstone bedrock (2008) and the natural sand (2005) were encountered at a depth of 0.42-0.72m below the present floor surface. In the centre of the trench, were the remains of an east-west aligned sandstone wall, (F200), 0.42-0.48m below the present floor surface, bonded with mortar to the natural sandstone 2008. Wall F200 was badly truncated and was 0.30m wide and up to 0.30m high. It was composed of a single course of sandstone blocks, bonded with a buff mortar.

At the northwest part of the trench, between wall F200 and the north edge of excavation, a deposit of dark greyish brown sand (2009), 0.65 m in diameter and 0.20m thick, which was not visible in section, sealed natural 2005. Deposit 2009 contained a sherd of post-medieval pottery, brick, tile, vessel glass, animal bone,

sandstone fragments, coal and charcoal. Natural 2005 and deposit 2009 were sealed, at the northwest part of the trench, between wall F200 and the north edge of excavation, by a layer of reddish brown sand and sandstone rubble (2004) containing brick and tile fragments, 0.10-0.38m deep. Layer 2004 was overlain by a layer of sandstone rubble (2002) containing brick fragments, 0.30m thick, and a dark brown sand and sandstone rubble (2003) containing brick and tile fragments, 0.16m deep.

Over the rest of the trench natural 2005 and wall F200 were sealed by a floor surface (2007). Floor surface 2007 was composed of mortar bonded sandstone blocks, 0.20m deep. The upper surface of 2007 was tiled and one post-medieval tile was found in-situ, and the impressions left by other tiles were visible. A north-south orientated brick and mortar wall (F201), 0.20m wide and 0.24m high, cut layers 2004, 2003 and floor 2007. Although it was badly truncated F201 appeared to have originally extended beyond wall F200. Overlying 2007 and abutting wall F201, were the remains of a brick floor surface (2006), 0.08m deep. Above F201, 2006, 2002 and 2003 was the present wooden floor.

Area A (not illustrated)

Area A was located at the front of the building inside a passageway, running through the middle of the building. Steps were removed by contractors, for the construction of a ramp, involving excavation to a depth of 0.2m, below the present floor surface.

A cobbled surface (3001) was the earliest context revealed. The cobbles appear to have formed a ramp leading from Greengate Street into the passageway. The average size of the cobbles was 0.10m x 0.10m and the surface was at least 0.10m thick. Surface 3001 abutted a single row of spacer bricks, which were bonded to the walls of the passageway. Sealing 3001 was a layer of clinker (3000), 0.05-0.10m deep.

8.0 Finds by Annette Hancocks

Post-medieval pottery

Two sherds (30g) of post-medieval pottery were recovered, one each from context 1003 and 2009. A single diagnostic rim sherd from a cup was from context 1003 and provided a *terminus post quem* of late 18th/19th century AD (Table 1 below).

Other finds

A small and undiagnostic assemblage of ceramic tile and brick, vessel glass, clay pipe, coal, slag, sandstone and animal bone represent the remaining find types recovered. Two of the brick fragments from context 2009 (dimensions 1 ¼" high x 4 ¼" wide and 8 ½" long) were hand clamped and were of probable 17th century date. One of the brick fragments was sooted on both faces possibly indicating it had been used in a chimney and another had been subject to high temperatures and was partly vitrified. The finds were recovered from contexts 1003 and 2009. It is recommended that no further work be undertaken upon the finds assemblage. The finds archive will be deposited with Stoke City Museum and Art Gallery.

| Context | Description | Finds summary | Spot date |
|---------|-------------|---|---|
| 1003 | layer | 1x post-medieval pottery (4g); 1x vessel glass (11g); animal bone (2g); undiagnostic slag (18g); clay pipe (4g); coal (18g) | late 18 th /19 th century |
| 2009 | deposit | 1x post-medieval pottery (26g); 2 x ceramic brick (1479g); ceramic tile (1153g); vessel glass (40g); animal bone (1g); building masonry (357g); coal (6g) | |

Table 1: Summary of finds

9.0 Discussion

The earliest context in Trench 1 was layer 1003/ 1004, which was of late 18th/19th century date. The three northwest-southeast aligned brick walls (F100, F103 and F104) all probably date to 19th century. Wall F104 was partly built on foundations of reused sandstone blocks, one of which was probably a former capping stone for a plinth possibly used to support a sill beam for a timber-framed structure perhaps of medieval or early post-medieval date. Ditch or trench F101 is of post-medieval date, although lack of closely datable finds means it is not possible to date F101 more closely.

Stratigraphically, the earliest activity in Trench 2 was the construction of an east-west aligned sandstone wall, F200. No dating evidence associated with the construction of the wall was recovered and the function of the wall is unclear. At a later date sandstone floor, 2007, was laid over the top of F200. No clear dating evidence was recovered from 2007. Context 2009, which overlay the natural, possibly the fill of a truncated pit, contained redeposited fragments of 17th century brick, possibly from a chimney. Evidence of later activity was attested by the construction of brick wall F201, of probable 19th century date.

No finds were recovered from the cobbled surface 3001, recorded at Area A, which could be of 19th or early 20th century date, and is probably part of the passage way surfacing relating to when this entrance was still used for access to the rear of the building.

10.0 Acknowledgements

The watching brief was carried out by Andrew Rudge and managed by Laurence Jones. This report was written by Andrew Rudge with a contribution from Annette Hancocks. Nigel Dodds prepared the illustrations and Laurence Jones edited the report. Thanks are due to Jon Banks Associates who commissioned the work on behalf of the developers, The 'Moat House' Acton Trussell, and the staff of the contractors R. Bennett & Co. Thanks are also due to Emma Lea and Steve Litherland for their help and advice.

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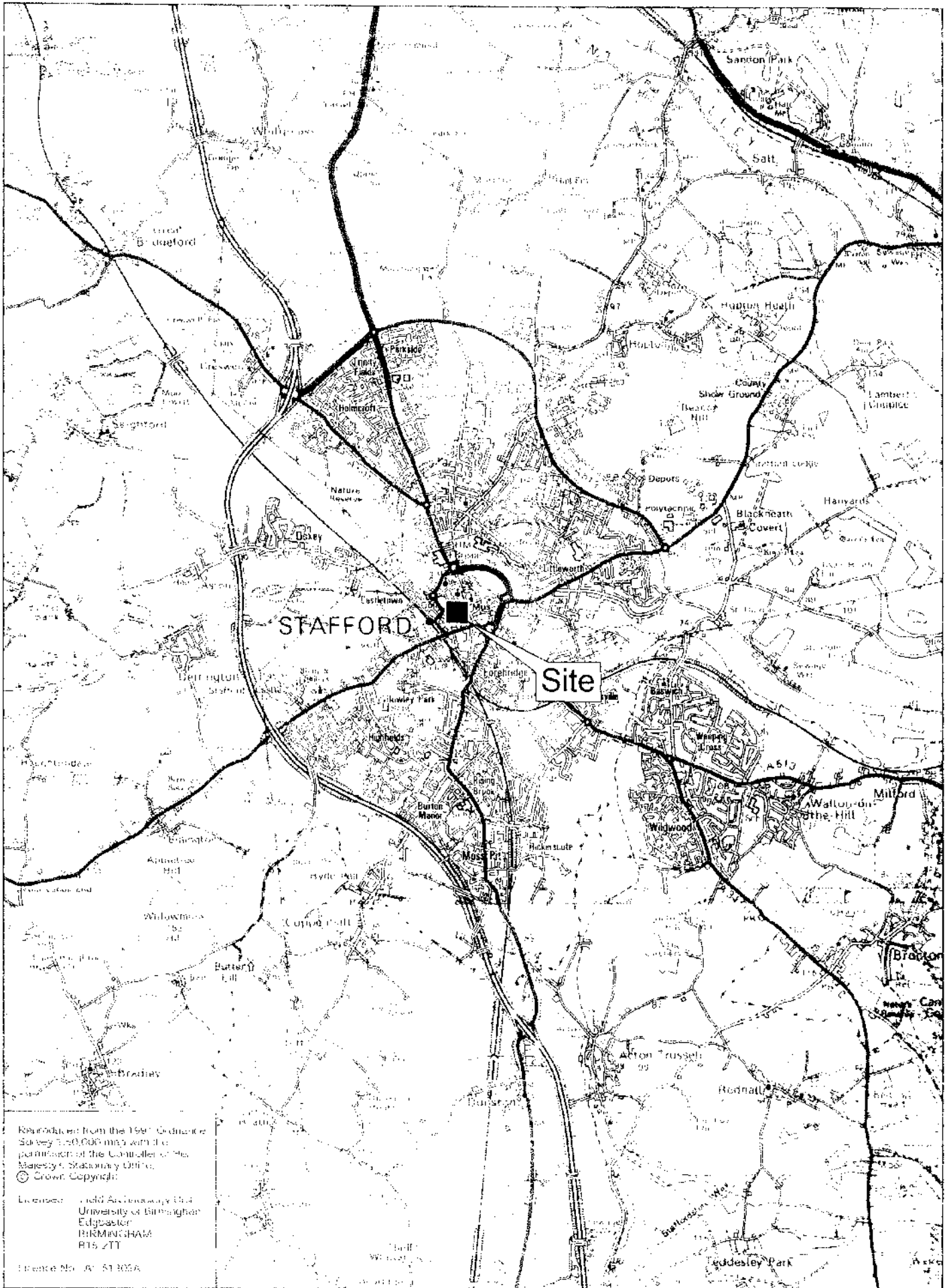


Fig.1

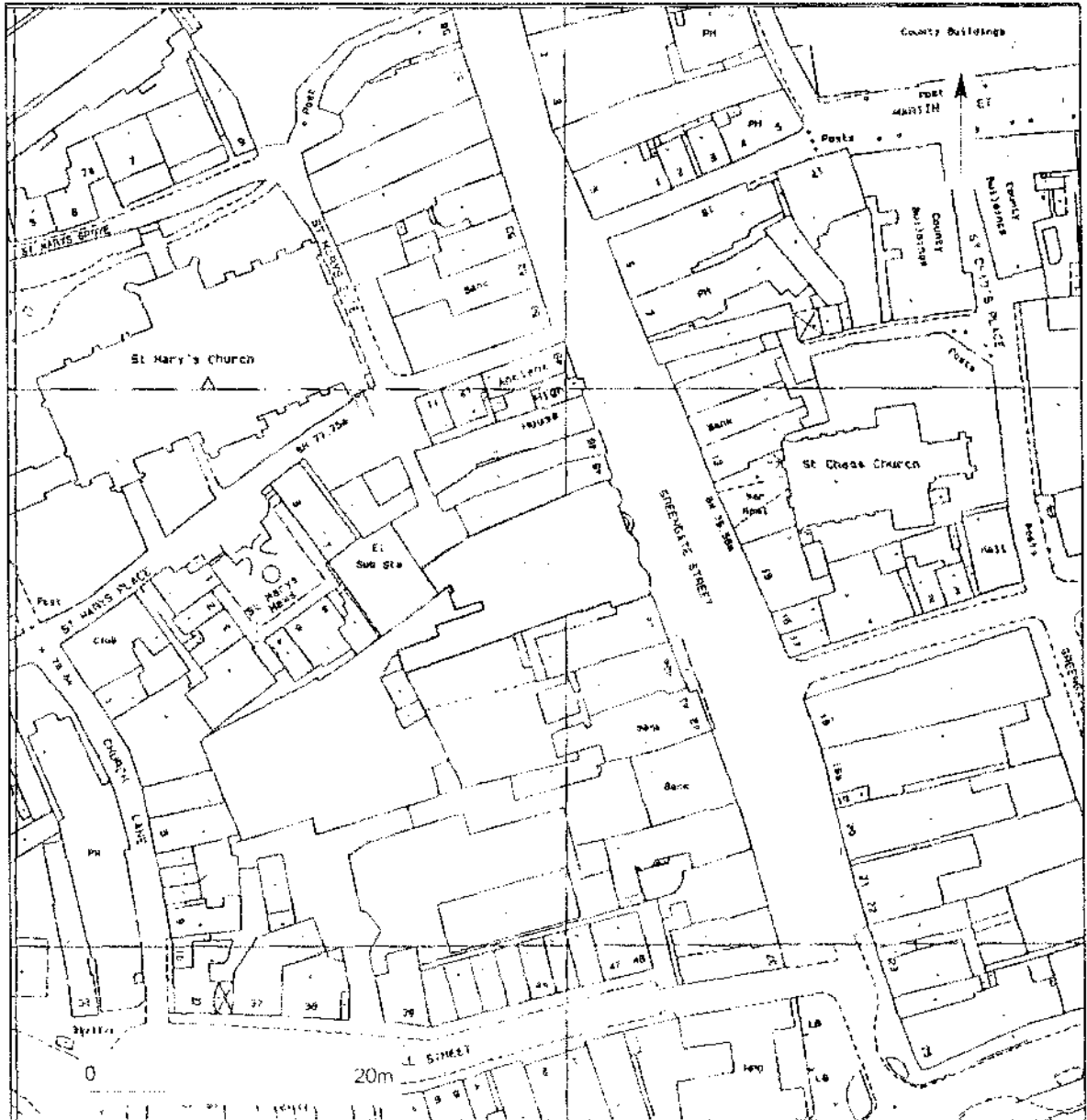


Fig.2

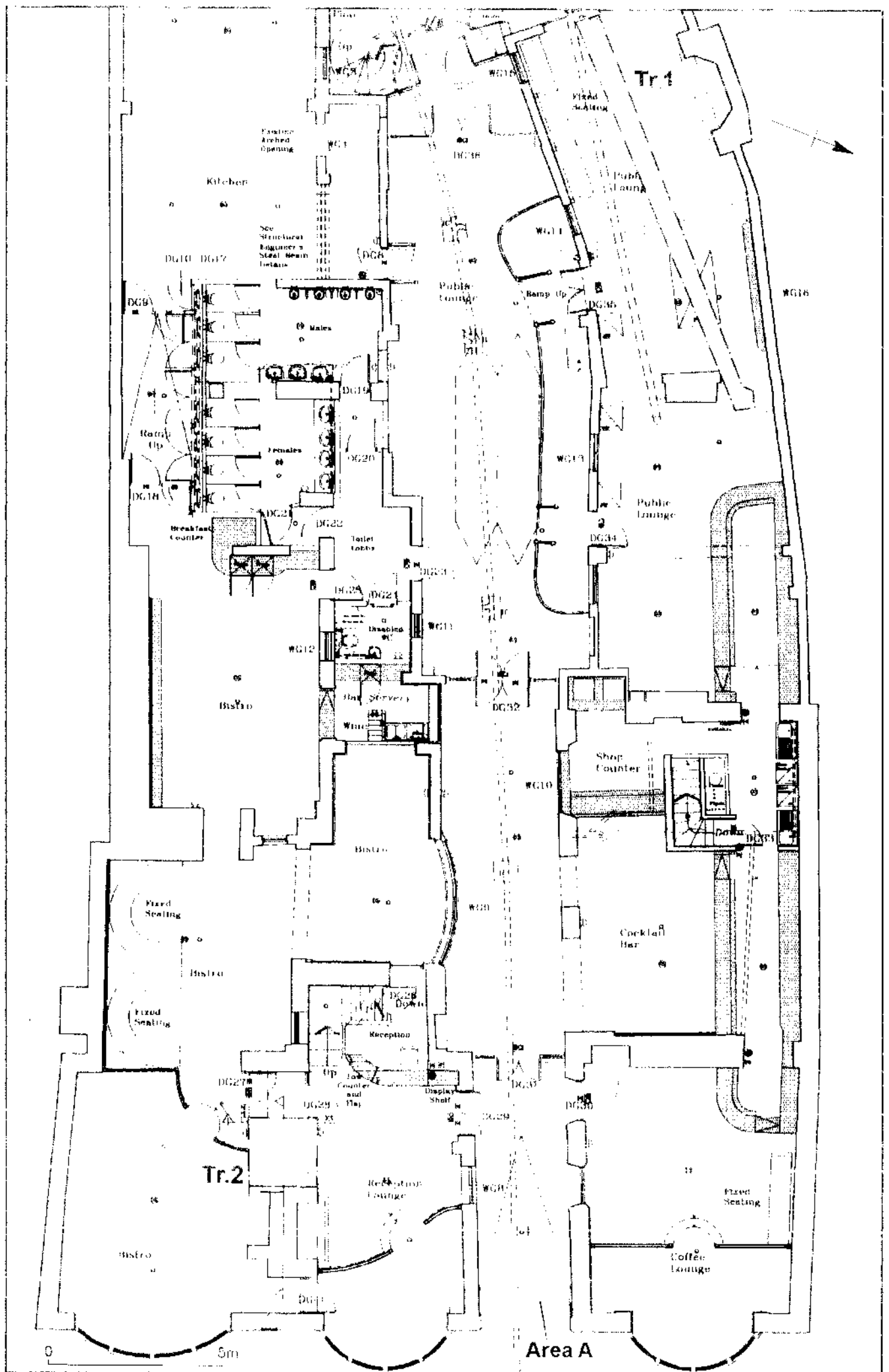


Fig.3

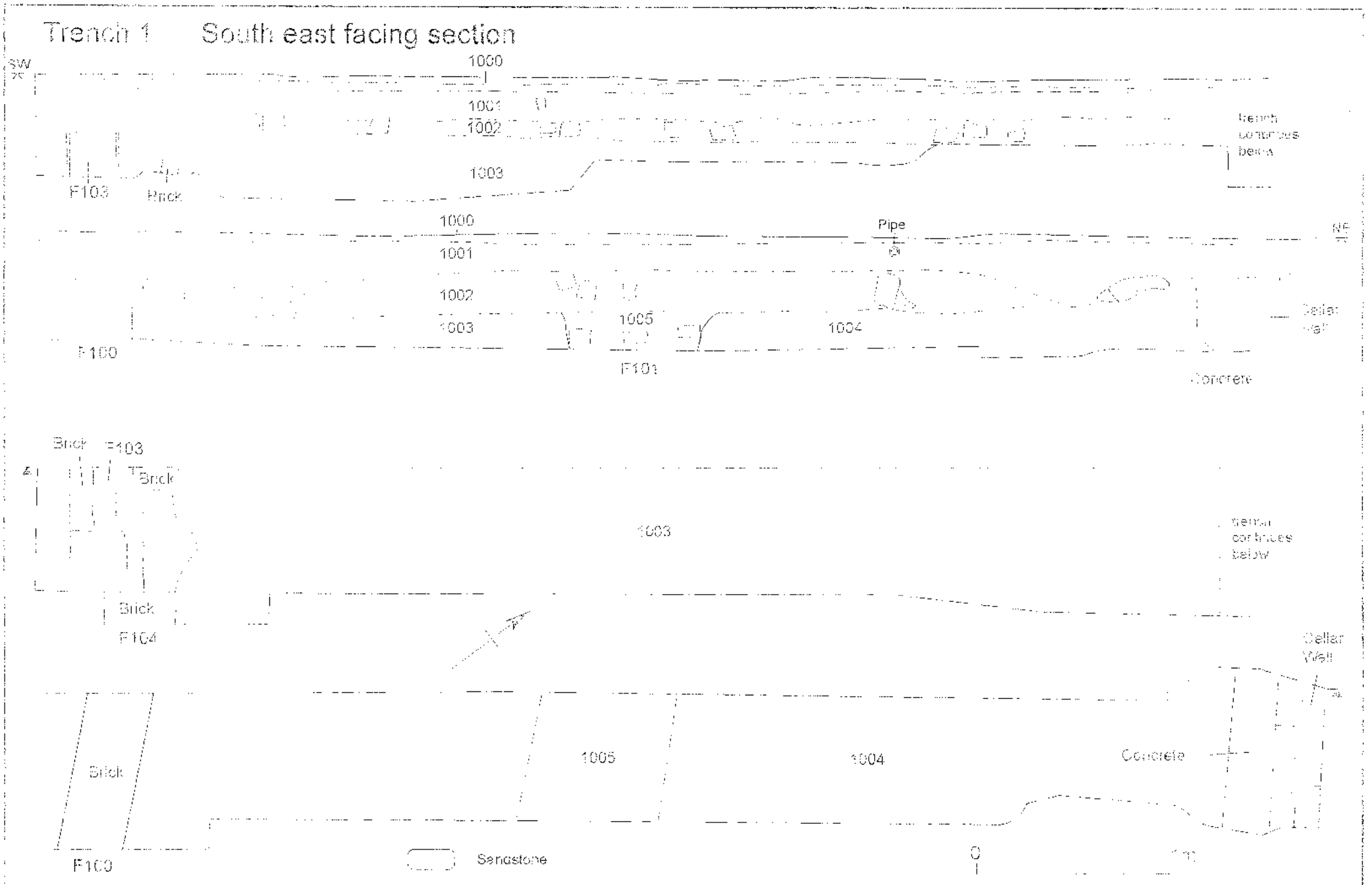


Fig.4

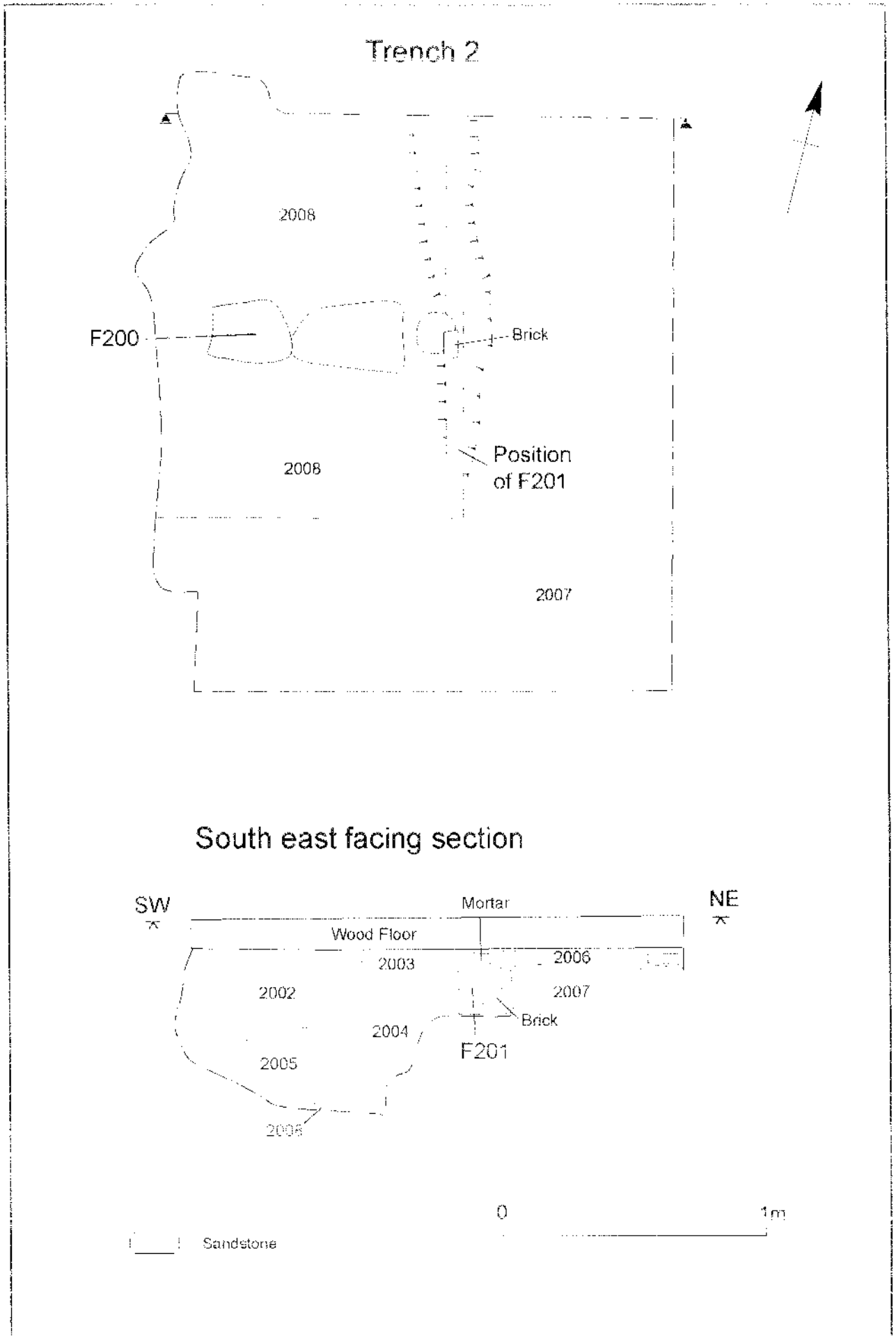


Fig. 5



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3

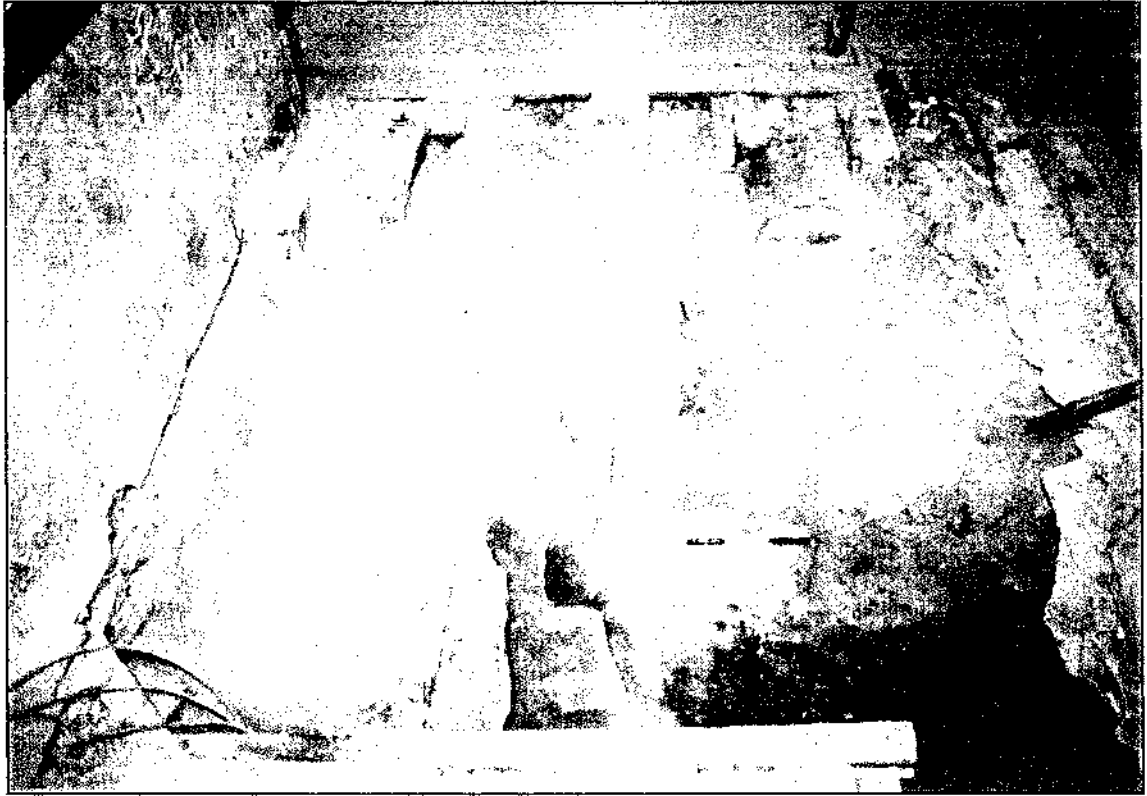


Plate 4



Plate 5