

**Land to the Rear of 8-16  
Worcester Road,  
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation.  
2002  
(Fieldwork Reference WSM 311883)**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
**Project No. 944**  
July 2002

**Land to the Rear of 8-16 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire**  
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## **1.0 Summary**

*Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation in June 2002, on land to the rear of 8-16 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. The work was commissioned by Elmsvyne Ltd. and undertaken in advance of the proposed construction of 9 apartments and associated works (Planning reference No: B/02/0599). Two archaeological trial trenches were excavated within an area to the rear of tenement plots thought to date from the medieval period. There had been no previous archaeological work carried out on this site. A watching brief carried out to the north of the site unearthed evidence of 16<sup>th</sup> century activity. The evaluation revealed evidence of later medieval activity, including possible metal working activity. There were also two deposition episodes, which appeared to relate to clearance activities associated with the development of the buildings fronting onto Worcester Road, both in the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century building remains associated with the development of the backplots of the tenement plots were also identified.*

## **2.0 Introduction**

The following report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in June 2002 on land to the rear of 8-16 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. The work was commissioned by Elmsvyne Ltd. in advance of the proposed construction of 9 apartments and associated works (Planning reference No: B/02/0599) and consisted of 2 trial trenches following an initial assessment of the relevant information available in the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). It was undertaken in response to the guidelines set down in Planning Policy Guidance note 16; and in fulfilment of the aims set forth in the County Structure Plan (*Hereford & Worcestershire County Council 1993; policy CTC5*) and the district local plan, (*Bromsgrove District Local Plan, November 1993 (deposit draft), policies C36-39*). The site of the proposed development was identified as potentially affecting an archaeological site registered on the County Sites and Monuments Record (WSM 19684).

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with a specification prepared by BUFAU based on a brief by the Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council. It was also carried out in accordance with I.F.A. 'Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation' (1999).

### 3.0 Site location (Fig. 1, Plate 1)

The site is centred on NGR SO 95797058, an area of disused land to the rear of 8-16 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. It is located immediately to the rear of former tenement plots, which front onto Worcester Road. To the north and northwest, the site is bounded by the Spadesbourne Brook, and to the west, Little Lane.

### 4.0 Archaeological background with Kate Bain (Figs. 2 & 3)

The town of Bromsgrove itself can trace its history back to the earliest times. There is evidence that a Celtic settlement existed in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century and there is no doubt at all that a Saxon hamlet stood around the hillock on which the parish church of St. John stands. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the town's nail making industry grew rapidly, it lasted for over 300 years but died out with the introduction of machine made nails.

The site of the development, according to an SMR reconstruction, lies within the projected course of a Roman road described by Margery (1973) as the Birmingham to Gloucester Road, '*Margery 180*'. The course of the road appears to follow that of the southern end of what is today Worcester Road, and continues to run in a straight line to the northeast. Just north of the junction with Hanover Street the course of the present road system diverges from that of the projected Roman road, which continues to run in a straight line and crosses the development site just to the rear of the standing buildings.

As a part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, Bromsgrove has been identified as displaying a variety of discrete components that make up a medieval town. The site lies to the rear of a tenement plot (WSM 19684) thought to date from the earliest phase of the medieval town due to its proximity to the church, which may have Anglo-Saxon origins; a watercourse, the Spadesbourne Brook, and the main road. No medieval buildings survive in the area although one 18<sup>th</sup> century Listed Building is located on the frontage (WSM 17520). The remains a 17<sup>th</sup> century meeting house may also survive on site.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889 (Fig. 2) depicts a building or group of buildings, represented as a single block, extending on the site's southwestern limit, from the front of Worcester Road to the Spadesbourne Brook. A passageway or street, which delineates the southwestern edge of this group of buildings, runs at a right angle to Worcester Road, and corresponds today with a drive way running between number 24 Worcester Road (a Public House) and numbers 20/22 Worcester Road. Little Lane appears not to exist at this time, or was possibly a covered walkway between those buildings identified as a single unit.

By 1929, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 3) depicts a second lane branching off Worcester Road, opposite Station Street, and dividing the once single block of buildings into two. This lane would appear to be the first formal depiction of Little Lane. This creation, or perhaps adaptation of an existing, possibly roofed, alleyway between buildings, appears to coincide with a new bridging point over the Spadesbourne Brook. The bridging point, which lies at the northwestern end of 'Little Lane', appears to allow direct access to a new public building, which was possibly the

original market hall. Although the area of the site also coincides with a piece of open ground, it appears that the extent of buildings occupying the site was once more extensive than survives today.

A watching brief (Cook 1994) located just to the rear of the site revealed evidence of 16<sup>th</sup> century deposits, as well as some late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century structures.

The proximity of the site to the Spadesbourne Brook indicated that the site might have potential for waterlogged deposits and the possibility of medieval industrial activity, such as tanning and iron working.

## 5.0 Objectives

The general objective of this archaeological evaluation was to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area affected by the development.

The specific aims were to recover:

- any evidence associated with the Roman road identified in the SMR assessment,
- evidence associated with early medieval activity in Bromsgrove,
- any dateable waterlogged deposits associated with Spadesbourne Brook, and
- any evidence of structures to the rear of the tenement block.

## 6.0 Method (Fig. 4)

Prior to fieldwork an SMR assessment was carried out of all available sources to provide a more informed picture of the type and nature of archaeology that may have been encountered.

Two trial trenches were excavated as part of the evaluation. Trench 1 measured 10m by 2m and Trench 2 measured 5m by 2m. Their location was determined by Worcestershire County Council's Planning Archaeologist in order to provide a representative sample of the development area. In order to facilitate machine access for excavation and to negate other logistical problems, the location of Trench 1 was moved slightly further to the north than originally planned.

The overburden in the trenches was removed with a J.C.B. fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, down to the uppermost archaeological horizon, or the top of the natural subsoil, whichever was encountered first. All machining was carried out under archaeological supervision.

All archaeological features were simple excavated and stratigraphic sequences were recorded on BUFAU *pro-formae* for contexts and features. Where no archaeology was identified, a record of the stratigraphy was made. Contextual information was supplemented by scale drawings; plans (at a scale of 1:20) and sections (at a scale of 1:20). This record was supplemented with black and white, colour slide and colour print photographs. These, together with recovered artefacts, form the site archive.

presently held at BUFAU until appropriate arrangements can be made for their final deposition.

## **7.0 Results**

### *7.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 5 & 6, Plate 2)*

Trench 1 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.56m and for safety and access reasons was stepped at its western end.

The natural, a yellow brown sand and gravel (1008), was encountered at its highest point at a depth of 1.32m below the present ground level. Animal bone was recovered from the interface between the surface of 1008 and 1007. To the east of 1008, at a depth of 1.5m, the natural, or what appeared to be a natural deposit, changed to a grey brown sand (1009). Organic remains including wood and bone were found at the interface between 1009 and 1007. Both 1008 and 1009 were sealed by a layer of grey/brown silty sand containing numerous charcoal flecks (1007). Overlying 1007 was a second layer of silty sand (1006), 0.62m below the present ground level. 1006 was dark grey brown in colour and contained more numerous charcoal flecks and small to medium sub-rounded stones than the underlying 1007. 1007 contained pottery sherds of 16th and 17th Century date, which were from vessels associated with normal domestic activities (see Ratkai, below).

1006 was cut by F101, a construction trench for a robbed out northwest–southeast aligned wall. F101 was found at a depth of 0.5m below the present ground level and was filled by 1011, a mixed matrix comprised of dark grey/brown silty sand, containing cobble-sized stones, as well as fragments of brick and sandstone. Above 1011 was a layer of mortar and tile (1005). Sealing this layer was a yard surface (1002), composed of large, rounded cobblestones and on the north side, a brick surface. 1002 was cut by F102, a service trench, which contained both a ceramic sewage pipe and metal water pipe, probably late 19th century in date. F102 was filled with 1004, a mixed deposit comprised of dark grey/brown silty sand, charcoal flecks and cobbles. Sealing both F102 and the yard surface (1002) was a layer of rubble, 1001, comprised of bricks, mortar and tile. 1001 was found at a depth of 0.12m below the present ground level, and had been truncated in the western end of the trench by 1000. At this point, were the remains of a northwest-southeast aligned wall, F100. F100 was 0.38m in width and composed of worked sandstone blocks and brick (1010). The type of brick suggesting an early, possibly 17<sup>th</sup> century date. Sealing both F100 and 1001 was the topsoil (1001), which was poorly developed and contained waste building material.

### *7.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 7 & 8, Plate 3)*

This trench was excavated to a total depth of 1.58m, with an excavated step at the northern end of the trench for safety reasons and to provide access

The natural, a yellow brown sand (2008), was similar to that (1008) encountered in Trench 1 and encountered at a similar depth, 1.5m below the present surface level. A small ditch, F201, was cut into the natural (2008) and was filled with 2006, a grey clay with sand lenses. 2006 contained fuel ash slag, associated with the remains of

small-scale ironsmithing. A layer of silty clay (2005), which contained animal bone, and pottery sherds dated to the later 15th and 16th centuries sealed F201 and 2008.

A small post-hole, F200, was cut into the surface of 2005 and was filled by 2007, a grey/black silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks. A single pottery sherd, dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was recovered from this context. Overlying 2005, and apparently sealing F200, was a layer of grey/brown sandy silt (2004). A second layer of grey/black silty sand (2002) sealed 2004. Cut into both 2002 and 2004 was a foundation trench for a brick wall (F202), aligned north-south. F202 was filled with a brick rubble and mortar deposit (2003). A second wall (F203) was seen in plan and ran east-west across the trench at this level, where it appeared either abut or join F202, the exact relationship was unclear. Above 2002 and F202 was a layer of silty clay overburden (2001). 2001 seals the underlying contexts and begins some 0.18m below the present ground level. 2001 was in turn sealed by the present surface layer/topsoil, which was a black humic matrix containing brick rubble.

## **8.0 Finds**

### *8.1 Post-medieval pottery by Stephanie Ratkai*

The pottery consisted mainly of post-medieval wares dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, which were typical of ordinary domestic assemblages of the period. There was an absence of the high quality light-bodied table wares of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, e.g. white salt glazed stoneware and creamware, but as the sample size is so small no conclusions can be drawn from this.

The earliest pottery was made up of late medieval/early post-medieval traditional wares. There were three oxidized wheel-thrown Malvernian sherds (fabric F69 in Worcester County type series, fabric B4 in the Hereford City type series). These were a bowl base sherd from (1006) and a jug sherd and a pouring lip from a dripping pan from (1008). A similar dripping pan was found at Malvern Abbey (pers. inspection by the author). The fourth late medieval/early post-medieval sherd came from (2005). It was a hard fired oxidized sherd with a patchy internal olive glaze and probably came from a jar or cistern.

Late Malvernian ware had a very wide distribution in Worcestershire and Herefordshire and parts of southern Warwickshire. However, it never seems to have penetrated to any extent into northern Warwickshire and it is probably true that Bromsgrove marked the northeastern boundary of its core distribution. In contrast the other late medieval fabric (from 2005) is a type common in north Warwickshire and the Black Country and is generally uncommon further south in Worcestershire. The rather limited evidence from Worcester Road might therefore indicate that Bromsgrove stands at the junction of two ceramic traditions and their associated marketing areas.



## 8.2 Other Finds by Erica Macey

Context	Animal Bone	Brick	Charcoal	Clay Pipe	Cobbles	Copper Alloy	Glass	Iron	Leather	Slag	Slate	Tile	Post-medieval pottery	Spot date
1001						1	3				1		6	19thC
1002		1			3									
1005	36g											1		
1006	14g	2	1	3								3	18	c1700-1750
1007	510g		2	1			2	2				3	4	16-17thC ?
2005										83g			1	L15-16 <sup>th</sup> C
2006										195g				
2007										14g			3	17th-18thC
U/S													3	19thC

Table 1 Quantification of Finds Types by Context

A small quantity of non-pottery finds was recovered from the site. The assemblage was fragmentary, although individual items were relatively unabraded. Five pieces of glass, including one complete 20th century bottle (1007), were recovered from the site. A nearly complete bottle from the same context was marked with the name and logo of the “*Bromsgrove Mineral Water Co.*” The other pieces of glass in the assemblage were too fragmentary to be of any real diagnostic use, although one fragment (1001) may have been the base of a small square inkbottle.

The ceramic tile was also largely undiagnostic. Of particular interest was a square fragment of tile with deep comb impressions (1007). This initially resembled the known Roman tile form *tubulus*, or box flue tile, but closer macroscopic examination of the fragment showed that the fabric was similar to the fabric of some of the other fragments in the assemblage, all of which were post-medieval in date.

The most interesting metal item from the site was a small funnel-shaped copper alloy tube of modern appearance. The function of the item is unclear, but it was noted that the tube was scored around the outside of its wider end, suggesting that it could be screwed to another item. Other metal finds from the site included a heavily corroded iron nail (1007) and a fragment from an iron pipe (1007). Both of these were undiagnostic, but were assumed to be of post-medieval date.

The metallic slag recovered from the site appeared to be a mixture of tap slag (2005 and 2008) and fuel ash slag (2008). This would be indicative of the type of residue associated with small scale iron smithing taking place (A. Hancocks, pers. comm.), although the nature of the deposits which contained this slag did not appear to be associated with iron working structures themselves.

Other finds from the site included animal bone, clay pipe stems, a broken end of a slate pencil (1001), ceramic brick, a leather shoe sole (1007) and leather scraps (1007), charcoal fragments and a sample of stones from a cobbled surface (1002). As with the rest of the assemblage, these all appeared to be of post-medieval date.

## 9.0 Discussion with Gary Coates

### 9.1 Trench 1

The earliest deposit in this trench, 1007, contained pottery sherds dateable to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries mixed with artefacts of a possible later date. These items may have been intrusive, possibly introduced by the disturbance created by the service trench. 1007 would appear to be a clearance layer of former cultivation or garden soil that was deposited in a single episode. Above 1007, 1006 appeared to be a similar deposit, which contained pottery sherds dated to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There was a robbed out foundation trench (F101) as well as a surviving wall (F100) cutting into this soil: all suggestive of 18<sup>th</sup> century structures associated with the buildings fronting onto Worcester Road. These features and deposits had been sealed by a 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century cobbled and brick yard surface (1002), which had been disturbed by a later service trench.

### 9.2 Trench 2

The earliest dating evidence comes from a sherd of oxidized ware, which was dated to the later 15<sup>th</sup> –16<sup>th</sup> century. This sherd was recovered from 2005. The only other piece of pottery recovered came from 2007, F200, and was dated to the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century. No other datable material was recovered from this trench.

The earliest feature identified, F201 (2006), contained slag, which related to a phase of industrial activity associated with iron working. It appeared that the slag was a secondary deposit in this feature, as the feature did not have a form that was recognisable with an iron working structure. Sealing F201 was layer 2005, which appears to represent a single episode of deposition, the nature and consistency of which were suggestive of the clearance of a cultivation or garden soil, as observed in Trench 1. Cut into the surface of this layer was post-hole F200. A later deposit (2004), again suggestive of a cleared cultivation or garden soil, sealed F200. This had been cut by later walls, which appeared to date to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### 9.3 Conclusions

The stratigraphy of both trenches was similar and provides an initial interpretation picture for the formation of the deposits on this site. There were two episodes when substantial depths of garden or cultivation soil have been deliberately deposited. The first approximately dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, (contexts 1007 and 2005) and the second to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (1006 and 2004). The nature of the deposits themselves and the few artefacts recovered from them may suggest that they were associated with clearance activity for tenement plots and buildings fronting onto Worcester Road. 1007 did contain artefacts apparently of a much later date than the pottery sherds, which are thought to have been introduced with the disturbance created by the excavation of a later service trench. However, it remains possible that this deposit is much later than the dateable pottery sherds suggest, i.e. 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the formation of deposits on this site is much more complicated than suggested here. Evidence from the trenching exercise remains inconclusive. They were certainly substantial depths of deposits that had not accumulated gradually over a long period of time.

There was then a later period of building activity associated with the back plots of the tenement buildings, relating to a late 18<sup>th</sup> and into the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which sealed the clearance deposits and had very little modern overburden above them.

While it remains possible that earlier activity was taking place on the site, this may have been truncated by the deposition of the clearance deposits. A feature at the base of Trench 2 was identified, which may relate to earlier medieval activity. However, it remained undateable and the slag recovered may have been intrusive from the clearance deposits above. This feature and the natural subsoil were encountered at an average depth of some 1.5m below the current ground surface level.

There was no evidence of activity associated with the possible route of the Roman road, 'Margary 180', or any evidence of significant alluvial deposits associated with Spadesbourne brook.

## **10.0 Acknowledgements**

Kate Bain carried out the SMR assessment. The evaluation was managed by Gary Coates and carried out by Andrew Rudge and Maurice Hopper. Andrew Rudge wrote the report with contributions by Kate Bain, Gary Coates, Stephanie Ratkai and Erica Macey. John Halsted prepared the illustrations and Gary Coates edited the report.

Thanks are due to Gary Bridgewater, Elmsvyne Ltd., for commissioning the work and all their site representatives for their help and interest.

Mike Glyde, Worcestershire County Council's Planning Archaeologist, monitored the project on behalf of the local planning authority.

## **11.0 References**

Cook, M. 1994. *Watching Brief on the Site of the New Market Hall, Bromsgrove* HWCAS. Report 240.

Margary, I.D. 1973. *Roman Roads In Britain* John Baker Ltd., London.

## Figures

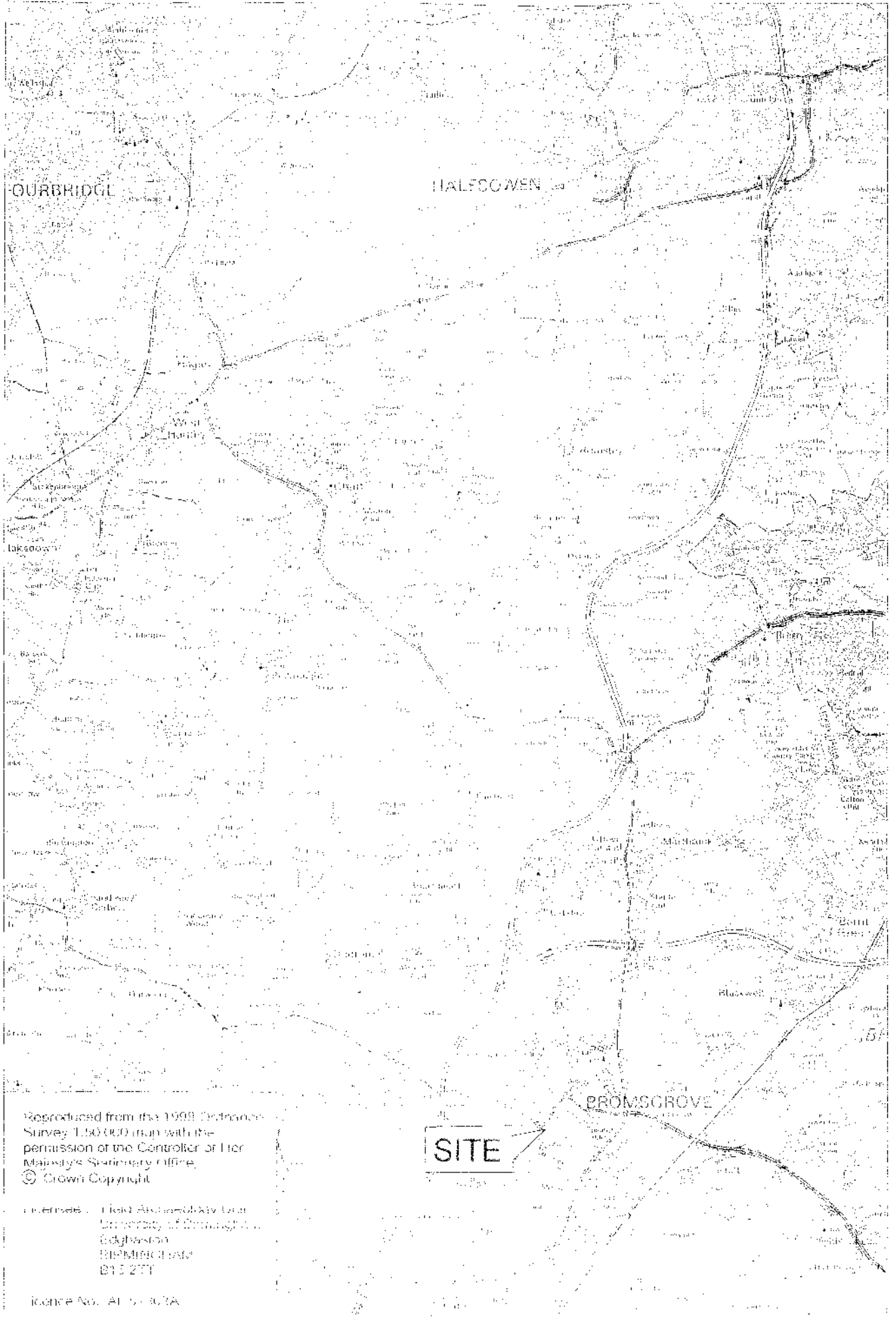


Fig. 3

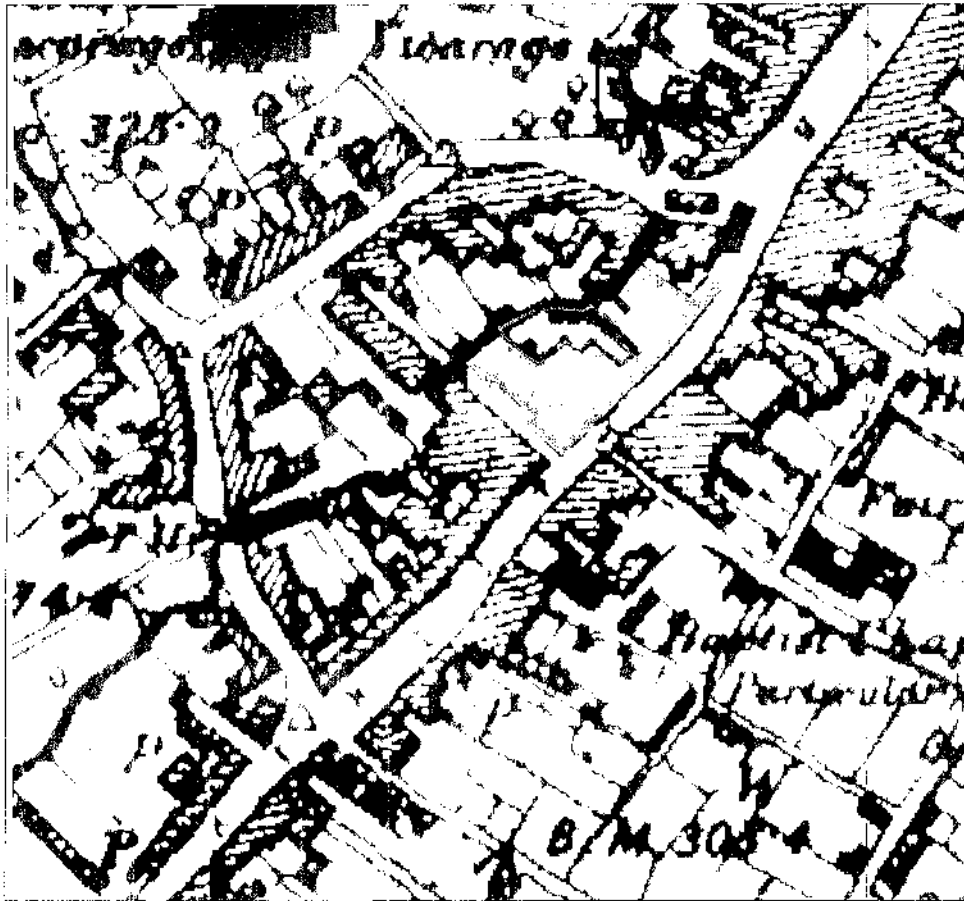


Fig. 2 1889 first edition OS map



Fig. 3 1929 3rd edition OS map

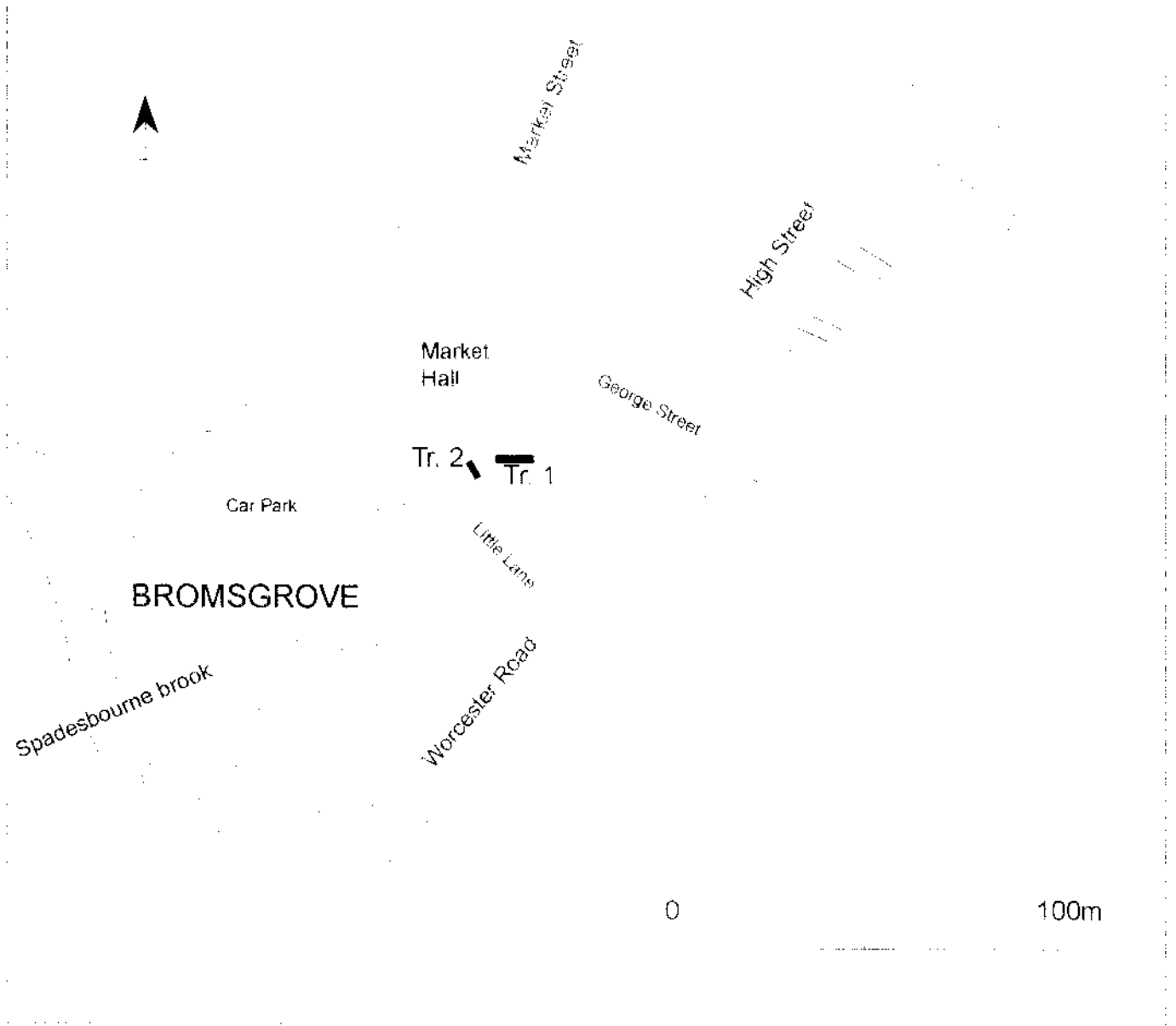


Fig 4

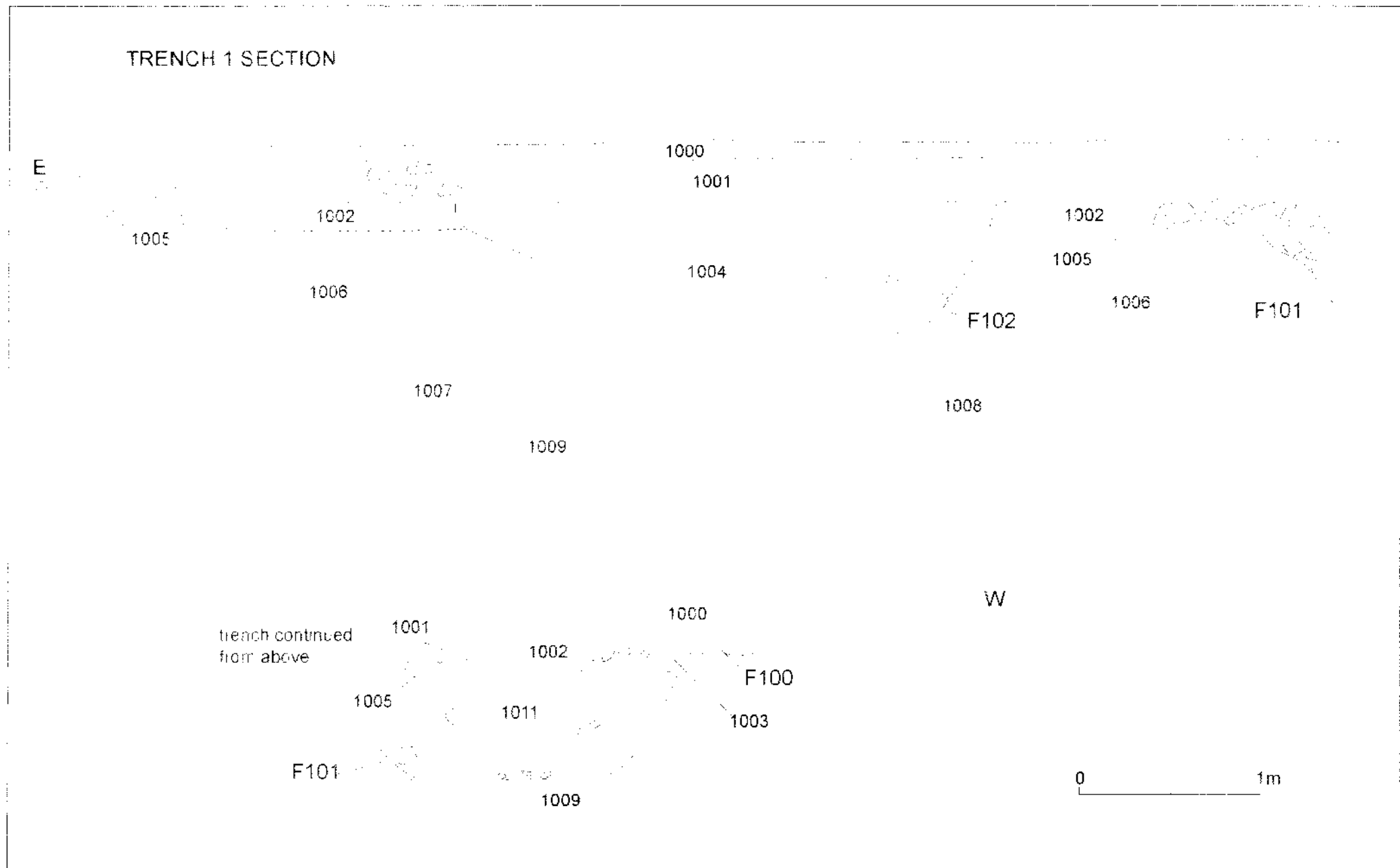


Fig 5



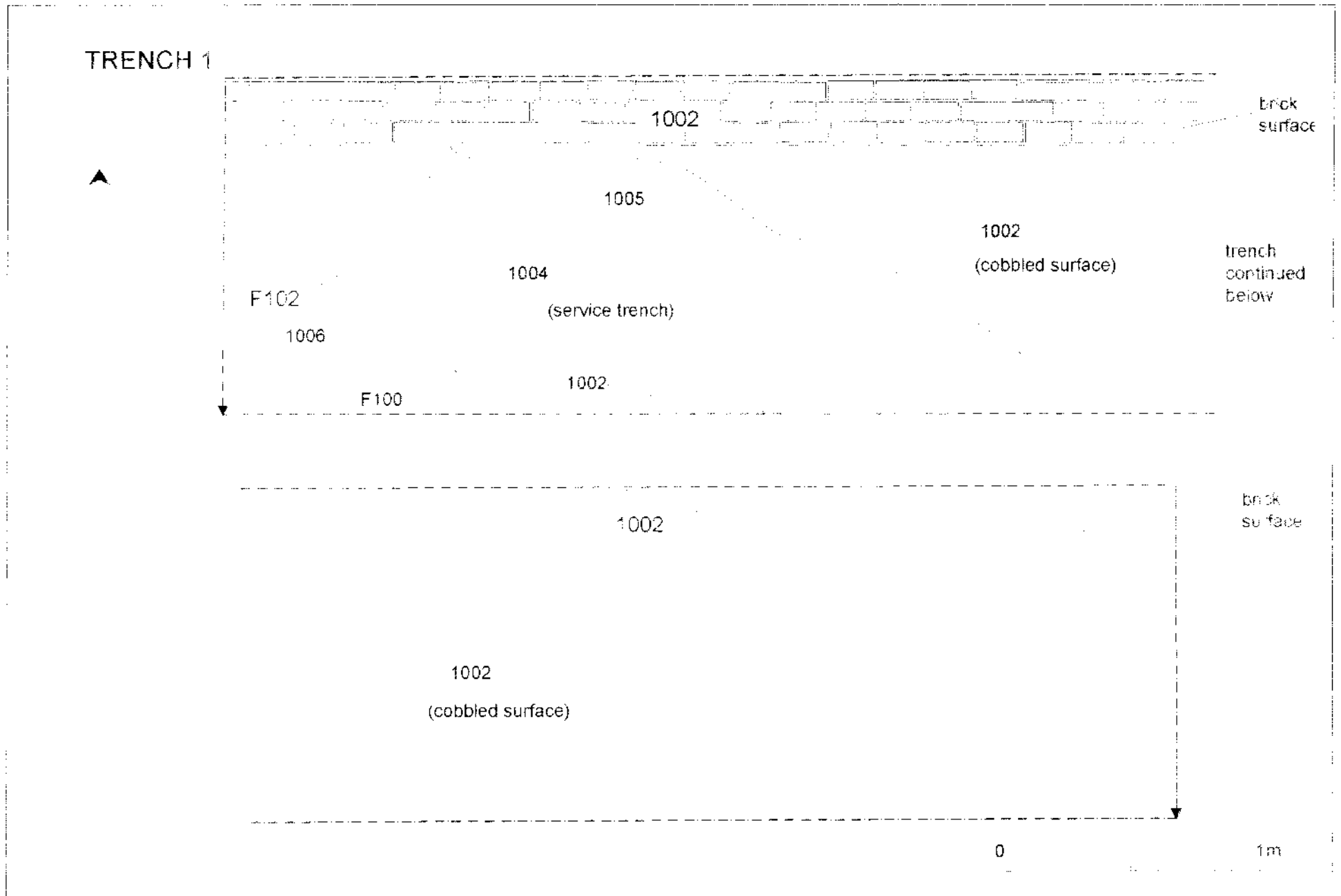
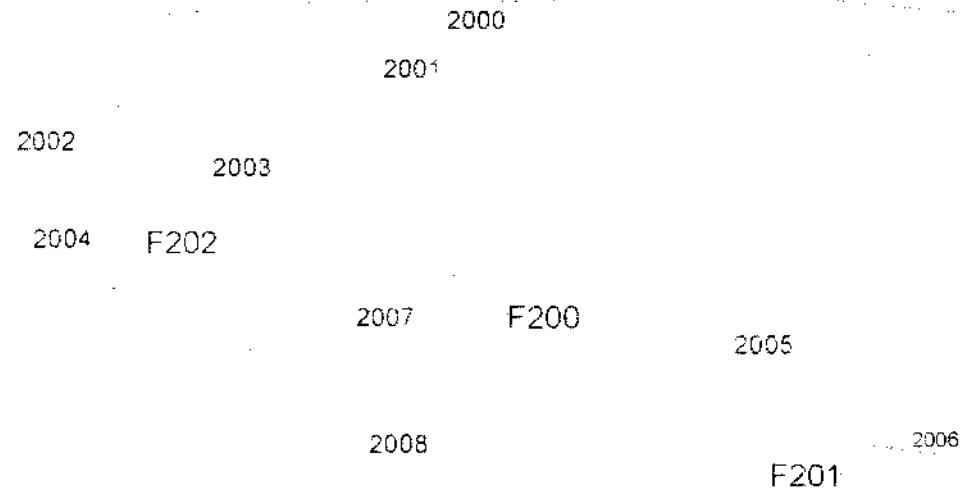


Fig. 6

# TRENCH 2 SECTION

NW

SE



0

1m

Fig. 7

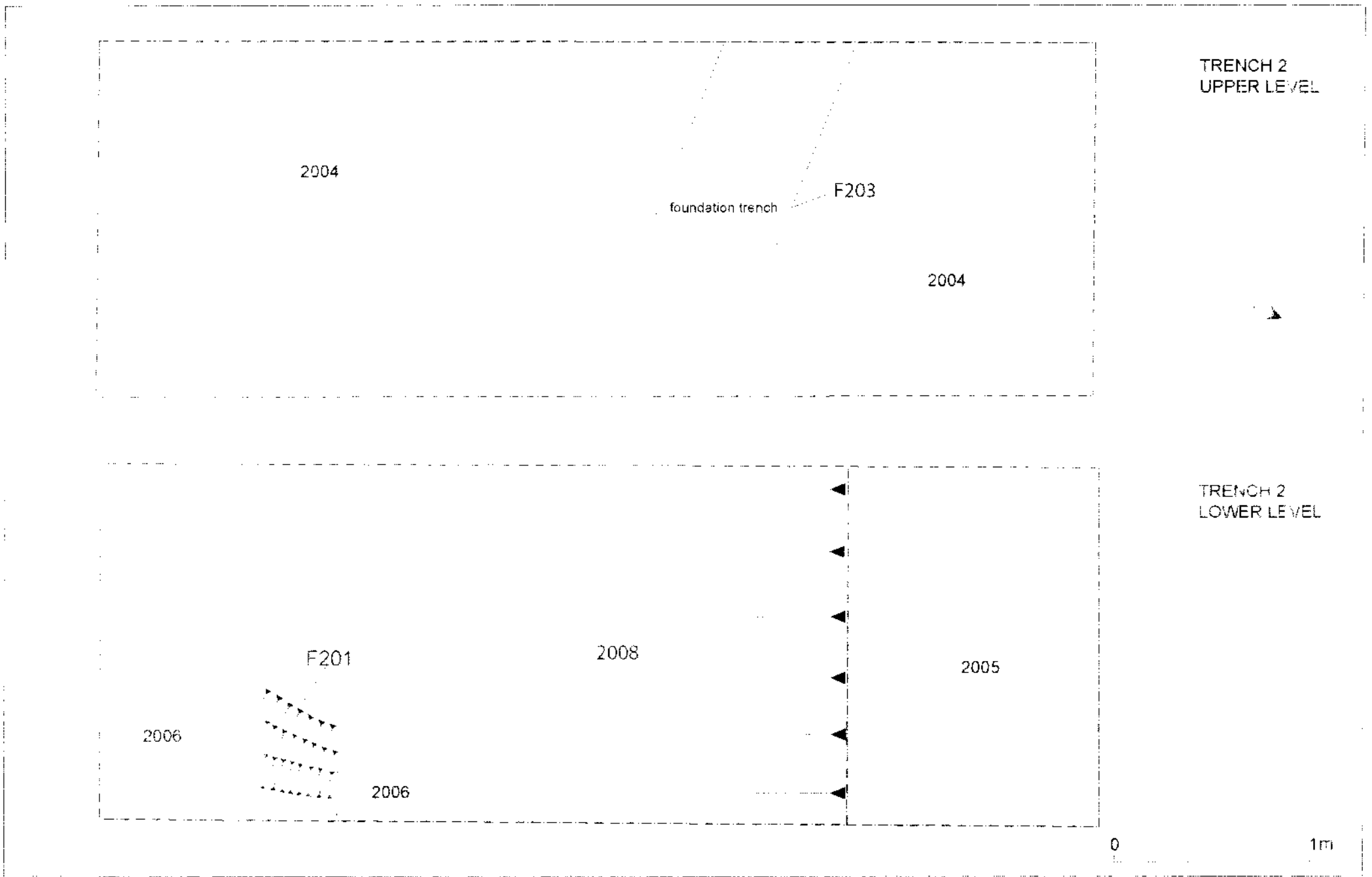


Fig. 8

## Plates

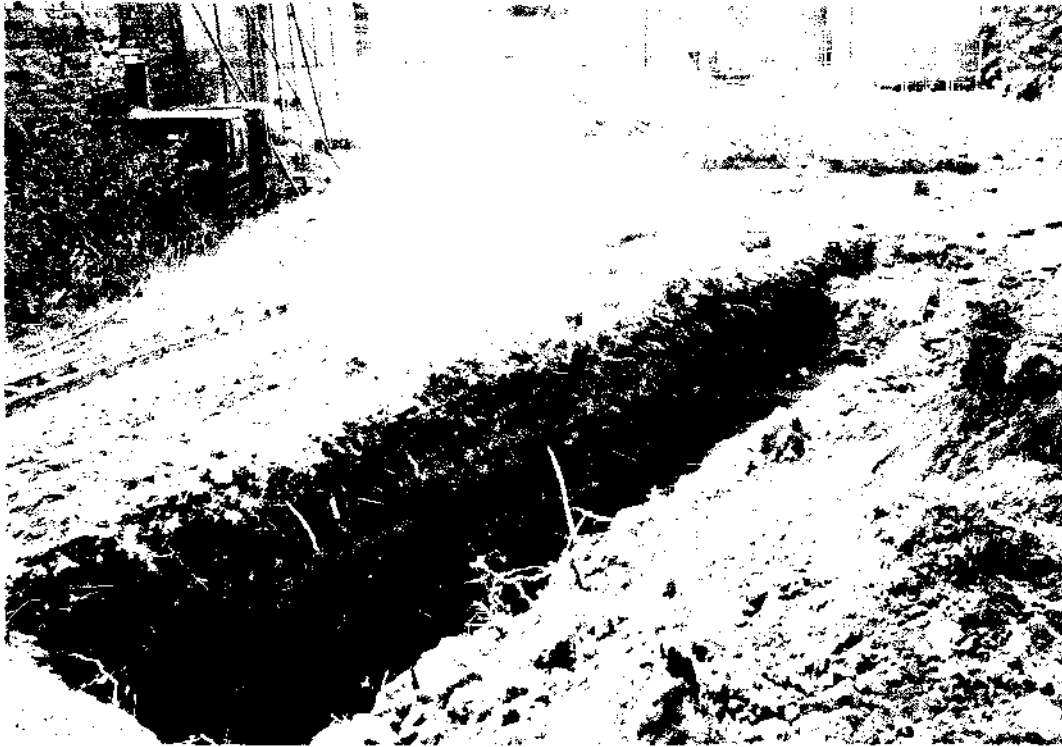


Plate 1. General site shot, looking west



Plate 2. General shot Trench 1,  
looking southwest



Plate 3. General shot Trench 2, looking southeast