

**Salvage Building
Recording at 197-198
Wolverhampton Road,
Dudley, West Midlands,
2002**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 946
July 2002

**Salvage Building Recording at 197-198
Wolverhampton Road, Dudley, West Midlands,
2002**

by
Malcolm Hislop

For further information please contact:
Simon Buteux or Iain Ferris (Directors)
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

Salvage Building Recording at 197-8 Wolverhampton Street, Dudley, West Midlands, 2002

1.0 Summary

In July 2002 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit undertook salvage recording of a boundary wall, and the excavation of a trench adjacent to it, at the rear of 197-8 Wolverhampton Street, Dudley, for Millennium Apartments Ltd. The sandstone rubble wall was of at least two main phases, having been heightened probably during the early 19th century. The foundations were found to extend to approximately 0.95m below current ground level and to be built on top of a weathered coal seam. The structure was abutted by a second wall to the south, which formed one of the side boundaries of 197-8 Wolverhampton Street. The foundations and lower courses of this wall were also of coursed sandstone rubble, though the upper courses were of early 19th century brick. No artefacts were recovered from the excavation, and it was not possible to provide a closer date for the earlier phases of the two walls; it is, however, suggested that map evidence points to the wall being on the line of a boundary that was in existence by 1783.

2.0 Introduction

In July 2002 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) undertook salvage recording of the rear boundary wall of 197-8 Wolverhampton Street, Dudley, together with the excavation of a trench adjacent to it in order to evaluate the significance of the archaeological deposits. Bryant Priest Newman Ltd, architects, commissioned the work for Millennium Apartments Ltd. The reason for undertaking the project, was a proposal to convert that part of the Wolverhampton Street property immediately to the southwest of the wall into a car park in order to serve the adjacent Metropolitan Lofts development (the former telephone exchange); linking the two sites would necessitate the demolition of the wall. As the structure falls within the curtilage of a Grade II Listed Building (197-8 Wolverhampton Street), it may therefore be considered to have statutory listed status. The local authority made planning consent conditional to carrying out recording of the structure, though partial demolition had taken place before recording could be undertaken. The scope of the work was outlined by the Borough Archaeologist and carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (1999).

3.0 Site Location

The wall is situated in the centre of Dudley (Fig.1), within the street block formed by Parsons Street, Priory Street, St James' Road and Wolverhampton Street (Fig.2). It is aligned northwest-southeast and forms the rear (northeast) boundary of 197-8 Wolverhampton Street (NGR SO94259031). At its northwest end a second wall returns towards Wolverhampton Street as the northwest boundary of the property. The ground slopes away from Wolverhampton Street towards the north, and the northeast wall marks a substantial difference in level between the grounds of 197-198 Wolverhampton Street

and the courtyard of the Metropolitan Lofts development (the former telephone exchange) to the north. Consequently, it acts as a retaining wall for the grounds of the Wolverhampton Street property.

3.0 Objectives

The objectives were to make a written and photographic record of the surviving sections of the wall, and to assess the significance of the adjacent archaeological deposits.

4.0 Method

The wall was recorded by means of a written description supplemented by monochrome and colour print photography. A single trench measuring 0.5m x 2.4m was excavated by JCB under constant archaeological supervision, to a depth of approximately 1.1m. At the south-east end of the trench a 1m deep sondage was sunk into the natural geological strata. Recording was by means of pro-forma record sheets, section drawings at a scale of 1:10, and by monochrome and colour print photography. This record forms the site archive, which is currently stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

5.0 Historical Background

A desk-based assessment of the street block (Hodgkinson 2002) suggests that this area lay outside the medieval settlement and was not developed until the early post-medieval period, possibly as a result of the dissolution of Dudley Priory. No buildings are recorded in the area on the 1787 map, though a number of property boundaries are shown. Hodgkinson has pointed out the probability that the depiction of buildings on this map is selective, because, on architectural grounds, 197-8 and 199 Wolverhampton Street can be dated respectively to the mid- and late 18th century (Hodgkinson 2002, 9). Whilst this may be true, it is also possible that the wall is represented on the map by one of the property boundaries, namely, the one that marks the northeast boundary of Plot 198 (Hodgkinson 2002, Drawing NL05627/3), rather than the site suggested by Hodgkinson. This suggests that the wall may have been in existence before 1783, the *terminus ante quem* for the Parish map of Dudley produced by Henry Court, of which the 1787 map was essentially a copy (Hodgkinson 2002, 4-5).

6.0 Results

The Building Recording

The northeast wall (Plate 1) was built of coursed and roughly squared buff coloured sandstone rubble, and the surviving portion stands to a height of between 2.15m (west) and 2.27m (east) above ground level. At a height of approximately 1.15m above ground level there is a change in the character of the masonry, delineated by a narrow line of stones, apparently a levelling course, or a former coping course (Plate 2). Above this level the stonework is slightly more irregular, and contains brick and tile. Between 1.60m (west) and 1.67m (east) above ground level the wall is carried up in brick courses in the

sequence (from bottom to top) of stretcher, header, then three courses of stretchers, then capped with coping stones. The bricks measure 9" x 4 3/8" x 2 3/4", range in colour from yellow to deep orange, and probably date from the first half of the nineteenth century.

Much of the north-west wall is of hand made brick. The bricks measure 9" x 4 3/8" x 2 1/2-2 3/4", and were laid in English Garden Wall bond. The wall had sandstone coping stones that displayed an early to mid-19th century style tooling pattern. The lower courses of this wall were mostly below ground level, but at the angle where it joins the northeast wall, the two lowest courses above ground level could be seen to be of sandstone rubble.

The Excavation

The trench was excavated at the junction of the two walls, and showed that the foundations of the northeast wall (Plate 3) extended approximately 0.95m below ground level, whereas those of the northwest wall extended to no more than 0.5m below ground level (Fig.3). The northeast wall was built first, being abutted by the north-west wall. Both sets of foundations were constructed of coursed sandstone rubble and lime mortar.

The foundations of the north-east wall sat on a black layer (1004, Plate 5, Fig.3), apparently a clay coal mixture, and probably the uppermost level of a seam of coal (1005, Fig.3) that became much firmer in consistency at a depth of 1.1m below ground level. A sondage was excavated to a further depth of 1m, and the layer was found to be a natural weathered coal seam. Above the coal layer, and possibly cut into by the builders of the wall was a layer of brown/green clay streaked with yellow clay and flecked with charcoal or coal (1003, Plates 4 and 5, Figs. 3). In the west corner of the trench this layer sealed a pit filled with yellow clay (1006, Plate 4, Fig.3). The top of layer 1003 sloped down towards the wall; above it was a very mixed, loose layer of light brown clay, ash and mortar with several medium sized sandstones (1001, Plate 5, Fig.3). The uppermost layer consisted of a dark brown clay, mortar and coal mix (1000, Plate 5, Fig.3). Both these latter layers represented made up ground.

7.0 Conclusions

The builders of the northeast wall appear to have cut down through a sloping land surface represented by layer 1003 as far as the coal seam, on which they laid the foundations. It cannot be said when this occurred, owing to the absence of any artefacts from the excavation, though the structural details of the later phase of the wall seem to preclude a date later than the first quarter of the 19th century. The north-west wall is later, though here again it is impossible to be specific in respect of date.

8.0 Acknowledgements

Malcolm Hislop carried out the archaeological fieldwork for BUFAU. Malcolm Hislop also wrote this report, which was edited by Gary Coates, who also managed the project. Nigel Dodds prepared the illustrations. Peter Boland monitored the work for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, and the author is grateful to him and his colleagues at

Dudley MBC for their observations on the above ground structures, and the below ground archaeology, some of which are incorporated in this report. Thanks are also due to Larry Priest of Bryant Priest Newman Ltd, to David Hodgkinson of Wardell Armstrong and to Graham Tait and the site staff from Weaver PLC.

9.0 Reference

Hodgkinson, D. 2002. *Millennium Apartments Ltd, 197-198 Wolverhampton Street, Dudley: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (Wardell Armstrong: Engineering and Environmental Solutions).

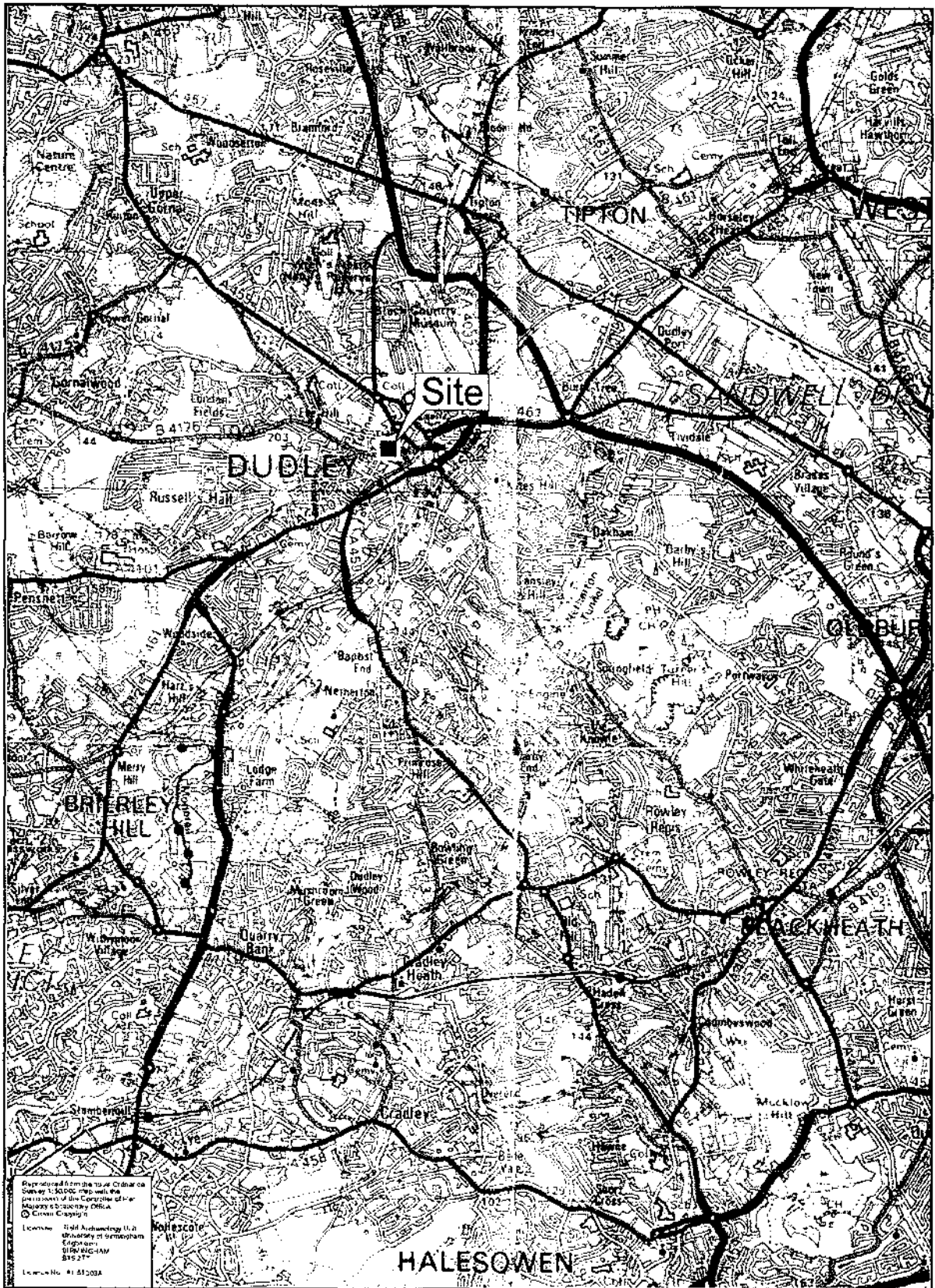


Fig.1

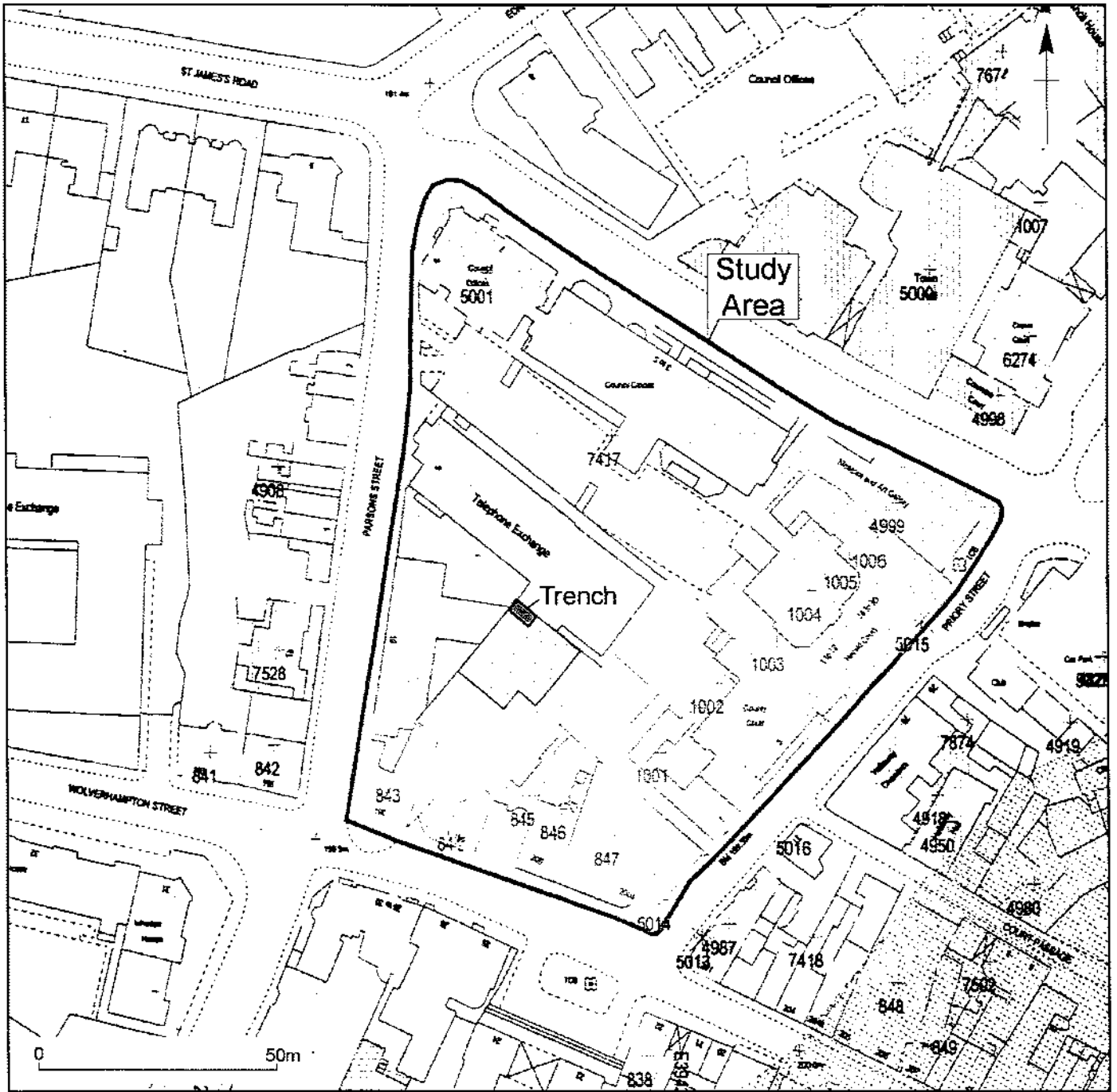


Fig.2

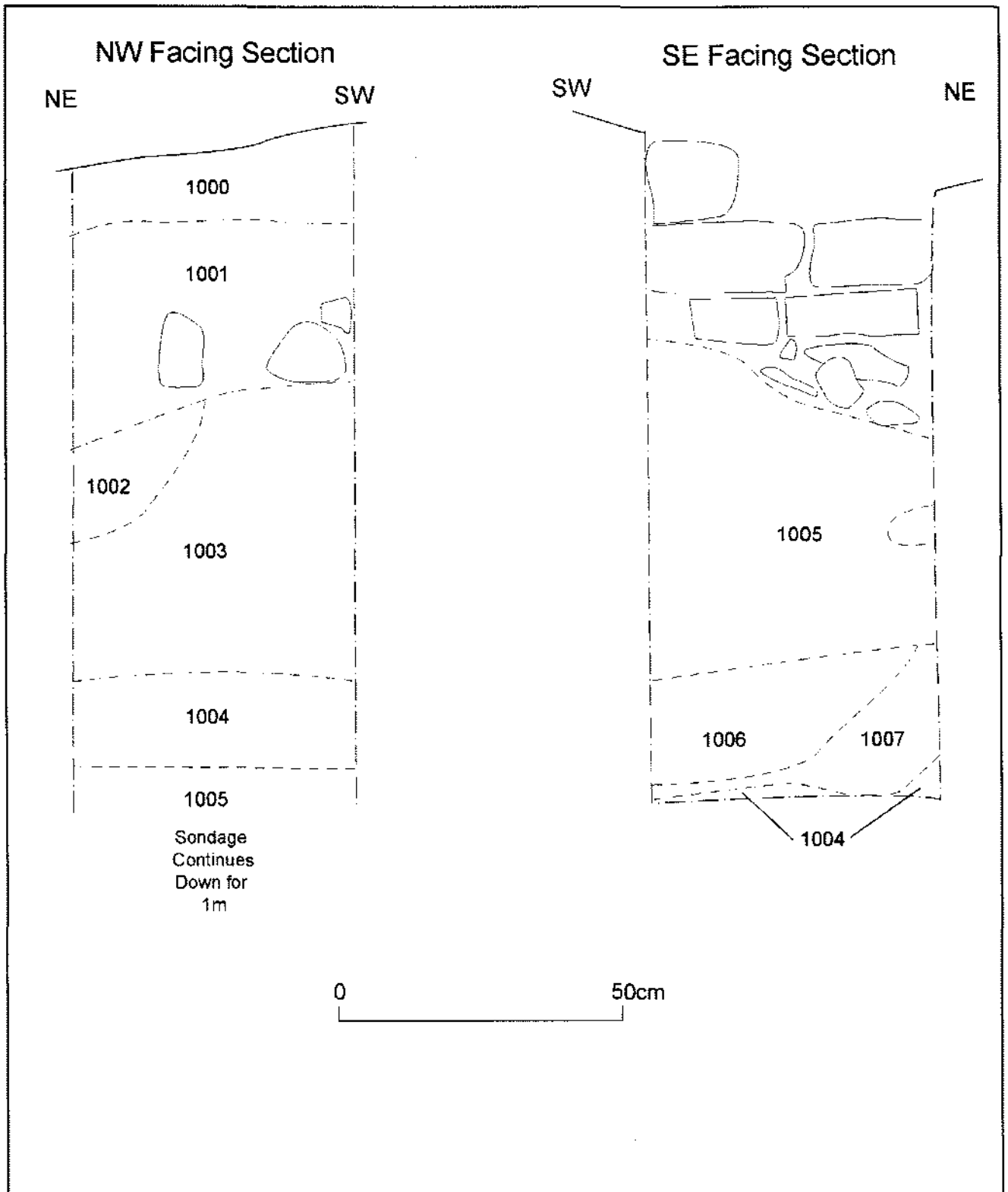


Fig.3



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4

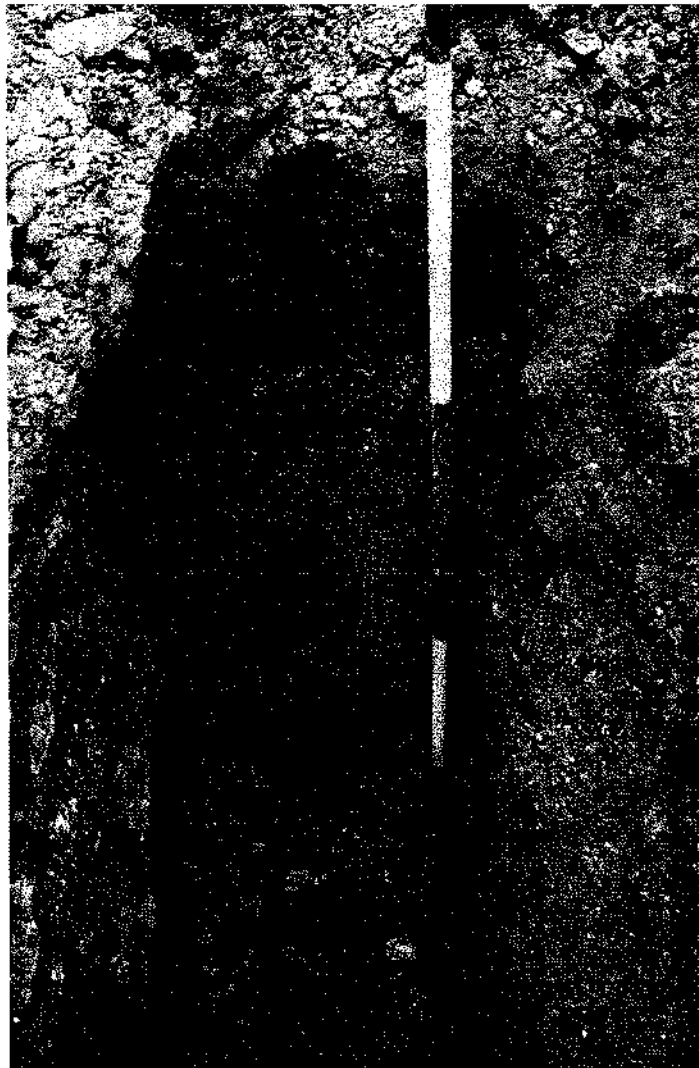


Plate 5