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**THE UNIVERSITY
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**St. Peter's Gardens,
Wolverhampton**

**Phase 2 Landscaping
An archaeological watching brief
2003**



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St. Peter's Gardens, Wolverhampton
Phase 2 Landscaping
An archaeological watching brief, 2003

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On behalf of
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**St Peters Gardens, Wolverhampton, Phase 2 Landscaping works,
An archaeological watching brief, 2003.**

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at St. Peter's Gardens in Wolverhampton City Centre, West Midlands (centred on NGR SO 914 988) by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit between January and June 2003. Landscaping and renovation work was carried out by Mowlems Midlands on behalf of Wolverhampton City Council, who commissioned the archaeological work. It was believed that part of this work would encounter burial vaults and an investigation of both their structural integrity and historical value was required. As the landscaping project progressed there was further requirement for archaeological monitoring of a drainage trench and limited test pit investigation of another area containing vault structures.

In all 18 funeral vaults were identified within St Peters Gardens in the area known as the Lich Gates directly in front of the western face of the church. It appeared that all of these had been previously disturbed to some degree. Coffin material was present in some, although it seemed that human remains had been removed. The limited method of recording meant it was difficult to ascertain the true extent of survival. Some names and details were recovered from coffin plates and headstones associated with Vaults 4, 5 and 17, which may relate to former burials in these structures. A monitored drainage trench illustrated the extent of landscaping on the lower terrace and possible reuse of building material associated with the former Exchange Hall. Test-pitting in association with the Church South Approach suggested a degree of previous disturbance to vaults in this area.

The watching brief provided further evidence of the 19th century funerary custom of burying family members in specific vault structures in association with prominent locations in the churchyard. This custom has recently been identified in other urban cemeteries in the West Midlands.

Introduction (Plate 1)

This report outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief and test-pitting during the landscaping work associated with Phase 2 of St.Peter's Gardens, Wolverhampton (NGR SO 914 988). Wolverhampton City Council commissioned the landscaping work, which was carried out by Mowlems Midlands. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned to carry out the archaeological work, which took place between January and June 2003

The scope of the landscaping work, requiring archaeological monitoring and/or test-pitting can be divided into three distinct parts:

1. The removal of the York Stone paving slabs and the in-filling of a series of burial vaults, identified by GB Geotechnics Ltd in a non-destructive investigation prior to the commencement of the work (Machin and Millar 1997). The extent of the vaults and any possible burials were to be recorded (but not disturbed), prior to them being filled with concrete.

2. The recording of an excavation of a trench for drainage works on the lower terrace.
3. Work also involved a small extension to the Lich Gates Terrace wall and a one metre wide and 0.25 metre deep section of the parallel garden wall was to be removed to facilitate construction. Archaeological test-pitting was carried out to identify the extent and condition of any vaults adjacent to the garden wall.

A specification for the work was prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit under advice from the Conservation Officer for Wolverhampton City Council. All work followed guidelines outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999 '*Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*'.

Location and Site Description (Figs. 1 & 2)

Wolverhampton is on a spur of the Birmingham sandstone plateau. The area of the site is situated within the vicinity of the highest part of the plateau that slopes steeply towards the north and north-west (Hooke and Slater 1986). The drift geology consists of glacial clays, sands and gravels with tendencies towards bogginess in places (*ibid.*). Parts of this natural geology seem to have been heavily terraced and built up in the majority of the area of St. Peter's Gardens.

The gardens affected by the Phase 2 of the landscaping project surround St. Peter's Church on the western and northern sides (NGR SO 914 988). This area is known as the Lich Gates and the War Memorial. The Civic Centre is to the west of the site and Cheapside borders the site, to the south.

Historical and Archaeological Background

It is possible that the site of St Peter's Church is in the middle of an Iron Age hillfort (Conway 2002). The evidence for this is based only on implications of street names and boundary patterns (*ibid.*).

It is suggested that the Mercian royal family founded St. Peter's Church in the 7th century A.D. and it is apparent that this was the focal point of the Saxon settlement of Wolverhampton (*ibid.*). It has been suggested that remains dating to this period could still survive in the vicinity of this site (Wolverhampton Council 1996). As archaeological evidence from this period is scarce, any archaeological remains discovered of this date would be highly significant to the understanding of the heritage of Wolverhampton.

The present form of this part of the gardens was constructed in the 19th century (Machin and Millar 1997), and it is probable that this construction destroyed much of the earlier deposits. The earliest available map, from 1750, illustrating this area would suggest that at least part of the site to the west of the church was not within the original or earlier area of St. Peter's Gardens (see Watt 2001). Presumably only the Lich Gate area of this development was part of the church and it seems that this was a thoroughfare rather than part of the gardens. The area to the west of this seems to have been either open or garden plots. The 1871 map of the town illustrates an Exchange building on the land directly to the west of the church, with a thoroughfare between the two buildings. The authorisation of 'the conversion of certain portions of

the Churchyard belonging to the above (St. Peter's) Parish into an Open Space' from 1906 shows that St. Peter's Gardens only extended as far as the Lich Gate area in this period. To the west of this, where the war memorial now stands, was the site of the Exchange Hall, since demolished. The 1919 map demonstrates that the western gardens of St. Peter's Church were similar to those, as they were prior to this development, bordered by Exchange Street to the west, indicating that these new gardens are on the site of the late 19th century Exchange building.

Recent investigations in the vicinity of this site have demonstrated the survival of *in situ* burials and burial vaults would not be unexpected within the vicinity of St. Peter's Church (Neilson et al. forthcoming, Litherland and Coates 1996). Work carried out in phase one of St. Peter's Garden refurbishment demonstrates the presence of burials and burial vaults to the eastern side of the church (Limane 1998). The deposits identified in the course of this work ranged in date from the 13th to the 19th centuries demonstrating the longevity of the use of this grave yard, and illustrating the probability that the original graveyard of St. Peter's did not conform with the present boundaries.

A non-intrusive survey had identified a series of burial vaults below the paving along the western frontage of the church (Machin and Millar 1997). The plan attached to the 1906 authorisation for the extension of the gardens illustrates the presence of these burial vaults along the Lich Gates. Although in the 1906 proposal it is stated that '*access for the family should be retained but that these vaults need not be moved merely their markers, if need be, there is provision for the removal of burials and interments if occasion require it.*'

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to identify any *in situ* archaeological and palaeoenvironmental remains that may be present below the ground surface and to record such archaeological deposits prior to the contractors' groundworks.

Specific objectives were in reference to several funeral vaults suspected to be in an area directly in front of the western door of the church. It was proposed that fully comprehensive remote recording be undertaken on these vaults prior to them being preserved *in situ* and filled with concrete, in order to render them safe.

Methods

Burial Vaults

The overburden above vaults was removed using a mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. This was carried out under archaeological supervision. Any funeral vaults encountered during this procedure were to be left *in situ*. Small access holes were opened in the roofs of each burial vault for the purpose of recording and filling. The vault interiors were then recorded by remote means and then back-filled with concrete in order to make them structurally safe. Any other archaeological deposits encountered during this excavation were excavated by hand. If appropriate, the exposed subsoil or archaeological horizon was defined and hand cleaned as

necessary. A representative sample of surviving features was excavated in order to understand the structural record and stratigraphic relationships of deposits.

All disarticulated human remains recovered during the course of this work were retained and reburied on site. A written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout. This forms the site archive, which is currently housed at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

Drainage Trench (Trench 1)

The excavation of a drainage trench on the lower terrace was carried out with a mechanical excavator under continuous archaeological supervision. Where possible archaeological deposits were identified, these were hand excavated and sampled. These were recorded using a continuous numbered context system on pro-forma context and record cards. The stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned and sections drawn, at appropriate scales, through all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy. A written record was maintained. A monochrome print and colour slide photographic record was maintained.

Test-pitting

Seven test pits were excavated by hand at regular intervals along the entire length of, and within, the garden parallel to Lich Gate Terrace wall (see Plate 16). The position and the dimensions of the test pits were in some cases dictated by the surrounding shrubbery and plants, which could not be disturbed.

The exposed stratigraphy was hand-cleaned and recorded using pro-forma feature and context records, supplemented by monochrome print and colour slide photographs and scale drawings as appropriate. These records and finds form the site archive and are currently housed at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

Results

Burial Vaults (Fig 3; Plate 5)

In all, 18 brick-built burial vaults were uncovered in the course of this watching brief along the western frontage of St. Peter's church. They were all rectangular in shape, varied in depths and generally finished with a vaulted roof, where it survived. Vault 17 had been finished with a flat stone roof. In some vaults there was evidence of white-washing on the interior walls and putlock recesses, to secure wooden coffin supports. All of these vaults were constructed of machine-cut, red, bricks measuring 0.24m long by 0.11m wide by 0.07m deep, which suggested a build date in the late 19th Century. Entrances were identifiable in most vaults on the western side. These had been sealed with a headstone, bricks or back-filled with soil and rubble.

Vaults 3, 4, 6 to 10 and 18 had been previously disturbed. The vaulted roofs had been removed and the interiors had been back-filled with a mixture of brown sand and silt mixed with rubble. Generally, the area of these vaults had been capped with a layer of concrete mixed with brick rubble used as a conglomerate, 0.6m deep, reinforced in places with steel bars, aligned north-south, roughly parallel to the span of the vaults.

The structures of Vaults 1, 2, 5, and 11 – 17 were relatively intact when excavated. Information was gathered from these vaults from areas of the exteriors, where they were exposed. The interiors of these vaults were recorded by remote means.

Vault 1

Vault 1 was 2.6m wide, 3.3m long and 1.8m deep. Upon inspection it became apparent that the majority of this vault had been filled with rubble, which appeared to have either been placed or accumulated from the western entrance to the vault. Several pieces of timber were visible on the floor at the eastern end of the vault. A single piece aligned north-south close to the eastern wall and several pieces of wood in the south east corner, aligned east-west. The entrance to this vault was in the middle of the western wall and was blocked by a sandstone head stone (1009) with indistinct engraving reading *E. Boacker* or *E. Bomker*.

Vault 2

This was approximately 2.4m wide, in excess of 2.6m long and 1.6m deep constructed with machine cut red bricks, vertical sides and a vaulted roof.

Vault 3

Vault 3 was situated at a turn in the orientation of the burial vaults in front of the western door of the church. This vault was 2.3m wide and 4m long and was only exposed in plan. This vault was aligned westsouthwest-eastnortheast. It is quite possible that this is not actually a vault, but a gap between Vaults 2 and 4, as little of the vault was exposed.

Vault 4 (Plate 3a-c)

Vault 4 was to the south of Vault 3 and was only exposed in plan. This vault was aligned westsouthwest-eastnortheast and was 3m wide and 4.2m long. The tops of the brick built walls were exposed and consisted of machine-cut, red bricks. Coffin materials consisting of 4 copper alloy coffin plates were retrieved from the infill of this context. Names and dates obtained from these read:

Catherine Cooksey

Died

August 16th 184-

Aged

67 Years

Samuel Cooksey

Died

Oct". 5 .1842

AGED

84 Years

Samuel Cooksey

Died Sept". ---- 1842

AGED

38 years

M--- Anne Cooksey
Died
August the 9th
1848

Vault 5 (Plate 4a-f)

Vault 5 was situated between Vaults 2 and 16. This vault was 2.6m wide, 3m long and 2.4m deep. This vault seemed to be the least disturbed of all of those investigated. The vault had vertical walls and a vaulted roof made of machine-cut red bricks. There appeared to be nine brick built plinths, positioned at regular intervals, on the floor of the vault. It appears that several wooden boards, which had apparently partially rotted away were placed onto these plinths, upon which two coffins could be seen.

The northern most of these appeared to be in its original position. This appeared to be a wooden coffin with lead, brass and felt trimming. The coffin plate could be seen to read (Plate 4f):

Mary Ann Farmer
DIED
July 28th 1859

To the south, the coffin seemed to have collapsed at the northern end, the supporting timbers below having rotted and given way. The top of the coffin seemed to have come loose and the coffin plate was not legible.

The entrance of the vault was in the western wall and was sealed with an engraved sandstone headstone (Plate 5), which read;

EDWARD FARMER
Died July 15th 1770

MARY ANN FARMER
Died ---- 1859

Vaults 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10

Vaults 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were identified adjacent to Vault 3 in a line extending to the south. These vaults were all aligned westsouthwest-eastnortheast and only exposed in plan and measured 2.5m wide and 4.2m long. A piece of coffin furniture was retrieved from the fill of Vault 8. Otherwise all these vaults appeared to have been emptied and partially backfilled with rubble.

Vault 11 (Plates 6 & 7)

Vault 11 was 2.6m long, 1.5m wide and 2.1m deep. There appeared to be the remains of between three and four adult wooden and lead-lined coffins. There was also evidence of fabric coverings and collapsed wooden supports. It was not clear whether these were intact coffins or the remains of shells, with the bodies removed.

A carved sandstone headstone blocked the entrance to this vault and read:
BURGESS 1818

Vault 12 (Plate 8)

Vault 12 was 2.6m long, 1.5m wide and 1.8m deep and was aligned northwest-southeast. There appeared to be the remains of between three and four adult wooden and lead-lined coffin shells. There was also evidence of fabric coverings and collapsed wooden supports. It was not clear whether these were intact coffins or the remains of shells, with the bodies removed.

Vault 13 (Plates 9 & 10)

Vault 13 was 2.6m long, 1.6m wide and 1.8m deep. There appeared to be the remains of between three and four adult wooden coffin shells, but no evidence of skeletal material. There was also evidence of fabric coverings and collapsed wooden supports.

Vault 14

Vault 14 was 2.6m long, 1.8m wide and 1.8m deep. The vault had been almost completely back-filled with rubble.

Vault 15 (Plate 11)

This was 2.4m long, 1.5m wide and 2m deep. There appeared to be the remains of one adult wooden coffin, aligned east-west, and another aligned north-south. It was not clear whether these were intact coffins or the remains of shells, with the bodies removed.

Vault 16 (Plate 12)

This was 2.6m long, 1.8m wide and 2m deep. There appeared to be the remains of between three and four adult wooden coffin shells, but no evidence of skeletal material.

Vault Entrance wall (F103) (see Plate 1)

The vaults were connected together with a continuous front wall (F103) on the western side. This wall was realigned twice in its course. It was aligned northnorthwest-southsoutheast, fronting Vaults 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. The wall then changed orientation between Vaults 3 and 4 and was orientated northnortheast-southsouthwest, fronting Vaults 1, 2, 3, 5, 15 and 16. This wall then changed direction between Vaults 14 and 15 to become aligned northeast-southwest. It does not continue to connect Vaults 17 and 18. It was made of machine-cut red brick, which suggests a date in the second half of the 19th Century.

F103 appears to have been a later addition as it cut a further brick wall F102, which itself appeared to cut the roof of Vault 1. However the exact relationship and phasing of the walls was unclear.

Vault 17 (Plates 13 & 14)

This vault measured approximately 3m by 3m and 1.5m deep. It had been sealed with a 0.24m thick stone roof. It was not clear whether this was an original design or if the original (possibly vaulted) roof had been reduced and the stone construction a later rebuild.

The interior had been divided into separate levels with brick and wooden supports, which had long since collapsed. The remains of at least 3 wooden coffins and 2 lead-lined coffins were noted. The lead coffins were stacked on top of each other and the uppermost contained a rectangular coffin plate (Plate 15), which read:

MARY HOWARD

Born

December 20th 1777

Died

May 28th 1843/9 (?)

Vault 18

Where exposed, this vault appeared to measure 1.6m wide by 1.8m long. No depth was recorded as it had been backfilled with rubble.

Test-Pitting (Figure 4)

Seven Test Pits were excavated along the line of the garden wall, running parallel to Lich Gates terrace (Plate 16). The eastern side of this wall retains an enclosed and raised landscaped garden of shrubs and plants. The garden extends eastwards and is retained by a wall parallel to Church South Approach. Built into this wall, at regular intervals, are burial vault memorial stones strongly suggesting that the landscaped garden overlies a number of burial vaults consistent with the historical nature of the gardens and the earlier identification of other burial vaults within the same locality.

The seven test pits varied in dimensions and depths, see Table 1 below. No archaeology was noted within any of the seven test pits excavated. However, underlying the uppermost layer of topsoil (2000) was a layer of sandy, stony material (2001) that contained numerous fragments of brick, post-medieval pottery sherds, glass and human bone (Plate 17). The precise depth of this layer was not established but it does extend beyond the depth required for construction work of the wall. It is likely that this layer is a combination of collapsed vault build and imported material used to elevate the garden to its present level.

Table 1. Dimensions of Test-Pits

Test Pit	Length (m)	Width (m)	Excavated Depth (m)
1	2.40	0.42	0.62
2	0.66	0.63	0.64
3	1.00	0.70	0.64
4	0.82	0.42	0.55
5	0.50	0.38	0.45
6	0.70	0.60	0.36
7	1.27	0.52	0.42

No evidence of undisturbed burial vault remains was located within the confines of the seven test pits excavated. However, underlying the uppermost layer of topsoil is a layer of soil and rubble mixed with brick, early 20th century pottery sherds, and fragments of human bone. It is therefore probable that burial vaults did exist within

this area and have collapsed and been filled in with contemporary soil, rubble, and refuse during previous landscaping works.

Trench 1 (Figure 5; Plate 18)

This drainage trench was excavated on the lower terrace and ran from the steps, in front of the war memorial to the southwest corner of the West Garden (see Fig. 2). It was approximately 0.5m wide and reached maximum depths of 2.0m in places. The base of the trench was a natural sandstone deposit (1005), which was generally encountered at a depth of 1.5m. The general stratigraphy of the trench is outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Stratigraphy of Trench 1

Context	Depth (m)	Description
1000	0.0-0.4	Modern, mixed, topsoil
1001	0.4-0.6	Mixed building base deposit
1002	0.6-0.75	Mortar layer
1003	0.75-1.1	Rubble/hardcore/clinker layer
1004	1.1-1.5	Re-deposited topsoil, mixed with building rubble. Uneven sandstone blocks present.
1005	1.5-	Natural Geology. Brown Sandstone, sometimes weathered

Large rectangular sandstone blocks were noted, in section, in layer 1001 in the northern extent of the trench. Uneven, possibly weathered and re-deposited sandstone blocks were noted at various points in layer 1004. Layer 1001 may have been remains of a foundation wall, but appear to have been re-used blocks in landscaping or an undefined structure. The location of the blocks could possibly relate to the former location of the 19th century Exchange Hall. The evidence from the trench was inconclusive, although the general stratigraphy of the trench is indicative of re-landscaping and contains remains which are likely to have once belonged to the Exchange Hall.

Documentary research.

The families

This documentary research was carried out on the named individuals found in Vaults 4, 5 and 17 during the watching brief along the western frontage of St. Peter's Church. The research was carried out at Wolverhampton Records Office in an effort to discover more about the families and place them in their 19th century context.

The research began with the primary source of the information, which were the coffin plates. In addition, information was obtained in Vault 5 from an engraved sandstone headstone, which sealed the entrance. The information was in some cases incomplete as the coffin plates were difficult to decipher. The main sources used were the St. Peter's Church burial records, which are available on microfiche, the St. Catherine's Index (SCI), which is a record of all births, death, and marriages in England and Wales since 1837, and the International Genealogical Index(IGI). This is a county

index of all parish registers compiled by the Mormon Church, but is not always accurate and coverage of this area seems to be incomplete. The Trade Directories were also consulted.

Vault 4 (Figure 6)

Name	Age	Date of death
Catherine Cooksey	67	August 16 th 1842
Samuel Cooksey	84	Oct 5 th 1842
Samuel Cooksey	38	Sept ? 1842
M Anne Cooksey		August 9 th 1848

In this case, using information from the above sources it is possible to build up a profile of the Cooksey family.

The burial records provided additional information: -

Name	Age at death	Date of death	Date of burial	Residence
Catherine Cooksey	67	August 16 th 1842	August 23 rd 1842	Dudley Port
Samuel Cooksey	84	October 5 th 1842	October 16 th 1842	Dudley Port
Samuel Cooksey	38	September 1842	September 18 th 1842	Dudley Port
Anne Maria Cooksey	46	9 th August 1848	17 th August 1848	Dudley Port

Catherine was born in 1775 to Thomas and Catharine Brett, who had her christened at All Saints Church in West Bromwich where, 25 years later on 25 February 1800, she married Samuel Cooksey. He was 42. A year later the couple began their association with St. Peter's Church when they had their daughter Anne Maria christened there on October 13th 1801. Subsequently, another son, Samuel was born, who was christened at the Old Meeting House, a non-conformist establishment in Dudley.

At the time of their deaths the whole family were listed as living at Dudley Port, a village described in 1835 in Pigot & Co Trade Directory as 'between Burnt Tree and Horsley Heath on the road between Tipton and Birmingham'. A Samuel Cooksey is described as a nailmaker and wood screw maker in Dudley Port in 1834 and 1835 and it is likely that this is the younger Samuel. In 1845 after Samuel's death, Thomas B. Cooksey is listed as a nail and wood screw manufacturer suggesting that he was another son that took over the family business.

Nailmaking was a trade that had been associated with the region since the 17th century when Dud Dudley stated that 'in 1665 there were 20,000 nailers dwelling in the area' (Wilson-Jones 1955). Conditions were hard and wages low, with both men and women working alongside children who often started work from the age of 6. Workshops were initially in the workers houses or in adjacent yards, but by the 19th century production was changing and small workshops and factories were beginning to appear.

By the 1830s, when Samuel Cooksey worked in Dudley Port, nail and screw manufacture was a highly important industry in the area, and formed a large part of the industrial metal working occupations that predominated in the Wolverhampton area at the time (Watt in Neilson et al. forthcoming). The business must have been significant enough to merit inclusion in the contemporary Trade Directories.

In 1842 tragedy struck the family with Catherine and Samuel, together with their son, Samuel dying between August and September. Smallpox, typhoid and cholera were common at the time and since the deaths were so close together, is it possible that the family could have been victims of such a disease. There is a discrepancy of one year with Anne Maria's age suggesting that it was incorrectly recorded on her death.

They were buried in a vault at St. Peter's Church and in 1848, their daughter Anne Maria was also interred in the same vault. This could be considered as significant, since at that time in the 19th century the trappings of a funeral and final resting place was considered important to the rising middle classes (Cherrington et al. in prep). The fact that the family from Dudley Port who made nails, invested in a family vault at St. Peter's Church, one of the largest in the area at the time, suggested that either they were of considerable wealth and standing in the community, or at least, they wanted to give the impression that they were.

In addition, the desire to be buried together, demonstrated the kinship of families, at a time in the 19th century when disease and financial ruin was an ever-present danger to all levels of society.

Vault 5

Coffin Plate

Name	Age	Date of death
Mary Ann Farmer		July 28 th 1859

Headstone

Name	Age	Date of death
Edward Farmer		July 15 th 1770
Mary Ann Farmer		1859

The only additional information obtained from the entry in the burial records for Edward Farmer is that he died aged 48. At that time no other information was recorded in the registers. There was no trace of him in the relevant Trade Directories or the IGI.

Despite having the date of death recorded on both the headstone and the coffin plate, no trace of Mary Ann Farmer could be found in the burial records, in the SCI or IGI.

Vault 17

Name	Born	Date of death
Mary Howard	December 20 th 1777	May 28 th 1843?

The date of death on this coffin plate was indistinct, and since examination of the burial records and the SCI did not reveal the death of Mary Howard in 1843 it was

concluded that this was incorrect. The burial records for 1842 and 1848 were also checked but nothing was found so no further information could be obtained.

Discussion

It is apparent that the burial vaults uncovered in the course of this watching brief have been disturbed at some point in the past. This most probably took place during the re-landscaping works carried out in or near 1906. The seven vaults at the southern end of the row had had the roofs dismantled and the inside back-filled with a mixture of graveyard soils and rubble. Whereas the nine vaults to the north of the row were on the whole preserved, at an increasingly greater depth towards the north. This would suggest that the vaults were originally constructed on a downwards slope, sloping down towards the north. Vaults 17 and 18 were not built in the same alignment as the western end of the church and probably part of a more general cemetery layout.

Burial in vault structures was an increasingly common practice during the second half of the 19th century. This followed the increased wealth of middle class society and their desire to be conspicuous with this wealth. Other factors governing the desire for burials in vaults were the overcrowded nature of urban cemeteries, where the increased pressure on space in burial grounds meant that the sanctity of burials was often disturbed. This resulted in the ban on burials in urban cemeteries in the Burial Act of 1853 (Watt in Neilson et al, forthcoming). Indeed, a new cemetery was opened in 1850 at Jeffcock Road, and this probably meant that only family burials could be interred in St. Peter's itself, from that point onwards. The location of vaults was important as well. These vaults outside the western entrance to St. Peter's were in the most desirable location, short of being buried within the church itself. The general similarity of the builds of the vaults (1 to 16) in this location, further re-inforces the idea that they were built at the same time and as part of a more deliberate cemetery layout, as a result of the general disuse of urban cemeteries. The vaults associated with the test-pitting exercise were probably also designed and built at a similar time.

It must be remembered that there is no definitive evidence of who was buried in the vaults. Although coffin plates were recovered with named individuals engraved upon them and inscribed headstones the nature of the remote recording may mean that the coffin plates were deposited later or not associated with the inhabitants. Also the headstones may have just been used to seal the vaults and not necessarily relate to the burials therein.

The scope of this report cannot encompass all the strands of research that could be carried out in relation to the vaults at St. Peter's. However, the work that has been carried out is invaluable in enhancing the research being carried out into Birmingham urban cemeteries (Cherrington et al., in prep) and St. Peter's overflow burial ground (Neilson et al. forthcoming.).

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Maps

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Fig.1

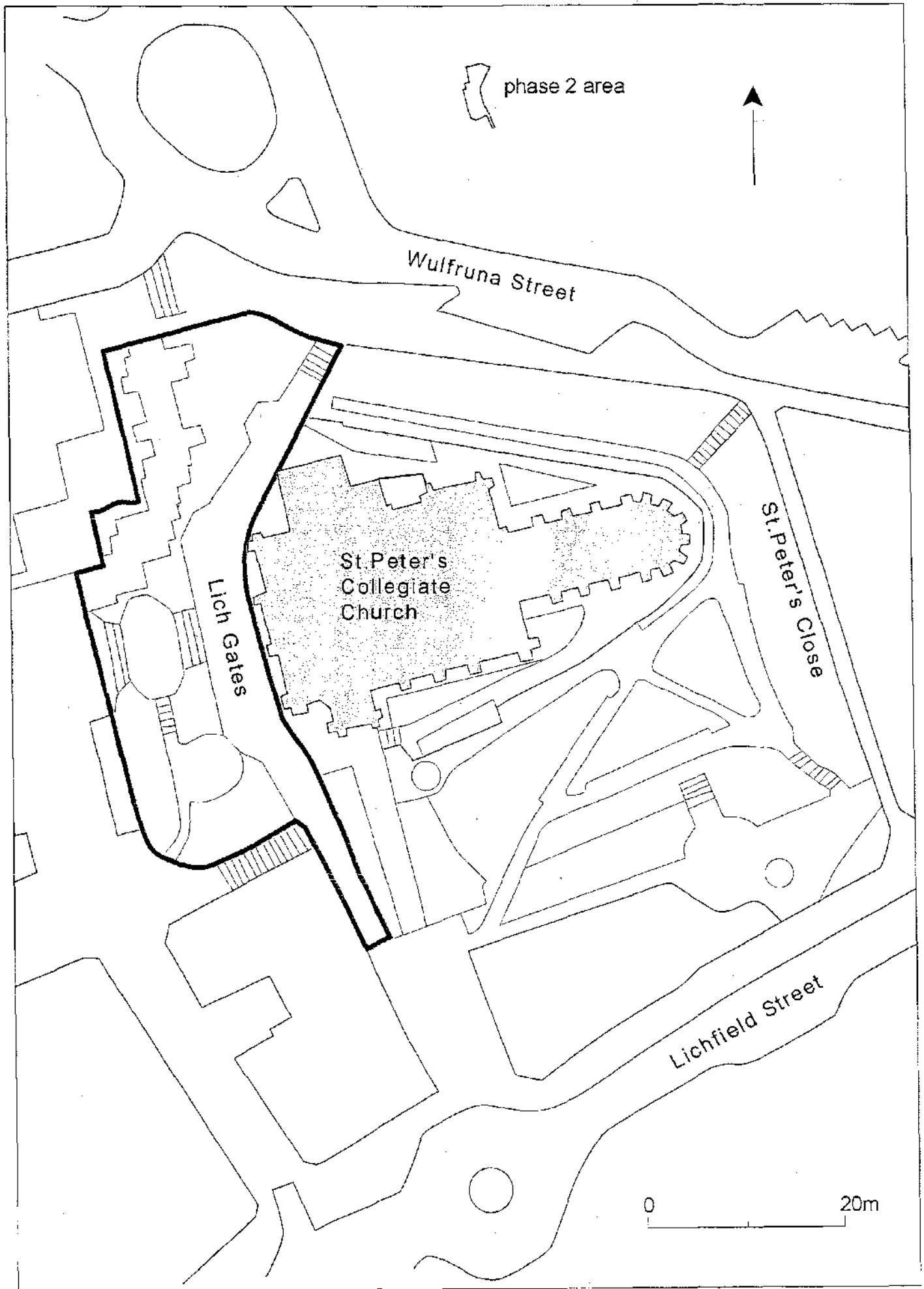


Fig.2

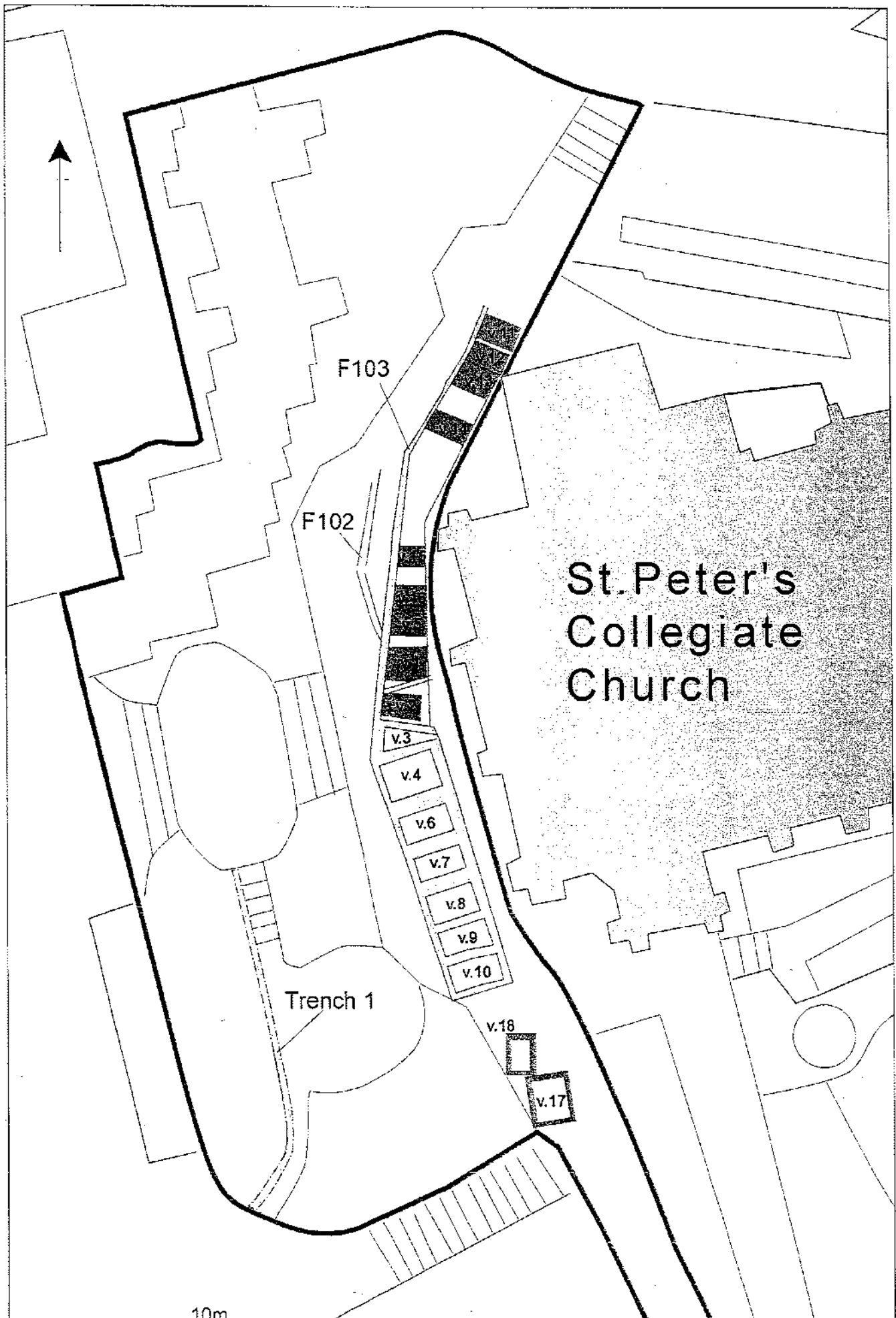


Fig.3

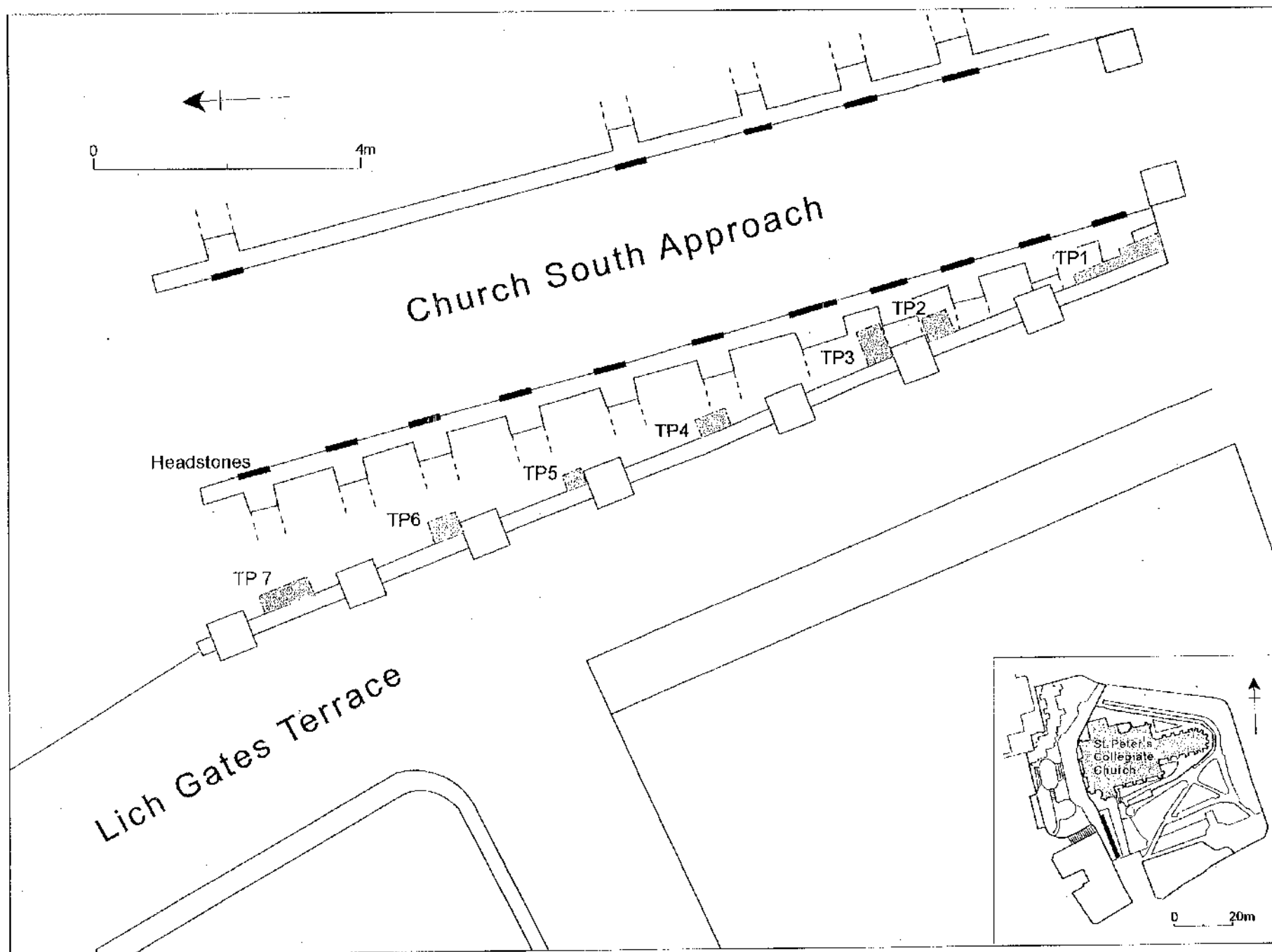


Fig.4

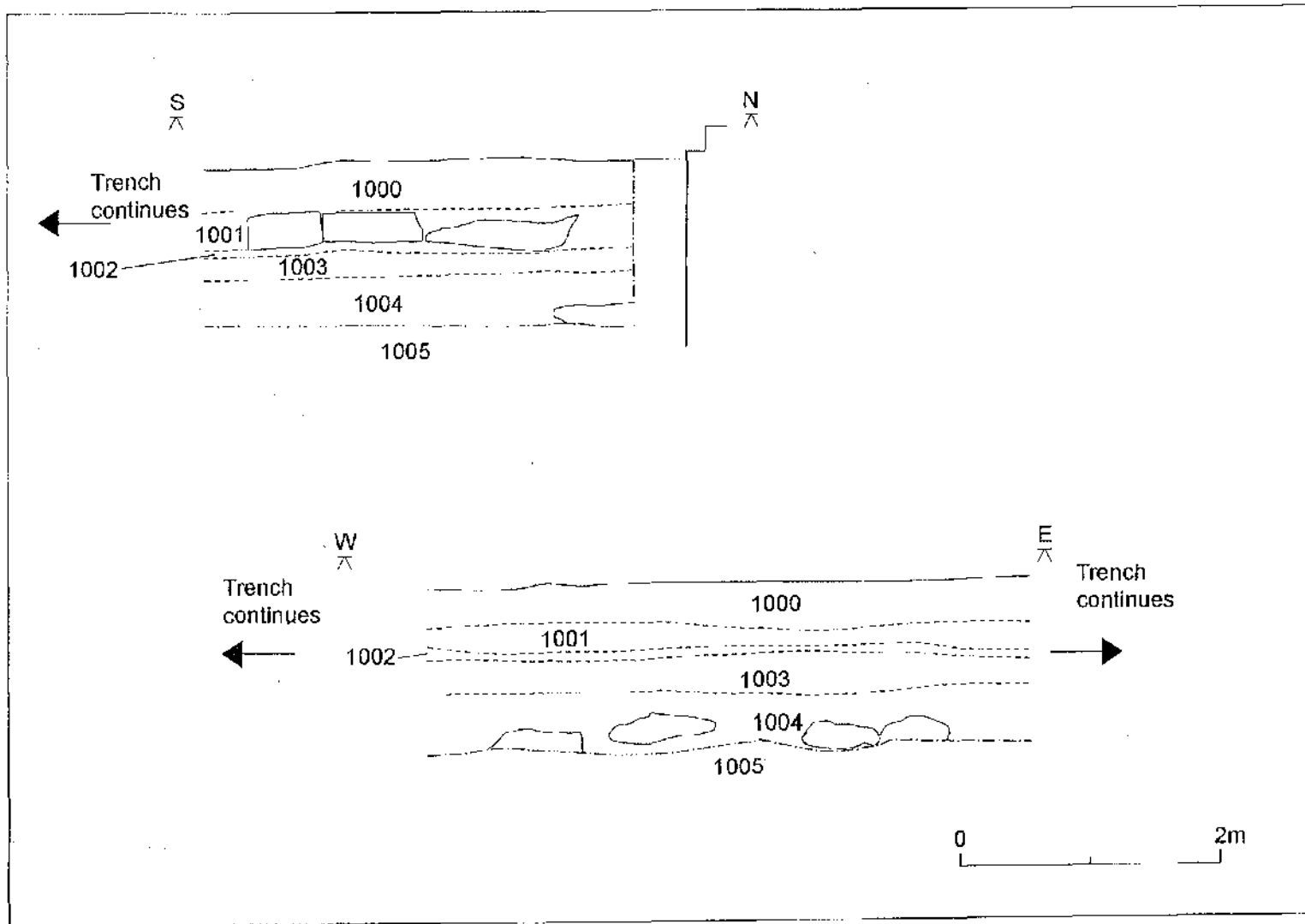


Fig.5

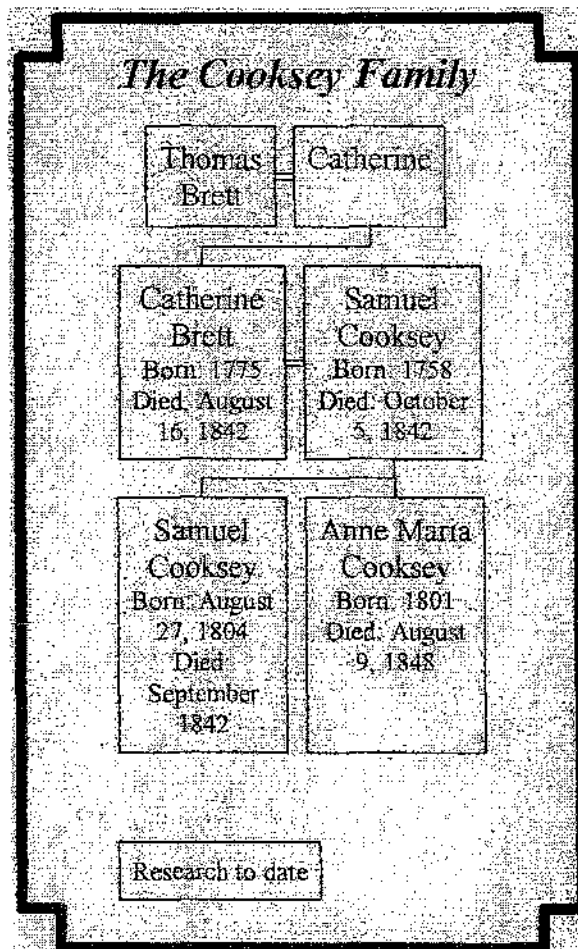


Figure 6



Plate 1



Plate 2

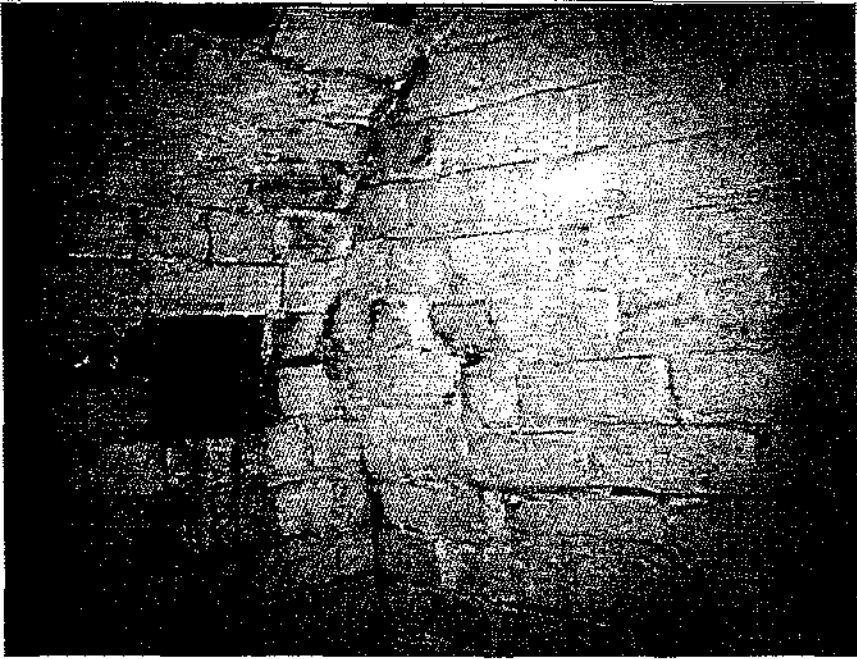


Plate 3a



Plate 3b

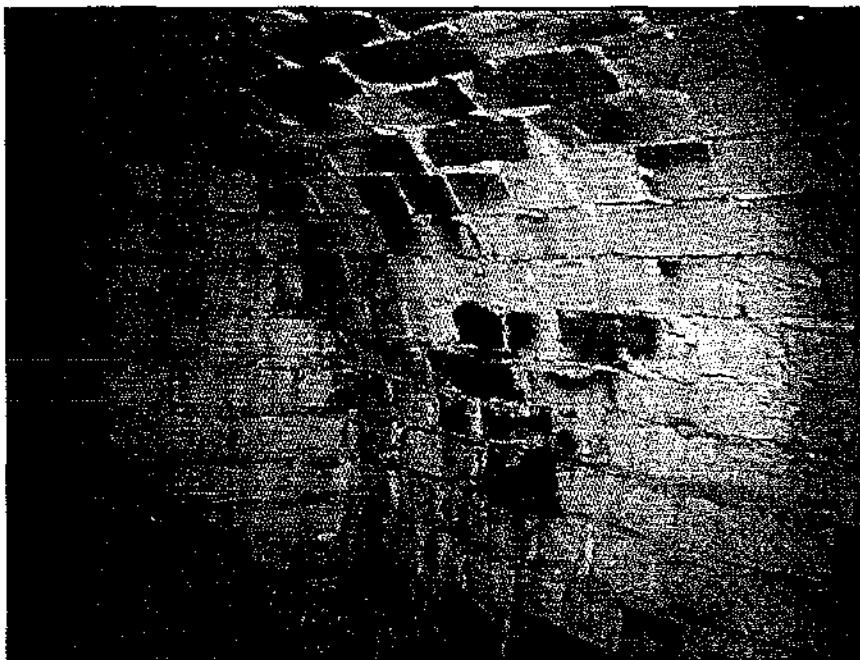


Plate 3c

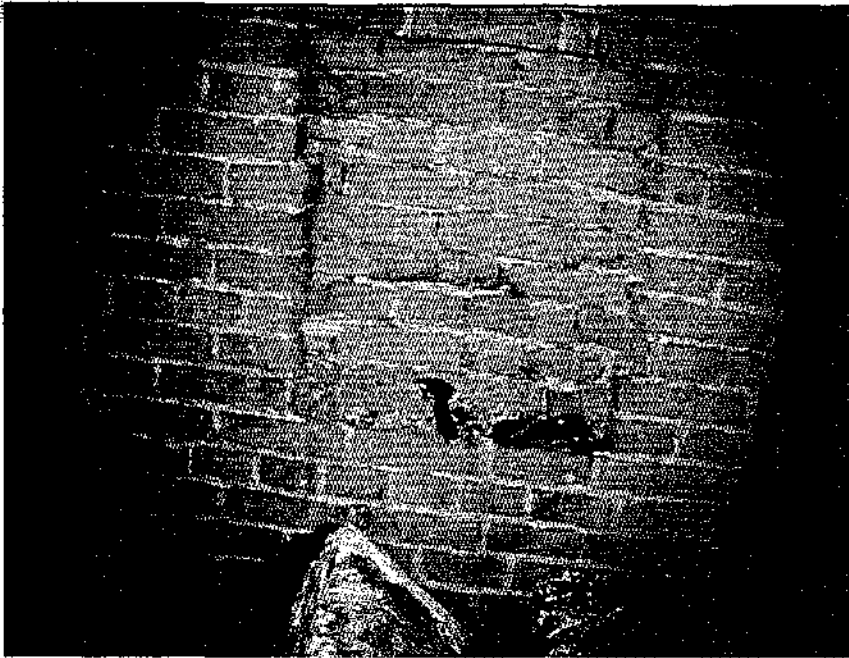


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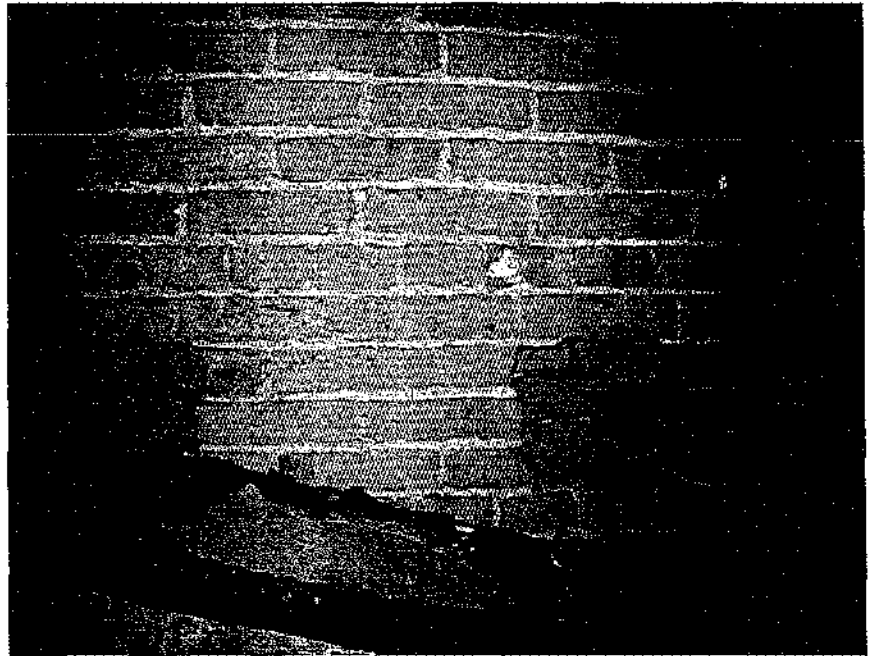


Plate 4b



Plate 4c

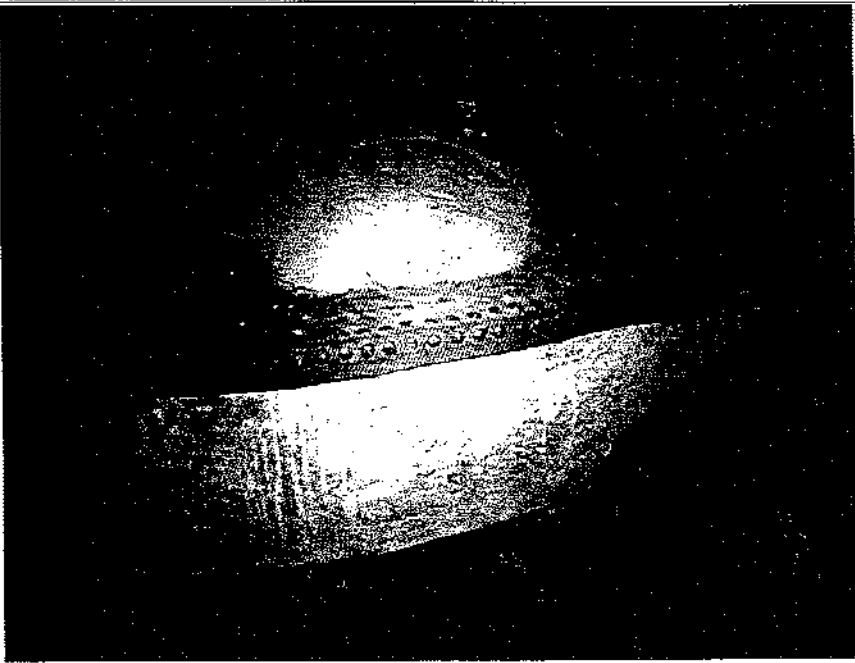


Plate 4d



Plate 4e



Plate 4f



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8

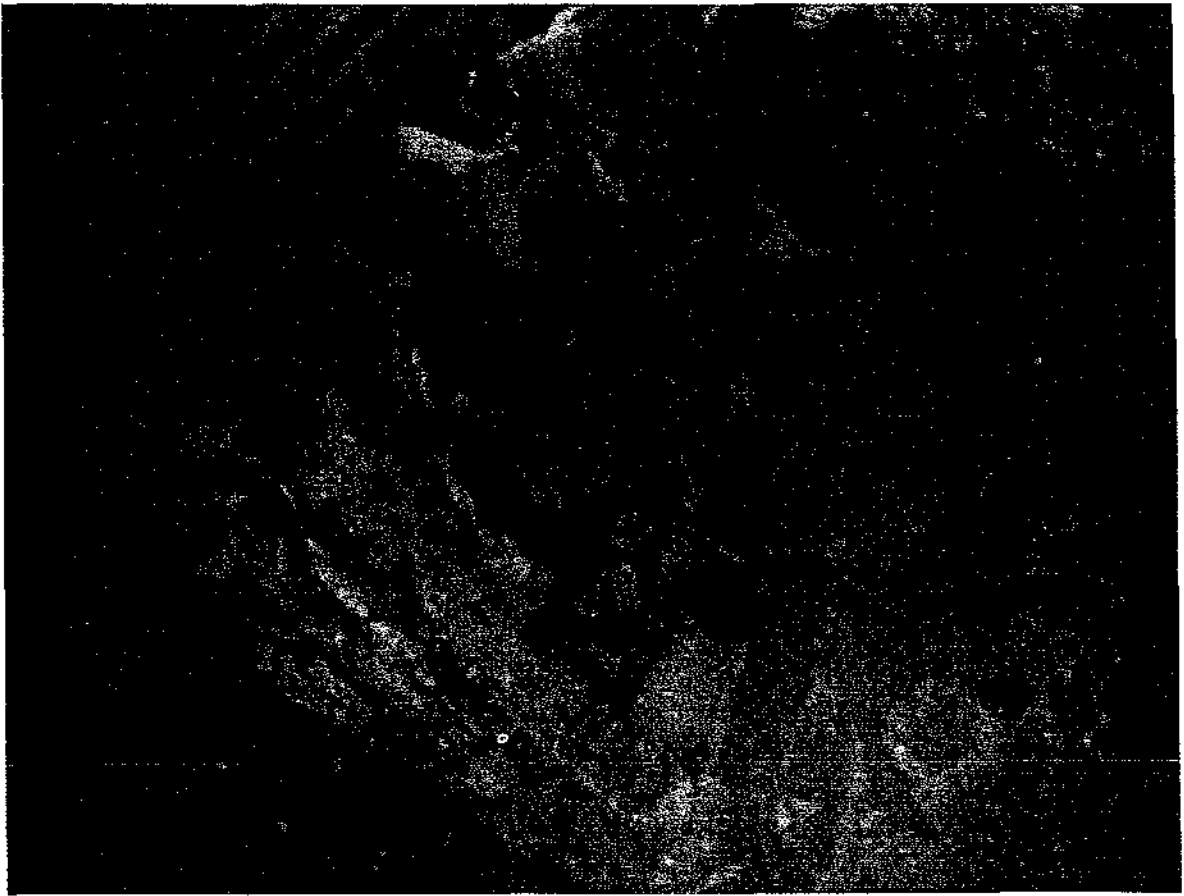


Plate 9

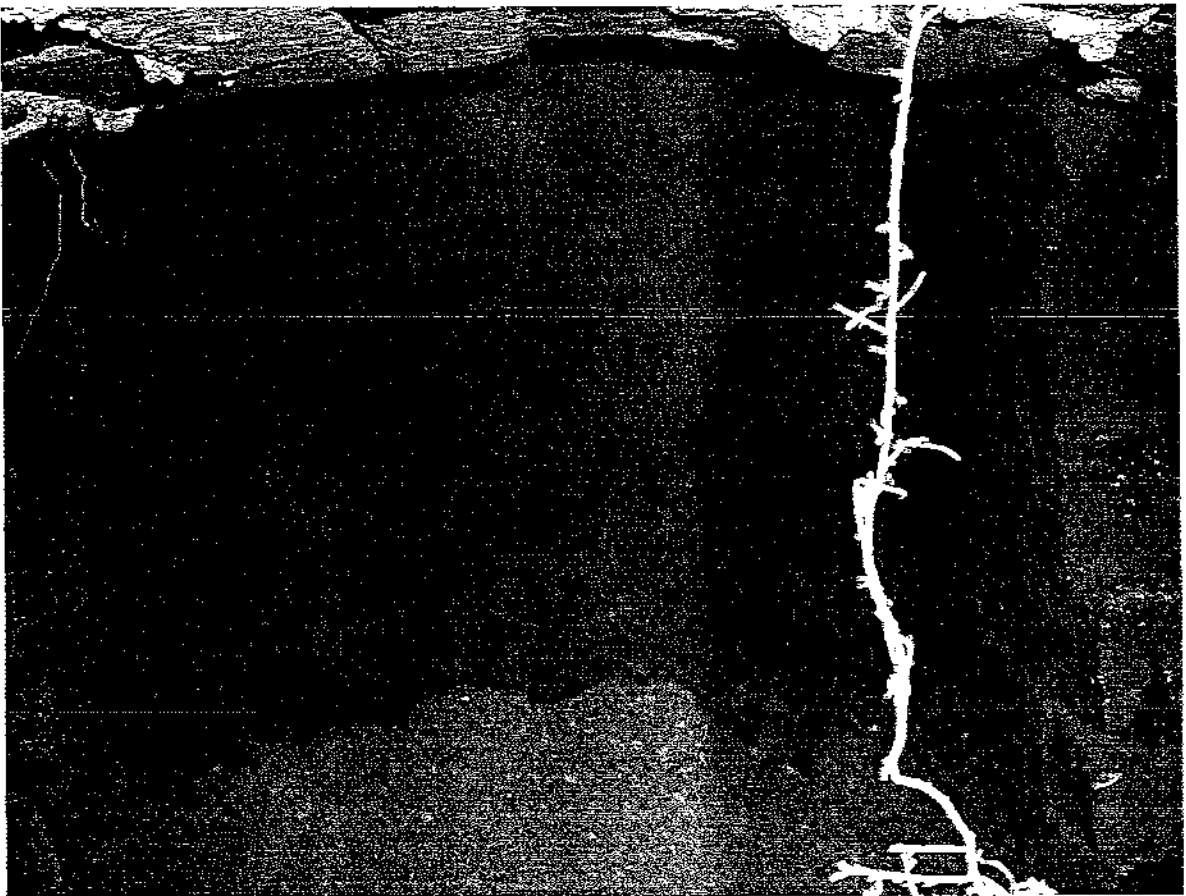


Plate 10



Plate 11

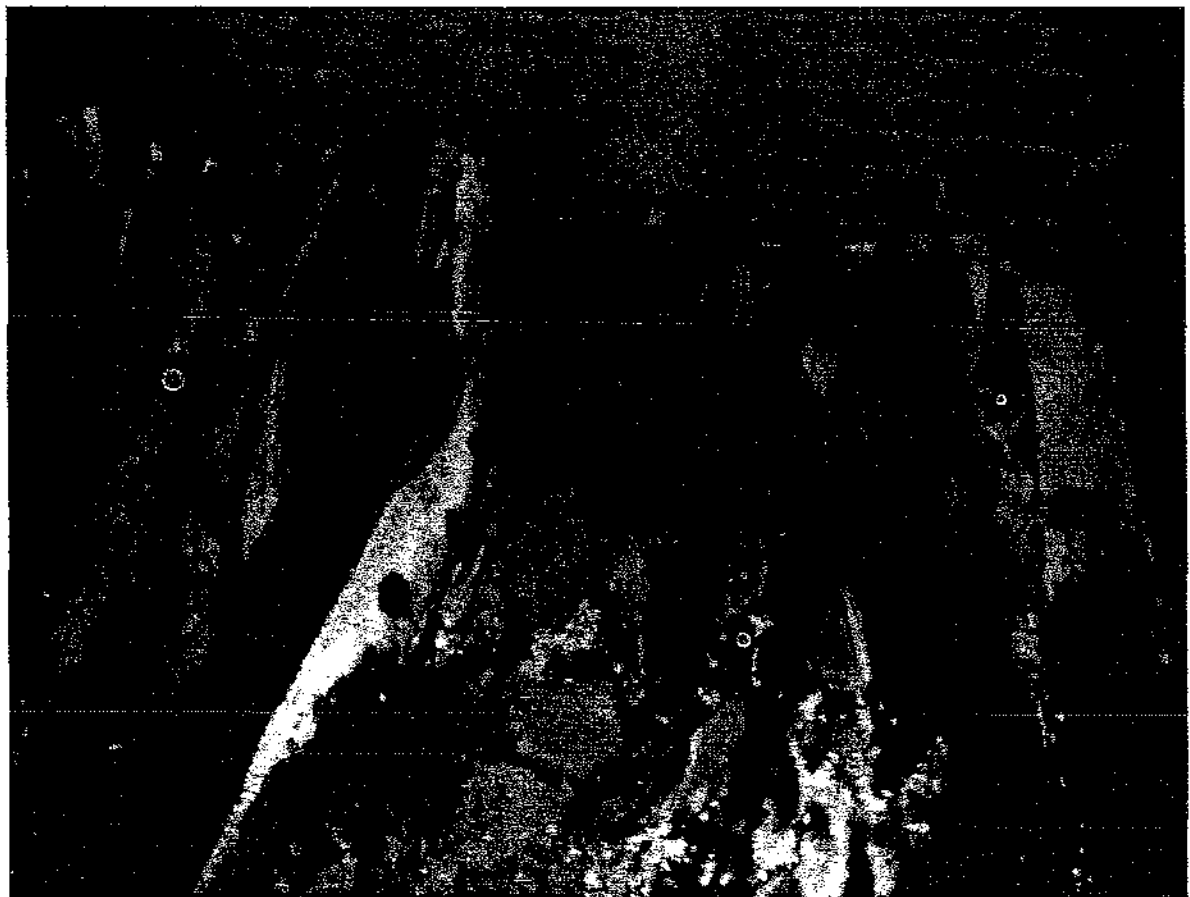


Plate 12



Plate 13

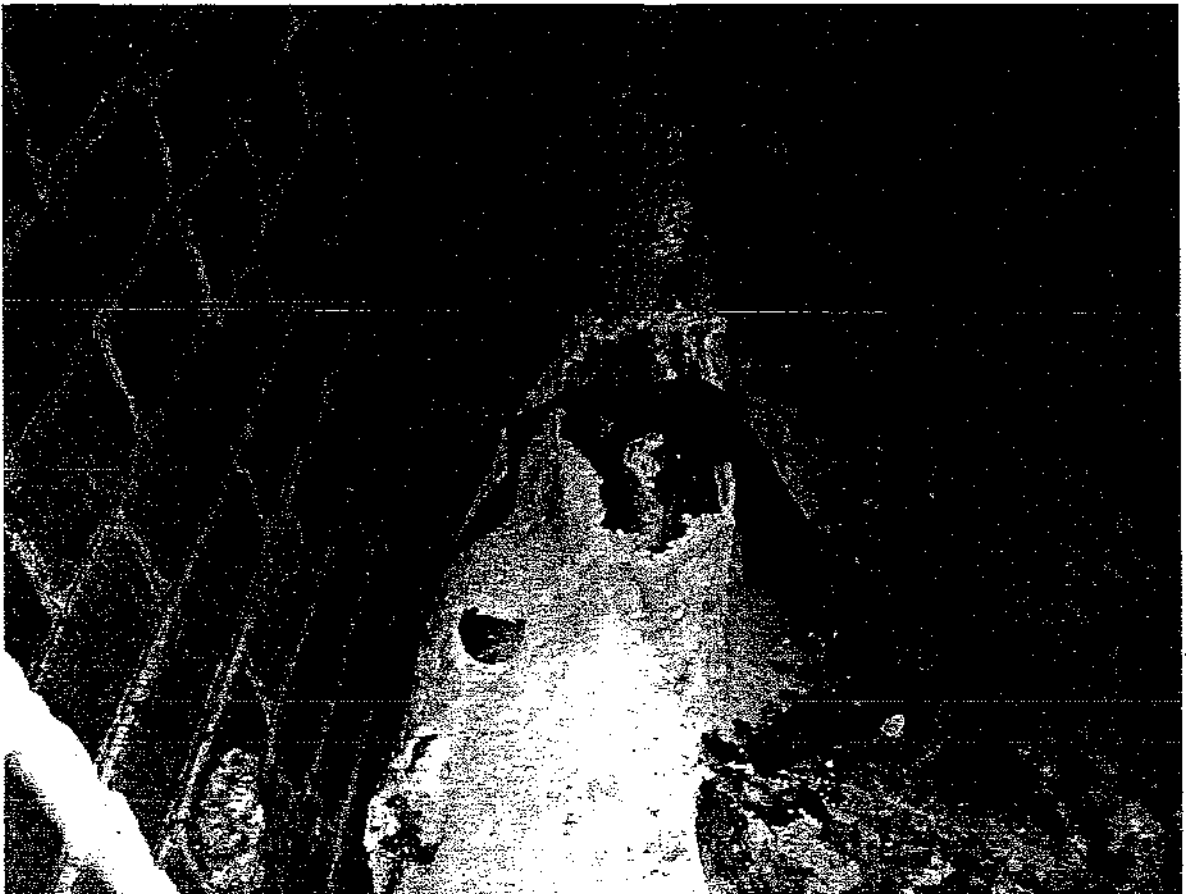


Plate 14

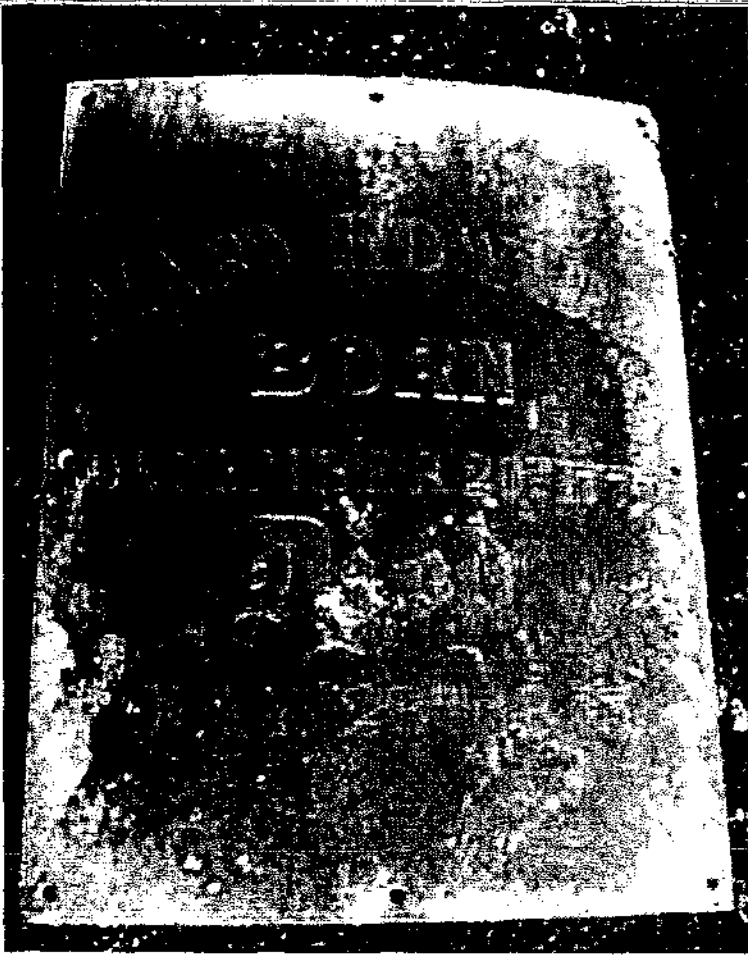


Plate 15

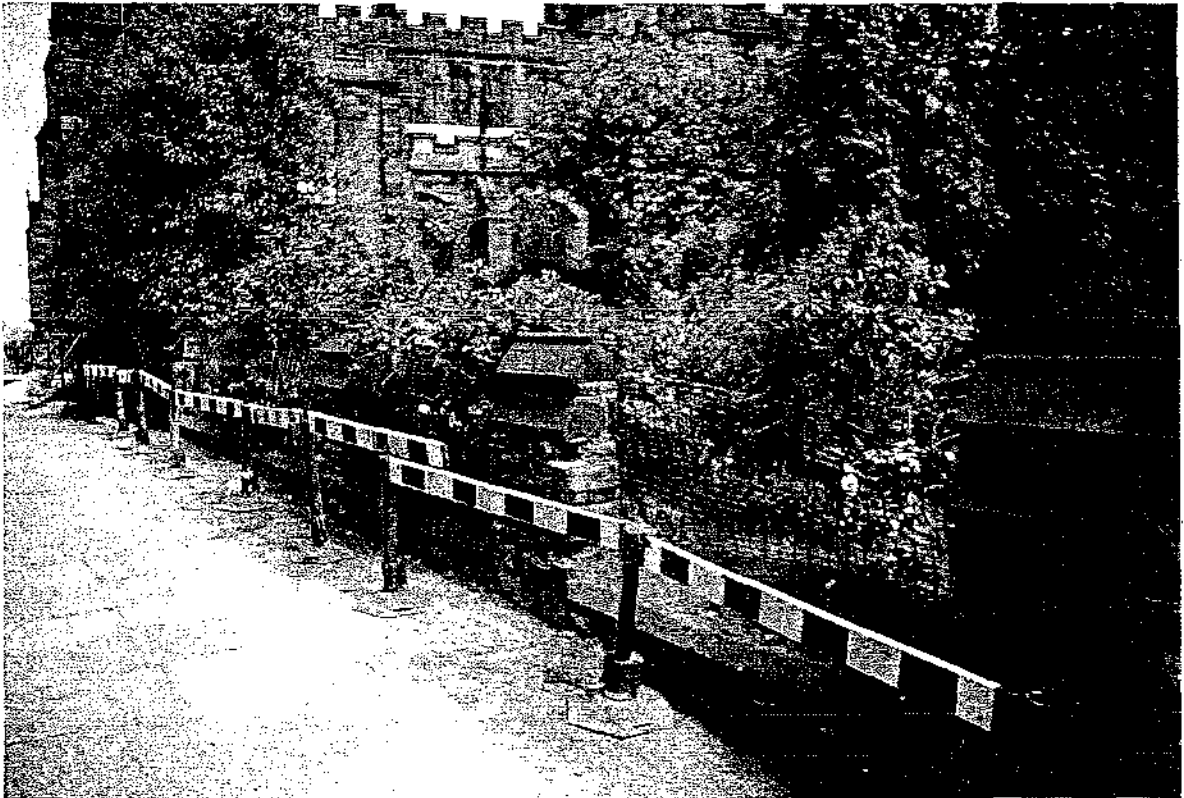


Plate 16

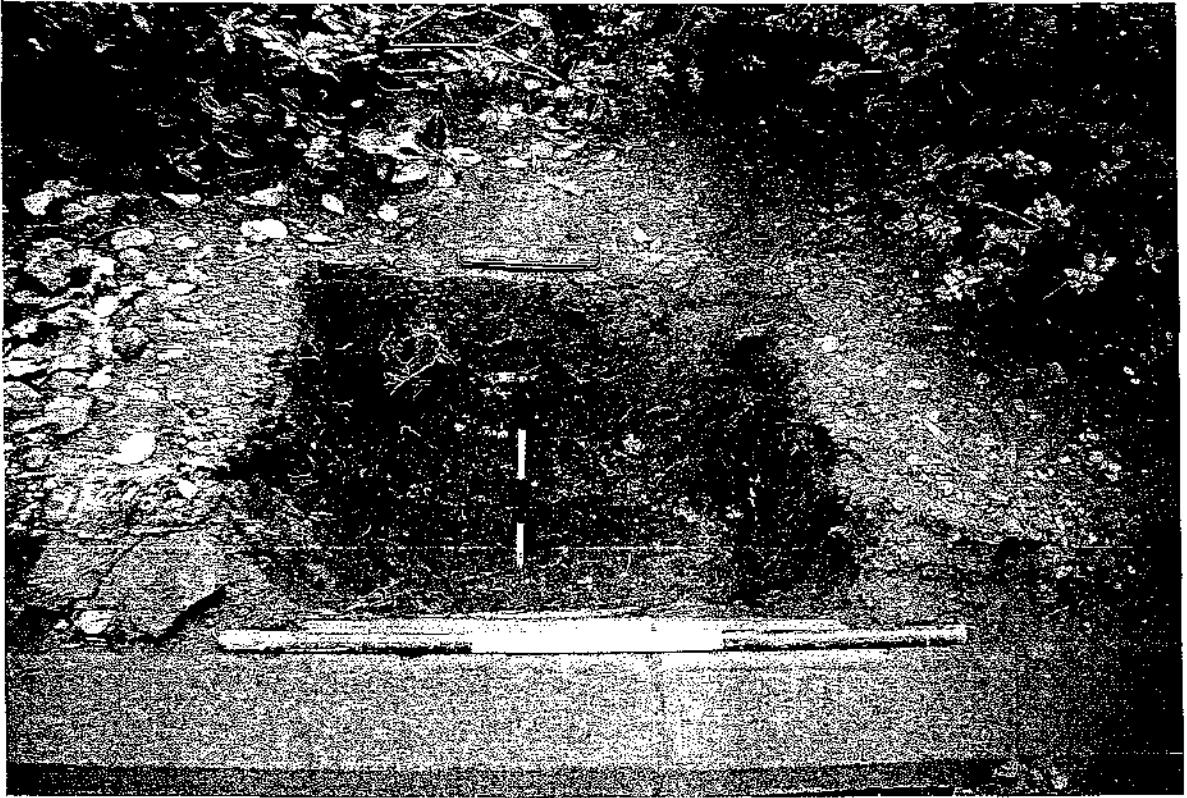


Plate 17



Plate 18