

**Trent Lane, Newark,
Nottinghamshire:**

**an archaeological evaluation
2003**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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Nottinghamshire
an archaeological evaluation 2003**

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TRENT LANE, NEWARK, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 2003

Developer: Limes Developments Ltd.
Archaeological Planning Consultant: John Samuels Archaeological Consultants.
Archaeological Contractor: Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit at Trent Lane, Newark, Nottinghamshire (centred on NGR SK 8025 5479), during April 2003. The work was required by Nottinghamshire County Council in advance of a planning proposal for the construction of a new retail store with associated parking. The evaluation was commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants on behalf of Limes Developments Ltd.

The application site and its environs have been the subject to two desk-based assessments, both suggesting that the site had a high potential for the presence of archaeology from several periods.

A total of seven trial-trenches were excavated during the evaluation. The results of the evaluation identified the presence of ditches dated to the Romano-British period, which probably relate to a settlement to the southwest of the site. The evaluation also demonstrated that the southwestern half of a Civil War defensive earthwork known as the King's Sconce lies within the development area, as suggested by the desk-based assessments. A trench located along the southern extent of the site identified a layer of early post-medieval building debris, possibly the remains of structures destroyed during the Civil War.

1.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out at land to the north of Trent Lane, Newark (NGR SK 8025 5479, Fig.1, hereafter referred to as the site). The work was commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants on behalf of Limes Developments Ltd and undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in April 2003. The evaluation was required by Newark and Sherwood District Council in advance of a planning application for a new retail store with associated parking to the southeast and service parking and a garden centre to the northeast.

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001), and adhered to a specification prepared by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC 2003). The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: planning and archaeology* (Department of the Environment 1990).

2.0 Site Location and Description

The site is located 0.7 km from the centre of Newark, (Figs. 1 and 2) and comprises a roughly 'L' shaped area of ground of approximately 6,800m². To the southwest is Trent Lane and to the southeast and northeast is Maltkiln Lane. The site lies between 13.2 and 14.2m OD with the exception of discrete spoil heaps and earthwork banks which comprise the remains of the Baird's Maltings buildings.

The geology comprises Mercia Mudstone, which lies immediately to the north of a fragment of the lowest gravel terrace of the River Trent.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Two desk-based assessments both suggested that the site had a high potential for archaeology from various periods (Appleton and Kinsley 1994, Kinsley 2002). While a more complete account is available in these assessments the main points are summarised here.

The Romano-British period

The desk based assessments suggested there was little evidence for the presence of prehistoric activity. The Fosse Way, a Roman road linking Exeter, Leicester and Lincoln lies adjacent to, but beyond the southern boundary of the site. It was suggested that features associated with this may be encountered. In addition to this the focus of an important and extensive Romano-British small town lies immediately to the southwest of the site.

The date range of the artefacts from the site suggest that the occupation of the site spanned the 1st to the 4th centuries, and there are indications of a military origin. The combination of features so far discovered points towards a roadside settlement, however its extent is difficult to assess.

The Medieval period

During the medieval period the site is associated with Osmundthorpe, a vil and hamlet of Newark. This is believed to be mainly concentrated towards North Gate and the Lincoln Road Viaduct. It is possible that the site is located within the boundary of the medieval Hospital of St Leonard. Earlier excavations along the line of the Lincoln Road Viaduct identified the cemetery and the church relating to the hospital.

Exeter House, the former hospital complex may have lain partly within the development site, although its exact location remains unclear. The house was taken on several occasions before being destroyed during the burning of the North Gate.

The king's Sconce

A Civil War defensive earthwork known as the King's Sconce was constructed as part of the Royalist defence of Newark, and was 'raised in or near the place formerly occupied by Exeter House'. At the end of the Civil War the local people were ordered to assist in the demolition of the fortifications. The Kings Sconce was identified to the north of the development area at SK 8017 5485, and it was anticipated that part of it could reasonably be expected to lie within the development area.

The late post medieval period

Towards the end of the 19th century the site comprised gardens and areas of pasture. In 1866 the Midland and Great Northern Railway was constructed to the northwest of

the development area. Between 1883 and 1900 Baird's Maltings was constructed within the northern half of the site.

4.0 Aims

Specific research aims

The aims of this evaluation are as laid out in the specification (JSAC 2003) are to:

- Determine the presence or otherwise of remains of archaeological interest.
- To determine the extent of truncation to any subsurface remains
- Obtain dating evidence to establish a chronology of the site
- Establish the extent of later post-medieval disturbance
- Recover environmental information as to the economy, diet etc of the inhabitants of the area.
- Where remains are of significant importance, to provide sufficient information to enable the formulation of a strategy, in liaison with the County Archaeologist, whereby these remains can be preserved, either in-situ or by record.
- To provide sufficient information to enable any subsequent archaeological works or excavation to be conducted within clearly defined research aims.

5.0 Method

In order to achieve the aims of the evaluation 7 trial trenches were excavated (Fig. 3), each measured 10m x 3m, except for Trench 7 which measured 1.8m x 6m The total amount of trenching was approximately 199m², providing for a 2.9 % sample of the site.

Excavation of topsoil subsoil/overburden was carried out using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket down to the natural subsoil level or to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon. Subsequent cleaning and excavation was by hand. Spoil from machine excavation and hand-excavation was temporarily stored on site.

Twenty litre soil samples were collected from datable features and their potential for charred plant macro-fossils was assessed. Appropriate samples also were to be collected from any waterlogged deposits in order to retrieve plant macro fossils, insect, molluscs and pollen.

Faunal remains were collected by hand and were assessed and analysed as appropriate. Recovered finds were cleaned and marked, and remedial conservation work will be undertaken where appropriate.

Recording was by means of pre-printed pro-forma record cards for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (at 1:20 and 1:50), sections (at 1:10 and 1:20), and monochrome print and colour slide photography.

Review/monitoring meetings were attended by Richard Cuttler, Project Manager BUFAU, Forbes Marsden, Consultant Archaeologist, John Samuels Archaeological Consultants and Ursilla Spence, Principal Archaeologist, Nottinghamshire County Council.

6.0 Results

Trench 1 (Fig. 4)

Trench 1 was located at the western corner to the site. The trench was excavated down to a layer of natural mudstone (1011) at a depth of 0.55m.

The natural mudstone was cut by a large north-south aligned ditch (F107, Fig. 4, Sections A and B) which extended beyond the evaluation trench, but was demonstrated to be more than 3m wide and 1.5m deep. The eastern side of this feature had a steep-sided profile with a step at a depth of 1m. It was filled by a loose brown clay and silt with many small sub-angular stones (1002), but contained no finds. The alignment of the ditch turned eastwards at a point in the middle of the trench.

Five concrete filled pier bases (F100, F102, F103, F104, and F105) were cut into the top of the ditch fill. These were 1.5m squared in plan and cut to a depth greater than 1.4m. On a grid aligned approximately northeast-southwest, the piers were spaced 2m apart. A brick wall (F106) at the northeast end of the trench was aligned northwest-southeast.

A second phase of concrete piers (F101 and F108) were constructed using concrete, with a double layer of bricks which were then overlain by a slab of sandstone 0.4m deep. These features were 1.5m square and were spaced 2.5m apart. The two phases of piers appeared to be orientated differently.

The trench was sealed by a layer of friable brown silt and clay with sub-angular stones (1001), 0.45m in depth. This was sealed by a layer of concrete (1000) 0.1m deep.

Trench 2 (Fig. 5)

Trench 2 was located to the east of Trench 1. The trench was excavated down to a layer of natural mudstone and red clay (2006) at a depth of 0.5m.

At the southwestern end of the trench was a layer of grey silt and clay with occasional charcoal flecking (2005), 0.2m in depth. This was cut by a north-south aligned ditch (F200) 1.4m wide and 0.6m deep (Fig. 5, Section C). Although heavily truncated the fill consisted of a dark brown sand clay and silt (2007) and produced Roman pottery.

Trench 2 also exposed the southern edge of a large ditch (F203, Fig. 5, Section D) the extent of which lay beyond the northeastern limit of the trench. The profile was steep and the fill comprised a loose brown silt and clay with numerous small sub-angular stones (2004). This was sealed by a loose grey silt and clay with charcoal flecking (2003). The upper fill of the feature consisted of a loose brown silt and clay with numerous small sub-angular stones (2002/2008).

Cut into the top of the ditch (F203) were three concrete pier bases (F204, 206 and 208), approximately 1.4m apart. A later phase of pier bases (F205 and F207) were constructed using concrete, a double layer of bricks which was overlain by a slab of sandstone.

Trench 3 (Fig. 6)

Trench 3 was located in the northern corner of the site and was excavated to the natural mudstone (3001) at a depth of 0.2m. A sondage was excavated at the southern extent of the trench in order to confirm this was indeed a natural horizon.

At the northeast end of the trench a large, north-south aligned ditch (F300) was partially exposed which had a depth greater than 1.4m. This was filled with a loose brown clay and silt with numerous sub-angular stones (3003) which in turn was sealed by a layer of compact brown silt with gravel and lenses of clay (3004).

To the west of this was rectangular feature (F301) which measured 0.6m in width, and was cut to a depth greater than 0.65m with a steep profile.

Trench 4 (Not illustrated)

Trench 4 was located within the eastern corner of the site, and was excavated by machine to the natural mudstone (4002) at a depth of 1.0m. This was overlain by a layer of compact grey sand clay and silt (4001) 0.6m deep, which in turn was sealed by a layer of compact brown topsoil (4000), 0.4m deep.

A rubbish pit (F400) measuring almost 7m across contained modern plastics and truncated the stratigraphy to a depth of 1.5m within Trench 4.

Trench 5 (Fig. 7)

Trench 5 was excavated to the natural mudstone (5010) at a depth of 0.8m.

An east-west aligned ditch (F506) appears to have been subject to several recuts (F501, F502, F503, F504 and F505). The majority of these had been severely truncated by the very latest recut (F500). All of these with the exception of (F500) would appear to have been cut with a V shaped profile, and the deepest would originally have been a ditch measuring at least 1.10m in depth.

These features were filled with a compact brown clay and silt (5003 to 5009), with some lenses of the natural calciferous mudstone.

The ditch was sealed by a layer of compact brown clay and silt (5002) 0.4m deep. Over this was a layer of compact brown clay-rich silt with some pebble inclusions (5001), 0.2m deep.

Trench 6 (Fig. 8)

Trench 6 was located close to Malkiln Lane at the southeast extent of the site. The trench was extended to the northeast by 4.5m at a width of 1.8m. This was to determine the extent of the Roman ditches identified in Trench 5. The natural mudstone (6005) was identified at 0.8m, and was sealed by a layer of compact brown clay sand and silt with some stone and rubble inclusions (6002), 0.4m in depth.

Above this was a layer 0.25m deep consisting of masonry rubble with mortar and brick and tile fragments within a friable brown silt (6001 and 6009). This was cut by two linear features (F600 and F601). These were at right angles to each other but did not intersect within the trench. The northern most feature (F600) was aligned east-west and was 1.5m wide and 0.78m deep with a u-shaped profile. This was filled with

brown silt with rubble consisting of broken masonry mortar and tile fragments (6004). To the south, F601 was aligned north-south, 1.m wide and 1.08m deep. This was filled with brown silt with rubble consisting of broken masonry, mortar and brick and tile fragments (6003). The trench was sealed by a layer of topsoil 0.25m deep.

Trench 7 (Not illustrated)

Trench 7 was excavated in order to understand the deep clay-silts and demolition material within the southern part of the site. The trench was excavated to natural mudstone (7002) at a depth of 0.8m. This was sealed by a layer of black sooty silt with occasional brick and masonry rubble inclusions (7001) 0.4m in depth. The area of the trench was sealed by a layer of topsoil (7000), 0.4m deep.

7.0 The Finds

Romano-British pottery by Annette Hancocks

During the evaluation a small assemblage of Romano-British ceramics was recovered principally from Trench 5. This material was rapidly scanned and spot-dated to the 2nd-3rd century AD. It comprised a total of 51 sherds, weighing 935g and included six diagnostic rims, greywares imitating Black-Burnished ware 1 forms, such as dog dishes, shell-tempered wares and Lower Nene Valley Colour-Coated ware.

Medieval pottery and Post-medieval pottery

A single sherd from each period was recovered from the ploughsoil in Trench 5.

Context	Feature	Description	Tile: Ceramic	Brick: ceramic	Roman pottery	Medieval	Post-medieval pottery	Claypipe	Coin	Iron:other	Stone: Other	Animal Bone	Shell	Charcoal
<u>Trench 2</u>														
2003	F201		1	-	-	-	-	12	-	1	-	178g	-	-
2007	F200		-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	5g	-	-
2008	F202		1	1	-	-	-	8	1	-	-	644g	-	8g
<u>Trench 3</u>														
3005	F301		-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Trench 5</u>														
5000	Topsoil		1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5003	F500		-	-	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	106g	-	-
5004	F501		-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	1	103g	2	-
5005	F507		-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	59g	-	-
5006	F506		-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5008	F503		-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals			3	1	51	1	1	20	1	1	1	1095g	2	8g

Table 1: Summary of finds

Animal Bone by Emma Hancox

A small amount of bone was hand collected from the evaluation (1095g). No bulk samples were taken for sieving. The bone came from six contexts. Contexts 2007, 5003, 5004 and 5005 are potentially Roman in date, the remainder (2003 and 2008) are from a large ditch which may be the fortifications of the Kings Sconce. The assemblage was generally in fair/poor condition and fragmented. Cow, sheep/goat and pig were identified. Only 5 recordable elements were noted, 2 of which were ageable or measurable. Evidence of butchery was only found in 4 of the contexts dated to the Romano-British period (2003, 2008, 5003, 5004). Burning was noted on 2 bones from the ditch associated with the King's Sconce (2003 and 2008), the bones were blackened with slight calcification on the bone from 2003. No evidence of pathology or gnawing was found.

8.0 The biological remains by Marina Ciaraldi

One soil sample was collected from an early phase of a ditch (F501/5004), which an analysis of the pottery suggests is of a 2nd to 3rd century AD date.

Ten litres of soil were processed by manual flotation and the flot recovered on 0.5 mesh. They were dried in the oven at 40^o degrees and later scanned under a microscope. The residue was recovered using a 1mm mesh and sorted by eye.

The sample contained a few charred grains of hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) and some waterlogged/modern seeds of bramble (*Rubus* sp.). The exclusive presence of barley grains suggests localised cooking activities or of a storage facility. It is also possible that the grains are associated with the corn-drier identified in the settlement area (Kinsley 2002).

Although the environmental evidence is limited to a single sample, it is clear that charred plant remains have been preserved within the archaeological deposits. It is, therefore, recommended that any future works account for an appropriate sampling strategy with the aim of collecting environmental evidence from the Roman deposits as well as later periods of occupation. Features such as drains or cesspits associated with the medieval hospital (Kinsley 2002) would also be of particular interest since they may contain evidence for medicinal plants (Ciaraldi 2002) and as such should form part of any future research agenda.

9.0 Discussion

Former excavations and watching briefs have found significant concentrations of Roman features extending from the southwest boundary of the North Gate Retail Park to Trent lane, between the river bank and the North Gate frontage. This activity appears to date from the 1st through to the 4th centuries AD with the development of military or small town status in the 2nd or 3rd centuries. The ceramic evidence from the development area dates the focus of activity to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, with the majority of the Roman pottery recovered from two ditches (F200 in Trench 2 and F506, and successive recuts, in Trench 5).

Neither of these ditches were large enough to suggest a defensive origin, and neither appear to 'reflect the ubiquitous influence of the Fosse Way alignment', located approximately 25m to the south of the site. Ditches of various alignments were

recorded on earlier excavations, but given the restricted nature of the excavations no coherent pattern was ever deduced. This suggests a haphazard expansion of the settlement rather being part of an intentional plan. The lack of structural evidence may suggest that these ditches represent activity on the fringes of the former Roman town, with the obvious focus of domestic occupation to the south and the west. While there is no direct evidence indicating a compound, and no evidence of a bank associated with the ditches, these may each originally served as part of an enclosure. Successive recuts of the ditch in Trench 5 (F506) emphasises the continuing importance of this boundary within the landscape.

The presence of a Roman kiln, approximately 30m to the north of the development area (Kinsley 2002) would suggest a high potential for waster sherds and similar industrial features. No industrial Roman features were recorded, however, and there is a surprising paucity of residual Roman pottery from the fills of the Kings Sconce ditches recorded in Trenches 1, 2 and 3.

The survival of charred plant remains albeit in small amounts demonstrates conditions favourable to the survival of environmental remains. The presence of grains of hulled barley implies localised cooking activities and is consistent with the discovery of a corn-drier identified in the settlement area to the southwest (Kinsley 2002). The animal bone assemblage is also in a reasonable state of preservation and suggests that the site has the potential to provide a sizeable bone assemblage. This could provide a greater understanding of the Roman trade and economy within the region.

The church and cemetery associated with the former medieval Hospital of St Leonard would appear to have been formerly located to the east of the development area. The absence of inhumations within Trenches 5 to 7 appears to indicate that the cemetery did not extend as far westwards as the development area. No features relating to medieval Osmundthorpe were recorded which suggests that the area was open ground during this period. A buried soil measuring 0.4m in depth, which sealed the Romano-British deposits tends to support the theory that this area may have been the focus of agriculture during this period.

Demolition debris recorded in Trench 6 (6001 and 6009) may relate to the destruction of Exeter House, destroyed during the burning of the North Gate. Before the third and final seige of Newark it was recorded that there was 'not one stone left unthrown down' from the building. A spread of masonry rubble with mortar and brick and tile fragments may relate to an episode in which the larger stonework from the building was systematically removed from the site. It also seems possible that the linear features within Trench 6 (F600 and F601) are robbed-out wall foundation trenches.

The large ditches in Trenches 1, 2 and 3 (F107, F203 and F300) have very similar fills and are probably all part of one ditch, formerly the fortifications for the King's Sconce. The profiles of the ditches are steep, and the ditches are easily large enough to be considered as part of a former defensive structure. The presence of mid to late 17th Century finds within the upper fills of these ditches (1002, 2002 and 3003) concurs with the demolition date for the King's Sconce siege works at the end of the Civil War. The King's Sconce was comparable with the Queen's Sconce which is still evident within the town. Figure 3 shows a projected overlay of the King's Sconce fortification with the trench location plan. Figure 9 shows the King's Sconce

approximately located on a modern map. The overlay would appear to be fairly accurate, with Trenches 1, 2 and 3 excavated across the southern corner of the fortification. This would suggest that much of the southeastern half of the fortification survives within the northern half of the development area.

Concrete piers in Trenches 1 and 2 appear to relate closely to the plans of the malthouse (Kinsley 2002), although the piers clearly represent two phases of rebuild or repair. Recent pits have been used for the disposal of modern material (F400, Trench 4). While the piles and modern rubbish pits have clearly truncated earlier deposits enough of the stratigraphy remains to provide a meaningful interpretation of the chronology of the site.

10.0 Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants on behalf of Limes Developments Ltd. The evaluation was carried out by Mary Duncan with the assistance of Ianis Altsitzoglou, Bob Bracken and Andrew Walsh. The report was written by Mary Duncan and Richard Cuttler. The project was monitored by Ursilla Spence on behalf of Newark and Sherwood District Council, by Forbes Marsden on behalf of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants and by Richard Cuttler on behalf of Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

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Ciaraldi, M. 2002 *The interpretation of medicinal plants in the archaeological context: some case studies from Pompeii.* In R. Arnott (ed.) *The Archaeology of Medicine.* Oxford, Archaeopress, British Archaeological Reports 71-75

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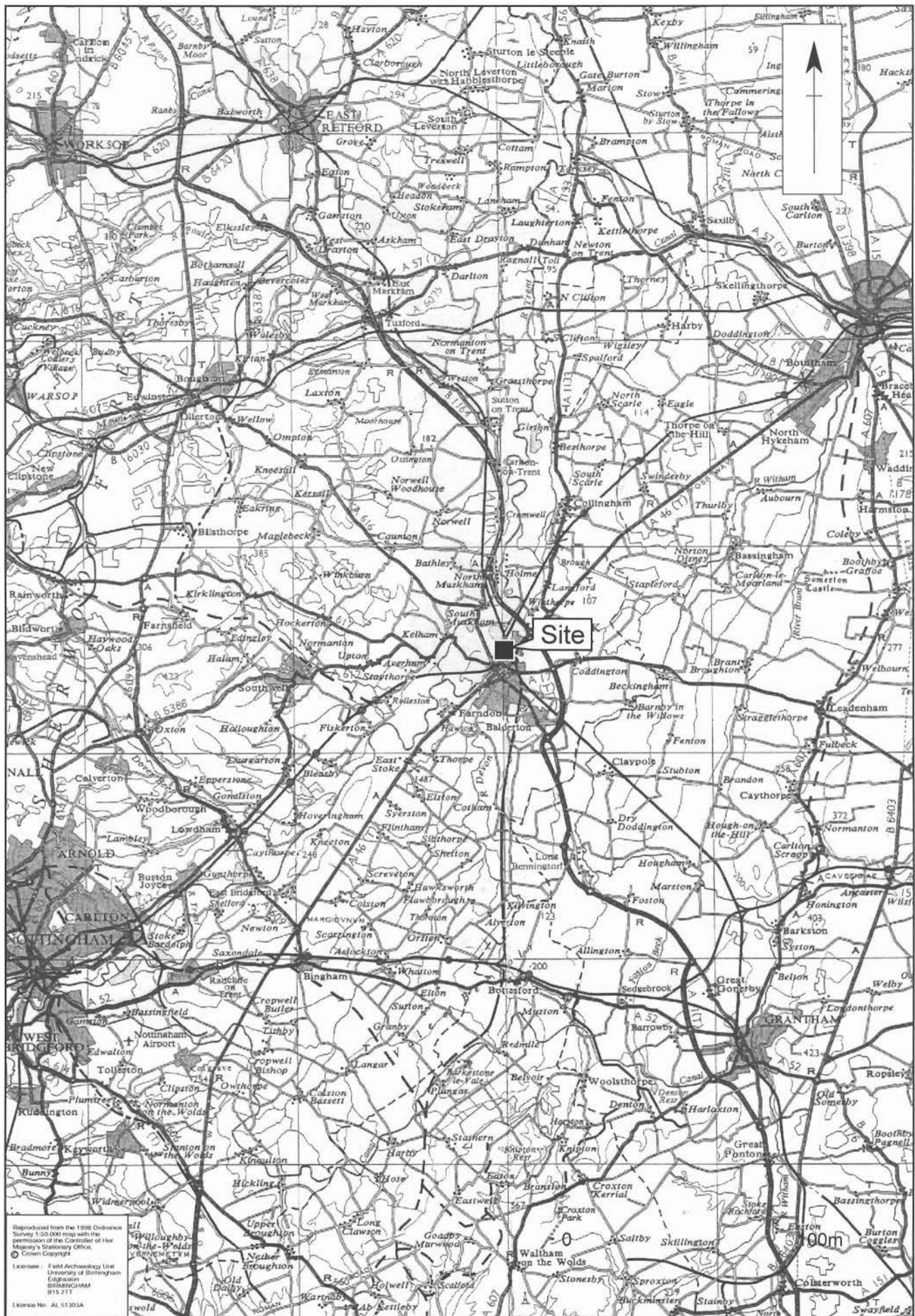


Fig.1

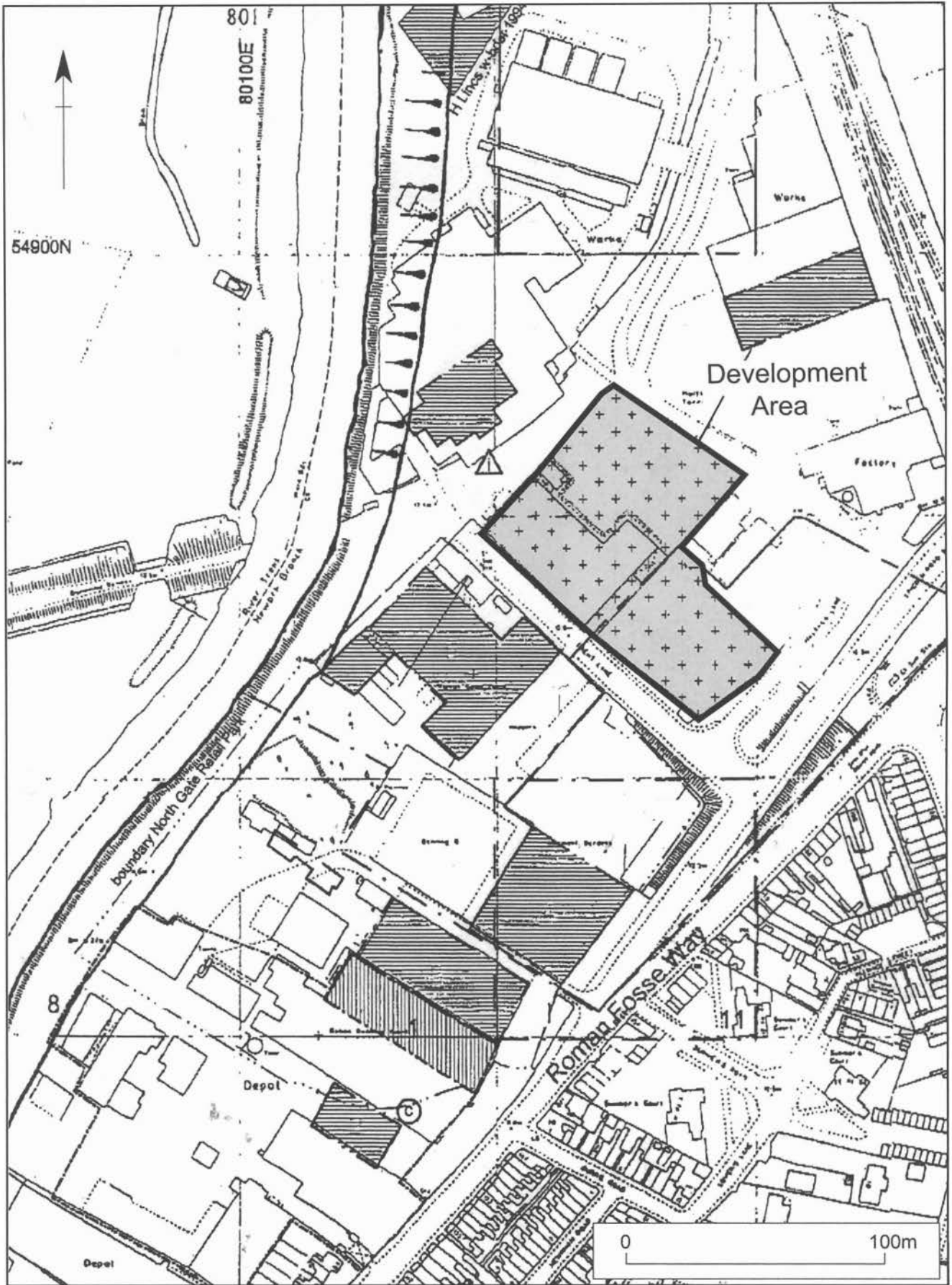


Fig.2 Development Area

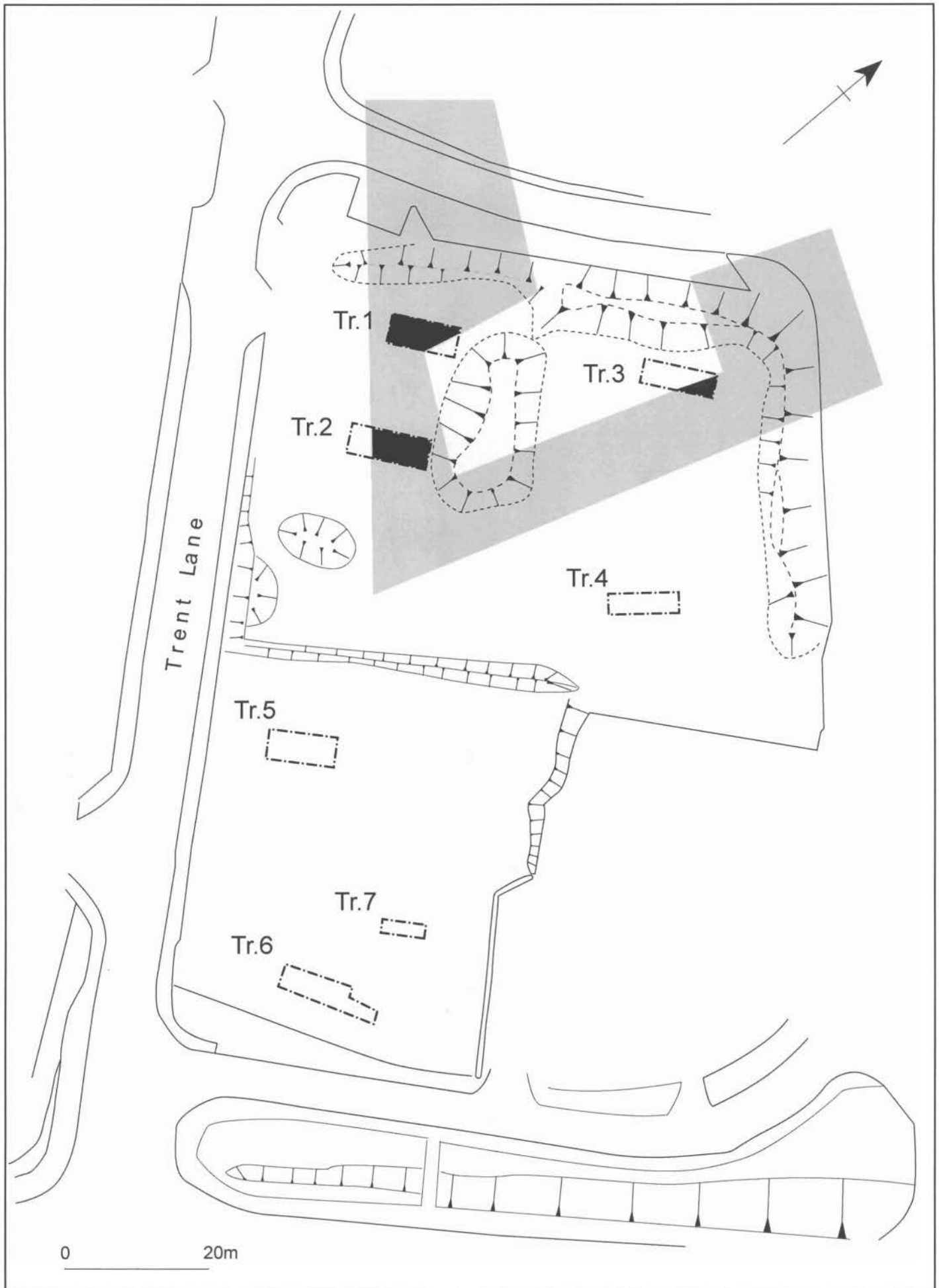
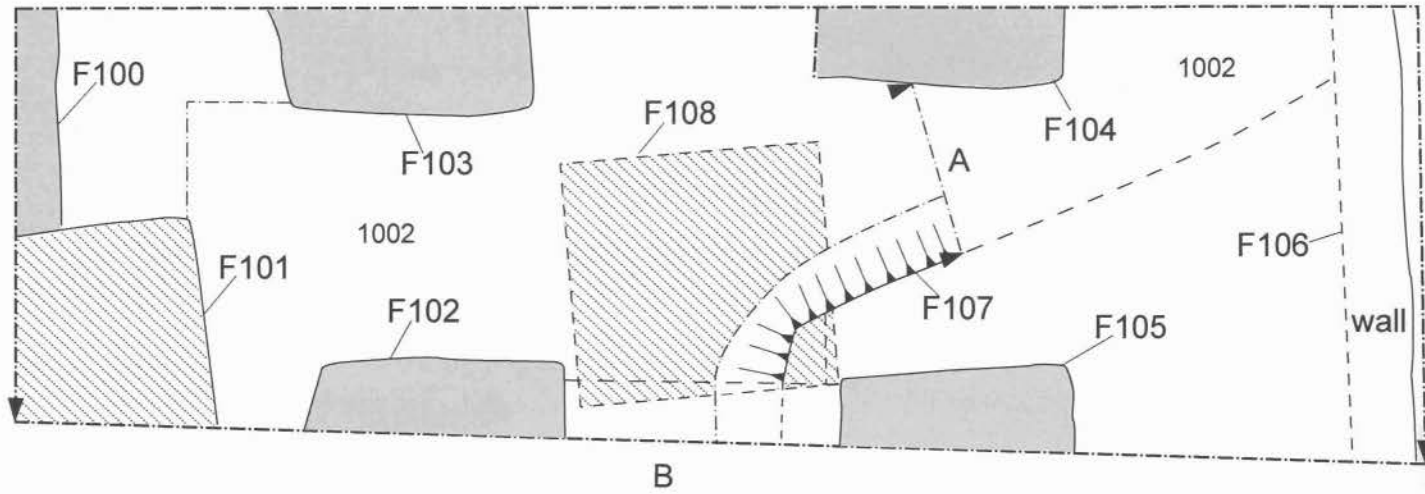


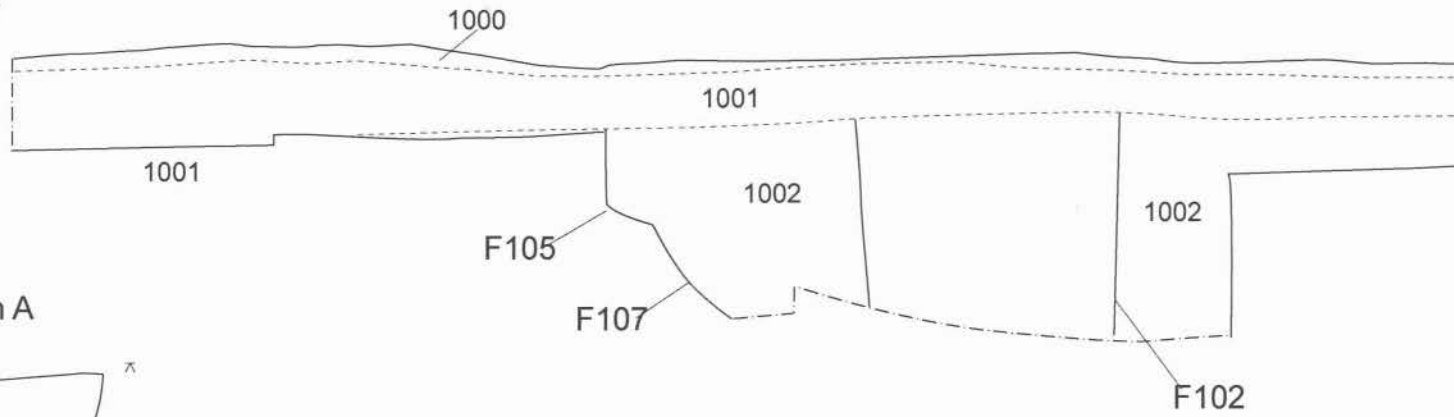
Fig.3 Trench Location Plan Showing Probable Position of the King's Sconce

TRENCH 1

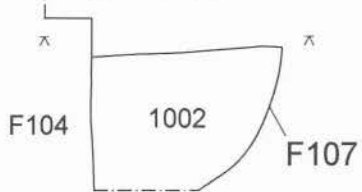


Section B

NE
^



Section A



0 2m

Fig.4

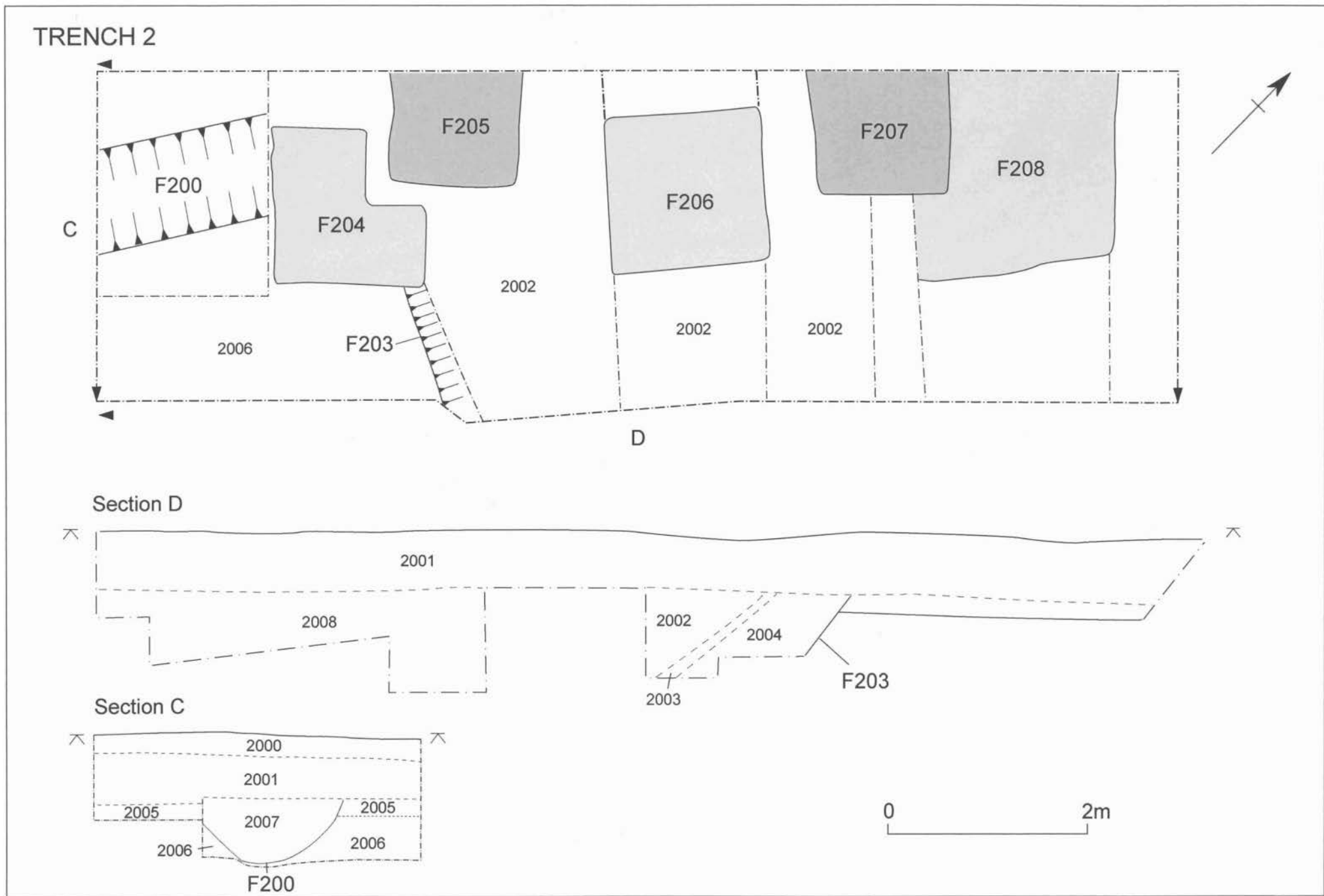


Fig.5

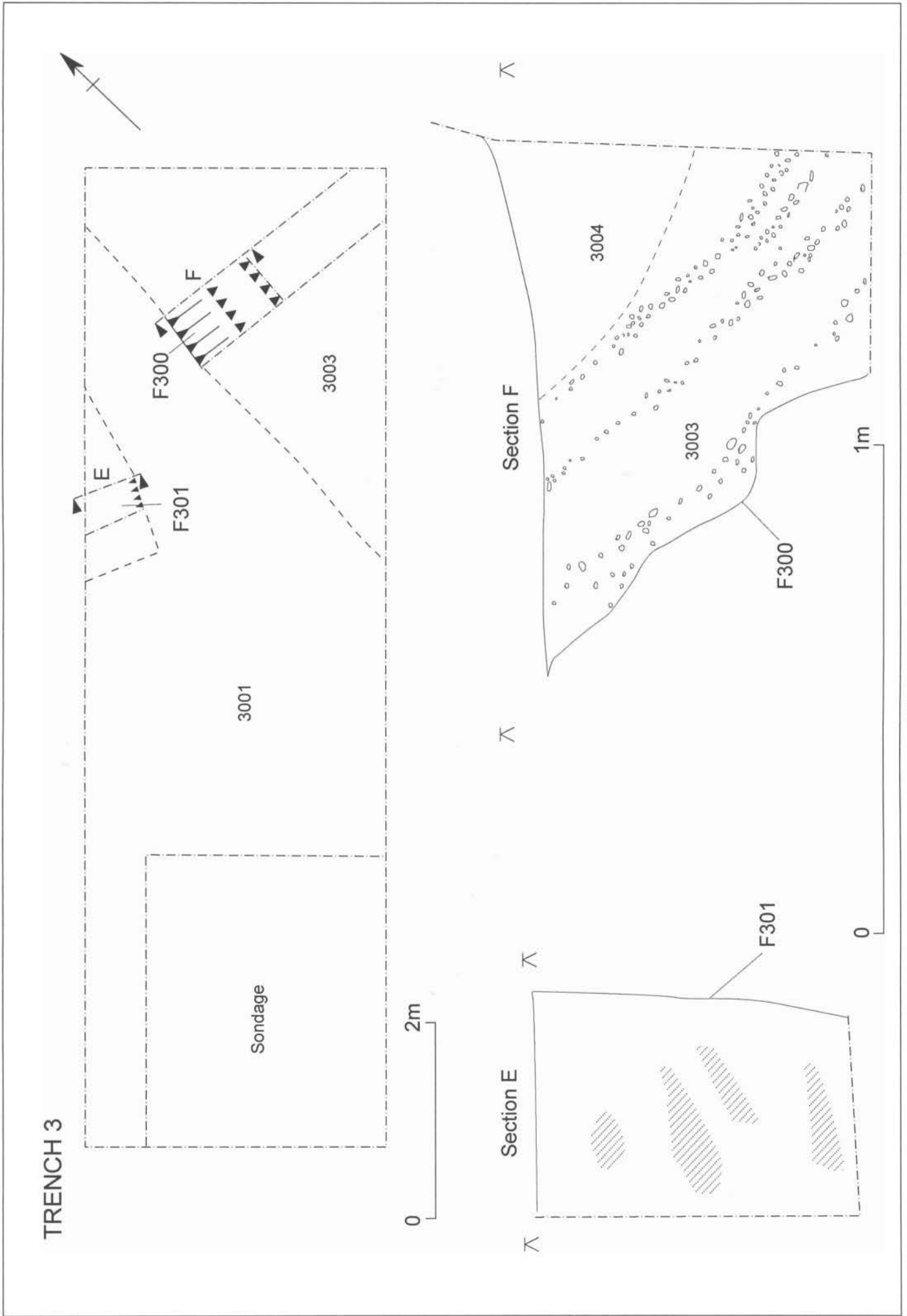
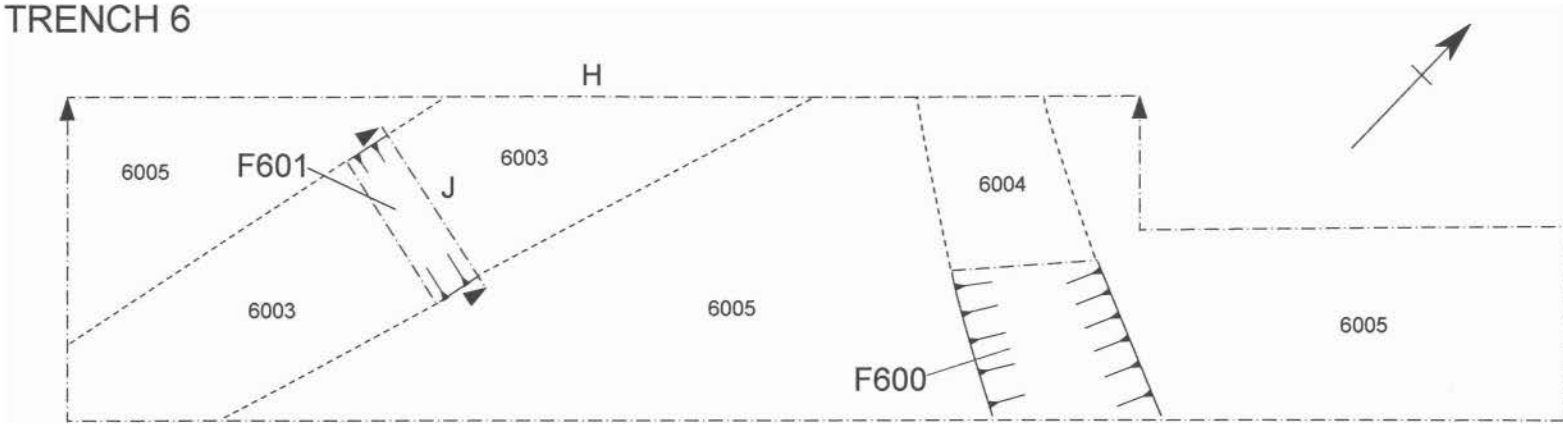
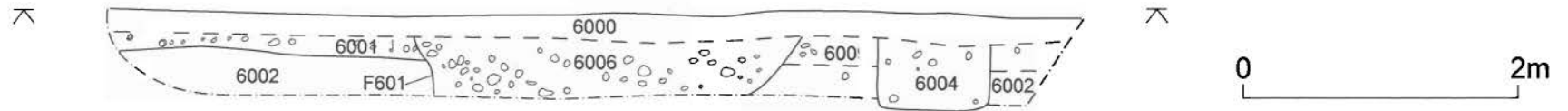


Fig.6

TRENCH 6



Section H



Section J



Fig.8

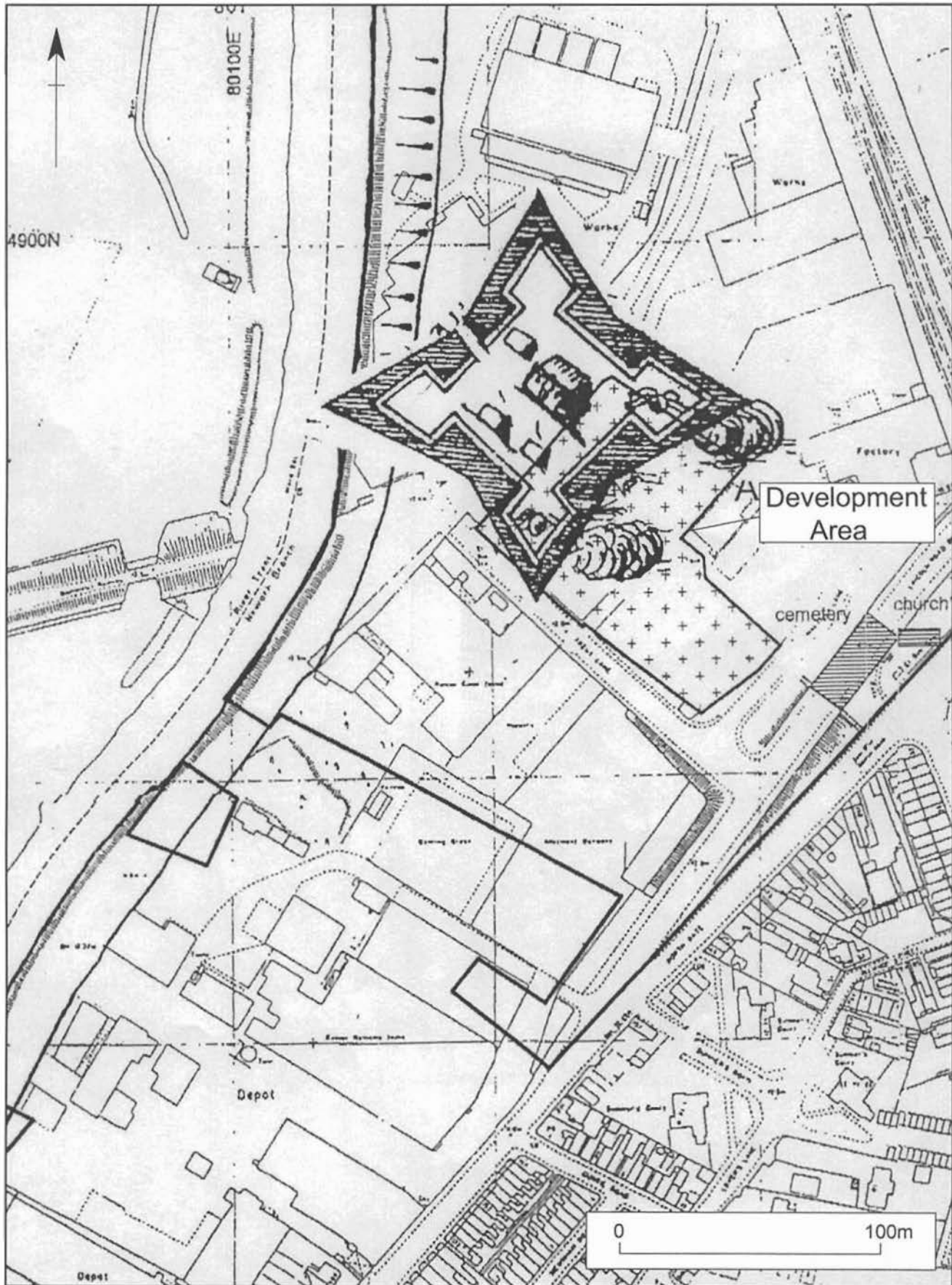


Fig.9 Plan of the King's Sconce Superimposed on the Development Area



Plate 1 The Site - Facing Northeast



Plate 2 Trench 1 _ Facing Northeast

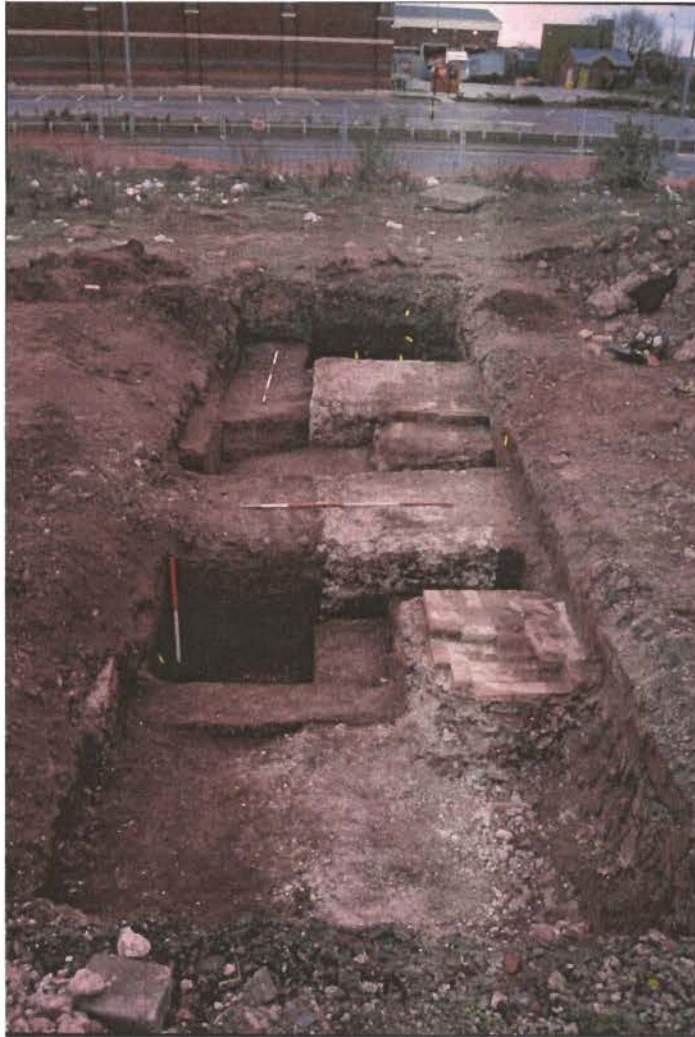


Plate 3 Trench 2 - Facing Southwest



Plate 4 Trench 3 , F300



Plate 5 Trench 5 , F506



Plate 6 Trench 6 - Southeast Facing Section