The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham:

archaeological observation and recording 2003

Project No. 1098 September 2003

The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham: archaeological observation and recording 2003

By Robert Bracken

with contributions from Erica Macey and Stephanie Rátkai

For further information please contact:
Alex Jones (Director)
Birmingham Archaeology
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513

Fax: 0121 414 5516 E-Mail: bham-arch@bham.ac.uk Web Address: http://www.barch.bham.ac.uk

The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham:

archaeological observation and recording 2003

1.0 Summary 2 2.0 Introduction 2 3.0 Site Location 2 Archaeological and historical background 4.0 3 5.0 Objectives 3 6.0 Method 3 7.0 Results 4 8.0 The Finds 4 9.0 Discussion 6 10.0 Acknowledgements 6 11.0 References 7 APPENDIX 8

Summary description of stratigraphy in monitored pits Summary description of stratigraphy in monitored trenches Table 2

Figures

Table 1

Contents

Fig. 1	Site Location
Fig. 2 Fig. 3	Location of monitored pits and cable trenches
11g. 3	Pit 30/ Cable Trench 13: west facing section, Pit 12: east facing section

The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham:

archaeological observation and recording 2003

1.0 Summary

Archaeological observation and recording was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology at The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham (NGR SP 405 279) in August and September 2003, on behalf of Birmingham City Council. The work was required by the Planning Archaeologist for Birmingham City Council and involved monitoring the groundworks for erection of new street lighting. The present layout of The Green corresponds with the medieval village green, and it was thought that the groundworks may have affected buried archaeological remains.

A total of 33 pits were excavated for lampposts, along with associated trenches for electricity cables. No clear evidence was found of archaeological features or deposits associated with the medieval village green, probably due to the small size of the pits, the shallow depth of the associated trenches, disturbance by modern service trenches and modern landscaping. No finds dating from earlier in date than the late 16th/early 17th centuries were recovered. The remains of a probable cobbled surface of possible 17th - 18th century date, or earlier, were recorded in one lampost pit located immediately to the south of St. Nicolas churchyard. The contexts recorded in other lampost pits were of later 18th-19th centuries/modern date or were undated.

2.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of archaeological observation and recording carried out during groundworks for erection of new street lighting at The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham. The archaeological fieldwork was carried out by Birmingham Archaeology in August and September 2003, on behalf of Birmingham City Council.

The present layout of The Green corresponds with the location of the medieval village green, and the work was required by the Planning Archaeologist for Birmingham City Council, as it was thought that the groundworks may have affected buried archaeological remains.

The work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Birmingham Archaeology (Birmingham Archaeology 2003). The guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999, revised 2001) were followed.

3.0 Site Location

The Green (hereafter referred to as the site) is located at the centre of Kings Norton, Birmingham (NGR SP 405 279, Fig. 1). The Green is roughly triangular with St. Nicolas Church to the north and Pershore Road South to the east.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2003) for the work summarised the archaeological background and concluded that it is highly likely that archaeological features and deposits dating to the medieval period may survive at The Green. The medieval village green was located to the south of the church of St. Nicolas, which dates from at least the 13th century, and a medieval priest's house is located in the churchyard. On the west side of The Green is the former Saracen's Head Inn, part of which dates from the late 15th century. The Green may have acted as an informal market place during the Middle Ages (Dyer 1992), although a licence was not granted until 1616. The Green at Kings Norton corresponds with the original medieval village green. There are documentary references from the mid 16th century referring to 'faire' houses that may have belonged to wool staplers at Kings Norton (Toulmin Smith 1964, 96). Cartographic evidence from 1732, in the form of an estate map (WRO fo 970.5:7 B A 1101/2) shows a rectangular green with two-storied houses on each side of the green.

A previous archaeological excavation at No.15 The Green in 1992 (Jones, Rátkai and Ellis 2000) revealed part of the rear of a medieval tenement plot, extending southwards from the original village green. Evidence of two timber-framed buildings together with a third less substantial structure was uncovered. These structures dated from the early 13th century to the late 14th century, although the presence of 12th century pottery hinted at earlier settlement on the site.

5.0 Objectives

The objective of the archaeological observation and recording is to provide a record of any archaeological deposits or features present below the modern ground surface, with the aim of contributing to the understanding of the history and the significance of the archaeology of the site as a whole.

These objectives and aims were achieved through a programme of archaeological monitoring visits to the site during below-ground works.

6.0 Method

Thirty-three pits for lampposts and associated trenches for electricity cables (Fig. 2) were excavated by contractors. All pits and trenches, with exception of one pit, were monitored by a qualified archaeologist. The pits were generally 0.3m diameter and 1m deep and the trenches varied in size and depth depending on the proximity of the pits to the mains electricity cable.

All observed deposits were recorded using pre-printed *pro-forma* recording cards for features and contexts, supplemented by scale drawings of sections and plans. Colourslide and black and white photographs were also taken as appropriate. All finds were recovered and recorded. These finds, and the site records form the site archive, which is currently stored at Birmingham Archaeology, and will be deposited with Birmingham Museum at the earliest opportunity.

7.0 Results (Fig. 2)

The majority of the pits and trenches revealed no significant archaeological features or deposits. Only pits and trenches containing archaeological features or deposits are described here. Full stratigraphic details, recorded in all the pits and trenches, have been tabulated and are contained in the appendix to this report. The natural subsoil was a compact orange clay with occasional river pebbles.

Pit 6

An east- west aligned red brick wall (F100) was built on the natural clay at a depth of 0.70m below the present ground surface. Wall F100 was 0.23m thick and 0.3m high and was constructed of machine-cut bricks, likely to date from no earlier than the 19th century. Wall F100 was sealed by a layer of orange clay, 0.25m deep. This was overlain by brick rubble.

Pit 30/ Cable Trench 13 (Fig. 3)

The earliest deposit encountered was a reddish-brown clay (1006) containing cobbles, 0.06m thick, at a depth of 0.36m below the present ground surface, overlying the natural subsoil. This was overlain by a brown silty clay layer (1005), 0.06m deep, containing a sherd of yellow glazed pottery, of either 16th-18th century or 19th century date, together with two sherds of 16th-18th century pottery and two rounded stone cobbles. This was sealed by a hardcore layer (1004), 0.12m deep. The presence of probable cobbled surface 1006 may suggest the existence of a cobbled surface in this area.

Pit 12 (Fig. 3)

A dirty orange clay (1003), possibly redeposited natural, was revealed at a depth of 1.0m below the present ground surface, at least 0.50m deep. This was overlain by a dirty orange clay (1002), 0.40m deep, containing cobbles, brick and tile. The cobbles recorded in context 1002, although not deliberately laid to form a surface, may have originated from the disturbance of a cobbled surface.

These pits/ cable trenches contained the only archaeological deposits of any significance noted during the observation and recording. Many of the pits and the cable trenches revealed evidence of modern services and levelling/ landscaping activities. In addition, the cable trenches were excavated to a shallower depth than the pits, reducing the likelihood of reaching undisturbed stratigraphy.

8.0 The Finds

A small quantity of finds was recovered from the site. The assemblage consisted of post-medieval pottery, ceramic tile, glass, clay pipe, and a stopper from a bottle. The assemblage was fragmentary, although individual fragments were largely unabraded. The assemblage poses no long-term storage problems, and should be deposited with the paper archive at the earliest possible opportunity.

8.1 The Pottery by Stephanie Rátkai

In the main, the ceramic assemblage consisted of pottery sherds likely to have been deposited within the last two hundred years. There were one or two exceptions to this. There were two yellow ware sherds dating from the late 16th-early 18th centuries together with an iron-poor coarseware handle (Cable Trench 3) which is likely to be of 17th century date. Two mottled ware sherds (1005, Pit 30) date from the later 17th-mid 18th centuries. They were found with a light bodied yellow glazed sherd. Unfortunately, this sherd was very small and it was not possible to determine whether it was post-medieval yellow ware (late 16th-early 18th centuries) or a small piece of Cane ware (19th century).

Spot Dating and Catalogue

Cable Trench 1(1007) mid-late 19th c 4 x blue transfer printed ware 1 x grey transfer printed ware 1 x green transfer printed ware 3 x utilitarian whiteware 1 x ?creamware 1 x ?Cane ware 1 x bone china 1 x brown stoneware 1 x stoneware bottle Cable Trench 1 (1008) 19th c 5 x Coarseware 12 x blue transfer printed ware 2 x industrial slipware 1 x ?bone china 2 x brown stoneware 1 x utilitarian whiteware $19^{th} c$ Cable Trench 2 2 x coarseware 1 x pearlware Cable Trench 3 19th c 1 x blue transfer printed ware 2 x coarseware 1 x industrial slipware 2 x yellow ware (late 16th-early 18th c) Cable Trench 4 19^{th} c 4 x ?Cane ware 2 x ?lustre ware 1 x flowerpot Pit 30 (1005) late 17th-early 18th c or 19th c 2 x mottled ware 1 x yellow ware (possibly Cane ware) Pit 31 later 18th-19th c 1 x coarseware

8.2 Other Finds by Erica Macey

Other finds from the site included 17 small fragments of ceramic tile. The fragments were all quite small, the largest being 70mm wide, and no diagnostic or datable fragments were recovered, although the group is of post-medieval appearance. The fabric of all but one of the fragments is uniformly dense and hard-fired, with only slight variations in colour. The other fragment (Pit 31) is in a similar fabric to that seen in engineering bricks, and is likely to be from a floor tile.

A small quantity of glass was also recovered from the site. The assemblage is dated to the early 20th century (R. Bracken, pers. comm.), and consists of four fragments of green bottle glass, two fragments of brown beer bottle glass, a neck of a small blue glass bottle and a base fragment from a clear glass bottle. The most interesting fragment is the largest fragment of green bottle glass (Cable Trench 4), which shows part of the name of the producer of the liquid in the bottle - (W?)ADDINGTON & S(ON?) MAKER and part of a possible place name - MEXBOR.

The rest of the assemblage consists of 10 small pieces of clay pipe stem and the stopper from a mid-20th century beer bottle (Cable Trench 4) which came from Ansell's Brewery Ltd, Birmingham, and showed the company's AAA Trade Mark.

9.0 Discussion

No clear evidence was found of archaeological features or deposits associated with the medieval village green, probably due to the small size of the pits, the shallow depth of the associated trenches, disturbance by modern service trenches and modern landscaping.

The earliest datable context recorded was a probable cobbled surface: a reddish-brown clay layer (1006) containing cobbles but no other finds, which was located in Pit 30/ Cable Trench 13, immediately to the south of the St. Nicolas churchyard. Probable cobbled surface 1006 was sealed by a layer (1005), of possible 17^{th} - 18^{th} century date, which provides a terminus ante quem for the probable cobbled surface 1006, assuming there has been no disturbance. A yellow glazed pottery sherd found with two mottled ware sherds, dating from the later 17^{th} -mid 18^{th} centuries, recovered from the layer 1005, is either of late 16^{th} -early 18^{th} century date or possibly an intrusive 19^{th} century sherd. The yellow ware sherd was very small and it was not possible to determine which of these periods it dated to (see Rátkai above). It is possible that this cobbled surface extended further south as similar cobbles were recorded in context 1002, Cable Trench 12, although they were not insitu and were probably redeposited.

The contexts recorded in other lampost pits and cable trenches were of probable later 18th-19th century/ modern date or were undated.

10.0 Acknowledgements

The project was sponsored by Birmingham City Council and was carried out by Robert Bracken, John Halsted, and Josh Williams of Birmingham Archaeology. The

report was written by Robert Bracken and edited by Laurence Jones who also managed the project. Illustrations were prepared by John Halsted and Nigel Dodds.

11.0 References

- Birmingham Archaeology 2003, The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham. Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Observation and Recording.
- Dyer, C. 1992 The hidden trade of the middle ages: evidence from the west midlands of England, *J Hist Geogr* 18, 2, 48
- Jones, L. and Ratkai, S. with Ellis, P. 2000 Excavations at No 15, The Green, Kings Norton, 1992, TBWAS 2000, Vol 104, 101-121
- Toumlin Smith, L. (ed) 1964 The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543, Vol 2, London

APPENDIX

Table 1 – Summary description and finds quantification: lamppost pits

Pit No.	Description of context	Depth of layer (m)	Finds quantification	Spot- date
1	Topsoil	0-0.40	_	M - 3
	Brick rubble	0.40-0.60	_	Modern
	Buried topsoil	0.60-0.80		Post-medieval
	Brick (not structural)	0.80-0.90	-	Post-medieval
	Natural	0.90-1.00		Post-medieval
2	Paving	0-0.05	_ -	
_	Sand	0.05-0.10	-	Modern
	Hardcore		-	Modern
	Natural	0.10-0.20	-	Modern
3	Tarmac	0.20-1.00		
	Hardcore	0-0.05	-	Modern
	Brick rubble	0.05-0.20	-	Modern
	I	0.20-0.50	-	19 th C- modern
	Drain Pipe	0.50-0.80	-	19 th C- modern
4	Natural	0.80-1.00	-	
4	Topsoil	0-0.60	-	Modern
	Natural	0.60-1.00	<u> - </u>	
5	Tarmac	0-0.10	-	Modern
	Brick rubble	0.10-0.30	_	19 th C- modern
	Buried topsoil	0.30-0.80] -	19 th C- modern
	Brick (not structural)	0.80-0.90	-	19 th C- modern
	Natural	0.90-1.00	_	17 C- modern
6	Tarmac	0-0.05	-	Modern
	Brick rubble	0.05-0.15	_	19 th C- modern
	Orange clay	0.15-0.40		19 C- modern 19 th C- modern
	Brick wall (F100), aligned	0.40-0.70	_	19 C- modern
	E-W	31,0 31,0		19 C
	Natural	0.70-1.00		
7	Tarmac	0-0.05	-	
	Hardcore	0.05-0.10	_	Modern
	Pipe trench	0.10-0.40		Modern
	Natural	0.40-1.00	-	Modern
}	Tarmac	0-0.10		
	Hardcore	0.10-0.30	1 -	Modern
	Natural	0.10-0.30	_	Modern
)	Tarmac		-	
	Hardcore	0-0.10	-	Modern
	Natural	0.10-0.30	-	Modern
0	Paving	0.30-1.00	-	
J	Hardcore	0-0.20	-	Modern
	Natural	0.20-0.30	-	Modern
1	Paving	0.30-1.00	-	
1	Hardcore	0-0.20	-	Modern
		0.20-0.30	-	Modern
	Natural (1000)	0.30-1.00	_	
2	Tarmac (1000)	0-0.10	-	Modern
	Dirty orange clay, brick,	0.10-0.50	1 x tile	Post-medieval
	tile and cobbles (1002)	i		201 11101010141
	Dirty orange clay	0.50-1.00	-	
	(redeposited natural?)			
	(1003)			
3	Tarmac	0-0.18	-	Modern
	Brown silty clay, brick	0.18-0.98	2 x tile	Post-medieval
	and tile fragments			rost-medieval
4	Mixed topsoil and brick	0-0.80	_	

	rubble	T		
	Natural	0.80-1.00		
15	Tarmac	0-0.10	-	
	Mixed topsoil and brick	0-0.10	-	Modern
	rubble		-	Post-medieva
	Natural	0.50-1.00	-	
16				
10	Topsoil	0-0.05	-	Modern
	Concrete	0.05-0.35	-	Modern
	Natural	0.35-1.00	-	1.1040111
17	Topsoil	0-0.70	-	Modern
	Natural	0.70-1.00	•	Modelii
18	Concrete	0-0.40		34 1
	Natural	0.40-1.00		Modern
19	Concrete	0-0.40	_	
	Natural	1		Modern
20	Sand	0.40-1.00	-	
20	Hardcore	0-0.10	-	Modern
	1	0.10-0.20	-	Modern
	Mixed topsoil and brick	0.20-0.40	-	
	rubble	:	-	
	Natural	0.40-1.00	-	1
21	Sand	0-0.10	-	Modern
	Hardcore	0.10-0.20		
	Mixed topsoil and brick	0.20-0.80	_	Modern
	rubble	0.20 0.00		19 th C- modern
	Natural	0.80-1.00	_	
22	Sand	0-0.10	-	
	Hardcore		-	Modern
		0.10-0.20	-	Modern
	Mixed topsoil and brick rubble	0.20-0.40	-	19 th C- modern
	1		-	
	Natural	0.40-1.00		
23	Paving slabs	0-0.05	-	Modern
	Hardcore	0.05 - 0.10	-	Modern
	Mixed topsoil	0.10 - 1.00	-	Wiodelli
24	Paving slabs	0-0.20		Modern
	Mixed topsoil	0.20-1.00	4 x tile	
25	Paving slabs	0-0.20	- A dilo	Modern
	Mixed topsoil	0.20-1.00	_	Modern
26	Paving Slabs	0-0.20		Modern
	Mixed topsoil		-	Modern
	Natural	0.20-0.60	-	Modern
27		0.60-1.00		
. 1	Paving Slabs	0-0.20	-	Modern
	Hardcore	0.20-0.30	-	Modern
	Mixed topsoil	0.30-1.00	_	
8	Tarmac	0-0.10	-	Modern
	Brick rubble	0.10-0.30	-	19 th C- modern
	Natural	0.30-1.00	-	13 C- modern
9	Tarmac	0-0.20	_	3.5.1
	Brick rubble	0.20-0.30		Modern
	Sand	0.30-0.40	-	19 th C- modern
	Natural	0.30-0.40	-	
0	4.5.		-	
J	1 - 1 1	0-0.12	-	Modern
		0.12-0.24	-	Modern
	Silty clay (1005)	0.24-0.30	2 x post-medieval mottled ware, 1	17 th -early 18 th
			x yellow ware (possibly Cane	or 19 th century
			ware), 1x clay pipe stem and 1x	or 15 contains
			tile	
		0.30-0.36		
	cobbles (1006)	-		
	1 = =	0.36-1.00		

31	Topsoil subsoil	0-0.30 0.30-1.00	- 1 x coarseware	Later 18 th -19 th
32	Concrete Tarmac	0-0.08 0.08-0.26	-	century Modern Modern
	Silty clay	0.26-0.40		Wiodein
33	Not monitored		-	

Table 2 - Summary description and finds quantification: cable trenches

Trench No.	Size of Trench width denth (m)	(length,	Description of Layer	Depth (m)	Finds quantification	Spot- date
1	29.00 x 0.25 x 0.36		Topsoil (1007)	0-0.17	4 x blue transfer printed ware, 1 x grey transfer printed ware, 1 x green transfer printed ware, 3 x utilizarian	mid-late 19th century
			Brick rubble (1008)	0.17-0.36	whiteware, 1 x?creamware, 1 x?Cane ware, 1 x bone china, 1 x brown stoneware 1 x stoneware bottle, 2 x bottle glass and 1 x clay pipe stem 5 x Coarseware, 12 x blue transfer printed ware, 2 x industrial slipware 1 x?bone china, 2 x brown stoneware	19 th century
					I x utilitarian whiteware, 4 x bottle glass, 3 x clay pipe stem and 4 x tile	
7	7.90 × 0.25 × 0.47		Topsoil Brick rubble Natural	0-0.20 0.20-0.40 0.40-0.47	2 x coarseware, 1 x pearlware, 1 x bottle glass and 1 x tile	19 th century
m	14.00 x0.25 x 0.49		Topsoil Brick rubble, coal and ash	0.18-0.37	1 x blue transfer printed ware, 2 x coarseware, 1 x industrial slipware, 2 x yellow ware (late 16th-early 18 th century). 1 x hottle olass and 5 x clays	19 th century
			Natural	0.37-0.49	pipe	
4	15.00 x 0.25 x 0.50		Topsoil Brick rubble, coal and ash	0-0.20	4 x ?Cane ware, 2 x ?lustre ware, 1 x flowerpot, 1 x bottle glass, 1x bottle stopper and 1 x tile	Modern 19 th century
ro .	13.0 × 0.25 × 0.24		Tarmac Hardcore	0.38-0.50 0-0.10 0.10-0.17		Modern Modern

		Dirty orange clay (redeposited 0.17-0.24	0.17-0.24	1	
		natural?)			
	$25.00 \times 0.25 \times 0.42$	Tarmac	0-0.07	I.	Modern
		Hardcore	0.07-0.32		Modern
		Durty orange clay (redeposited		1	1100001
	1 20 0 00 00 00	natural?)			
	$1.20 \times 0.90 \times 0.80$	Tarmac	0-0.10		Modern
		Brick rubble	0.10-0.30	1	19 th century, modern
		Buried topsoil and brick	0.30-0.50	r	17 Correan y - INDUCTIL
	$1.20 \times 0.90 \times 0.60$	Таттас	0-0.10		Modern
		Hardcore	0.10-0.30	1	Modern
		Natural	0.30-0.60	ı	INIONOLI
	$1.00 \times 1.00 \times 0.70$	Tarmac	0-0.10		Modern
		Hardcore	0.10-0.30	ı	Modern
	6.0	Natural	0.30-0.70	1	
	$1.10 \times 1.00 \times 0.70$	Таттас	0-0.20		Modern
		Hardcore	0.20-0.30		Modern
\neg		Natural	0.30-0.70	1	
	$1.00 \times 1.00 \times 0.70$	Paving	0-0.20		Модет
		Hardcore	0.20-0.30	ı	Modern
_		Natural	0.30-0.70		
	$1.00 \times 1.00 \times 0.70$	Paving	0-0.20		Modern
		Hardcore	0.20-0.30	ı	Modern
-+		Natural	0.30-0.70	1	
	0.78 x 0.80x 0.36m	Tarmac (1001)	0-0.12	1	Modern
		Tarmac/ hardcore (1004)	0.12-0.24	1	Modern
		Silty clay (1005)	0.24-0.30	ı	17 th -early 18 th or 19 th
		Reddish-brown clay and cobbles	0.30-0.36	1	century
\dashv		(1000)			

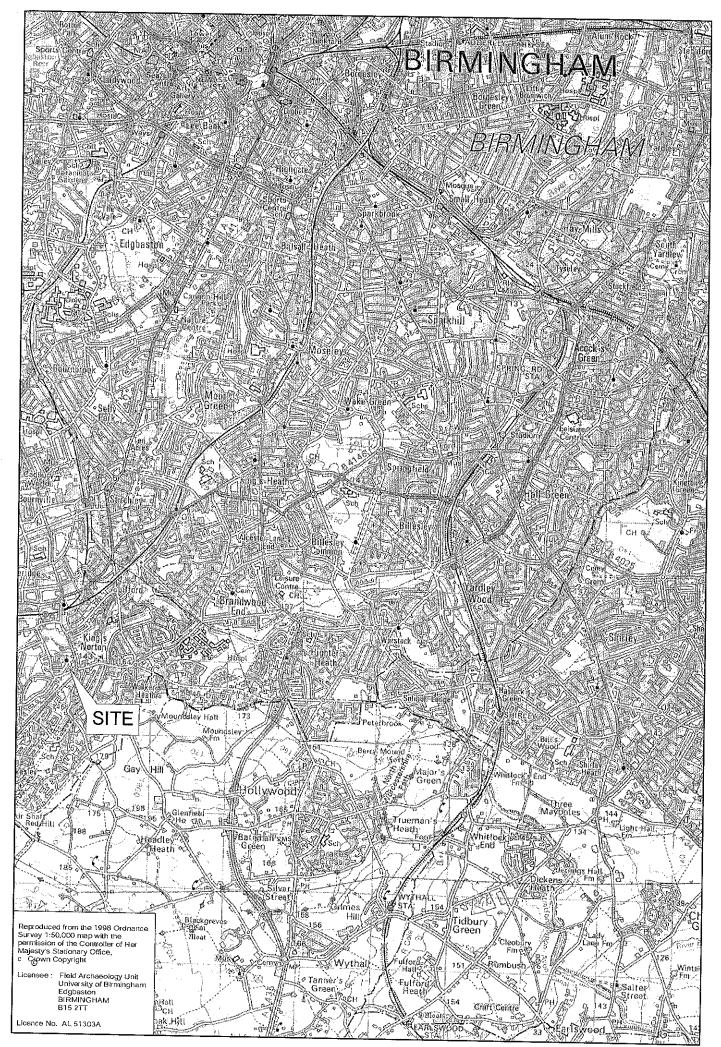


Fig.1

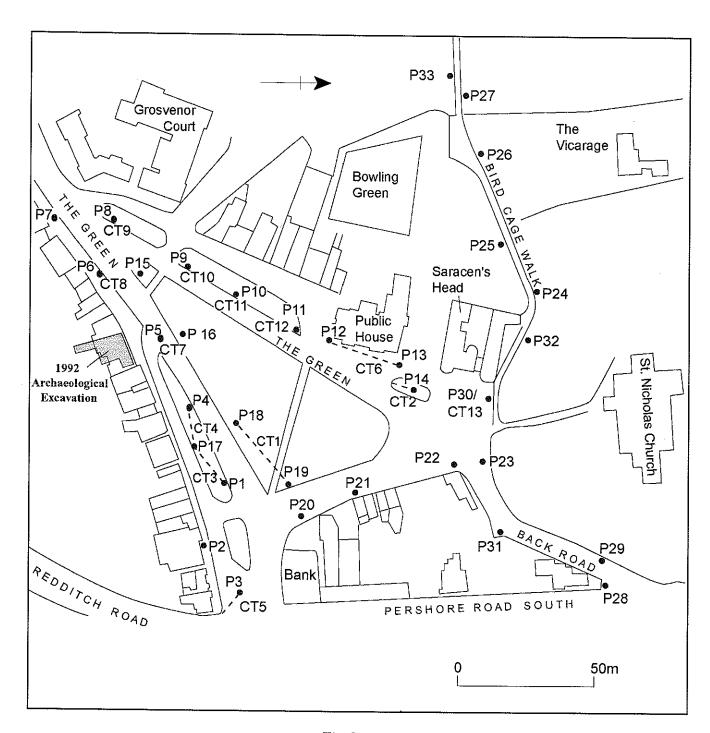


Fig.2

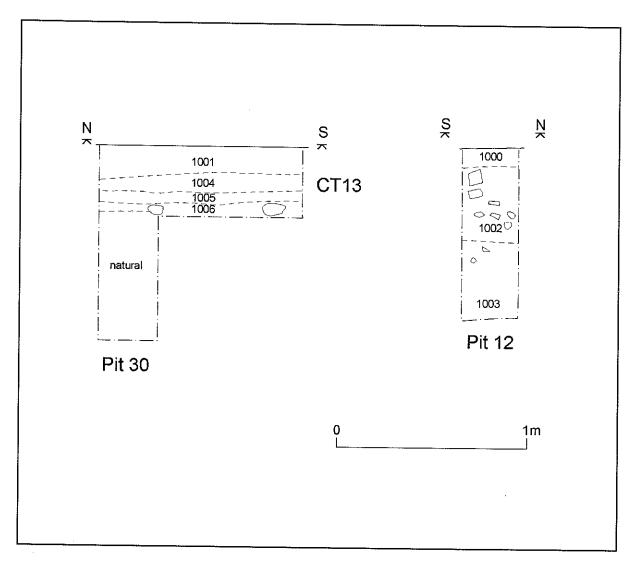


Fig.3