

**TIPTON AND COSELEY
BULDING SOCIETY,
70 OWEN STREET, TIPTON:**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION. 2006**

Checked by

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Brief for archaeological evaluation. 70 Owen Street, Tipton. Sandwell MBC, January 2006

*Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation. 2006.
Tipton and Coseley Building Society, 70 Owen Street, Tipton, Sandwell.*

SUMMARY

In May 2006, Birmingham Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation, on behalf of Tipton and Coseley Building Society, in the car park to the rear of their existing offices at 70 Owen Street, Tipton (NGR SO 954 823). The evaluation was required in order to comply with a condition of planning permission for an extension to the current office building. Three trial trenches were excavated within the car park in order to assess the potential for the survival of archaeological features or artefacts associated with the former medieval settlement of Tipton Green and subsequent post-medieval development. The trenches were located in order to assess the survival, character and depth of any archaeological remains across the site.

No evidence of medieval settlement or associated activity was recorded during the evaluation. A deep levelling layer, probably dating to the later 19th century and comprising clinker, ashy silt and associated debris overlay the natural clay subsoil. Above this layer the remains of brick-paved yard surfaces and retaining walls were recorded, again dating to the late 19th century. This was identified on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map. It is likely that evidence of earlier settlement activity may have been disturbed or removed by construction in the later post-medieval period though features may survive in part where the natural subsoil has not been truncated significantly below the more recent levelling layers.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by Building Design Practice on behalf of Tipton and Coseley Building Society to undertake a programme of trial trenching ahead of office extension work at 70 Owen Street, Tipton (Planning Application Number DC/05/45331; hereafter referred to as the site).

This report outlines the results of a field evaluation carried out in May 2006 and has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (IFA 2001). The evaluation conformed to a brief produced by Sandwell Borough Council and was guided by a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2006), approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990).

1.2 Location and geology

The site is located to the rear of the Tipton and Coseley Building Society, 70 Owen Street, off the main High Street of Tipton and is centred on NGR SO 954 823 (Fig. 1).

The present character of the site comprises a surface car park in which the land slopes gently towards the southeast. The Building Society fronts onto Owen Street, whilst the site is located to the rear adjacent to Old Cross Street and Coppice Street. To the northwest is a modern housing estate, to the southwest and southeast are car parks associated with the Owen Street frontages.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

No archaeological evidence dating to the Prehistoric or Romano-British periods has been identified within Tipton. The earliest genuine references date to the later medieval period, although there is a reference to Tibbintone in Domesday, which is probably Tibbington, located to the north of Tipton itself. There is also a possible moated manor house (SMR 6262) which may lie 1.5km to the southwest of Owen Street, but no definite date exists for it. The only clear reference to Tipton at this time is in association with the priory at Sandwell which held land there that was lost when the priory was suppressed in 1524 (VCH Vol 3:219). There is little more information about Tipton until the Civil war, when in 1644 the battle of Tipton Green was fought. Lord Denbigh led Cromwell's army against the Royalists and was defeated. The battle site lies c.1.5km to the northwest of the site of this archaeological evaluation.

In 1772 the Birmingham and Wolverhampton canal and successive other waterways opened up Tipton, a rich source of coal and limestone to the larger trade network of the Black Country. The town prospered and grew quickly during the industrial revolution and evidence of earlier

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occupation would have been removed to make way for buildings to house the coal mining community. The Tithe map of 1847 shows Tipton to be well established and the site to be very heavily developed, with buildings described predominantly as houses with yards (Fig. 3). These buildings survive at least until the late 1930s, at which time large scale demolition commences. This clearance begins to the North of the site and by the late 1980s there are only two houses remaining, fronting onto Owen Street (Fig. 8).

The current building fronting onto Owen Street, the Tipton and Coseley Building Society, was built in the 1990s and the site itself became a car park. The land to the north was given over to a residential housing estate and some of the buildings along Owen Street were demolished during the development of the new town centre, built during a new wave of investment and growth within this part of Black Country.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principle aim of the evaluation was to determine the character, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.

More specific aims were:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- To determine the nature, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To provide further insight on the origins and development of Tipton from the medieval period to the present day.
- To contribute to the existing corpus of academic knowledge.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Fieldwork

The proposed development area covers approximately 416m². Three trenches were excavated across the site totalling 20.8m² (two measuring 5.0m x 1.6m and one measuring 3.0m x 1.6m), which provided a 5% sample of the total area (Fig. 2).

Since no features of specific archaeological interest were identified during the map regression, the evaluation trenches were located in order to provide a comprehensive coverage within the footprint of the proposed development, such that the nature and character of the underlying natural and archaeological stratigraphy could be recorded.

All topsoil and modern overburden was removed using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision, down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon or the subsoil. Subsequent cleaning and excavation was by hand.

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All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50, and sections were drawn through all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:10. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context and feature cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using monochrome, digital and colour slide photography.

The full site archive includes all artefactual and ecofactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive has been prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). Finds and the paper archive will be deposited with Wednesbury Museum subject to permission from the landowner.

5 RESULTS

This section provides a summary narrative of the results arranged in trench order.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the western part of the proposed development area, nearest the current office building. The upper horizon of natural clay subsoil began at 139.66m AOD, almost 2.0m below the modern tarmac surface. Immediately above the natural subsoil were successive layers of clinker and grey ash material measuring 0.50m in depth [**1007-1010**]. Some sherds of 18th century yellow-glaze pottery was retrieved from one of these layers [**1008**].

A concrete floor [**1006**], associated with a brick wall [**1005**] lay above these clinker layers. The wall was orientated northeast - southwest and was recorded in the northeast facing section of the trench. Both the wall and the concrete floor were overlain by demolition debris [**1003**], from which a strip of small bullet casings was retrieved. This demolition layer was cut by an east - west aligned service trench [**1002**], which in turn was sealed by a layer of hardcore and tarmac [**1001** and **1000**].

Trench 2

Trench 2 was of similar character to Trench 1. The natural subsoil began at 139.44m AOD. Overlying it was a layer of grey silt [**2008**] that contained a 20th century beer bottle. This layer was cut by two brick wall footings, one orientated northwest - southeast [**2008**] and the other orientated east - west [**2012**]. These walls were overlain by two layers of clinker and rubble [**2007** and **2006**], which in turn were overlain by a concrete floor [**2005**], separated from an exterior yard surface [**2003**] by brick a wall [**2004**].

A demolition deposit 0.22m thick [**2002**] overlay these surfaces and floors. It was comprised rubble and building debris. This deposit was overlain by the hardcore and tarmac surface of the modern car-park [**2001** and **2000**].

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located to the northeast of Trench 2 at the eastern extreme of the proposed development area. The natural subsoil was reached at 139.18m AOD, the trench proving to be

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the deepest of the three. A 1.0m thick layer of silty clinker [3007], directly overlay the natural subsoil and was cut by a brick wall [3005], which due to its depth could well have been a retaining wall for a former building. A brick yard surface [3004/ 3003] lay parallel to the wall and may be the surviving element of an alley. A demolition deposit [3002] 0.90m deep overlay this surface. This was in turn overlain by the hardcore and tarmac surface of the car-park [3001 and 3000].

6 THE FINDS

6.1 The Pottery

Four sherds of manganese-mottled ware and one sherd of yellow-glazed pottery were retrieved from layer **1008** in Trench 1. These probably date from the late 17th- early 18th century and may be associated with occupation on or close to the site during this period, though no physical evidence of this was excavated.

6.2 Other finds

A string of small bullets was retrieved from demolition layer **1003** in Trench 1. The star-like crimp on the end of the case suggests that they were only filled with priming powder. They are of a type called *Hilti* and derive from a nail gun cartridge strip.

A green glass bottle was retrieved from layer **2008** and although the bottle had no stamp it is likely to be a beer bottle, probably dating to the late 19th century. Two bottles were also retrieved from demolition deposit **3002** in Trench 3, both are of clear glass and are complete. The larger of the two is a Brylcreem jar and the other is likely to be a sauce bottle. Both are probably early 20th century.

7 DISCUSSION

The evaluation did not expose any evidence to indicate medieval occupation or activity at Tipton. The evaluation did demonstrate however, that the site has been developed continuously in the later post-medieval period to the point that any possible traces of earlier periods are likely to have been destroyed. The site is situated on a fairly steep slope which falls away to the southeast. This may have influenced the deposition of the clinker and ash levelling layers which were encountered in each trench, in all likelihood the sort of material associated with the industrial processes that characterised the region and the Black Country as a whole in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Several brick floor surfaces were encountered along with associated walls, which would have formed part of the houses and yards that appear on the 1847 tithe map (Fig. 3). These appear to have gradually been demolished from 1930 onwards, until the site was cleared for the building society in the 1990s.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Building Design Practice on behalf of the Tipton and Coseley Building Society. Thanks are due to Bruce Jones of Building Design Practice for his co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also go to Graham Eyre-Morgan and Charlotte Lewis, who monitored the project on behalf of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. Mary Duncan and Kristina Krawiec, who produced the written report, undertook fieldwork on site.

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The report was illustrated by Bryony Ryder and edited by Mark Hewson who also managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

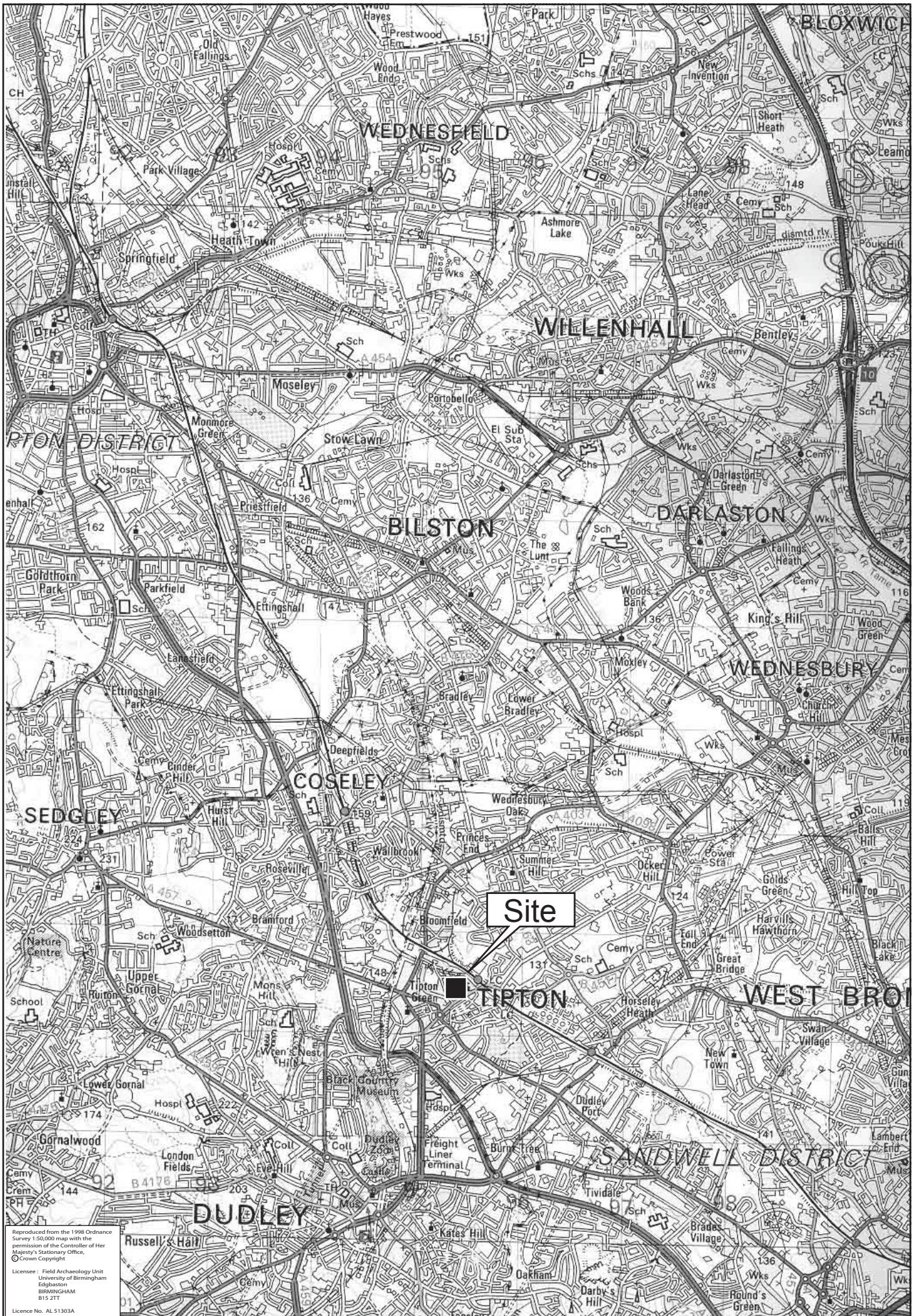
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Fig.1

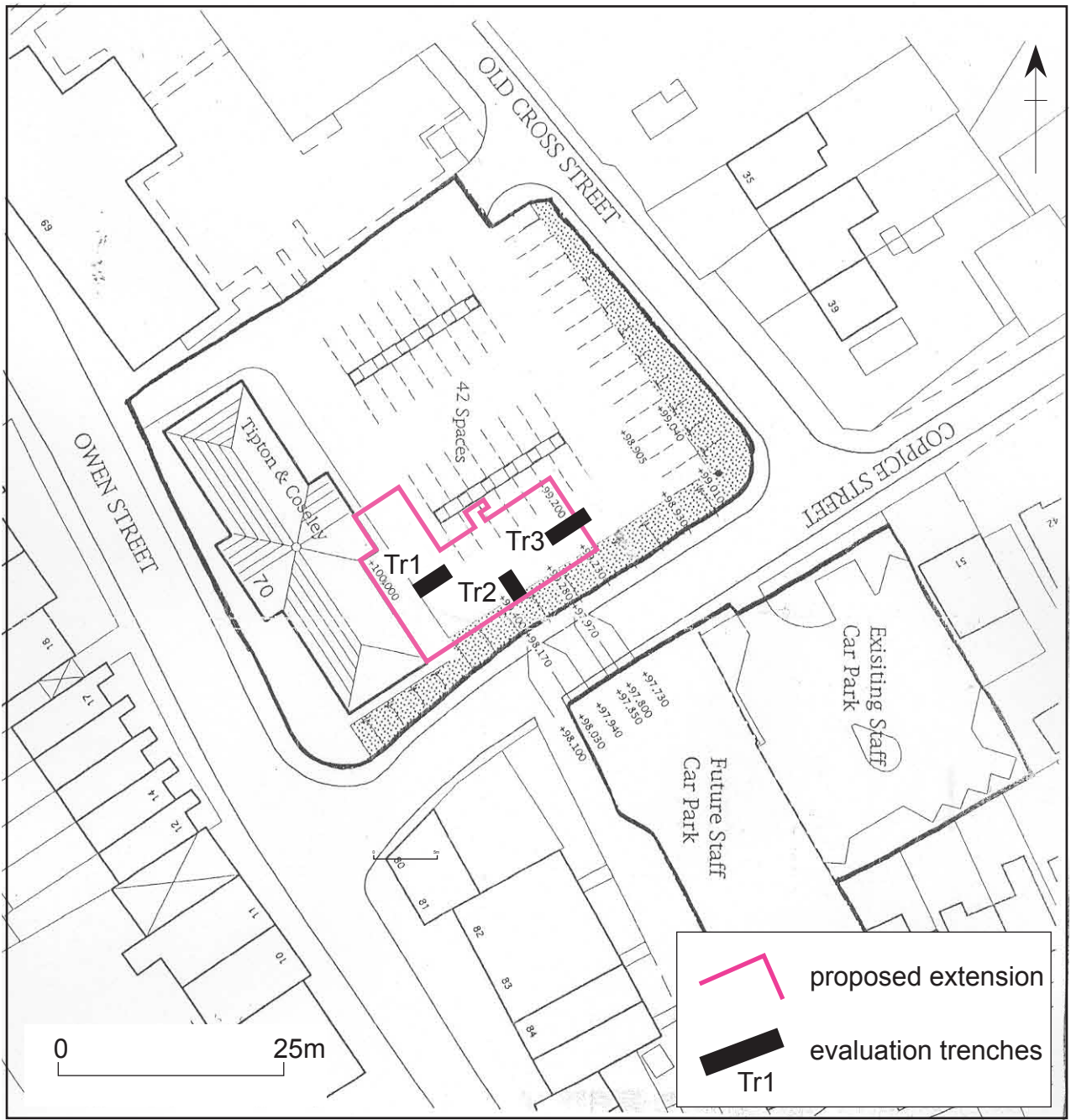


Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4

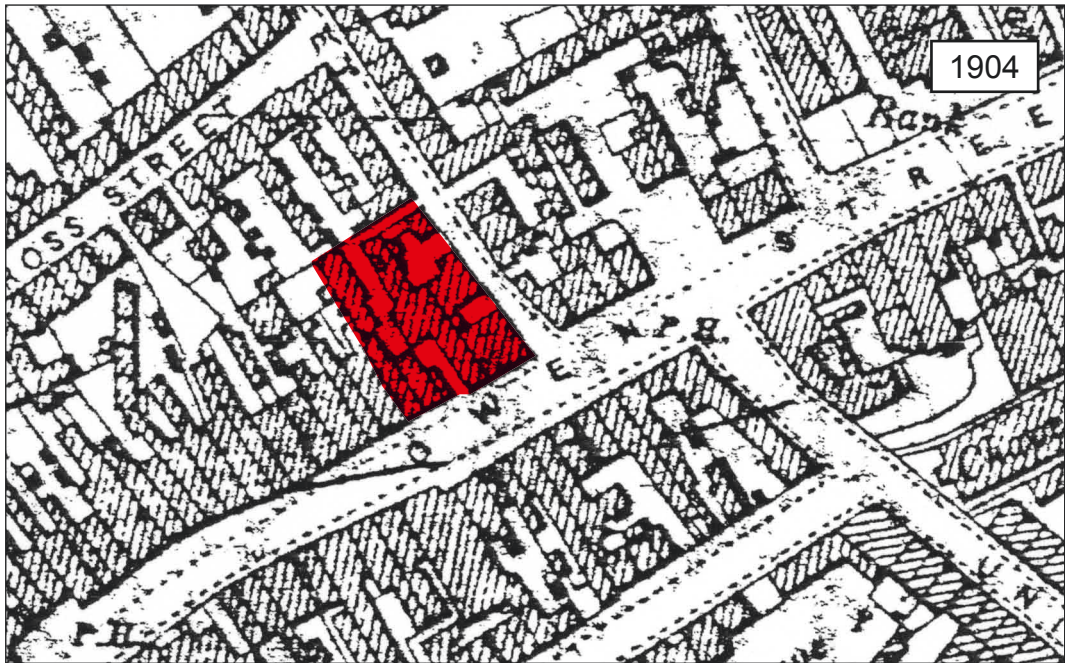


Fig.5



Fig.6

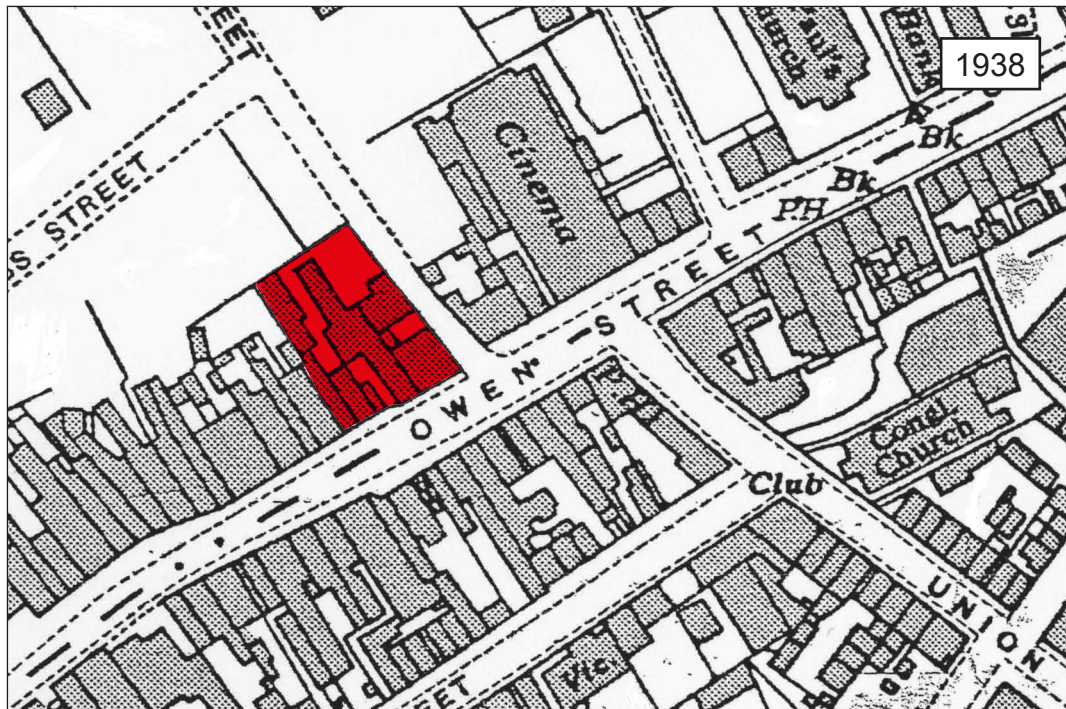


Fig.7

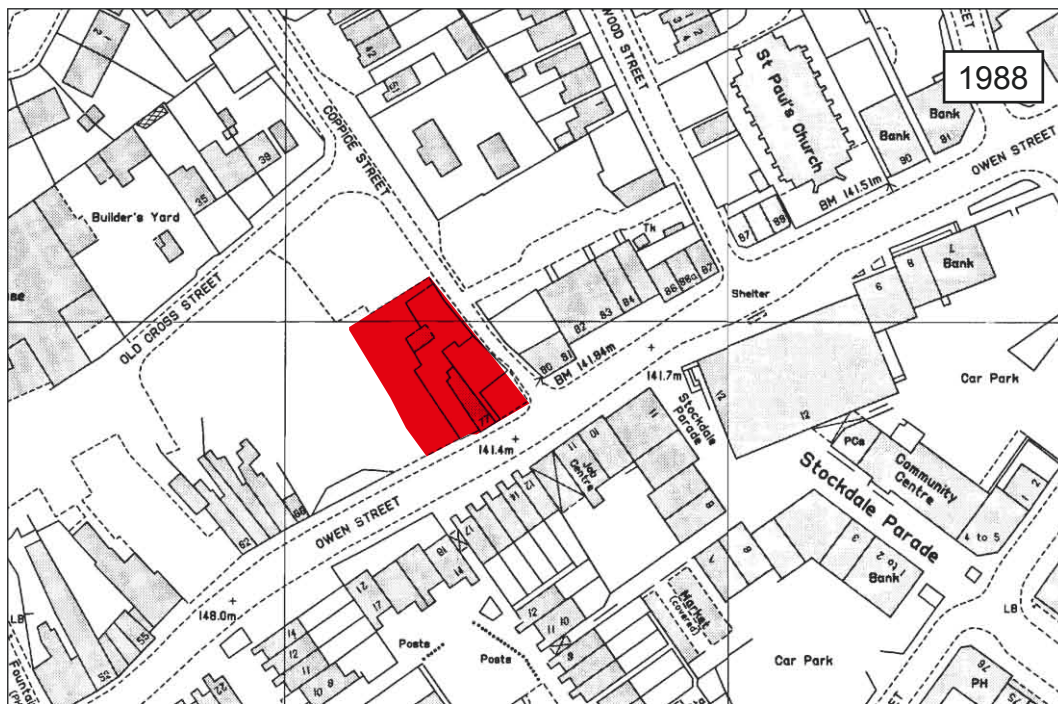


Fig.8

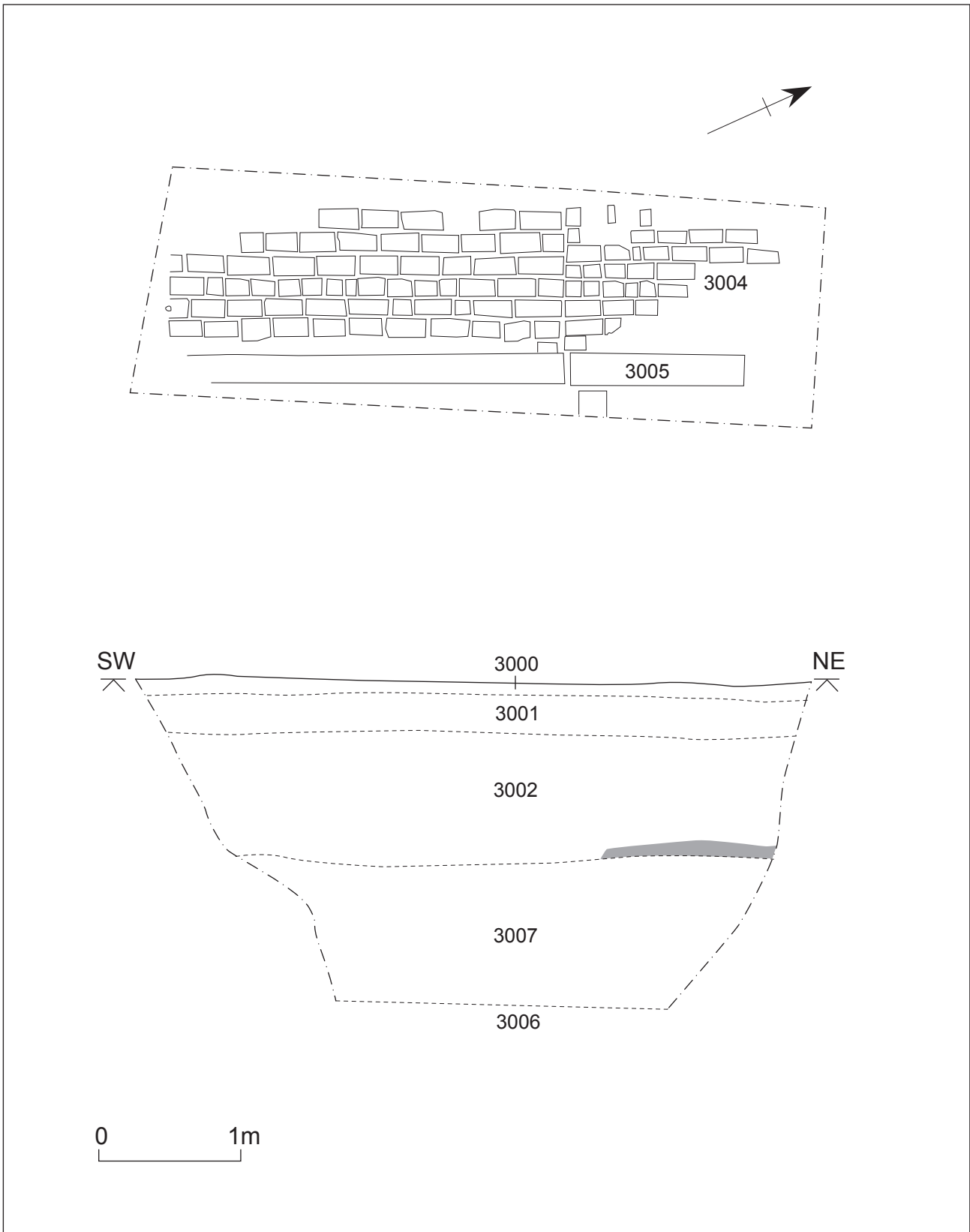


Fig.9



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4