

# birmingham archaeology

The Saracen's Head,  
Kings Norton, Birmingham

Archaeological Excavation, 2006

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**THE SARACENS HEAD, KINGS NORTON, BIRMINGHAM**

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## SUMMARY

*Due to the proposed redevelopment and restoration of the Saracen's Head, 81 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham (SP0 0498 7876; SMR PRN 01237 and 20767) archaeological excavation was required prior to the commencement of the development (planning application number S/06452/05/FUL). Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by Kings Norton Parochial Church Council to carry out the first phase of these excavations in August-October 2006.*

*Documentary evidence and an archaeological evaluation carried out prior to the excavation indicated that there was a high likelihood for the survival of significant archaeological deposits within the entire development area. The excavation described in this report comprised three areas immediately adjacent to the standing buildings of the Saracen's Head complex including the courtyard, the entrance passage from The Green to the courtyard, and a small area on the eastern frontage of the north range.*

*The earliest archaeological deposits dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the excavation demonstrated that at least two timber structures existed on the site in this period. The remains included, towards the western end of the courtyard, a 3m wide building of earth-fast post construction of which a 4.5m length was located within the excavation area, and which appeared to have extended further to the south, into the area occupied by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century south range. This building was associated with the remnants of two sill beam slots and a stone plinth apparently indicating a 13<sup>th</sup>-century timber-framed structure. It is probable that these are the remains of domestic structures. There was evidence of associated domestic cooking activities of the same date.*

*Deposits edging The Green at the east end of the site suggest that this area, potentially adjacent to a medieval market place on The Green and immediately to the south of the church of St. Nicolas, which also has medieval origins, was well paved with a pebble surface, the full extent of which could not, however, be confirmed.*

*It seems that parts of the site, at least, were abandoned and left vacant after the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a tentative conclusion that corresponds with the results of excavations on the southern side of The Green carried out in 1992, which also indicated a period of abandonment at much the same time. There is some sign of reoccupation in the ? century, prior to the construction of the Saracen's Head at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century.*

*The remains of a cobbled surface stratified above the 13<sup>th</sup>-century deposits and dated to the late 15<sup>th</sup>/early 16<sup>th</sup> century, seems to have been contemporary with the late medieval timber-framed buildings that still occupy the site. This courtyard surface continued in use into the 17<sup>th</sup> century before being replaced. Modifications to the building, for which archaeological evidence was recovered include the construction of a brick bay on the southern side of the north range.*

## THE SARACENS HEAD, KINGS NORTON, BIRMINGHAM

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS, 2006

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

In the Autumn of 2006 Birmingham Archaeology carried out a programme of archaeological excavation as a condition of planning consent (planning application number S/06452/05/FUL) for the restoration and redevelopment of The Saracen's Head, Kings Norton, Birmingham (NGR SP0 0498 7876; SMR PRN 01237 and 20767) which, with the nearby Old Grammar School, was the 2004 winner of the BBC Television 'Restoration' programme. The decision to excavate had been informed by earlier phases of documentary research (Hislop and Hewitson 2005) and evaluation (Duncan 2005), which had identified the potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains dating from the earliest occupation of the site.

This report outlines the results of the first phase of archaeological excavations carried out in Autumn 2006, and has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* (IFA 2001).

The excavation conformed to a brief produced by Birmingham City Council (Appendix I), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2006) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation, and carried out in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990).

#### 1.1 Location and geology

The Saracen's Head is located at 81 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham, being centred on NGR SP 0498 7876 (Fig.1); it occupies a position on the west side of the Green immediately south of the medieval church of St Nicolas, in the historic centre of the former village, which now falls within the boundaries of the city of Birmingham.

The underlying geology consists of Mercia Mudstone with overlying glacial tills (Jones and Ratkai 1992 102), which on this site seem to consist of red sandy clay.

The excavation was carried out within the central courtyard, enclosed by the north, south and east ranges, in the entrance passage at the north end of the east range, and in an area immediately in front (east) of the north range (Fig. 2). Prior to excavation, all three areas were covered by a grey brick pavement, which incorporated several drainage covers.

#### 2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Kings Norton is of Anglo-Saxon origin, being recorded in the Domesday Book as one of the outlying estates of Bromsgrove (Jones and Ratkai 1992 102). It is suggested that Bromsgrove and Kings Norton formed a large estate prior to this, placing the site within the boundary of this larger estate (Jones and Ratkai 1992 102). The church of St. Nicolas is medieval, probably Norman, in

origin, with 12<sup>th</sup>-, 13<sup>th</sup>- and 14<sup>th</sup>-century features and a 15<sup>th</sup>-century tower and spire along with extensive 19<sup>th</sup>-century alterations (Pevsner and Wedgwood 1966).

Previous archaeological work from sites around The Green indicates medieval activity centred on The Green from the 12<sup>th</sup>-century onwards (Jones and Ratkai 1992 and Braken 2003). This could suggest a market place focus dating back to this period.

The buildings that comprise the Saracen's Head complex are the north, south and east ranges, and the northwest block (Fig. 2). These structures, with the exception of the south range, which is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick building, are of timber-framed construction, and have been subjected to dendrochronological analysis (Tyers 2003). This suggests a date of winter 1491/2 for the North Range a range of 1485-1507 for the East Range and of 1476-1512 for the Northwest Block (Tyers 2003).

### 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of the excavation were to fully investigate and record the archaeological remains in advance of damage or destruction by the proposed development. Specific questions to pursue were as follows:

- The date and extent of the pebble and cobble surfaces found in the evaluation.
- The date and character of the archaeological remains that predate the pebble and cobble surfaces and therefore provide evidence of activity preceding the 15<sup>th</sup>-century buildings.
- The remains of past environmental conditions
- The remains of past industrial activity, indicated by features or residues.

### 4 METHOD

All areas of the site that could be affected by the restoration and redevelopment works on the Saracen's Head were, or will be subject to archaeological investigations. This first phase of excavation includes the courtyard, the entrance passage leading from The Green to the courtyard, and an area fronting The Green immediately east of the North Range (Fig 2).

Modern overburden was removed using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator 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.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded. Features were planned at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 and sections were drawn through all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. 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, colour slide and digital photography.

Twenty-litre soil samples were taken from datable archaeological features for the recovery of charred plant remains and evidence of industrial activity. The environmental sampling policy followed the guidelines contained in the Birmingham Archaeology Guide to On-Site Environmental Sampling. Recovered finds were cleaned, marked and remedial conservation work was undertaken

as necessary. Treatment of all finds conformed to guidance contained within *A Strategy for the Care and Investigation of Finds* (English Heritage).

The full site archive, which includes all artefactual and/or ecofactual remains recovered from the site, will be 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 the appropriate repository subject to permission from the landowner.

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Introduction

Detailed summaries of the individual deposits are presented in Appendix I and full details are available in the project archive. This report details a summary report of the archaeological deposits excavated around the buildings of the Saracen's Head.

For ease of discussion, site north is taken at slightly to the west of true north, and the below ground archaeology is discussed as though the site were aligned with the cardinal points.

Archaeological deposits were encountered over the majority of the area of excavation, and although heavily truncated by 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century drainage in places, the survival of the archaeological deposits was remarkably good. The principal dated features and deposits were:

- Medieval
- Late Medieval
- Post Medieval

### 5.2 Subsoil (natural)

The natural subsoil (2023) was encountered over the majority of the site. This had a downwards slope towards the east. The top of slope was at 155.3m AOD and base was at 154.45m AOD and consisted of a compact pink sandy clay.

### 5.3 Phase 1: 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Century

The earliest archaeological activity identified on the site dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Deposits of this date were encountered all across the site.

#### Area A (The Frontage) (Fig. 3)

On the west side of Area A, towards the north end of the trench, was a wide, shallow, pit (2120) of sub-circular plan, of which a maximum diameter of 1m survived between later truncation. It had a shallow asymmetrical profile, with a steep edge on the north side and a shallow slope on the south side, and a maximum depth of 0.3m. The fill (2121) consisted of grey silt liberally flecked with charcoal, and contained mid-13<sup>th</sup>- to early 14<sup>th</sup>-century pottery.

A further medieval feature (2146) was located in the northeast corner of the frontage area, but, owing to the confines of the excavation and later truncation, neither its nature nor its extent could be ascertained. The 0.2m x 0.2m section of the southern edge of this feature, which fell within the excavated area, appeared to be linear in plan and aligned east-west. It had a curving profile and was excavated to a depth of 0.16m. It is possible that it represented an early property boundary, but equally it may have been a fragment of a pit.

#### The Entrance Passage (Figs 3 and 5)

Within the entrance passage the archaeology had been severely truncated by recent service trenches, which occupied a wide central section so that the surviving archaeology was confined to two narrow strips on either side of the passage, a situation that presented difficulties in interpretation. A probable linear feature was located at the eastern end of the passage (Figs 3 and 5), only surviving in sections of 0.3m to the north (2161), and 0.2m to the south (2164). The western edge had a long sloping profile and the feature a minimum width of 1.9m, but because the eastern edge was located beyond the excavated area, it was not possible to ascertain its full lateral extent. This feature was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.73m. The earliest fill encountered (2163 to the north and 2165 to the south) consisted of a relatively clean sandy silt from which a sherd of 13<sup>th</sup>-pottery was recovered. The upper fill, which was rich in large stones including lumps of sandstone, contained 13<sup>th</sup>- to 14<sup>th</sup>-century pottery to the north (2162), and 13<sup>th</sup>-century pottery and possibly some 15<sup>th</sup>-century pottery to the south (2155). There was some evidence on the north side of the corridor that the upper fill had been heat affected, an event that related to a sub-circular area of burning (2130) 1-4m in diameter and 0.2m deep, above the western edge of the linear feature (2161). Unfortunately, owing to later truncation, this burning could not be associated with an activity or feature.

Further to the west was a 0.36m wide negative feature (2142) of which a 0.3m length was evident on the north side of the passage. This had a shallow sloping profile and was 0.1m deep. The fill consisted of grey silt, and although no direct dating evidence was obtained the fact that this feature disappeared below the foundations of the north range indicates that it predates its construction. To the west of this, on the south side of the passage, was a similar, 0.5m wide, feature (2172) of which a 0.3m length survived. This also had a shallow sloping profile 0.1m deep, and the fill (2173) also consisted of grey silt. These features probably represent shallow pits or parallel linear gullies.

At the western end of the entrance passage was a pit (2160) associated with burnt deposits; although this feature was truncated by later activity, enough survived to allow a reasonably true appraisal of its character. The pit was 1.8m in diameter, 0.5m deep, and in profile had a flat base, steep sides, and a wide shallow lip around the outer edge (Figs 4 and 5; Plate 2). It was packed with large cobbles (2159) surrounding what were probably the *in situ* remains of a single 13<sup>th</sup>-century pottery vessel, apparently placed rim downwards within the pit. This feature had been truncated by a later drain (2140) from the fill of which large sherds of pottery were retrieved, which probably came from the same vessel. Over this was a deposit of heat affected soil (2158) overlaid by a deposit of cobbles (2188) and covered by a narrow band of charcoal and ash (2189).

#### Area C (The Courtyard)

There was a further area of heat-affected ground towards the centre of the courtyard area (2066 Fig 5; Plate 3), which, owing to later truncation, could not be associated with any particular feature such



as a hearth. However, it was apparent that the area affected was sub-circular in plan about 1.4m in diameter with a depth of 0.1m. Posthole 2058 cut this area as did two of the drains. Although the source of this burning could not be dated directly it must predate posthole 2058, which was found to belong to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Post hole 2058 formed (with 2056 and 2167) part of a northwest-southeast linear arrangement of post holes, regularly spaced at *c.*2m intervals (Figs 4 and 5, Plate 3). Two more post holes (2048 and 2068) were located parallel to this alignment, *c.* 2m to the southwest. No other elements which might have formed part of this structure were identified within the excavated area, although it seems probable that the building extended into the area latterly occupied by the south range. These post holes were circular in plan, between 0.34m and 0.55m in diameter with steep-sided profiles between 0.35m and 0.5m deep. The fills of 2048 (2049), 2056 (2057), 2058 (2059), 2068 (2069) and 2167 (2168), were similar, with all but 2168 showing signs of packing with rounded cobbles. Fill 2049 had a stain of the post visible in the section and 2057 contained evidence of water logging of the post towards the base of the post hole. Pottery was retrieved from three of these features (2057/8) and gave a 13<sup>th</sup> or possibly 14<sup>th</sup>-century date. The majority of the post holes were sealed by the medieval soil (2001, 2024 and 2045, discussed below).

Further structural features were also apparent in the courtyard area (Fig 5). Unlike the postholes these were on the same alignment as the existing late 15<sup>th</sup>-century Saracen's Head structures. Towards the eastern side of the courtyard was a north-south aligned beam slot (2072), a feature that had already been encountered and partially excavated in the evaluation (1012), but that had not been fully understood at the time. The feature had a shallow U-shaped profile, a width of 0.90m, a maximum depth of 0.15m, and a maximum length of 2.3m, although both ends had been truncated by later activity. The primary fill (2074) consisted of compact clay, possibly an indication of the deliberate packing of clay around a timber. Pottery from this primary fill was dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The upper fill consisted of grey silt (2073 numbered 1012 in evaluation) from which a large amount of pottery was retrieved and dated to AD 1250-1310.

An east-west aligned rubble stone plinth (2075) abutted this beam slot on its western side. Owing to later truncation, the full extent of this feature could not be defined, however, it had a shallow U-shaped profile, was 0.70m wide and 0.20m deep, and a maximum length of 1.6m. The primary fill (2076) consisted of rounded cobbles compressed into the natural subsoil, with an upper fill (2018) of degraded roughly broken sandstone blocks. Pottery from this feature dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Also from this period, immediately to the west of post hole 2048, was a small shallow pit (2026 Fig. 5) 0.27m in diameter and 0.11m deep, filled with grey silt (2027) from which sherds of 13<sup>th</sup>-century pottery were retrieved.

This feature was sealed by a soil or silting layer (2024) remnants of which survived in various places around the courtyard. This was numbered 2000 at the northwest corner of the courtyard, 2024 at the northwest corner, and 2001 on the south side. Survival was patchy, with a maximum depth of 0.1m, and the context consisted of a beige silt with some charcoal rich lenses, for example, 2051 and 2041 (Fig. 5). The survival of this soil in some areas of the site, especially below the later layers (for example the cobbled surface discussed below) was not obvious, and it is possible that 2045 (Fig 4), located to the south of the courtyard, within the line of the south range, was part of this silting event. Pottery dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century was retrieved from all these deposits.

Towards the western end of, and immediately south of, the north range a series of burnt features were cut through this soil (Fig. 5, Plate 4). These included a hearth, which had a halo of burnt soil surrounding it (2041) and although partially truncated it was apparent that this consisted of a square cut (2067) packed with ceramic tiles on edge (2040). Although no direct dating evidence was obtained from the hearth, a pit cutting it (2062) contained 13<sup>th</sup>-century pottery and the heat affected ground surrounding it (2041) also produced 13<sup>th</sup>-century pottery, thereby dating the hearth itself to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

To the west of the hearth was a further burnt feature (2055) which may represent an associated rake-out area, or, conceivably a further hearth, although there was little evidence of *in situ* burning. The feature retained some ceramic tiles placed on edge and packed into its southern side with a deposit of charcoal and ash (2052) overlain by a deposit of heat-affected earth (2053).

Almost immediately to the west of this was a small pit (2046) 0.26m in diameter and 0.06m deep, full of charcoal (2047). Although there was again no dating evidence from this feature it is possible that it was related to the other burnt features in the vicinity. To the east of these features there was further evidence of a heavily burnt deposit, where the southern edge of a negative feature (2080) was evident in an area 0.9m long and 0.3m wide. However, to the east and west it had subsequently been truncated by drainage cuts and the northern extent was masked by the north range which overlay it. Thus, although no dating evidence was encountered, it must predate the north range of AD 1492. This feature also cut the silting layer (2001), and, taking into account the proximity to the hearth 2067, it is very possible that this was related to the more westerly features.

A small pit (2062 Fig. 5), partially exposed at the northern edge of the courtyard, cut hearth 2067. The northern extent of this feature was masked by the north range, which overlay it, but it was roughly square in plan, measured at least 0.28m across, and 0.1m deep, and had steep sides and a flat base. The fill (2063) consisted of brown silt, from which pottery dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century was retrieved.

Towards the southwest corner of the courtyard a pit of rectangular plan (2060) cut post hole 2068 (Fig. 5, Plate 3). Aligned east-west, it was 1.25m long, 0.52m wide, 0.38m deep, and had steep sides and a flat base. The fill of this pit (2061) consisted of large stone cobbles and broken pieces of roof tile within a clay matrix, sealed by a shallow scoop (2028) filled with silt (2027) located directly over the pit, perhaps representing later silting. Pottery retrieved from the feature dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

A circular pit (2082), 0.55m in diameter and 0.1m deep with a shallow gently sloping profile, was located close to the centre of the courtyard (Fig 5). The fill (2083) consisted of grey silt and although it contained no dating evidence, the feature was sealed by a cobbled surface of 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>-century date (discussed below) and must therefore predate this.

#### **5.4 Phase 2: 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Century**

Many of the features identified within the excavation were close in date to the Saracen's Head itself, and it is probable that some of these deposits relate to the construction of the building towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

##### Area A (The Frontage) (Fig 3)

A well constructed 0.2m deep pebbled surface (2122) was encountered with larger cobbles towards the base and small pebbles and pieces of roof tile compacted into the surface (Fig 3, Plate 1). A number of sherds of pottery, probably of 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>-century date, gave a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the surface although no finds were recovered from the top of the feature to indicate when it went out of use. Unfortunately, owing to later activity and the confines of the excavation area, the full extent of this feature could not be established.

Cutting the cobbled surface towards the south end of Area A was a large sub-circular steep-sided, flat-based, posthole or pit (2099), with a maximum diameter of 0.8m, a depth of 0.5m. The fill (2100), which consisted of a mix of grey silt with clay lenses and stones, contained 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>-century pottery. Towards the northern end of the frontage area a probable posthole (2110) was evident. Although this had been severely truncated by later activity, it is probable that it was originally circular in plan with a diameter of 0.4m, a V-shaped profile and a depth of 0.4m. This feature was filled by charcoal flecked grey silt (2109) containing late 15<sup>th</sup> to mid-16<sup>th</sup>-century pottery. Towards the north end of the excavated area were the remains of another probable posthole (2118), with a maximum width of 0.3m and a maximum depth of 0.44m. The fill (2119) consisted of grey silt with evidence of clay packing at the edges, and contained 16<sup>th</sup>-century pottery.

It is possible that two further features on the frontage belong to this phase of activity, although neither has been securely dated. A post hole (2123) in the northern half of the area, which cut a pit dating from the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century (2120), had itself been cut by post hole 2118. It was evident from the surviving southwest edge of 2123 that it had had a maximum width of 0.2m, was 0.18m deep, and had a shallow U-shaped profile. The fill (2124) consisted of silt with pebbles throughout. The northern edge of 2118, which was also apparent, indicated that it had a maximum width of 0.3m, a depth of 0.5m, steep sides and a flat base. The fill (2107) consisted of cobbles and pebbles within a silt and clay matrix.

#### Area B (The Entrance Passage) (Figs 4 and 5; Plate 2)

At the west end of the entrance passage was a stone feature with something of the character of a plinth. The feature was set within a cut or construction trench (2175) at least 2m wide from east to west, a 0.47m length of which had survived on the north side of the passage. Several dressed sandstone blocks (2133) bearing somewhat coarse tooling marks were supported within the cut by sandstone flags and a packing of roof tiles (2174). This feature straddles the line of the east range west wall, and it seems probable it was related to the construction of range. A sherd of pottery from packing material directly above it (2144) dated from the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century and a later intrusion into the feature (2141), which was filled with charcoal (2135) produced 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century pottery. A cut for the footings of the north range was also evident (2143) and partially excavated, the fill (2132) consisting of roof tiles packed into the cut with a charcoal rich silt. Finds from this dated from the late 15<sup>th</sup>-mid 16<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Area C (The Courtyard)

Within the courtyard area was a cobbled surface (Fig 7, Plate 5), the earliest part of which was the 13<sup>th</sup>-century stone plinth (2075) described above, whose upper construct (2018) was incorporated. Otherwise, the earliest date obtained for the construction of the surface came from the interface between the cobbles and the natural subsoil into which they had been pressed (2035), which

produced mainly 15<sup>th</sup>- to 16<sup>th</sup>-century pottery. Much of this metalled surface consisted of well packed rounded cobbles (2029, 2031, 2032), although towards the centre of the courtyard, it was made up of broken pieces of sandstone and roof tile (2003). Pottery from this surface generally dated from the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century, although 2032 produced a convincing 17<sup>th</sup>-century date and probably represents a repair. This surface covered an area of 7.3m x 7m and had a maximum depth of 0.1m. Owing to later truncation, its former extent could not be fully ascertained, but it would seem that it did not extend all the way to the north range, nor all the way to the western boundary of the site, ceasing 5.5m short of the western edge of excavation. It seems probable, however, that it originally continued further to the east, on which side it had been curtailed by later service trenches, and further to the south where it seemed it disappeared beneath the south range.

At the north and west edges of the cobbled surface were two structural features. To the north was an east-west aligned linear feature (2077), the full extent of which could not be ascertained owing to later truncation, but which was at least 5m long, 0.8m wide, had a maximum depth of 0.2m, and a shallow U-shaped profile. The fill (2078) consisted of a distinctive sandy silt with sandstone inclusions throughout, from which 15<sup>th</sup>-century pottery was recovered. Above this, forming part of the cobbled surface, was what appeared to be a gully (2030), constructed of large stone cobbles with a dip in the middle running laterally along the feature.

Extending south for a distance of 2m from the west end of the gully and perpendicular to it was a cobble plinth or foundation (numbered 1026 in the evaluation). It had a maximum width of 0.8m and a maximum depth of 0.15m, and was constructed of large rounded cobbles set in sandy silt (2002 numbered 1008 in evaluation). Stratigraphically, this appeared to overlie 2030. Pottery from 2002 dated from the late 15<sup>th</sup>-mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, although in the evaluation the pottery from 1008 had a wide date range including 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery. It is possible that the later pottery may be related to the demolition date of a structure, rather than the construction. At its south end this footing had been cut by a later brick built foundation (2178, see below).

## 5.5 Phase 3: 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century

### Area A (The Frontage)

Along the north range frontage there seems to have been a focus of pit digging during the post-medieval period (Figs 3 and 4, Plate 1). Stratigraphically, the earliest of these were 2112 and 2108. Again, owing to later truncation and the confines of the excavation area the full extent of these features could not be ascertained, but 2112 had a maximum diameter of 0.9m, a maximum depth of 0.48m, steep edges and a flat base. The fill (2111) consisted of silt with pebbles and clay lenses throughout. Cutting 2112 was a pit (2116) of which only the southwest edge was apparent. It is likely that this was sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 0.6m and a maximum depth of 0.48m with a steep west edge and gently sloping southern edge. The fill of this pit (2117) consisted of large cobbles set in clay. Further to the south, the cobbled surface (2122) was cut by a pit (2084), probably rectangular in plan originally, at least 0.5m long, 0.5m wide and 0.25m deep, with a flat base and steep sides. The fill (2085) consisted of brown silt.

Evidence of modification of the north range was discovered in the remains of the footings for a bay window and an under-building of the jetty (Fig 6, Plate 1). A foundation trench (2089) aligned north-south 2.3m long, 0.4m wide and 0.2m deep contained large square sandstone blocks and a

single course of mortared red bricks. The bay footings (2090) projected to the east of this and consisted of a red brick foundation. Although truncated in places there was evidence of an internal floor surface constructed of quarry tiles (2091).

#### Area C (The Courtyard) (Fig. 7)

It was apparent that by the 17<sup>th</sup> century the courtyard surface had been abandoned. For example the latest date from 2032, the eastern part of the cobbled surface dated lay in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There is no indication of the nature of a replacement surface, and it is probable that any surface present in the courtyard during this period has been lost.

Evidence for the structural re-modification of the Saracen's Head buildings was apparent in a brick footing (2178 numbered 1028 in the evaluation) towards the southwest corner of the site. Although this cut the cobble footing (2002) at its southern end it is probable that it represents a modification of the same structure. The full extent of this footing was masked by later structures at the western extent of the site. It was, however, apparent that 3.25m of its length of this extended into the site. This was 0.6m wide and 0.16m deep aligned east-west. There were two courses of surviving brick work (2177, numbered 1002 in the evaluation). The primary construction course consisted of distinctively long red bricks measuring 0.52m (20½") long, 0.135m (5¼") wide and 0.065m (2½") thick. The second course of bricks above this consisted of more conventionally sized brick 0.24 (9½") mixed with the longer bricks. The bricks were set into the cut (2178) 0.57m wide and 0.16m deep with mortar and clinker (1006). Pottery from this was dated to the late 17<sup>th</sup> to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **5.6 Phase 4: 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century**

#### Area A (The Frontage) (Fig.6)

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century a variety of pits were excavated on the site. Pit 2103, close to the southeast corner of the site, was rectangular in plan 1.07m long and 0.6m wide with steep side and a flat base 0.56m deep. It contained a primary fill of cobble with some clay (2102), and, above it, a square cut sandstone slab (2101) 0.4m wide and 0.1m deep was set into mortar, along with a brick, seemingly capping the feature.

Only the western side of pit 2106 was within the area of excavation, but this was sub-circular in plan with a diameter of at least 0.8m, a maximum depth of 0.76m, steep edges and a flat base. The primary fill (2105) consisted of grey silt with clay lenses at all of the edges, and the upper fill (2104) was grey silt with rounded cobbles throughout.

#### Area C (The Courtyard)

Within the courtyard a 19<sup>th</sup>-century circular pit (2036) was located within the eastern half. It was 0.76m in diameter, 0.42m and had a U-shaped profile. The primary fill (2038) was packed with rounded cobbles, whereas the upper fill (2037) consisted of burnt coal.

The construction of the south range in 1888 (Hislop and Hewitson 2005, 21) dominates the character of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century deposits. Much of the drainage running through the middle of the

courtyard seems to be associated with this range as is the beer chute to the cellar (2008). A projecting bay at the east end of the courtyard also dates from this period, and in recent years was modified to house the toilets, whose associated drainage has truncated much of the archaeological deposits at the eastern end of the site. It seems probable that the brick paving that was still in use at the start of this archaeological excavation was probably laid down at around the same time.

At the western end of the courtyard were the structural remains of some early 20<sup>th</sup>-century urinals. These remains are consistent with an archive set of architects plans dated 1911. Most of the drainage and services that were present in the northern and western parts of the courtyard are related to the construction of these facilities.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Five principal phases have been identified, which span seven centuries. Not only does the archaeology supplement the information about the development of the site that has already been gleaned from the buildings, but by revealing a hitherto unknown 13<sup>th</sup>-century phase, it has added another two hundred years to the structural history of the site, and increased our understanding of the development of Kings Norton.

The most significant aspect of the archaeology is the information that has been gleaned about the 13<sup>th</sup>-century phase. Particularly interesting are the remains of the structures revealed in the courtyard, both in respect of the technology employed and in their relationships with the late 15<sup>th</sup>-century standing buildings.

Firstly, there appears to be evidence for two structural types: an earth-fast post building towards the centre of the courtyard, and a possible timber-framed structure to the east of it, indicated by a stone plinth for a sill beam. To judge from the pottery, these two buildings appear to have been near contemporaries, and may have implications for determining the point at which fully-framed buildings superseded earth-fast post structures as the principal type of timber construction in the West Midlands.

The second point of interest lies in the alignments of the two 13<sup>th</sup>-century structures. The remarkable aspect of the earth-fast post structure in this regard is that it is set obliquely to the 15<sup>th</sup>-century north and east ranges, but, more interesting, perhaps, is that its orientation is similar to that of the northwest block. In contrast, the stone plinth and associated beam slot reflect the lines of the standing buildings. It may well be that the hitherto inexplicable alignment of the north-west block is owed to the peculiarities of a much older property boundary. It is possible that part of this property boundary has been excavated at the east end of Area C.

Another significant aspect of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century phase is the series of features denoting fire-based activities, including the two tiled hearths, the cooking pit, and several burnt areas. Interestingly, several of these features are ranged along the south wall of the north range, an arrangement that may also owe something to the disposition of property boundaries within the site.

Significant for a fuller understanding of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century arrangement are the Phase 2 results, the most prominent aspects of which are the cobbled surfaces within the courtyard and to the east of the

north range. Although the cobbles are of interest in their own right as evidence for the character of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century yard surface, their extent is also significant, for they seem to have been bounded by a timber building on the west side of the courtyard, contemporary with, or only slightly later than, the north range, and by a drainage gully on the north side. On this side the interest focuses on the reason for the absence of the metalling, and may be connected with the possible presence of a building on the west side.

The report serves as an interim statement on the archaeology of the Saracen's Head. Further excavation currently being carried out in the north range provides the opportunity for extending our knowledge of the standing buildings and of the earlier phases. The initial indications are that a substantial amount of archaeology survives, and it is the intention to carry out a post-excavation assessment covering both sites once the fieldwork is complete.

## 7 FINDS SUMMARY

Strat unit	Tile: ceramic	Brick: ceramic	Plaster	Medieval pot	Post-medieval pot	Clay pipe	Iron nails	Other iron	Copper/alloy	Lead	Other metal	Slag	Bottle glass	Other vessel glass	Window glass	Other glass	Other stone	Animal Bone (g)	Shell	Charcoal	Comment
1003	5			3														190			13 <sup>th</sup> c
1008	2			1	17	3	5											103			15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> 17 <sup>th</sup> 18 <sup>th</sup> /19 <sup>th</sup>
1009	8			29	3		2											641			16 <sup>th</sup> c
1011				9																	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c
1012	1			57			1											29			13 <sup>th</sup> c
1013				7																	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c
1014				2	2																16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> c
2000	1			11														61			13 <sup>th</sup> Century
2001	2			24			1									1		71			13 <sup>th</sup> Century
2002	1			4	3		1											66			L 15 <sup>th</sup> -M 16 <sup>th</sup> c
2003	5			7														130			15 <sup>th</sup> c some residual
2006					11	1															L 17 <sup>th</sup> -E 18 <sup>th</sup> c
2011	1	1		3		1							3		3			2			19 <sup>th</sup> c
2012													1								
2014									1												19 <sup>th</sup> c
2015	4			1	5													1			L med-19 <sup>th</sup> c
2016				1																	13 <sup>th</sup> c
2018	3			4			1											36			13 <sup>th</sup> c
2022				1	2	6															19 <sup>th</sup> c
2024				5																	13 <sup>th</sup> c
2025				2																	13 <sup>th</sup> c
2027				1																	13 <sup>th</sup> c

2029	9	1	24	1	1													103	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c + 13 <sup>th</sup> c
2030																		16	
2031	1		4	1	3													3	15 <sup>th</sup> c
2032	20		28														1	39	17 <sup>th</sup> c + some L med
2033			36														1		13 <sup>th</sup> c + some L med
2034	1		1	1					1									71	Spotted Cistercian
2035	5		4	6					1									71	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> + 13 <sup>th</sup> c
2037	4																2		
2038	3	1		1													8		17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> c
2040			4																Burnt tile
2041	1		2							1									13 <sup>th</sup> c
2043			2	2													1		L 15 <sup>th</sup> -M 16 <sup>th</sup>
2045			6																13 <sup>th</sup> ?
2049			6						1										13 <sup>th</sup> + 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup>
2054																		2	
2057	2																	362	
2059	4		1																13 <sup>th</sup> c (could be 14 <sup>th</sup> )
2061	10																		
2063			1																13 <sup>th</sup> c
2065				2															19 <sup>th</sup> c
2069	2																		
2073			73														2	32	1250-1310
2074			6																13 <sup>th</sup> c
2076			1																13 <sup>th</sup> c
2078			14																? 15 <sup>th</sup> c
2080	4	1	5	70	2	2	2	1	1	7	14							159	19 <sup>th</sup> c
2081	9		1	6															L 17 <sup>th</sup> -E 18 <sup>th</sup> c
2085	3		4	3															17 <sup>th</sup> or 18 <sup>th</sup> c
2090					1						1							1	
2092			7	6	4			1											13 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> c mixed
2093				2	3	1												5	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c
2094	1		2	2	1													8	17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> c + 13 <sup>th</sup>
2097			2	4	1														13 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> c mixed
2100	2		2															3	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c
2101				5															19 <sup>th</sup> c
2104	1			6	1						1							47	L 17 <sup>th</sup> c
2105				2															L 17 <sup>th</sup> -M 18 <sup>th</sup> c
2109			1																L 15 <sup>th</sup> -M 18 <sup>th</sup> c
2111			4	8	3					1								2	17 <sup>th</sup> c
2119				3														1	16 <sup>th</sup> c
2121			17																M 13 <sup>th</sup> -E 14 <sup>th</sup> c
2122	5		7														1	49	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c?
2130	2		2																13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> c
2132				1															L 15 <sup>th</sup> -M 16 <sup>th</sup> c
2135				2															L 17 <sup>th</sup> -M 18 <sup>th</sup> c
2137				1	1														17 <sup>th</sup> c
2140	4	2	10	51	8	5					12	1	1					26	2 4 13 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> c mixed



2144					1										2	L 15 <sup>th</sup> -M 16 <sup>th</sup> c
2145	3				3											13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> c
2147					1											13 <sup>th</sup> c
2154					4											M 13 <sup>th</sup> -E 14 <sup>th</sup> c
2155					11											13 <sup>th</sup> c + 15 <sup>th</sup> c?
2159																13 <sup>th</sup> c 1200-1250?
2162	4				3										2	13 <sup>th</sup> -?14 <sup>th</sup> c
2163					1											13 <sup>th</sup> c
2168					1										7	13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> c
2169						2	1									L 17 <sup>th</sup> -E 18 <sup>th</sup> c
2173					1											14 <sup>th</sup> c
2174	1															
2179	2					7	9					3	1	5	15	19 <sup>th</sup> c
U/S	12				9	9										

Table 1. Finds summary table with spot dating pottery comments by S. Ratkai.

## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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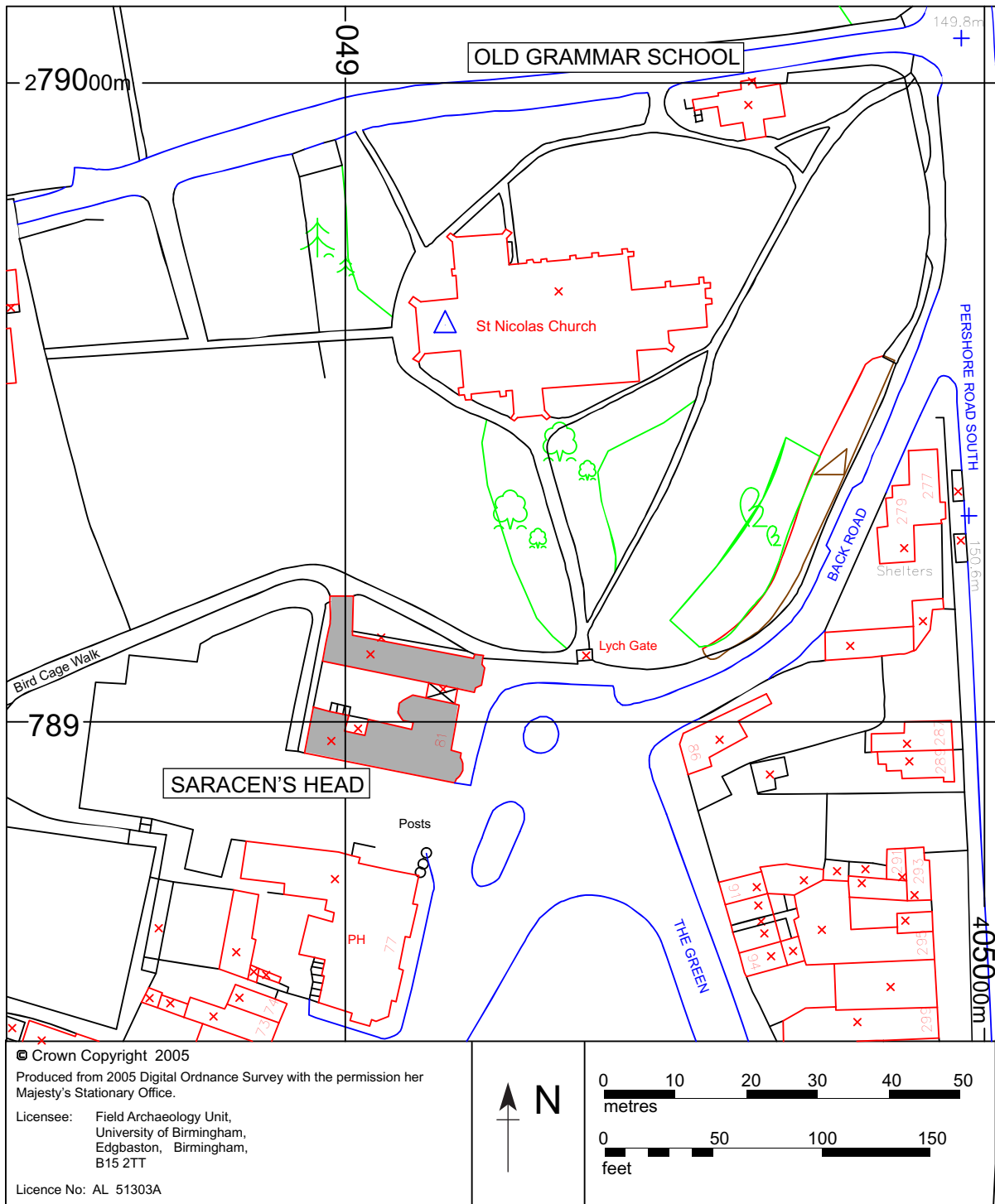


Fig.1



Fig.2



Fig.3

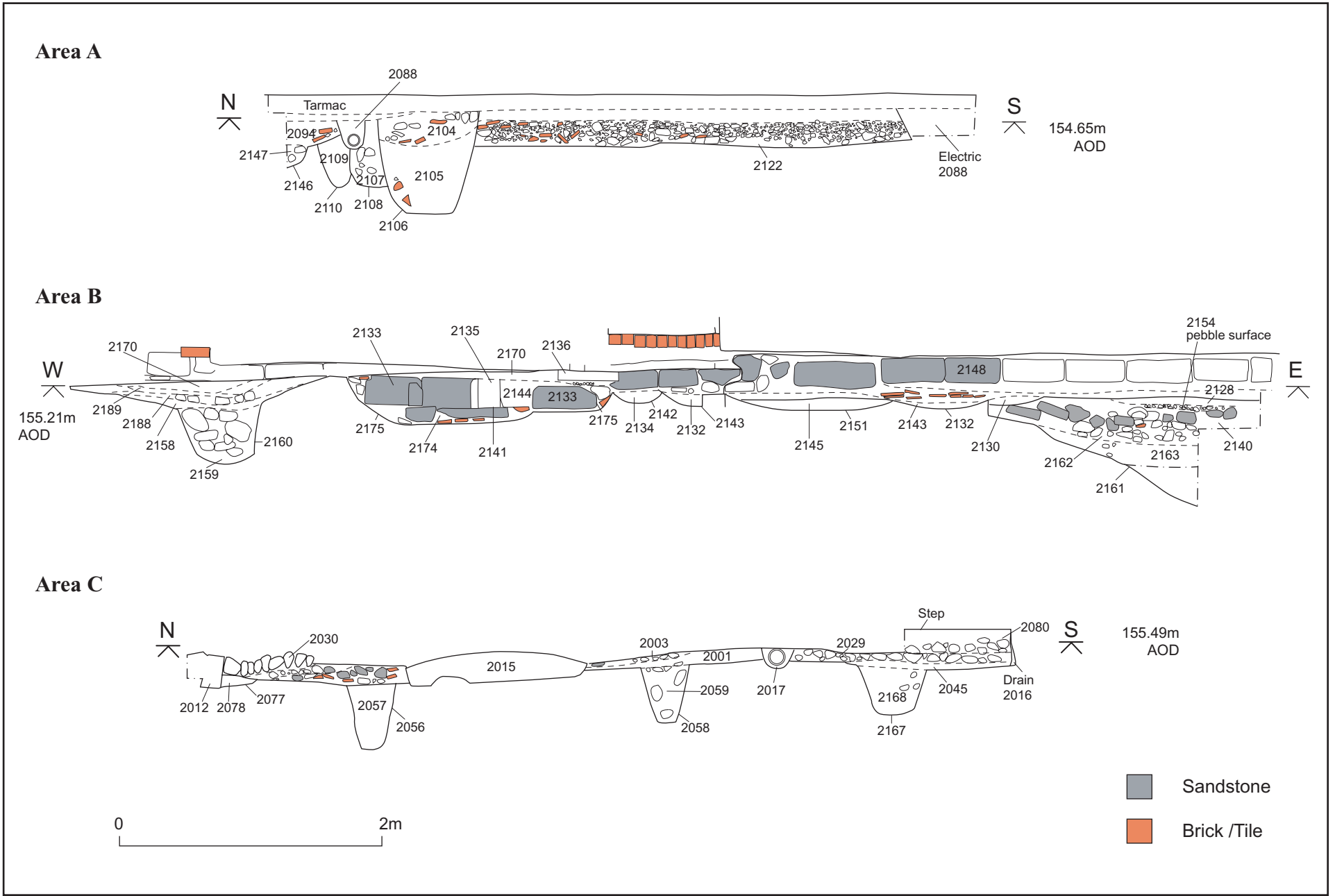


Fig.4

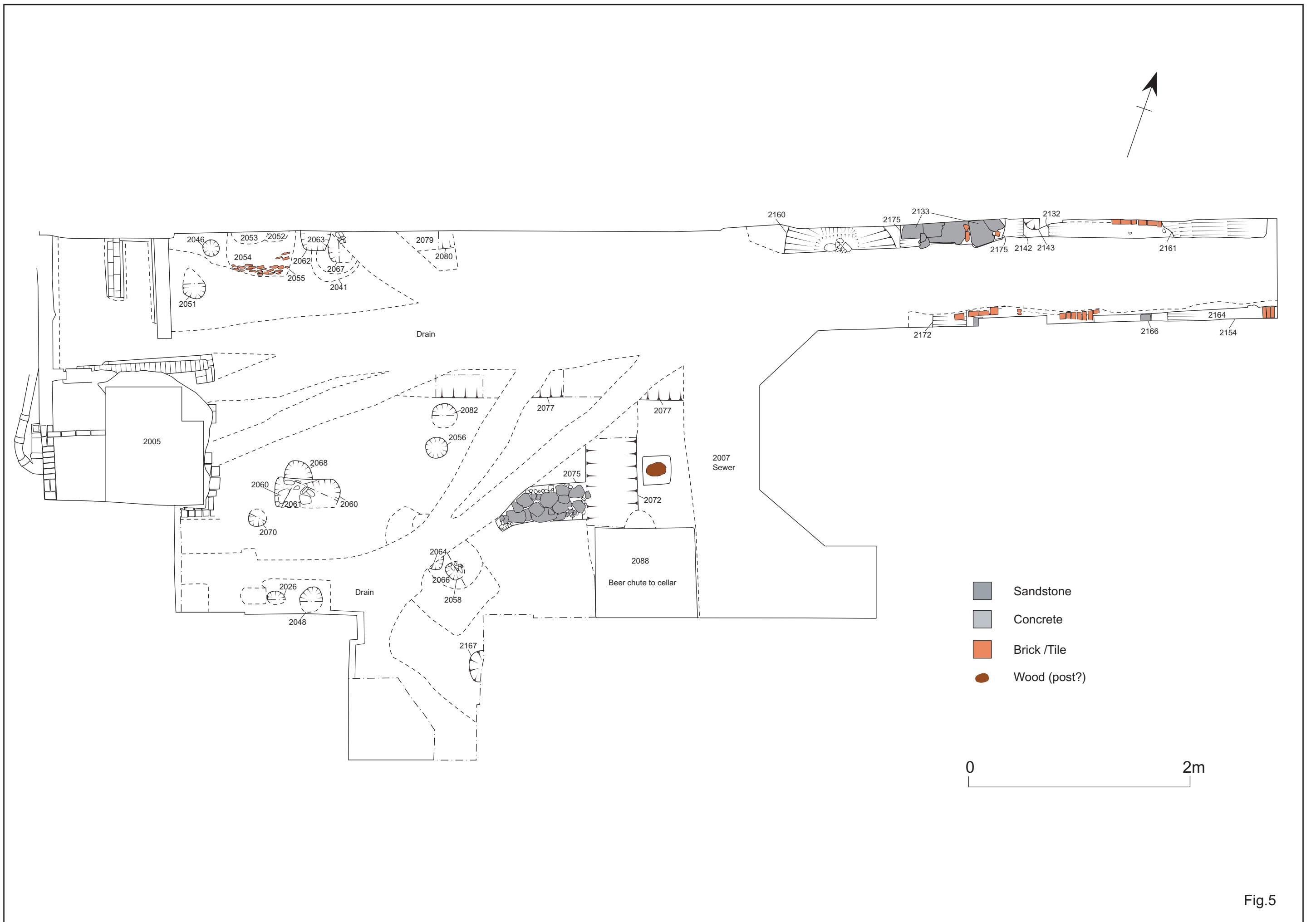


Fig.5



Fig.6



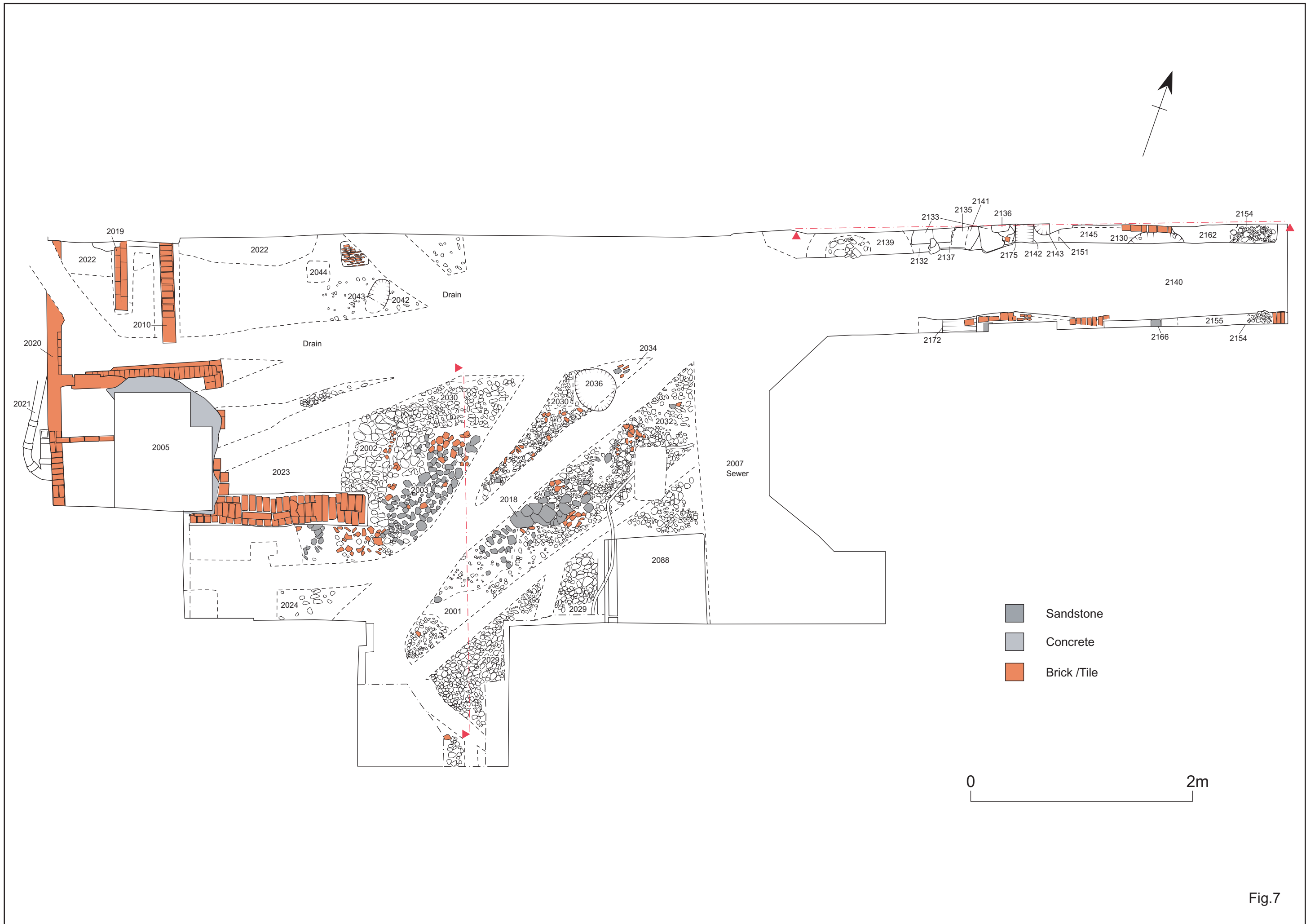


Fig.7



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5