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NORTH STREET 1974 (appendix on the Roman military pit at 37 North St.)
(Roman military)

**EXCAVATIONS AT 45-46 NORTH STREET, EXETER, 1974
PART 1: ROMAN MILITARY**

**(with an appendix on the Roman military
pit at 37 North Street)**

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SECTION 1

1 Introduction

In late 1973 and early 1974 the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit (EMAFU) undertook a rescue excavation within cellars of the existing buildings of Numbers 45-46 North Street at the junction of North Street and Waterbeer Street. The excavation was in advance of building operations by Laings as part of the new Woolworth's store. The site was directed by M. Griffiths. Conditions on the site were far from ideal; the laying of foundations and the insertion of piling were taking place at the same time as the recording of the archaeology. This has resulted in a consequent effect on the original records which are not as complete as they might have been. On site recording of sections was primarily the work of John Allan and the principal supervisor on site was Jonathan Hunn. The post-excavation work for this research archive report was undertaken in 1993 by J.P. Salvatore.

1.1 The organisation of this report

Section 1 contains a site narrative for the Roman military period. This narrative is an interpretive and account based upon the discussion of the stratigraphic groups detailed in Section 2. Section 2 contains the detailed archaeological evidence for the stratigraphic development of the site during the Roman military period. An appendix deals with the single Roman military feature recorded at North Street in 1971.

1.2 The site (Fig.1)

The site was situated close to the centre of modern Exeter at SX 9188/9260 and was within the area of the former Roman legionary fortress.

1.3 Method of excavation

The excavation was conducted within three existing cellars of numbers 45-46 North Street and by sections created by the demolition of the cellar walls by the contractors. Plans were drawn up where possible but the recording of the stratigraphy was mainly by way of sections.

1.4 Excavation summary

Remains of the post-medieval, the medieval and the Roman civil periods were recorded overlying or cutting the deposits of the Roman military period which at Exeter is dated from c.AD 55/60 - c.75/80. Damage to the deposits of all periods caused by previous cellars and the new building works was severe.

Roman military deposits were first encountered at about 37.7m OD.

1.5 Post-excavation applications

The account given here is abetted by the personal comments of J. Allan and C.G. Henderson. The site records, comprising feature cards, field plans, and photographic material, are stored at the RAM Museum, Exeter; plans on drawing film are stored at the EMAFU offices, Gandy Street, Exeter under project number 38.

1.6 Site narrative: Roman military

The area of the site is known to be within the central part of the legionary fortress, the *latera praetorii*. The remains of at least two timber buildings were recognised together with evidence for two of the fortress streets. The timber buildings were of a post-trench type of construction which is common for the Roman military period at Exeter. Evidence for Building 1 (Fig. 2) consisted of a short length of post-trench located in a position to the north-west of the right lateral street of the fortress. The trench was quite substantial being 0.72m deep and 0.66m wide. It was associated with a floor on its north-western side, the make-up layer of the floor being continuous with the infill of the post-trench. A thin clay layer pre-dating Building 1 may be part of a very early building on the site. The plan of the fortress in Henderson (1988, Fig.5.3) shows the post-trench of Building 1 as part of the back wall of a barrack (probably that of the first manipule of the first cohort). If the building was a barrack then the floor recovered would presumably have stood within the inner room of a *contubernium*. To the south-east of Building 1 evidence was recovered of the right lateral street of the fortress. Lengths of the same street have been observed at the Mary Arches Street, Queen Street, and Trichay Street sites (respectively: Bedford and Salvatore 1992c; 1993; Henderson, Salvatore and Earwood 1993). From the depths of the deposits recovered it was clear that the street had continued in use beyond the military period. This continuity of the fortress streets into the civil period has been demonstrated elsewhere in the fortress most notably at Friernhay Street and Queen Street (Bedford and Salvatore 1992a; 1993). The military metallurgy certainly encompassed the 14-16cms of gravel which was laid on the pre-existing turf. Subsequent re-metalling on at least two occasions appears to have occurred in the military period although the higher levels which were recorded were almost certainly civil. The full width of the street was not seen although it cannot have exceeded much more than 5m as the parallel

post-trenches of Buildings 1 and 2 which flanked the street were 5.8m apart. A slight rise in the suspected centre of the street is perhaps indicative of a camber in the make-up of the *agger* similar to that seen in the *via sagularis* at Mermaid Yard (Bedford and Salvatore 1992b).

A street found in section at right angles to the right lateral street is almost certainly to be identified with the *via quintana* which would have run along the rear of the *latera praetorii* separating it from the *praetentura*. Like the right lateral street it had been remetalled several times, at least twice during the military period.

In the north-western corner of the plot bounded by the two streets evidence was recovered of two sides of a substantial timber building (Building 2 on Fig.2). A post-trench running parallel to the right lateral street on its south-eastern side was observed over a distance of 9.5 m. It was up to 1.2m deep and contained post-holes which had been cut through the bottom of the post-trench; the basal portion of two of the posts was still extant. A wooden peg found in the base of the trench close to one of the posts was possibly inserted to mark a surveyed position. Two post-trenches at right angles to the outer post-trench, one of which was clearly contemporary, were probably the foundation trenches for interior walls. They defined a room 7.2m wide and at least 5.5m deep; no return wall was found within the excavated area. An adjoining room to the north-east was probably a corner room within the building. It was provided with a yellow clay floor the make-up of which was continuous with the fill of the outer wall post-trench.

A further extant post within a post-trench was located adjacent to the *via quintana* on its south-western side. This post probably represented part of the back wall of Building 2. It too was discovered with a wooden peg close by on its north-western side.

The location of Building 2, close to the centre of the fortress, and within the *latera praetorii*, would have been a position of some importance. The post-trenches revealed were for a building of exceptional height, possibly the *praetorium*, although this could have been situated on the other side of the *principia* on a site excavated by Lady Fox (1952, 31-7). For more detailed discussion of Building 2 and the *via quintana* see Groups 2 and 4 - 6.

1.7 Conclusions

This site was extremely important in terms of the plan of the legionary fortress. Sites close to the centre of the fortress have been little investigated. Although only a tiny part of the plan was recovered the position of two of the major streets of the fortress (the right lateral street and the *via quintana*) could be determined. The corner of a plot formed by the

intersection of these two streets held the traces of a substantial timber building, possibly the *praetorium*. The relationship of the site to the fortress as a whole will be discussed in a future Exeter Archaeological Report (Salvatore and Henderson forthcoming).

1.8 Acknowledgements

The present author is most grateful to John Allan who was able to offer some invaluable contributions to the interpretation in those instances where records were either untraceable or unclear. John Allan, Christopher Henderson and Jonathan Hunn, along with other members of the EMAFU worked under difficult conditions in order to salvage as much as possible of the archaeological sequence at the North Street site.

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SECTION 2

2 Introduction

This section of the report contains a record of the detailed archaeological evidence upon which the narrative produced in Section 1 is based. The stratigraphic sequences, where recovered, are presented in the form of context matrices. These have been produced according to a series of stratigraphic groups and sub-groups which illustrate events and stages in the archaeological record. Individual contexts are described in a standardised form in numerical order.

2.1 Context matrix identification

Two matrices have been produced for the Roman military contexts of the North Street site. The group number is found on the left hand side of the matrix diagram immediately below the horizontal line that defines its limit. The sub-group number is found immediately to the left hand side of the contexts that form the sub-grouping.

2.2 Group and sub-group identification

The Roman military contexts for the North Street site have been divided into eleven groups. Each group represents either an archaeological event, such as the primary construction of a building or its rebuild, or a grouping of contexts which have some association and which can be more easily discussed under the group umbrella. The nature of each group is given in the group discussions; this section includes the interpretational conclusions that can be drawn from a consideration of the stratigraphic and other evidence. Where appropriate, the group may be divided further into sub-groups. These sub-groups represent distinct stages in an archaeological event and they usually consist of a number of contexts that have a clear association. The nature of each sub-group is given in the sub-group descriptions. Stratigraphic relationships between the groups and sub-groups are illustrated by the group/sub-group matrix.

2.3 Context information

Information about individual contexts is provided in two forms. Firstly, the context number as it appears in the context matrix is annotated with an abbreviated 'type' description (e.g. Cdt = Cut, ditch). The list of abbreviations is given at the beginning of the matrices. These abbreviations are also used in the general context index. Secondly, a standardised summary description of each context in numerical order is included in the report.

2.4 The matrix diagrams, group discussions, and sub-group descriptions

List of abbreviations (for matrices)

Cut	C	
Fill	F	
Layer	L	
Surface	S	
Miscellaneous	M	

Dump	dp	
Floor	fl	
Make up	mk	
Metalling		mt
Natural	nat	
Post-hole		ph
Post trench		pt

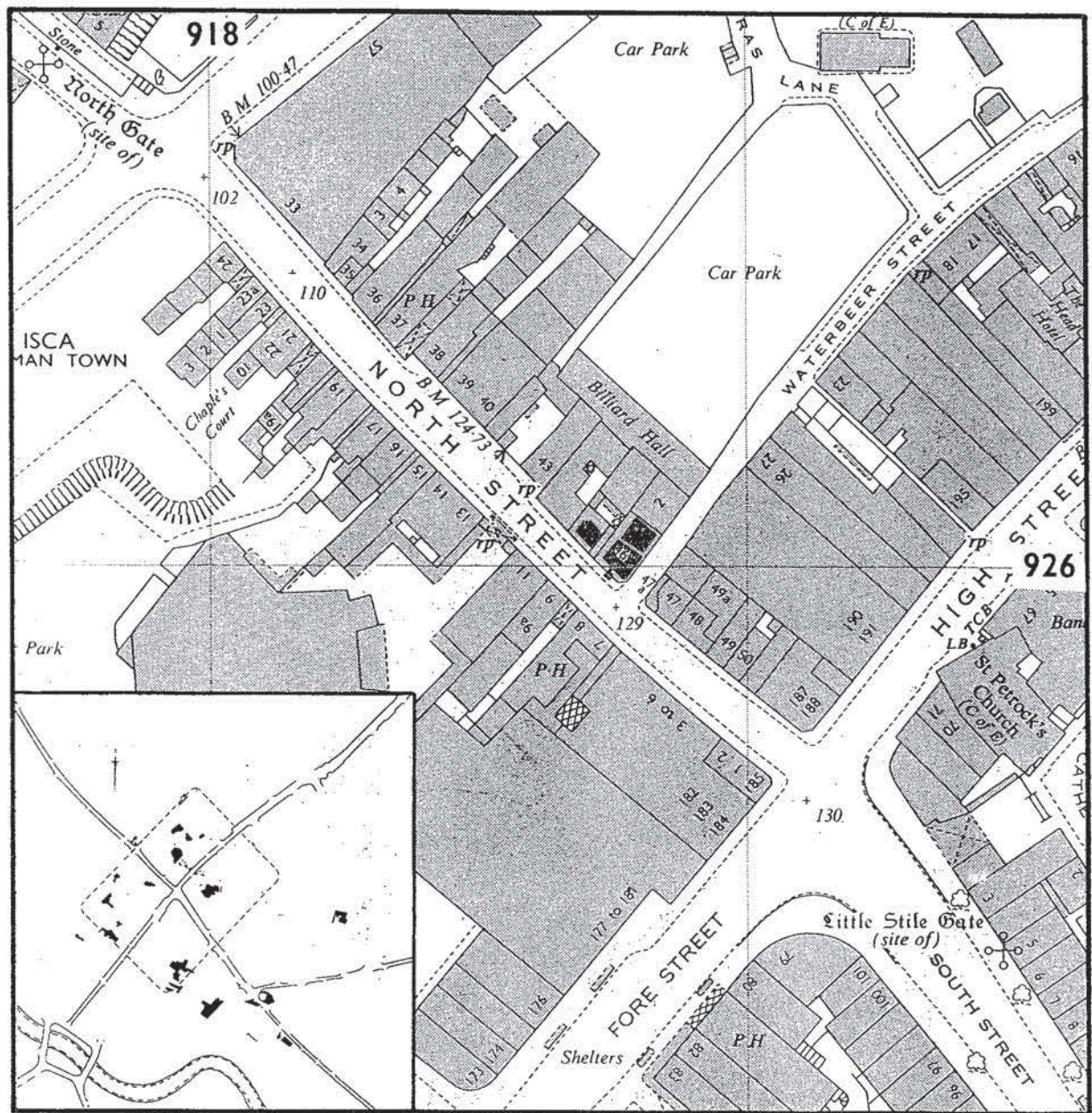


FIG 1. LOCATION OF 46 NORTH STREET EXCAVATION.

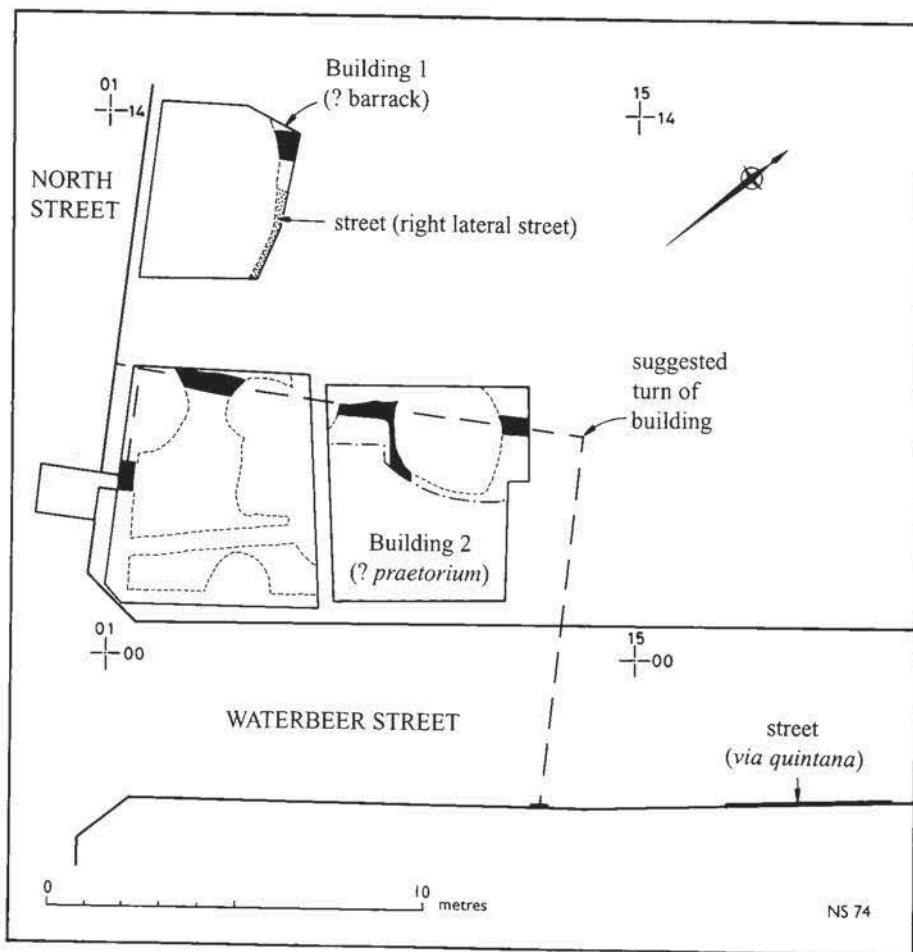


FIG 2. A COMPOSITE PLAN OF THE ROMAN MILITARY FEATURES AT 46 NORTH STREET.

(51) 2

Groups 2-4 and 7

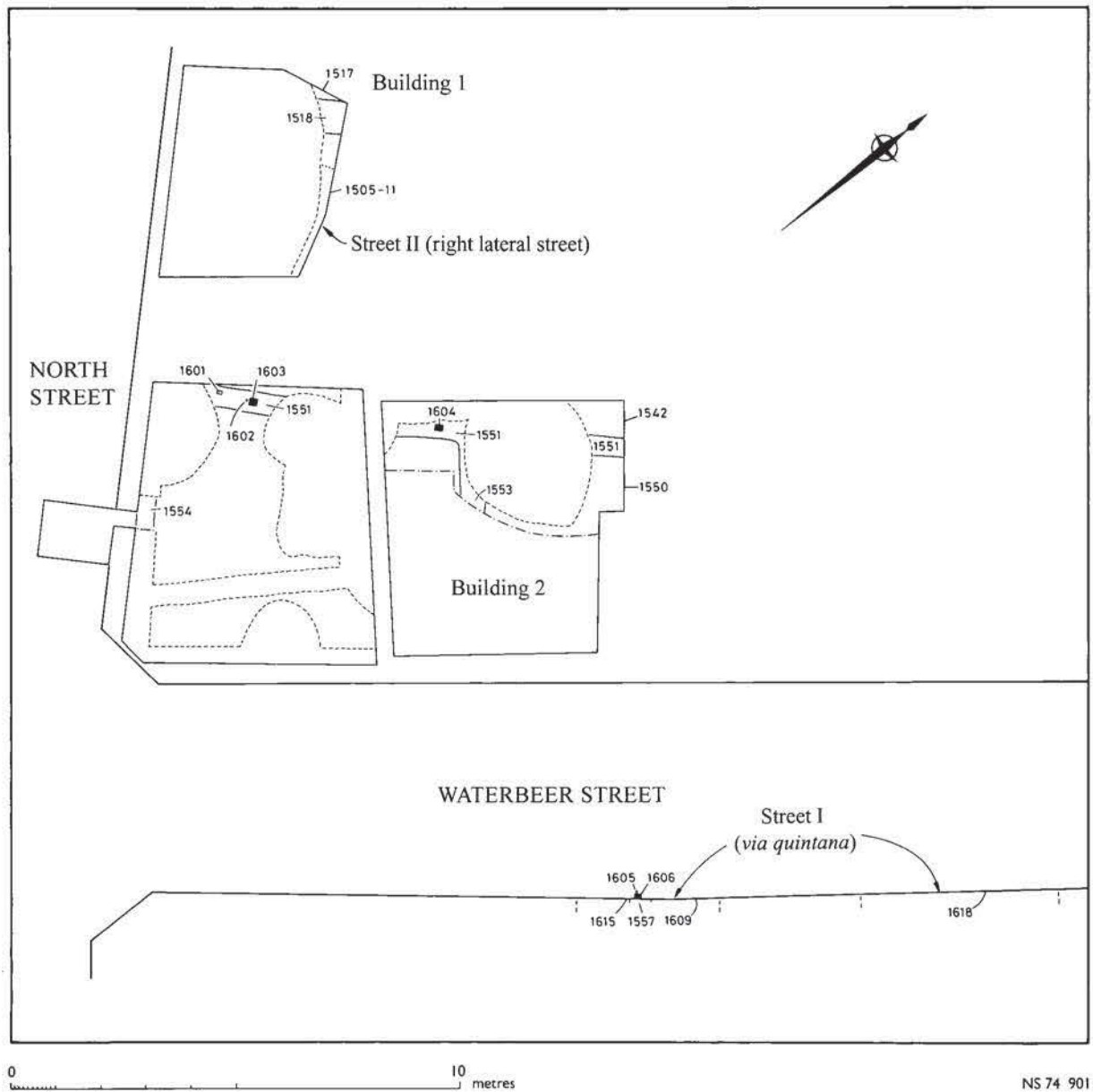


FIG 3. SIMPLIFIED PLAN COMBINING GROUPS 2-4 AND 7.

(51). 4

NORTH STREET 1974

801

Roman military

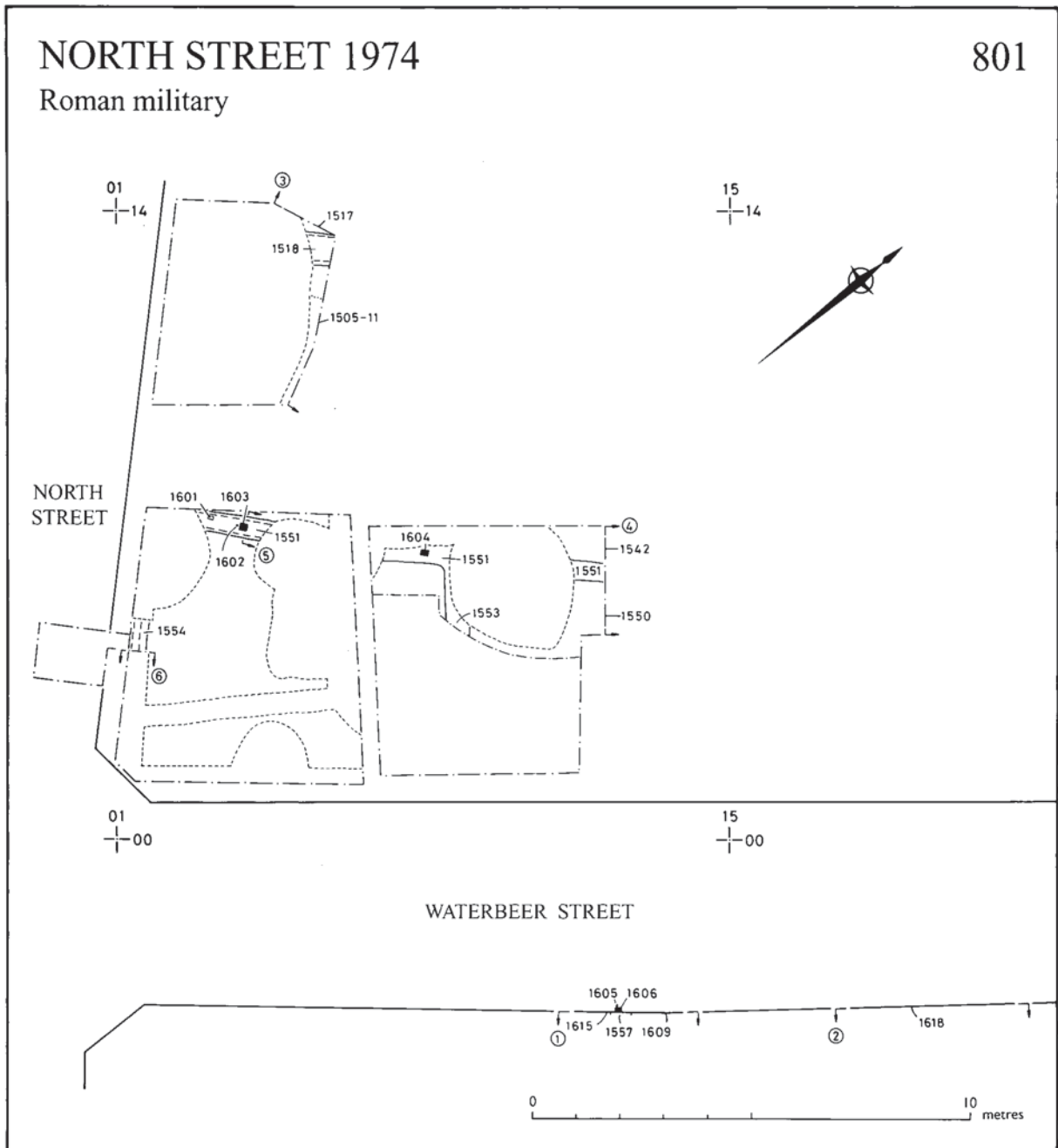
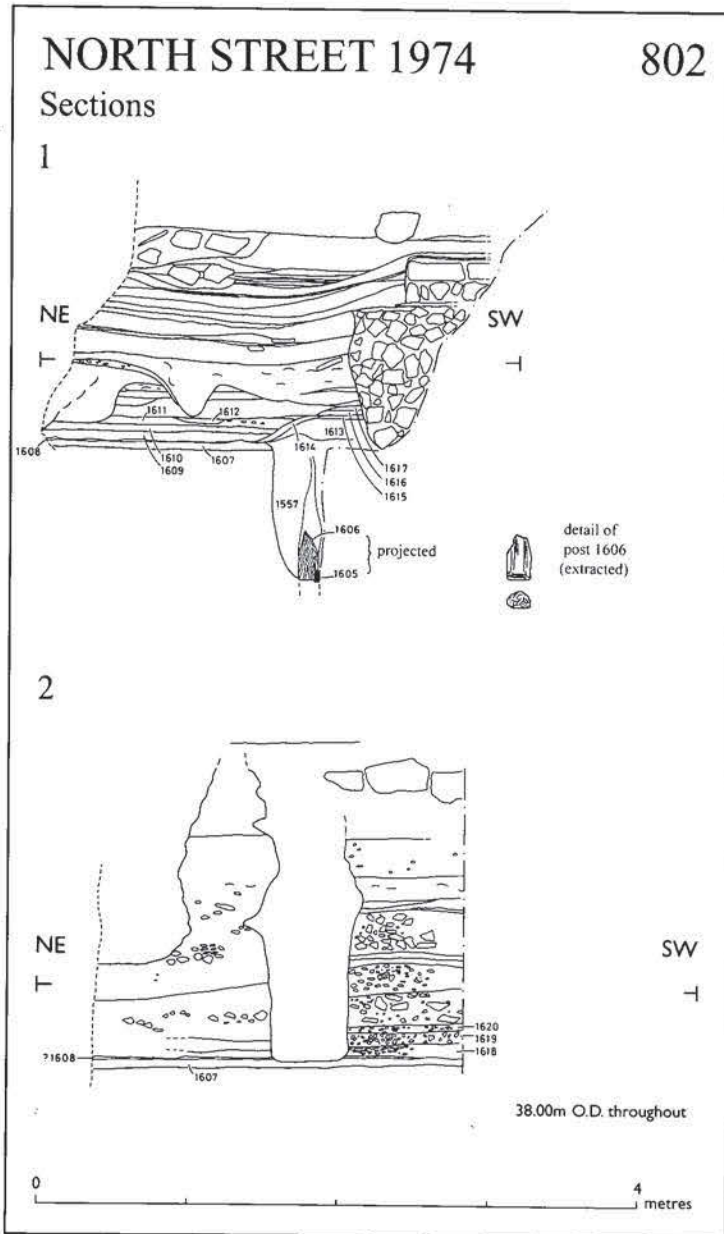


FIG 4. PLAN OF THE ROMAN MILITARY REMAINS.

(51) 1



FIGS. SECTIONS THROUGH THE ROMAN MILITARY AND POST ROMAN MILITARY DEPOSITS.

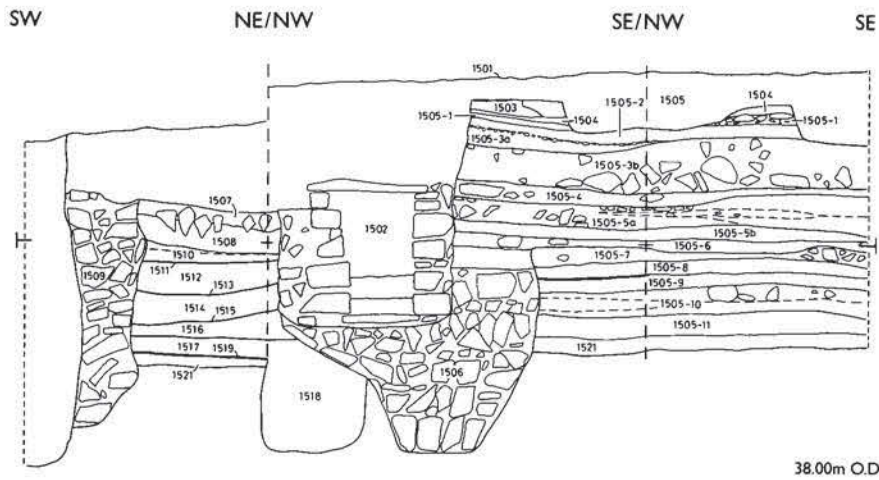
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NORTH STREET 1974

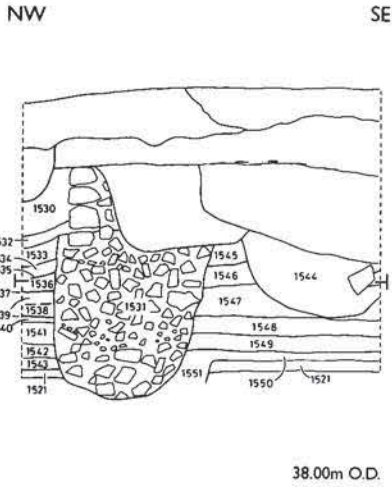
803

Sections

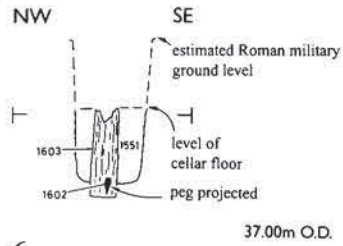
3



4



5



6

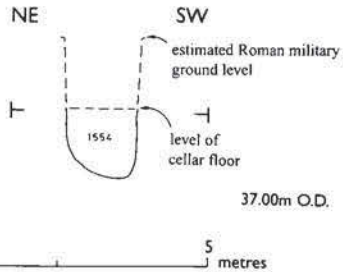


FIG 6. SECTIONS THROUGH THE ROMAN MILITARY AND POST-MILITARY DEPOSITS.

(51) . 5

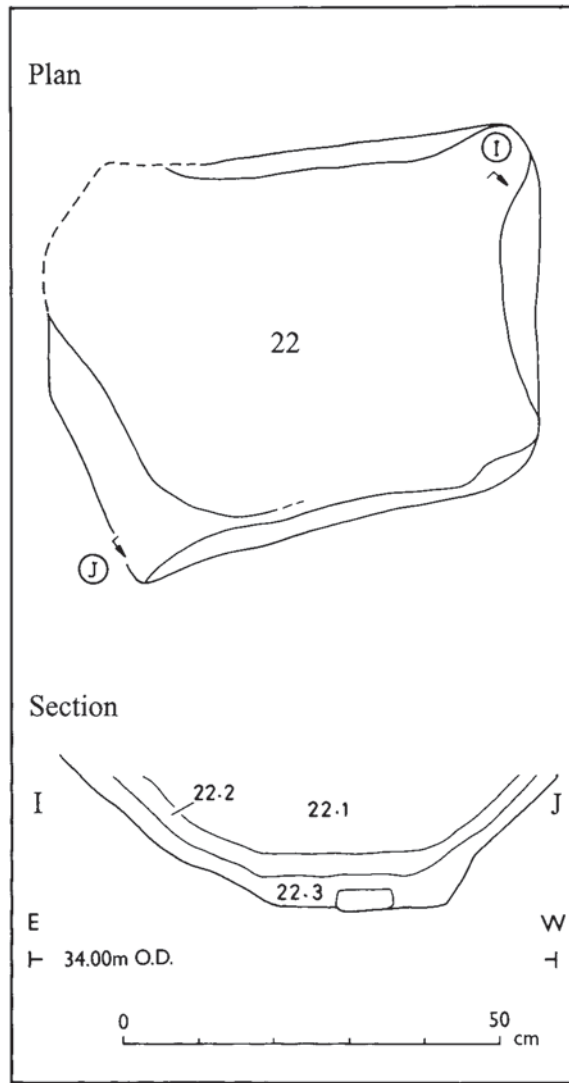


Fig. App. 1 Plan and section of Pit 22. Scale 1:10