

92.38 PRESTON STREET 1976-77

(ROMAN MILITARY)

**EXCAVATIONS AT PRESTON STREET, EXETER, 1976-77  
PART 1: ROMAN MILITARY**

by

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**EXETER MUSEUMS ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD UNIT**

**Report No. 92.38**



**EXETER**  
— CITY COUNCIL —

## PREFACE

This report comprises two sections. The first section summarises, in the form of a site narrative, the main results of the excavation of the Roman military levels at the Preston Street site of 1977 (for site location see Fig.1; the site was also known as Ford Signs). The second section contains the more detailed archaeological evidence upon which the site narrative is based. In Section 2 the excavation records are presented in a processed form using matrices and stratigraphic groups and sub-groups with standardised descriptions of individual contexts.

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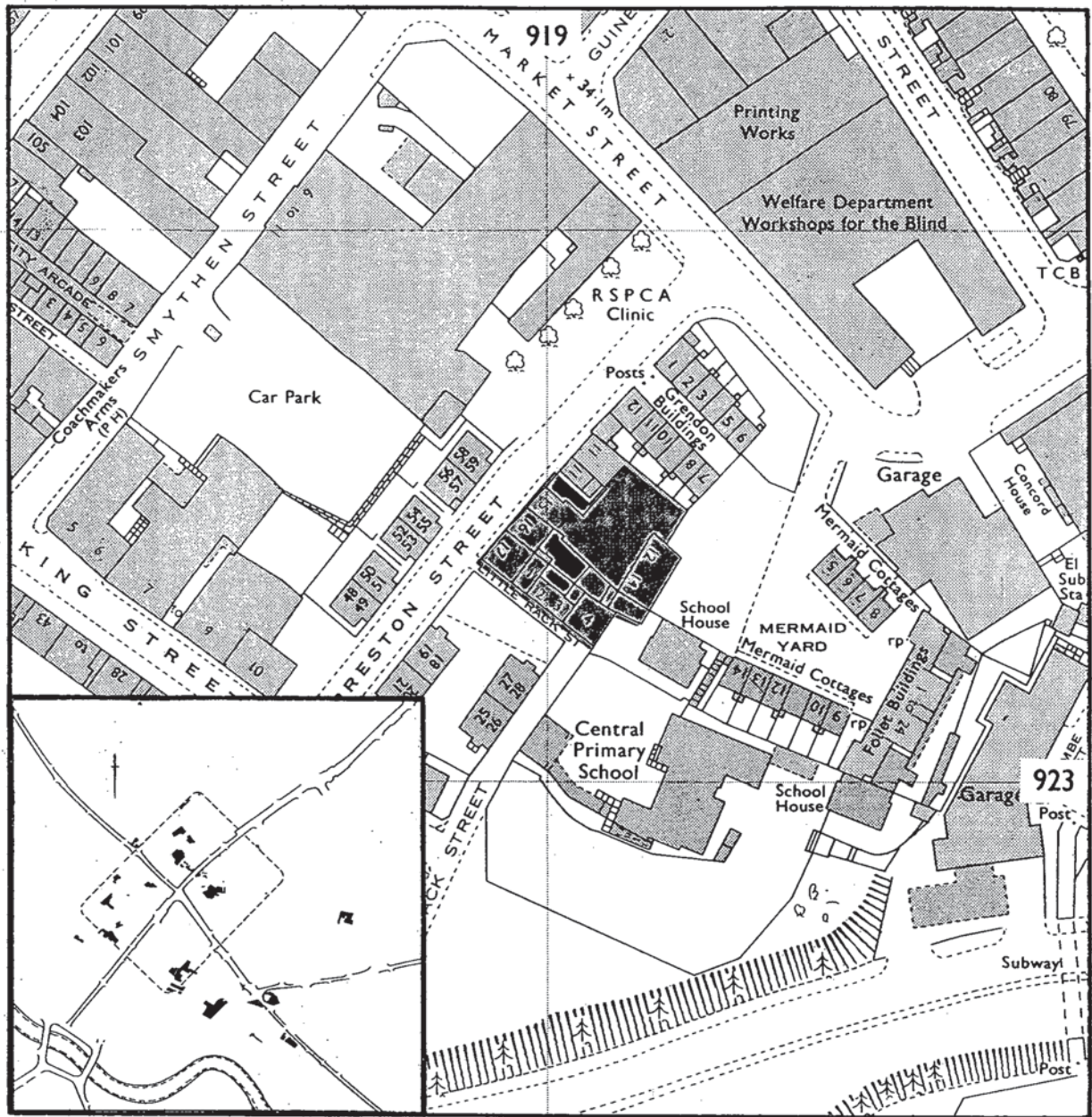


Fig. 1 The location of the Preston Street excavations Exeter 1976-77. The inset shows the approximate position of the site within the fortress.

## SECTION 1

### Introduction

Throughout December 1976 and at various times throughout 1977 the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit (EMAFU) undertook excavations at the site of the Ford Signs works at 16 Preston Street in advance of new housing. The excavations were funded by Exeter City Council and were directed C.G. Henderson. The site supervisors were C. Tracy, G. Lacy and J.Pamment (now Pamment Salvatore).

Post-excavation work for this research archive report was undertaken in 1992 by J.B. Bedford and 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 stratigraphic account based upon the discussion of the archaeological records contained in Section 2.

Section 2 contains the detailed archaeological evidence for the stratigraphic development of the site during the Roman military period.

#### 1.2 The site (Fig.1)

The site fronted Preston Street and was adjacent to Little Rack Street at SX 91899234.

#### 1.3 Method of excavation

Excavation took place within the standing buildings formerly owned by the Ford Signs Company at No. 16 Preston Street. The need to excavate clear of the standing walls resulted in a number of isolated excavation areas that corresponded to internal room sizes of various dimensions. The interior of each room was excavated by the open-area method with accompanying sections to recover detail of the stratigraphy.

Levels of truncation due to terracing and other later activity had removed all traces of the Roman military occupation within certain of the rooms, this was particularly evident in Rooms 3, 4, 8, and 10.

#### 1.4 Excavation summary

Remains of the Post-medieval, the Medieval and the Roman civil periods were recorded overlying the Roman military deposits. Damage to the Roman military levels was severe, so much so that no clear building plan emerged.

The post-trench of a timber building and other activity associated with the Roman military period at Exeter (c. AD 55/60 - c.75/80) were identified. The timber building is suspected to have been a barrack within the *praetentura* of the Roman legionary fortress. The Roman military levels were first encountered at about 29.5m OD.

#### 1.5 Post-excavation applications

Each room was provided with a number in the original excavation (i.e. Rooms 1-10). There were also two outside yards one on the frontage and one set behind. This was superseded in post-excavation by a division into areas. Each area has retained the same room number (i.e. Room 1 = Area 1 etc.) In addition, the front yard (skip area) = Area 11 and the internal yard = Area 12. See Fig. 2 for the location of these areas.

The site records, comprising context sheets, field plans, plans

on drawing film, and photographic material, are stored at the EMAFU offices, Gandy Street, Exeter under project no.60.

#### 1.6 Site narrative: Roman military

The fragmentary remains of at least two Roman military timber buildings within the area of the legionary fortress were represented by post-trenches observed at the Preston Street site (Fig. 2).

Building 1 was identified from a number of trenches located in the northern part of the site. The position of the building suggests that it may have parallels with a similarly positioned building found at Bartholomew Street East (Salvatore and Simpson 1992) which was located at right angles to the barracks behind their north-eastern limit. Such buildings placed in close proximity to the barracks and behind the cohorts that occupied the barracks in the opposing corners of the *praetentura* of the fortress may have fulfilled a number of functions. They may have been stores buildings although Henderson (1988, 105) has suggested that at Exeter this position in the fortress may have been occupied, at least on a temporary basis, by stable ranges.

Building 2 can best be interpreted as the remains of a barrack that was aligned *per strigas* (in this case north-east/south-west). The remains that were observed almost certainly represent part of the rear end of the barrack, the centurial quarters of which would have lain further to the south-west. The back wall of this same building was found during excavations at Mermaid Yard in 1977 (Bedford and Salvatore 1992). Measurements taken from both the Preston Street and the Mermaid Yard sites show that the total width of the barrack was approximately 4.5m. The recovery of the *via sagularis* at Mermaid Yard demonstrates that there was no room available for a further barrack to the east of that seen at Preston Street. The Preston Street barrack would therefore have been situated at the extreme eastern end of the cohort block and would have faced its counterpart in the maniple which would have been situated to the west of it. No evidence for the paired barrack to the west was however forthcoming, at Preston Street.

Two pits that were thought to be military in date, one Claudio-Neronian and one Flavian, were located in a position that would place them perhaps in the space between the back walls of a pair of barracks assuming that a full cohort-block had occupied the area. Alternatively, the earlier of the two pits (469) may have pre-dated building operations whilst the other (507) may have been dug at the end of military occupation.

#### 1.7 Conclusions

The excavations at Preston Street added little detail to the overall picture of the fortress. This was due to the later activity over the site which had removed much of the Roman military levels. Nevertheless, enough of the wall of Building 2 was seen to be reasonably certain that this building, suspected to have been a barrack, was aligned *per strigas*. This finding has implications for the internal design of the fortress. The relationship of the site to the fortress as a whole will be discussed in a future Exeter Archaeological Report (Salvatore and Henderson forthcoming).

#### Acknowledgements

The plans in this report with the exception of the 800 series illustrations were drawn by T. Ives and were photographed for

The plans in this report with the exception of the 800 series illustrations were drawn by T. Ives and were photographed for reduction by G. Young. The 800 series plans were drawn by various members of the EMAFU. On-site plans were drawn by B. Jupp and G. Lacy. The matrices were produced by A.G. Collings who also typed Section 2 of the text. Pottery listings were provided by G. Langman.

### Bibliography

Bedford J.B. and Salvatore J.P. 1992 *Excavations at Mermaid Yard Exeter 1977-78 Part 1: Roman Military*, Report of the EMAFU 92.39.

Holbrook N. and Bidwell P.T. 1991 *Roman Finds from Exeter*, Exeter Archaeological Reports: 4.

Henderson C.G. 1988 'Exeter (*Isca Dumnoniorum*)' in Webster G. (ed.) *Fortress into City: The consolidation of Roman Britain, first century AD*, 91-119.

Salvatore J.P. and Simpson S.J. 1992 *Excavations at Bartholomew Street East Exeter 1980-81 Part 1: Roman Military*, Report of the EMAFU 92.33.

Salvatore J.P. and Henderson C.G. forthcoming *The Roman Legionary Fortress at Exeter*, Exeter Archaeological Reports.

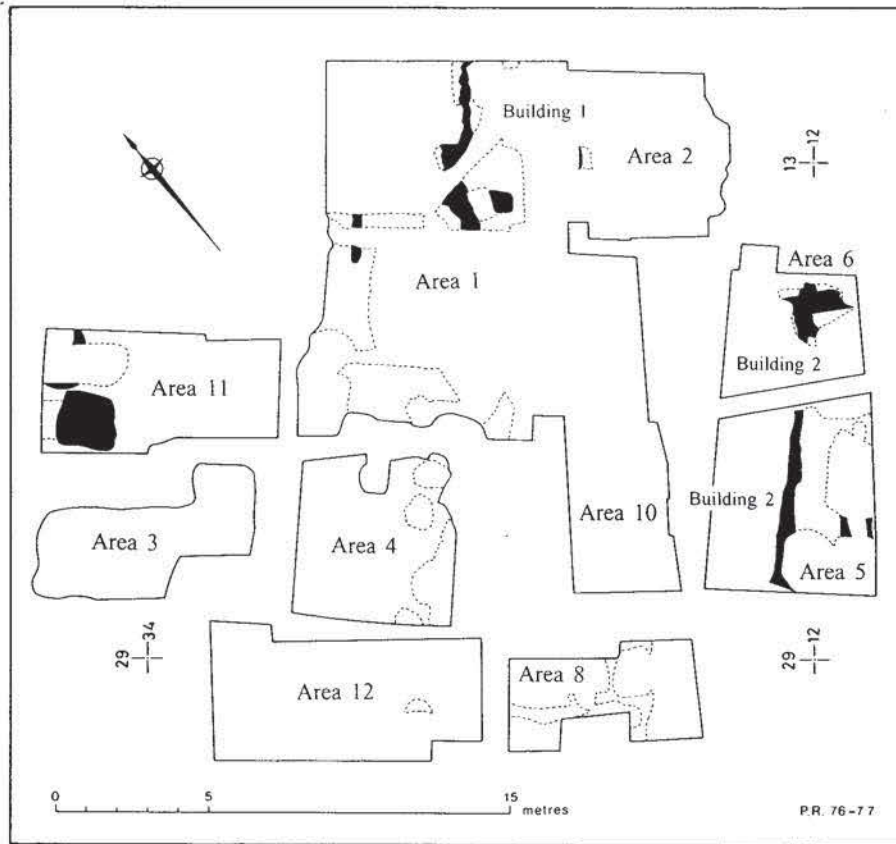


Fig.2. A composite plan of the Roman military features. Scale 1:250

## SECTION 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 are presented in the form of context matrices. The matrices have been produced according to a series of stratigraphic groups and sub-groups which illustrate events and stages in the archaeological record.

#### 2.1 Context matrix identification

Matrices have been constructed for the contexts of the Roman military period. These are numbered Matrix 1 - Matrix 4.

The context matrix diagrams have been divided by horizontal lines at significant points; these indicate the divisions between stratigraphic groups. The group number is located 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 Preston Street site have been divided into groups. Each group represents an archaeological event. The nature of each group is given in the section on group discussions, this section includes the interpretational conclusions that can be drawn from a consideration of the stratigraphic evidence. Stratigraphic relationships between the groups are illustrated by the group matrix.

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 section on sub-group descriptions.

The stratigraphic relationships between the sub-groups are themselves illustrated by the 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. Cph = Cut, post hole). The glossary of abbreviations is given at the beginning of the series of matrix diagrams. 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

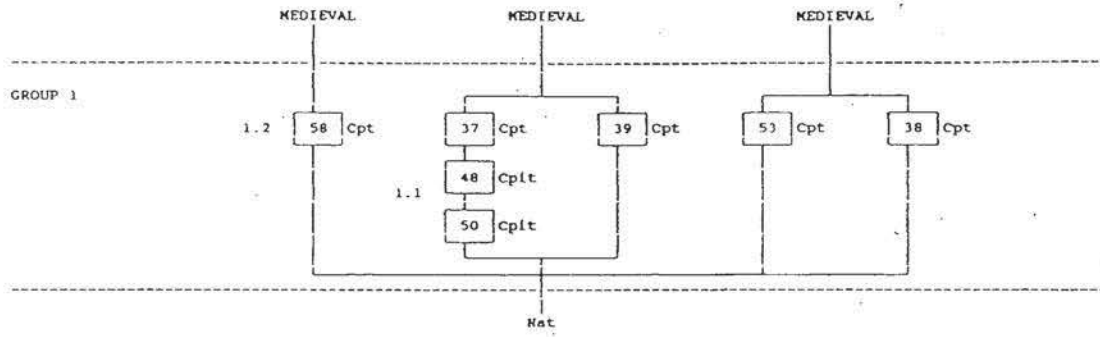
Glossary of abbreviations (for matrices).

Build	B
Fill	F
Cut	C
Layer	L
Surface	S
Miscellaneous	M

Bank	bk
Blocking	bl
Construction	cn
Demolition	dem
Ditch	dt
Doorway	dw
Drain	dr

Dump	dp
Extraction trench	et
Floor	fl
Foundation trench	ft
Gully	gl
Make up	mk
Modern	mod
Natural	nat
Occupation	ocp
Packing	pk
Partition	pa
Pit	pit
Post	pst
Post-hole	ph
Post-packing	ppk
Post-pad	ppd
Post-pipe	ppi
Post-pit	ppt
Post-trench	pt
Re-cut	rc
Robber trench	rt
Robbing	rb
Scoop	sc
Sleeper beam	sb
Slot	sl
Soil	so
Stake	st
Stakehole	sh
Terrace	te
Timber	t
Timber slot	tsl

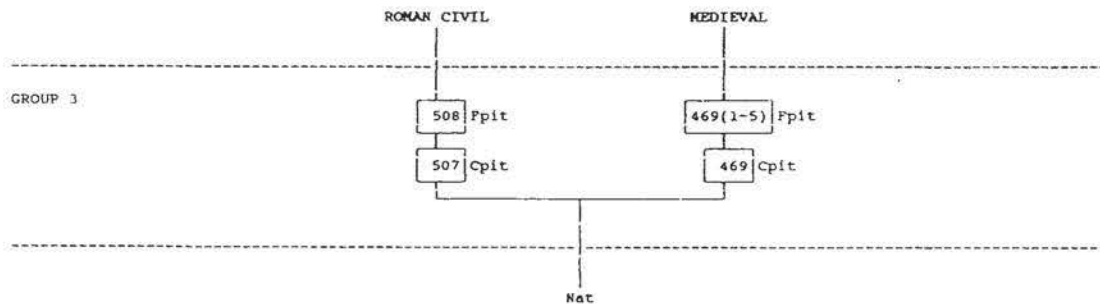
MATRIX 1 AREA 1



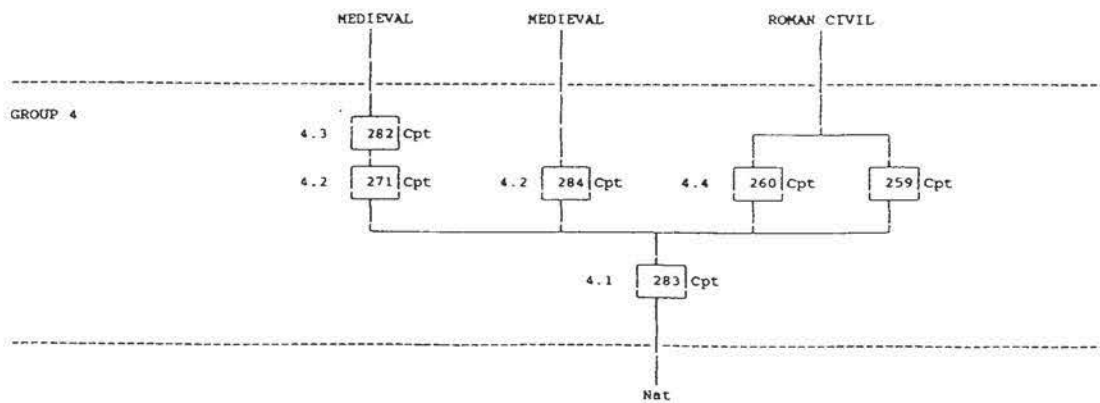
MATRIX 2 AREA 2

GROUP 2 Context 115 only. A post-trench which cut natural and was sealed by Medieval deposits.

MATRIX 3 AREA II



MATRIX 4 AREA 5





## GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND SUB-GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

**Group 1** (Significant contexts from Groups 1-4 are shown on Fig. 3)

This group, in Area 1, concerns a group of trenches and earlier pits. The post-pits are of uncertain function but the associated trenches that superceded them probably relate to a single structure (Building 1). It is unclear whether the trenches represent internal divisions or, in some cases, external walls within the structure.

Contains sub-groups: 1.1, 1.2.

### Sub-group 1.1

Two post-pits, 48 and 50, are represented by this sub-group. They constitute the earliest activity in evidence in Area 1, and they are cut by [1.2]. The earliest of these pits, 50, was cut by 48, and both were on the same alignment as Trench 58.

Contains contexts: 48, 50.

### Sub-group 1.2

This sub-group concerns the trenches located in Area 1. Only short sections of foundation trenches occurred and no post-hole or post impressions were observed within them. Later disturbances in this area prevented the exact relationships between these trenches from being established. However, they cut the earlier post-pits and they clearly formed part of a building (Building 1). They were perhaps associated with another trench (53) that was in an isolated position to the north-west.

Contains contexts: 37, 38, 39, 53, 58.

## Group 2

The only remaining evidence of the Roman military occupation in Area 2 consisted of trench 115. This trench was badly disturbed and cut by later activity. Possibly an internal division within Building 1.

Contains context: 115

## Group 3

This group concerns a pair of pits in Area 3. Pit 469 (443) was heavily cut by later features, but yielded pottery of Claudio-Neronian date. The pit, 507, contained predominantly Flavian material and can be placed as a probable late military feature. The functions of both these pits is uncertain.

Contains contexts: 443, 469, 469-1/5, 507, 508.

## Group 4

This group concerns the building remains located in Areas 5 and 6 which together form Building 2. From its position within the fortress this building is best interpreted as a barrack (Barrack A) in which case trench 271 would represent the front wall of the barrack and trench 284 a possible division between *contubernia*. Sub-group 4.4 may represent successive builds of the central longitudinal wall.

Contains sub-groups: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4.

### Sub-group 4.1

A sub-group for a post-trench (283) which is the earliest in the sequence associated with Building 2 in Area 6. It is aligned north-west/south-east and may represent part of a temporary structure or even an earlier building predating the building that overlay it. Contains contexts: 283.

### Sub-group 4.2

This sub-group concerns a longitudinal post-trench in Areas 5 and 6 which showed signs of having had contemporary trenches at right angles to it. These trenches constitute Building 2. The longitudinal trench (271) cut 4.1 at right angles to it. A narrower trench (284) may represent an internal division within the building.

Contains contexts: 271, 284.

### Sub-group 4.3

A sub-group for a post-trench which may have been either an internal wall within Building 2 or even an end wall of the building. It did however cut Trench 271 and was thus the latest trench in the sequence. It continued to either side of 271, though, due to the fact that the area is heavily disturbed its length was not established.

Contains contexts: 282.

### Sub-group 4.4

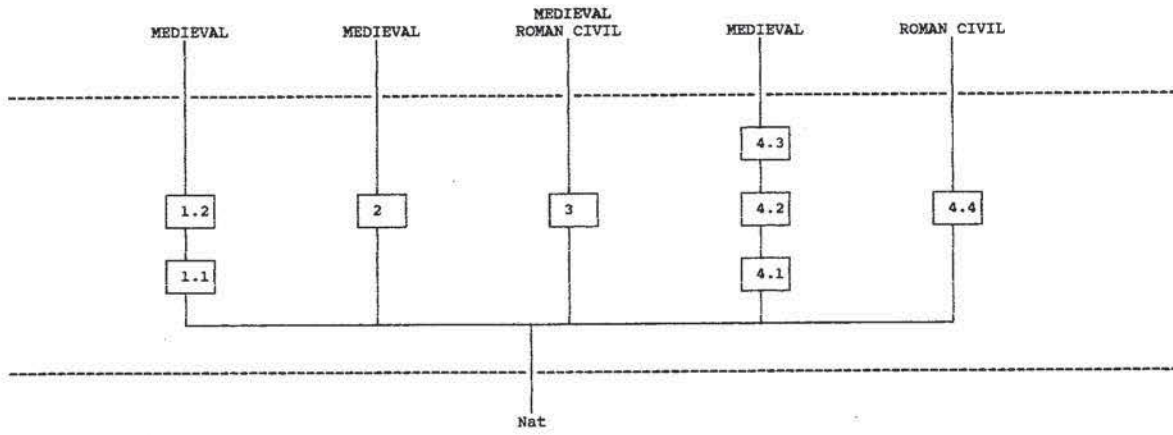
This sub-group concerns two narrow parallel trenches, 259 and 260, which may have been internal walls within Building 2. They were approximately parallel to Trench 271. Only 0.65-0.70m of their length remained.

Contains contexts: 259, 260.

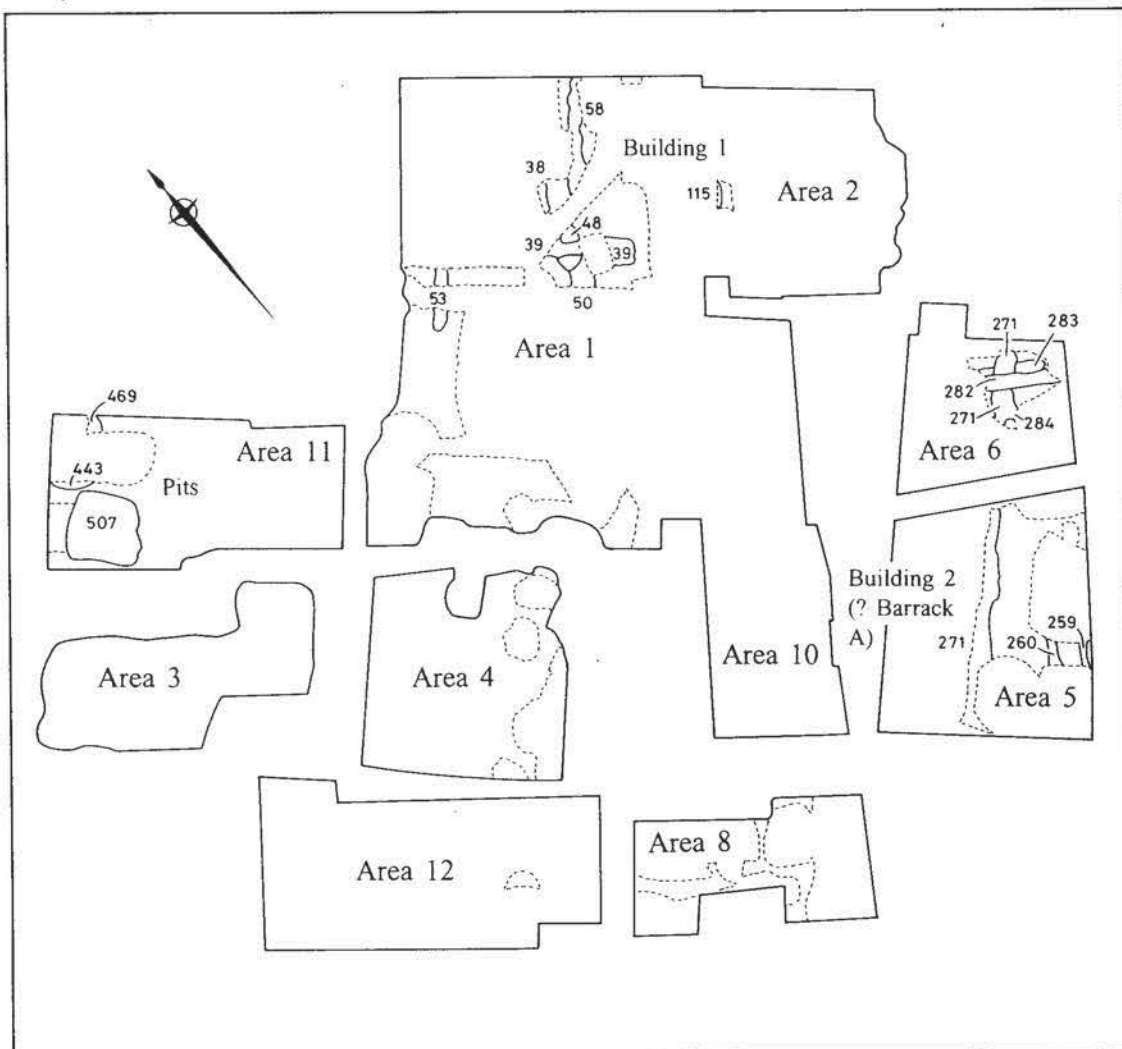
## GROUP / MATRIX INDEX

Context	Group	Matrix
37	1	1
38	1	1
39	1	1
48	1	1
50	1	1
53	1	1
58	1	1
115	2	2
259	4	4
260	4	4
271	4	4
282	4	4
283	4	4
284	4	4
469	3	3
507	3	3
508	3	3

GROUP MATRIX



Groups 1-4



PR. 76-77 901

Fig. 3 Plan of Groups 1-4 Roman military. Scale 1:200

## 2.5 The context descriptions and main indices

### Glossary of abbreviations (for contexts).

Length	Lc
Depth	D
Height	H
Width	Wth
Diameter	Diam
North	N
South	S
East	E
West	W
Frequent	Freq
Occasional	Occ
Fragment(s)	Frag(s).
Waterworn	ww
Volcanic	Volc

- 37 Post-trench, aligned NW-SE, fill of light orange/brown clay sand, some darker patches, ww pebbles, red and orange clay flecks, occ shell and charcoal frags. Le = 0.84m, Wth = 0.42m, D = 0.21m.
- 38 Post-trench, aligned NE-SW, at right angles to 37, fill of light orange/brown clay sands, red and orange clay flecks, ww pebbles, occ volc chip, charcoal flecks. Le = 0.60m, Wth = 0.50m, D = 0.17m.
- 39 Post-pit, fill of light orange/brown sands, stony clay, many ww pebbles, volc stones and chips, occ estuarine shell flecks, charcoal. Diam = 0.70m, D = 0.41m.
- 48 Post-pit, fill of light orange/brown sandy clay, ww pebbles, occ volc chips slate frags. Diam = 0.82m, D = 0.20m.
- 50 Post-pit, fill of mixed orange/red stony sandy clay, many ww pebbles, occ slate frags; lens of brown clay. Diam = 0.64m, D = 0.18m.
- 53 Post-trench, aligned NE-SW, fill of orange and red hard packed gravels and clays, occ slate frags, many ww pebbles, occ lense brown clay sand. Le = 1.56m, Wth = 0.33m, D = 0.17m.
- 58 Post-trench, aligned NE-SW, fill of orange/brown sandy clay, many ww pebbles, occ charcoal flecks. Le = 2.40m, Wth = 0.30m, D = 0.12m.
- 115 Post-trench, parallel to 58. Fill of light yellow/brown sandy gravelly clay, ww pebbles, occ volc chips, charcoal flecks. Le = 0.8m, Wth = 0.07m, D = 0.28m.
- 259 Post-trench, aligned NE-SW, fill of mid orange/brown very clean sandy clay, occ charcoal slate flecks, ww pebbles Le = 0.70m, Wth = 0.15m, D = 0.09m.
- 260 Post-trench, parallel to 259, fill of mid brown/orange clean sandy clay. Le = 0.65m, Wth = 0.28m, D = 0.40m.
- 271 Gully/post-trench, aligned NE-SW, fill of mid-yellow brown sandy clay, occ charcoal slate frags, ww pebbles, occ volc frag. Le = 5.2m, Wth = 0.2-0.4m, D = 0.23m.
- 282 Post-trench, aligned SE-NW, fill of light reddy/brown soft sandy clay, occ volc chip, occ charcoal flecks; Le = 0.84m, Wth = 0.40m, D = 0.45m.
- 283 Post-trench, aligned NE-SW, fill of light reddy/brown soft sandy clay, occ red clay, charcoal, volc frags, ww pebbles. Le = 1.90m, Wth = 0.30m, D = 0.22m.
- 284 Post-trench, contemporary with 271, fill of light yellow brown sandy clay, ww pebbles, occ charcoal, volc stone lumps.
- 469 Pit, 4 different fills: 1) beige/orange compact clay loam; 2) compact redeposited orange clay; 3) gritty clay/cess; 4) as layer 2, occ pebbles. Diam and D = unrecorded.
- 507 Pit, fill 508, 1.7 x 2.0m, D = 1.12m.
- 508 Fill of 507, 5 different: 1) light brown sandy clay loam; 2) sandy red clay with light brown clay; 3) dark green sandy cess; 4) sandy light orange clay loam; 5) light reddish brown sandy clay loam.

### GENERAL CONTEXT INDEX

<i>Context</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Plan</i>
37	Rom Mil	1	C	801
38	Rom Mil	1	C	801
39	Rom Mil	1	C	801
48	Rom Mil	1	C	801
50	Rom Mil	1	C	801
53	Rom Mil	1	C	801
58	Rom Mil	1	C	801
115	Rom Mil	2	C	802
259	Rom Mil	5	C	802
260	Rom Mil	5	C	802
271	Rom Mil	5,6	C	802
282	Rom Mil	6	C	802
283	Rom Mil	6	C	802
284	Rom Mil	6	C	802
469	Rom Mil	SA	C	801
507	Rom Mil	SA	C	801
508	Rom Mil	SA	F	-

### ARCHIVE SECTION INDEX

<i>Context</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Sheet</i>	<i>Location</i>
37	B	803	801
38	B	803	801
39	B	803	801
48	B	803	801
50	B	803	801
53	-	-	-
58	E	803	801
115	-	-	-
259	PV	803	802
260	PV	803	802
271	N, V, X	803	802
282	Z	803	802
283	Z	803	802
284	-	-	-
469	-	-	-
507	54, 57	803	801
508	-	-	-

EXETER: PRESTON STREET 1977  
ROMAN

801

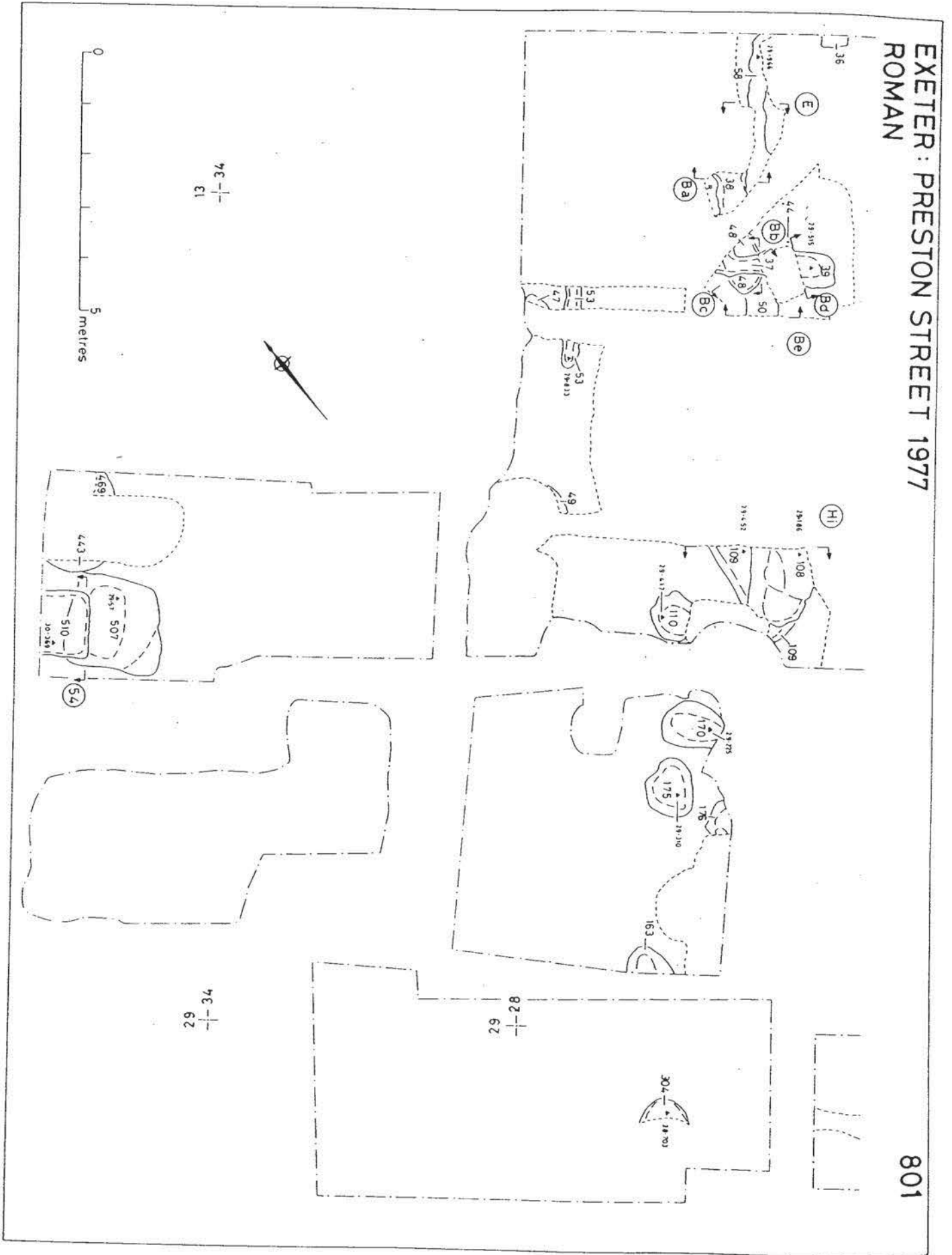


Fig. 4 Plan of the Roman remains, military and civil. Scale 1:100

EXETER: PRESTON STREET 1977

802

Roman

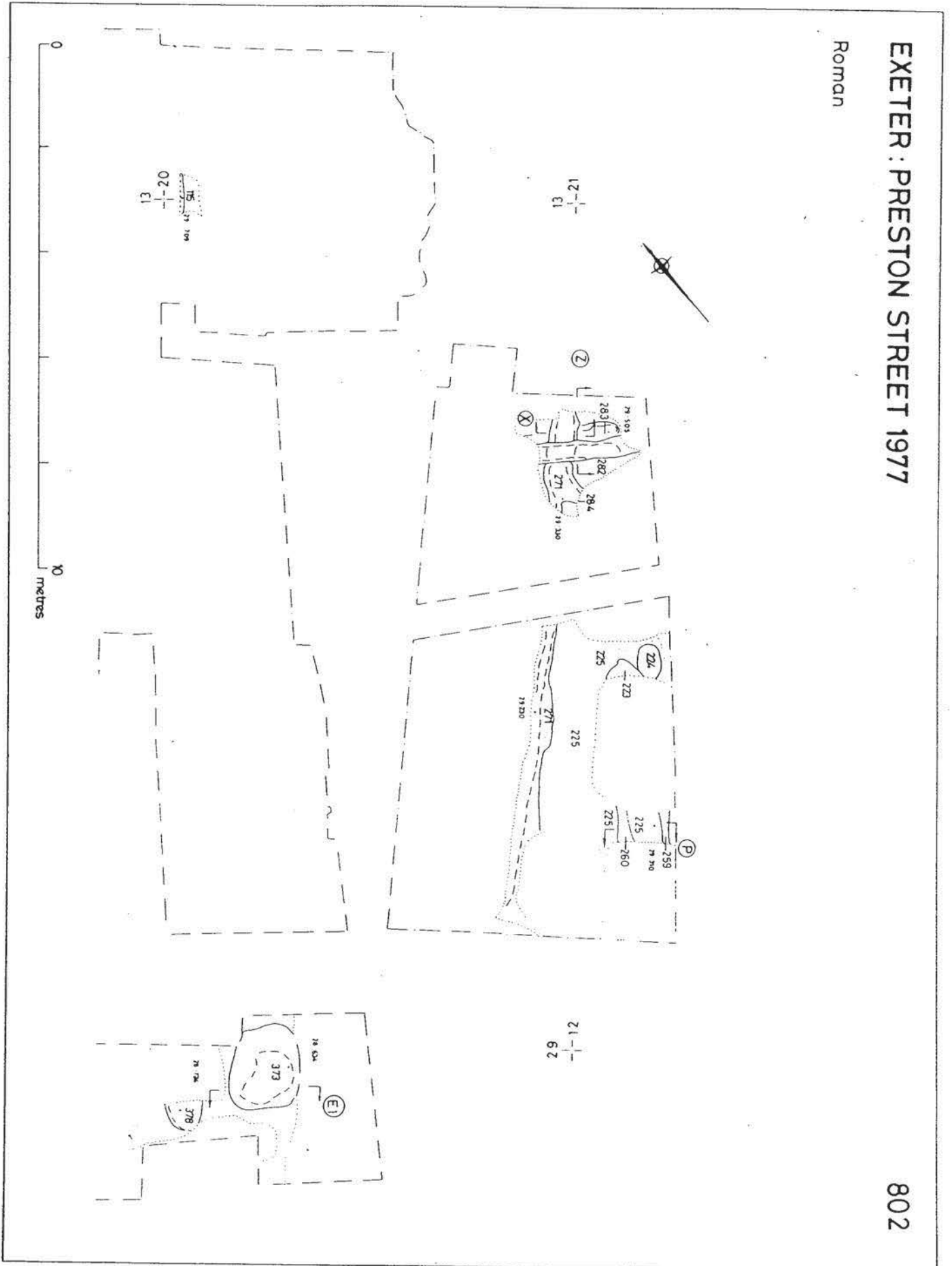


Fig. 5 Plan of the Roman remains, military and civil. Scale 1:100

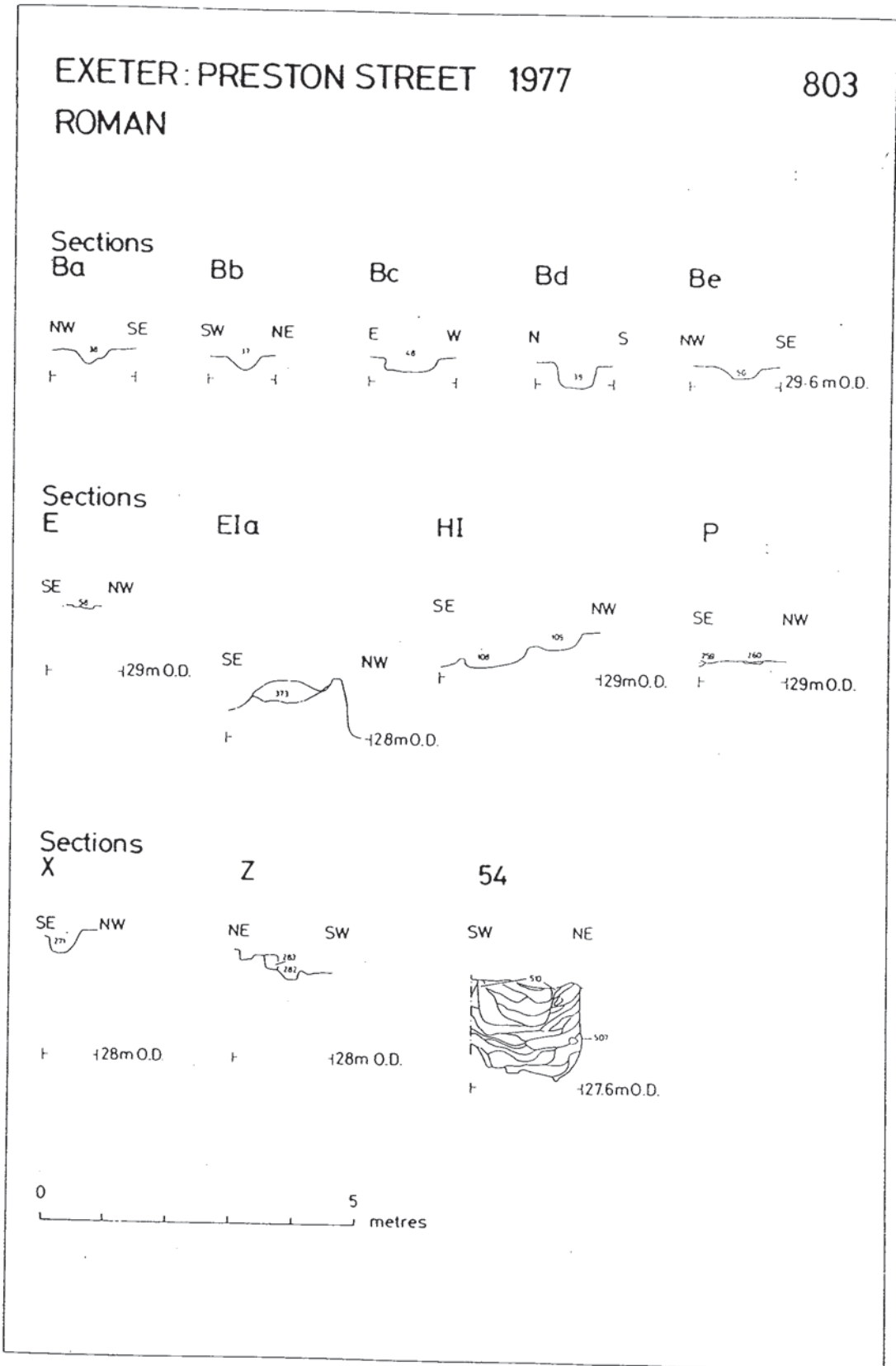


Fig. 6 Sections and profiles through the Roman remains, military and civil. Scale 1:100

## 2.6 The finds listings and other indices

## Glossary of abbreviations for finds inventory

*Fabric No. Type*

31*	South-East Dorset Black-Burnished Ware
40*	South-Western Black-Burnished Ware
81*	Hand-Made Grey-Burnished Ware
151*	Exeter Sandy Grey Ware
190*	Fortress Ware B
191*	Fortress Ware C
371*	Fortress Ware A
401*	Flagon Fabric
406*	Flagon Fabric
435*	Flagon Fabric
440*	Flagon Fabric
451*	Flagon Fabric
500	Samian-South Gaulish Type
503	Lyon Ware (pre-Flavian)
505	Central Gaulish Ware (Colour-Coated, pre-Flavian)
603	<i>Camulodunum</i> 186 (Peacock & Williams 1986, Class 17/18), amphorae
612	Unspecified/Unassigned. amphorae
706	FC4 (Gallia Belgica), mortaria
707	FC5 (Gallia Belgica), mortaria

For descriptions and discussions of fabric and types mentioned see Holbrook and Bidwell 1991. Exeter Archaeological Reports 4.

(\* = Fabric number used In EAR 4)

*Type Abbreviations*

BKR	Beaker
CP	Cooking pot
Dr.	Dragendorff
TC	Type Continental

*Miscellaneous*

MNV	Minimum number of vessels
Qty	Quantity
Wt	Weight in grams

## FINDS INVENTORY

*Pottery***37**

Fabric	151	MNV	1	Wt	10	
Fabric	401	MNV	1	Wt	75	
Type	2.1					Qty 1
	(P.139, 2.1)					

**39**

Fabric	151	MNV	1	Wt	5	
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**283**

Fabric	435	MNV	1	Wt	5	
Fabric	?603	MNV	1	Wt	485	

**469-1**

Fabric	31	MNV	3	Wt	235	
Type	11.2					Qty 1
	(P.103, 11.2)					
Type	37.2					Qty 1
	(P.108, 37.2)					
Type	CP					Qty 1
Fabric	40	MNV	2	Wt	75	
Type	CP					Qty 2
Fabric	81	MNV	1	Wt	10	
Fabric	500	MNV	1	Wt	30	

Type	Dr.27					Qty 1
	(c. 45-65 AD, P.49, 72)					
Fabric	503	MNV	1	Wt	10	
Type	BKR					Qty 1
	<b>508</b>					
Fabric	31	MNV	4	Wt	135	
Type	35.1					Qty 1
	(P.108, 35.1)					
Type	64.3					Qty 1
Type	CP					Qty 2
Fabric	40	MNV	2	Wt	1295	
Type	19.2					Qty 1
	(P.118, 19.2)					
Type	20.3					Qty 1
	(P.122, 20.3)					
Fabric	81	MNV	2	Wt	55	
Type	4.1b					Qty 2
Fabric	151	MNV	2	Wt	?	
Type	11.1					Qty 2
Fabric	190	MNV	1	Wt	600	
Type	8.1	Qty	1			
Fabric	191	MNV	1	Wt	15	
Fabric	371	MNV	1	Wt	90	
Type	10.1					Qty 1
Fabric	406	MNV	2	Wt	100	
Type	4.1	Qty	1			
	(P.141, 4.1)					
Fabric	440	MNV	2	Wt	25	
Fabric	451	MNV	2	Wt	105	
Fabric	500	MNV	3	Wt	115	
Type	Dr.27					Qty 2
	(pre-Flavian)					
Type	Dr.29					Qty 1
	(c. 50-65 AD, P.55, 5)					
Fabric	505	MNV	1	Wt	60	
Type	BKR					Qty 1
Fabric	603	MNV	1			
Fabric	612	MNV	1			
Fabric	706/707					
	TC33					
	(c. 70-150 AD, P.201, TC33)					

## PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX

<i>Context</i>	<i>B/W</i>	<i>Slide</i>
259	-	60/59
260	-	60/54
271	-	60/53,56-58
282	-	60/52,55
283	-	60/51