

93.07 / 41-42 HIGH STREET (STAR JEANS) 1980

(Roman Military)

**EXCAVATIONS AT 41-42 HIGH STREET (STAR JEANS) EXETER, 1980
PART 1: ROMAN MILITARY**

by

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EXETER MUSEUMS ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD UNIT

Report No. 93.07



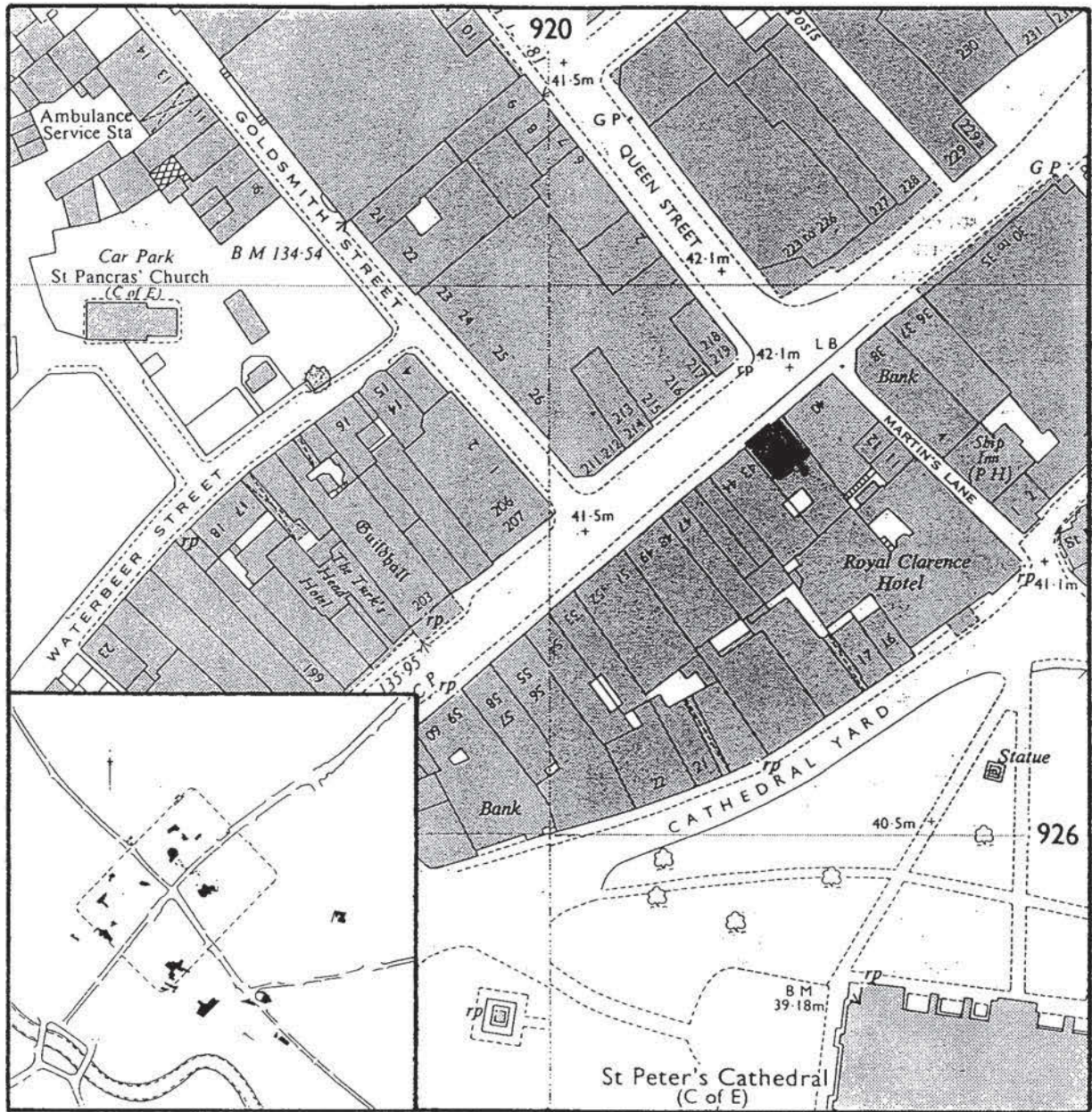


Fig. 1 The location of the 41-42 High Street excavations Exeter 1980. The inset shows the approximate position of the site within the fortress.

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SECTION 1

1 Introduction

From January to February 1980 the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit (EMAFU) undertook an excavation in the basement of Nos. 41-42 High Street (then trading as Star Jeans) prior to a proposed lowering of the floor level. The excavation was funded by Exeter City Council and was directed by C.G. Henderson. The site was supervised by J. Pamment (now J.P. Salvatore). The 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

The report comprises three sections. Section 1 includes a site narrative which summarises the results of the excavations at 41-42 High Street 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. The excavation records are presented in a processed form using matrices and stratigraphic groups and sub-groups with standardised descriptions of individual contexts. In Section 3 information is given on the finds material.

1.2 The site (Fig.1)

The site was situated in the basement of Nos. 41-42 High Street Exeter at SX 9204 9267. The site is within the known area of the former Roman legionary fortress at Exeter.

1.3 Method of excavation

Excavation was by the open-area method with accompanying sections to recover details of the stratigraphy. Standing walls and foundation pillars reduced the area available for investigation and in some cases prevented full excavation of certain features.

1.4 Excavation summary

Remains of the Post-medieval, the Medieval and the Roman civil periods were recorded overlying the deposits of the Roman military period which at Exeter is dated from c.AD 55/60 - c.75/80. The south-east side of the *via decumana* of the fortress was located along with a stone-built wall which is suspected to have supported the aqueduct supplying the legionary bath-house of the fortress.

1.5 Post-excavation applications

The truncated nature of the basement site made it impossible to demonstrate the relationships between some features with absolutely certainty. In the compilation of the site narrative the interpretations reached follow closely those based on Henderson (1988).

1.6 Site narrative: Roman military

One of the earliest features recovered on the site was a street surface later identified on plan as the south-east side of the *via decumana* of the Roman legionary fortress (Fig.2). This

street was observed in the north-western part of the basement and was significant in that it was approximately parallel at this point to the line taken by the modern Exeter High Street.

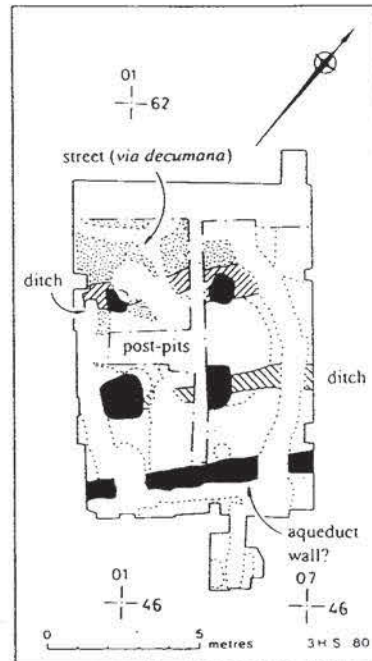


Fig. 2 A composite plan of the Roman military features at the 41-42 High Street site.

The *via decumana* was resurfaced and widened on at least one occasion. The original roadside ditch that was probably contemporary with the first use of the street was filled in when this widening took place. The street in its widened form was probably provided with a replacement roadside ditch; evidence of what appears to have been a ditch parallel to the widened street was recovered. One of the more unusual discoveries was a partially robbed-out stone wall (probably of Roman military date) on the Roman alignment and running parallel to the *via decumana* on its south-eastern side. With the exception of the legionary bath-house all structures within the fortress which have been excavated to date were constructed of wood. It has been suggested (Henderson 1988, 100-1) that this substantial wall, constructed of volcanic stone, was the footing for a raised water channel (aqueduct) carrying water to the bath-house. The bath-house, erected c. AD 60-5 (Henderson 1988) would have required its own copious water supply, the only source for which existed to the north-east of the fortress. An obvious route for the aqueduct if it were to have served the bath-house would have been along the south-eastern side of the *via decumana*. The bath-house itself was situated in a plot at the rear of the *principia* immediately south-east of the *via decumana*. A number of water-pipe trenches of Roman military date were discovered in 1977 in a position that would have been very close to the

north-western corner of the *insula* that held the bath-house. One of these pipes may have been the principal main from the aqueduct (Bidwell 1979, 60). It is possible that the second roadside ditch was infilled at the same time that the aqueduct wall was constructed, volcanic stone was observed in the backfill of the ditch. The area between the aqueduct wall and the *via decumana* was probably utilised for a covered thoroughfare flanking the street. A number of post-pits suggest the presence of a portico (a colonnaded walkway) alongside the aqueduct wall.

1.7 Conclusions

The excavations at 41-42 High Street were significant in confirming the suspected line of the *via decumana* within the fortress. Of great importance also was the discovery of the stone wall that almost certainly represented the footing of the aqueduct supplying water to the legionary bath-house. 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 were drawn by T. Ives and were photographed for reduction by G. Young. The 800 series plan was drawn by B. Jupp. The matrices were produced by A.G.Collings who also typed Section 2 of the text. Pottery listings were provided by G. Langman.

Bibliography

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 Grew F.O. 1981 'Roman Britain in 1980: Sites explored', *Britannia* 12, 358.
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 Holbrook N. and Bidwell P.T. 1992 *Roman Pottery From Exeter 1980-1990*, Report of the Exeter Archaeological Field Unit: 92.30.
 Salvatore J.P. and Henderson C.G. forthcoming *The Roman Legionary Fortress at Exeter*, Exeter Archaeological Reports.

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 sequence is presented in the form of a context matrix. The matrix has 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

Only one context matrix has been produced for the site. The group or sub-group number is found immediately to the

lefthand side of the contexts that form the group or sub-grouping.

2.2 Group and sub-group identification

The Roman military contexts for the 41-42 High Street site have been divided into four groups. Each group represents an archaeological event. 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.

Stratigraphic relationships between the groups are illustrated by the group/sub-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 sub-group descriptions.

The stratigraphic relationships between the sub-groups are themselves illustrated by the group/sub-group matrix.

2.3 Context information

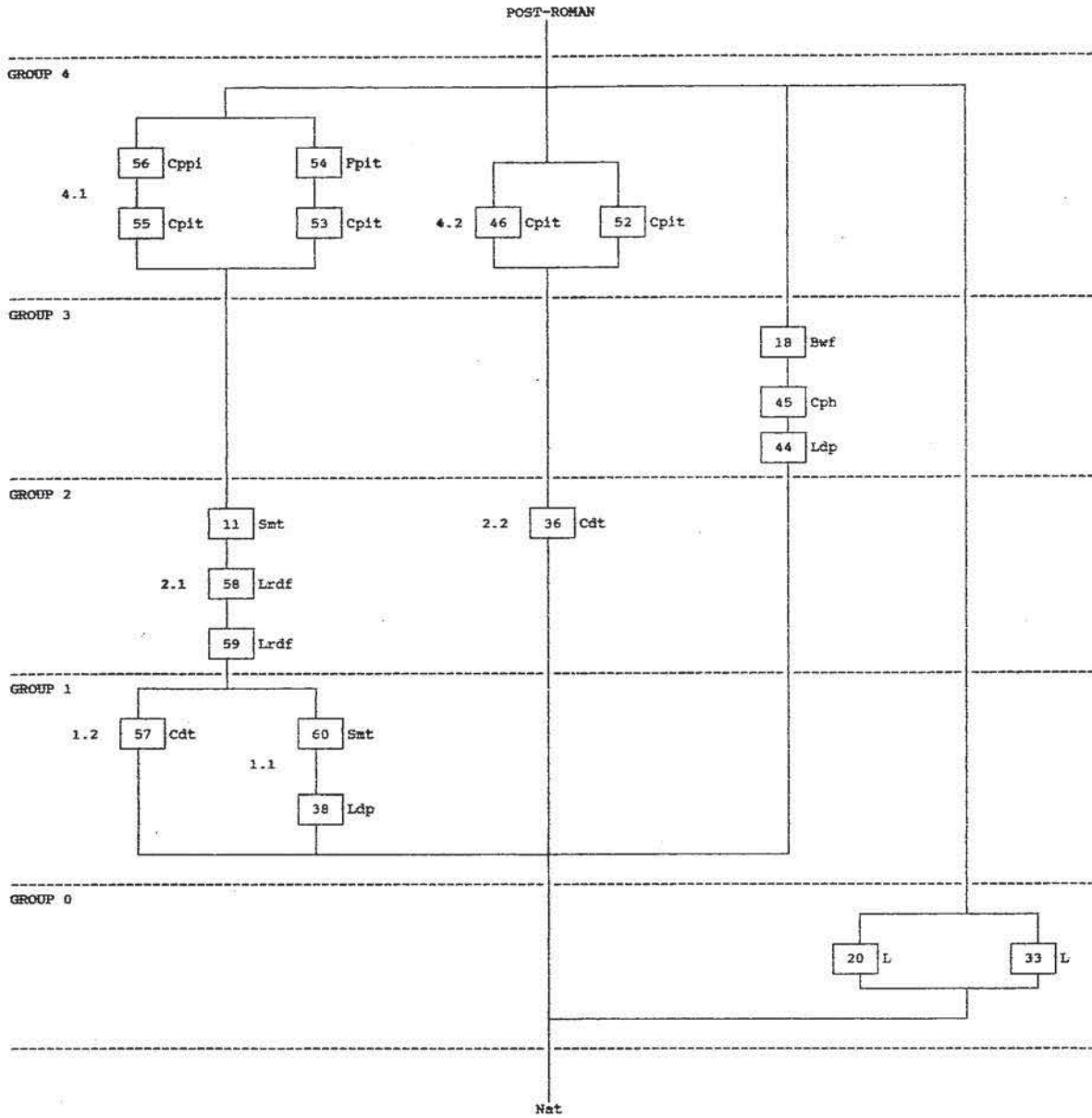
Information about individual contexts is provided in two forms. Firstly, the context number as it appears in the context matrix is annotated with an abbreviated 'type' description (e.g. Cph = Cut, post hole). The glossary of abbreviations is given at the beginning of the matrix diagram. Secondly, a standardised summary description of each context in numerical order is included in the report.

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

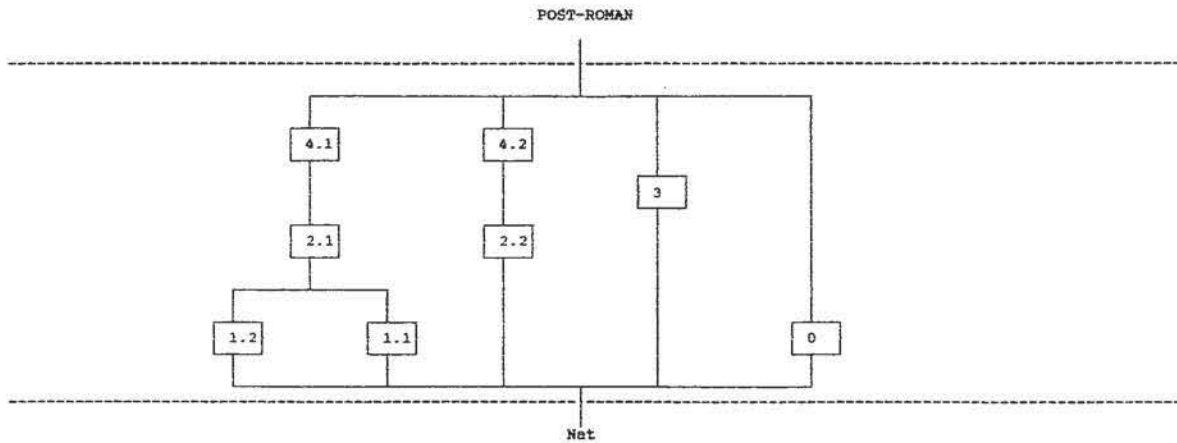
List of abbreviations (for matrices).

Cut	C
Fill	F
Layer	L
Surface	S
Ditch	dt
Dump	dp
Metalling	mt
Natural	nat
Pit	pit
Post-hole	ph
Post-pipe	ppi
Post-pit	ppt
Road foundation	rdf
Wall footings	wf

MATRIX 1



GROUP/SUB-GROUP MATRIX



GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND SUB-GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

Group 0

This group concerns two layers (20, 33) found on the site which seemed to constitute disturbed natural; both contained charcoal fragments, and early Roman potsherds. They were truncated and subsequently sealed by post-Roman deposits. Contains contexts: 20, 33.

Group 1 (Significant contexts from Group 1 are shown on Fig. 3/1)

Group 1 concerns the earliest recognised period of Roman activity on the site, this being the establishment of a street on a north-east to south-west orientation (later recognised as the *via sagularis*). The first surface of the street did not have any visible make-up layers underneath it and appeared to have been laid directly onto the pre-existing ground surface. The street was provided with a ditch along its south-eastern side. Contains sub-groups: 1.1, 1.2.

Sub-group 1.1

This sub-group concerns the first street surface of small compacted pebbles lain directly over disturbed natural, possibly representative of the original turf. The full width of the street was not seen but a width of some 2m on the south-east side was observed. Contains contexts: 38, 60.

Sub-group 1.2

This sub-group concerns the ditch which was almost certainly contemporary with the street (1.1). It was aligned parallel to the street (NE/SW). The ditch was just over 1m wide and 0.35m deep as excavated. Contains context: 57.

Group 2 (Significant contexts from Group 2 are shown on Fig. 3/2)

Group 2 concerns the widening of the street. This involved the infilling of the first roadside ditch (sub-group 1.2). The first ditch was probably replaced by another some 3.5m further to the south-east (sub-group 2.2). The street was widened by at least 2m along its south-eastern edge and probably more if the replacement ditch was immediately adjacent to the street metalling.

Contains sub-groups: 2.1, 2.2.

Sub-group 2.1

This sub-group concerns the subsequent widening and resurfacing of the street. Two make-up layers were put down (58-59) followed by a thick metalled surface (11) which extended the road width and sealed the first roadside ditch. Due to later disturbance it was not possible to determine the full extent of this widening operation although the street appears not to have extended beyond ditch 36 (sub-group 2.2).

Contains contexts: 11, 58, 59.

Sub-group 2.2

This sub-group concerns a roadside ditch, cut parallel to the first but some 3.5m to the south-east. It may have been contemporary with and associated with the widening of the street although there is no direct evidence of this. The ditch was 0.60m wide and 0.44m deep as excavated.

Contains context: 36.

Group 3 (Significant contexts from Group 3 are shown on Fig. 3/3)

A length of stone wall (18) running parallel to the street (NE/SW), about 4.5m south-east of the recorded metalling, was discovered. This wall was later robbed in the Roman period leaving only its lowest courses of volcanic stones set in a firm gravel and clay mixture. The wall footing was c.0.70m wide at its base and was built over a layer of compact gravels (44). A shard of Flavian samian associated with the wall may have derived from the robbing operation.

Contains contexts; 18, 44, 45.

Group 4 (Significant contexts from Group 4 are shown on Fig. 3/4)

This group concerns four post-pits that may have been associated as part of a structure, perhaps a colonnaded walkway built parallel to the street along its south-eastern side. The two foremost post-pits (sub-group 4.1) were smaller in their dimensions than the two post-pits (sub-group 4.2) that were located closer to wall 18 which would appear to have had a greater load-bearing capacity.

Contains sub-groups 4.1, 4.2.

Sub-group 4.1

This sub-group concerns two post-pits (53, 55) that were cut through the existing street surface on its south-eastern side (sub-group 2.1). They were of similar diameter, 0.8m and 0.7m respectively, and may have been associated. One of the post-pits (53) was found to have contained a shard of Flavian samian.

Contains contexts: 53, 54, 55, 56.

Sub-group 4.2

This sub-group concerns two post-pits (46, 52) that cut the later roadside ditch (sub-group 2.2). Pit 52 was 1.30m deep with a diameter of 1.24m; pit 46 was at least 0.70m deep.

Contains contexts: 46, 52.

GROUP / MATRIX INDEX

Context	Group	Matrix
11	2.1	1
18	3	1
20	0	1
33	0	1
36	2.2	1
38	1.1	1
44	3	1
45	3	1
46	4.2	1
52	4.2	1
53	4.1	1
54	4.1	1
55	4.1	1
56	4.1	1
57	1.2	1
58	2.1	1
59	2.1	1
60	1.1	1

2.5 The context descriptions and main indices

List of abbreviations (for contexts).

Length	Le
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

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

11	Street surface, reddish brown compact gravel and pebbles. The result of a widening of the street as it sealed ditch 57. D = 0.12-0.15m.	55	Post-hole, post-pipe 56, fill of dull orange brown gravel, very compact, volcanic stones, charcoal flecks, fine brown loam, tile flecks. Diam = 0.70m, D = 0.40m.
18	Stone base / wall, possibly for aqueduct. Volcanic stones, occasional pebbles, firmly set in a gravel and loam mix. Le = 7m, Wth = 0.7m, D = 0.12m.	56	Post-pipe in 55, reddish brown very fine loam, charcoal flecks, small tile chippings. Diam = 0.20m, D = 0.40m.
20	Disturbed natural, dirty dull orange gravel, compact, with charcoal fragments, volcanic chippings.	57	Roadside ditch, sealed by 11, three fills: 1) dull grey loam with pebbles; 2) dull orange brown gravel, pebbles, volcanic chips; 3) fine silty gravel, fewer pebbles than 2): backfill appeared to be street gravels, contemporary with 60. Le = 5.7m, Wth = 1.05m, D = 0.35m.
33	Degraded natural, dull orange brown gravel / pebbles in clay, very compact, charcoal flecks, occasional potsherd. D = unrecorded.	58	Street make-up, grey, small pebbles in fine silt, compact. D = 0.07m.
36	Ditch, aligned NE-SW; three fills: 1) dull yellow clay, charcoal flecks, small volcanic chips, large volcanic stones with very stony gravelly loam; 2) fire clay loam, dull red brown with charcoal flecks; 3) yellow clay silt with charcoal flecks. Le = 5.5m, Wth = 0.6m, D = 0.44m.	59	Street make-up, under 58, light orange loose gravel, many small pebbles. D = 0.18m.
38	Disturbed natural, possibly old turfline, dull olive yellow clay, compact with charcoal flecks. Varied in thickness. D = 0.05m.	60	Street surface, only found to N of 57, very compacted small pebbles, charcoal flecks. D = 0.08m.
44	Layer under 18, dull orange compact gravel, loam traces, pebbles. D = 0.18m.		
45	Post-hole below 18, cuts 44, grey clay loam, very soft, volcanic chippings. Dimensions unrecorded.		
46	Post-pit cutting 36, fill of very dull orange gravel with charcoal, pebbles around volcanic packing stones. Diam = 1.2m, D = 0.70m (unbottomed).		
52	Pit, two fills: 1) dull brown compact gravel, many pebbles and stones; 2) soft grey black loam with water-worn pebbles. Large volcanic stones towards the bottom of L1. Diam = 1.24m, D = 1.30m.		
53	Post-pit, fill 54, with large volcanic stones. Diam = 0.8m, D = unrecorded.		
54	Fill of 53, soft light dull brown fine loam with dull green soft cess / loam, small pebbles.		

GENERAL CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Type	Plan
11	Surface	
18	Build	801
20	Layer	
33	Layer	
36	Cut	801
38	Layer	
44	Layer	
45	Cut	
46	Cut	801
52	Cut	801
53	Cut	801
54	Fill	
55	Cut	801
56	Cut	
57	Cut	801
58	Layer	
59	Layer	
60	Surface	801

ARCHIVE SECTION INDEX

Context	Number	Sheet	Location
11	7, 11	-	801
18	4, 9	-	801
36	5	-	801
44	4, 9	-	801
46	3	-	801
52	13	-	801
55	8	-	801
56	8	-	801
57	7, 11, 12	-	801
58	7, 11	-	801
59	7,	-	801
60	7	-	801

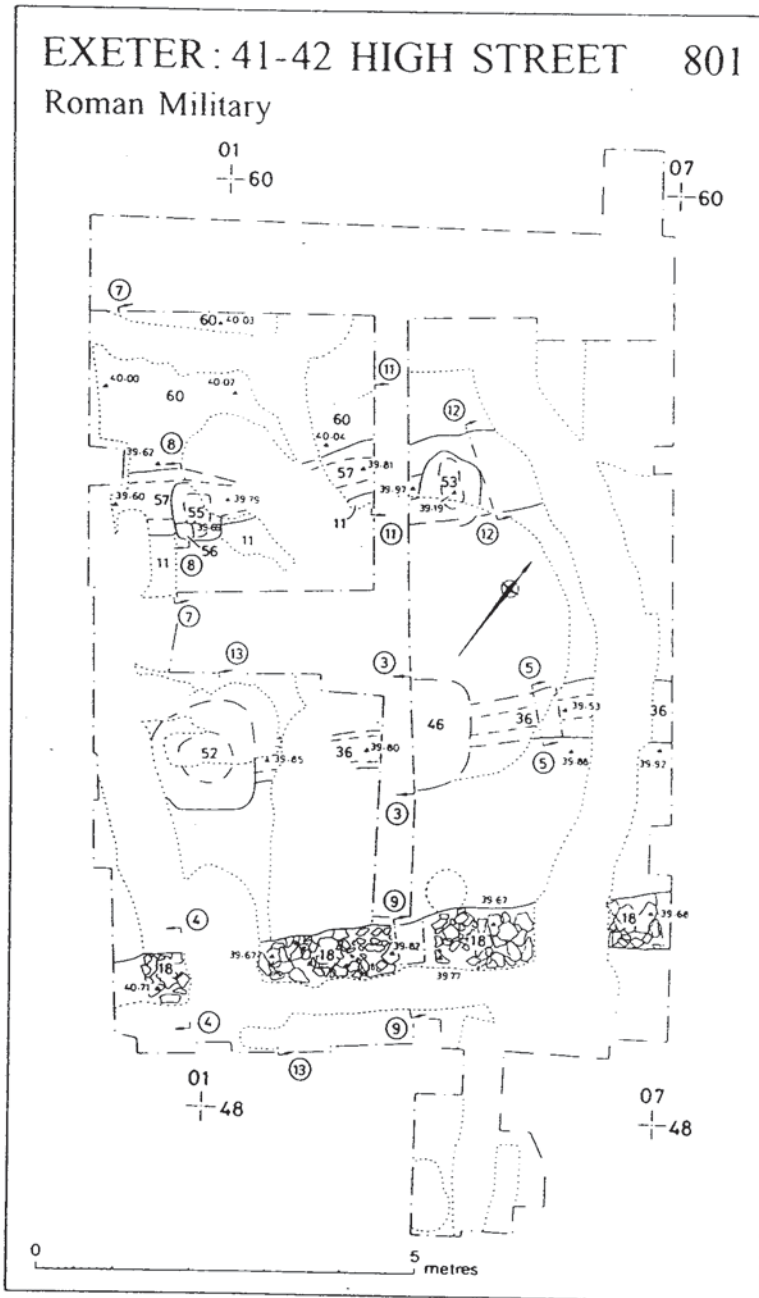


Fig. 4 Plan of the Roman military remains (801). Scale 1:100

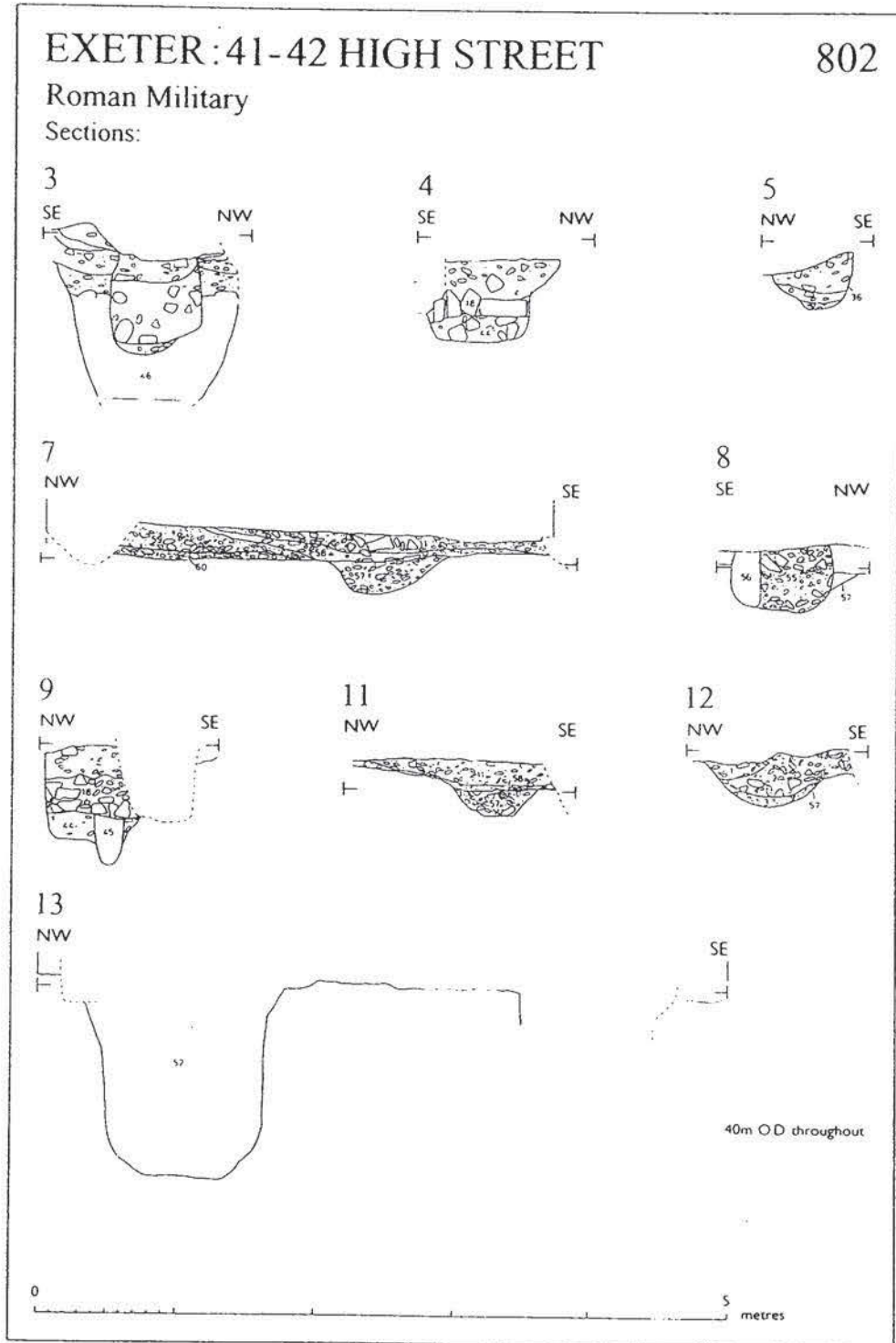


Fig. 5 Sections through the Roman military remains (802). Scale 1:50

SECTION 3

3 The finds listings and other indices

List of abbreviations for finds inventory

<i>Fabric No.</i>	<i>Type</i>
31*	South-East Dorset Black-Burnished Ware
40*	South-Western Black-Burnished Ware
151*	Exeter Sandy Grey Ware
190*	Fortress Ware B
191*	Fortress Ware C
220	Butt Beaker (EAR 1)
373*	Imitation <i>Terra Nigra</i> Type
401/406 *	Flagon fabric
435/440*	Flagon fabric
451*	Flagon fabric
500	Samian South Gaulish Type
503	Lyon Ware (Pre-Flavian)
517	<i>Terra Nigra</i> (Gallo-Belgic ware)
1000	Unspecified/Unclassified fabric

<i>Type abb.</i>	<i>Type</i>
BKR	Beaker
CAM	<i>Camulodunum</i>
CP	Cooking Pot
Dr	Dragendorff

For descriptions and discussions of fabrics and forms mentioned see Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, Exeter Archaeological Reports 4.

(* = Fabric Number used in EAR 4)

Miscellaneous

ERE	Estimated Rim equivalent
Wt	Weight

FINDS INVENTORY AND DATING EVIDENCE

Pottery

11

Fabric 191

18

Fabric 40
Fabric 406
Fabric 440

(handle)

Fabric 500

Type Dr.18 Wt 3 ERE 4

(Flavian)

Type Dr.18 Wt 5

(Pre-Flavian)

Fabric 517

Type CAM 16

20

Fabric 40
Fabric 406
Fabric 7435
Fabric 500

Type Dr.27 Wt 2 (1C)

Type Dr.37 Wt 3 (1C)

33 (NB: 1 medieval sherd, intrusive)

Fabric 151

Fabric 440

36

Fabric 31

Fabric 406

Fabric 500

Type Dr.27 Wt 3
(Pre-Flavian)

45

Fabric 500

Type Dr.27 Wt 7 (1C)

46

Fabric 373

Type BKR (biconical)

Fabric 406

Fabric 503

52

Fabric 40

Type CP

Type CP

Fabric 151

Fabric 190

Fabric 220

Fabric 401

Type 1.1

Fabric 406

Fabric 435

Fabric 440

Fabric 500

Type Dr.18 Wt 4 (?1C)

Type Dr.29 Wt 10 ERE 6 (1C)

Fabric 503

54

Fabric 500

Type Dr.29 Wt 15

(Late Flavian)

55

Fabric 31

Fabric 40

Fabric 406

Fabric 451

57

Fabric 1000

(1 sherd oxidised fabric)

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX

<i>Context</i>	<i>Slide</i>
18	72/3,4,16,18,20,26,27,29,35