

**95-103 HIGH STREET
BRAINTREE
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING AND EXCAVATION**



Essex County Council

Field Archaeology Unit

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CONTENTS

	Page
Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	2
1.1 Planning Background	2
1.2 Report and Archive	2
1.3 Abbreviations Used in the Report	2
2.0 Background	2
2.1 Location, Geology and Topography	2
2.2 Historical and Archaeological Background	3
3.0 Aims and Objectives	5
4.0 Methods	5
5.0 Results	6
5.1 North-east area: Trenches A to F	6
5.2 South-west area: Trenches G to M	9
6.0 Finds	11
6.1 Medieval and Post-medieval Material	11
6.2 Roman Material	12
6.3 Recommendations for Further Work	13
7.0 Environmental Material	13
8.0 Conclusions	14
8.1 Late Iron Age and Roman	14
8.2 Saxon and Medieval	15
8.3 Post-medieval and Modern	16
9.0 Assessment of Results	16
Acknowledgements	17
Bibliography	18

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Fieldwork Data	19
Appendix 2: Finds Data	23
Appendix 3: Archive Index	24
Appendix 4: Essex Historic Environment Record Sheet	25

FIGURES

1.	Location plan	28
2.	Trench locations	29
3.	Roman and medieval features	30
4.	North-east area trenches	31
5.	Section of Trench B	32
6.	South-west area trenches	33

**95-103 HIGH STREET
BRAINTREE, ESSEX
MONITORING AND EXCAVATION**

SUMMARY

Client: Courtmead plc

NGR: TL757229

Planning Application No: BTE/219/03 & BTE/1491/03

Site Code: BT40

Project No: 1375

Date of Fieldwork: 06/08/04 - 23/02/05

Archaeological monitoring and limited excavation was carried out on the foundation trenches of a new residential development at 95-103, High Street, Braintree. The archaeological work was undertaken by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Courtmead plc as a result of a condition on planning consent. The site fronts onto the north-west side of London Road, originally the Roman road from Braintree to Chelmsford, and incorporates the areas of two previous archaeological investigations, now published: 97-99 High Street (Hickling 2002) and 103-105 High Street (Pearson 2002). These investigations recorded evidence of Late Iron Age, Roman, medieval and post-medieval activity to the rear of buildings along the London Road frontage.

The present investigation revealed fragmentary Roman remains within the north-east and south-west parts of the site, in localised areas which had survived truncation from later post-medieval and modern activity. Roman features recorded in the north-east included a rough metalled surface with parts of a possible timber structure, and a large 3rd-4th century pit. In the south-west a further part of a previously excavated large mid-2nd century pit was recorded, along with a few smaller Roman features. Altogether, these features provide further evidence of gravelled surfaces and pits as recorded in the earlier excavations, dating to the 2nd to 4th centuries, and representing yard areas 20m or more back from the frontage onto the former Roman road.

Two medieval pits were recorded in the south-west and the north-east areas of the site, but otherwise the earliest evidence of post-Roman activity was in the form of pits and a well dating to the later 17th and 18th centuries, representing typical back yard activity to the rear of the existing buildings at the street frontage (refurbished in the present development), at least one of which may date from the late medieval period.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out under an archaeological condition placed on the planning applications BTE/219/03 and BTE/1491/03 for construction of residential blocks to the rear of 95-99 and 101-103 High Street Braintree (Fig 2).

The monitoring work was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of Courtmead plc under the terms of an archaeological condition placed on planning consent in accordance with Planning Policy Guideline 16 (PPG16). The condition was placed by Braintree District Council following specialist advice from the Essex County Council Heritage Environment Management team (ECC HEM), as the development site lies in an area of high archaeological potential (Medlycott 1998). The archaeological work followed a brief produced by ECC HEM (2005) and the written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by ECC FAU (2005).

1.2 Report and Archive

Copies of this report will be supplied to Courtmead Plc (including a copy to be forwarded to Braintree District Council), the Essex CC Historic Environment Management (HEM) and Record (HER) sections. A version will be uploaded to the Online Access Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>). The project archive will be deposited at Braintree Museum (Appendix 3).

1.3 Abbreviations used in the Report

ECC (Essex County Council), EHER (Essex Historic Environment Record), FAU (Field Archaeology Unit), HEM (Historic Environment Management), HER (historic Environment Record), IFA (Institute of Field Archaeologists), NGR (National Grid Reference), WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation).

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, Geology and Topography

The market town of Braintree is situated on a flat plateau between the valleys of the Rivers Brain and the Pant (Blackwater) (Fig 1). It is located at the junction of the A120 and A131, both of which were originally Roman roads. The development site fronts onto the north-west side of London Road with surface heights of between 67.7 and 67.9m OD. The ground falls away quite steeply towards the south-east and the river Brain. Generally, the modern ground

surface had been affected by recent development, especially in 2000-1. Prior to this, the area was under tarmac and used for occasional parking and as an outdoor seating area by patrons of Flacks Hotel, 103-105 High Street.

The underlying surface geology of this area is composed of glacial fluvial deposits of clay, sand and gravels between 66.0 and 67.3m OD (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

2.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

The archaeological background for this and other parts of Braintree has previously been extensively discussed by Havis (1993) and reviewed by Medlycott (1998). In view of this, only a summary of the most pertinent information is presented here. Small archaeological excavations have previously been carried out at 97-99 High Street (EHER 19098-9) and 103-105 High Street (EHER 19525) (Fig 3), and the present investigation incorporates both these areas.

2.2.1 Prehistoric

A Late Iron Age ditched enclosure was recorded under Pierrefitte Way, while previous excavations at College House (Essex Historic Environment Record 6297), 2 and 4 London Road (EHER 6295/6) have all produced Iron Age artefacts. Excavations at the Fountain (Hope 1982; 1983; and EHER 6356-6360) (Fig 1) and Boars' Head (EHER 16351-3) sites have yielded possible roundhouse gullies.

2.2.2 Roman

The Roman period saw the establishment of a small town (Havis 1993), initially in the area of Pierrefitte Way (Fig 1), but spreading north-east in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Throughout the Roman period, the urban area seems to have been confined within the angle formed by the western arm of Stane Street (A120/Rayne Road) and the London road (High Street/London Road). Patterns of minor roads and property boundaries have been recorded, suggesting planning, but so far there has been no evidence of defences. Based on excavations by Hope in 1983/87, Medlycott suggests that one of the streets of Roman Braintree should pass through the south-west of the development area to meet the High Street (Medlycott 1998). Roman structures have been recorded at several sites along Rayne Road, Pierrefitte Way and London Road (EHER 6295, 6293-4, 16351-3, 16356-7, 6367-2, 16866-7, 6356-60). Two substantial buildings were recorded at 7 Grenville Road (Garwood and Lavender 2000).

2.2.3 Saxon

Evidence for post-Roman activity in the town is limited. A possible sunken floored building was recorded at the Fountain site (Fig 1) (Hope 1982; 1983). The presence of agricultural activity has been defined within many investigations through Braintree by the identification of a 'dark-earth' sealing Roman deposits. The previous excavations at 97-99 High Street produced a single 5th to 6th century bead from a post-Roman soil horizon, suggesting an early Saxon presence in the area (Pearson 2002).

2.2.4 Medieval and Post-medieval

Braintree developed during the medieval period, with a market place situated to the north-east of the site on the junction between London Road/the High Street and Bank Street. A new town was created as a result of a royal grant to the Bishop of London in 1199. Tenements were established including the area running along side the western edge of the High Street. These originally may have been 20-25 metres in width but survive as plots half the size with buildings still standing originating from between the 15th and 18th century (Andrews 2002). Flacks Hotel has been identified as one of a series of these listed buildings fronting the High Street.

2.2.5 Previous Investigations of the Site

Two archaeological excavations have taken place previously on the site as part of development to the rear of what were once different properties. In July 2000 an open area excavation to the rear of 97-99 High Street was undertaken (Murray 2000; Pearson 2002; EHER 19098-9). The principal archaeological features recorded were Roman, of 2nd century date, comprising the truncated remains of a metalled surface, a robbed-out flint-and-chalk wall foundation and a large rubbish pit. A large 19th-century cellar had disturbed the southern part of the site. Limited excavation to the rear of 103-105 High Street in March 2001 (Hickling 2001; 2002) identified a Late Iron Age ditch, and several Roman features dating from the mid to late 2nd centuries: a large pit, ditches, gullies, post-holes and a midden (EHER 19525). The character of these features seems to suggest an 'urban backyard'. A large number of post-medieval and modern levelling deposits, pits, and post-holes were also identified from the more recent development of the site, in many cases truncating the underlying archaeological deposits.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the investigation was to determine and record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains threatened by the proposed development.

In particular, the archaeological work aimed to assess:

- Evidence of Late Iron Age and Roman occupation
- The presence and type of structural evidence on the site
- Evidence for production and/or processing
- The eco-factual and environmental potential of features and deposits

Further, non- site specific aims were to:

- Interpret the evidence in relation to the other recorded information from the town
- Relate this excavation to the other excavations in the immediate area

4.0 METHODS

Monitoring and excavation were carried out within the foundation trenches of the residential block behind 101-103 High Street, in the south-west of the site. An open area excavation was also proposed within the footprint of the new building to the rear of 95-99 High Street to the north-east of the development, in which excavation below 600mm was to be confined to the areas to be disturbed by the foundation trenches. In addition, detailed monitoring was to be undertaken for all associated service trenches for both buildings, as was any other significant disturbance by development groundworks.

Prior to commencing groundworks, it became evident that the area within the footprint of the building in the north-east of the development was to suffer minimal disturbance beyond penetration of the modern overburden. On consultation with ECC HEM, it was agreed to limit any excavation to within the foundation trenches, negating the need for open area excavation.

The excavation trenches were opened under archaeological supervision, using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Hand excavation of all archaeological deposits was undertaken within the foundation trenches down to a maximum depth of 1.2m. For safety reasons, deposits exceeding 1.2m deep were machine-excavated under archaeological supervision.

All surfaces were sufficiently cleaned to ensure that any features present were visible. Archaeological features and deposits were excavated using hand tools. Features that cut through post medieval overburden and were obviously modern were not excavated.

The work was carried out according to regional standards in field archaeology. Standard ECC FAU recording and excavation methods were used. All fieldwork methods and recording conformed to the codes of practice and guidance issued by the IFA and adhered to regional guidelines (Gurney 2003).

5.0 RESULTS

The site comprised two distinct areas of archaeological investigation within the development area, corresponding to the locations of the residential blocks and their associated service runs. The results of both area excavation and watching brief works are therefore grouped into north-east and south-west site areas. The north-east area comprises Trenches A to F, and the south-west Trenches G to M. The location of each trench is shown in Figure 2.

Further context information is presented in Appendix 1. Trench descriptions are followed by finds and environmental reports (section 6), with additional artefact data presented in Appendix 2.

5.1 North-east Area

Trenches B, C, D, E and F formed the foundations of the new building to the rear of 95-97 High Street, on the north-east side of the development area (Fig 3). Trench A was dug to accommodate the foundation for a new boundary wall to the rear of 95-99 High Street. Trenches B (Fig 3 and 4), C and D (not illustrated) contained archaeological features and deposits of Roman and medieval/post-medieval date. Trenches E and F contained no archaeologically significant remains.

Generally, the Roman archaeological remains survived patchily as islands of horizontal layers and fragmentary discrete features overlying and cutting into the natural clay at a level of 67.1m OD, separated by areas of post-medieval pits and other intrusions.

Medieval and post-medieval layers and features were overlain by overburden between 0.20m and 0.32m thick, and further disturbance caused by walls, foundations, and services associated with previous modern development.

5.1.1 Trench A

Trench A contained predominantly modern brick-built structures and services. Archaeological features present dated to the post-medieval period, with no evidence of significant earlier remains. The principal features encountered were brick-built structures; well 101 dating to the 18th century, and wall footings 124 and 129 that represented parts of a demolished

building dating to the 19th century. The stratigraphic sequence of rubble and dumped deposits within this trench apparently derive from levelling and build-up associated with the post-medieval structures. All features and deposits were sealed by a gravel layer overlain by tarmac.

5.1.2 Trench B

Archaeological remains were spread throughout Trench B. The most complex stratigraphic sequences were in the centre and south-east of the trench, with a simpler sequence at its north-west limit, due to significant truncation before overburden layer 137 was deposited. Significant archaeological remains were fragmentary, with layers and deposits only surviving between later post-medieval and modern intrusions.

The surface of the natural clay within Trench B, layer 133, was at 67m OD and rose slightly from the north-west to level off at 67.2m OD, before being truncated to the south-east by undated pit 174 (Fig. 4). Overlying the natural clay at the north-west end of the trench were contemporaneous layers 134 and 142 (Fig. 3) and 211 (Fig. 4), defining a rough metalled surface 0.12m thick and following the natural slope. Post-hole 163 apparently defined the south-eastern limit of metalled surface 142, with layer 172 beyond it containing oyster shell, representing occupation, probably in the form of a beaten earth surface. Layer 135, a darker more humic soil containing oyster shell, burnt daub and charcoal, may suggest an accumulation above these surfaces.

A large pit, 145, truncated the metalled surface and overlying accumulation 135. The pit contained a series of mixed fills from which a few sherds of Roman pottery was retrieved. A second large pit, 195, was present towards the south east in Trench B, cutting from the natural surface, and continued into Trench D. The pit approached 4m in diameter but its full extent and depth could not be established. The uppermost 0.4m of the pit was excavated, and its fills contained predominantly 3rd to late 4th century pottery, with residual pottery from the late 1st century. In addition, burnt clay fragments and animal bone were retrieved. Layers 191 and 192 appear to be dumped material sealing pit 195, in the form of midden deposits producing oyster shell, bone and slag fragments. They could be late Roman deposits sealing pit 195, but could equally be post-Roman. Pit 174 was filled by deposit 185 that also contained oyster shell and charcoal, but as no dating evidence was retrieved it is impossible to decide whether this was a Roman feature or of later date.

The post-medieval features exposed within Trench B comprised three large post holes, 143, 197 and 186, and small pits 169 and 188. Post-holes 143, 197 and pit 188 all contained sherds of Roman pottery but these were clearly residual, as 197 cut from a much higher level, while 143 and 188 also contained post-medieval artefacts from the same fill. Features

143, 169, and 186 were securely dated to the post-medieval period. Layer 136 was a mixed deposit sealing pits 169 and 145, and probably representing the disturbed base of the modern overburden.

The modern sequence was denoted by additional intrusions and levelling layers. Modern 20th century overburden, 137, was present across most of the trench, sealing all earlier stratigraphy, and in the north-west truncating earlier features. It was truncated by a foundation trench 138 containing an apparent brick wall footing. Deposits 141, 164, and 194 represented modern levelling prior to the laying of tarmac and concrete.

5.1.3 Trench C

A large area of modern disturbance was revealed in Trench C, towards its south-west limit. In the north-east half of the trench two pits were identified, both of which remain undated. Where its northern end joined Trench B, in which archaeological remains were less affected by later truncation, a similar stratigraphic sequence was exposed.

The natural clay was sealed by layer 200, a compacted gravel floor surface or yard area associated with the datable Roman activity in Trench B. Overlying this was layer 199, a soil with abundant oyster shell inclusions that may be a further part of the Roman occupational build-up in the area. Pit 183 cut layer 199, but lacked clarity, definition and dateable artefacts. Pit 182 was not present in section and, coupled with the absence of artefacts, its relationship to other remains on site was not ascertained. This said, both pits 182 and 183 are of potential Roman date. Truncation within the trench was severe, cutting down to within 0.08m above the natural clay, whose surface was at a height of 67.1m OD.

No medieval or post-medieval remains were encountered. All significant remains were overlain by the same modern levelling deposit 137 as present elsewhere across the area. Above this was, 141, a blanket context defining modern disturbance and intrusive materials or features.

5.1.4 Trench D

At the north-east end of Trench D a continuation of 3rd/4th century pit 195 was recorded at 66.74m OD. This feature had an estimated diameter approaching 4m and possible interpretations include the top of a well or a large quarry or refuse pit. Midden layer 191 sealed 195 which was then overlain by midden layer 192; both these deposits were also present in Trench B. Overlying 192 was a substantial layer 205 that ran the length of the trench and formed what appeared to be a dark cultivation soil, 0.52m thick, not seen elsewhere on the site due to post-medieval and modern truncation. This layer contained tile and bone fragments along with crushed oyster shell. The base of the layer was present at

66.76m OD, lying on top of a potential Roman ground surface into which pit 195 was cut. Victorian rubbish pits 201 and 204 (seen in section) cut through 205 and their base was below the bottom of the trench. They contained glazed pottery, animal bone, glass bottles and brick or tile fragments.

5.1.5 Trench E

The foundation trench forming Trench E was cut to a depth of 1.1m. The uppermost 0.8m comprised overburden, comprising brick, mortar, tile, rubble and disturbance from a modern foundation. On exposure of the natural clay, no archaeological remains were visible.

5.1.6 Trench F

The foundation trench forming Trench F was cut to a depth of approaching 1.2m. The stratigraphic sequence in the south-west end of the trench had been disturbed by the continuation of the modern wall seen in Trench E. On exposure of the natural horizon, no archaeological remains were visible.

5.2 South-west Area

Trenches G, H, I, J, K, L, and M formed the foundations of the new building to the rear of 95-97 High Street, located on the south-west side of the development area. Trench G partially lay within an area previously recorded in 2001. A further part of a large 2nd century pit, 25, and a small post-hole, 27, from the 2001 excavation, were revealed, cleaned and planned but not excavated. Trenches H and K contained no significant archaeological remains.

Service trenches L and M were monitored under watching brief conditions and crossed areas of site that had previously been disturbed by modern services and previous archaeological trenches.

5.2.1 Trench G

Sealed beneath a dirty redeposited natural clay layer was gully or pit 156, cutting the natural at 66.2m OD. Its fill, 157, contained a few sherds of Roman pottery. Pit 152 containing sherds of post-medieval pottery together with residual Roman artefacts. Features of modern date, gully 154, post-hole 160 and pit 149, post-dated this activity and were sealed by topsoil.

Towards the south-east of the trench, pit 25 and post-hole 27 were continuations of features excavated during previous archaeological work (Hickling 2001; 2002). These features were re-exposed and partially excavated to confirm their identification. Seven sherds of Roman pottery dated to the mid 2nd century were recovered from the fill of pit 25, mirroring the mid 2nd date of the large group of pottery recovered when the pit was first excavated in 2001.

5.2.2 Trench H

Trench H, along the north eastern side of the new build, was machine-excavated to a depth of 0.7m at its north-west end, exposing the underlying natural clays sealed beneath a thick layer of modern rubble and construction debris. The overburden increased in depth to over 1m towards the south-east of the trench, cutting into and truncating the natural clay. No archaeological remains were visible.

5.2.3 Trench I

Trench I contained predominantly undated remains, although a sherd of medieval pottery was retrieved from a pit or post-hole, 175, that continued beyond the limits of the trench. This feature was heavily truncated by a modern service drain that disturbed much of the strata within the trench.

In the south-west of the trench were undated features 166 and 167. 166 was a poorly-defined feature with no discernable function or form, truncated by pit 164. The features were covered by a heavily disturbed modern horizon of rubble/ construction debris and truncated by a modern drain trench.

5.2.4 Trench J

Irregular feature 158 represented a large tree bole towards the north-west end of Trench J. This was cut by a large oval modern rubbish pit 177; one of several modern pit cuts in the trench. The pit was over 2.5m in diameter and observed to a depth of 0.90m. A modern service trench truncated much of the features within the trench and all remains were sealed by a 0.28m-thick layer of overburden.

5.2.5 Trench K

Trench K defined the NW end of the new build and was reduced to a depth exposing the natural glacial clays. No archaeological remains were observed.

5.2.6 Trench L

Trench L was excavated to a depth of 1.14m, exposing natural glacial clays. Above the clays were several overlapping soil horizons of archaeological potential with similarities to those observed in section in Trench B in the north-west of the development area. No archaeological features were observed. Brick rubble comprised the upper 0.70m the trench.

5.2.7 Trench M

Trench M was a service trench excavated to a depth of 0.70m and as a result did not impact upon the archaeological horizon. Brick walls and foundations of the more recent phases of

the sites development, and the backfill from the previous excavations at 97-99 High Street (Murray 2000; Pearson 2002), were exposed.

6.0 FINDS by Joyce Compton

Finds were recovered from a total of twenty-seven contexts. All of the material has been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full details can be found in Appendix 2. Fifteen contexts contained either modern or post-medieval finds, mainly comprising bricks, roof tile fragments, and pottery. Two contexts are undated; fill 182 of pit 181 in Trench C contained a single iron nail and layer 191 in Trench B produced small quantities of animal bone, shell and slag.

6.1 Medieval and Post-medieval Material

A range of post-medieval finds was spread evenly across the site, many coming from the top fills of identified features. Sample bricks were recovered from the remains of structures in Trench A. The bricks from the well shaft and structure 117 are likely to be 18th century handmade types (following the typology in Ryan 1996, 94-6). The yellow mortar attached to the brick from 117 is an indication of a late 17th to 18th century date. The bricks from structures 120 and 129, with white mortar attached, are later, probably 19th century. The dimensions of these reflect the standardised brick measurements introduced during the Victorian period.

Six contexts, mainly in Trenches B and D, produced post-medieval pottery, amounting to 17 sherds, weighing 278g. The pottery types range from locally-made post-medieval red earthenwares to factory-made 18th- and 19th-century ceramics. Fill 170 of pit 169 in Trench B contained modern stonewares. Bottle glass came from two contexts, mainly derived from 19th-century mineral water bottles. The neck of a wine bottle with an applied string-lip was found in layer 206 in Trench D. This type of neck is dated to the second half of the 18th century. A sherd of window glass retaining marks from the lead comes, which held the pane in position, was found in fill 144 of pit 143 in Trench B. Clay pipes were recovered from fill 205 of pit 204 in Trench D. The complete bowl has rouletting around the lip and a flat heel and is an Oswald (1975) Type 7 pipe dated 1660-80. Small amounts of animal bone were recovered from several contexts, and twelve oyster shells were found in layer 191. Both are likely to represent the disposal of food waste.

Single sherds of medieval pottery, all residual and weighing 63g in total, came from four contexts. Cooking-pot rim sherds were found in fill 153 of pit 152 in Trench G and fill 176 of

post-hole 175 in Trench I. A tiny glazed body sherd came from layer 208 in Trench D. Fill 170 of pit 169 produced a late medieval base sherd, with patchy glaze.

6.2 Roman Material

Roman finds were recovered in small amounts, mainly from the lower fills of features in Trenches B and D. A range of finds types is present, although the bulk of the assemblage comprises pottery. In total, 41 sherds, weighing 447g, of Late Iron Age and Roman pottery were recorded, with Trenches B and D producing 80% by weight of this total. The pottery was recorded using the ECC FAU Fabric Series, and, where possible, the form typology devised for Chelmsford (Going 1987, 13-54). Most of the sherds are in coarse fabrics, which are not closely datable within the Late Iron Age and Roman periods. Three contexts can be dated more precisely, however. Lens 210 in Trench D contained a C16 bowl rim (Going 1987, fig.3) which is a late 1st century type. The pottery from fill 209 of pit 195 contained several forms and fabrics which provide a general 3rd century date for the context. A sherd of late 4th century Oxford red colour-coated ware was recovered from fill 196 of the same feature. Of all the recorded features, pit 195 in Trenches B and D produced the largest amount of Roman pottery.

Trench G uncovered two features with Roman pottery, one of which (25) was part-excavated in 2001 (Hickling 2002, fig.2). The pottery from the fill, 26, was dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD (Martin 2002, table 2). Although the amount of finds from the re-exposed feature is smaller, the pottery is similarly dated to the mid 2nd century. The pottery from the second feature, 156, is not closely datable within the Roman period. In addition, single small sherds of residual Roman pottery were found in three contexts, one each in Trenches B, D and G.

Small quantities of animal bone were recovered from five contexts in all, again representing food waste, and a single oyster shell came from fill 189 of pit 188 in Trench B. Three contexts produced baked clay fragments, weighing 74g in total. The fragments are too small to determine whether they are structural daub.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Work

Nothing in the assemblage requires further work. Finds quantities are too small and the Roman material comes from features which had either been truncated or were disturbed by later (post-medieval) activity. This truncation has also been noted at previously excavated sites in the vicinity (Hickling 2002; Pearson 2002; Ennis and Pocock, forthcoming), resulting in mixed finds assemblages. All of the finds should be retained, except for some of the post-medieval material and the slag, which is undated. The bricks and the ironwork were

discarded following recording. The post-medieval glass was discarded on health and safety grounds, except for the 18th century wine bottle neck.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

A soil sample was taken from fill 147 of pit/ditch 145 in Trench B. The dried and sorted residue produced very little; further small animal bone fragments, some of which are burnt, a flint flake, five iron flakes/scales and 8g of baked clay. The dried flots contained modern root material and several molluscs only. The environmental material recovered from the flots is insufficient for study.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigation has demonstrated the extent, date and condition of archaeological remains within the development of areas to the rear of 95-103 High Street, Braintree.

The two previous excavations at 97-99 and 103-105 High Street (Pearson 2002; Hickling 2002) identified Roman remains comprising gravelled surfaces, pits, post-holes and midden deposits, to the rear of plots extending back from the Roman forerunner of the High Street/London Road. A soil layer overlying the Roman features indicates a hiatus during which the site area was cultivated during the Saxon and medieval periods. The High Street frontage was apparently built up again in the medieval period, and the earliest elements of the former Flack's Hotel, on the frontage of 103-5 High Street, date to the 15th century (Andrews 2002). Archaeological features dating from the 17th century onwards, including outbuildings, wells and pits, were recorded in yard areas behind the frontage buildings.

The present results supplement the results of previous archaeological investigations of the site, and provide insight into the nature of Roman and later development of the area. Generally, the archaeological evidence indicates fragmentary survival of Roman features, occasionally with an overlying soil layer also surviving, but with widespread post-medieval and modern truncation and disturbance over many areas of the site.

8.1 Late Iron Age and Roman

The investigation recovered a single sherd of Late Iron Age pottery, retrieved from a Roman context. No further evidence was recovered of the Late Iron Age ditch or pit 45 recorded in

the previous excavations at 103-105 High Street (Hickling 2001; 2002). This remains the sole Late Iron Age feature in the development area and implies peripheral activity to known occupation at Letch's Yard, the Fountain and other sites to the west (Ennis and Pocock in prep.).

Roman remains survived in two distinct areas. The first of these was located towards the north-east end of the site, in Trench B and the northern end of Trenches C and D (Fig 3). There was evidence of a rough external metalled surface with a possible associated timber structure or fence line. Although this surface is poorly dated, it can be correlated with cobbled surfaces previously recorded immediately to the west at 97-99 High Street (L1072, L1065 and L1062) and in the west of the site at 103-105 High Street (surface 11) that are dated to the 2nd century. These surfaces appear to form an extensive yard area to the north-west of the Roman road. A large pit or well, 195, at the junction of Trenches B and D is dated to the 3rd to late 4th centuries, and is clearly later than the gravelled surfaces.

In the second area, towards the south-west end of the site, there is evidence in Trench G of several Roman features dated to the 2nd century, contemporary with the gravelled surfaces. One of these, pit 25, was also excavated during the previous investigation at 103-105 High Street, when a large group of well-dated mid 2nd century pottery was recovered.

The 2nd century surfaces were overlain in several places by midden deposits containing quantities of oyster shell, burnt daub, and charcoal. Midden deposits 135, 191-192 and 199 can be related to similar deposits previously recorded at 97-99 High Street (L1006) and 103-105 High Street (layer 10). In previous excavations, midden deposits have been dated to the 2nd century, but the current investigation suggests these deposits continued to be dumped beyond the 4th century, as some of them sealed 4th-century pit 195 (see above). This may signify that much of the pottery in the midden layers is residual, or that they were deposited over an extended period of time.

Structural evidence is sparse, limited to possible remains of a timber structure in Trench B, and a probable foundation trench and partially preserved flint wall on the edge of the previous excavation at 103-105 High Street. Whilst the evidence is poor, the investigation does suggest the possibility that the gravel surfaces were related to or surrounded buildings.

8.2 Saxon and Medieval

The midden deposits that built up during the later Roman period were overlain by a thick soil deposit, which survived in Trench D (layer 205). This is interpreted as a cultivated soil, similar to that recorded on the previous excavations at 97-99 and 103-105 High Street. In

the previous excavations the soil was found to contain Saxon and medieval artefacts. It may relate to the Saxon development of the town, but no evidence of Saxon occupation was identified. Medieval activity on site was represented by a single pit in Trench I containing a few sherds of medieval pottery. In addition residual sherds of medieval pottery in several later features hint at medieval stratigraphy that could have been truncated by post-medieval and modern truncation disturbance.

8.3 Post-medieval and Modern

The post-medieval remains on site are indicative of back yard areas to the rear of buildings along the High Street frontage. The earliest post-medieval feature on site was datable to the mid/late 17th century. Modern overburden dating to the 20th century, including rubble construction deposits, covered the entire site. It included extensive disturbance from the recent building works to the rear of 97-99 and 103-55 High Street. In many parts of the site, especially in the north-east and centre, there was evidence of extensive truncation to below the surface of the natural clay, removing all archaeological features.

9.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The results of this investigation support the results of both previous excavations on the site, at 97-99 High Street (Pearson 2002) and 103-105 High Street (Hickling 2002). Both the previous and present investigations showed that archaeological deposits of the Roman and medieval periods had been extensively truncated by post-medieval and modern features, including recent groundworks.

The investigation provided no further evidence of the Late Iron Age development of this area, as seen on previously excavations in the Pierrefitte Way area to the west of the site. However, there was evidence of Roman development from the 2nd to 4th centuries that was comparable with that previously recorded at both 97-99 and 103-105 High Street. It is possible to characterise the site area as being largely external in the Roman period, with gravelled areas and pits in yard areas, presumably to the rear of plots related to the Roman road that ran along the line of the later High Street and London Road. Because of the limited nature of all of the archaeological investigations of the site, it is difficult to reconstruct a more complete ground plan of Roman development. In particular, there is some evidence to suggest the presence of Roman structures, but because this evidence survived and was recorded over such limited areas it is not properly understood.

The site evidence suggests a post-Roman hiatus with cultivation taking place in the Saxon and medieval periods, although again poor survival of the relevant levels prevents this evidence from being discussed in more detail. The post-medieval features on site merely confirm that the archaeological work took place in back yard areas to the rear of known late medieval and post-medieval buildings on the High Street frontage.

The poor survival of archaeological deposits, coupled with the limited areas of investigation, has made interpretation of function and significance of the archaeological remains difficult and as a result the excavation has provided insufficient evidence to satisfy current research agendas (Brown and Glazebrook 2000). However, the new evidence has added to the general understanding of the area, albeit fragmentary, and has placed the site firmly within the extent of the Roman town.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Essex CC Field Archaeology Unit thanks Mr Steve Webb of Courtmead PLC for commissioning and funding the archaeological investigation. Fieldwork was conducted by Ben Barker, Chris Down, Dave Smith and Adrian Turner. Digital illustrations were drawn by Andrew Lewsey. All finds were processed by Phil McMichael and assessed by Joyce Compton. The project was managed by Mark Atkinson and Patrick Allen of ECC FAU. Vanessa Clarke of ECC HEM team monitored the project.

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APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

Context No.	Fill of	Trench	Category	Details	Date
101	-	A	Well Shaft	Brick-built well shaft	Post med.
102	101	A	Backfill	Dark greyish brown sandy silt.	Post med.
103	101	A	Backfill	Dark yellowish brown clayey sandy silt.	Post med.
104	101	A	Backfill	Yellowish brown silty sand and rubble.	Post med.
105	101	A	Backfill	Dark grey ash.	Post med.
106	-	A	Cut	Large Pit – possible construction cut for 101.	Post med.
107	106	A	Fill	Dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt.	Post med.
108	106	A	Fill	Dark yellowish brown silty sandy clay.	Post med.
109	106	A	Fill	Dark yellowish brown sandy clay silt.	Post med.
110	-	A	Natural Geology	Mid yellowish brown clay.	-
111	-	A	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy silt.	Post med.
112	-	A	Layer	Dark brownish grey sandy silt with yellow sandy clay lenses.	Post med.
113	-	A	Layer	Dark brownish grey sandy silt.	Post med.
114	-	A	Layer	Sandy gravel.	Post med.
115	-	A	Layer	Tarmac surface.	Modern
116	-	A	Cut	Construction cut for wall 117.	Post med.
117	116	A	Wall	NW-SE aligned brick wall foundation.	Post med.
118	116	A	Fill	Mid yellow chalky clay.	Post med.
119	-	A	Layer	Greyish brown clayey sandy silt.	Post-med
120	121	A	Wall	NE-SW aligned brick wall foundation.	Post-med
121	-	A	Cut	Construction cut for wall 120.	Post-med
122	121	A	Fill	Dark brownish grey silty clay sand.	Post-med
123	-	A	Cut	Construction cut for wall 124.	
124	124	A	Wall	NW-SE aligned cellar wall.	
125	123	A	Fill	Dark yellowish brown silty clay sand.	
126	123	A	Fill	Mid yellow clay.	
127	-	A	Layer	Dark grey/black silty sand.	
128	-	A	Cut	Robber/demolition trench above wall 129.	Post-med
129	128	A	Wall	NW-SE aligned cellar wall.	Post-med
130	128	A	Fill	Demolition brick rubble in mid yellowish brown silty sand matrix.	Post-med
131	-	A	Layer	Orange sand.	
132	128	A	Fill	Dark yellowish brown silty clayey sand.	
133	-	B	Natural Geology	Mid yellowish brown sandy clay.	
134	-	B	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty sand.	
135	-	B	Layer	Dark brownish grey sandy silt.	
136	-	B	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty sand with mottle	

				orange clay lenses.	
137	-	B	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy silt.	
138	-	B	Cut	Construction cut for wall 139.	
139	138	B	Wall	Brick rubble wall foundation.	
140	138	B	Fill	Dark grey silty sand.	
141	-	B	Layer	Pale yellowish brown sandy gravel hoggin.	Modern
142	-	B	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty sand.	
143	-	B	Post-Hole	Ovoid cut with steep sides and concave base.	Post-med Roman
144	143	B	Fill	Dark yellowish brown sandy silt.	Post-med Roman
145	-	B	Cut	Large pit or ditch. NE-SW aligned. Concave sides with uneven base.	Roman
146	145	B	Fill	Pale yellowish brown sandy silt.	Roman
147	145	B	Fill	Pale greyish brown sandy silt.	Roman
148	145	B	Fill	Mid yellowish brown silty clayey sand.	Roman
149	-	G	Pit	Circular pit. Vertical sides and slightly concave base. Cuts 152 and 154.	
150	149	G	Fill	Mid yellowish grey sandy silt.	
151	149	G	Fill	Mid/dark greyish brown sandy silt.	
152	-	G	Pit	Sub-circular pit. Steep sides and slightly concave base. Cut by 149.	Post-med Medieval Roman
153	152	G	Fill	Mid Greyish Brown sandy silt.	Post-med Medieval Roman
154	-	G	Gully?	Poorly defined E-W ditch or gully. Cut by 149.	
155	154	G	Fill	Yellowish grey sandy silt.	
156	-	G	Gully	NW-SE aligned gully. Steep sided with slightly concave base.	Roman
157	156	G	Fill	Dark greyish brown silty sand.	Roman
158	-	J	Tree Bole	Irregular ovoid. Gradually sloping sides with flat base and root hollows.	
159	159	J	Fill	Light greyish brown silty sand.	
160	-	G	Post- Hole	Circular post-hole with steep sides.	
161	160	G	Fill	Dark greyish brown silty sand.	
162	-	B	Hoggin	Orange brown sand hoggin.	
163	-	B	Post-Hole	Oval, vertically sided post-hole. Cuts 133.	LIA
164	-	I	Ditch/Pit	NW-SE aligned ditch or pit. Gradual sides and concave base.	
165	164	B	Fill	Mid Brown sandy silt.	
166	-	B	Unknown Cut	Shallow	

167	166	B	Fill	Light Brown Orange sandy silt.	
168	163	B	Fill	Yellowish brown silty sand.	LIA
169	-	B	Pit	Steep sided post-hole, seen in section.	Roman?
170	169	B	Fill	Dark greyish brown sandy silt. Primary fill.	Post-med Late Med
171	169	B	Fill	Dark yellowish brown silty sand. Upper fill.	Post-med
172	-	B	Layer	Mid brownish grey	
173	-	B	Layer	Orangey brown silty sand.	
174	-	B	Pit?	Irregular oval cut with steep sides. Cuts layer 172.	
175	-	I	Pit	Semi-circular cut with moderate sides.	Medieval
176	175	I	Fill	Mid-dark brown with orange flecks sandy silt.	Medieval
177	-	J	Pit	Oval cut with steep sides. Cuts 158.	
178	177	J	Fill	Dark brownish black, sandy silt.	
179	-	J	Pit	Unexcavated. Seen in NE end of trench J	
180	179	J	Fill	Dark brownish black silty sand.	
181	-	C	Pit	Circular cut with moderate sloping sides.	
182	181	C	Fill	Dark brown silty sand.	
183	-	C	Post-Hole	Ovoid with steep sides.	
184	183	C	Fill	Mid dark brown sandy silt.	
185	174	B	Fill	Dark greyish brown	
186	-	B	Post-Hole	Sub-square/ rectangular cut with steep sides	Post-med
187	186	B	Fill	Dark grey sandy silt.	Post-med
188	-	B	Pit	Circular cut with moderately sloping sides.	Roman
189	188	B	Fill	Mid yellowish brown silty sand	Roman
190	188	B	Fill	Brownish orange silty sand	Post-med Medieval
191	-	B	Layer	Dark yellowish brown sandy silt	
192	-	B	Layer	Dark yellowish brown sandy silt	
193	-	B	Layer	Greyish brown sandy silt.	
194	-	B	Hoggin	Brownish orange sandy gravel	
195	-	B/D	Pit	Large cut, extents unknown.	Late 4 th C
196	195	B	Fill	Mid yellowish brown silty sand.	Late 4 th C
197	-	B	Post-Hole	Circular cut with steep sides.	Roman
198	197	B	Fill	Dark greyish brown sandy silt.	Roman
199	-	C	Layer	Mid brown sandy silt.	
200	-	C	Layer	Dull Yellow orange.	
201	-	D	Pit	Steep sided cut, extents unknown.	Post-med
202	201	D	Fill	Dark greyish brown sandy silt.	Post-med
203	201	D	Fill	Dark brownish grey sandy silt.	Post-med
204	-	D	Pit/Ditch	Steep sided cut only seen in section.	Post-med
205	204	D	Fill	Dark brownish grey sandy silt.	Post-med
206	-	D	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy silt.	Post-med

					Roman
207	-	D	Layer	Mid yellowish brown silty sand.	
208	-	D	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy silt.	Post-med Medieval
209	195	D	Fill	Mid yellowish brown silty sand.	?3 rd C
210	(209)	D	Lens	Black silty clay.	Late 1 st C
211	-	B	Layer	Compacted stone layer, unexcavated.	
212	-	E	Cut		Post-med
213	212	E	Fill		Post-med

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
26	25	7	66	Pottery; jar rim sherds and body sherd HGG; jar rim sherds and body sherds GRS	Mid 2nd C
101	Well shaft	4	1990	Brick, in four pieces, buff poorly mixed clay with press marks, stained, 230 x 110 x 45mm (Discarded)	Post med.
117	116	1	2080	Brick; complete 'place' brick, yellow mortar attached, 220 x 105 x 50mm (Discarded)	Post med.
119	Layer	1 2	86 22	Roof tile fragment Pottery; rim sherd pancheon; rim sherd bowl; PMRE	Post med. Post med.
120	121	1	2770	Brick; complete, narrow frog, sandy grey-white mortar attached, 225 x 110 x 65mm (Discarded)	Post med.
129	128	1	3500	Brick; complete, heavily mortared (white with coal flecks), part of next brick attached, 225 x 110 x 65mm (Discarded)	Post med.
144	143	5 1 1	50 4 1	Animal bone; long bone shaft fragments, large mammal; long bone shaft, medium-sized mammal Window glass with mark left by lead comes Pottery; chip GRS	- Post med. Roman (2nd-4th centuries)
147	145	2 22 1 4 3	22 <2 <2 8 58	Animal bone; hoof, sheep/goat; long bone fragment, poor condition, inc. 4 small frags from sample 1 Burnt bone fragments from sample 1 Flint flake, patinated from sample 1 Baked clay fragments from sample 1 Pottery; body sherds BSW	- - - - Roman
153	152	1 1 1	38 12 4	?Floor tile fragment, abraded (depth 17mm) Pottery; rim sherd, cooking pot Pottery; body sherd GRS	Post med. Medieval Roman
157	156	3 2	12 22	Animal bone; mandible hinge, sheep/goat and fragments, ?all same bone Pottery; body sherds, one GRS, one BSW	- Roman
168	163	1	26	Pottery; jar base sherd GROG	LIA
170	169	2 1	30 22	Pottery; body sherds, stoneware, one ribbed Pottery; base sherd with patchy internal glaze	Modern Late medieval
176	175	1	28	Pottery; rim sherd, cooking pot	Medieval
182	181	1	4	Iron nail with head (Discarded)	-
187	186	3	264	Roof tile fragments, inc 'knib'	Post med.
189	188	2 1 1	16 18 6	Animal bone; ?mandible fragments, encrusted Shell; oyster, one valve Pottery; body sherd BSW	- - Roman
190	188	2 1 2	34 24 26	Animal bone; long bone shaft fragment, large mammal; split metacarpus, proximal end, pig Roof tile fragment Pottery; body sherds	- Post med. Med/post med.
191	Layer	18	100	Animal bone; metapodial fragment, distal end, cattle;	-

		13 -	220 46	horn core fragment, cattle; fragments Shell; oyster, twelve valves Slag fragments	- -
196	195	13 3 3	82 40 20	Animal bone; pig mandible fragment with two molars, incisors and canines broken off; sheep/goat molar; fragments, one encrusted ?Baked clay fragments, burnt black Pottery; body sherds, one OXRC, two GRF, one with lattice	- - Late 4th C+
198	197	1	48	Pottery; body sherd STOR	Roman
203	201	1 5 1 1 9	24 128 52 14 190	Animal bone; tibia fragment, proximal end, large mammal Bottle glass, inc egg-shaped end of a Hamilton 'bowler' (all discarded) Roof tile fragment Brick fragment Pottery; rim, base and body sherds, hand-painted pearlware bowl; rim sherd, white stoneware plate (seed decoration); body sherd, brown-glazed teapot; handle, Westerwald stoneware; rim sherd, bowl PMRE, internal yellow glaze	- Post med. Post med. Post med. Post med.
205	204	3 2 1	90 18 76	Animal bone; pig mandible fragment with two molars; rib fragment Clay pipes; stem and bowl (Oswald's type 7) Roof tile fragment	- 1660-80 Post med.
206	Layer	6 3 1 1	140 98 4 4	Bottle glass; rim/neck with applied string lip and body sherds (these discarded) Roof tile fragments Pottery; rim sherd, coffee can, creamware Pottery; body sherd GRS	1750-1800 Post med. Post med. Roman
208	Layer	3 3 1	56 204 1	Animal bone; long bone fragments, large mammal Roof tile fragments Pottery; body sherd, glazed	- Post med. Medieval
209	195	12 18	184 174	Animal bone; scapula fragments, ?cattle; sheep/goat molar; rib fragments, one sawn, two encrusted; radius, proximal end, pig Pottery; jar rim sherds and body sherds GRS, body sherd NVC, body sherds GRF, one with lattice, flask rim sherd and B1 dish rim sherd and body sherds BSW	- ?3rd C
210	195	1 4 2	2 26 18	Iron ?nail head (Discarded) Baked clay fragments Pottery; C16 bowl rim sherd and body sherd BSW	- - Late 1st C
213	212	1	6	Pottery; body sherd PMRE	Post med.

APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVE INDEX

File containing:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief for Excavation
- 1.2 Specification for Excavation

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Excavation Report
- 2.2 Analytical Reports
 - 2.2.1 Finds Report

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Context Index
- 3.2 Context Record Register
- 3.3 Original Context Records 101 to 213.
- 3.4 Drawing Registers
 - 3.4.1 Plans Register
 - 3.4.2 Sections Register
- 3.5 Levels Register
- 3.6 Photographic Register
- 3.7 1 set of 35mm colour slides and B&W Prints
- 3.8 Miscellaneous maps and plans

Not in Files:

- 1 Box of Finds
- Site Drawings (3 sheets)

APPENDIX 4: EHCR SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: 95-103 High Street, Braintree	
Parish: Braintree	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 757229	Site Code: BT40
Type of Work: Archaeological Excavation	Site Director/Group: B. Barker ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 6 August to 24 August 2004; 18 January and 23 February 2005.	Size of Area Investigated: Monitoring and limited excavation in foundation and service trenches
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Braintree	Funding source: Courtmead PLC.
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HCR Nos.: 19098-9, 19525
Final Report: Essex Archaeology and History shorter note, 2006?	
Periods Represented: Late Iron Age/Roman/Medieval/Post Medieval	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Fieldwork comprised the excavation of archaeological features within several trenches denoting the footprint of residential development to the rear of existing properties 95-103 High Street, Braintree. Associated service runs were also monitored.</p> <p>The results of this investigation revealed fragmentary archaeological remains within the north-east and south-west areas of the site in areas that escaped the extensive truncation from post-medieval and modern disturbances. The archaeological results are summarised below by period:</p> <p><i>Late Iron Age.</i> A residual pottery sherd was retrieved from a Roman feature.</p> <p><i>Roman.</i> In the north-east was a rough gravelled surface with a possible timber structure. The gravelled surface correlates with similar surfaces dated to the 2nd century previously recorded at 97-99 High Street (Pearson 2002) and 103-105 High Street (Hickling 2002). A large 3rd-4th century pit was also recorded in the north-east. In the south-west were 2nd century features, including part of a large pit (25) that had previously been excavated at 103-105 High Street. Midden deposits, dated to the 2nd century in the previous excavations, overlay the gravel surfaces, and also sealed the late Roman pit in the north-east of the site.</p> <p><i>Saxon/Medieval.</i> The Roman midden deposits and late Roman pit were sealed by a cultivation layer 0.40 metres thick. This survived in Trench D in the north-east end of site. This could have built up towards the latter stages of Roman period, and during the Saxon period, but no evidence of Saxon occupation was identified. Medieval activity on site was represented by a single pit mainly seen in section.</p> <p><i>Post medieval;</i> The post-medieval remains on site, outhouses, wells and pits, were typical of back yard activity, and lay behind buildings on the street frontage, denoting the spread of roadside occupation along the High Street. Features comprised fragments of wall dating to the 19th century, a well shaft dating to between the 17th and 18th century, and Victorian rubbish pits.</p>	

Modern; Several service trenches that run through the investigation area and a number of pits make up the modern intrusive elements on site. The overburden consisted of 20th century rubble and debris together with disturbed ground from previous development behind 103-105 High Street, Flacks Hotel.

The excavation and contemporaneous observations achieved a keyhole view into the development of Roman and post-Roman Braintree, supplementing and uniting the previous work carried out on the site and places the site firmly within the extent of the Roman town. It can be surmised that Roman remains may once have been more widespread but have been significantly truncated and removed by subsequent land use. This disturbance, coupled with the limited area of investigation, has made interpretation of function and significance of the archaeological remains difficult. Similarly, the investigation has provided insufficient evidence to further our understanding of the post roman development of Braintree.

Previous Summaries/Reports: Murray 2000; Pearson 2002 (97-99 High Street). Hickling 2001; 2002 (103-105 High Street).

Author of Summary: Matthew Pocock

Date of Summary: December 2005

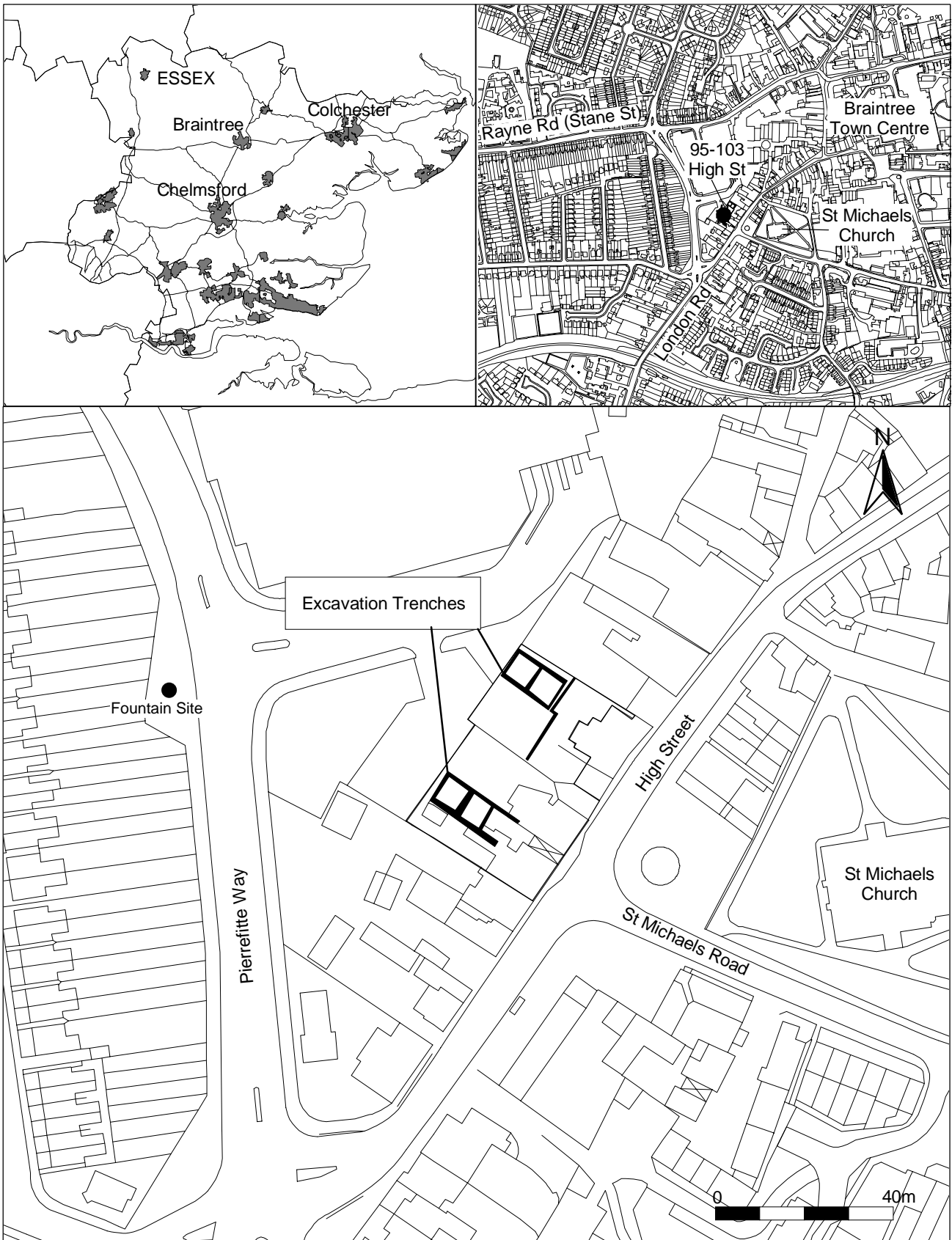


Fig.1. Location plan

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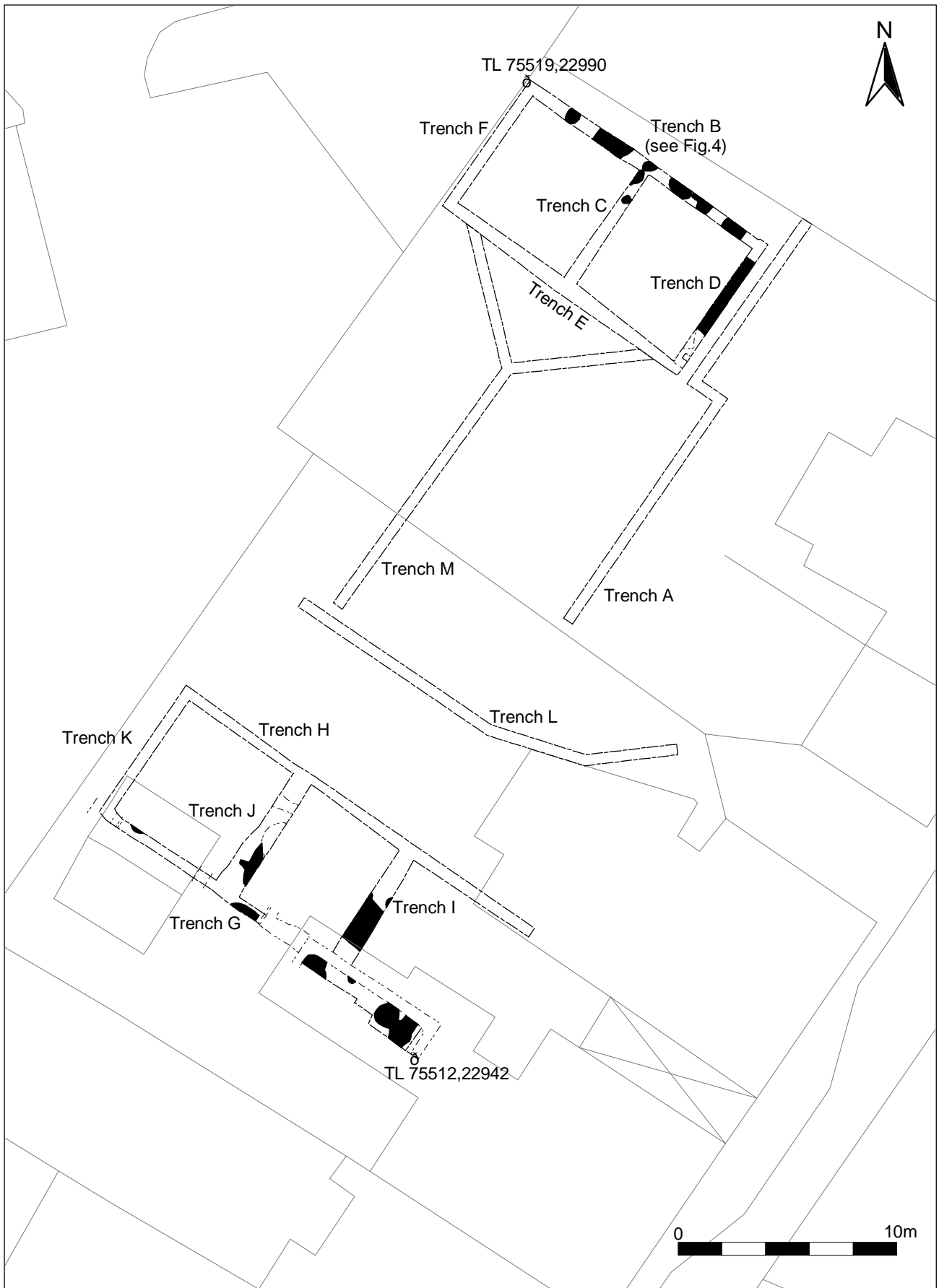


Fig.2. Trench locations

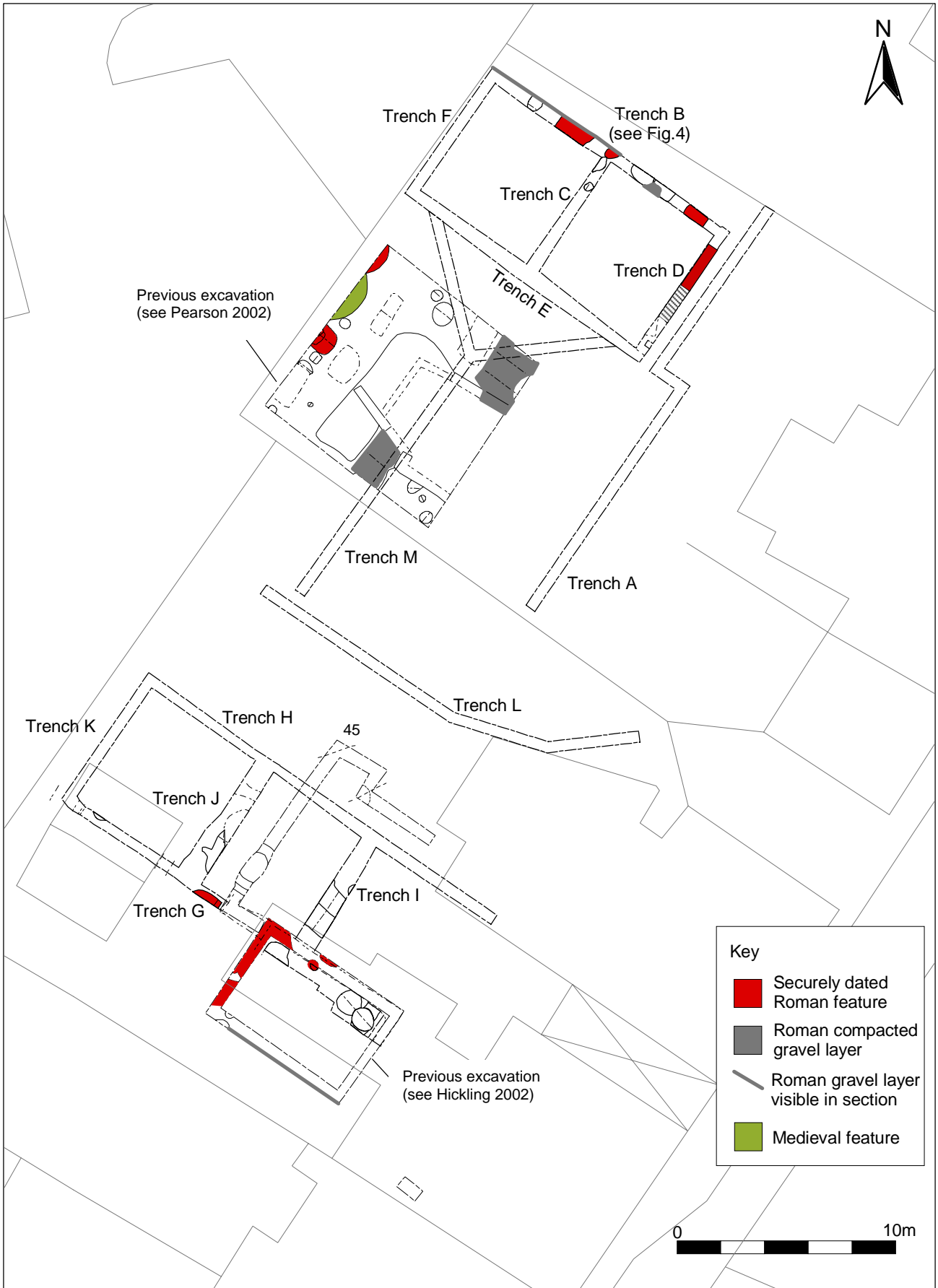


Fig.3. Roman features

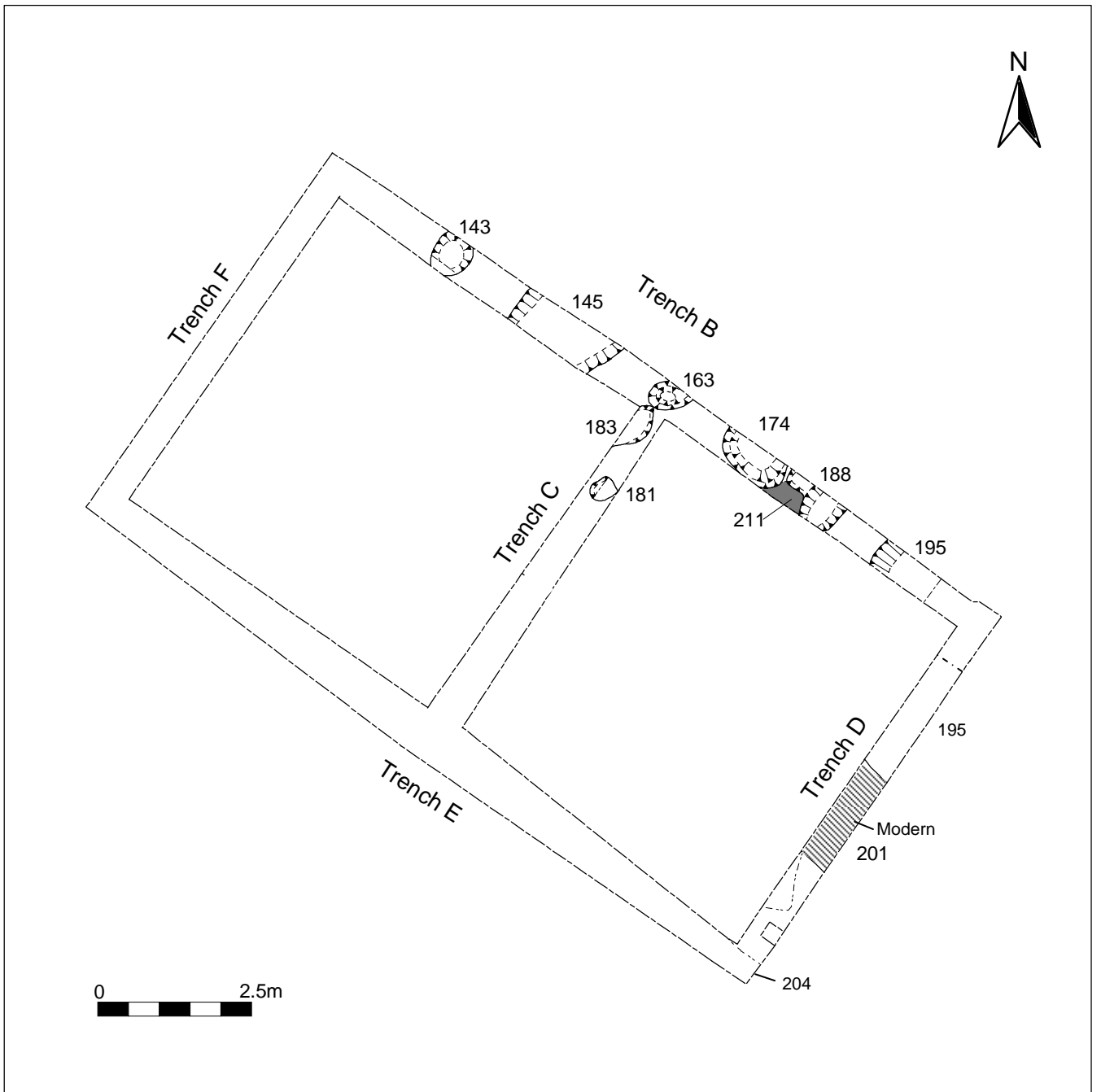


Fig.4. North-east area trenches

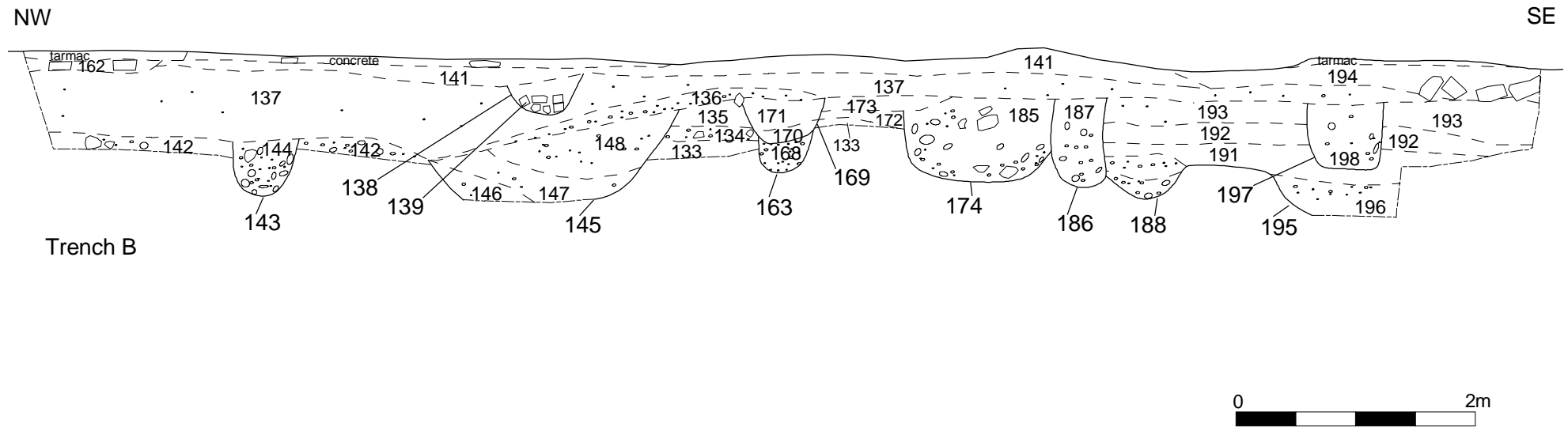


Fig.5. Section of Trench B

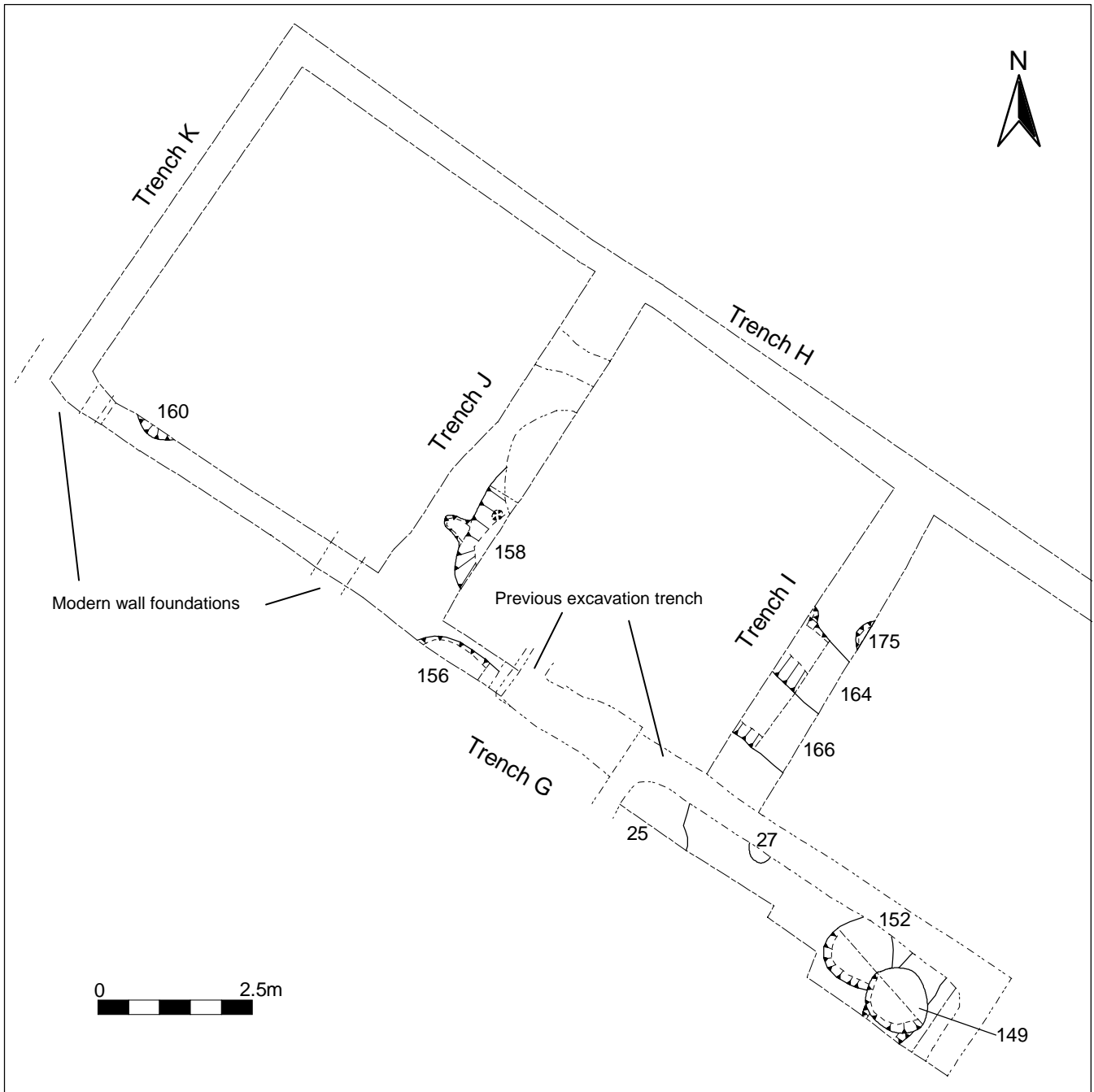


Fig.6. South-west area trenches