

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION  
AND RECORDING  
AT PARLIAMENT SQUARE, CREDITON**

**by**

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## SUMMARY

*The evaluations and watching brief identified well-preserved below-ground remains of buildings fronting onto Parliament Street and Market Street; these buildings known to be associated with the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Crediton Market.*

*Numerous brick wall footings were revealed, as were floor surfaces, either as flagstone, screed, concrete or brick paved. Many of the exposed brick wall footings can be directly identified with the market buildings depicted on the 1889 1:500 Ordnance Survey map and three buildings seen in excavation, together with a through passage connecting North Street and Market Street, corresponds closely with these same features shown on the 1889 map as can the main and original flagstone floor upon which the market stalls would have been set out.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological excavation and recording (evaluation and subsequent watching brief) undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) between November 2005 and January 2006 at Parliament Square, Crediton (SS 83266 00396).

The work was commissioned by Kier Western on behalf of Mid Devon District Council and was required by Mid Devon District Council as a condition of the grant of planning consent for the redevelopment of the site (Application No. 03/05211).

### 1.1 The site (SS 83266 00396). Fig. 1

The site lies 98m to the north of Crediton High Street and is bounded by Parliament St., Market St., North St., and Pannier Road. The site lies at a height of between 63.16m AOD to the west and 61.95m AOD on the east side. The whole site covers 1970 square metres although the evaluation was only concerned with part of the northern half of the site.

### 1.2 Geology

The British Geological Survey indicates that the site lies at a boundary between Permian Creedy Park Sandstone and the overlying Crediton Breccia to the north.

### 1.3 The brief

The Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES) produced a brief<sup>1</sup> for the proposed development, the main requirements of which were;

- A desktop-based assessment using historical and cartographic material (*produced May 2005 as a separate report: EA project 5359*)
- Evaluative investigations comprising two 14m-square excavation areas with contingency for a further 130 square metres if warranted.
- A watching brief on all aspects of ground disturbance.
- Statement of potential for analysis.
- Post-excavation analysis and archive report.
- Publication of results if warranted.

### 1.4 Brief Historical Background

Crediton was a significant settlement in the Saxon period with a Minster established by AD 739 and a large hinterland evidenced by a Charter Boundary of around the year 1000 (Finberg, 1969, 44-53). By the time of Domesday Crediton was a rich manor held by the Bishop of Exeter and in 1238 it attained the status of a borough. Long established as a market town Crediton prospered during the 16<sup>th</sup> century rise of the woollen industry but declined in wealth from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Hoskins, 1992, 378-9).

The site of which this report is the focus is shown by cartographic evidence to have been occupied by the market place with an impressive suite of market buildings and a paved area for stallholdings constructed by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and shown in some detail on the Ordnance Survey Plan of 1889 (Fig. 2).

## 2. AIMS

The principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, nature, character, depth and date of archaeological deposits within the proposed development area.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Kemp, dated 17/2/2005 Ref Arch/DC/6673

The subsequent watching brief was intended to ensure the adequate investigation and recording of any significant archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks.

### 3. METHOD

The work was carried out in accordance with two Written Schemes of Investigation<sup>2</sup> produced by EA (August 2005: evaluation, and November 2005: watching brief) and approved by the DCHES.

The evaluation comprised two areas (Areas 1 and 2: Fig. 3). Hardstanding and underlying modern deposits were removed using a wheeled digger fitted with a toothless grading bucket. Excavation continued until the top of archaeological deposits or natural ground was reached, at which point machining ceased and investigation continued by hand. Stratigraphic information was recorded on standard EA single context record sheets or masonry record sheets and a drawn record was compiled in plan and section at scales of 1:50 or 1:20 as appropriate. A photographic record was compiled using black-and-white film and colour slide film. All finds were bagged and labelled on site.

EA subsequently attended site to monitor those groundworks that had the potential to expose archaeological deposits. Investigation of deposits was carried out by hand and the recording methodology described above was employed.

### 4. RESULTS (Figs 2–5)

#### 4.1 Evaluation

Both Areas 1 and 2 measured approximately 22m east-west by 13.5m north-south but Area 1 included three distinct parcels of land exposed at different times during the course of the exercise whilst Area 2 included two parcels. All of the proposed development areas were set out by Kier Western surveyors based on the locations given in EA's Written Scheme of Investigation. Formation levels were also indicated on site by the Kier Western agent.

##### *Area 1* (Fig. 4)

This was located to the north-west of the development site fronting Parliament St. and adjacent to Market St. Following removal of overburden, wall footings and areas of flooring were revealed at depths ranging from 0.02m to 0.35m below existing ground level. On the west and south sides of Area 1 the indicated formation levels had already been achieved by removal of modern deposits.

Four brick wall footings were identified fronting onto Parliament St at right angles to it. These can be securely identified with the structures shown on the 1889 Ordnance Survey 1:500 map.<sup>3</sup> Three of these brick footings relate directly to buildings shown on the OS 1889 map while the others represent internal divisions of those buildings. Together, these footings define three ground floor rooms of the Market building which stood alongside Parliament Street. The room to the west appeared to have been cellared as no flooring was revealed (formation levels precluded further investigation). The central room comprised a screed floor (523) to the north separated by an east-west brick wall (527) from a crudely paved area (525) to the south of the brick wall. This may have lain outside the original building perhaps as a

<sup>2</sup> EA 2005. Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation at Parliament Square, Crediton

<sup>3</sup> Sheet 67.2.24

rear yard. On the east side an area of flagstone flooring (517) in York and Purbeck stone bound by brick walls (519 & 516) was identified; this lay less than 0.05 m below ground level and again a crudely paved area (520), probably external, lay to the south.

To the south of the above structures two granite kerbs (514 & 505) flanked a passageway 3.4m wide which appears on the 1889 OS plan to run parallel with Parliament Street behind the market buildings and to connect North Street to Market Street. The surface of the passageway was cobble with 20th century repairs of brick, tarmac and fragments of flagstones (578).

On the south side of Area 1, a flagstone pavement and 38.5 square metres of surviving market flooring were revealed. The 1.2m wide pavement (501) lay immediately to the south of granite kerbing (505) and lay 0.15m higher than the flagstone flooring of the market building (601). Both the pavement and market floor were laid in a mixture of York and Purbeck stone. To the southeast of Area 1, the flagstone floor had been removed by a modern disturbance. To the south of Area 1 a brick culvert was located and its projected route plotted (Fig. 3).

Following the recording in Area 1 an area measuring 4m by 5m was reduced in the northeast corner a further 0.50m below the floor level of context 517. The flagstones were removed carefully for re-use which revealed a sub-base deposit of brick fragments and mortar in a silty clay matrix (600). This deposit was reduced to the given formation level; it produced finds of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century consistent with the known construction date for the market buildings.

Two additional areas of reduction to formation level were recorded during a subsequent watching brief phase. One lay on the west side of Area 1 within the north western corner of the market and measured 8m east-west by 12 m north-south. This revealed four further brick walls and infilled cellars of rooms located within the building on the corner of Market St. and Parliament St. (Figs.3 and 4). Immediately to the south a short section of curving granite kerbing (602) was also seen along with a flagstone surface (603) encompassed by brick footings (604). These structures correspond to the arrangement shown on the 1889 OS map with the section of curving granite kerb marking an entranceway from Market Street (Figs. 3 and 4).

### **Area 2 (Fig. 5)**

This was located within the north-east part of the development site fronting Parliament Street, in the corner formed by its junction with North Street. Following removal of the overburden, brick wall footings and small areas of flooring were revealed at depths ranging from 0.10m to 0.35m below existing ground level. No deeper excavations were carried out as, with the exception of a 5m wide north-south strip on the east side of Area 2, the formation level had already been achieved.

At the north-eastern corner, an area measuring 4.5m by 4.5m showed evidence of cellars. Immediately west of this was a 6m by 4.5m area criss-crossed by brick walls which created eight separate sub-divisions giving room sizes as small as 1m by 1m (Fig. 5). These sub-divided rooms were floored with concrete with the exception of one fronting onto Parliament Street which was paved in brick (605). In the north-west corner no footings were present and the area appeared to be cellared where revealed at formation level. The features revealed relate directly to the market building shown occupying the north-east corner of the Market House complex on the 1889 Ordnance Survey 1:500 map (Fig. 2).

To the south of the market building identified above the granite kerbs (514 and 505) and rear thoroughfare passage seen in Area 1 were again observed. The surface (578) comprised metalling formed by pebbles rammed into a stiff clayey matrix with 20th century repairs evident. The east-west culvert seen in Area 1 was exposed across the southern part of Area 2.

To the west of the market building an area of 7sqm. was reduced in level during a watching brief exercise. This revealed more of the granite kerbing (514). Here, however it was curving to form the market entrance from Parliament Street (Fig. 5). Substantial brick footings for the entrance buildings were also seen (606).

A 5m wide strip on the east side adjacent to North Street was reduced by 0.90m to achieve formation level. This showed a continuing depth of cellar fill in the north-east corner. One L-shaped section of walling (577 & 574) and a 3m length of ceramic drain (576) were revealed at formation level (Fig. 5).

The L-shaped brick wall (577 & 574) does not appear to correlate with any wall or structure depicted on the OS map of 1889, its alignment is also skewed in relation to the walls of the market building. The L-shaped wall continues south beyond the limit of the market house buildings and lay partially under the rear passageway. The ceramic drain (576) was aligned northeast to southwest and had been cut out by the construction of an east-west brick footing identified with the market buildings suggesting an earlier date for the drain. No direct dating evidence was found to provide a date for either the construction of the L-shaped wall or the ceramic drain.

#### **4.2 Watching Brief**

The DCHES brief required a watching brief to be carried out on all aspects of ground disturbance including enabling works. Following the evaluation a total of five visits were made to the site between 15/11/05 and 12/1/06 to monitor such ground disturbances.

During the works for services and drainage a total of seven brick walls on a north-south alignment were identified within the site to the south of the evaluation areas. Their position and alignments correspond extremely well with those marked on the 1:500 OS map and can be identified with the internal arrangement of the market buildings (see Figs 2 and 3).

### **5. DISCUSSION**

The evaluations identified well-preserved remains of buildings fronting onto Parliament Street and Market Street which are known to be associated with the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Crediton Market. Numerous brick wall footings were revealed, as were floor surfaces, either as flagstone, screed, concrete or brick paved. Many of the exposed brick footings can be directly identified with the market buildings depicted on the 1889 1:500 Ordnance Survey map and three buildings seen in excavation, together with a through passage connecting North Street and Market Street, can be positively identified with these same features shown on the 1889 map as can the main and original market floor upon which the stalls would have been set out.

Only the L-shaped wall and the ceramic drain in Area 2 fail to correspond with any mapped structure of 1889 and have been demonstrated to be stratigraphically earlier than the market

buildings; they may relate therefore to 'The Red Lion' public house shown in this location on an 18th century map produced after the 'Great fire of Crediton' of 1743

The 18th century map produced after the 'Great fire of Crediton' depicts an open stream running broadly east-west across the site. During the evaluation an arched topped brick culvert was observed in approximately the correct position for the open stream. It is likely that, prior to the construction of the market square, steps were taken to culvert and the Litterburn below the market complex. Slight damage to the top of the brick culvert revealed that it was carrying water at the time of the evaluation.

No significant finds were recovered, the collection consisting of a small number of 19th century tile fragments and glass sherds.

## 6. PROJECT ARCHIVE AND 'OASIS' REPORT

A fully integrated project archive has been compiled and will be deposited at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, under museum accession number 476/2008.

A report of the excavations (including a pdf version of this document) has been submitted to the on-line database OASIS (On-line AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS), under OASIS ID: 62219

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**HER Devon County Historic Environment Service**

Entries for Map sheet SS80 SW

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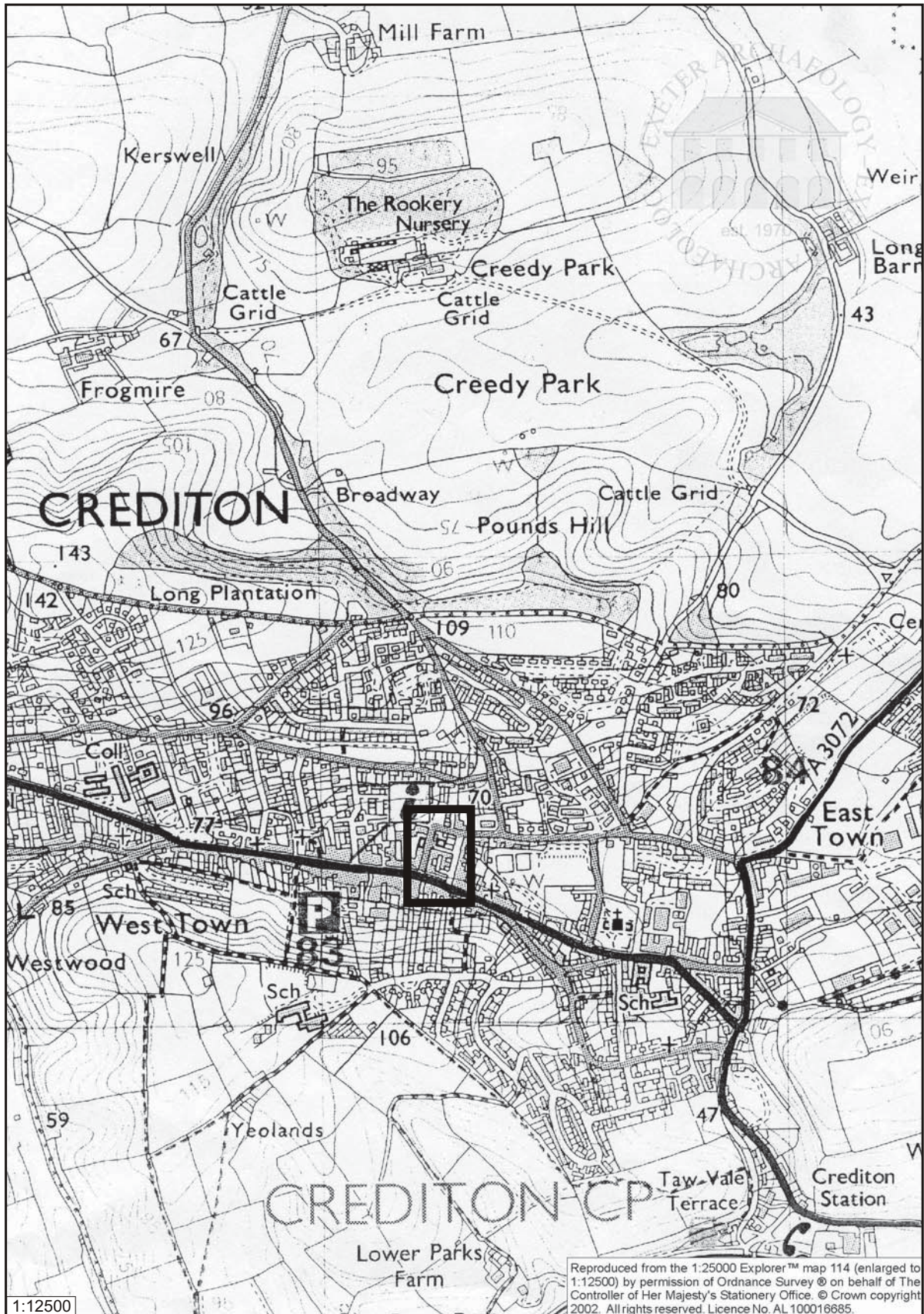


Fig. 1 Location of site.



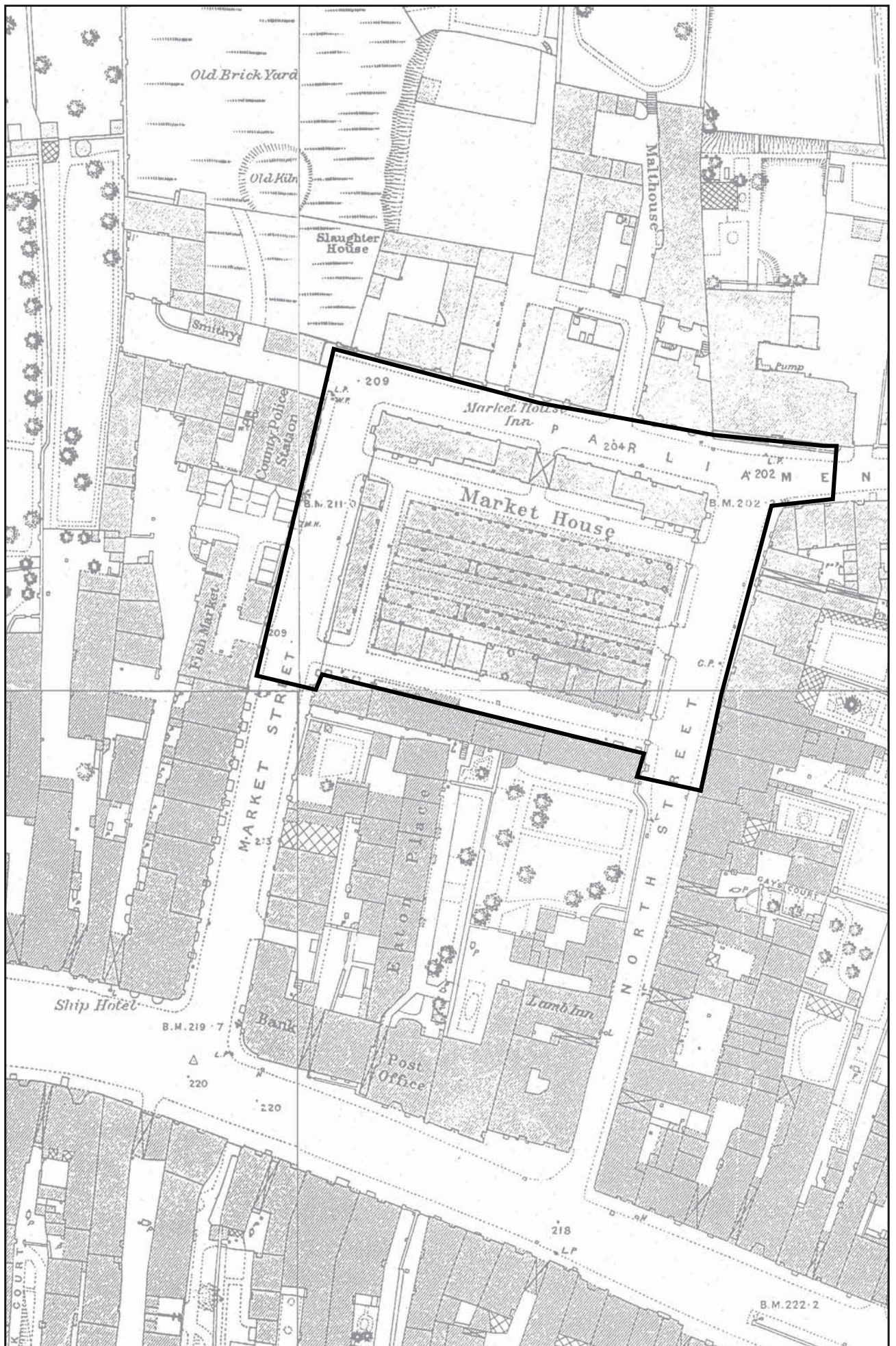


Fig. 2 The site in 1889 (reproduced from OS sheets 67.6.3, 67.6.4, 67.2.23 and 67.2.24, reduced).



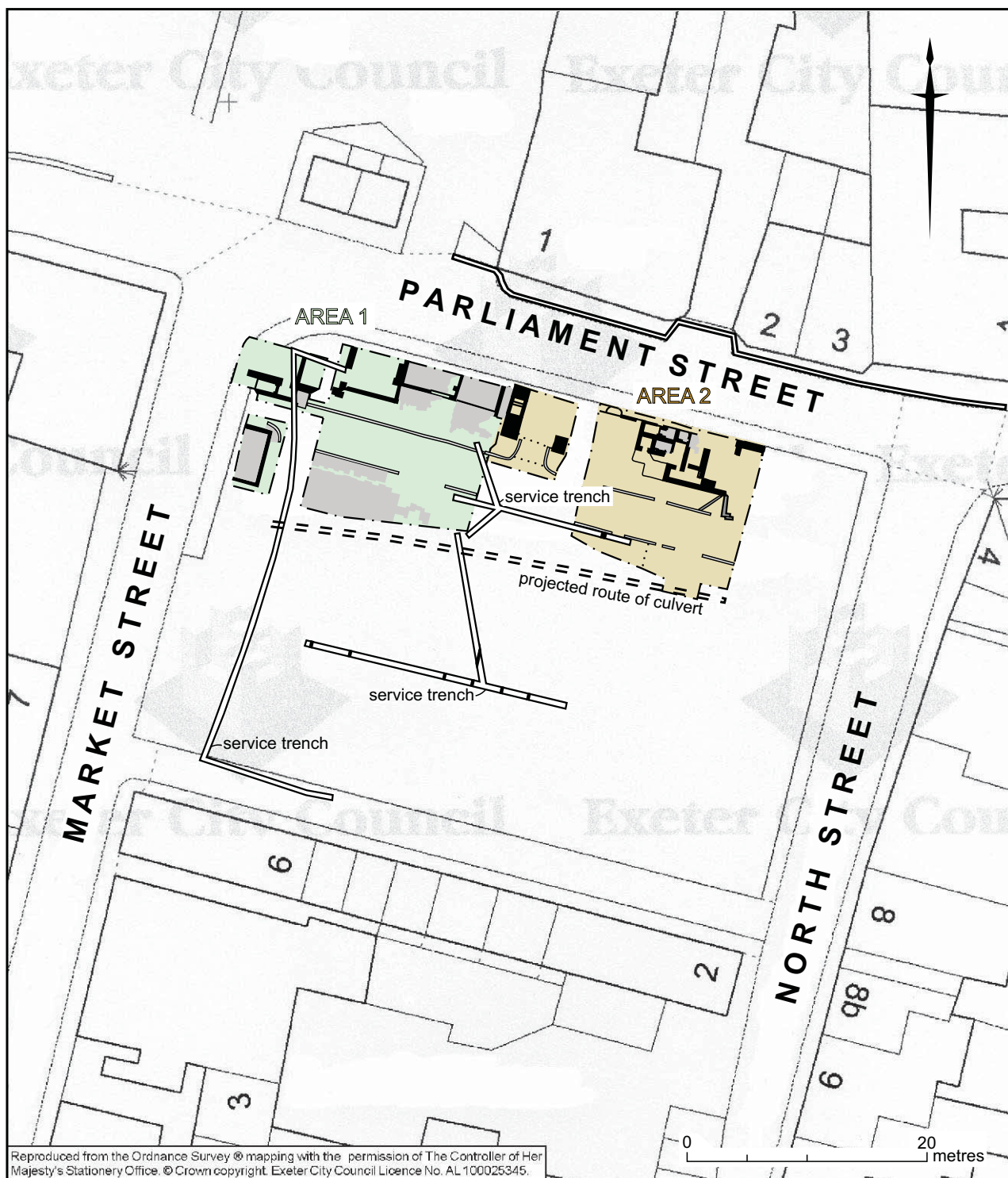


Fig. 3 Overall plan of site and service trenches. Scale 1:500.

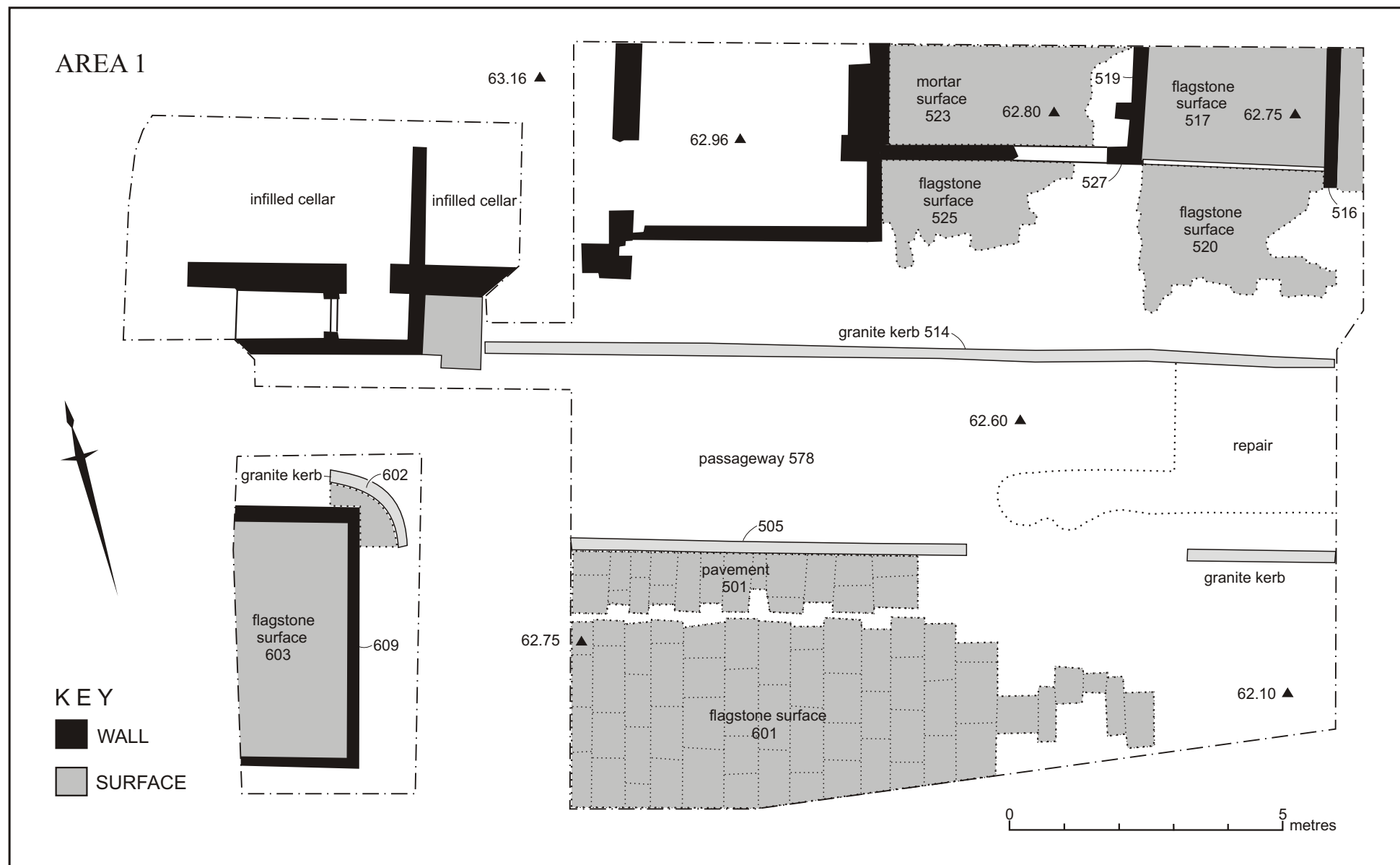


Fig.4 Plan of area 1, scale 1:100.

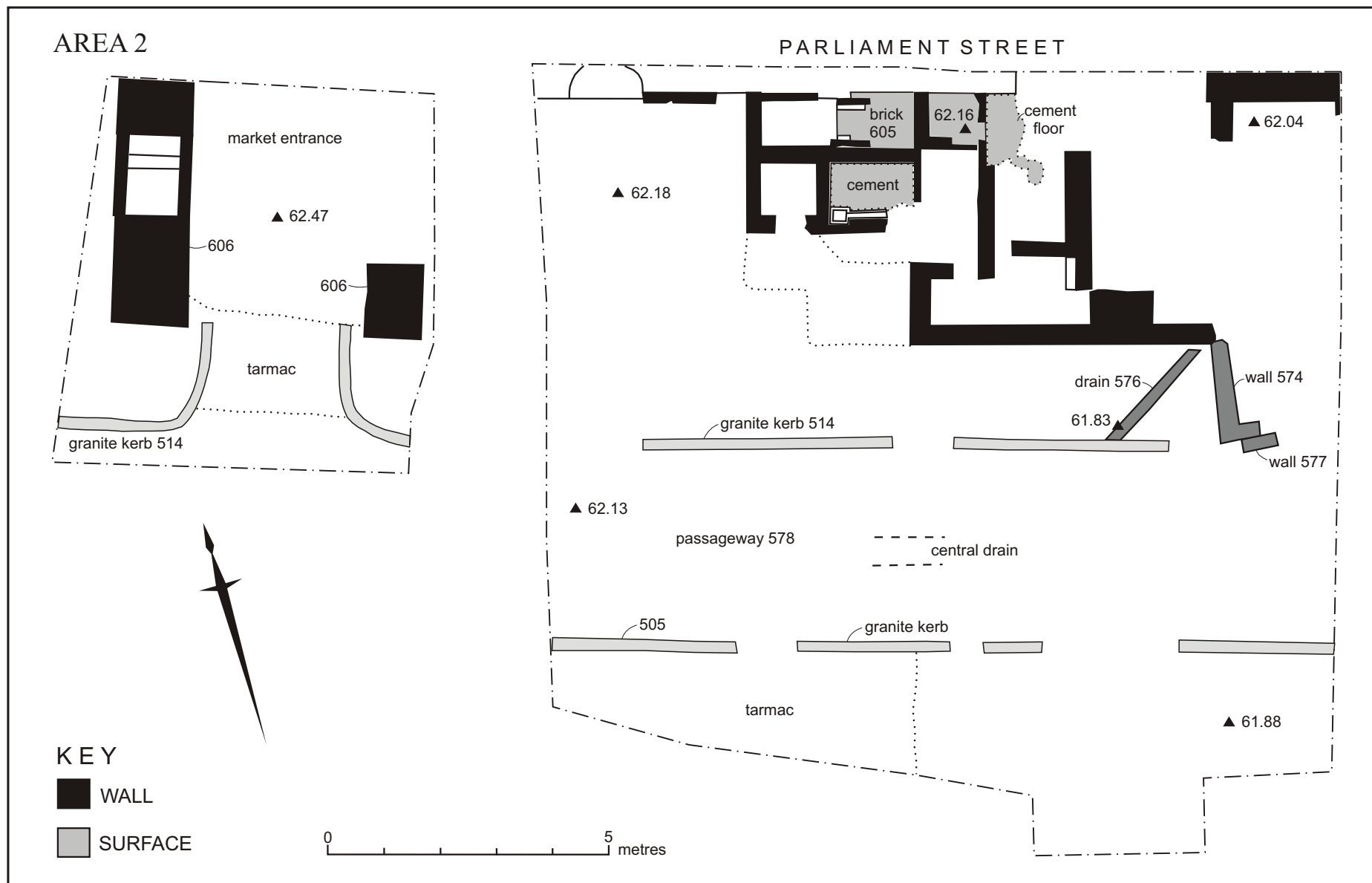


Fig. 5 Plan of area 2, scale 1:100.