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Former Corus Steelworks, Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell (Phases 2 & 3):

building recording and archaeological evaluation 2006 - 2007

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For

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FORMER CORUS STEELWORKS, BIRMINGHAM ROAD, OLDBURY, SANDWELL:

BUILDING RECORDING AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (PHASES 2 & 3) 2006-2007

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SUMMARY

The second and third phases of an archaeological evaluation and historic building recording were carried out at the former Corus Steelworks, Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell (NGR SO 997 895) in November 2006 and April 2007. Documentary and cartographic evidence suggested that there was potential for the survival of buried remains associated with the medieval Blakeley Mill. A total of nine trial-trenches were excavated, six in the southwest part of the site and three to the northwest.

No evidence for features associated with the mill was found. A palaeochannel running roughly east-west was recorded in one trench. Two small gullies of probable post-medieval date were also recorded. A large tree bole – at first tentatively identified as a possible complex of archaeological features – was encountered at the western part of the site. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from a context associated with the tree bole. Undated possible buried soils were identified at the centre of the site. At the extreme western end of the site evidence of a 19th century canal basin associated with the former Broadwell Colliery was uncovered. This had been filled in during the latter part of the 20th century.

The historic building recording, equivalent to an English Heritage Level 1 record, was carried out on two former mid to late Victorian railway buildings converted in the mid to late 20th-century for use as ancillary steelworks buildings. Despite later steel cladding and additions, a basic record was obtained.

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BUILDING RECORDING AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (PHASES 2 AND 3) 2006-2007

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by Geopost UK Ltd, to undertake a programme of trial trenching ahead of a development at the former Corus Steelworks, Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell (hereinafter referred to as the site). The work was carried out as a condition of planning consent (Planning Application No. DC/05/4437) prior to the proposed construction of a parcel-sorting unit, associated offices and hardstanding.

The first phase of the field evaluation was carried out in April 2006 (Duncan 2006). This report outlines the results of building recording and the second and third phases of the evaluation and has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (IFA 2001). The building recording was carried out in August 2006 and the fieldwork was undertaken in November 2006, January and April 2007.

The evaluation conformed to a brief produced by (Sandwell MBC 2005), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2006) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation, in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990).

1.2 Location and geology

The site is located at Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell, to the east of Oldbury town centre, (centred on NGR SO 997 895, Fig. 1). The Phase 2 area of this site is situated at the northwest part of the site and Phase 3 area is at the southwest (Fig. 2).

The present character of the site (Fig. 2) consists of the former Corus Steelworks buildings, hardstanding and associated infrastructure. The Birmingham Canal and the Stour Valley Railway line bound the site to the north. To the immediate south is the Birmingham Canal (Wolverhampton Level) and the Spon Lane Basin, with the M5 Motorway elevated above this. Further industrial buildings border the site to the west.

The superficial geology comprises undifferentiated Glaciolacustrine deposits overlying Enville Member bedrock.

2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The place name Oldbury could indicate a possible Iron Age hill fort may be located in the area and several prehistoric finds have been recorded in the area, as well as numerous Roman coins. The site is near to the historic core of Oldbury town and although the earliest cartographic evidence of Oldbury town is Ogilby's map of 1675, finds dating to the medieval period have been recorded.

The site is close to the probable location of the former medieval Blakeley Hall Mill, to the west and to the former location of Blakeley Hall, to the south. Blakeley Hall Mill is depicted on Ogelby's map of 1675 and there is also documentary evidence for the mill from as early as 1302:

"when the millers of Blakele, Walwyke and of the new mill were summoned to appear before the next court in order that they should take an oath to observe manorial regulations as to the grinding of malt (brasii)" (Dilworth 1976, 179).

The precise location of the mill is uncertain although the approximate location is registered on the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record (PRN 6354) (Birmingham Archaeology 2006, 3). However, it is probable that the medieval was sited at the same location as buildings illustrated on the 1844 tithe map (Fig. 3). It is possible that archaeological features associated with the mill may be present within the site.

The 1844 Tithe map (Fig. 3) also illustrates that at this time, apart from the Parker Branch of the Birmingham Main Canal in the Phase 2 evaluation area, most of the site formed part of a system of open fields. The main section of the Telford designed canal was built between 1825 and 1838 as an extension of the Aldersley Junction to Deepfields Junction line, finished in 1772 and designed by James Brindley. It is likely the branch is named after the Parker family who constructed the Tipton furnaces around 1800 (www.bcn-society) and exploited the local seams of ironstone and coal. The Parker Branch served the Broadwell Colliery located in the northwest part of Phase 2 area, giving further weight to the idea that the family had financed the building of this branch to transport coal.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1890 shows 'Mill Farm', at the western boundary of the site, which may suggest the location of Blakeley Mill. The First Edition Ordnance map also clearly shows a footpath or trackway leading from a tollhouse at the canal bridge across open fields. The Broadwell Forge, together with the railway and a railway carriage works, remnants of which are, at present part of the former Corus Steelworks (Duncan 2006b) are also depicted. This arrangement seems little changed on the 1904 and 1919 Ordnance Survey maps, apart from the closure of the Broadwell Colliery, until the 1937 map when the Phase 1 area is illustrated as the location for the Simplex Works (Electrical Engineering). By 1956 (Fig. 4) the majority of the site seems to be occupied by the buildings of the Broadwell Engineering Works. By the 1970s the Ordnance Survey map shows the remaining part of the Parker branch of the canal had been infilled.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principle aim of the evaluation is to determine the character, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.

More specific aims as stated in the archaeological brief (Sandwell MBC 2005,4) were to:

- Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area
- Determine the nature, extent, condition, character, quality and dated of any archaeological remains encountered
- Provide further information of the origins and development of Oldbury from the medieval period to the present day
- Contribute to any existing corpus of academic knowledge

- Make available to interested parties the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Building Recording

Historic Building recording was carried out to a degree equivalent to Level One (English Heritage 2006). A written record of each building was compiled in the field on *pro forma* building and room record sheets, noting details of building type, date(s), materials, plan, and elevations. In addition a photographic survey was carried out which comprised both general and detail shots, and was carried out using a high-resolution digital camera (Nikon D50). All detail shots include a scale. All photographs were recorded on a pro forma record sheet detailing subject, direction, photographer and date.

4.2 Trial-trenching

The Phase 2 of the site area covers approximately 2.3ha. A total of three trenches were excavated across the Phase 2 area (Trenches 4-6, Fig. 2). Trench 4 could only be excavated to a length of 4.5m to allow safe access for machinery to groundworks in the northwest of the site. Similar restrictions meant that both Trenches 5 and 6 could only be excavated to a length of 9.5m.

The Phase 3 area of the site covers approximately 3.6 hectares. A total of six trenches were excavated across the Phase 3 area of the site (Trenches 8-13, Fig. 2). Trench 7 could not be excavated due to the proximity of a haul road and resulting health and safety considerations. It was decided in consultation with the Sandwell Borough Archaeologist that in the circumstances excavation of this trench was not necessary.

All topsoil and modern overburden was removed using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision, down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon or the subsoil. Subsequent cleaning and excavation was by hand except in Trenches 4 to 6 where the presence of contaminated canal backfill meant that access was severely restricted.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned and sections were drawn through all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context and feature cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using digital, monochrome and colour slide photography.

The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). The archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository, subject to permission from the landowner.

5 RESULTS

5.1 **Phase 2: Building Recording** by Shane Kelleher

Building recording was carried out on a former Victorian railway building converted for use as an electrical substation (Building A) and a building associated with steel-working (Building B, Plate 1).

Building A (Fig. 4)

Exterior
South Elevation.
The eastern section of this elevation is a two storey high, three bay gable ended elevation. This is of an orangey red brick in English Cross bond measuring 8 ⅝' x 3' x 4', this has occasional burnt headers and stretchers which are in no apparent pattern. At ground floor level there is a tripartite timber framed window with a timber sill, external hinges, and a concrete lintel. To the west of this is a doorway with a concrete lintel. This is to the east of a large doorway which provided machinery access; this has roller shuttering, a bullnose brick step, and a timber lintel and I-beam which form the head. To the west of this is another doorway with a concrete lintel. There are no windows at first floor level which terminates in a plain gable with cut stone coping.

The central section of this elevation has four gable ends with valley gutters in between each gable. The ground floor façade of each is recessed between brick piers and framed horizontally by oversail brick. These gables are of a reddish brown brick in English Cross bond measuring 8 ⅝' x 2 ¾' x 4 ⅛'. The most easterly gable is bonded into the eastern section. To the east of this gable is a metal framed window with three courses of splayed blue brick forming the sill. The lower two courses of this splayed brick forms a string course which continues west along the remainder of this central section being interrupted by the doorways and piers. This window has a concrete sill. To the west of this window is a doorway with concrete lintel, which is to the east of another doorway with concrete lintel and a blue and red brick step. The gable to the west of this has a large central doorway with an I-beam head, this doorway has been partly filled with modern brick and a door has been inserted. The gable to the west of this has a doorway to the east with a concrete head, this cuts an earlier opening. To the west of this is a large timber framed window with a wooden sill and lintel. To the west of this are three small timber framed with timber sills and soldier brick heads. The western gable has a large central doorway with an I-beam lintel, this doorway has been partly filled with modern brick and a door has been inserted.

The western section of this elevation has been removed; the interior walling has been exposed. The west facing section of this is one storey high and is of painted red brick in stretcher bond measuring 9' x 3' x 4 ¼'. There is a large blocked segmental arch doorway in the centre of this wall which has two rows of headers at its head. There is a riveted I-beam exposed at roof level. The eaves are timber and there is a felt and plastic roof.

The south facing section (Plate 2) of this is of painted red brick in stretcher bond with occasional headers measuring 9 ⅛' x 3' x 4 ¼'. To the west is a bullnose brick pier which has been partially taken away, above this is a cut I-beam. To the east are two large segmental arch windows with timber frames and sills. To the east of this is a bullnose brick pier and another cut I-beam which is to the west of a segmental arch window. To the east of this is a large doorway to provide access to the electrical substation, this has a timber lintel. To the

east of this is another pier and two blocked segmental arched windows, the western one being blocked. This is to the west of another pier and two blocked segmental arched windows.

The west elevation is part of the interior of a now demolished structure which extended westwards. It has one storey and is in red brick in stretcher bond measuring 9' x 2 ¾' x 4 ⅛'. Brickwork has been cut off and exposed on the northern corner and west running I-beams have been cut and exposed. This elevation has a doorway to the north with an iron lintel. To the north of this is a vertical section of iron framing. Beneath eaves level is a large exposed I-beam bearing a plaque PATENT CRAFT ANNETREE AND CO LTD 1886 ENGINEERS WEDNESBURY (Plate 3).

The eastern section of the north elevation is similar to the eastern section of the south elevation. This is in red brick in English Cross Bond measuring 8 ¾' x 2 ⅞' x 4. To the east is a small wooden doorway, to the west of this a two blocked soldier headed windows. These are cut by a large grilled opening. The return of this section is of red brick in English Cross bond measuring 8 ¾' x 2 ¾' x 4'. It has occasional dark headers. It has a central louvered gateway with metal winches above. The quoins are of bullnose brick. The eaves are three courses of oversail brick.

The remainder of the north elevation is a one storey fifteen bay elevation (Plate 4). This is in red brick in English Cross bond with occasional burnt headers and stretchers in no apparent pattern, measuring 8 ⅝' x 3' x 4'. This elevation is similar to the central elevation on the south wall in that it has a series of piers with recessed sections in between. There are cast iron rainwater goods on each pier. The splayed blue brick string is also present here. The west corner of this elevation has been cut off leaving exposed brick. It is apparent that the bay between each pier had two segmental arched windows. These have all been blocked, some of which have been cut by tripartite steel windows and louvered air vents. The eaves are coped with brick on edge.

The east elevation is covered in corrugated steel cladding; three courses of breeze block are exposed at plinth level. There are six courses of brick exposed on the north corner.

Interior
The interior was deemed inaccessible for recording due to the fact that the electric substation was still operational, and that building stripping works were continuing in the remainder of the building. However, a brief photographic record was carried out.

Interpretation
This is a former Victorian Railway building converted for use in the mid to late 20th for use as an electrical substation and for use as part of a steelworks. The eastern gabled part of this building is probably the first phase of construction, this was later extended westwards. The western terminus of this structure has obviously been cut off and demolished. The cut I-beams and exposed girders show that this probably extended both to the west and southwards. It is likely, however, that this section was a later addition; as it appears to have been blocking a fenestration scheme of segmental arched windows on the south elevation. The plaque on the steel girder bearing the date 1886 provides a reasonably good dating evidence for the construction of this western part of the structure. This building was well lit from the north and south due to the number of large segmental arch windows which lined the north and south elevations.

Building B (Fig. 4)

This is a former Victorian railway building converted for use as a steelworks in the mid to late 20th century (Plate 1).

Exterior
The exterior is, on the whole, covered in corrugated steel cladding. The original brickwork is exposed on both the north and south elevations for up to nine courses high. The south elevation is of red brick in English Garden Wall bond measuring 9' x 3' x 4 ⅛'. There is a modern doorway to the east of centre. There is also evidence of the historic fenestration/portal scheme on this elevation; in the western corner of the elevation is a section of modern brick and breeze block infill, to the east of the modern doorway another area of breeze block infill with evidence for a blue brick step, there is another section of breeze block infill to the east of this.

At the eastern corner of the north elevation is a red brick pier in English Garden Wall bond measuring 8 ½` x 3' x 4'. Recessed from this pier to the west is a section of red brick in stretcher bond with occasional headers measuring 9' x 3' x 4 ¼'. This pattern is replicated for three more piers to the west before a section of English Cross bond which is covered in places by a section of thick glazed white tiling. The elevation is completed by a section of modern stretcher bond red brick.

The east facing elevation is entirely modern; this has two gables of corrugated steel cladding above a wall of three courses of modern stretcher bond brick.
The west elevation was inaccessible and is obscured in part by buildings to the west.

Interior
The interior provides a much better insight and understanding of the original form and fabric of this structure. This has a mid to late 20th century steel roof structure.
The south wall is of painted red brick in English Garden Wall bond 9 ⅛'x 3 ⅜' x 4 ½`. This wall has fourteen evenly spaced piers which reach c. ¾ up the wall. These support a series of riveted I-beams which stretch along the extent of the elevation. These are riveted together over each pier. Modern vertical steel I-beams, which are positioned adjacent to each pier, also contribute to this support. There are corbels at regular intervals at eaves level, these support the steel roof structure, and are of painted oversail brick and concrete/stone. The wall coping is of soldier brick. There are thirteen bays between the brick piers. Bay 1 and 2 (from the east) have two blocked segmental arched openings, the most westerly one of each is cut by a blocked modern doorway with a lintel head. Bay 3 has a large doorway with a wooden lintel. Bay 4 has a smaller doorway with an I-beam lintel. Above pier level in bay five is a blocked *oeil-de-boeuf* window (Plate 5). Bay 6 has a blocked doorway with an I-beam lintel, and is now cut with a modern doorway. Bay 7 has a blocked doorway with an I-beam lintel, and has a blocked *oeil-de-boeuf* window above. Bays 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 do not appear to have had any previous fenestration. Bay 13 has a blocked doorway with an I-beam lintel and is cut by a modern blocked doorway.

The west wall comprises of two gable ends (Plate 6). These are of painted red brick in English Cross bond measuring 9' x 3'x 4 ½ `. The south gable has a large blocked segmental arched doorway. This is cut by two blocked large rectangular doorways; the most southerly of these is blocked with painted breeze block and has a riveted I-beam lintel. The other is blocked with painted modern brick in stretcher bond. The roof structure cuts the area between the gables at two points. The northern gable on this elevation has a bullnose brick pier with chamfer stops to the south of centre and a large blocked opening with a lintel head.

The north wall is of red brick in English Cross bond. It has a similar arrangement to the south wall with fourteen piers, thirteen bays, and corbels. Bays 1,2,3,5,6,7,8,9,11 and 12 have no evidence for fenestration. Bay 4 has a modern doorway into the adjacent building, and has a blocked *oeil-de-boeuf* window above. Bay 10 has two blocked *oeil-de-boeuf* windows above, while bay 13 has one blocked *oeil-de-boeuf* window above.

The east wall is, as noted above, a modern corrugated steel and brick elevation.

Interpretation
This is a former Victorian railway building which was probably utilized, due to its length, and to the large blocked openings on the west elevation, as a shed for the manufacture/storage of engines and carriages. This was converted for use as a steelworks in the mid to late 20th century. Much of the historic fabric is hidden behind the steel cladding on the exterior. The interior, however, provides an insight into the historic/ original form of this building. The corbels do not appear to have been inserted, and were probably used to support the original roof structure. It is possible, due to the fact that the east wall is devoid of historic fabric, that this building extended further eastwards. The lack of fenestration (apart from the *oeil-de-boeuf* windows), and the presence of interior tiling on the north wall may signify that this formed the party wall with another building to the north.

5.2 Phase 2: trial-trenching

Trench 4 (Fig. 6)
This trench was aligned north-south and measured 9.5m x 2m x 1.5m.

The earliest deposit encountered was a layer **[4004]** of possible hydrocarbon contaminated material consisting of clinker, coal dust and brick rubble containing metal piping. The layer was excavated to depth of 1.50m, but its full extent was not recorded and natural subsoil not located. Rapid seepage of potentially contaminated groundwater meant it was not possible to fully excavate this layer. Layer 4004 may be associated with the infilling of a former canal basin shown on historic maps at this location.

At the north end of the trench a concrete surface **[4002]**, at least 3.75m wide and 1m deep, cut layer 4004. Built on surface 4002 was a 'L'-shaped blue brick wall **[4001]** aligned east-west (forming the northern extent of the trench) and north-south. Also overlying surface 4002 to the east, was a large red brick footing **[4003**, Plate 10**]**, 1.2m wide and 0.90m high, that incorporated the remains of a concrete stanchion. As 4003 was located within the side on the trench its full extent was not revealed. Overlying 4001 and 4003 was a layer of modern overburden **[4005]** consisting of brick rubble, which was sealed by a concrete surface **[4000]**.

Trench 5
This trench was aligned north-south and measured 9.5m x 2m x 1.5m.

Natural subsoil was not encountered in this trench and the earliest deposit located was a layer **[5003]** consisting of possible hydrocarbon contaminated material mainly brick rubble, stone and clinker containing metal piping, tar, and miscellaneous corroded metal objects. Layer 5003, similar to layer 4004 in Trench 4, was thought to be backfill of a former canal basin, was excavated to a depth of 1.5m, but its full extent was not recorded. Rapid seepage of potentially contaminated groundwater meant it was not possible to fully excavate this layer. To the north layer 5003 was cut by a concrete surface **[5002**, Plate 9**]**, at least 5m wide and

0.75m deep. Surface 5002 was overlain by a layer of modern overburden **[5001]** that consisted of mostly brick rubble. These Layers 5001 were sealed by a concrete surface **[5000]** 0.70m thick, that increased in depth to the north.

Trench 6
The trench was aligned north-south and measured 4.5m x 2m x 1.70m.

The natural subsoil was not reached and the earliest feature revealed was a red brick wall **[6003,** Plate 8**]** at the north end of the trench on a northwest-southeast alignment. Wall 6003 was at least 1.20m high. Wall 6003 was sealed by a surface made of a single course of blue engineering brick **[6002]**. Abutting 6003 and 6002 was a layer **[6001]** of dark grey-brown silt and clinker, at least 1.70m deep, containing frequent red bricks and metal piping. Layer 6001 was similar to layers 4004 and 5003 in Trenches 4 and 5, and was thought to be backfill of a former canal basin. It was excavated to a depth of 1.70m, but its full extent was not recorded. Layer 6001 was sealed by modern overburden **[6004]** that consisted of dark grey-brown silty clay with clinker, brick fragments and mortar. Contexts 6004 and 6002 were sealed by a surface of modern concrete **[6000]**.

Wall 6003 may be part of the canal basin wall associated with the a 19th century canal branch, now filled in, and the overlying surface 6002 could perhaps have been associated with a towpath or wharf.

5.3 **Phase 3: trial-trenching** (Fig. 5)

Trench 7
Due reasons of health and safety it was decided not to proceed with the excavation of Trench 7 (see above).

Trench 8 (Fig. 7)
The positioning and length of Trench 8 was modified to take account of obstructions on the ground, such as a concrete washout pit. Originally intended to be a narrow trench orientated east-west, it was adapted into a shortened two-part 'L'-shape trench - with 10m running east-west and 10m running north-south. The east-west part was then extended with additional rectangular areas excavated to north and south in order to investigate possible archaeological features. The total area of this trench was 93 sq. m.

The mid yellow orange brown natural clay **[824]** was encountered at a fairly uniform depth of 0.80m-0.90m from the present ground surface.

Apparently cut into the natural clay 824 were numerous intercutting features with irregular outlines thought at first to range from small postholes to large pits. In order to investigate these further, extensions to the north and south of the trench were excavated by machine. It became apparent during subsequent hand excavation that all the supposed archaeological features were in fact part of a single natural feature **[821,** Plate 11**]**, identified as a tree bole. The tree bole covered a sub-rectangular area roughly 4.5 x 4.5m in extent. It contained an area of lighter coloured clay **[823]** surrounded by an outer area of darker more silty material **[822]**, with the latter undercutting the former – a characteristic trait of tree boles. Smaller roughly circular discolourations in the soil initially thought to be postholes were shown to have irregular and indistinct disturbed sides and bases – a characteristic trace of root activity.

One small rim sherd of medieval pottery was found in layer **[819]** which appears to be associated with the tree bole.

A north-north-west to south-south-east orientated field drain cut the natural clay 824.

A layer of black clay **[809]** containing modern brick and other demolition material sealed the natural 824 and the tree bole 821. This was overlain by a mixed mid reddish brown layer of rubble **[810]**, which almost certainly derived from the steelworks phase of use of the site. This in turn was overlain by a layer of reinforced concrete **[825]**.

Trench 9 (Fig. 7, Plate 12)
Trench 9 was orientated north-south and measured 49m x 2m x 1.8m. A 3m length of the trench was not excavated as a flood prevention method. The northern and central parts of the trench were subject to rapid seepage of groundwater, making excavation difficult even with a pump in operation.

A mid orange brown natural clay **[909]** was encountered at a depth of 1.50m (in the south) sloping down to 1.80m (in the north) from the present ground surface.

In the middle of the northern half of the trench the natural surface dipped down to form a hollow. No definite cut was located and it is thought that the hollow may be a possible palaeochannel or former watercourse. While the northern edge of the palaeochannel was not found, by a process of elimination it must lie within the unexcavated portion of the trench as natural was encountered to the north. The width of the palaeochannel is estimated at about 11m.

Cutting into the natural 909 in the south of the trench was a linear ditch or gully **[907]** running east-west. Its mid brown sandy clay fill **[908]** contained slag and small fragments of clay pipe, dating the feature to the post-medieval period.

Another possible linear gully **[904]** aligned north-west to south-east appeared to cut the natural 909. It was however extremely shallow and ill-defined and its interpretation as a definite feature is uncertain. A fragment of clay pipe was found in its fill [903] which was similar to that of gully 907, making it possibly contemporary with gully 907.

Overlying the natural 909 over most of the trench was a black clay silt layer **[902]**. In the area of the possible palaeochannel this dipped down sharply beneath a pink sandy clay **[906]** which in turn was overlaid by a further layer of black clay silt **[910]**. Both these latter layers were sealed by a layer of mid yellow grey clay **[905]**.

Above these layers was mixed rubble hardcore layer **[901]** which formed the foundation for a modern brick floor surface **[900]**.

Trench 10 (Fig. 7, Plate 13)
Trench 10 was orientated east-west and measured 43m x 2m x 1.30m. The intended 50m length had to be foreshortened to avoid large concrete stanchions at the eastern end.

Natural mid orange brown clay with pebbles **[1004]** was encountered at a fairly uniform depth of 1.10-1.30m from the ground surface right across the trench.

The natural clay 1004 was cut by curvilinear gully **[1006]**. There were no finds in the fill **[1007]** and given its irregular sides it is probable that the feature is of natural origin.
Also cutting the natural were two north-east to south-west orientated field drains.

Sealing the natural 1004 was mid greenish-grey silty clay **[1003]**, similar in consistency to the natural below but containing some 19th-20th century brick and other building debris. Above this was a dark brown mixed rubble make-up layer **[1002]** of modern origin. This in turn was sealed by the modern concrete **[1000]**.

Trench 11 (Fig. 7, Plate 14)
Trench 11 was orientated north-south and measured 50m x 2m x 2m.

Natural yellow and blue clay **[1106]** was encountered at an average depth of 1.20 – 1.40m for most of the trench, though modern disturbance had truncated it to an unknown depth for a stretch of 5m at the northern end and 12m in the southern half of the trench.

Cut into the natural 1106 was an undated possible shallow furrow **[1109]**, filled by light grey-blue clay **[1110]**. Also cutting the natural was a shallow irregular pit-like feature **[1111]**, filled by a mid grey silty clay **[1112]** which contained no finds.

Where there was no modern disturbance, the natural 1106 was overlaid by a light blue clay **[1105]** containing waterwashed pebbles, suggesting waterborne deposition. This in turn was overlaid by dark grey or black silty clay **[1104]**, containing a high proportion of charcoal and of a consistent thickness of about 0.2m along much of the trench. This was sealed in places by a pink sand levelling deposit **[1108]** which was cut by pipe trench **[1101**] and its fill **[1102]**. The top layer was modern concrete **[1101]**.

Trench 12 (Fig. 7, Plate 15)
Trench 12 was orientated north-south and measured 50m x 2m x 1.20m.

The yellow sandy clay natural **[1205]** was encountered at an average depth of 1.20m. Above the natural was a dark grey gritty clay sand **[1204]**, which could be a buried former topsoil, but for which no dating evidence was found. All the layers above were of modern origin. Sealing 1204 was the very dark grey silty clay **[1203]** containing Victorian pottery and glass. Above 1203 was the grey layer of ash and clinker **[1202]**. This layer was cut by two pipe trenches running roughly north-south from a manhole cover in the north of the trench. Layer 1202 was covered by a brick surface **[1201]** which in turn was sealed by concrete **[1200]**. There were no archaeological features in this trench.

Trench 13 (Fig. 7, Plate 16)
Trench 13 was orientated east-west and measured 34m x 2m x 2m, with a sondage at the eastern end excavated down to 3.2m. Natural was not encountered in this trench, and excavation revealed heavily made-up ground in this part of the site.

In the central part of the trench the earliest layer was a black silt layer **[1324]** overlaid by brown clay **[1323]** which was overlaid by mid grey sandy clay **[1318]**. All these layers dipped downwards towards the west, either as part of a natural slope or into a watercourse or some other deep hollow. Above 3018 was a continuation of the same pattern or sequence of layers: - brown clay **[1317]**, grey clay **[1312]**, brown clay **[1311]**, black silt **[1310]**, brown clay **[1309]**, black silt **[1308]**, brown clay **[1307]**, black silt **[1306]**, brown clay **[1305] / [1316]** and black silt **[1304]**. The alternating nature of these layers indicates they were all deposited at roughly the same time as part of the same making-up process – probably in connection with the construction of the steelworks.

It is not clear whether the build-up of layers described above has taken place against (and is therefore later than) a brick wall **[1326]** and overlying brick and rubble layer **[1325]** or

whether both of these were contained within a construction trench which cuts (and is therefore earlier than) the stratigraphy to the west.

Cutting through the build-up of alternating layers was a modern foundation trench **[1328]** for brick walls **[1319]** and **[1321]**, with rubble infill **[1320]**.

Also cutting through the alternating layers was a narrow foundation trench for a metal girder, containing fills **[1315]** and **[1314]**.

To the east of the brick wall 1326 a sondage was excavated by machine to a depth of 3.2m below the ground surface. The natural subsoil was not encountered and neither was the build up of alternating layers found to the west. Instead the material was mostly comprised of the single modern rubble layer **[1327]**.

The upper layers encountered in this trench were modern hardcore **[1303]**, concrete surface **[1302]** and brick surface **[1301]**.

6 FINDS

A sherd of pottery from **[819]** was identified by Stephanie Rátkai as part of the rim of a 13th-14th century cooking pot, of fairly typical local sandy fabric from the Black Country. It weighs 6g and is fairly abraded.

7 DISCUSSION

Apart from the sherd of medieval pottery from Trench 8, no medieval archaeological features or finds were encountered. The possible palaeochannel in Trench 9 has more of the character of a natural stream than an artificially controlled channel and is of unknown date. Buried soils were identified beneath modern overburden in Trenches 11 and 12 (perhaps corresponding to buried soils found in the Phase 1 part of the evaluation) but again no dating evidence was obtained: all that can be said with certainty is that these date to the pre- late 19th century. The large tree bole in Trench 8 is an indicator of the largely rural landscape that preceded the industrial development of the 19th century. The presence of a medieval sherd of pottery in close association with the tree bole is hard to explain, but could possibly have been transported by way of manuring of surrounding fields, perhaps originating from the medieval settlement of Oldbury nearby.

The evidence from Trenches 4, 5 and 6 at the north-western area (Phase 2) of the site indicated deep layers of industrial waste fill. A colliery existed to the north-west of the location of these trenches, until the late 19th century, and it was served by a 19th century canal branch off the main Birmingham Canal which was finally infilled by the early 1970s. It appears that industrial waste encountered in these trenches was probably the fill of the canal basin. Possible evidence of the canal itself was revealed in Trench 6 where features suggestive of a towpath or loading area and the canal basin wall were exposed.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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9 CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

1843 Tithe map
1956 Ordnance Survey map

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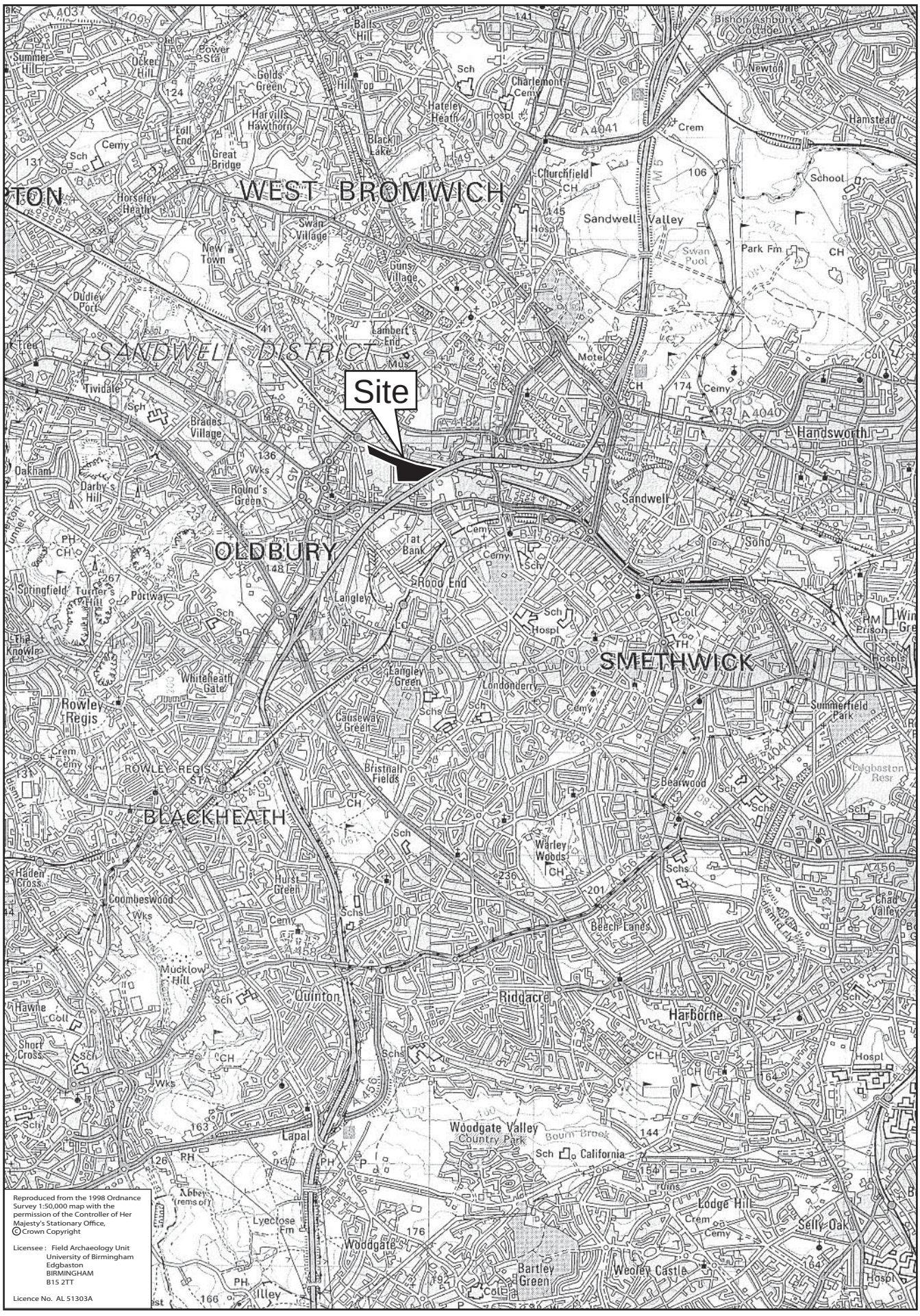
Site
WEST BROMWICH
SANDWELL DISTRICT
OLDBURY
SMETHWICK
BLACKHEATH
ROWLEY REGIS STA
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Fig.1

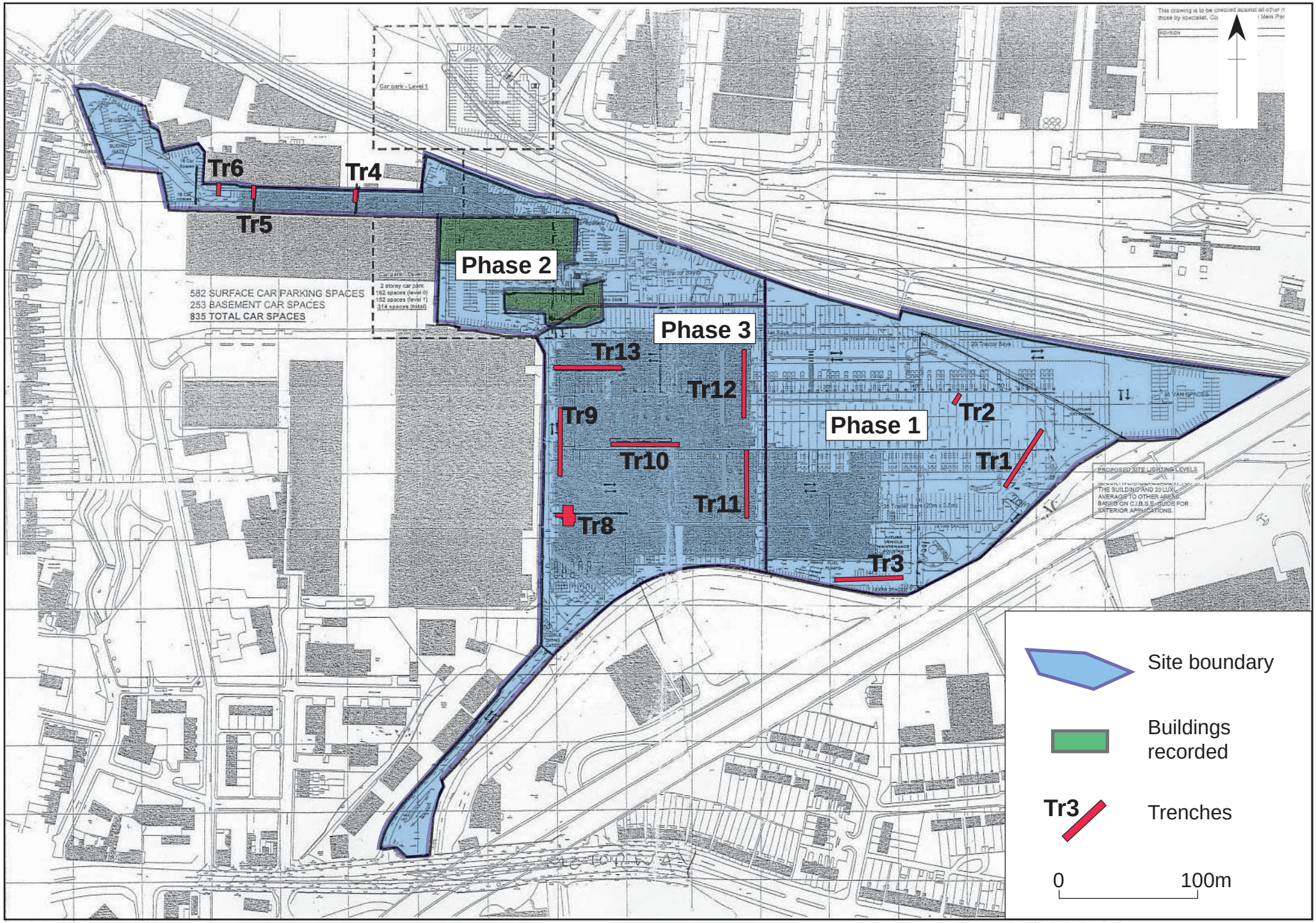
Tr6
Tr4
Tr5
Phase 2
582 SURFACE CAR PARKING SPACES
253 BASEMENT CAR SPACES
835 TOTAL CAR SPACES
Phase 3
Tr13
Tr12
Tr9
Tr10
Tr11
Tr8
Phase 1
Tr2
Tr1
Tr3
Site boundary
Buildings recorded
Tr3
Trenches
0
100m

Fig.2


182
mill
meadow
pasture
180
mill
meadow
pasture
183
colliery
181
house
and mill
185
wharf
and
pit
BROMFORD
POOL
212 old pool
pasture
192
top
pasture
187
sling
188
Parker branch of
Birmingham canal
189
house yard
boat dock
190
Parker branch of
Birmingham canal
191
spoil barn
pasture
193
mill
leasow
197
limeliln
piece
196
weir
piece
198
limekiln
and wharf
575
horse
leasow

Fig.3

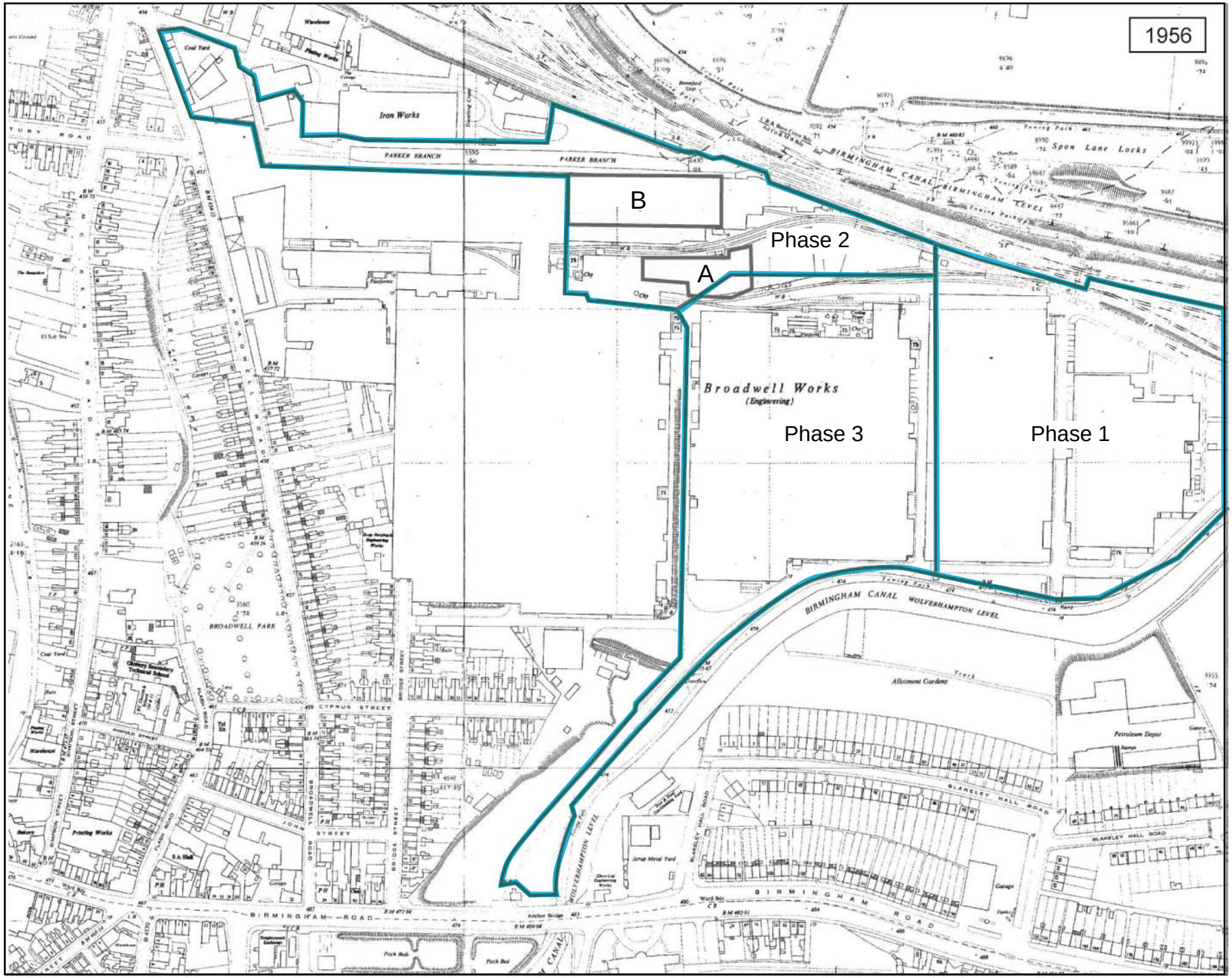
1956
B
Phase 2
A
Phase 3
Phase 1
Broadwell Works
(Engineering)
Iron Works
PARKER BRANCH
BIRMINGHAM CANAL
BIRMINGHAM LEVEL
Spon Lane Locks
BIRMINGHAM CANAL WOLVERHAMPTON LEVEL
BROADWELL PARK
Allotment Gardens
Petroleum Depot
BLAKELEY HALL ROAD
BIRMINGHAM ROAD
CYPRUS STREET
BROADWELL ROAD
BRIDGE STREET
JOHN STREET
WOLVERHAMPTON LEVEL

Fig.4

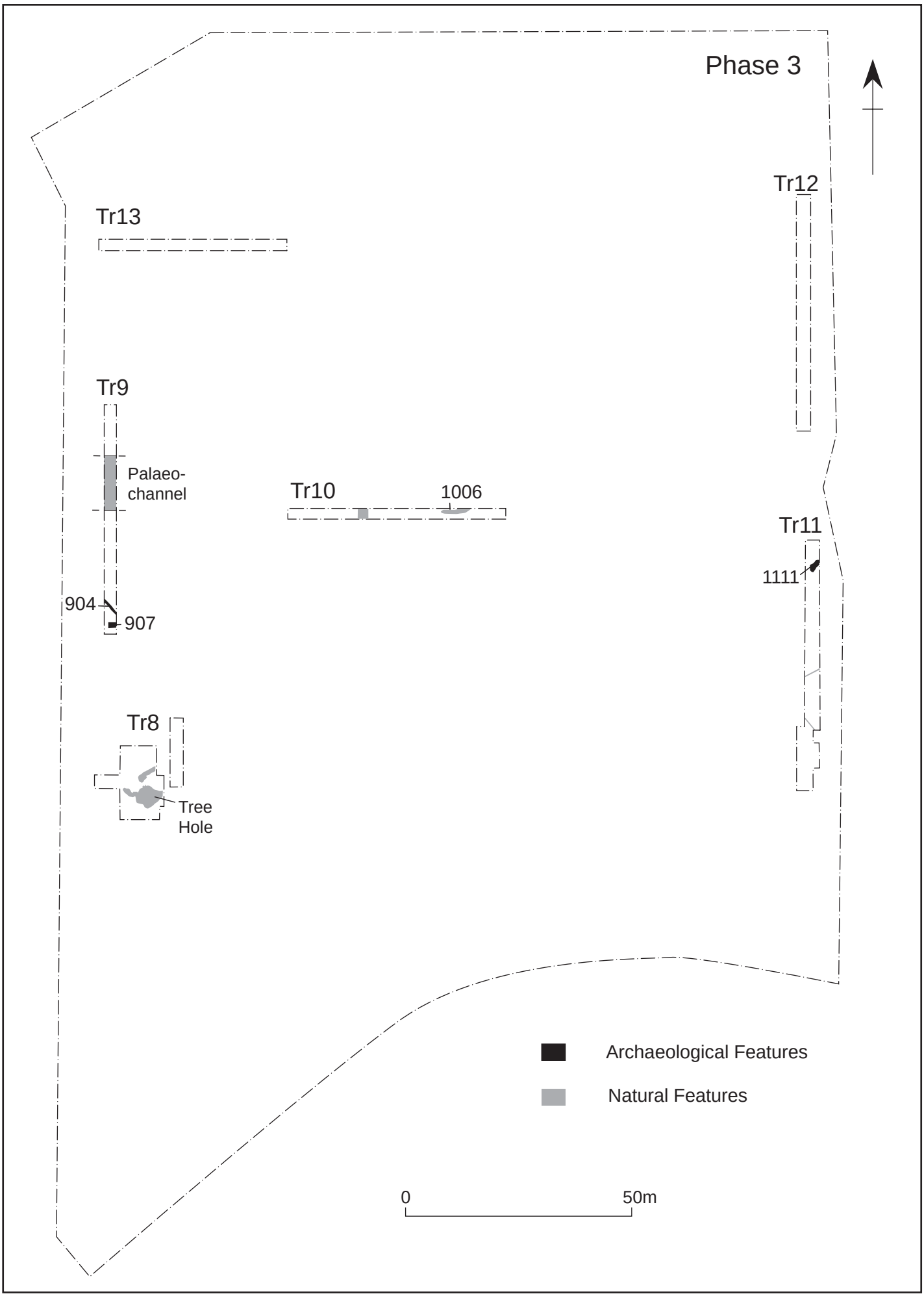
Phase 3
Tr13
Tr12
Tr9
Palaeo-
channel
Tr10
1006
Tr11
1111
904
907
Tr8
Tree
Hole
Archaeological Features
Natural Features
0
50m

Fig.5

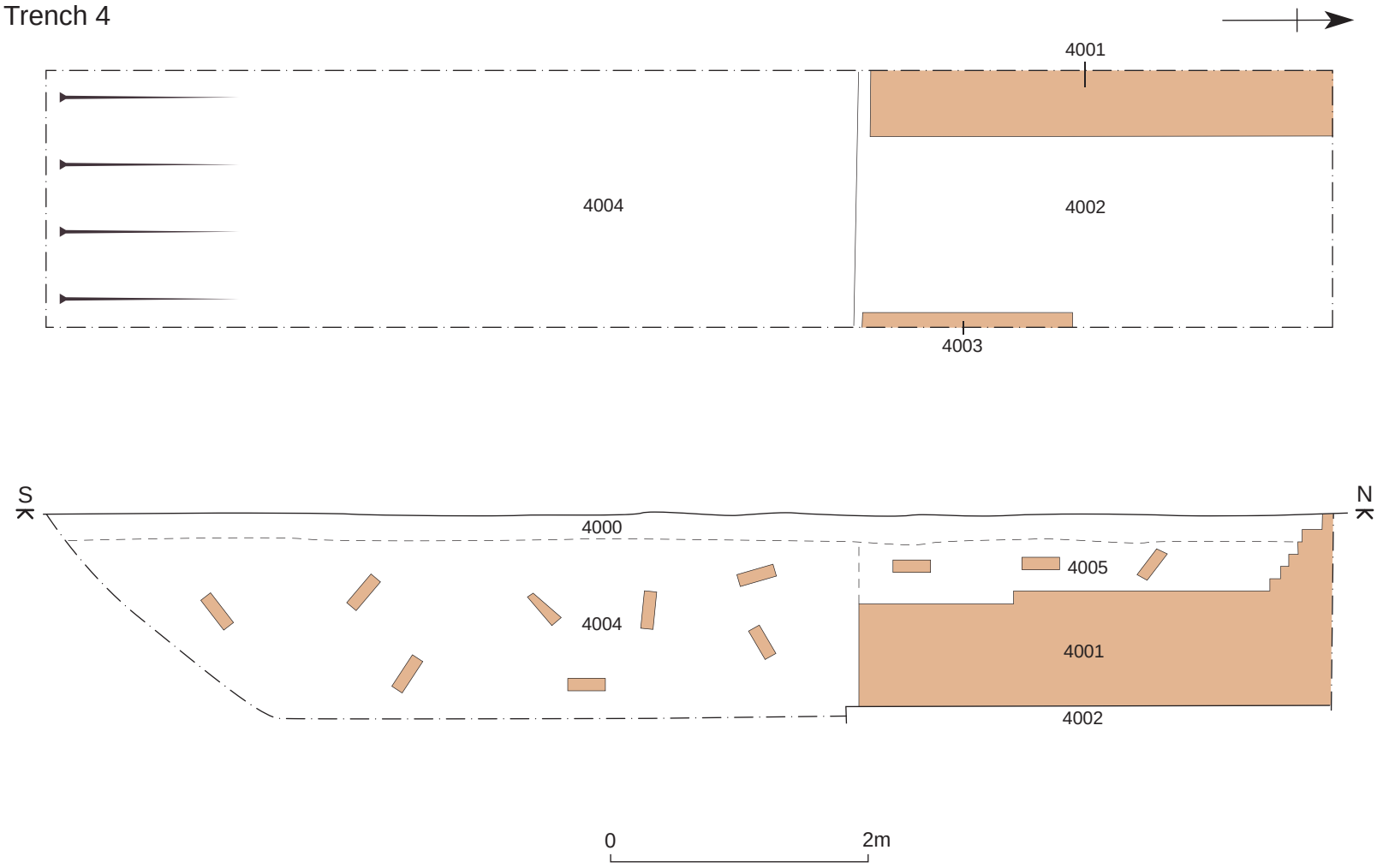
Trench 4
4001
4004
4002
4003
S K
N K
4000
4005
4004
4001
4002
0
2m

Fig.6

Sample Sections

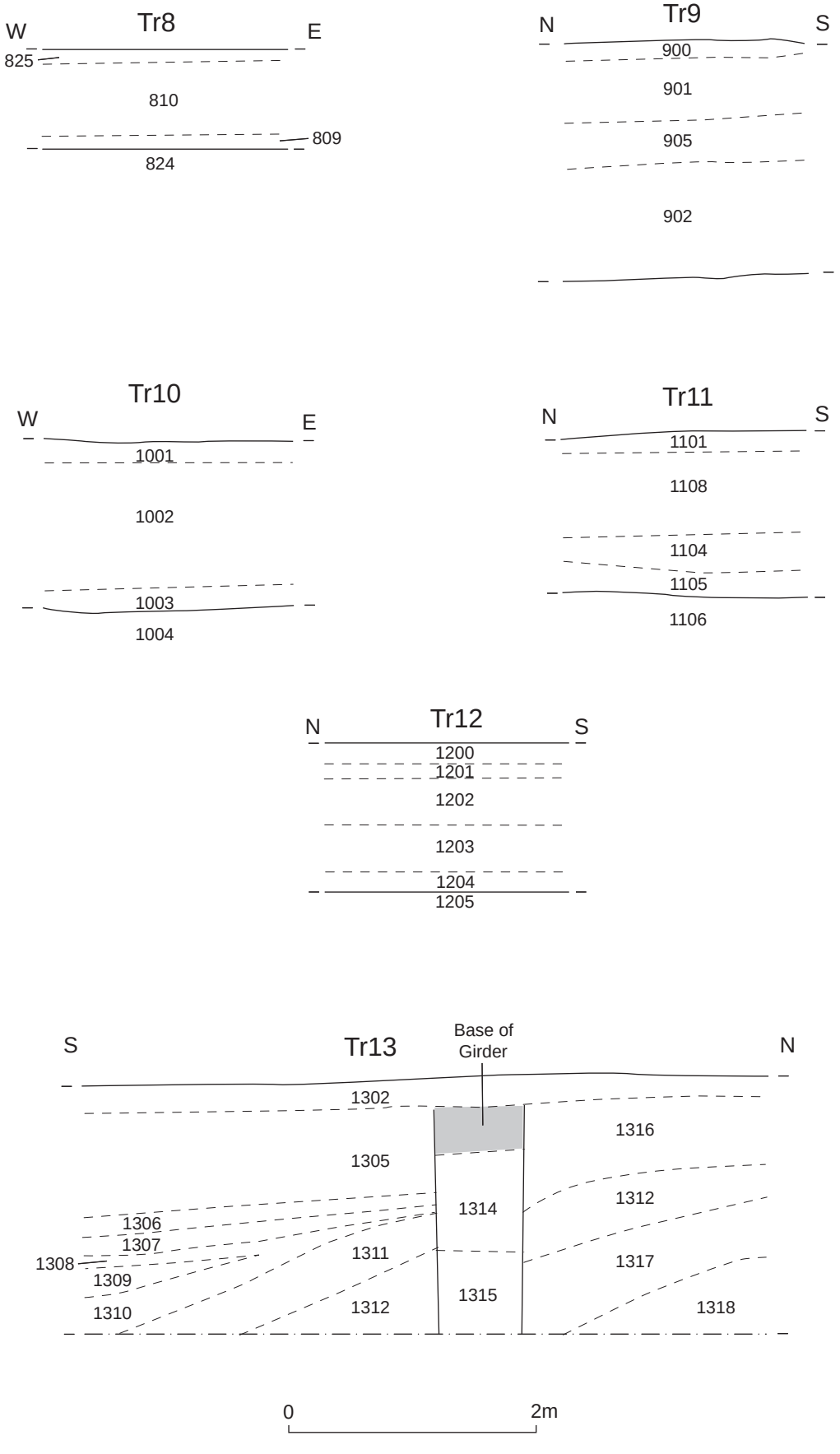

Fig.7

Plate 1

Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 4

Plate 5

Plate 6

Plate 7

Plate 8

Plate 9

Plate 10

Plate 11

Plate 12

Plate 13

Plate 14

Plate 15

Plate 16