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**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
The Row Market, Edgbaston Street, Birmingham City Centre  
2000**

by  
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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief**

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### **1.0 Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at the Row Market, Edgbaston Street, Birmingham City Centre (NGR SP 073 864), during groundworks for a new market building. An earlier desk-based assessment (Mould and Litherland 1995) had identified the site as being part of a zone of potential archaeological survival, and a subsequent archaeological evaluation demonstrated the survival of medieval remains as “islands” between areas of later disturbance (Hovey 1999).

No medieval artefacts or deposits were present in the area under investigation, as 19th-century cellaring had erased any earlier archaeology. Cellaring was present throughout the new Row Market wall foundation trench.

### **2.0 Introduction**

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during groundworks associated with the development of the Row Market on Edgbaston Street (NGR SP 073 864; planning application no. C/01412/99/BCC). The archaeological fieldwork was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on behalf of Commercial Services, Birmingham City Council.

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Specification prepared by BUFAU (Mould 1999) and a Design Brief prepared by Dr Mike Hodder, Planning Archaeologist for Birmingham City Council (Hodder 1999). The guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999) were followed.

An earlier archaeological evaluation of the site had been undertaken in July 1999 (Hovey 1999). This work is reported on separately, however, the results are incorporated in this report.

### **3.0 Site Location (Figs. 1 and 2)**

The site is located within Birmingham City Centre and lies to the south of Edgbaston Street and St. Martin's Church, and to the west of St. Martin's Lane and Moat Lane. The site formerly comprised a tarmac surface which was used for an open market.

## **4.0 Objectives**

The objectives of the watching brief were to monitor all below-ground works associated with the new eastern wall-line of a market hall and to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological deposits or features affected by the development works.

## **5.0 Method**

The objectives were achieved through a series of site visits during the contractors' groundworks. Substantial wall footings (6m x 30m) aligned north-west-south-east were excavated to a maximum depth of 4m in the southern end and to 2.25m in the northern end. At the northern end, the footings were continued and widened to incorporate a lift shaft (7m x 7m), and this was excavated to a depth of 2-3m (Fig. 2).

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeological deposits or features were present. Contextual information was supplemented by scale sections and photographs which, together with recovered artefacts, form the site archive. A copy of the paper and photographic archive will be deposited with the Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record.

## **6.0 Archaeological Results (Figs. 3 and 4)**

The orange sand subsoil (1000) was recorded at a depth of 2.25-3.6m throughout the length of the trench. A sub-circular pit (F112, Fig. 3) was identified central to the lift shaft area cutting the subsoil at a depth of 2.25m. This feature was approximately 1m in diameter and 0.5m deep comprising a brown silty fill containing brick and tile. Also identified in this area were two north-west-south-east aligned 19th-century cellar walls (F100, F113). These were 4m apart and were visible at 0.4m-0.75m below the ground surface. Part of a north-east-south-west aligned wall (F101) was identified running between these walls.

A north-west-south-east aligned brick culvert (F114) was identified in the north-west-facing section of the lift shaft area. This culvert was approximately 0.75m in diameter and was visible 2m below the ground surface. Part of a yard surface (F115) comprising one course of blue bricks was located 0.7m below the ground surface. In the south-west-facing section, the subsoil was visible directly beneath a single layer of modern building rubble and brown organic silt (1001). In the north-east-facing section the ground was severely truncated by a modern sewer, the cut of which was backfilled by clean pink gravel and green sand (1010).

The north-west-facing section containing the culvert also showed a build-up of layers, including black-brown silt with a high concentration of brick and general building debris. The northern-most part of the trench was sealed by layers of coke and clinker, orange brick, and compact brown silt, overlain by tarmac (1002).

The character of this lift shaft area most typifies the remainder of the new wall foundation trench (Fig. 4). Walls aligned north-west-south-east (F102, F104, F105,

F106, F107, F108), and north-east-south-west (F109, F110, F111) continued from this point for another 22m. Between them were deposits and layers including high concentrations of mortar and sand (1003, 1004) and general building debris with large amounts of bricks (1005, 1006, 1011, 1012, 1013 and 1014). Some modern deposits containing concrete rubble were also identified (1007, F117)

An undated posthole (F103) was identified under one of the north-east-south-west aligned walls (F106), and was seen in plan only. In the south-eastern end of the trench, the 19th-century cellaring and backfill was truncated by a modern cut containing concrete and pink sand (F116, 1015). This modern disturbance also heavily truncated an undated layer of brown-black organic silt (1009) that directly overlaid the subsoil. This layer was also truncated by F117 to the north.

One fragment of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the northern end of the trench.

## **7.0 Discussion (Map 1)**

No artefacts or deposits dating to the medieval period, or to any earlier activity, were recorded.

Prior investigation of the area, that included the assessment of documentary and cartographic sources, and published and unpublished written records, indicated Birmingham's importance as a medieval settlement (Mould and Litherland 1995). An archaeological evaluation further demonstrated that archaeological deposits can survive as "islands" between areas of later disturbance (Hovey 1999). In the area of this watching brief, however, there was no survival of medieval or earlier archaeology as extensive cellaring was present throughout the whole of the new foundation trench. The alignment of the 19th-century cellars was the same as the alignment of the new eastern market hall wall, and so the probability of locating an "island" was perhaps diminished along this line. Where the cellaring was not present, the ground level was characterised by modern services and building foundations.

## **8.0 References**

- Hodder, M. 1999 *Design Brief for Archaeological Observation and Recording: Proposed New Market Hall and Redesigned Open Market*.
- Hovey, J. 1999 *An Archaeological Evaluation at The Row Market, Edgbaston Street, Birmingham City Centre* BUFAU Report No. 603.
- Mould, C.A. and Litherland, S. 1995 *A Preliminary Archaeological Assessment of the area of Edgbaston Street, Pershore Street, Upper Dean Street and Moat Lane, Birmingham City Centre*. BUFAU Report 354.
- Mould, C.A. 1999 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief at Edgbaston Street*

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

The project was sponsored by Commercial Services, Birmingham City Council. Thanks are due to Marcus Ballinger from Tilbury Douglas Constuction and Dr Mike Hodder, Planning Archaeologist for Birmingham City Council. The watching brief was carried out by Eleanor Ramsey. The report was edited by Catharine Mould. The illustrations were prepared by Mark Breedon.

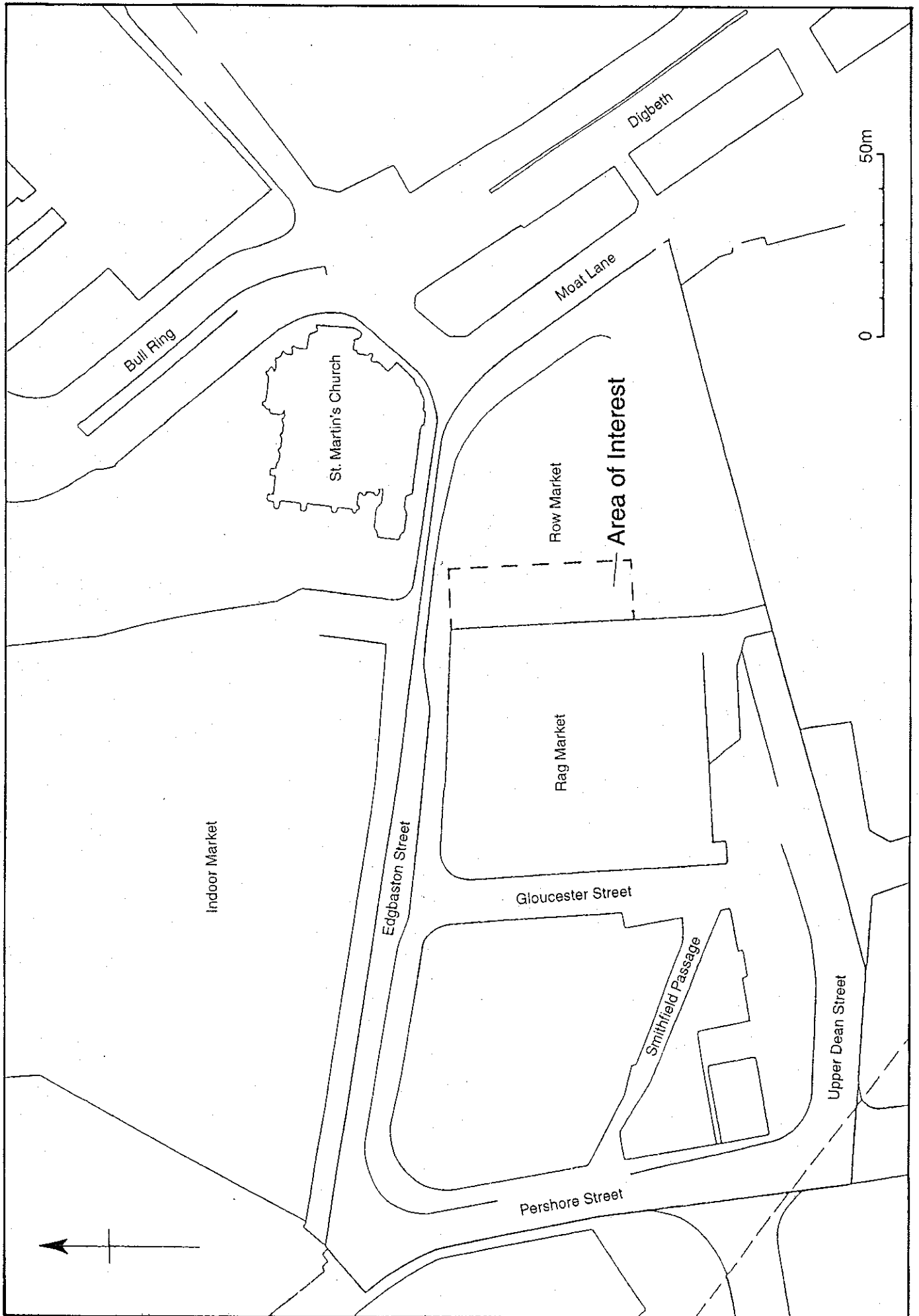


Fig 1

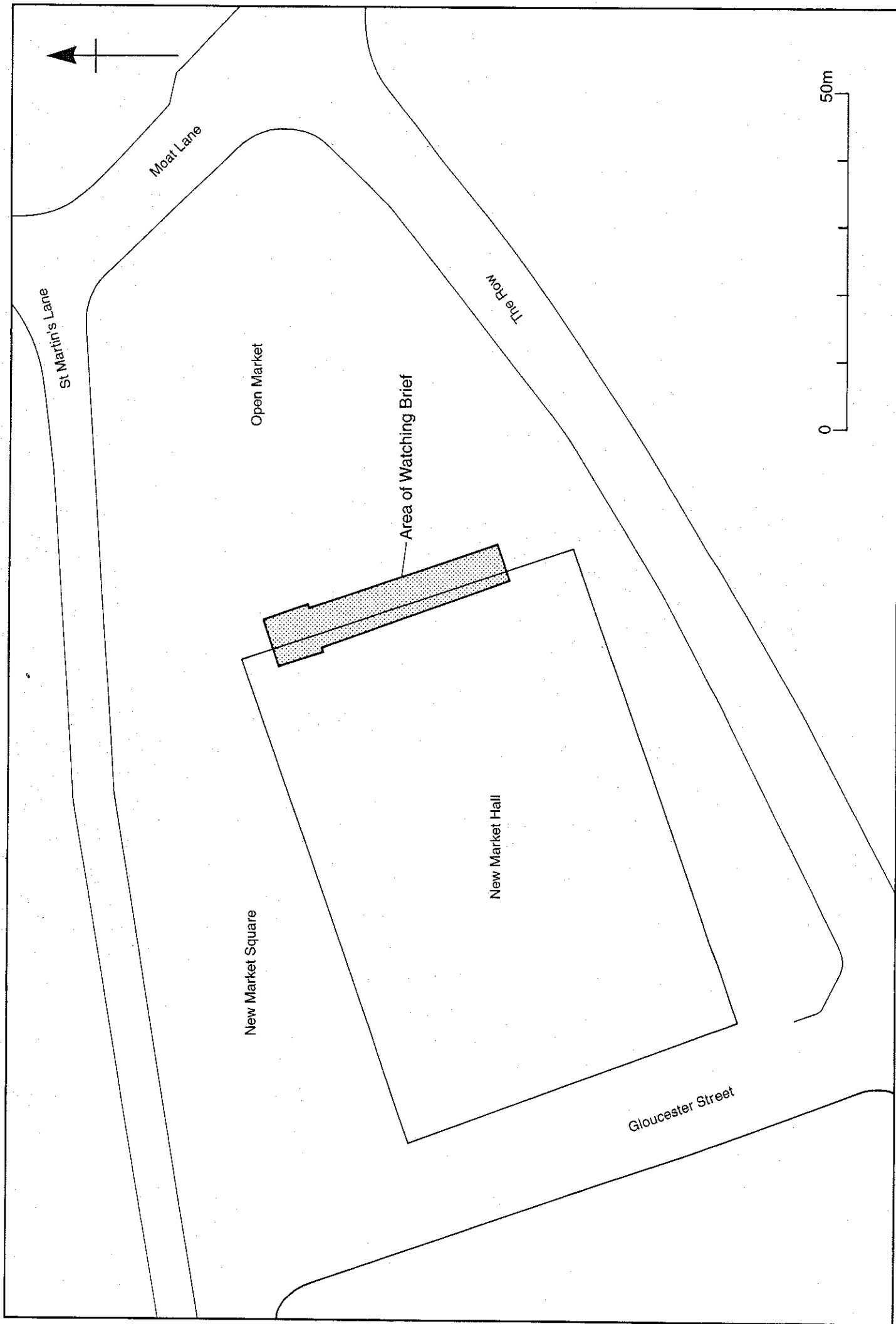
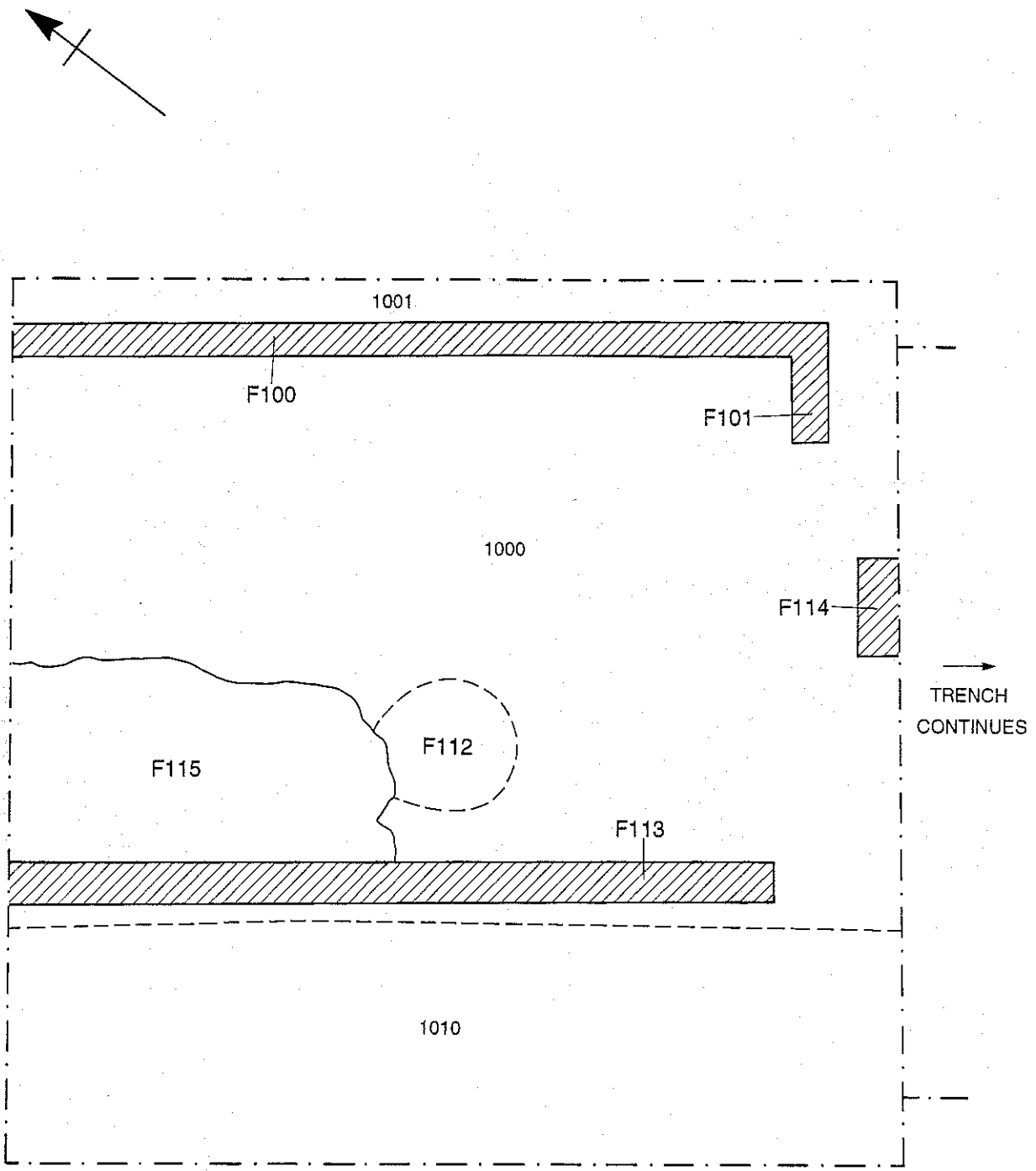



Fig 2





Key

 Brickwork

0 5m

Fig.3

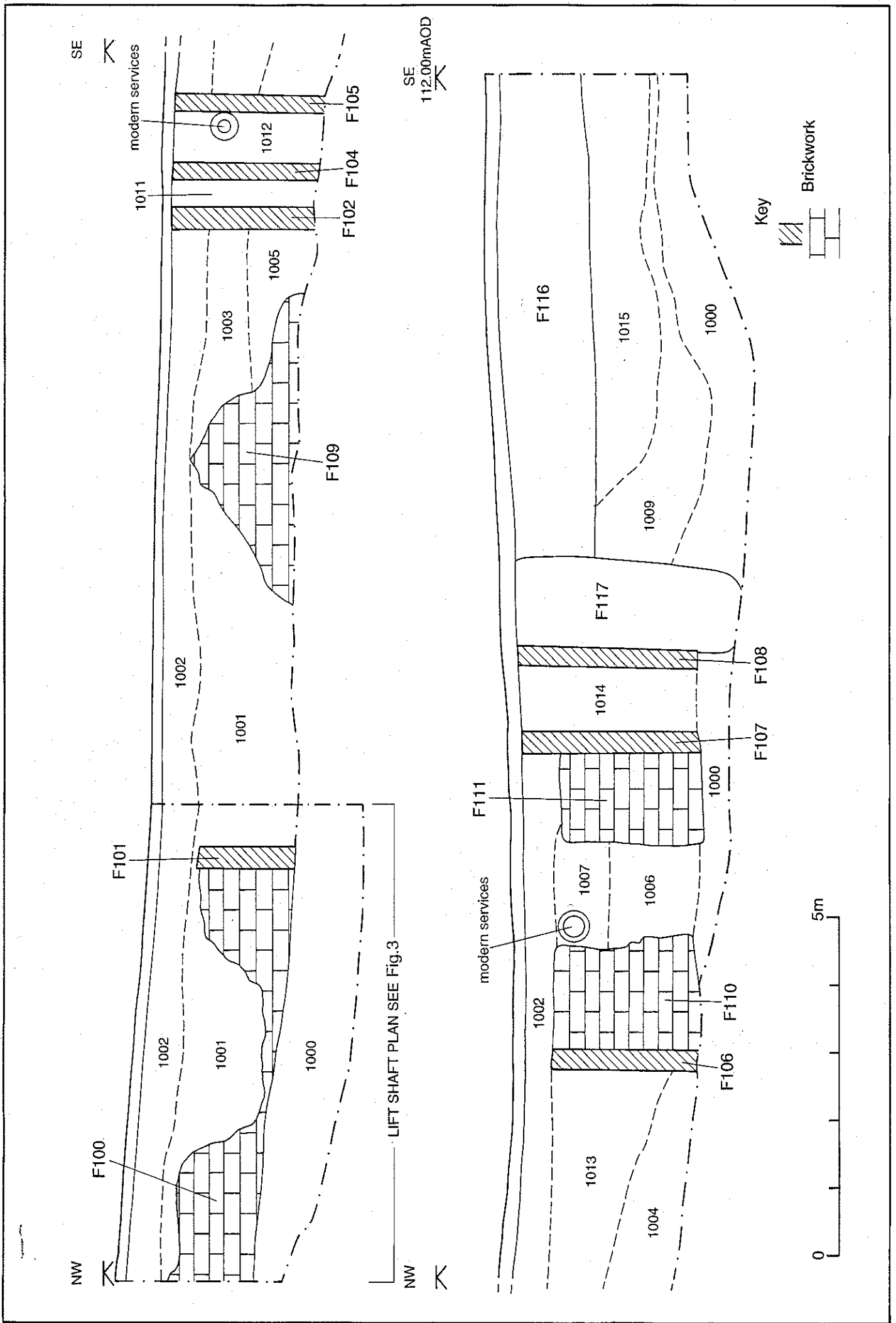
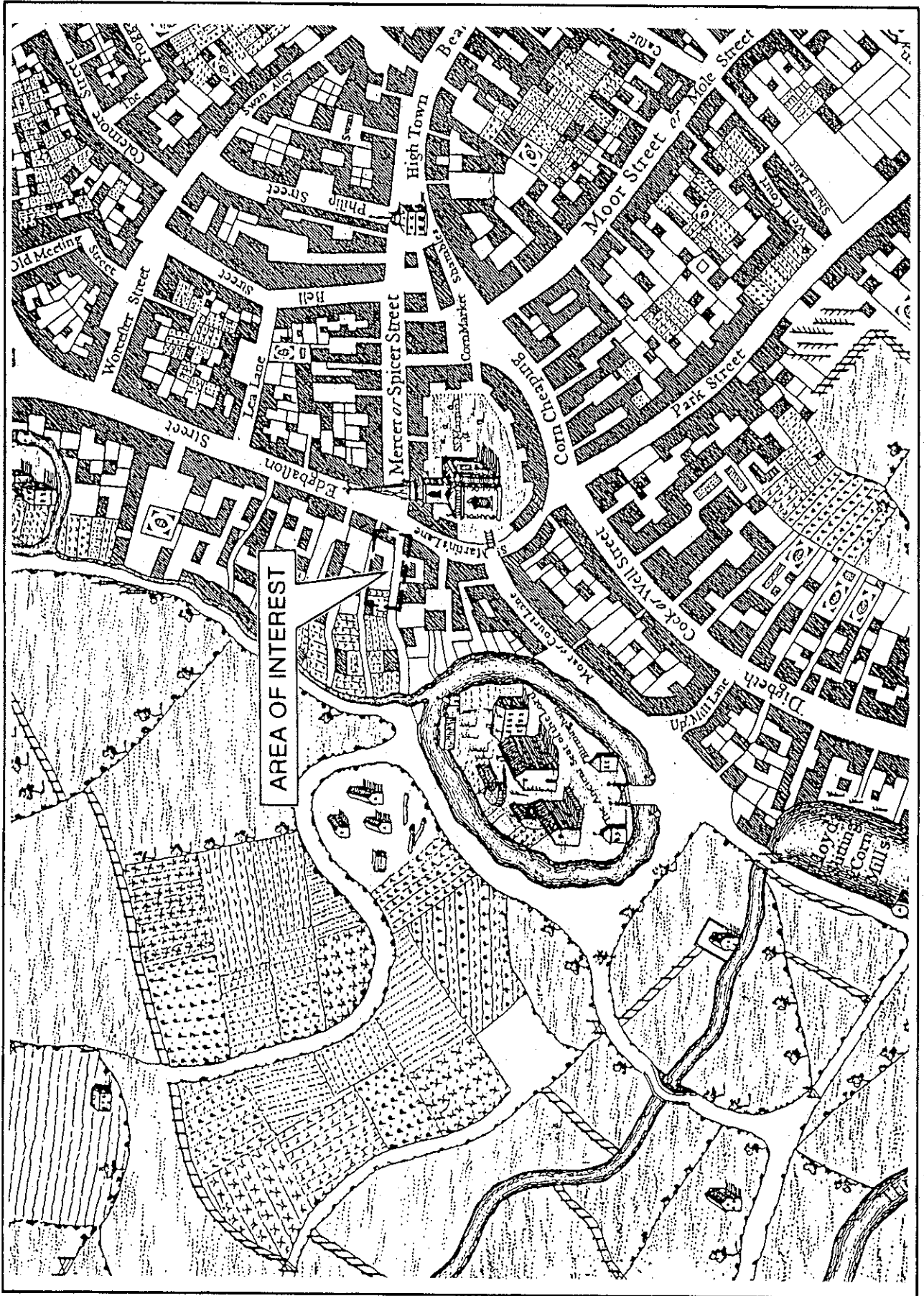


Fig.4



Map 1