Further Archaeological Investigations at Hartwell Smithfield Garage Site, Digbeth, Birmingham, 2000

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1.0 Summary

An archaeological evaluation and watching brief was carried out in the forecourt of the Hartwell Smithfield Garage in Digbeth. The site had been identified as part of a zone of potential archaeological survival, and development of the site for a car showroom was likely to affect below-ground archaeological remains, including those from medieval and later settlement and industry. Trial trenching showed discrete survival of medieval pits in Trench 1, at a depth of 1.04m below the modern concrete surface. The remainder of the recorded deposits and features consisted of 19th-century cellars, which had been backfilled in the 20th century, and of services and their associated trenches. Despite major truncation of earlier deposits by cellaring, these further archaeological investigations demonstrated the survival of 'islands' of archaeological deposits and features.

2.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Hartwell Smithfield Garage in Digbeth between November 1999 and January 2000. The work was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of McBains Cooper Architecture, to provide archaeological information in advance of proposed development of the site for a new car showroom, and extension of an existing workshop. Two earlier desk-based assessments (Litherland 1995a and 1995b) had identified the development site as being part of a zone of potential archaeological survival. Although foundations for the new building were designed to minimise disturbance of archaeological remains, some degree of disturbance was inevitable. In line with government guidance and the City Council's planning policies, there was a requirement, therefore, for archaeological excavation in advance of development, and for archaeological observation and recording during development.

The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994), a Brief prepared by Birmingham City Council (Hodder 1999) and a Specification prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Mould 1999). This evaluation conformed to Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Department of Environment 1991).

3.0 Location

The site is located in the forecourt of the Hartwell Smithfield Garage on the northern side of Digbeth (Fig. 1). The area under investigation was occupied by car showrooms and workshops, with surrounding car parking.

4.0 Archaeological background

The site in Digbeth lies on the western side of the Rea Valley, close to the medieval focus of Birmingham, near St. Martin's Church. The geology of the area consists of sands and gravels overlying Mercia Mudstone. A desk-based assessment of the Digbeth area was carried out in 1995 (Litherland 1995a), and the development site was included in a more specific desk-based assessment of the whole of the Hartwell Smithfield site, also in 1995 (Litherland 1995b). The latter assessment identified the site as potentially important for yielding information on the historical development of the lower reaches of Digbeth from the medieval period onwards, and divided it into five zones. The current development site lies mainly in Zone 1, defined as the properties fronting Digbeth, and was considered likely to contain archaeological remains relating to medieval and post-medieval industry, commerce and settlement, albeit somewhat disturbed by later cellarage along the street frontage.

An archaeological evaluation was carried out to the east of the current development site in 1996 (Litherland and Moscrop 1996). Two trenches were excavated, revealing 'islands' of significant archaeological deposits surviving between areas of later disturbance. These deposits contained pottery dating between *c.*1500 and 1800, cut by the foundations of densely-packed 18th and 19th-century buildings. A waterlogged deposit containing fragments of wood, animal bone, roof tile and leather was also encountered.

The archaeological potential for this site was supported by recent archaeological investigations elsewhere in the city centre. Evidence for Medieval pottery production has been found in Digbeth/Deritend (Sherlock 1955, Litherland *et al.* 1994 and Mould 2000). Excavations elsewhere within the city centre, at Edgbaston Street, have identified the extensive remains of 13th to 14th-century tanning pits and settlement features (Mould forthcoming), whilst an evaluation at The Row Market recorded medieval remains between later cellars (Hovey 1999). On-going excavation at Moor Street has demonstrated an unbroken sequence of survival from the 12th century up to the present day. In addition, a watching brief on The Row has identified a surviving profile of the medieval manorial moat (Patrick *et al.* forthcoming).

5.0 Objectives

The main objective of the archaeological excavation was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains in advance of development. In particular, the aim was to assess the extent to which archaeological deposits had been affected by cellars constructed in the 19th century, and to inform the level of observation and recording required during groundworks.

The objective of the watching brief was to monitor all below-ground works, in order to record any archaeological remains uncovered during the course of the development, and to assess their extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality.

6.0 Methodology

Two trenches, each measuring 10m by 1.50m, were excavated along the new building wall-line (Fig. 2). The first trench was excavated on a north-south orientation in a former yard area, in order to try and locate evidence of 'backplot' remains such as pits. The second trench was aligned east-west in order to locate remains relating to development along the street frontage, such as property boundaries. The layers of modern overburden were removed with the use of a JCB excavator, under archaeological supervision, to a depth of 1.40m. Subsequent excavation of archaeological deposits was carried out by hand, and environmental samples were taken from features where appropriate. Recording was carried out using pre-printed *pro-forma* record cards for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (at 1:20 and 1:50), sections (at 1:10 and 1:20), and monochrome print and colour slide photography.

Following the excavation, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks. This was achieved by archaeological monitoring and salvage recording during the excavation of ground beam trenches, 1.0-1.2m deep, following the outline of the new building, and during the stripping of the concrete ground surface. Significant archaeological deposits were cleaned and recorded, and all artefacts were recovered.

7.0 Results

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

In the southern half of the trench, the blue-green clay horizon of the natural Mercia Mudstone (1011) was visible in section at a depth of 1.05m below the modern ground surface. The natural clay had been cut by three pits (F105, F102 and F100), the latter of which was clearly exposed in plan and was half-sectioned and sampled for environmental purposes. A moderate quantity of animal bone, including a horn, and many pottery sherds were recovered from the fill (1000). The pottery consisted largely of local grey wares, and included diagnostic sherds, and sherds of green-glazed pottery, suggesting 14th or 15th-century occupation. This date is supported by the recovery of green-glazed pottery from the fill of another of these pits (F102, 1010).

The three pits were sealed by a dark grey layer of silty clay (1009), which contained a sherd of medieval pottery. This deposit, and the pit (F105), were truncated by the construction trench (F104) for a modern foundation block (1012). The silty clay layer (1009) was overlain by a levelling layer of building rubble (1008), visible in section across the southern half of the trench.

At the northern end of the trench, at a depth of 1.20m, a clean layer of sandy clay (1022) was exposed, continuing beyond the limit of excavation (1.40m). This was overlain by a layer of red clay, between 0.40 and 0.60m deep, containing bands of redeposited sand (1018). This layer was cut by a service trench (F107), which was initially revealed at a depth of 1.20m, and continued beyond the limit of excavation. These deposits were overlain by a series of slumped levelling deposits (1021, 1020,

1019 and 1017). The latter context was truncated to the south by a modern drain (F106), which also cut the modern construction trench (F104).

All these deposits were sealed by a layer of brick and concrete (1007), which extended across the whole of the trench, overlain by a brick wall (1006), 0.20m in depth. The wall was overlain by a levelling layer (1005), and a make up layer of brick and mortar (1004) underlying the current concrete yard surface (1003), which was set with a steel foundation post (1013).

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

In the centre of the trench, the blue-green clay horizon of the natural Mercia Mudstone (2015) was exposed at a depth of 1.25m below the modern ground surface. This was overlain by a series of levelling layers (2014, 2016 and 2011), which were cut on the west and the east by cellars. The cellar to the west (F204 - 2010) was infilled with grey clay (2009), and the cellar to the east (F205 - 2017) was infilled with rubble (2013). These two cellars were sealed by layers of building rubble (2008), ash and charcoal (2007), and mortar (2006).

At the extreme western end of the trench, the cut of a vaulted cellar (F203), and a north-south aligned brick-built cellar wall (F201) was revealed. These two cellars, and the mortar deposit in the east of the trench (2006) were overlain by a levelling layer of stone and crushed brick (2005). Another cellar, consisting of a brick floor (2021) and a brick wall (F200), was sealed by the current concrete garage surface (2000).

Watching brief

The western ground beam trench (approximately 25m in length), running along the Meriden Street frontage, was excavated through cellars recently backfilled by the contractors and therefore yielded no archaeological deposits.

The southern ground beam trench (approximately 35m in length), running along Digbeth High Street frontage, was also excavated through a series of backfilled cellars, which had been revealed during the evaluation (Trench 2). The cellars were approximately 7m in length and had been backfilled with modern debris – brick, mortar, ash, clay, clinker, metal, glass and post-medieval pottery. The cellar walls had been constructed using machine-cut bricks. At the eastern end of the trench, a petrol tank, probably associated with the original garage, was uncovered. This was enclosed by brick walls and was surrounded by, and backfilled with, sand. This trench yielded no archaeological deposits due to the extent of the cellaring and modern disturbances.

The eastern ground beam trench (approximately 23m in length) revealed undisturbed archaeological deposits associated with those encountered during the evaluation (Trench 1). Much of the trench had been disturbed by cellaring, modern backfill and modern drainage systems. However, a pit, which was identified in Trench 1 during the evaluation (F100), was also observed and recorded during the watching brief, immediately to the south of Trench 1 (Fig. 3). It measured 1.4m in length, and was steep sided, but the shape in plan was impossible to discern due to truncation by a manhole. Large quantities of animal bone and medieval pottery, together with an iron

nail and a piece of worked bone were recovered from the fill (1026/1000), and a bulk environmental sample was collected.

The only other feature of significance observed during the watching brief was a well, located 10m south of the northern ground beam trench and 5m west of the eastern ground beam trench. The well, a circular structure, 1.2m in diameter, was constructed of hand-made bricks and filled with dark grey organic material. It was cut to a depth of approximately 4.5m below the present surface.

8.0 The pottery by S. Ratkai

8.1 Introduction

A total of 80 sherds weighing 658g were recovered. The sherds were generally in good condition with little sign of abrasion but many of the sherds were very small, weighing less than 5g.

8.2 Methodology

All the medieval pottery was examined under x20 magnification and divided into fabric groups. Ten fabrics were identified which fell into four main groups: oxidized cooking pots, grey wares, Deritend ware and glazed wares. In addition there were two regional imports of Malvernian cooking pot. Where possible, these fabrics were matched to the Warwickshire county pottery type series. The county type series was formed by an amalgamation of several existing type series for individual sites or towns. Fabrics in this system have been given an hierarchical alpha-numeric code. The work was undertaken by Iain Soden with some input from the author. Currently, the relevant paper work and the type series are held by Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Unit, in Warwick. The fabrics are not described in full in this report but the type sherds have been retained and form the beginnings of a Birmingham medieval pottery fabric type series. Full fabric descriptions will appear in the Edgbaston Street report (Ratkai Forthcoming (c)).

8.3 Oxidized cooking pots (13th-14th century)

There were two fabrics in this group. Cooking pot fabric 1 could not be paralleled in the Warwickshire type series. It was a fairly soft fabric with irregularly sorted quartz inclusions. Sherds tended to have dull brown surfaces and a grey core. There were three cooking pot rims all of which appeared to come from round bodied vessels. The rim forms were all very different. One was an elaborately modelled "double dished" lid seated type of a type commonly found in central and southern Warwickshire (Ratkai 1992a, fig 5,27; 6.34, 45; Ratkai 1987-8, fig 15.63-64) but not apparently common in Coventry since there are no examples from Broadgate East (Redknap and Perry 1996) and only one rim which is similar from Much Park Street (Wright 1987, fig 61.35). The second form was an almost upright thickened rim (Ratkai 1992a, fig7.61) and the third was a plain everted rim with very slight internal bevel which could not be paralleled.

Cooking pot fabric 2 was a well sorted moderately sandy fabric with red-brown surfaces and grey core. It resembled Warwick fabric 208 (fabric Sq04 in the county type series). There was one rim sherd of the elaborately modelled "double dished" kind (see above).

8.4 Grey wares (floruit 13th century but may begin in 12th and continue into early years of the 14th century)

Four fabrics belonged to this group, three of which could be paralleled in the Warwickshire type series. The fabrics are all sandy and tend to have mid grey surfaces apart from Grey ware 4 which has black surfaces. Grey ware 1 and grey ware 4 usually have a brown core. Grey ware 1 is the same as Warwick fabric 122 (Ratkai 1987-8, fabric RS02 in the county type series) and occurs widely in the county, including Gosforth St, Coventry (I. Soden *pers. comm.*). Grey ware fabric 2 is probably paralleled by fabric RS021 in the County type series and it has been found in the southern half of the county in Alcester, Stratford and Burton Dassett. Grey ware 4, (Warwick fabric 121 Ratkai 1987-8, county fabric RS01) is common in Warwickshire with a similar distribution pattern to grey ware 1. The one unparalleled fabric is grey ware 3, a harder fired, coarser, sandy fabric with sparse lumps of sandstone within the matrix. The only diagnostic sherds in this group were two angular rim sherds, from round bodied cooking pots, in grey ware fabric 4. The rim forms can be widely paralleled and occur, for example, with Deritend ware in a drying kiln in Alcester (Ratkai 1994b, fig. 8. 81, 82) and in Warwick (Ratkai 1987-8, fig. 16.83).

8.5 Glazed Deritend ware (13th century - ?early-14th century)

The glazed Deritend fabric was divided into two; Deritf, very fine with virtually no visible inclusions and Derit, with a very fine sandy matrix with rare rounded quartz grains. Essentially they are the same fabric but indicate different clay preparation. This difference can also be observed amongst the waster material and under-fired pottery found behind the Old Crown, Digbeth (Litherland *et al.* 1994, Ratkai 1994c) There was one reduced rim sherd from Hartwell's Garage from a jug with a corrugated neck and green glaze. The body sherds were small but at least two had traces of white slip decoration.

Deritend ware (fabric 109 in Warwick, fabric Sg12 in the county type series) had a wide currency in the West Midlands being found at Warwick (Ratkai 1987-8, Ratkai 1992a), Alcester (Ratkai 1994b, Ratkai 1996), Stratford (Ratkai 1992b, Ratkai 1994a) and Burton Dassett (Ratkai Forthcoming (a)) in Warwickshire, Kings Norton (Ratkai forthcoming (b)), Dudley (Ratkai 1985) and Weoley Castle (Oswald 1962) in the West Midlands, Worcester (V. Buteux *pers.comm.*) and Droitwich (Hurst 1992) in Worcestershire and Stafford Castle (Ratkai in prep), Staffordshire. This list is by no means exhaustive.

8.6 Glazed wares (13th-14th century)

Only two other glazed sherds were found in the assemblage, a Chilvers Coton C (Mayes and Scott 1984, Warwickshire County type series fabric Sq30) body sherd from a jug with a rich glossy dark green glaze and a sandy buff ware body sherd also

from a jug with a pale olive pitted, glaze, decorated with a horizontal band of triangular roller stamping. The latter sherd was similar to Warwick fabric 110 (Ratkai 1987-8, County type series fabric Sq211). This fabric was probably made in Warwick itself. However, the triangular roller stamping is not known in this ware and this decorative technique and glaze type seems to belong to the Worcestershire and Staffordshire traditions, particularly the latter. Further work on pottery from other sites in Birmingham may help elucidate the source of this ware.

8.7 Discussion

Most of the pottery (68 sherds, weighing 442g) came from one pit F100, fills (1000) and (1026). Grey wares predominated (see Tables 1 and 2) both in sherd weight and sherd number. The average medieval sherd weight was very low at 6.5g (both for the pit material and the entire medieval group), the usual range being c 10-20g on urban sites. Strangely, the sherds were not particularly abraded. The lack of abrasion was in marked contrast to the pottery recovered from the Custard Factory site where small sherd size was matched by a high degree of abrasion (Ratkai 2000). At the Custard Factory it was suggested that the pottery represented debris from the Deritend pottery making industry, further evidence for which was found nearby, to the rear of the Old Crown, Deritend (Litherland *et al.* 1994, Ratkai 1994c) but again consisting of glazed wares. However, grey wares were also produced at Deritend (Sherlock 1957) and it is possible that the pottery from Hartwell Garage could be interpreted as evidence of grey ware production. Further weight may be lent to this by the presence of a single overfired vesicular waster also found in pit F100. If this is so then pottery production may have extended from Deritend over the River Rea and north-west into Digbeth.

The medieval pottery falls mainly into the Warwickshire tradition and most of the pottery may have been of local manufacture. Contacts with areas further afield are evidenced by the two Malvernian cooking pot sherds, the buff glazed ware and the Chilvers Coton sherd. All the medieval pottery seems largely to belong to the 13th or early 14th centuries. The pit fill on the evidence of the Chilvers Coton sherd most probably dates to the very end of the 13th century or early 14th century.

Although the overall assemblage is small, there is no later medieval or early post-medieval pottery. A similar pattern was seen at the Custard Factory and further work is needed to try to establish if the lack of later pottery is due to truncation, abandonment, changes in rubbish disposal or change of use.

The next ceramic phase on the site is represented by coarsewares from layer (1002) which appear to date to the late-17th or early-18th century although the date of (1002) may be later since there was a 19th-century glazed ware sherd present. Pottery from the late-18th century was represented by four creamware sherds from layer (2008). The same fabrics were found on the Custard Factory site.

The assemblage from Hartwell Garage demonstrates that even small amounts of pottery can enhance our knowledge of early Birmingham and further work, both documentary and archaeological, is needed to try not only to understand the origins and extent of medieval industry in Birmingham, but also to elucidate the nature of

occupation and industry in Digbeth and Deritend from the later-14th to the later-17th centuries.

		Context						
Fabric	**Data**	**1000**	**1002**	**1009**	**1010**	**1026**	**2008**	**Grand Total**
ccc	*Sum of Qty*	5.3%						1.3%
	Sum of Wght	2.5%						0.9%
cpj1	*Sum of Qty*	31.6%				14.3%		16.3%
	Sum of Wght	23.1%				19.1%		14.3%
cpj2	*Sum of Qty*					10.2%		6.3%
	Sum of Wght					10.8%		3.3%
crw	*Sum of Qty*						100.0%	5.0%
	Sum of Wght						100.0%	5.5%
cw1	*Sum of Qty*		60.0%					3.8%
	Sum of Wght		35.8%					8.7%
cw2	*Sum of Qty*	5.3%	20.0%					2.5%
	Sum of Wght	4.2%	42.8%					11.9%
derit	*Sum of Qty*	10.5%				4.1%		5.0%
	Sum of Wght	9.2%				1.5%		3.8%
deritf	*Sum of Qty*					6.1%		3.8%
	Sum of Wght					7.8%		2.4%
gl1	*Sum of Qty*				50.0%			1.3%
	Sum of Wght				66.7%			0.9%
gw1	*Sum of Qty*	42.1%		100.0%	50.0%	6.1%		16.3%
	Sum of Wght	57.1%		100.0%	33.3%	1.5%		23.4%
gw2	*Sum of Qty*	5.3%				16.3%		11.3%
	Sum of Wght	3.8%				14.7%		5.9%
gw3	*Sum of Qty*					2.0%		1.3%
	Sum of Wght					8.8%		2.7%
gw4	*Sum of Qty*					34.7%		21.3%
	Sum of Wght					28.4%		8.8%
malv	*Sum of Qty*					4.1%		2.5%
	Sum of Wght					6.4%		2.0%
mgw	*Sum of Qty*		20.0%					1.3%
	Sum of Wght		21.4%					5.2%
waster?	*Sum of Qty*					2.0%		1.3%
	Sum of Wght					1.0%		0.3%
Total Sum of Qty		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total Sum of Wght		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 1. Fabrics quantified by percentage

		Context						
Fabric	**Data**	**1000**	**1002**	**1009**	**1010**	**1026**	**2008**	**Grand Total**
ccc	*Sum of Qty*	1						1
	Sum of Wght	6						6
cpj1	*Sum of Qty*	6				7		13
	Sum of Wght	55				39		94
cpj2	*Sum of Qty*					5		5
	Sum of Wght					22		22
crw	*Sum of Qty*						4	4
	Sum of Wght						36	36
cw1	*Sum of Qty*		3					3
	Sum of Wght		57					57
cw2	*Sum of Qty*	1	1					2
	Sum of Wght	10	68					78
derit	*Sum of Qty*	2				2		4
	Sum of Wght	22				3		25
deritf	*Sum of Qty*					3		3
	Sum of Wght					16		16
gl1	*Sum of Qty*				1			1
	Sum of Wght				6			6
gw1	*Sum of Qty*	8		1	1	3		13
	Sum of Wght	136		12	3	3		154
gw2	*Sum of Qty*	1				8		9
	Sum of Wght	9				30		39
gw3	*Sum of Qty*					1		1
	Sum of Wght					18		18
gw4	*Sum of Qty*					17		17
	Sum of Wght					58		58
malv	*Sum of Qty*					2		2
	Sum of Wght					13		13
mgw	*Sum of Qty*		1					1
	Sum of Wght		34					34
waster?	*Sum of Qty*					1		1
	Sum of Wght					2		2
Total Sum of Qty		19	5	1	2	49	4	80
Total Sum of Wght		238	159	12	9	204	36	658

Table 2. Fabrics quantified by sherd count and weight (g)

9.0 The environmental remains by Marina Ciaraldi

9.1 Introduction

The archaeological investigations revealed the presence in Trench 1 of a number of medieval pits cut into the natural clay. Two soil samples were collected from pit (F100) in order to determine the state of preservation of the environmental remains and their potential for further analysis. The pit also contained animal bones.

9.2 Methodology

The first sample (F100/1000) of 20 litres was floated by using bucket flotation, a 1mm sieve to recover the residue and a 500 µm to recover the flot. Fish bones and small mammal bones were observed in the flot and residue of the sample. On this basis, it was decided to take another sample from the same deposit (F100/1026). Fifty litres of soil were taken - of this, 20 litres were floated and the remaining 30 litres were sieved on a 2 mm mesh. Flot was sorted under the microscope while the residue was quickly scanned by eye and bagged for further analysis.

9.3 Sample description

The two samples presented a similar composition and contained large pieces of combusted and uncombusted coal. Some wood charcoal was also observed. Some charred and waterlogged seeds were present although not in abundance (see Table 3). Rounded fungal spores were noticed and a small bundle of unidentified fibers was found in sample F100/1026.

A few badly preserved mammal bones and some fish vertebrae were recovered from the residue and the flot (Table 4). The fish bones were well preserved and appeared partly mineralized. A preliminary identification of the mammal bones was made by Umberto Albarella, while the fish bones were identified by Cluny Johnston. A few sherds of pottery and some metal were also recovered from the samples.

Taxa	**Common name**	**Pres**	**F100/1000**	**F100/1026**	**F100/1026**
			20 litres - floated	20 litres – floated	30 litres – wet sieved
Triticum cf. *aestivum*	Bread wheat	Ch	1	1	
Avena sativa glume	Oats	Ch		1	
Avena sp.	Oats	Ch		1	
Secale cereale	Rye	Ch		1	
Cereal	Cereal	Ch	3	5	
Vicia/Lathyrus	Vetch	Ch	1	1	
Corylus avellana nutshell	Hazelnut	Ch			1 frg
Rumex acetosella	Dock	Ch	1		
Rubus sp.	Bramble	WL	1	Several	
Fumaria sp.	Fumatory	WL		3	
Sambucus nigra	Elder	WL	1	Several	
Bundle of fibres				X	
Spores			X	X	
Wood		WL	Few frags	Few frags	

Table 3. Plant remains

Taxa	**Common name**	**Pres**	**F100/1000**	**F100/1026**
			20 litres - floated	20 litres – floated
Small bird			X	
Cattle				Phalange
Sheep				Tooth (M3)
Burnt bones				X
Herring (*Clupea harengus*)				Vertebra

Table 4. Mammal and fish bones

9.4 Discussion

The combined presence of coal and domestic debris from the pit (F100) raises the question of whether the coal represents spent domestic fuel, or fuel associated with industrial activities. This research question is of particular interest for its implications regarding the general supply of fuel to medieval towns. It may suggest that in areas such as the Midlands, where deposits of coal are abundant, coal had become an important fuel not only for industry but also for domestic supplies. A similar situation has previously been recorded in Medieval levels at Lichfield (Ciaraldi unpublished). Dyer (1989) suggests that wood was the main fuel for the Midlands, and that mineral coal was used as industrial fuel rather than domestic, although he notes that the use of coal in households in the Medieval period is recorded in the north. The potential widespread use of coal in medieval towns has important ecological implications at a regional level, in terms of understanding the processes of woodland management.

The rest of the biological remains found in the deposit are of limited importance. Charred seeds were very scarce, while the few waterlogged seeds belong to species such as elder and fumatory. The small quantity of charred seeds does not enable any detailed interpretation of the plant assemblage. It is worth noting, however, that seeds of vetch and dock are often found as burnt crop waste. The seeds of bramble and elder recovered seem to have been waterlogged, although they may also represent modern contaminants. These two plants are often found in wastelands and clearances (Stace 1991). The presence of a few mammal bones and fish vertebrae is of some interest but, despite the large size of the sample collected, they represent a very small assemblage. Also noteworthy is the presence of a bundle of fibres, which may represent the by-product of textile production.

10.0 Discussion and assessment of the archaeological importance of the development site.

Discrete Medieval archaeological deposits have been recorded at the Hartwell Smithfield Garage Site. These were complemented by a small, but important assemblage of pottery and well-preserved animal bone and other environmental data.

The proximity of the Hartwell Smithfield Garage Site both to the historic core of the Medieval town, and to other excavated sites such as Edgbaston Street, the Custard Factory, and the Old Crown, Deritend, means that the results from these further archaeological investigations can be placed in a wider context and used to enhance our understanding of the early growth of Birmingham, from the Medieval period up to the present day. The importance of these archaeological deposits is enhanced by the inadequacy of surviving Medieval historical records, and the consequent lack of understanding of the many facets of the process of early growth within the town.

The pottery assemblage was recovered from firmly stratified features, allowing the Medieval activity on the site to be dated with confidence to the 13th and early-14th centuries. The assemblage has raised a number of interesting questions which need to be explored further, namely the possibility that Grey ware production was occurring on the site, suggesting an extension of the Deritend pottery industry to this area of

Digbeth, and the lack of Later-Medieval and Early-Post-Medieval pottery indicating possible abandonment or change of use in these periods.

The environmental remains recovered from the site have also raised interesting research questions, potentially contributing further evidence towards the debate as to whether coal was in use as a domestic fuel in Medieval towns in the Midlands.

The results have demonstrated that although extensive ground disturbance has occurred on the development site, mainly due to dense eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cellar activity in this area, significant archaeological deposits have survived as 'islands' amidst the disturbance. Despite the fact that a relatively small area of the development site was excavated, several medieval features were encountered.

11.0 References

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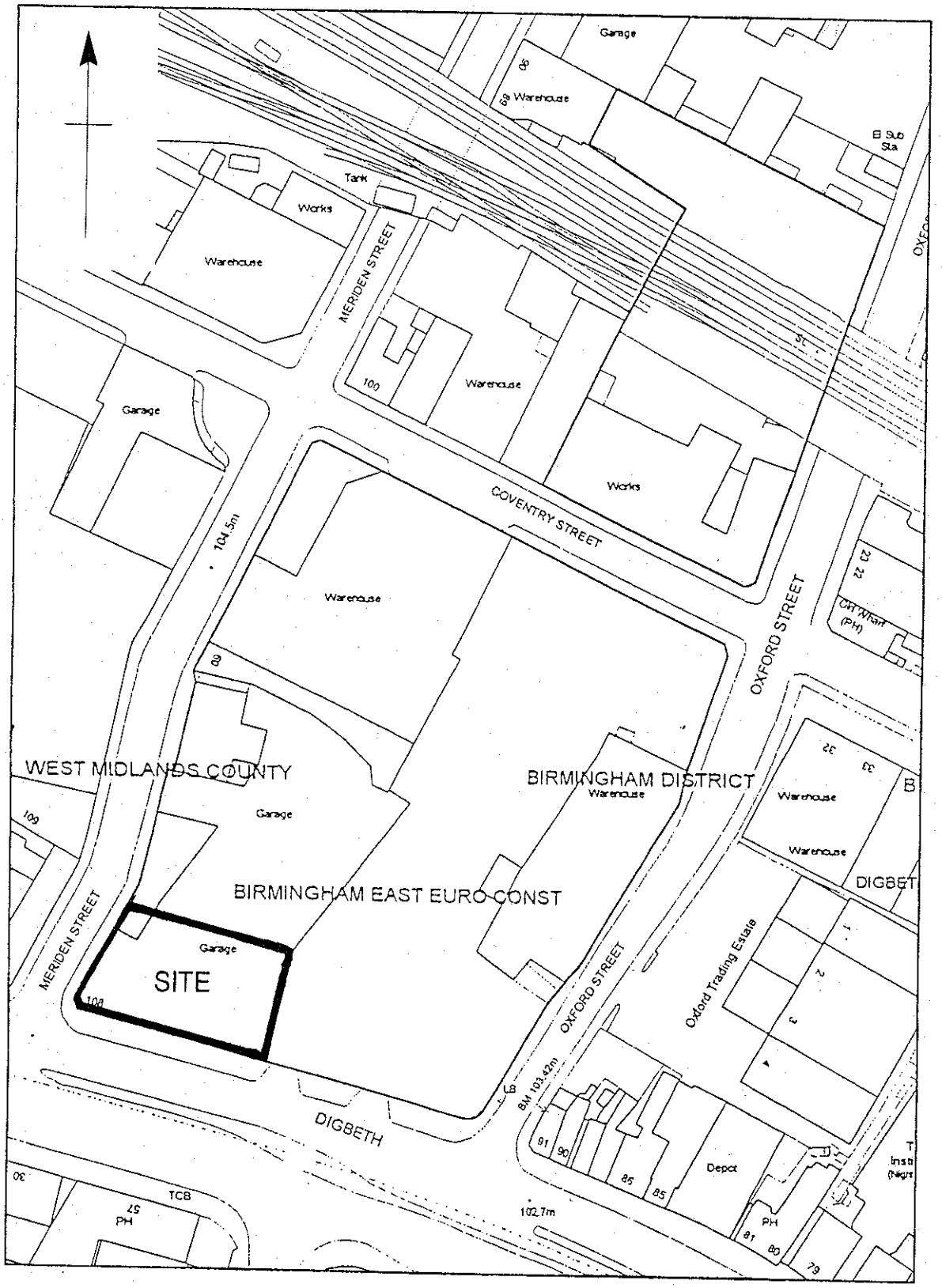

Garage
Warehouse
Tank
Works
Warehouse
MERIDEN STREET
Warehouse
Garage
COVENTRY STREET
Works
104.5m
Warehouse
OXFORD STREET
WEST MIDLANDS COUNTY
BIRMINGHAM DISTRICT
Warehouse
Garage
Warehouse
Warehouse
DIGBETH
BIRMINGHAM EAST EURO CONST
Garage
SITE
MERIDEN STREET
OXFORD STREET
Oxford Trading Estate
DIGBETH
BM 103.42m
Depot
TCB
PH
102.7m
PH

FIG.1

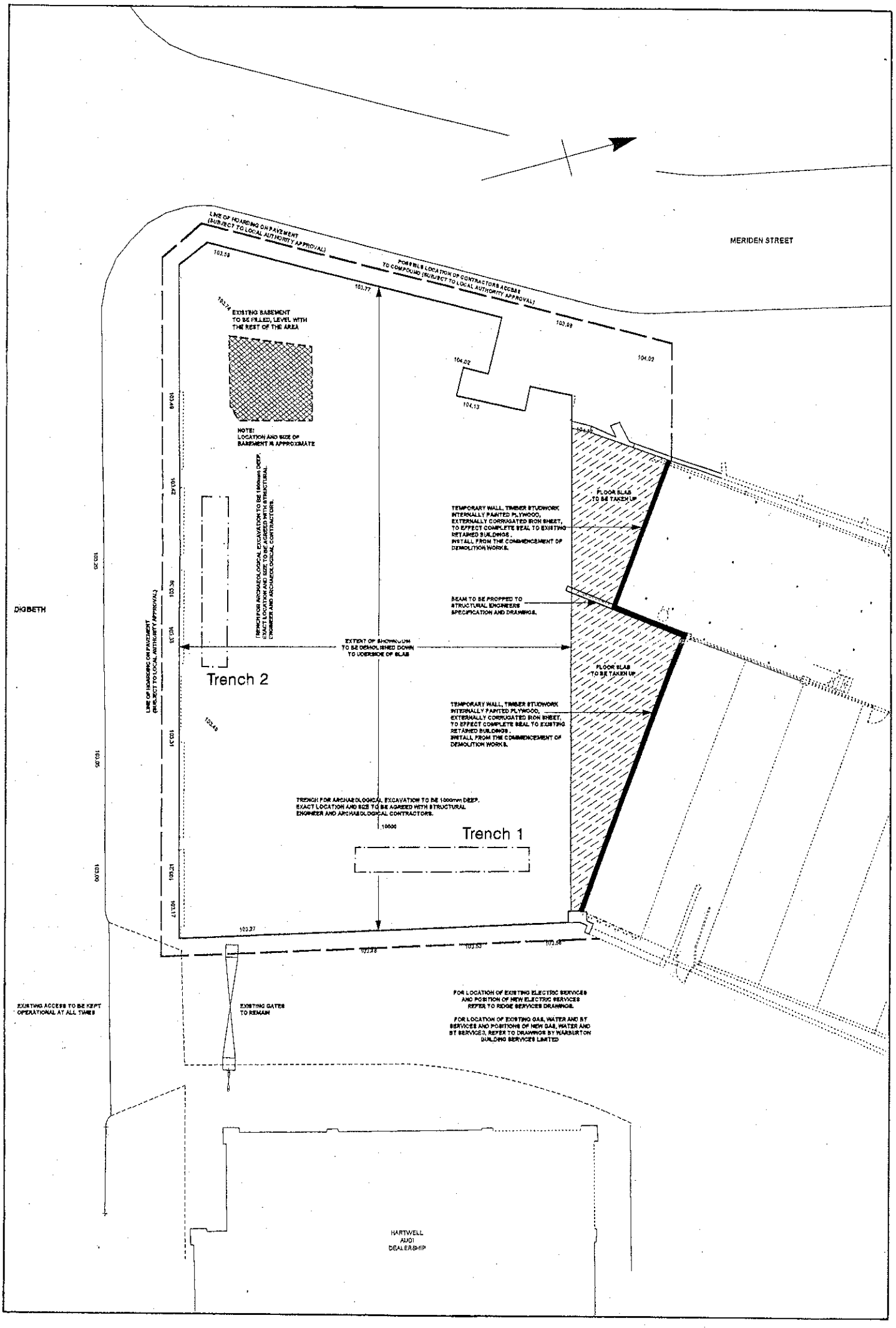
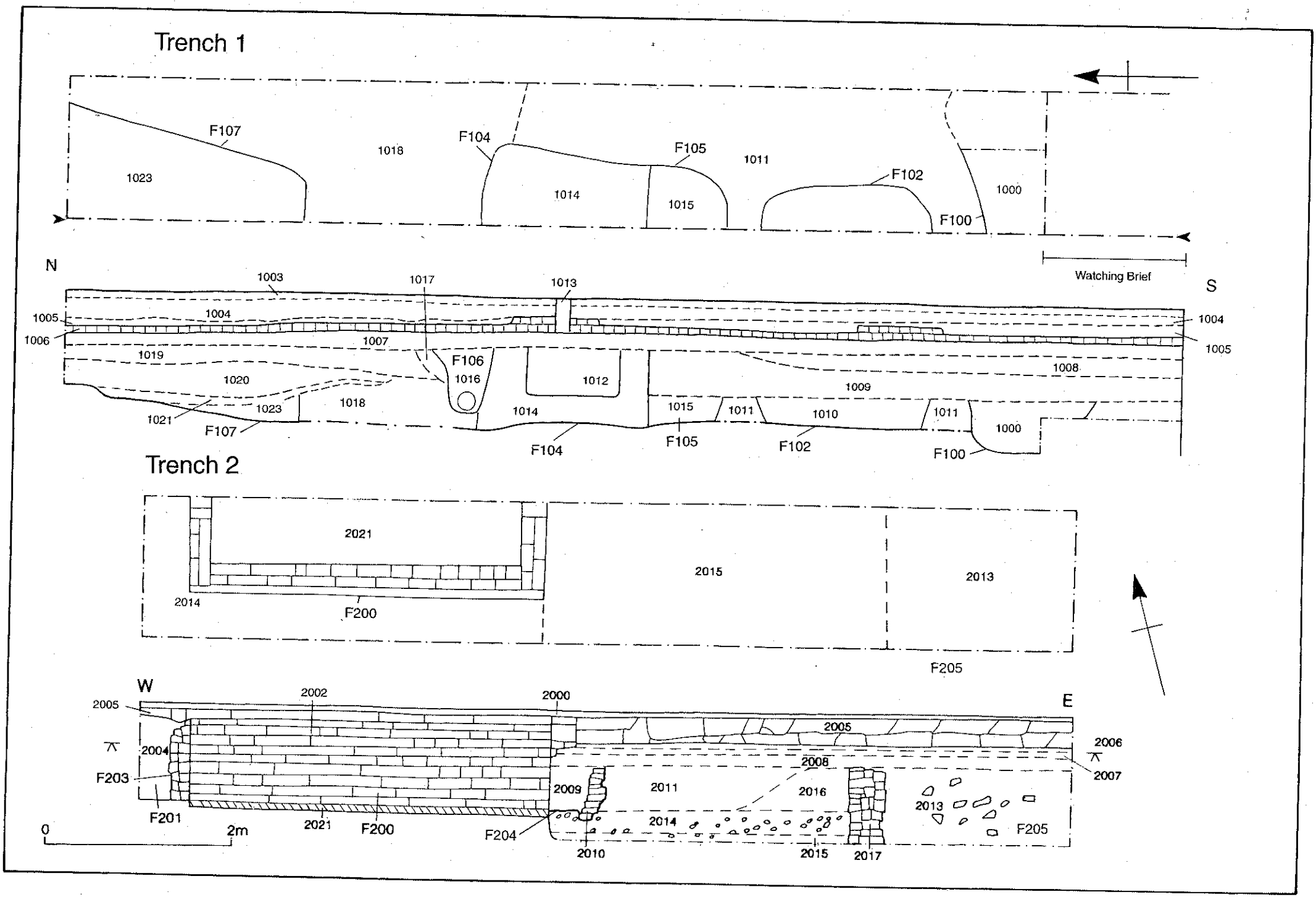

MERIDEN STREET
LINE OF HOARDING ON PAVEMENT (SUBJECT TO LOCAL AUTHORITY APPROVAL)
FOR DETAILS LOCATION OF CONTRACTORS ACCESS TO COMPOUND (SUBJECT TO LOCAL AUTHORITY APPROVAL)
EXISTING BASEMENT TO BE FILLED, LEVEL WITH THE REST OF THE AREA
NOTE: LOCATION AND SIZE OF BASEMENT IS APPROXIMATE
TRENCH FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION TO BE 1000mm DEEP. EXACT LOCATION AND SIZE TO BE AGREED WITH STRUCTURAL ENGINEER AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTRACTORS.
Trench 2
EXTENT OF SHOWROOM TO BE DEMOLISHED DOWN TO UNDERSIDE OF SLAB
TEMPORARY WALL, TIMBER STUDWORK INTERNALLY PAINTED PLYWOOD, EXTERNALLY CORRUGATED IRON SHEET, TO EFFECT COMPLETE SEAL TO EXISTING RETAINED BUILDINGS. INSTALL FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF DEMOLITION WORKS.
FLOOR SLAB TO BE TAKEN UP
BEAM TO BE PROPPED TO STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS SPECIFICATION AND DRAWINGS.
TRENCH FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION TO BE 1000mm DEEP. EXACT LOCATION AND SIZE TO BE AGREED WITH STRUCTURAL ENGINEER AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTRACTORS.
Trench 1
DIGBETH
EXISTING ACCESS TO BE KEPT OPERATIONAL AT ALL TIMES
EXISTING GATES TO REMAIN
FOR LOCATION OF EXISTING ELECTRIC SERVICES AND POSITION OF NEW ELECTRIC SERVICES REFER TO RIDGE SERVICES DRAWINGS.
FOR LOCATION OF EXISTING GAS, WATER AND BT SERVICES AND POSITIONS OF NEW GAS, WATER AND BT SERVICES, REFER TO DRAWINGS BY WARBURTON BUILDING SERVICES LIMITED
HARTWELL AUDI DEALERSHIP

FIG.2


Trench 1
F107
1023
1018
F104
1014
F105
1015
1011
F102
1000
F100
Watching Brief
N
S
1003
1017
1013
1005
1004
1006
1007
1019
F106
1016
1012
1020
1008
1009
1021
1023
1018
1014
1015
1011
1010
1011
1000
F107
F104
F105
F102
F100
Trench 2
2021
2015
2013
2014
F200
F205
W
E
2005
2002
2000
2004
2005
2006
F203
2008
2007
2009
2011
2016
2013
2014
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F200
F204
2010
2015
2017
0
2m

Fig.3

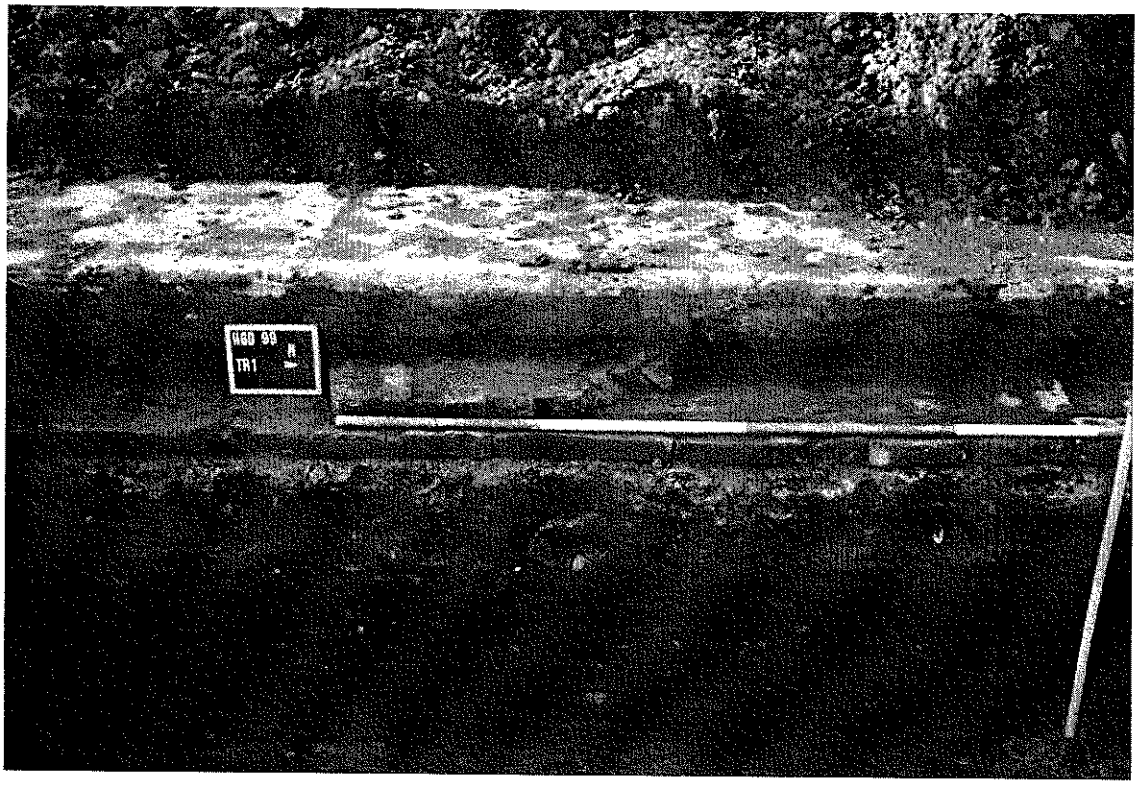

Plate 1

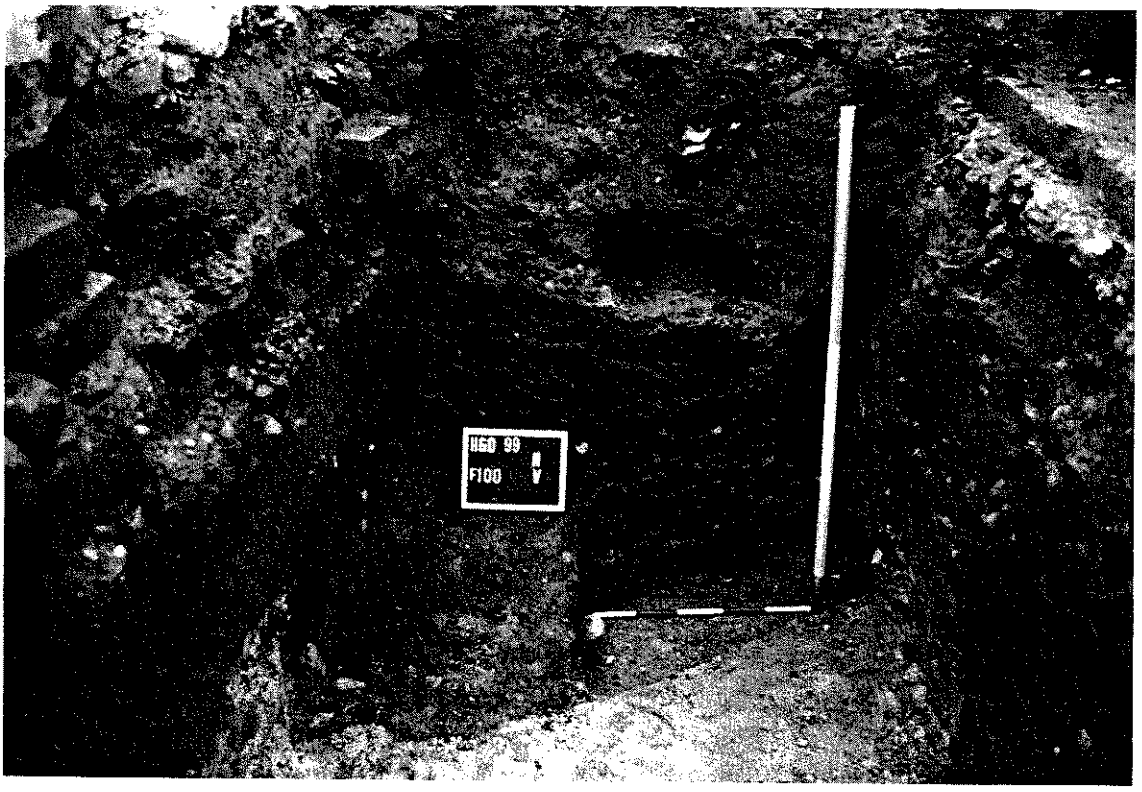

Plate 2

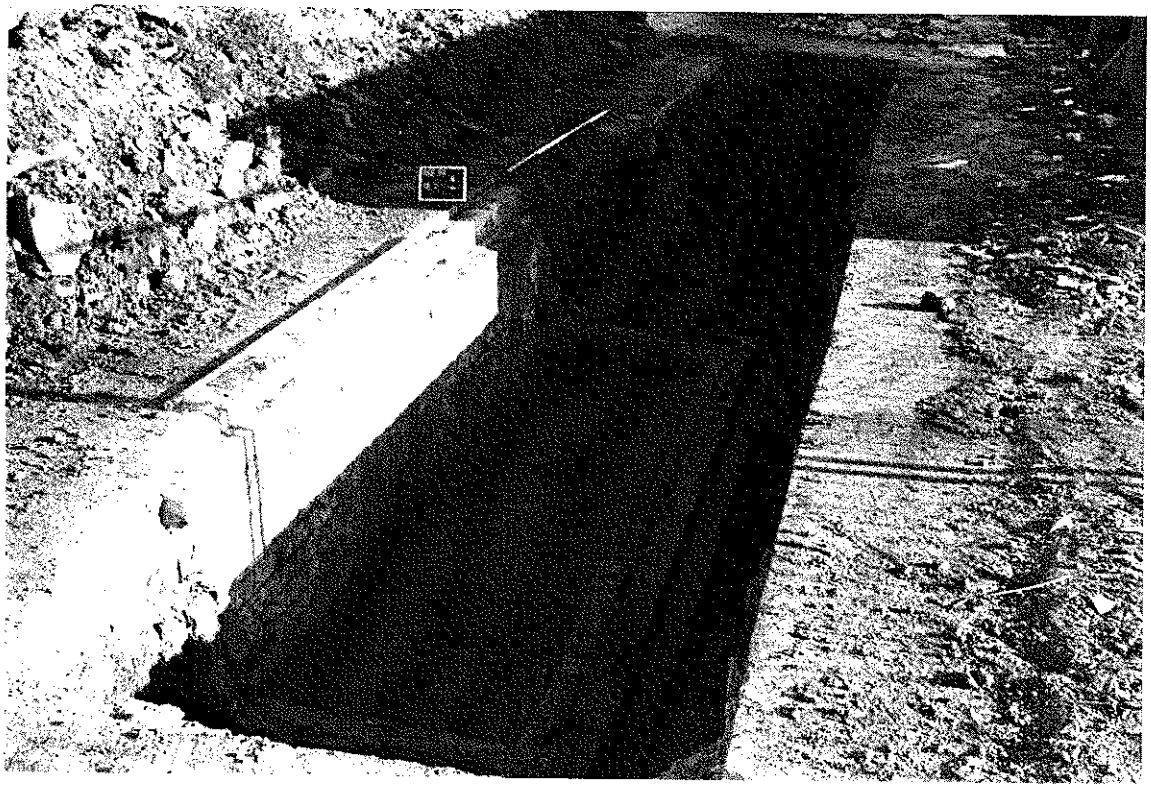

Plate 3