



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

**Walsgrave Road,
Coventry:**

**an archaeological
watching brief 2003**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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by
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) during February and March 2003, on behalf of Severn Trent Water during groundworks for a Flood Alleviation Scheme at Walsgrave Road, Coventry (NGR SP 435 279). The area under observation was located at land to the rear of properties fronting the north side of Walsgrave Road. The site was considered to have a high potential for the survival of archaeological features and deposits due to discoveries of medieval and post-medieval tile kilns in the vicinity, during the early 20th century. The excavation of a trench for sewer pipes was monitored. No features of archaeological interest were identified. This may be due to truncation or levelling of the natural subsoil horizon.

1.0 Introduction

This document outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during groundworks associated with a Flood Alleviation Scheme at Walsgrave Road, Coventry (hereafter referred to as the site). The work was commissioned by Severn Trent Water and carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) during February and March 2003.

The groundworks involved the excavation of a trench for the new water sewer at land to the rear/ north of properties fronting Walsgrave Road. The archaeological watching brief was carried out in accordance with a brief provided by Coventry City Council (Soden 2002) and a written scheme of investigation prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 2003).

2.0 Site location and geology (Figs. 1 and 2)

The site (NGR SP 435 279) is located to the rear/ north of properties fronting onto Walsgrave Road, between Clay Lane and Briton Road. The site currently consists of an alley to the rear of the properties, private gardens and a car park to the west (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is sandstone overlaid by Keuper Marl.

3.0 Archaeological Background

The site lies within what was the village of Stoke. Stoke existed from at least the early medieval period, possibly earlier, and is recorded on maps dating back to 1573.

Evidence of a ceramics industry at Stoke has been recorded, specialising in the manufacture of patterned floor tiles. Kilns associated with floor tile manufacture were uncovered in 1911 and 1940 (Chatwin 1941). The earlier investigation identified tiles of 14th century date to the south of Walsgrave Road. In 1940 kilns were uncovered just 20-30m north of the proposed pipeline. Later tile production continued into the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries.

There is documentary evidence of a stone building, possibly a chapel of 13th century date, in the angle between Walsgrave Road and Bray's Lane, just to the south of the site (Soden 2002). It was therefore, thought likely that archaeological evidence from

the early medieval settlement or the ceramics industry in Stoke could be encountered during the watching brief.

4.0 Aims

The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to provide a record of the nature and extent of any archaeological deposits or features which might be present below the modern ground surface. Specifically, the brief was to look for evidence relating to the possible medieval tile kilns and to contribute to the understanding of the history and the significance of the City of Coventry.

5.0 Methodology

A qualified archaeologist observed all groundworks associated with the excavation of the trench. All pre-18th century features and deposits were to be recorded in detail. Recording was by means of pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features, scale plans and sections, and colour slide and monochrome or digital photography. Where appropriate samples for environmental analysis, were to be taken from well sealed, datable deposits. In the event of medieval structural, or negative features being uncovered which could not be preserved *in-situ*, a fieldwork contingency for salvage archaeological excavation, plus an appropriate level of post-excavation analysis, was included.

6.0 Results (Figs. 2 and 3, Plates 1-6)

The machine-excavated trench was c.0.7m wide, between 1.5m and 2.5m deep and approximately 115m long. Nine manholes were excavated along the trench, each was c.2m sq. and up to 2.5m deep.

No pre-19th century features were encountered during the excavations. Natural subsoil (1003) was located c.0.5m below the surface at the eastern end of the trench. This was mainly a yellow sandy clay. Overlying the natural 1003, at the eastern end of the trench, was a dark brown silty sand (1001), this was up to 0.5m deep, becoming more shallow towards the west and it was not present at the east end of the trench, below the car park. Abutting 1001, in places, was a thin layer of clinker (1002), up to 0.25m deep. These contexts were overlain by a mixed mid brown sandy silt topsoil (1000) containing charcoal flecking and occasional small rounded stones.

The natural at the western part of the trench, under the car park and in Clay Lane, was a yellow sandstone, encountered at a depth of 0.3m below the present car park surface. This was under a layer of hardcore (1005) and asphalt (1004).

Twelve pipes and drains were recorded cutting through the natural subsoil at various points along the trench. All of these were underneath layers 1000-1002 and 1004, 1005, and all appeared to be late 19th or 20th century in date. Three walls were also encountered at the west end of the trench, below the car park. All three were built of frogged factory-made bricks and were of 19th-20th century date. None of them had foundations and were presumably garden or boundary walls.

No finds dated to earlier than the 20th century were recovered from the trench. The 20th century finds were noted but not retained.

7.0 Discussion

As evidence for tile production dating from the 14th century to the 17th had been found both to the north and the south of the site, it was thought that similar remains could be encountered at the site. However, no deposits or features were recorded dating to earlier than the late 19th century. It is possible that earlier deposits may have been truncated away. The natural is very close to the modern ground surface (0.3-0.5m) and no residual finds were recovered from the layers above, suggesting that originally the natural may have been higher in this area.

8.0 Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by Emma Hancox, Erica Macey and Helen Martin. Emma Hancox wrote the report. The project was managed by Laurence Jones. The plates and illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds. Iain Soden monitored the project on behalf of Coventry City Council.

9.0 References

BUFAU 2003. *Walsgrave Road, Flood Alleviation, Coventry: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. BUFAU.

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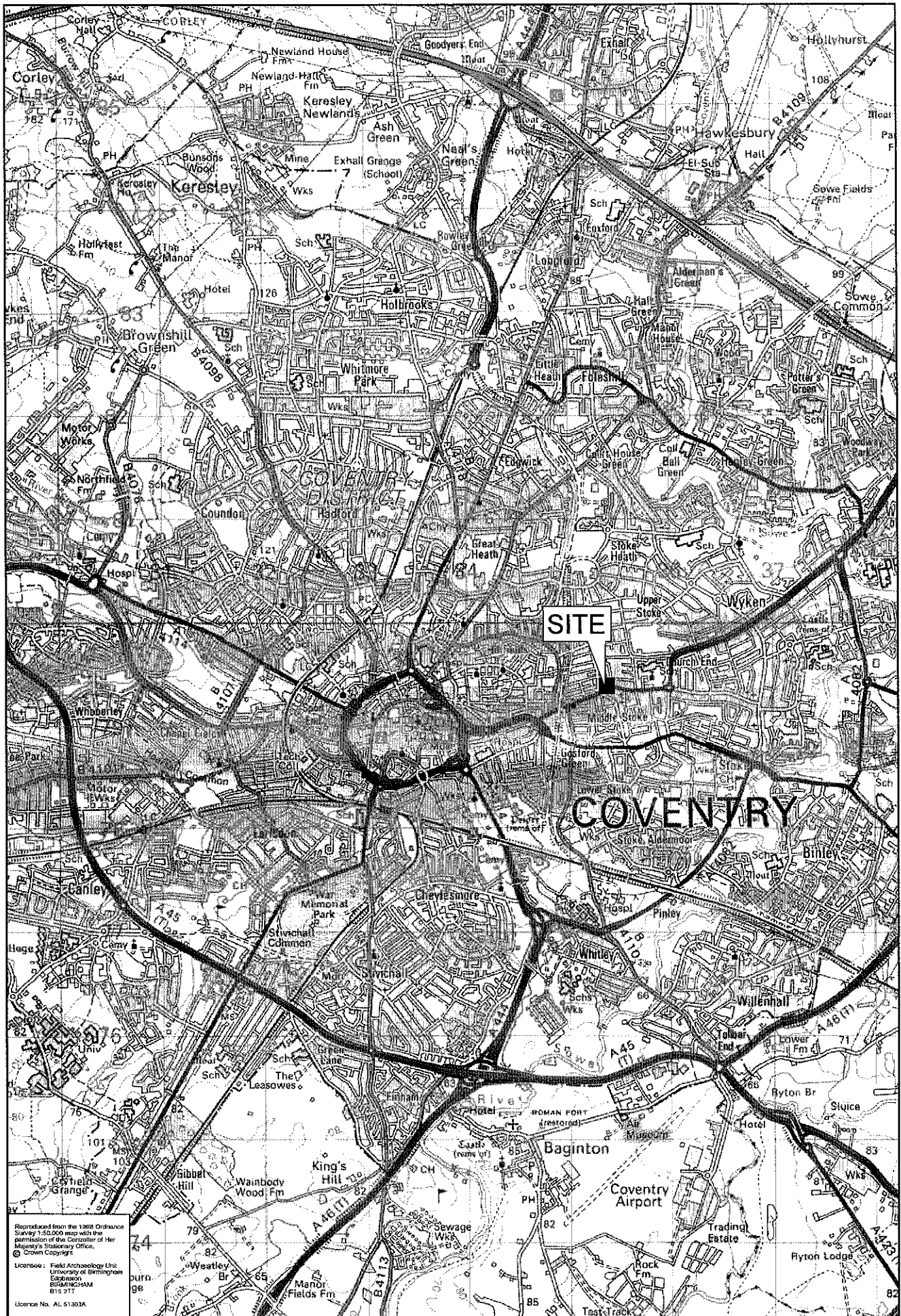


Fig.1

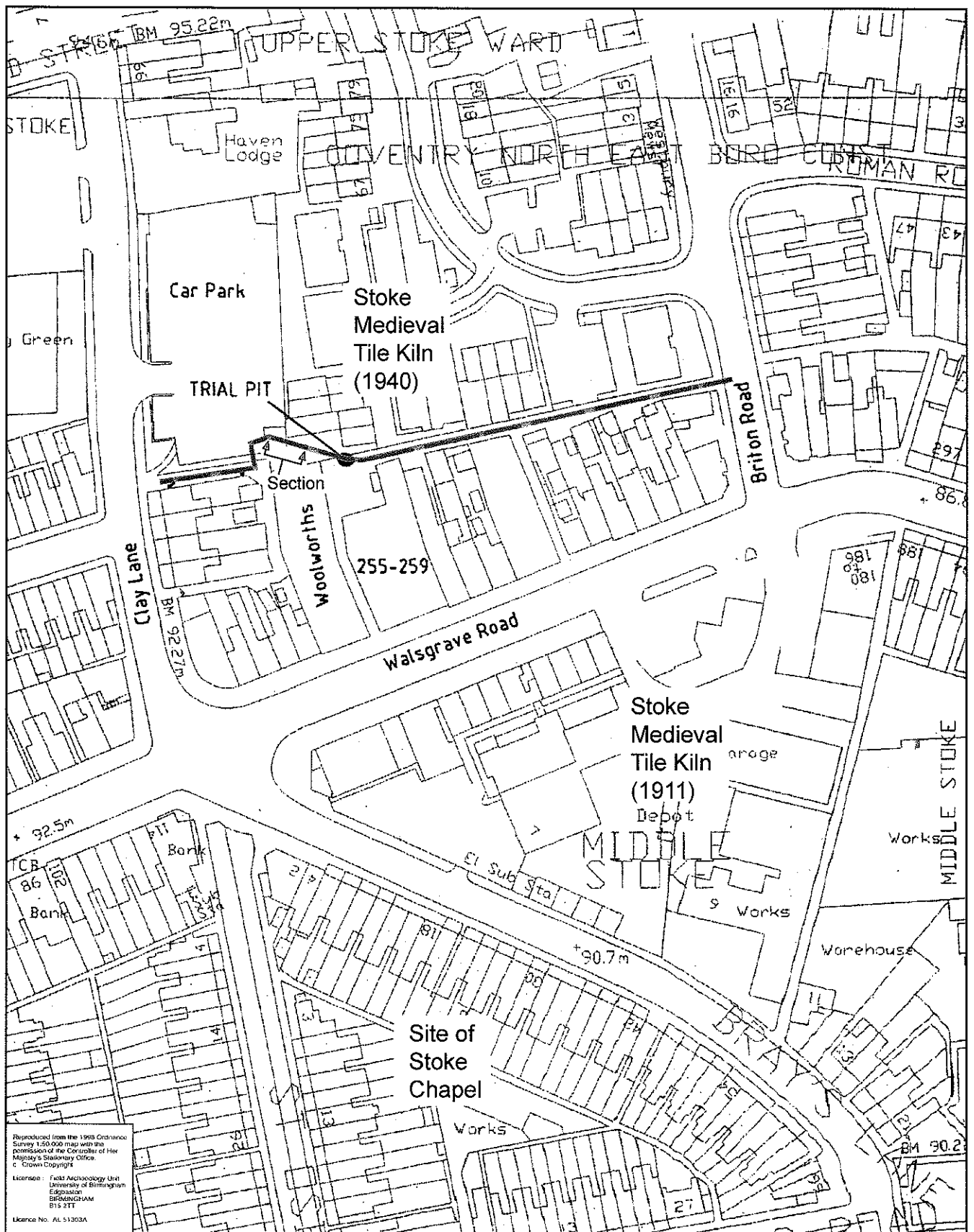
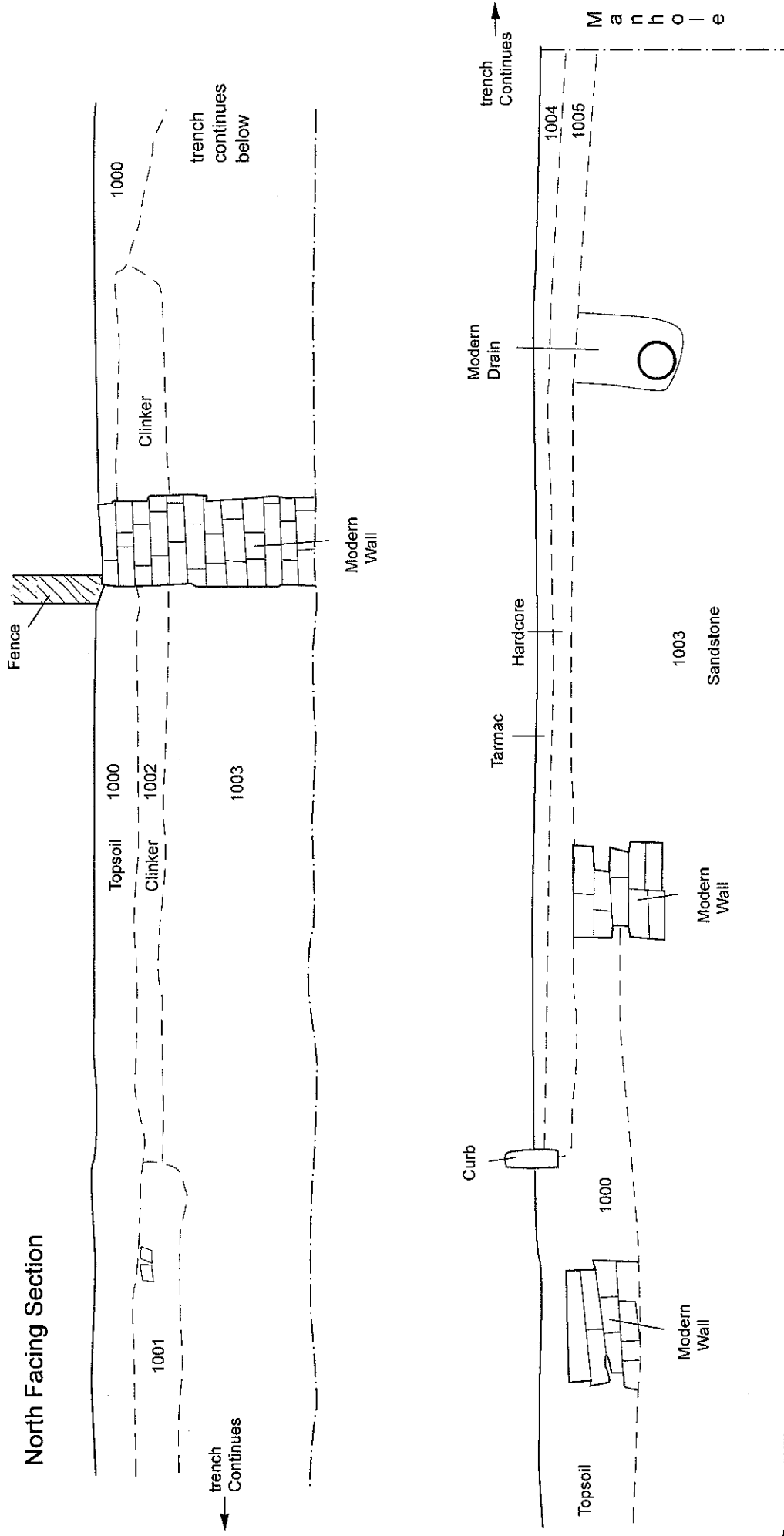


Fig.2

North Facing Section



0 1m
Approx.

Fig.3



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3

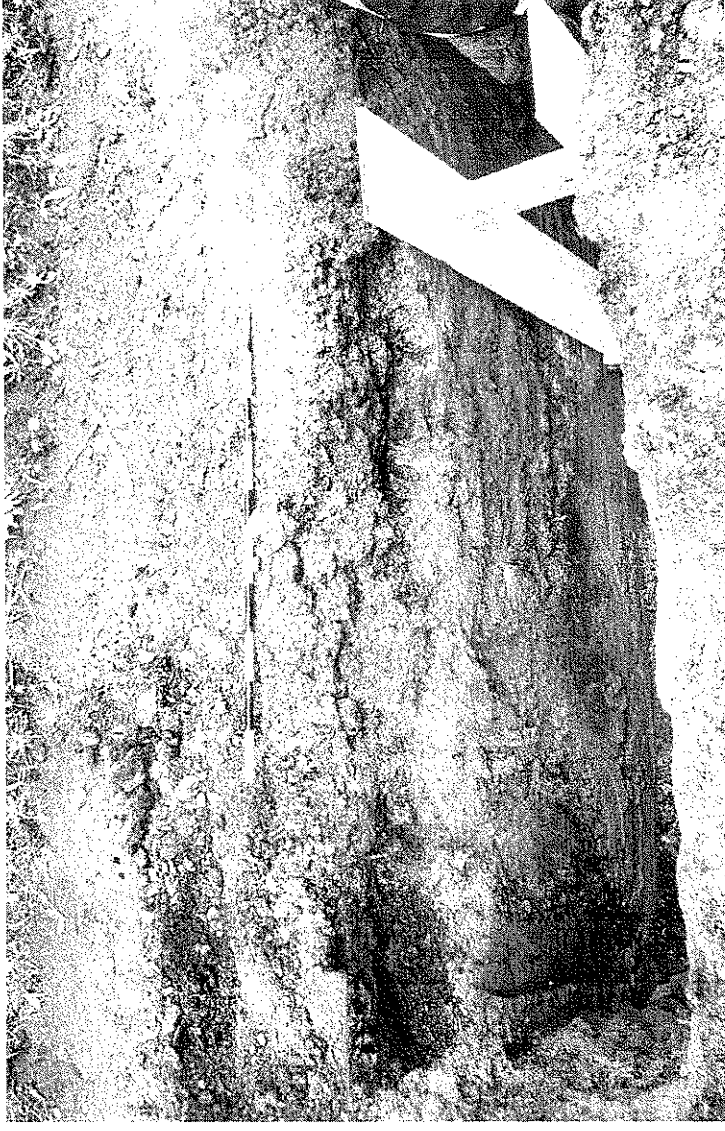


Plate 4

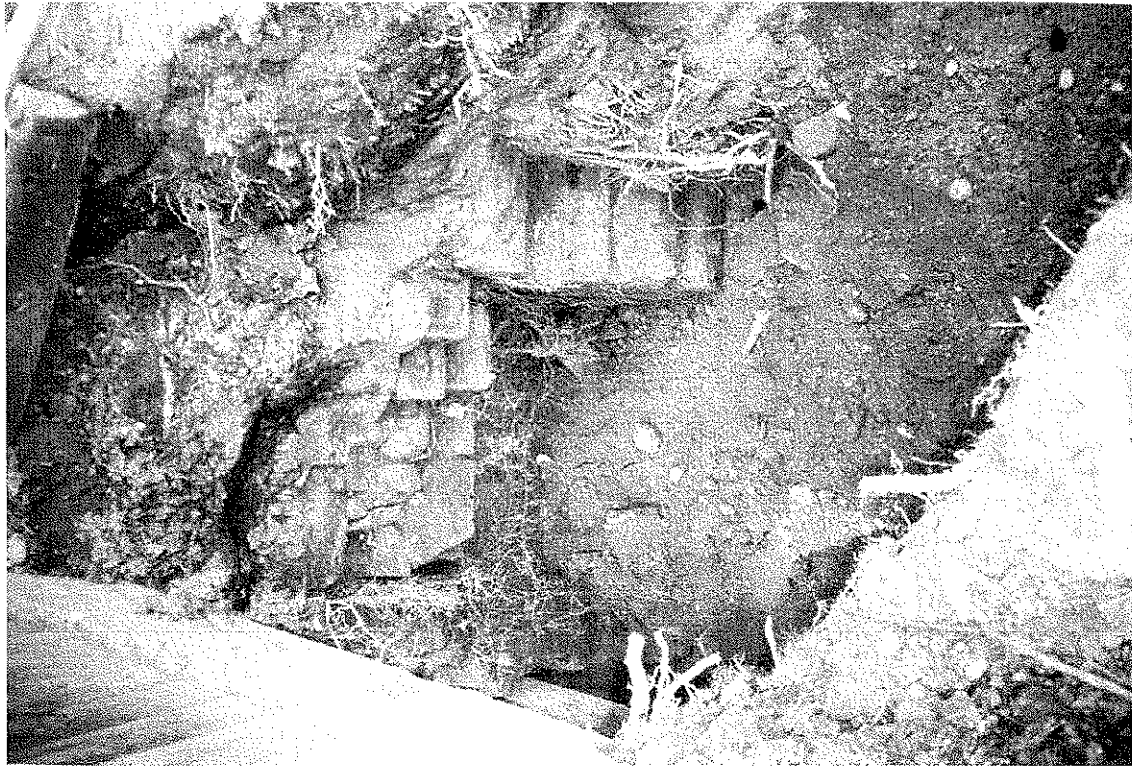


Plate 5



Plate 6

