

**18 Sherifoot Lane,
Four Oaks, Birmingham**

**An Archaeological Watching
Brief 2002**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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An Archaeological Watching Brief 2002

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1.0: SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was maintained at 18 Sherifoot Lane, Four Oaks, Birmingham (centred on NGR. SP117995), in advance of the construction of an extension to the rear of the existing property. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Mr Roger Cardin. The watching brief involved the examination and cleaning of hand-dug foundation trenches. In the event no features of archaeological, or possible archaeological interest were identified, although a small quantity of Roman pottery, as well as sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from a deposit of made-up ground.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during groundworks for an extension to the rear of 18 Sherifoot Lane, Four Oaks, Birmingham (centred on NGR SP 117995, Fig. 1). The site was located to the north of Sutton Coldfield. The archaeological watching brief was considered appropriate because a well-preserved Roman pottery kiln was recovered in the rear garden of the adjoining property, 16 Sherifoot Lane (Booth 1987).

3.0: BACKGROUND

In 1987 an almost complete later 2nd century Roman kiln (SMR Number 04606 B11610, Booth 1987) was discovered in the back garden of 16 Sherifoot Lane. This kiln may have supplied the military site at Wall, 7.5km to the north. This kiln lay within 2.5km to the east of Ryknild Street, and could have served local markets. The kiln comprised a stokehole and furnace with an adjoining pit, containing pottery, some wasters, from the kiln. The purpose of the watching brief at 18 Sherifoot Lane was to attempt to locate any features associated with the excavated kiln within the foundation trenches for the rearward extension to 18 Sherifoot Lane.

4.0: AIMS AND METHOD

The main aim of this exercise was to monitor any construction work in order to identify the presence or absence of any archaeological features relating to pottery production, or, indeed, any Roman or post-Roman features that may be present. The watching brief was intended to provide a record of any archaeological deposits or features which might be exposed by the extension groundworks.

The aims were achieved by a series of visits to the site in October 2001, whilst the foundation trenches were being excavated by the building contractor. No hand excavation was undertaken, except for the cleaning of exposed deposits in plan and

section, for better definition. A full record of all stratigraphic sequences, supplemented by scale drawings, was made. Stratigraphy was recorded using pro-forma context and feature record cards. Plans, sections and photographs, form the site archive and are currently stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

The archaeological watching brief was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (BUFAU 2002) and in accordance with the guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999).

5.0: RESULTS (Fig. 2, Plates 1-2)

The natural subsoil horizon (1002) exposed by the excavation of foundation trenches was a friable red-brown sand and gravel, recorded at a depth of 0.7m below the modern ground surface. Above was a deposit of made ground (1001), comprising friable dark brown sand and silt with rounded pebbles throughout. A modern soakaway and several north-south aligned drainpipes were encountered cutting through this layer. Sealing layer 1001 was a concrete flag stoned patio over the majority of the site (1003, not illustrated). Along the southern foundation trench layer 1001 was sealed by garden topsoil (1000).

Pottery and tile by Annette Hancocks

A small quantity, six sherds (96g), of residual Romano-British pottery was recovered from a deposit of made ground (1001). This material was of 2nd–4th century AD date and a single diagnostic Severn Valley ware rim sherd was noted. The remaining body sherds were also Severn Valley ware greyware. In addition, two sherds (19g) of medieval pottery of 12th–13th date were associated with this material. A single fragment of 1930's tile (112g) was also retrieved from this layer.

6.0: DISCUSSION

No features of archaeological, or possible archaeological interest, were found during the course of this watching brief. Sherds of Roman and medieval pottery were recorded within a deposit of made ground (1001) probably formed during the original construction of the house. These construction groundworks probably disturbed a part of the Roman kiln complex found in the garden of Number 16.

7.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Mr Roger Cardin who sponsored the watching brief. The watching brief was undertaken by Mary Duncan. Dr Michael Hodder, Planning Archaeologist, monitored the work for Birmingham City Council. The illustrations were prepared by John Halsted, and the report was edited by Alex Jones.

8.0: REFERENCES

Booth 1987 Sutton Coldfield Roman Pottery Kiln, *West Midlands Archaeology*, 30, 75.

BUFAU 2002 *18 Sherifoot Lane, Four Oaks, Birmingham. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief.*

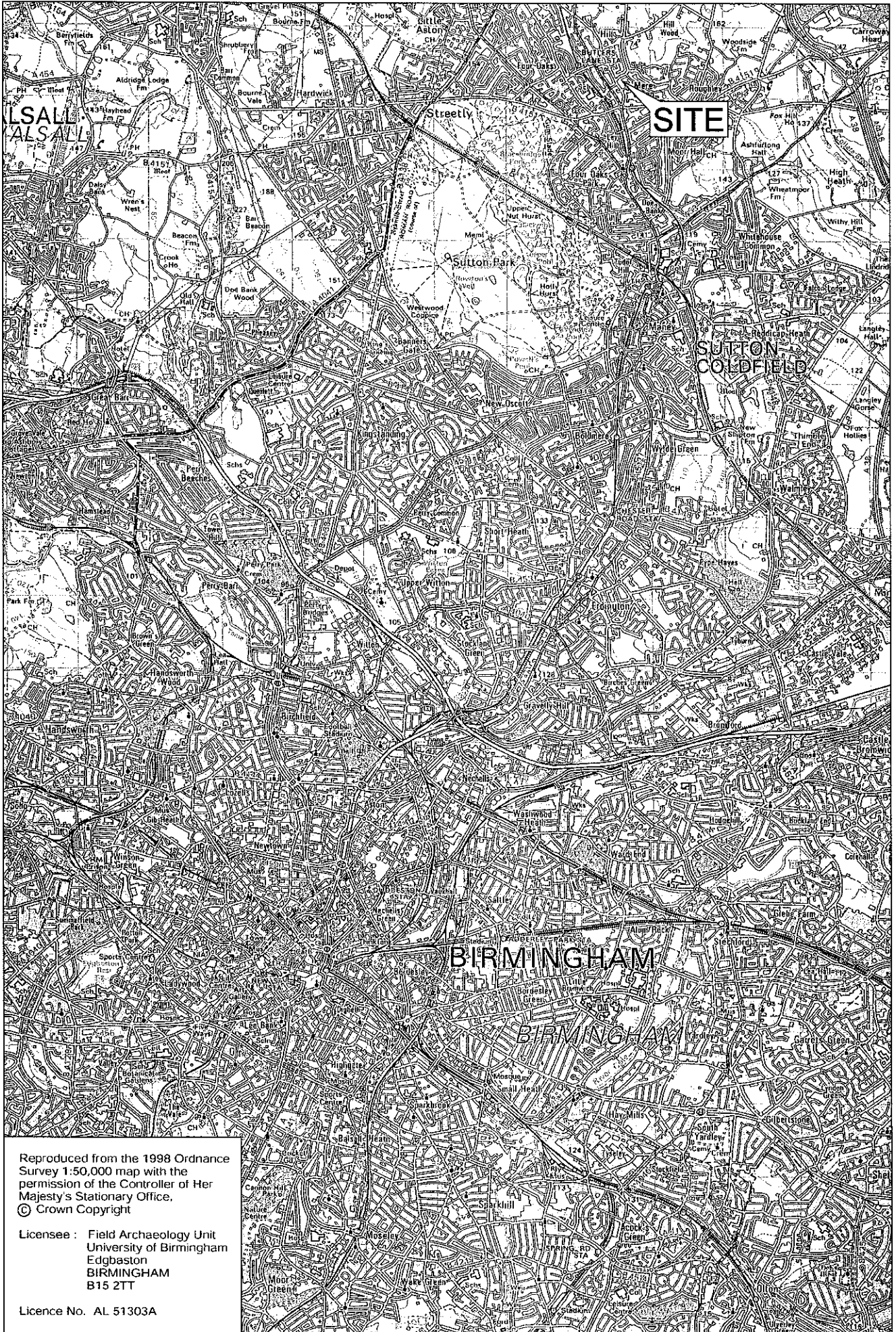


Fig.1

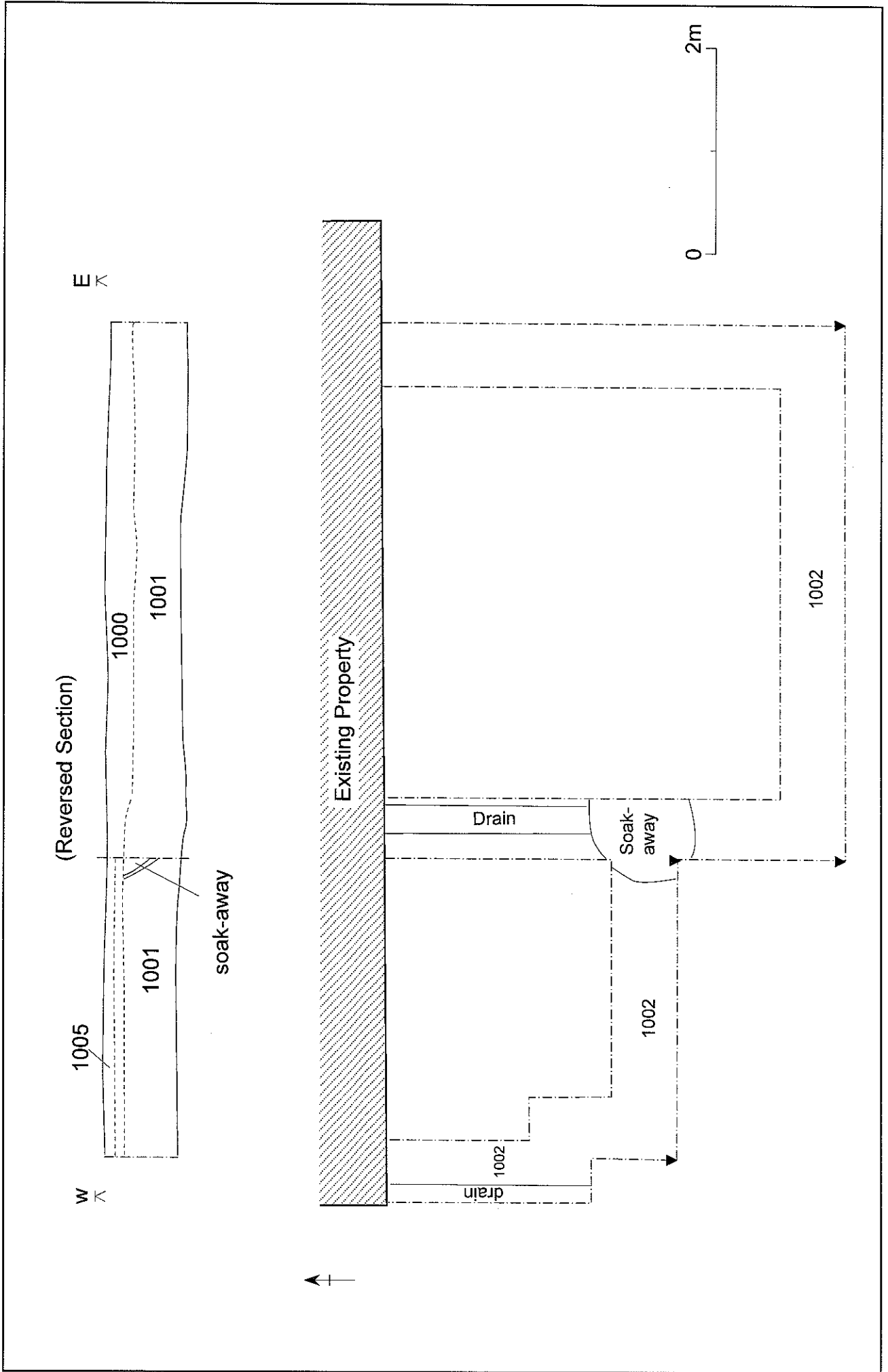


Fig.2



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Fig.1



Plate 1
Western Foundation Trench (with Drain)



Plate 2
Part of southern Foundation Trench

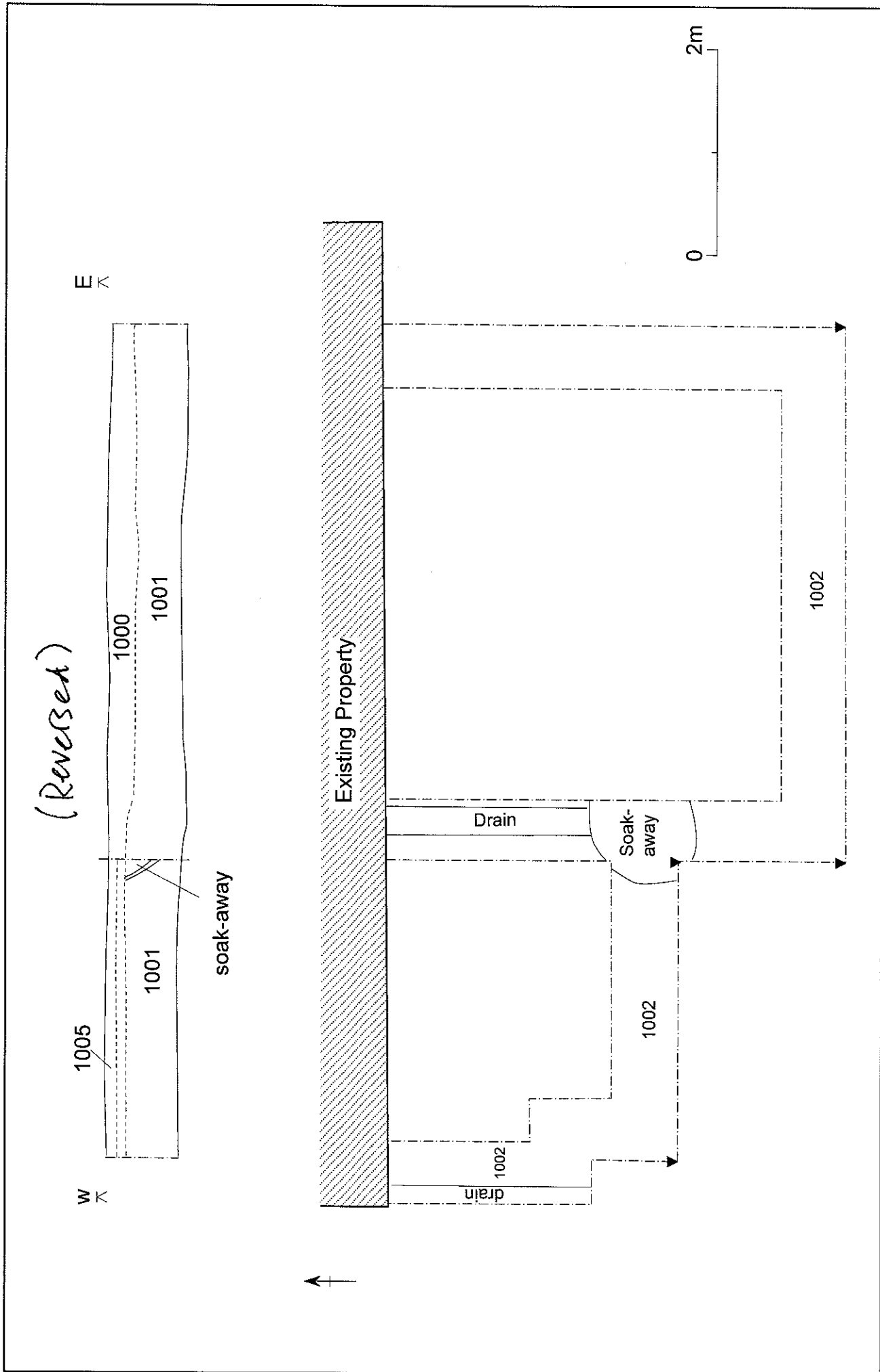


Fig.2