

Marches Archaeology

**Land adjacent to
Minster Pool
Lichfield
Staffordshire**

**A Report on an archaeological
watching brief**

October 1999

Marches Archaeology Series 096

Archaeological Consultants and Contractors

Land adjacent to Minster Pool
Lichfield

A report on a
archaeological watching brief

NGR:SK 115 096

Report by
Jo Wainwright *MA PIFA*

Contents

Summary

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Archaeological and historical background
- 3 Scope and aims of the project
- 4 Results of the watching brief
- 5 Discussion
- 6 References
- 7 The archive

October 1999

Marches Archaeology Series 096

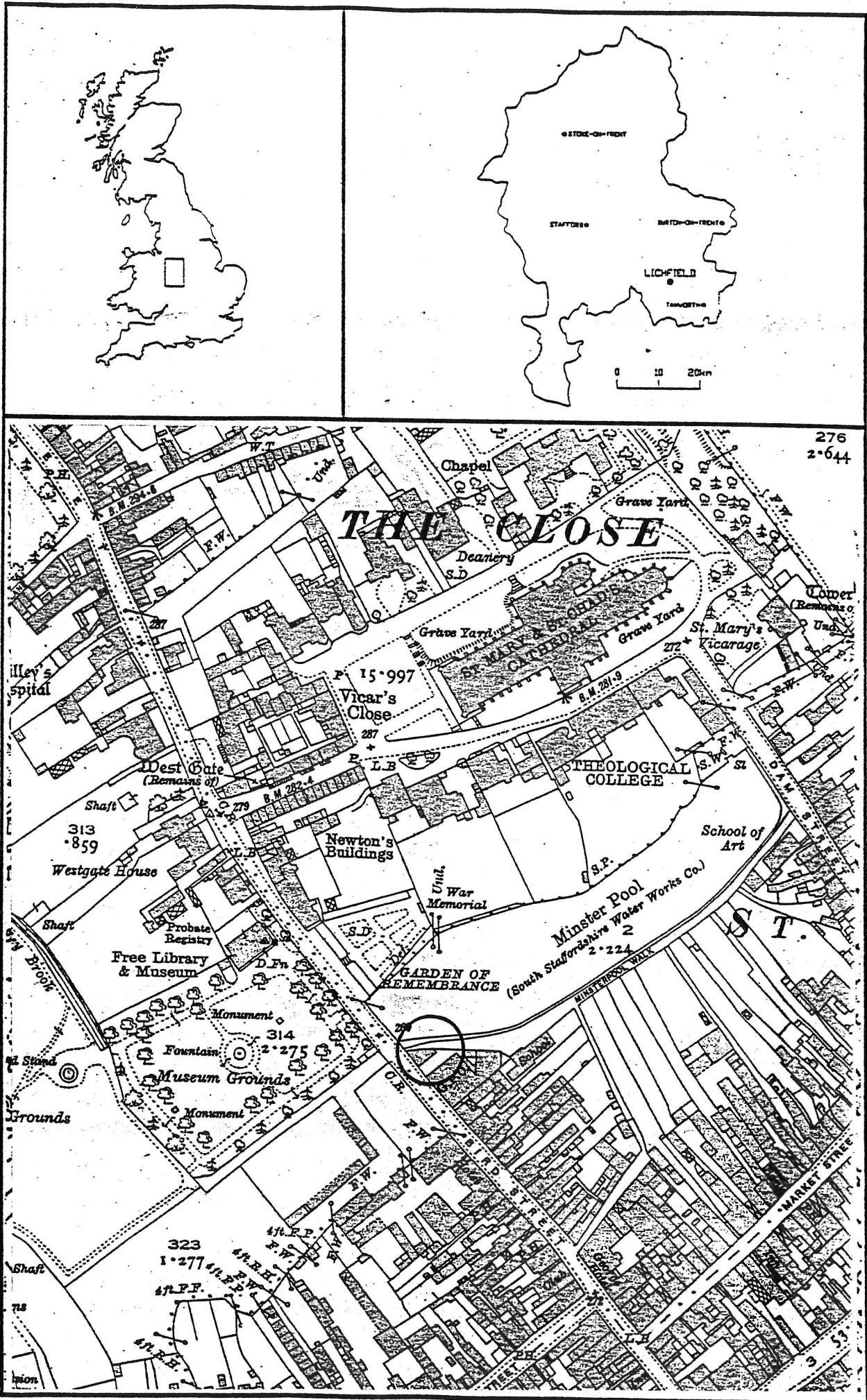


Fig. 1 Location of the site (1923 Ordnance Survey map)

**Land adjacent to Minster Pool
Lichfield**

A report on an archaeological watching brief

Summary

A watching brief revealed waterlogged deposits dating from the post-medieval period. These were presumably associated with the silting up of the Minster Pool during that period. The natural geological formations were not reached and it seems likely that medieval deposits exist beneath the excavated deposits

1 Introduction

Repairs to the sewerage system were carried out on land to the south of Minster Pool, close to Bird Street, in Lichfield. The site is situated at NGR: SK 116 097 (Fig 1).

The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor had advised that in order that the archaeological resource be adequately protected an archaeological watching brief be carried out during these ground works associated with the proposed repairs.

Haswell Consulting Engineers commissioned Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services and a watching brief was carried out on the 6/10/99 and the 15/10/99.

2 Archaeological and historical background

The area of the Minster Pool was originally land, albeit perhaps damp and even marshy. In the Neolithic period there was occupation just to the north, and further such evidence may survive. Little is known of the area from the later prehistoric period through the Roman and Saxon periods. However, in the twelfth century Minster Pool was apparently created or extended. After the area was flooded there was little activity on the site, with the exception of the dumping of household and industrial waste on the margins of the Pool. From the end of the medieval period the edges of Minster Pool gradually silted up, leading to the reclaiming of the land, and its reuse. By the end of the eighteenth century the land was fully reclaimed to its present extent and Minster Walk (earlier known as New Walk) was created.

3 Scope and aims of the project

The scope of the project was:

- ◆ observation of all topsoil stripping, other earthmoving and trench excavation until natural subsoil was reached
- ◆ the recording of the sequence of soil deposits present and all archaeological deposits and features
- ◆ the collection, identification and cataloguing of all artefacts recovered

- ◆ had significant archaeology been identified the archaeologist on site would have informed the County Archaeological Officer and Project Engineer immediately in order that appropriate action could have been taken to minimise the damage to such deposits and to record them appropriately.

Repair to the sewerage system consisted of the excavation of a trench between the Minster Pool and the Arts Centre. The trench was approximately 3.00m in length and 2.50m wide and was dug to a depth of about 2.60m below current ground level. This trench was through ground that had partially been previously disturbed by the insertion of the sewer and electricity cables running east to west (Fig 2). All archaeological deposits that were seen were recorded.

The aims of an archaeological watching brief are defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as:

'to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works'

and:

'to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

4 Results of the watching brief

The earliest deposit excavated was a dark brown moderately compact organic silt with occasional clay and charcoal fragments 0.70m deep [12] (Fig 3). This was possibly a series of waterlogged layers but because the trench shoring was in place it was only possible to see broad changes within the soils in the deepest part of the excavation. A fragment of tile from this deposit is probably post-medieval in date. Overlying [12] was a moderately compact dark brown black organic sandy silt layer with frequent charcoal, coal, brick, tile and sandstone fragments [11]. This was 0.60m deep and contained post-medieval pottery and clay pipe. Above this deposit was a friable pinkish orange sand with frequent silt and sandstone fragments and was 0.25m deep [10]. This also contained occasional mortar, iron slag, brick and tile fragments and was interpreted as a possible dump of material. Another dump or levelling deposit was directly above [10]. This was a friable grey brown silty sand [8] with frequent iron slag, clinker and charcoal and was 0.40m deep. An eighteenth century sherd of Staffordshire slipware pottery was recovered from this context. Overlying [8] and possibly associated with it was a 0.15m deep layer of loosely concreted clean sub-rounded pebbles in a pinky brown matrix [7] interpreted as a pathway or similar external surface. Sealing this was a 0.25m thick very mixed deposit of mid brown silty sand with frequent inclusions [6]. This was probably another levelling dump. Truncating [6] and the earlier deposits was the 1970's sewer trench [9] and the electricity cable trench [3]. Overlying these service trenches was a thin band of loose dark brown black gritty silty sand with frequent

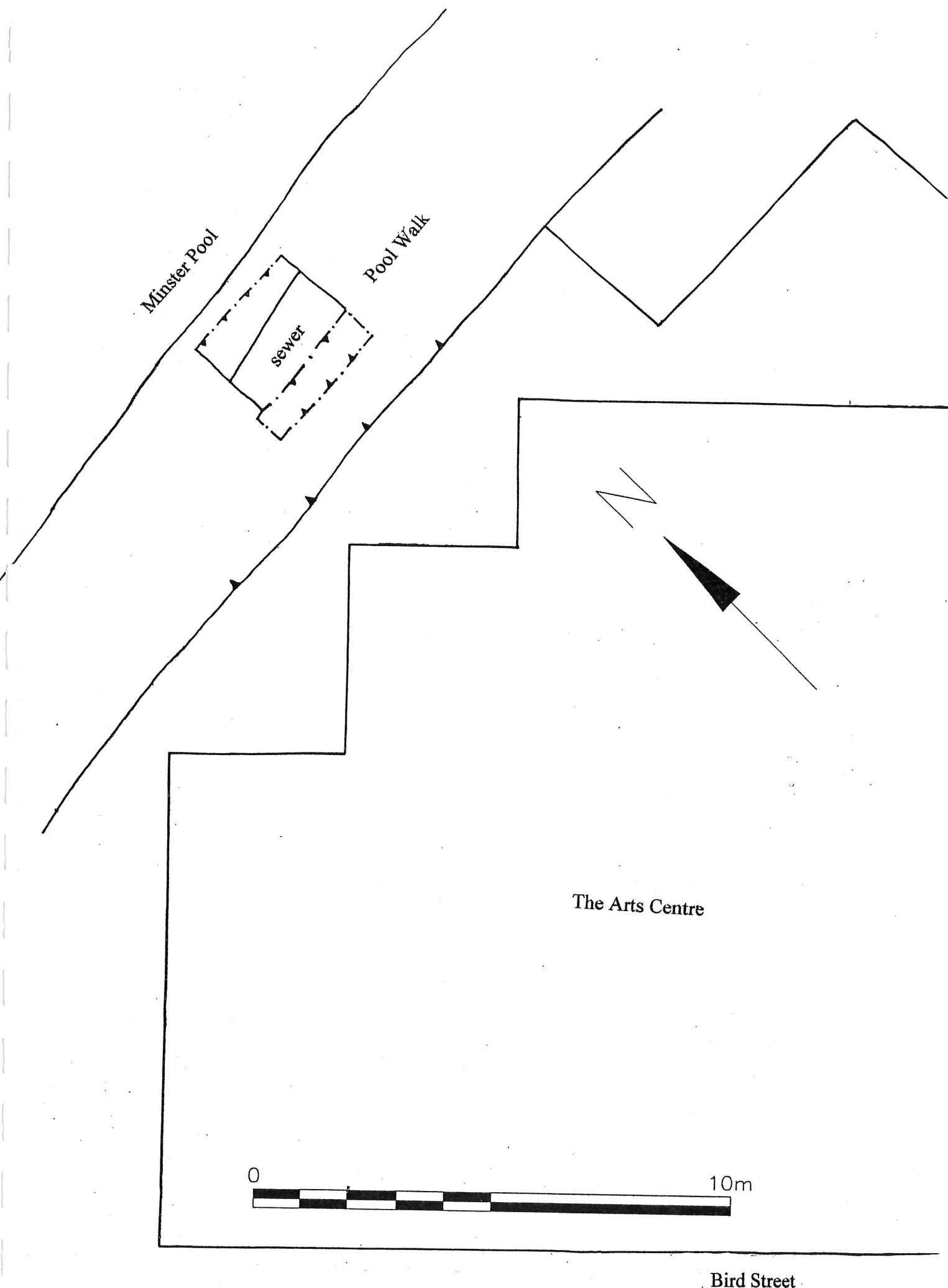


Fig. 2 Location of the trench

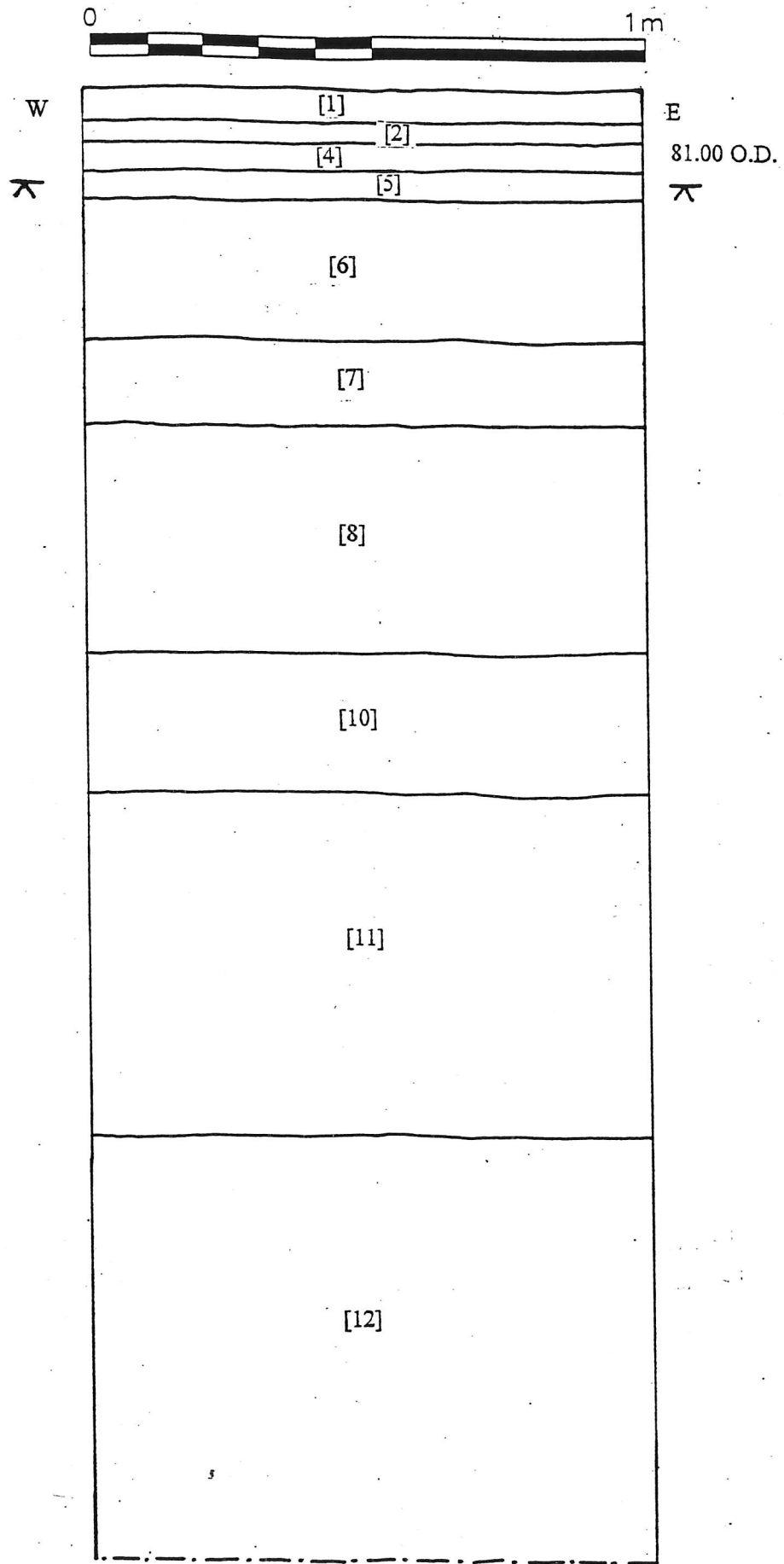


Fig. 3 Part of north section of trench

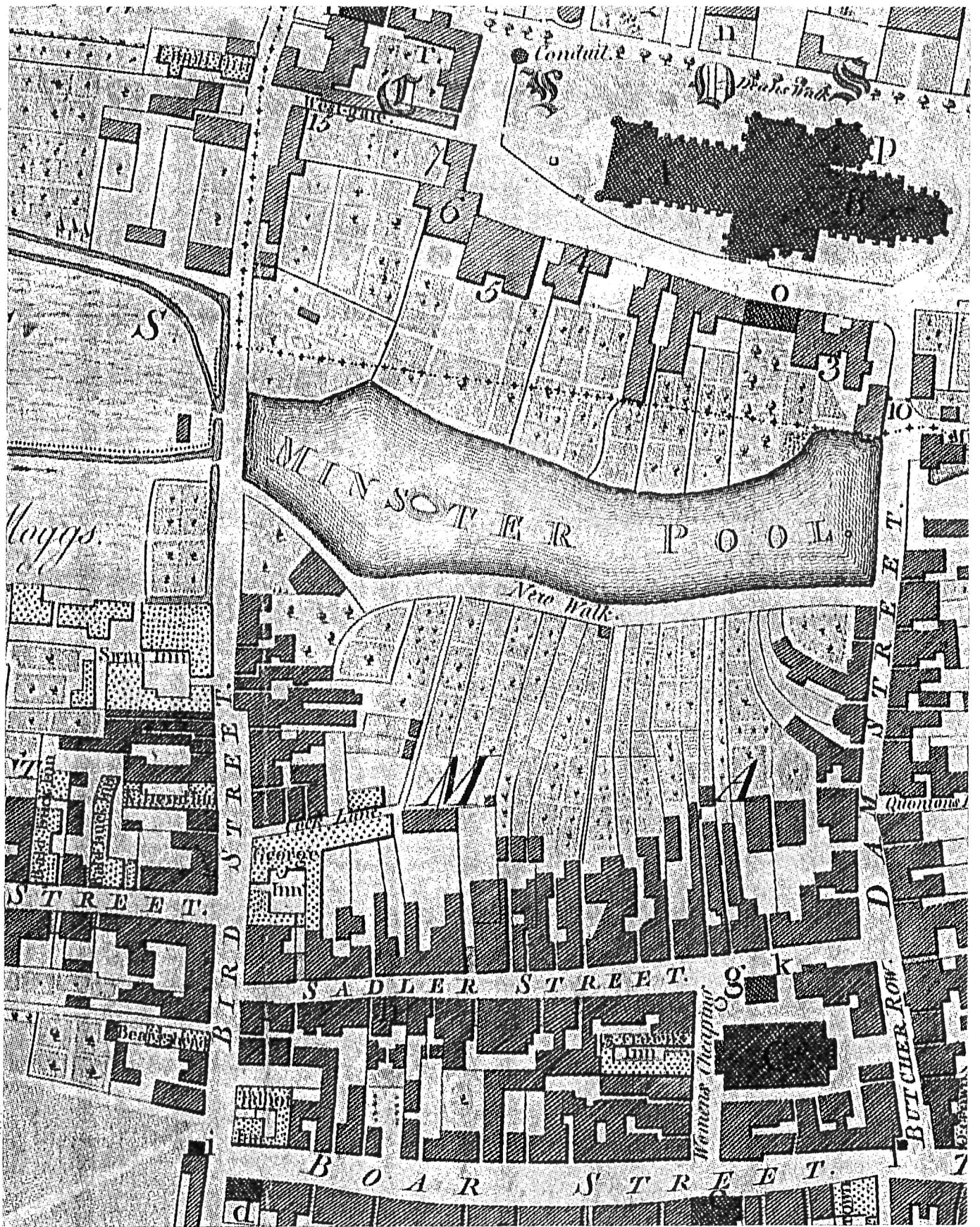


Fig. 4 Detail of Snape's map of Lichfield, 1781