

Marches Archaeology

St Thomas' Priory Hopton and Coton Staffordshire

Report on an archaeological evaluation

October 2003

Marches Archaeology Series 304

**St Thomas' Priory
Hopton and Coton
Staffordshire**

A report on an archaeological evaluation

NGR: SJ 9500 2290 (centre)

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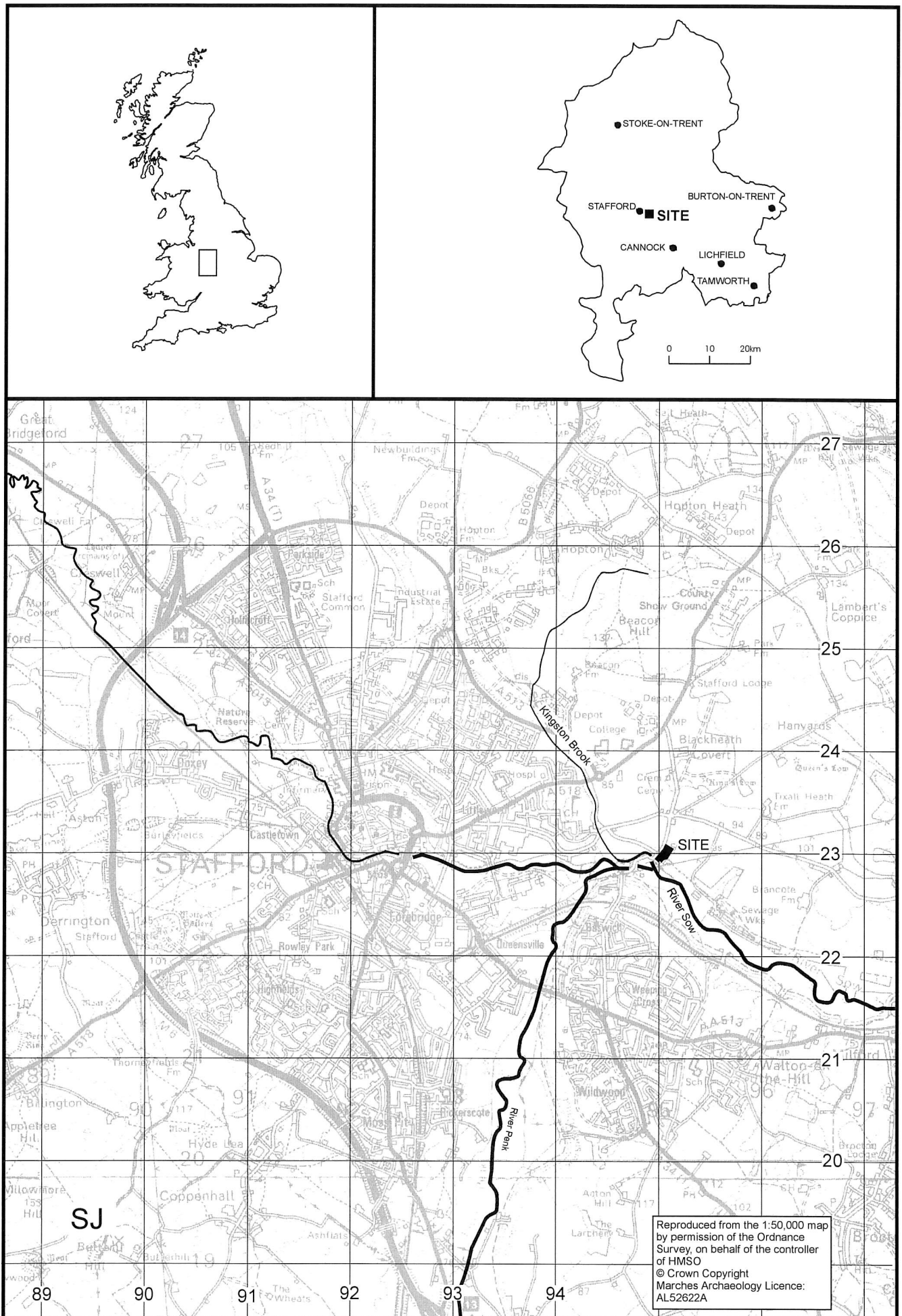


Fig. 1: Location of site

St Thomas' Priory Hopton and Coton Staffordshire

A report on an archaeological evaluation

Summary

Nine trenches were dug to investigate the area of a proposed development including part of the site of an Augustinian priory. The trenches revealed more substantial seventeenth century development of the site than had been previously suspected. Two walls may be part of the medieval priory, the northern one possibly represents part of the northern precinct boundary, but they could not be securely dated. The existence of a suspected pond was confirmed in the northern part of the site, and this has potential for preserving significant medieval environmental information. Recommendations for the development of the site have been suggested.

1 Introduction

A proposal is being considered for the renovation of existing buildings, demolition of others and erection of new buildings at St Thomas' Priory Farm, Stafford. The site is centred on NGR: SJ 9500 2290 (Fig 1).

Part of the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County Monument 112; National monument 21532). The site is registered on the local Sites and Monuments Record (ref.: 00124) as being of archaeological interest. All the listed buildings on the site are included under reference 2385. A watching brief on work on the southern boundary of the development area had been carried out in 2000.

An archaeological assessment, revised in 2003, has been produced by Bob Meeson archaeological consultant to Mr A Collier of Priory Investments (the client), forming the basis for a 'draft brief and schedule for archaeological evaluation' produced by Bob Meeson, after liaison with representatives of English Heritage, the Archaeology Service of Staffordshire County Council and the Local Planning Authority. Marches Archaeology was commissioned to provide the archaeological services detailed in the draft brief.

The fieldwork was carried out between 15th and 25th September 2003 inclusive, and the report issued on 29th October 2003.

2 Scope and aims of the project

The Brief stated that the archaeological project would consist of the excavation and recording of nine trenches and the preparation of a written and illustrated evaluation report.

An archaeological evaluation aims to “gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality) in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following: the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource; the formulation of a strategy to mitigate a threat to the archaeological resource; the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research” (Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations).

The objectives of this evaluation, based on the above stated aim, are defined in the draft brief as:

establish the potential for the survival of archaeological remains in those parts of the site where ground-works might impact upon them, assess their extent and quality, and consider their vulnerability to the proposed development

The draft brief also notes the primary objectives for the trenches :

- 1-3: to establish the depth of the overburden over medieval structures or surfaces
- 4: to provide information upon the survival, quality, depth and vulnerability of any archaeological deposits that may be affected by a new access road
- 5-6: to identify the foundations of demolished portions of buildings shown on OS maps and evaluate their relative archaeological significance and vulnerability
- 7-8: to establish the depth of the overburden over the uppermost deposits of the pond and to consider any likely impact upon any identified archaeological interests
- 9: to test the depth, significance and vulnerability of any potential archaeological deposits

3 Methodology

Documentary research

No documentary research was required at this stage.

Fieldwork

Nine trenches were excavated based on the locations indicated on Fig. 1 of the Brief. Problems of access to the buildings and the avoidance of functioning drains resulted in the actual locations of some trenches being altered as compared to the Brief (Fig. 2 below). This was mainly around buildings B and C. The trenches inside these buildings were located where access was easiest and safest. This necessitated that the northern part of trench 2 was offset to avoid building M. This part of trench 2 was recorded as trench 10 purely for convenience at the time of recording. The part of trench 1 inside building C was further west than the southern part of the trench, again for reasons of access. The northern extension of this trench on the north side of building C was placed to avoid areas of thick concrete and mature trees. Trench 3 was originally positioned to investigate a possible culvert from the fishponds, however, the client, Andrew Collier, informed the staff on site that a modern drain ran down the line of the postulated culvert and it was important that this was not damaged or disturbed by the JCB. To avoid any damage the trench was not extended as far east as intended, and to

compensate for this the trench was made a little wider. These changes to the proposed works were agreed by Bob Meeson, the consultant for the client.

The location of the trenches as dug is indicated on Fig. 2. It must be noted that there is some error in this plan. The trenches were accurately surveyed in using a total station electronic theodolite, and the resulting survey was overlaid on the 1:2500 OS map and plotted out at a scale of 1:500. However, the OS map was not intended to be used at such a large scale and errors in the OS map prevented the precise overlay of the trench survey. Appendix I shows the degree of error.

The upper deposits were excavated by a JCB mechanical excavator to a level determined to comprise deposits, features or horizons of archaeological significance. Further excavation was by hand. In trenches 1, 7, 8 and 9 the mechanical excavator was used to dig test pits to confirm and investigate the natural deposits. All archaeological features found were recorded and those considered to be of value to the understanding and interpretation of the site were selectively excavated. In all cases excavation was only partial, being sufficient to allow an understanding of the nature of the feature and the possibility of recovering dating evidence. All artefactual material recovered from hand excavation was retained, with the exception of unstratified post-medieval artefacts. Within building B machine excavation was not possible and all excavation was by hand.

On completion of the fieldwork the trenches were backfilled.

The recording system included written, drawn and photographic data. Context numbers were allocated and context record sheets completed for all layers and features, whether excavated or not. A running matrix was maintained for each trench. All features in each trench were planned at a scale of 1:20 and sections were drawn at 1:20 or 1:10 as appropriate. At least one long section of each trench was drawn at a scale of 1:20. The photographic record was made using black and white negative and colour transparency film. A plan of the trenches was created using a total station theodolite. This included the baselines of the hand drawn plans so that these could be accurately added into the final site plan.

No soil samples were taken as no deposits considered to have environmental, technological or scientific dating potential were encountered, with the exception of the pond deposits in trenches 7 and 8. The Brief required that only the upper deposits of the pond be exposed. For useful samples of the pond deposits to be obtained these would need to be taken either from throughout the full depth of the deposits or from the basal deposits. The layers revealed in the evaluation were, therefore, not considered worth sampling as the data would relate only to recent environmental changes. A piece of timber was recovered from trench 8, but this was considered to probably be too recent to justify radiocarbon or dendrochronological dating. However, it is being retained so dating could take place as part of future work if it was thought worthwhile.

Office work

On completion of fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced. A full list of contexts is presented in appendix II. All artefacts found from stratified contexts were archived, and the pottery was sent for specialist analysis (see appendix III).

4 Description of the site and geological background

The site lies on a low river terrace just above the flood plain of the River Sow, c.2.5km east of Stafford town centre (Fig. 1). It lies to the east of Blackheath Lane opposite the junction of this with St Thomas Lane. The scheduled area includes all the present upstanding buildings on the site and extends east of the farmhouse of St Thomas' Priory Farm. The area owned by Priory Holdings includes land to the north and east of the scheduled area, buildings C, G, H, J, K and part of building B, but excludes the farmhouse and its grounds and excludes St Thomas' Mill Farm, which incorporates the eastern end of building B (Fig. 2). The present evaluation was carried out only on land owned by Priory Holdings.

Two main sewers run north-west to south-east across the site (Fig. 2). These will have caused some impact on the archaeological deposits and their presence should be remembered when any groundworks are carried out on the site.

The solid geology under the site is Triassic sandstone of the Kidderminster/Chester Pebble beds formation (British Geological Survey 1990). The land rises to the north-east, the range in altitude over the area investigated being 74.00 to 79.90 m OD.

5 Archaeological and historical background

The history of the site is discussed in the assessment report (Meeson 2003) and only a summary of the history based on that report will be given here. The Augustinian priory of St Thomas the Martyr was established in the late 12th century, and though not a large community it was relatively wealthy. At the Dissolution the priory and its land passed to Rowland Lee, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, then on to his nephew Brian Fowler, Lord of Coton. In the 18th century the estate passed to Viscount Fauconberg of Newborough and then to the Duchess of Malborough.

Documentary evidence suggests considerable building activity in the late 13th century. Parts of the medieval buildings still survive as isolated sections of wall. The interpretation of the layout of the priory is largely based on the work of Charles Lynam in 1878. This places the church to the north and east of the farmhouse (building A), with the cloisters to the south. Two burials were found to the east of the farmhouse in the 1960s. The southern wall of the south cloistral range still survives. The area to the west of the church is assumed to have contained ancillary and agricultural buildings, with a gatehouse possibly near the road.

The outline of the priory precinct has not been firmly established, although it is assumed that the precinct was a narrow rectangular shape located on the river terrace between the flood plain and the steeper ground. The precinct boundary probably ran down the eastern side of the road and the site of the mill near the medieval bridge is assumed to be its south-western corner. The boundary then ran to the south and east of the farmhouse, but the exact location of its northern boundary is unknown. Map evidence suggests that there were two fish ponds to the north of building J possibly of medieval date, but these were not necessarily within the precinct.

The western and southern walls of building B are medieval and include features dating to the early 14th century. The eastern end of building B is an 18th century extension, but a watching brief in 2000 recorded 2 early stone walls of possibly medieval date, as well as later features including three 18th century blacksmiths' forges (Wilkinson 2000).

Masonry in the foot of the eastern side of building F indicates a range along the western side of the precinct, potentially of medieval date and possibly incorporating a gatehouse.

The farmhouse of St Thomas' Priory Farm (building A) was originally constructed in the late 17th century, although it has been altered since. Meeson dates building C to the mid or late 17th century from stylistic detail, and building B was remodelled at the same time to create matching stable blocks facing each other across a courtyard. This differs from the listed building description which describes it as of the 16th century and having Tudor details. In the late 18th or early 19th century the upper floor of both buildings were rebuilt in brick. It should be noted that building B does not have a brick upper floor on the north side, and that the 18th/19th century brick wall on the south side supports the roof along with the northern supposed 17th century sandstone wall. Presumably when the brick alterations were done the upper southern wall was removed and replaced with brick, raising the questions of why this was necessary and whether that wall was medieval or 17th century in date.

The watermill, which stood at the south-western corner of the site in the 19th century, dated from at least the 16th century and was probably on the site of the medieval mill.

No tithe map for the area survives in the local Record Offices (Meeson 2003, 8) so evidence for the earlier 19th century plan of the site is missing. However, by the late 19th century there were stock buildings with small yards in the north-eastern part of the site. Some of these had been replaced by building J, a large covered cattle yard, by the time the 1901 map was surveyed. Building H had been constructed by 1881, but the map suggests a closed western side. By 1901 the map shows that the open archways had been added.

6 Results of the evaluation

Trench 1 (Figs 3 to 8)

Trench 1 was composed of three parts; a trench within building C, a trench to the north of building C and one to the south. These three parts were not aligned as the southern part was positioned to investigate the eastern part of the courtyard south of building C, while the trench within the building was located in the room with the best access and the trench to the north had to avoid thick concrete and mature trees. These three trenches nevertheless combine to form a section under building C (Figs 6 to 8).

The floor [104] of building C was of brick. Along the south-western part of the room these bricks were hard-fired with a dark blue-grey exterior and a groove across the middle dividing them into two halves. These probably date to the late 19th or 20th century. The north-eastern part of the room was covered with red, more friable bricks set on edge, with some positioned to create a shallow drainage gully down the long axis of the room. The bricks were set on a layer of brown sand [105], under which was a levelling deposit of red-brown sand with rubble [106] (Fig. 7).

Sealed beneath the floor deposits was a large square post with a smaller adjacent post [115] (Fig. 4). These were securely embedded within the lower deposit [110] and were related to an earlier use of building C. The post was in line with the south-eastern side of a blocked doorway in the north-eastern side of building C and probably supported an internal partition related to this door. The post had been sawn off to allow the present floor to be laid.

Immediately south of post [115] was a well-built stone drain [108] constructed of sandstone slabs for capstones and base and dressed sandstone blocks for the sides (Fig. 4). The drain was 0.33m wide and 0.23m deep internally, and filled with a red-brown silty sand [109]. There was no cut for this drain and it appears to have been built as a free standing structure, then a made-up ground deposit was dumped around it to bury the drain and level the ground for building (Fig. 7). This deposit [107] was a dark grey silty sand, with tile and brick fragments, and contained Cistercian ware dating to the 16th to mid 17th century (appendix III) as well as 21 sherds of painted window glass. The drain was built on top of a red-brown silty sand with brick and tile fragments and sandstone pieces [110, 111]. At a depth of 1.25m below the present floor level (74.20m OD) a layer of strong red-brown coarse sand and gravel [114] was reached. This contained no artefacts and appeared to be the natural subsoil.

The made-up ground [107] was also built up against a linear feature composed of roughly laid sandstone in friable mortar [118] (Fig. 4). This ran across the entrance to building C, and was an earlier threshold to the building. It is believed that the threshold was constructed and [107] deposited as part of the original construction of the building, which drain [108] built in the same phase. On the south side of [118] a dark brown silty sand with rubble [116] had built up against it (Fig. 7). The relationship between [116] and the deposits inside the building could not be established. Although [116] was built up to the top of the threshold [118] suggesting that it was a ground surface in use soon after building C was completed, the deposit contained patches of clinker and later rubble and actually seems to have been of a recent date.

South of building C were two lines of stones [102] and [103], the northernmost of which, [103], were set on edge embedded firmly within [116] (Figs 4 and 7). The lack of a visible cut suggests that [103] was constructed as [116] was being deposited. Between [102] and [103] was a dark brown silty sand with gravel [117], which may be the remnants of a path. This feature continued in the northern end of the trench to the south of building C (Fig. 5). At this point the kerbs to the path were constructed of smaller sandstone blocks ([127] and [128]), with other blocks or bricks behind to support them. The kerb stones were supported and stabilised by a deposit of clinker and cinders [121] (Fig. 8), suggesting that the path, or at least this section of it, which may have been reconstructed, was no older than 19th century. Orange sand and gravel [122] created the path surface between the kerbs, and a thin layer of dark brown silty sand [123] may represent the original ground surface on which the path was built. The kerb can be seen in the surface of the present track further to the east (Fig. 2, (a)) showing that it ran along the full length of building C.

The recent date of the path was confirmed by the clinker layer [121] spreading over a dump of bricks and gravel in dark brown silty sand [124] (Fig. 8). Above [124] and [121] was a layer of dark brown sandy loam [120], a buried soil horizon, covered by another dump of rubble and gravel [119]. Layer [124] had been dumped directly on the natural subsoil, which here consisted of orange brown sands and gravels [126], with the exception of the southern

end of the trench where a trace of an earlier soil horizon survived [125]. The natural subsoil was at a level of c.74.48m OD.

The trench to the north of building C showed a considerable build up of deposits against the building. This totalled over 1m before a possible surface was located. The upper deposits of made-up ground [129] were clearly recent as they contained plastic. Below [129] was a dark brown sandy loam [130], a buried topsoil, which overlay redeposited red-brown sand and gravel [131]. At c.1.04m below the present ground surface (75.34m OD) was a layer of sandstone pieces [132], some placed horizontally, some just crushed fragments. This had 2 sandstone blocks [133] set in line along its northern edge and may be a deliberately laid surface related to building C. Below this layer were red-brown sands and gravels [134] which appeared to be natural but 2 sherds of Midlands whiteware pottery dating to the 13th to 15th century (appendix III) were recovered from near the surface of the layer suggesting some disturbance.

Trench 2 (Figs 9 to 13)

Trench 2 was also split into 2 parts, one inside building B and one to the north of the building (Figs 10 and 12). The latter trench was recorded as trench 10 for convenience in on site recording but it remains part of trench 2 and will be described here as trench 2.

The present floor [201] of building B is composed of red bricks. Beneath this was red-brown silty sand and gravel [202] providing a levelling layer on which the floor was constructed (Fig. 9). Sealed beneath [202] was a series of walls composed of red, machine-made brick [204] defining small rectangular areas filled with dark greyish black silty sand [203], presumably resulting from the gradual accumulation of debris within the abandoned structure (Fig. 10). [203] contained sherds of mid 19th century pottery. There was no evidence for the function of the brick structures, which may have supported a raised shelf or other fitted furniture related to the use of the building.

The brick structure [204] was built on, and partially cut through, an earlier floor [206] composed of red machine-made bricks. Under [206] was a layer of dark greyish brown silty sand [208] with brick, tile and late 18th or early 19th century pottery, then the battered remains of an earlier floor [209]. This floor was composed of distinctive bright red hand-made bricks but only survived in a small area 0.45m wide. [209] rested directly on a stone flagged floor [211]. This lowest floor was 0.7m below the present floor level (73.50m OD) and was composed of several square, regular sandstone flags and other smaller irregular pieces of sandstone and cobbles. Where [204] had cut through [206] the earliest floor could be seen surviving in fragments resting on the rotted red sandstone bedrock [213]. This early floor is thought to be the medieval floor surface although no occupation deposit was found on it and no dating evidence was recovered.

The part of trench 2 to the north of building B revealed a considerable build-up of made-up ground (Fig. 11). This was composed of brown silty sand with 70% crushed roof tile [1003], becoming darker, with increased clay content and less tile [1004] towards the base of the deposit. This rubble deposit was up to 1.3m deep and [1003] produced one sherd of pottery dating from the 16th to mid 17th century (appendix III). [1003] was covered by dark brown silty sand with coal and charcoal [1002], which appeared to be a rubbly topsoil. The made-up

ground raised the yard to a level consistent with the use of the 17th century stable blocks, and the deposition was presumably carried out shortly after these were built. However, there was no evidence of a yard surface. A line of sandstone blocks [1009] laid on top of [1003] at the northern end of the trench may represent part of a stone floor, but they were not seen in plan and their function was unclear.

Buried below the dumped rubble was a well-built wall [1005] of red and yellow sandstone with an ashlar face and a rubble and mortar core. This stood 3 courses high and was over 0.8m wide (Figs 12 and 13). The face of the wall as seen in the trench runs NNW-SSE on a very different alignment to the other buildings on the site. However, the eastern end of the exposed wall appeared to be changing direction to run parallel to the wall of building B. It is possible, therefore, that this wall can be tied in with the known structures on the site.

Wall [1005] was built directly on soft yellow brown sand [1007], which appears to be the natural subsoil occurring at a level of c.73.23m OD. There was a thin layer of dark brown sand [1006] with some stones along the top of [1007], which appeared to be a zone of disturbance or the trace of a soil horizon on top of the natural. In the northern part of the section a thin layer of red-brown clay [1008] covered [1006]. This was not explored in plan, but could be some sort of surface related to the wall.

Trench 3 (Figs 14 to 17)

Trench 3 was located close to the road on the western side of the site. Stripping the trench revealed the southern corner of a substantial sandstone building (Fig. 15). The wall [304], which was c.0.66m wide, was composed of large blocks of sandstone with a friable lime mortar. The wall only survived to a single course high (Fig. 17). Along the south-western side of the wall was a cobbled surface [305] composed of river pebbles, containing pottery dating from the late 17th to late 18th or 19th century. While this generally respected the wall some of the cobbles, especially at the north-western end, overlapped the stones of the wall indicating that the wall had been demolished to its present state before the cobbling was laid. The cobbled surface also incorporated a dressed sandstone block, presumably from the demolition of the wall. The wall is on the same alignment as the standing buildings in the area, although the corner was not quite a perfect right angle putting the south-eastern side of the building slightly out of alignment.

Wall [304] was built on a brown sand containing tile and other rubble [303] as well as pottery dating from the mid 17th to late 18th century (appendix III) (Fig. 16). This layer had also built up against the face of the wall with no trace of a cut, suggesting that [303] had been dumped over the site and that the same material continued to be dumped as the foundations of the building were constructed. The wall clearly rested on [303] and so post-dates the latest finds from it. The sand and rubble deposit was similar in appearance to [110]/[111] in trench 1 and [925] in trench 9.

Natural subsoil was not reached in trench 3 despite digging to a depth 1.44m below the present surface (73.91m OD) as below [303] was yet another layer of made-up ground [309] containing brick, tile and mortar fragments (Fig. 16). Set in the top of [309] and sealed by [303] was a line of undressed sandstone blocks [306] (Fig. 15). Initially it was thought that these formed the capstones for a drain but excavation showed that no drain existed below.

There was no mortar associated with the stones and no other evidence that a wall had been built on top of them. The surface of the stones was not sufficiently even for them to be a pathway. The function of this feature could not be established from the evidence in the excavation trench. [306] was also aligned ENE-WSW at a quite different angle to other structures on the site.

Trench 4 (Figs 18 and 19)

The trench dug in building H revealed a surprising absence of floor layers or foundation deposits. The present floor [401] is no more than a highly organic layer of dark grey-brown sandy silt. Beneath this was grey brown silty sand [410], which may be the pre-building soil horizon. Cut into [410] were 3 pits, two of which were fairly small ([403] and [405]) and filled with grey brown silty sand containing some animal bone. [409] was larger and filled with two dumps of grey brown silty sand ([406] and [408]) separated by a layer of redeposited pale brown sand [407] (Fig. 18). Pit [409] extended under one of the arch supports in the north-west side of building H, so it is assumed that all the pits pre-date the building.

Building H was constructed on a thick deposit of fine red-brown fluvio-glacial sand [416]. The only evidence of possible earlier activity was seen at the north-western end of the trench, outside the structure. Here a steep sided cut [415] had been made in the natural. The base of this was lined with irregular sandstone blocks roughly laid within red clay. The channel in the middle of the feature was filled by brown silty sand with some tile fragments [412] and grey brown silty sand with frequent stones and tile [413]. The upper part of the cut, which was unlined, was filled by grey brown silty sand [411]. The excavator initially thought this might be a robbed out wall but stone robbers are more likely to concentrate on the better stone of a wall face rather than removing the rubble core. The cut [415] also seems too neat and fits the structure too closely to be convincing as a robber trench. It, therefore, seems that a vertically sided cut was dug and its base and lower sides deliberately lined with stones and clay leaving a channel down the middle, most probably to create a type of drain. This interpretation would be more convincing if capstones had been found, but these may have been removed. There was no dating evidence from this feature so its relation to building H is not known.

Trench 5 (Figs 20 and 21)

Trench 5 was located to investigate the foundations of buildings shown on the 1881 to 1923 OS maps. Stripping the trench revealed several walls and floor surfaces buried under a mound of sand and gravel [501] and dumps of rubble [502]. There were two walls at right angles, running north-west to south-east and north-east to south-west. The northern-most of these [505] was built of red machine-made brick, while the other [508] was patched together from various materials. The southern end was made of brick and the northern end of sandstone, while in between were breeze blocks. It was unclear whether this was originally a brick wall patched with sandstone and then breeze blocks or whether the sandstone was also original. North-east of [505] was the disturbed remains of a brick floor with dark bricks grooved to resemble two square setts, like those in building C. There were two phases of concrete floor between [505] and [508] ([506] and [507]), both of which respected [505] but seemed to at least partially overlap [508]. To the west of [508] was another concrete floor [509].

At the north-eastern end of the trench where the floor surface was removed it was demonstrated that the buildings were constructed directly on the bedrock, visible as a compact red-purple sand [511], the rotted surface of the red sandstone bedrock. Presumably the deposits above bedrock had been removed to give a level terrace on which to construct the buildings.

Trench 6 (Figs 22 to 25)

In the northern end of trench 6 were the foundations of a brick structure ([603]/[604]) (Fig. 23). The walls were of red machine-made brick set on concrete foundations. One wall [612] was at a slight angle to the others and appeared to be an earlier wall cut through by the other structure. However, the bricks of [612] were very similar to those of [603]/[604] so it cannot have significantly predated them. There was a layer of disturbance and mixing below the building [613] but below that the structure rested on a clean brown sand containing only occasional small stones and gravel [605] (Fig. 24). This contained no artefacts and appeared to be a colluvial deposit, possibly caused by agriculture in the fields to the north, but showing no evidence of disturbance or human activity after it was deposited. Below this was a soft yellow brown sand similar to the natural sand in trench 4, and probably also of natural fluvio-glacial origin.

Further along the trench [605] was covered by a brown silty sand [608] containing some brick. This extended most of the length of the trench sealed under a dark grey loam with brick rubble [602] (Fig. 22). While [602] was of recent origin and covered the brick building, [608] was considerably earlier although the brick showed that it was still post-medieval.

A yellow sandstone wall [607] ran across the southern end of the trench (Figs 23 and 25). This only survived to two courses high and was composed of fairly irregular stones roughly coursed. It was 0.7m wide and bonded with yellowish, very friable mortar. This wall was built on red-brown sand and gravel [610], presumed to be the natural subsoil. A dark grey silty sand [609] representing an old soil horizon had built up against the southern face of the wall, but the relationship with [608] on the other side was not clear. [608] did not continue south of the wall, yet no clear cut could be seen against the north face of the wall. It is possible either that [608] built up against the north side of the wall, or that [608] was dug away to create a terrace on which to build wall [607]. If the latter was the case the wall was built so close to the north side of the terrace that no cut was visible in the present section.

Trenches 7 and 8 (Figs 26 to 29)

These trenches were positioned to investigate a potential pond or marshy area suggested by the early OS maps. Both trenches had considerable depths of made-up ground. In trench 7 this was 0.6m thick [701] and in trench 8 it was up to 1m thick [802]. In both cases there were large quantities of bricks and other rubble in the made-up ground and in trench 8 dumps of gravel and less rubbly soil were used. Below the made-up ground was a layer of dark grey sandy loam ([702] and [803]/[805]) strongly suggestive of a buried soil horizon. Both of these soil horizons had dumps of other material incorporated within them, orange sand [703] in trench 7 and red-brown clay [804] in trench 8. Although there was no dating evidence from this layer it could be proved to be of recent date as the soil horizon in trench 8 had developed,

sealing the cut for a ceramic drainage pipe [807]. This shows that the buried soil dates no earlier than the late 19th century and probably represents the ground surface indicated on the early OS maps. Below the buried soil was a layer of brown sand and gravel ([704]and[808]/[809]) up to 0.44m thick. Initially it was assumed that this layer was the natural subsoil, but test pits in trench 8 revealed other deposits below, and deeper test pits in trench 7 showed that here too the gravel sealed alternating layers of pale sand and grey silt interpreted as pond deposits ([705], [706], [707], [708], [810], [811], [812], [813]). The edge of the pond was not seen in either trench.

Trench 9 (Figs 30 to 33)

Trench 9 was covered by several layers of recent road make-up deposits and levelling layers. Once these had been removed a drain could be seen running diagonally across the south-eastern end of the trench. This drain [912] was large and well constructed with a brick base and stone sides and stone capping along part of it. The south-eastern end was built entirely of red hand-made bricks. The fabric and size of the bricks suggest an 18th or early 19th century date. The north-western end of the drain had been cut into, probably to remove some of the capstones. The cut [934] for this activity was not clearly defined except by the loss of the sides and cap of the drain. The resultant hole had been filled in by a rubble spread that covered over 2m of the trench. This deposit [918] consisted of orange and grey sands with brick and tile and also included an iron post and tops of 2 staddle stones (small find 1). The latter were unusual in that they were carefully laid upside down so that their surfaces were horizontal and it is possible that they were reused as post pads, perhaps one supported the iron post. Two short lines of stones within this deposit ([929] and [930]) could also be part of rough walls, though the evaluation trench did not reveal enough of these features for this to be proved.

The drain was cut into a firm red sand, probably rotted sandstone bedrock [916], and this was overlain in the south-eastern end of the trench by an orange gravel [917], probably also natural. The top of these natural deposits was at c.76.04m OD.

A test pit was dug in the middle of the trench which showed that [918] was c.0.25m deep and overlay a layer of pale brown sand [926] and red-brown gravel [927], both of which were probably natural deposits. This places the surface of the natural here at c.76.00m OD. At the north-western end of the trench the deposits were excavated by hand down to a depth of 75.71m OD and no natural subsoil was reached. This indicates again a slope down towards the west of the natural topography.

The dip in the ground was filled by red-brown sand and pebbles with pottery and tile [925] similar to deposits in trenches 1 and 3. The pottery dated to the 16th century (appendix III). On top of this made-up ground were built two substantial sandstone walls aligned north-east to south-west. The north-western of these [921] was built of red and yellow sandstone blocks, some of which were neatly dressed in irregular courses. This did not cross the full width of the trench and may represent the corner of a building. The other wall [922], c.1m wide, was also of sandstone with fairly neat, dressed facing stones, though at foundation level and not meant to be visible. A deposit of pebbles and sand [923] built up against and between these wall foundations and a brown silty clay [920] built up against the south-eastern face of [922]. There was no dating evidence from within the walls themselves.

7 Discussion

Trench 1

The evidence from inside building C shows that, at least at the north-western end, there was no medieval building preceding the present structure. Deposit [110]/[111] is very similar to deposits in trenches 3 and 9 and may represent a general layer covering much of the western end of the site. This would be envisaged as a dumping event designed to level this area, which presumably originally sloped down towards the river. The levelling was to create a platform for an extensive phase of building, which included building C. However, the pottery evidence provides some problems in dating this as a single event (see discussion of trench 3).

After the general levelling the drain was built and the ground more precisely built up to provide the desired floor level for building C. Layer [107] that formed this levelling deposit is dated by the 16th to mid 17th century Cistercian ware it contained, suggesting possibly a mid 17th century date for the construction of building C. However it also contained fragments of painted window glass which must have originated from the medieval Priory. They are residual in this context and probably represent demolition rubble from the Priory buildings being incorporated in the later made ground.

There seems to have been a rough sandstone path along the northern side of the building and there may have been a path along the southern side with well constructed kerbs. However the date of the latter is uncertain and parts, at least, of the path are much later, although this may be due to the replacing of some sections.

The foundations of a sandstone wall can be seen in the present track round the eastern end of building C (Fig. 2 (b)). This wall is shown on the 1881 to 1923 OS maps as a boundary wall and probably does not hint at a medieval building beneath the south-eastern end of building C (Fig. 34).

Trench 2

Building B has a medieval southern wall and the flagged floor found inside it probably relates to that wall. All dating evidence from trench 2 pointed to late 18th and 19th century activity, so it appears that the original medieval floor was used even after the building has been converted in the 17th century, presumably with a flight of steps leading down from the much higher ground level to the north. For some reason the 19th century saw the construction of a whole series of brick floors, each higher than the previous one, until the present level was reached. It is possible this was related to an increased problem with flooding causing damp inside the building.

The function of the brick structure [204] was not determined but it should be noted that remains of 3 post-medieval blacksmith forges were found during the watching brief in the south-eastern end of this building (Wilkinson 2000, 11) (Fig. 2 (c)). [204] would not necessarily have to have an agricultural function.

The northern part of the trench demonstrates how much the ground level was raised, presumably related to the 17th century building phase. The fact that the southern part of trench 1 did not show similar deposits demonstrates that the natural topography dipped down sharply over the western part of the site. In the 8m between the southern part of trench 1 and the northern part of trench 2 the natural subsoil drops from c.74.48m OD to c.73.23m OD, a drop of 1.25m. This drop is so steep that it must be either a deliberate terracing related to the medieval buildings or an ancient river terrace. Only further excavation could demonstrate which is the case.

Although there was no direct dating evidence it is probable that wall [1005] is medieval. It is at a much lower level than the later structures and is built on the natural subsoil rather than on made-up ground as the later walls on site are. It is well built and thick suggesting it supported a fine, substantial building. The wall may have formed the original northern wall to building B, but the change in angle suggests that it may be cutting across a corner to join another range perpendicular to building B.

A wall of dressed sandstone was found under the floor in the northern corner of St Thomas' Mill Farm Cottage during the watching brief (Wilkinson 2000, 10). This may relate to wall [1005] but it runs at an angle to the alignment of the other walls of building B (Fig. 2 (d)).

The 1881 and 1901 OS maps show a wall running at a slight angle between buildings B and M and a small structure on the northern side of building B at exactly the point where wall [1005] was found (Fig. 34). The structure shown is in an appropriate position for steps leading up to the central door in building B from a lower ground level. Further excavation would be necessary to confirm whether the map evidence and the features in the ground are the same, but if so it would alter the interpretation of the area. It would imply that the dump of tile filled rubble is recent, probably early 20th century, and that the ground surface when building B was in use was much lower. Wall [1005] would be contemporary with the construction of the north-eastern wall of building B, i.e. 17th century. One piece of evidence against this is the sherd of 16th to 17th century Cistercian ware recovered from the tile deposit [1003]. This could be residual but it may date the dumping of the deposit.

Trench 3

The area of the trench was built up by the dumping of a sandy rubbly layer [303] similar to that found elsewhere on the western side of the site. During this process of dumping a line of stones [306] was laid out, but their function is unclear. On top of the made-up ground a substantial stone building [304] was constructed. After the building's demolition its foundations were used as a boundary for an area of cobbling probably related to the continued agricultural use of the site. After the cobbles went out of use further layers of dumping and temporary yard surfaces were created.

Layer [303] closely resembled layers [110]/[111] in trench 1 and [925] in trench 9. No finds were recovered from [110]/[111] but pottery from the layer above shows that it was deposited before the mid 17th century at the latest. Pottery from [925] is dated to the 16th century, so both of these deposits are consistent with made-up ground in advance of a 16th or 17th century building phase. However, pottery from [303] dates from the mid 17th century to the late 18th/19th century, suggesting that despite the similarity of the deposit it is related to a much later building phase. This is unexpected as other later building or alterations on the site

appear to be in brick. The substantial foundations of [304] may imply a large well-built stone building out of character with the other buildings of this date. However, stone foundations to brick walls are quite common in Staffordshire (Meeson pers. comm.) so the superstructure could have been brick. In either case a structure built in the late 18th century would be expected to be still standing to be represented on the 1881 OS map, which this clearly is not. It is possible that some later disturbance not recognised during the excavation introduced the pottery into [303], but this would be special pleading, so the present evaluation cannot provide a solution to this problem. Further work on the site might clarify these questions.

The late date for wall [304] suggests that the sandstone wall footings seen in the eastern wall of building F are not medieval but post-medieval. If there are any medieval remains in this area they could be over 1.4m below current ground level.

Trench 4

This trench showed that this part of the site is underlain by a deposit of fluvio-glacial sand, unlike the gravels elsewhere. Building H was built directly on this natural sand and there is no evidence of earlier buildings here. However, a type of clay-lined drain found here could not be dated and may be earlier.

Trenches 5 and 6

The brick buildings visible in trench 5 and in the northern end of trench 6 are shown on the early OS maps and the features found in the evaluation trenches can be closely correlated with the map evidence. By comparison with the map evidence floor [503] was inside the northern building of the range, and the walls defined the building extending to the south (Fig. 35). Floors [506] and [507] were different phases within this building and [509] formed the surface of the courtyard outside. [603] was part of the same wall as [504], and [604] was the base of an open fronted structure to the south.

These buildings were constructed on bedrock or natural deposits and no evidence was found of previous structures or activity below them. The map evidence shows they were built by 1881, but the use of concrete foundations and machine-made bricks shows that they were not built long before this date. They were in use probably until the construction of building K, and different phases of concrete flooring and patching to a wall in trench 5 shows that minor alterations and repairs were made during this period of use.

Wall [607] at the southern end of trench 6 was very different in character. Being built of sandstone it compares more closely with the earlier buildings on the site rather than the 19th century constructions. This wall is also shown on the early OS maps as a boundary wall to one of the small enclosures in this area (Fig. 35). This wall could define the 17th century farmyard, but it is possible that the wall is in origin older, as it is appropriately located for the north-eastern precinct wall to the priory. A medieval date could not be proved but this possibility should be considered if further work is carried out in the area.

Trenches 7 and 8

The lower layers in these trenches represented sediment deposited in water flowing at varying rates. The sand requires flowing water for deposition but the fine grey, rather organic silt was

deposited in still water. The alteration of these layers shows that the water regime rapidly and repeatedly changed. The reason for this is probably hinted at on the 1881 map where a fish pond is shown a little to the north with its outlet marked with the word 'sluices' (Fig. 35). The area investigated by trenches 7 and 8 was almost certainly also a pond before completely silting up. Water flow from the upper to the lower pond could be controlled by the sluices so that when water levels were low the pond would have no in-flowing water but if water levels were high or there was a need to drain the upper pond the water and sediment were suddenly released into the lower pond. Such water management would be consistent with the use of the ponds as fish ponds, a function for which they were probably constructed by the priory.

The possibility has been raised (in the Brief, p4) that the ponds may also have functioned as header ponds for the mill. It is assumed that a culvert from the ponds ran along the line of the modern drain just to the east of buildings G and F, under the mill and into the mill leat. The mill was normally powered by Kingston Brook, flowing in from the west. The water from the fish ponds would, therefore, be likely to pass under the mill down stream from the mill wheel, unless there were channels under the mill to feed it into the mill race. As the ponds would provide a useful emergency source of water power if the brook level was low, this is a possibility, but could not be confirmed without excavation under the mill.

While the upper pond seems to have been maintained well into the 20th century the lower pond was allowed to silt up and by 1881 was indicated only as a boggy area (Fig. 35), still visible in 1923. Sometime after that date this boggy, lower ground was infilled with rubble to create the level area used until recently for parking vehicles.

Trench 9

The walls in the north-western end of trench 9 rested on the general made-up ground deposit that seems to have extended under building C and are similar to building C in the use of dressed sandstone blocks. It is likely that the walls in trench 9 were contemporary with the construction of building C. Whether the drain [912] was contemporary with or later than the early 17th century building event is unclear. The presence of staddle stones suggests that there was a granary resting on these stones somewhere within the farmyard, which was demolished fairly late in the site's history. Another, more temporary structure may have been built in this area using the tops of the staddle stones as post pads, but the 1881 map gives no indication of this.

8 Conclusions

The evaluation revealed surprisingly few medieval features. In part this may be due to the depth of post-medieval deposits along the western side of the site, but in trench 1 south, where the natural subsoil is only 0.6m below the present surface, no medieval deposits were found. More work is needed to establish whether this is a genuine absence. Walls [1005] in trench 2 and [607] in trench 6 might be medieval in origin but both seem to be indicated on the OS maps and their antiquity is in some doubt.

The topography of the site was changed, probably in the early 17th century, by large scale dumping of deposits to buildup the ground on the western side of the site. This was a prelude to considerable building activity including the construction of building C and walls [921] and

[922]. Building B was presumably also altered at this time, although wall [304] seems to have been built considerably later. While building B was definitely of medieval origin there is no evidence from the evaluation of a medieval precursor to building C or a medieval gatehouse near the road, although the remains of the latter could be below the level reached in the evaluation trench.

Trench 9 shows that archaeological remains are likely to survive within the yard area between buildings C and J, although there is no evidence of medieval deposits. It is possible that wall [607] was the priory precinct wall, and the lack of early deposits north of this support its interpretation as a boundary wall from either the 17th century or the medieval period, or both.

The deposits revealed in trenches 7 and 8 show that there was a pond in this area. Its depth is unknown, but it is probable that the lower deposits are of medieval date and may contain important environmental evidence.

9 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the architects drawing of the proposed development (Brownhill Hayward Brown 1940/SK100A). It should be noted that the scheduled area as shown on fig. 6 in the assessment report (Meeson 2003) includes building J, and is incorrectly indicated on the architects plan (Fig. 2). However, if wall [607] can be confirmed as the northern wall of the priory precinct the area indicated on the architects plan probably does enclose most the significant buried archaeology, with the exception of the remains of the wall itself. Discussions will be necessary with English Heritage before the houses intended for the site of building J could go ahead, but the present evaluation suggests that, as long as the line of the wall is avoided, there are no significant archaeological deposits here.

No additional building is proposed in the yard between buildings J and C, but any groundworks necessary for services should be kept to a minimum as they are highly likely to disturb archaeological deposits and features. Ideally the service trenches should be archaeologically excavated but as a minimum a watching brief allowing full recording of any archaeology revealed should be carried out. The present evaluation shows that the archaeology here is likely to be post-medieval in date, but the discovery of more of the plan of the 17th century farmyard would be a significant addition to the understanding of the site. The possibility also still remains that there may be medieval features in this area.

North of wall [607] there seems to be no pre-19th century remains with the exception of the pond deposits and a possible leat or culvert leading south from them. The pond deposits are of considerable potential for the environmental information that they may contain. Any foundations dug in this area or other groundworks should be kept within the made-up ground deposits so as not to disturb the lower pond deposits. Considerable drainage will be necessary to handle the flooding problems on the site and care should be taken that this does not result in the drying out of the waterlogged deposits in the base of the pond fill. Drying out would cause the loss of environmental information preserved by continuous waterlogging. If significant disturbance to this area is unavoidable it is recommended that a full paleoenvironmental survey of the deposits be carried out involving sampling of deposits from throughout the pond profile for palynological and macro-fossil analysis.

Over much of the area between and around buildings B and C the evaluation has shown that there is considerable built-up ground. No medieval deposits were found under building C, nor any earlier post-medieval floor levels. South of building C, even where the natural is quite close to the surface, there was no evidence of medieval layers. It may, therefore, be possible to design the service trenches so that no archaeological damage will be caused. Even so a watching brief would be recommended to allow for the recording of any unexpected features. The buried remains of the 17th century structures could be at risk from the service trenches and these would need full archaeological recording where it is not possible to avoid them with the trenches.

The garage proposed between building F and G would disturb the structure identified in trench 3. Although this appears to be late, and might not be considered worth preserving *in situ* it is important to be sure of the dating of this feature and to clarify the history of this part of the site with further excavation if the garage is to cause damage to this area.

The depth of post-medieval floor levels in building B may also enable service trenches and other works to be carried out without disturbing the medieval floor. If the medieval floor is to be exposed it should be recorded and any excavation below this level should be carried out by hand by archaeologists. In both buildings B and C the number of holes for services- through the walls, even at foundation level, should be kept to the absolute minimum and if possible avoided altogether.

The evaluation has revealed that a carefully designed development should cause little disturbance to the archaeology, but it is possible that the areas between the evaluation trenches hide unexpected surprises so all groundworks should be carried out with an archaeologist present with a contingency to allow the hand excavation and recording of any important deposits and features that cannot be avoided.

Only a relatively small number of finds have been recovered from the current evaluation, with surprisingly few medieval finds. It is recommended that the painted window glass from trench 1 is studied in the next phase of the project when other similar finds might be recovered.

10 Sources

British Geological Survey, 1990, Mid Wales and Marches, 1:250 000, sheet 52N 04W, Solid Edition

Ordnance Survey Landranger 127, Stafford, Telford and surrounding area, scale 1:50,000, 1988

Ordnance Survey County Series maps 1st, 2nd and revised editions, 1881, 1904 and 1923

Meeson, B, 2003, St Thomas' Priory, Hopton and Coton, revised archaeological assessment

Wilkinson, D, 2000, Watching Brief, St Thomas Mill Farm, Baswich Lane, Stafford. Stafford Borough Council Archaeology Section Report No. 17

11 The archive

The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to the Potteries Museum, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent: accession number 2003.LH.43. The Marches Archaeology site code is STP03A.

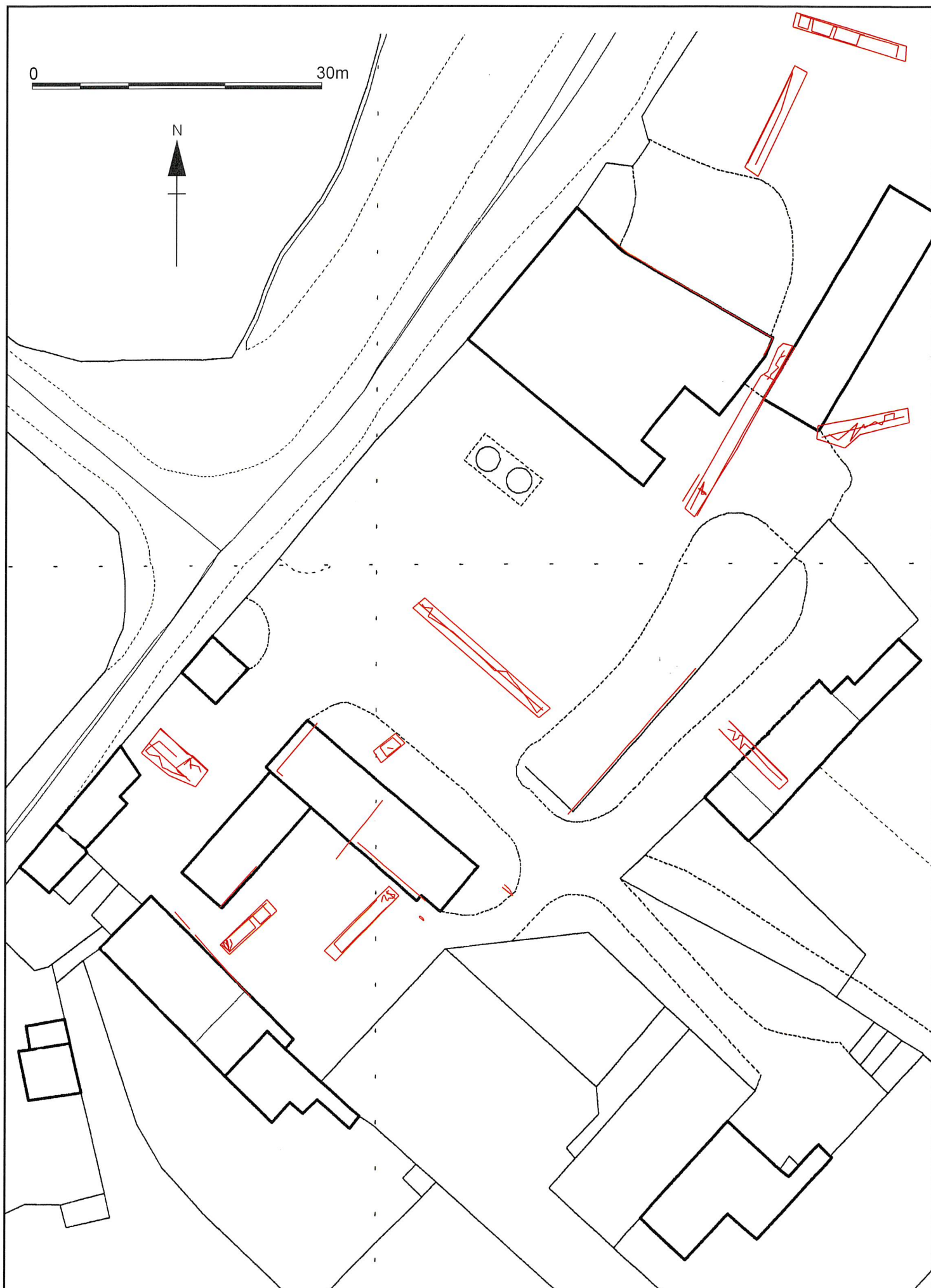
The archive consists of:

132	context sheets		
9	trench sheets		
1	drawing index sheets		
30	field drawings on 13 sheets		
1	sheet of levels		
2	sheets survey notes		
3	sheets site diary and notes		
14	finds sheets		
1	sheet small finds index		
2	small find record sheets		
6	photo record sheets		
4	films of black and white photographic negatives		
2	films of colour photographic transparencies		
1	box of finds:		
	Context 107	2 pot sherds 1 roof tile fragment 1 nail 4 pieces of animal bone 21 sherds of window glass	16th-mid 17th century medieval? post-medieval post-medieval medieval
	Context 134	2 pot sherds	13th-15th century
	Context 203	2 pot sherds	c.1840s/50s
	Context 208	3 pot sherds	late 18th/early 19th century
		1 piece of roof tile	medieval?
		2 sherds vessel glass	post-medieval
	Context 212	1 worked stone	medieval
	Trench 3, unstratified	1 pot sherd	late 18th/19th century
	Context 303	4 pot sherds	mid 17th-late 18th century
		1 ridge tile	medieval
		2 pieces roof tile	medieval?
	Context 305	4 pot sherds	late 17th-late 18th century
		2 pieces roof tile	medieval?
		1 piece animal bone	post-medieval
	Context 307	2 pot sherds	late 18th/19th century
	Context 308	1 animal bone	post-medieval
	Context 309	3 pieces roof tile	medieval?
		1 piece brick	post-medieval

Context 811	1 animal bone	post-medieval
Context 925	1 piece of wood	post-medieval
	3 pot sherds	16th century
	3 pieces roof tile	medieval?
	2 animal bones	post-medieval
Context 1003	1 pot sherd	16th-mid 17th century
	2 roof tiles	medieval?

Appendix I

Plan showing error in overlaying total station survey on OS base map



Appendix I: Plan showing error in overlaying total station survey on OS base map
(red indicates total station survey)

Appendix II

List of contexts

Context	Trench	Description	Interpretation
101	T1	Dark grey loam with brick rubble	Topsoil and rubble south of building C
102	T1	3 sandstone blocks placed to create straight N edge.	Probably kerb related to 102. Could have formed edge of stone surface.
103	T1	Line of stones set on edge.	Path kerb south of building C
104	T1	Floor composed of various types of brick	Floor of building C
105	T1	Clean brown sand	Levelling for floor 104
106	T1	Red-brown sand with rubble	Make-up layer for floor of building C
107	T1	Dark grey silty sand, with tile fragments	Rubbly deposit built up around drain 108
108	T1	Stone drain	Stone drain
109	T1	Red-brown silty sand.	Fill of drain 108
110	T1	Red-brown silty sand with brick and tile frags. and sandstone pieces.	Sandy deposit with tile, possibly part of general layer over much of site
111	T1	Red-brown silty sand with brick and tile frags. and sandstone pieces.	Sandy deposit with tile, possibly part of general layer over much of site
112	T1	Brown silty sand	Fill of 113
113	T1	Small cut in N end of trench	Recent cut, pit or pipe trench?
114	T1	Strong red-brown coarse sand and gravel	Probably natural
115	T1	Large square post with smaller adjacent post	Part of building C, in line with door in N side of building C.
116	T1	Dark brown silty sand with rubble	Build-up of rubble and soil S of building C
117	T1	Dark brown silty sand with gravel	Possible remains of path
118	T1	Roughly laid sandstone in friable mortar	Threshold to building C
119	T1	Dark grey loam with rubble	Topsoil and rubble
120	T1	Dark brown sandy loam	Topsoil buried under 119
121	T1	Layer of clinker and cinders	Support for 127
122	T1	Orange sand and gravel between 127 and 128	Remains of path
123	T1	Dark brown silty sand	Remains of old soil layer
124	T1	Dark brown silty sand with bricks	Made-up ground
125	T1	Brown silty sand	Possible remains of old soil layer
126	T1	Orange sand and gravel	Natural
127	T1	Rough kerb of red and yellow sandstone	Path kerb
128	T1	Rough kerb of yellow sandstone	Path kerb
129	T1	Topsoil with rubble and plastic	Modern dump
130	T1	Dark brown sandy loam	Buried topsoil
131	T1	Red-brown sand and gravel	Gravel dump, made-up ground
132	T1	Layer of sandstone pieces	Possible surface
133	T1	2 sandstone blocks set in line	Possible kerb to surface
134	T1	Red-brown sands and gravels	Possibly natural
201	T2	Floor composed of bricks	Current floor of building B

Context	Trench	Description	Interpretation
202	T2	Red-brown silty sand and gravel	Levelling layer under brick floor 201
203	T2	Dark greyish black silty sand	Accumulation of debris within structure 204
204	T2	Brick cellar structure composed of context 205	Brick structure
205	T2	Red machine made bricks composing structure 204	Brick structure
206	T2	Composed of context 207	Brick floor
207	T2	Machine made red bricks composing floor 206	Brick floor
208	T2	Dark greyish brown silty sand with brick and tile	Demolition layer
209	T2	Composed of 210	Heavily eroded possible floor
210	T2	Bright red hand-made bricks composing possible floor 209	Floor ?
211	T2	Composed of 212	Medieval stone floor
212	T2	Stone slabs and occasional cobbles composing floor 211	Medieval stone floor
213	T2	Rotted red sandstone	Bedrock?
301	T3	Dark grey loam with rubble	Topsoil and rubble
302	T3	Red brown sand with some sandstone, gravel and lenses of lime mortar	Recent yard surfaces
303	T3	Brown sand with tile and other rubble	Made-up ground, possibly part of general layer over this part of site
304	T3	Well built stone wall.	Wall of building near road
305	T3	Cobbled surface made of river pebbles	Cobbled surface
306	T3	Line of undressed sandstone blocks	Wall foundation?
307	T3	Brown silty sand with mortar frags.	Mortar rich deposit over wall 304
308	T3	Brown sand and gravel	Dump of sand and gravel
309	T3	Brown sand with brick and tile frags.	Made-up ground
401	T4	Dark greyish brown deposit with organic matter and modern debris	Floor of building H
402	T4	Brownish grey silty sand	Fill of 403
403	T4	Straight sided cut	Modern cut, possibly related to construction of building H
404	T4	Dark grey brown silty sand with animal bone	Fill of 405
405	T4	Cut of possible pit. Cuts through 410 so probably modern	Possible pit
406	T4	Grey brown silty sand	Fill of 409
407	T4	Redeposited natural sand	Fill of 409
408	T4	Dark grey silty sand	Fill of 409
409	T4	Cut of large pit, cutting redeposited natural so probably recent	Large pit
410	T4	Grey brown silty sand.	Redeposited natural sand, or old soil horizon
411	T4	Grey brown silty sand. Silting within 415	Fill of 415
412	T4	Brown silty sand with some tile frags.	Fill of 415
413	T4	grey brown silty sand with frequent stones and tile	Fill of 415
414	T4	Sandstone pieces in red clay forming 2 sides and base of structure	Possible robbed out wall or lining for crude drain

Context	Trench	Description	Interpretation
415	T4	Vertically sided cut	Cut for clay drain?
416	T4	Fine red-brown fluvio-glacial sand	Natural
501	T5	Brown silty sand	Overburden
502	T5	Brown silty sand with brick rubble	Dumped rubble
503	T5	Floor made of brick sets, now rather disturbed and uneven	Floor
504	T5	Brown silty sand with gravel	Deposit under building
505	T5	Brick wall composed of red machine made bricks	Brick wall
506	T5	White concrete floor	Floor
507	T5	Concrete floor with fine surface	Floor
508	T5	Wall composed of bricks, breeze blocks and sandstone	Wall
509	T5	Concrete floor associated with wall 508	Floor
510	T5	Loose brick and stone rubble	Very recent rubble
511	T5	Compact red-purple sand	Rotted red sandstone bedrock
601	T6	Concrete	Modern concrete surface and platform for building K
602	T6	Dark grey loam with brick rubble	Made-up ground
603	T6	Red brick building set on concrete foundations	Brick building
604	T6	Red brick building set on concrete foundations	Brick building
605	T6	Brown sand	Natural alluvium/colluvium?
606	T6	Yellow brown soft sand	Natural sand
607	T6	Wall built of rough sandstone blocks	Stone wall
608	T6	Brown silty sand with some brick	Made-up ground
609	T6	Dark grey silty sand	Old soil deposit
610	T6	Red-brown sand and gravel	Natural gravel
611	T6	Postulated terracing event to provide foundation for wall 607	Wall foundation cut?
612	T6	Brick wall at slight angle to 603	Earlier phase of brick building?
613	T6	Dark grey brown sand	Disturbed layer below 603/604
701	T7	Dark grey silty sand with brick rubble	Made-up ground
702	T7	Dark grey sandy loam	Buried soil deposit
703	T7	Orange-brown sand. Lense within 702	Dump of sand
704	T7	Brown sand and gravel	Dump of sand and gravel
705	T7	Pale brown sand	Pond deposit
706	T7	Grey sandy silt	Waterlogged pond deposit
707	T7	Grey sandy silt	Waterlogged pond deposit
708	T7	Pale brown sand	Pond deposit
709	T7	Grey sandy silt	Waterlogged pond deposit
801	T8	Dark grey loam	Topsoil
802	T8	Dark grey silty sand with brick rubble	Made-up ground
803	T8	Dark grey sandy loam	Buried soil deposit
804	T8	Red-brown clay with fragments of mudstone	Dump of clay
805	T8	Dark grey silty sand with 10% gravel	Buried soil horizon

Context	Trench	Description	Interpretation
806	T8	Brown sand around ceramic drainage pipe	Fill of 807
807	T8	Steep sided cut	Pipe trench
808	T8	Brown silty sand	Upper layer of sand and gravel dump
809	T8	Red-brown sand and gravel	Dumped sand and gravel
810	T8	Grey sandy silt	Waterlogged pond deposit
811	T8	Pale brown sand with lenses of dark grey silt	Pond deposits
812	T8	Dark grey silt with bands of pale sand	Pond deposits
813	T8	Pale brown sand	Pond deposit
901	T9	Grey loose gravel	Road surface
902	T9	Red scree and hardcore	Road surface, part of 901
903	T9	Pale yellow gravel	Road surface, part of 901
904	T9	Orange sand	Levelling deposit for road
905	T9	Grey silt with pebbles	Made-up ground
906	T9	Brown silt with pebbles	Topsoil
907	T9	Red sandy grit	Recent levelling deposit
908	T9	Pale scree	Recent levelling deposit
909	T9	Dark grey sandy loam	Previous topsoil
910	T9	Orange sand	Levelling deposit
911	T9	Brown sand and pebbles with brick and tile	Modern layer
912	T9	Drain with brick sides and base. Stone capping at NW end, brick arch at SE end	Drain
913	T9	Brown silty loam	Fill between cut and drain
914	T9	Steep sided linear cut	Cut for drain
915	T9	Yellow sand	Modern layer
916	T9	Firm, red sand, rotted sandstone?	Natural, bedrock?
917	T9	Loose orange sand	Possible natural
918	T9	Orange and grey sands with brick and tile containing iron post and tops of 2 saddle stones.	Recent dump
919	T9	Yellow compact sand with pebbles	Layer
920	T9	brown silty clay	Layer
921	T9	Wall built of red and yellow sandstone.	Stone wall
922	T9	Wall built of red and yellow sandstone.	Stone wall
923	T9	Brown sand with pebbles	Layer between walls 921 and 922
924	T9	Brown loam with pebbles and 2 land drains	Fill round land drains
925	T9	Red-brown sand and pebbles with post-medieval pottery	Made-up ground, part of general layer over site?
926	T9	Loose, pale brown sand	Natural sand?
927	T9	Red-brown sand and gravel	Natural sand and gravel
928	T9	Pale grey compact sand	Road make-up layer
929	T9	Irregular sandstone blocks in line	Possible wall
930	T9	Irregular sandstone blocks in line	Possible wall
931	T9	Loose gravel and silts	Fill of drain 912

Context	Trench	Description	Interpretation
932	T9	Orange and grey sands with brick and tile, indistinguishable from layer 918 but under 929 and 930	Dumped layer?
933	T9	Brown sand and gravel	Levelling deposit
934	T9	Poorly defined cut	Cut for robbing NW end of drain 912
1001	T10	Dark brown silty sand with tiles and stone	Recent bank against building B
1002	T10	Dark brown silty sand with coal and charcoal	Build-up of soil?
1003	T10	Brown silty sand with 70% crushed roof tile	Dump of rubble, mainly tiles
1004	T10	Dark brown slightly clayey sand with some rubble	Lower made-up ground deposit
1005	T10	Well built wall of red and yellow sandstone with ashlar face and rubble and mortar core	Medieval wall
1006	T10	Soft dark brown sand	Trample layer on top of natural
1007	T10	Soft yellow-brown sand	Natural sand
1008	T10	Red-brown clay	Thin clay deposit, surface??
1009	T10	Line of sandstone blocks	Possible floor surface

Appendix III

Ceramic finds from St. Thomas' Priory, Staffordshire

by Jonathan Goodwin

Ceramic finds from St. Thomas' Priory, Staffordshire

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A small group of sherds excavated from the site of St. Thomas' Priory, Staffordshire was submitted by Marches Archaeology to Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology service for identification and dating. The assemblage comprised twenty-four ceramic vessel sherds from nine contexts and one unstratified group. An additional ceramic roof tile sherd was also submitted and is listed separately from the vessel sherds.

2.0 List of finds

2.1 Ceramic vessels: The finds have been listed below by context with fabric/ware type, vessel type and date indicated.

Context	Fabric/ware type	No sherds	Vessel type	Date	Notes
107	Cistercian ware	1	Cup	16 th -mid 17 th century	
	Cistercian ware	1	Cup	16 th -mid 17 th century	
134	Midlands white ware	2 (conj.)	Jug?	13 th -15 th century	Traces of green glaze
203	Under-glaze transfer-printed earthenware	3 (conj.)	Platter	mid 19 th -century (c.1840s/50s)	'Willow' design
208	Creamware	2 (conj.)	Flat-bottomed dish	Late 18 th /early 19 th century (c.1780-1820)	
	Coarse earthenware?	1	Bowl/chamber pot	Late 18 th /early 19 th century	
303	Coarse earthenware	1	Pan	Late 18 th /19 th century	
	Coarse earthenware	1	Pan/dish	Late 17 th century/early 18 th century	
	Blackware	1	Cup?	mid-late 17 th century	
305	Mottled ware	3	Porringer/bowl?	Late 17 th -late 18 th century	
	Coarse earthenware	1	Pan	Late 18 th /19 th century	
307	Coarse earthenware	1	Jar	Late 18 th /19 th century	
	Coarse earthenware	1	Pan	Late 18 th /19 th century	
925	Midlands Purple ware	3 (conj.)	Jar	16 th century	
1003	Cistercian ware	1	Jug?	16 th -mid 17 th century	
Trench 3 u/s	Coarse earthenware	1	Pan	Late 18 th /19 th century	

(conj. = conjoining)

2.2 Ceramic building materials

Context	description	No of fragments	date	notes
303	Ridge tile	1	medieval	Green glaze present

3.0 Conclusions

3.1 The assemblage comprises a fairly narrow range of ware types, all of which could easily be the products of the north Staffordshire Potteries. The wares cover a wide date range from the 13th to the 19th centuries, although most of the sherds can be placed within the period 1600-1850. All is domestic waste, with a bias towards the coarsewares.

4.0 Acknowledgements

4.1 The examination and dating of the finds was undertaken by Jonathan Goodwin, Assistant Archaeologist, Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology Service.

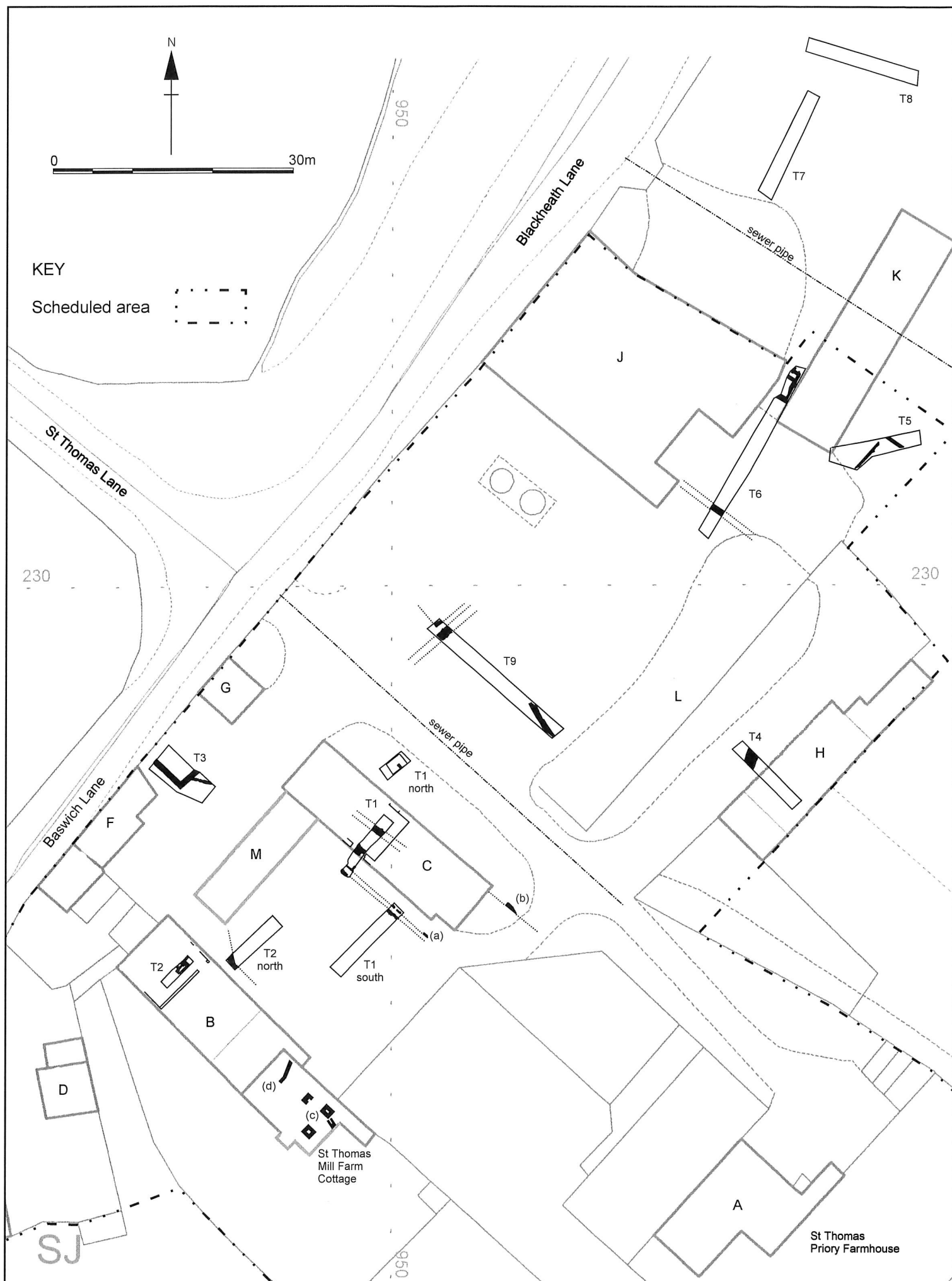


Fig. 2: Plan of site showing location of trenches

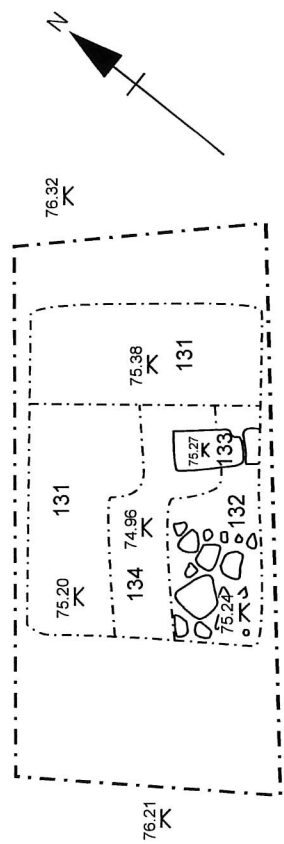


Fig. 3: Plan of trench 1 north

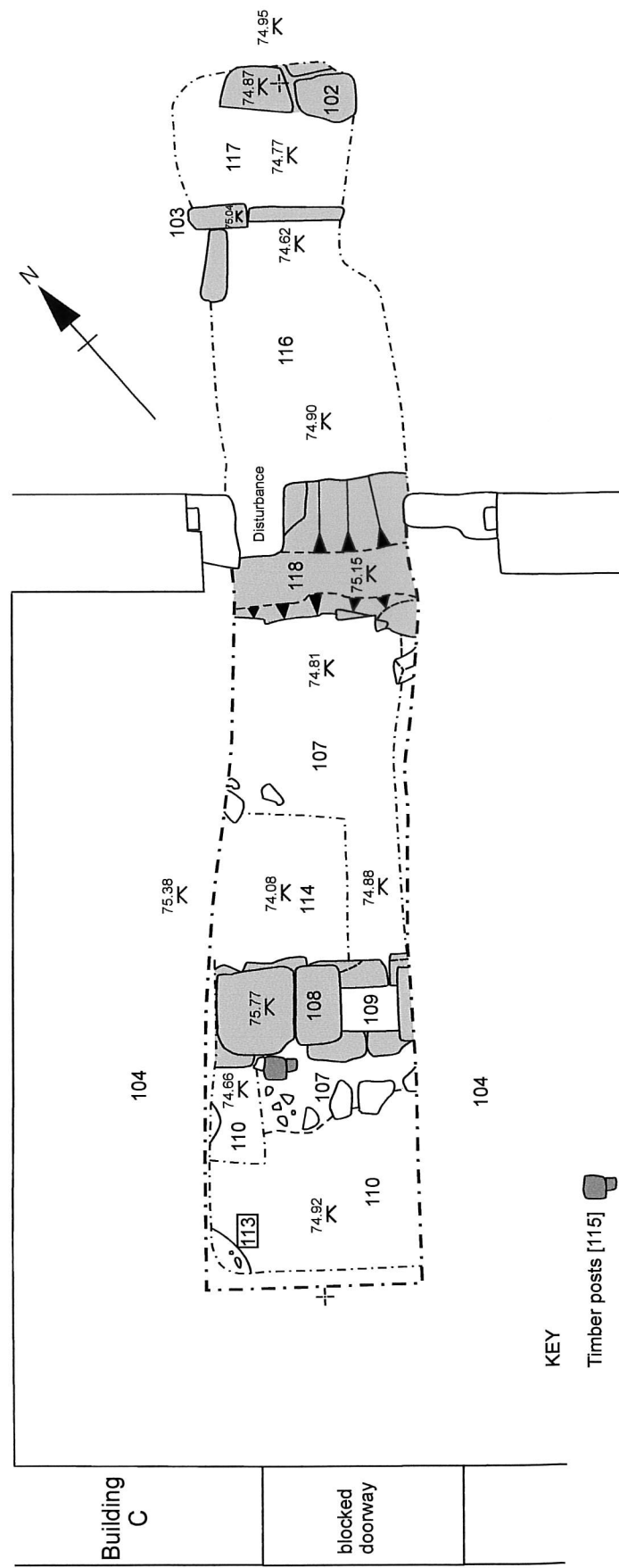


Fig. 4: Plan of trench 1 in building C

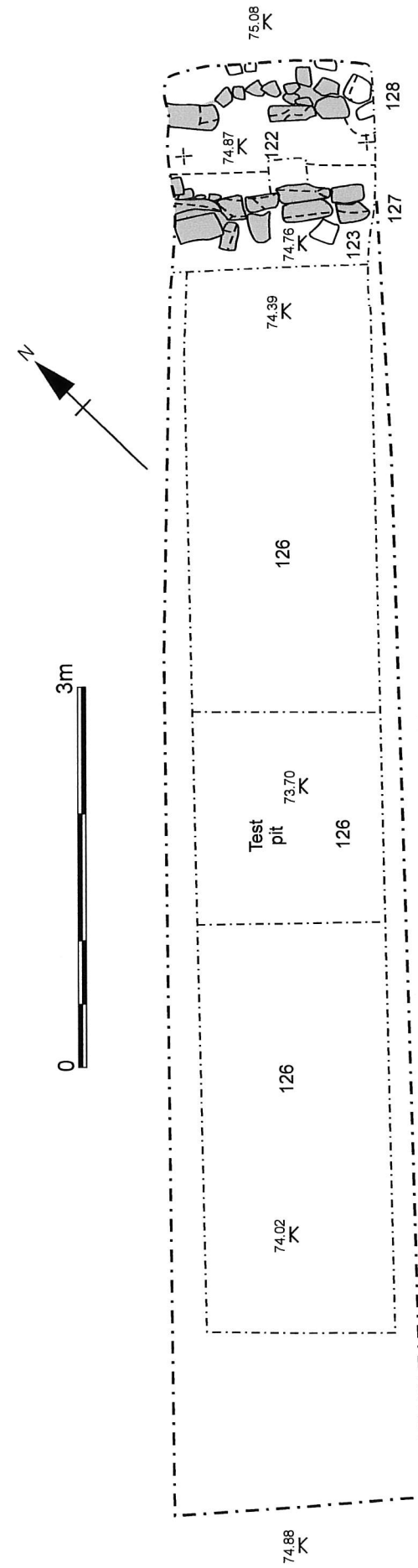


Fig. 5: Plan of trench 1 south

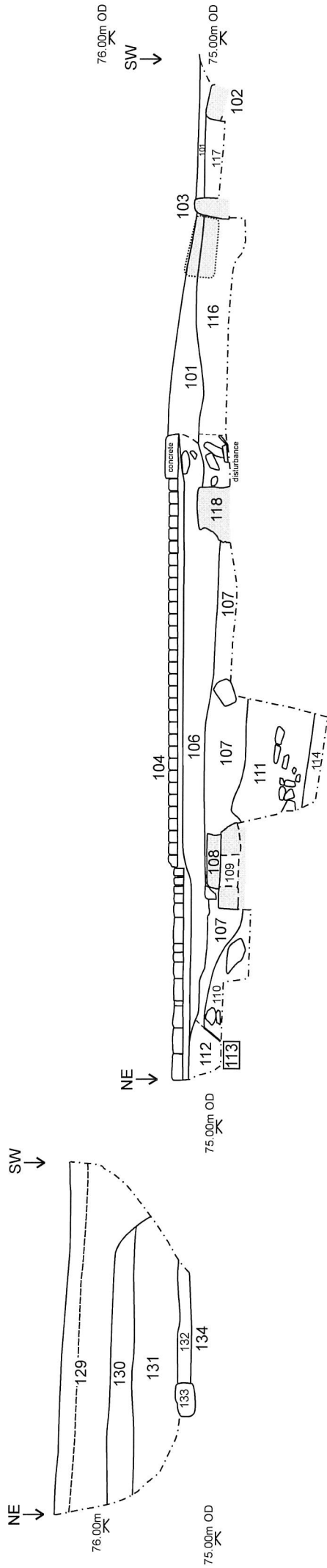


Fig. 6: North-west facing section of trench 1 north

Fig. 7: North-west facing section of trench 1 in building C

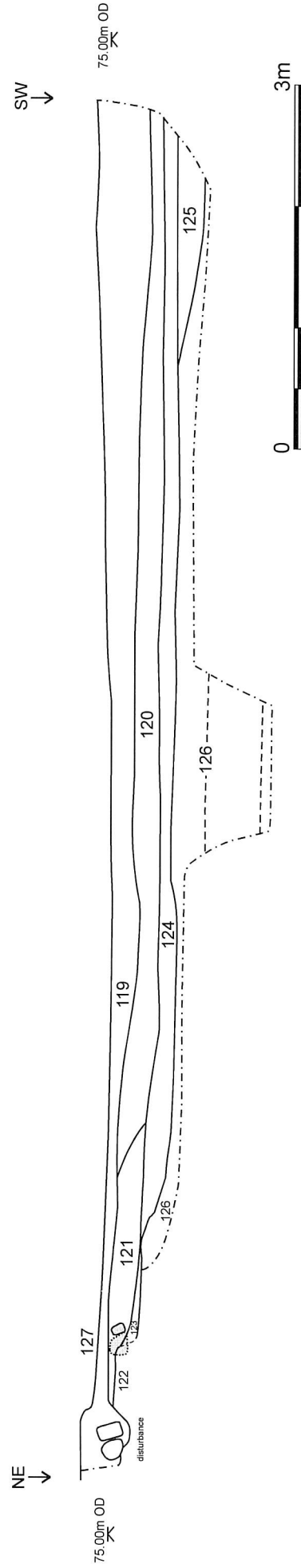


Fig. 8: North-west facing section of trench 1 south

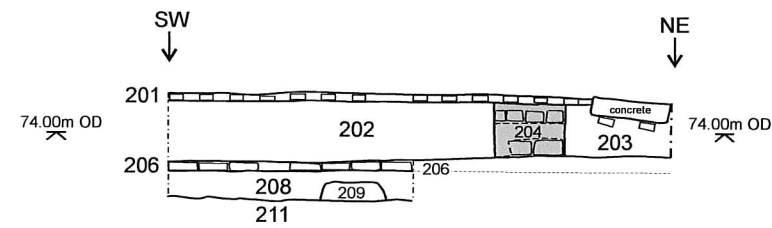


Fig. 9: South-east facing section of trench 2 in building B

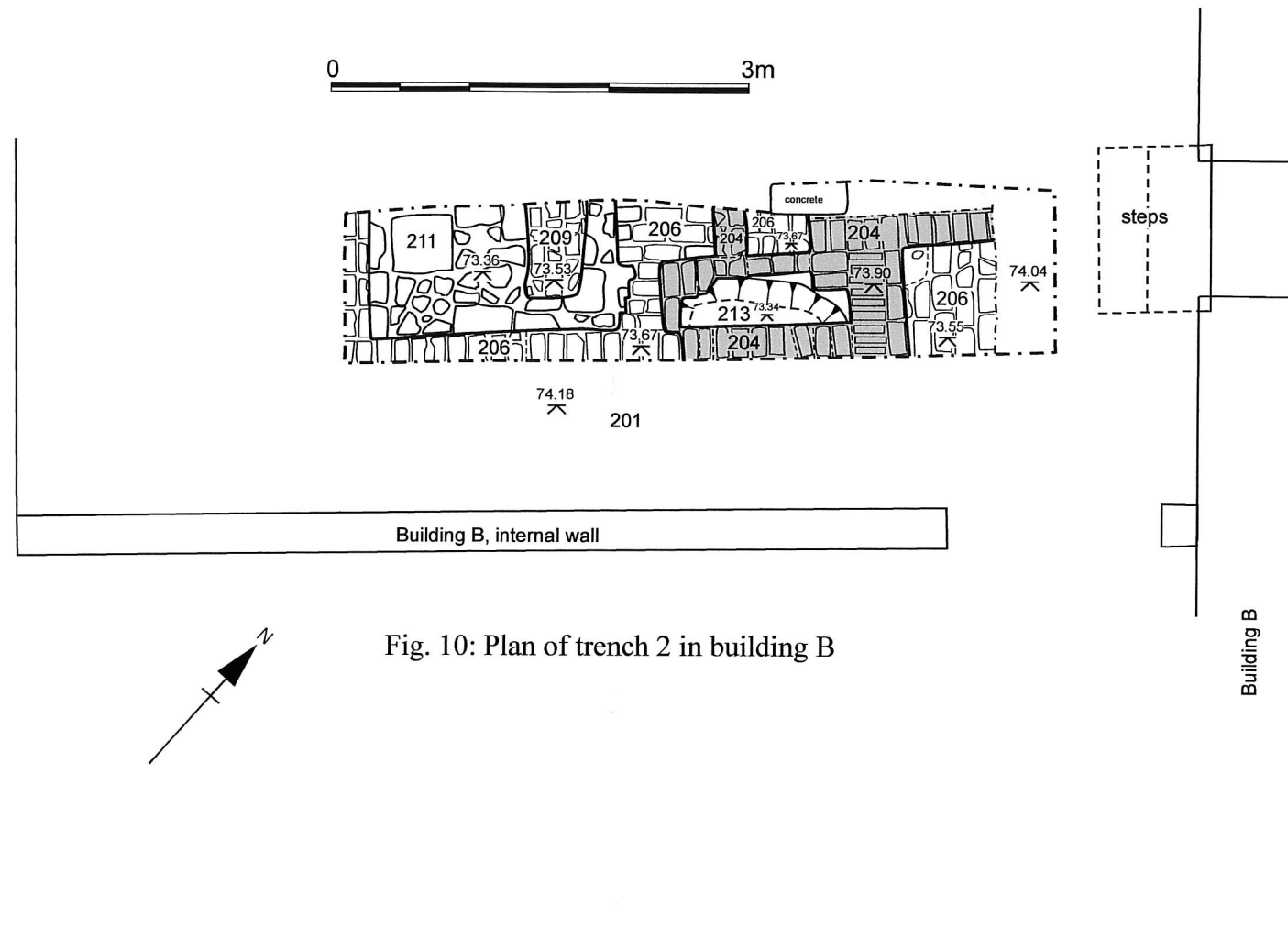


Fig. 10: Plan of trench 2 in building B

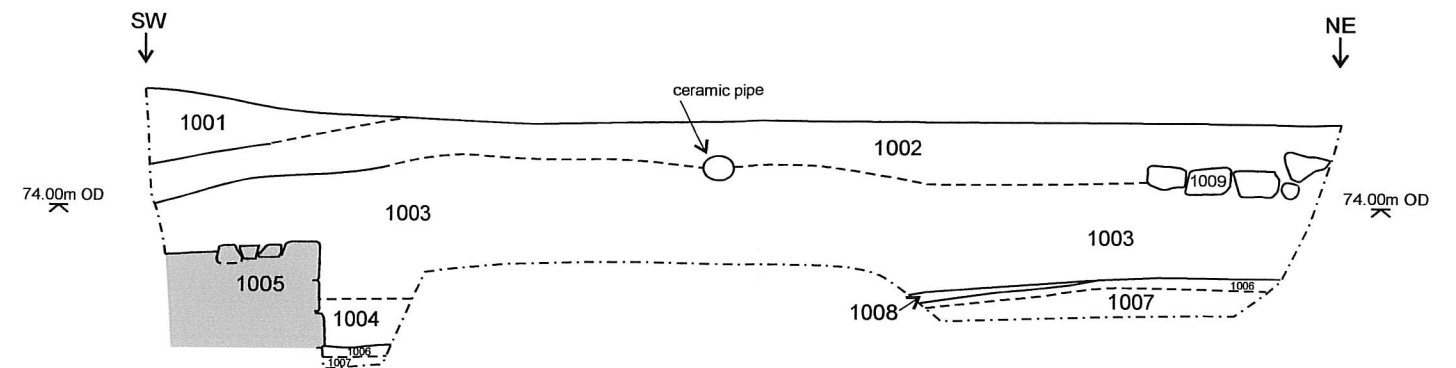


Fig. 11: South-east facing section of trench 2 north

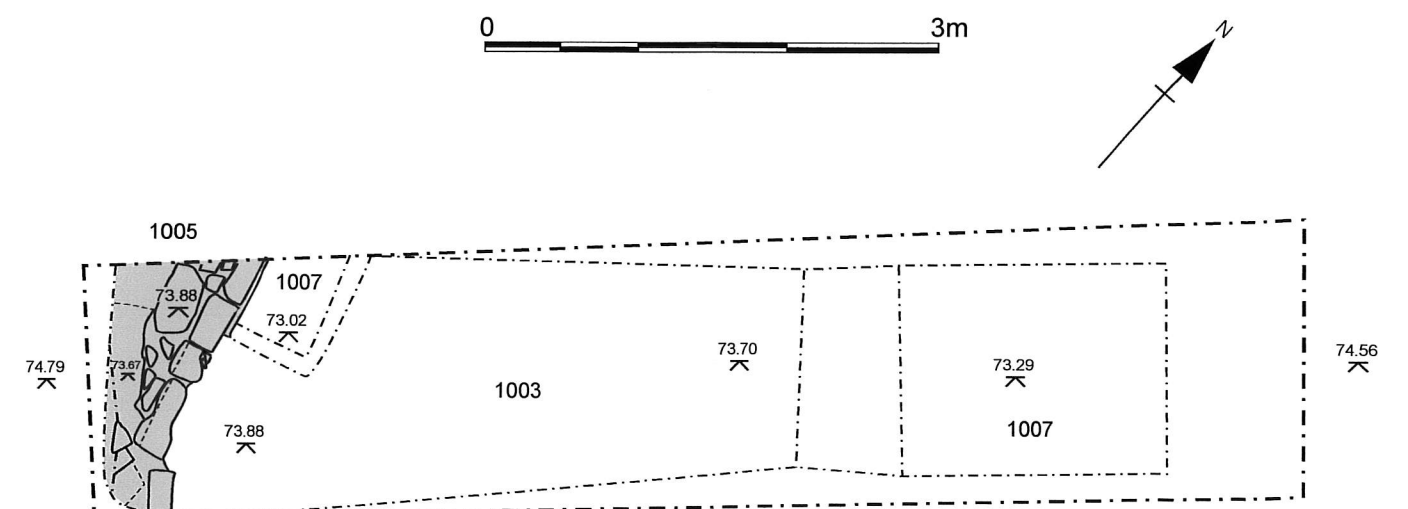


Fig. 12: Plan of trench 2 north

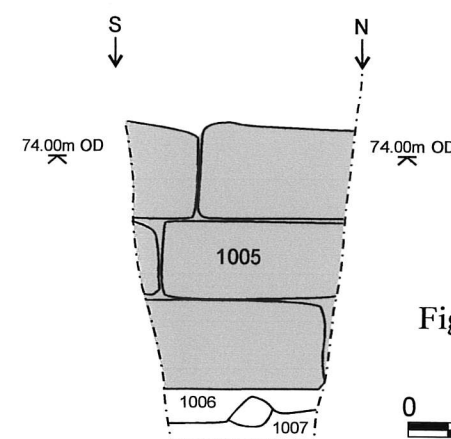


Fig. 13: East facing elevation of wall [1005]

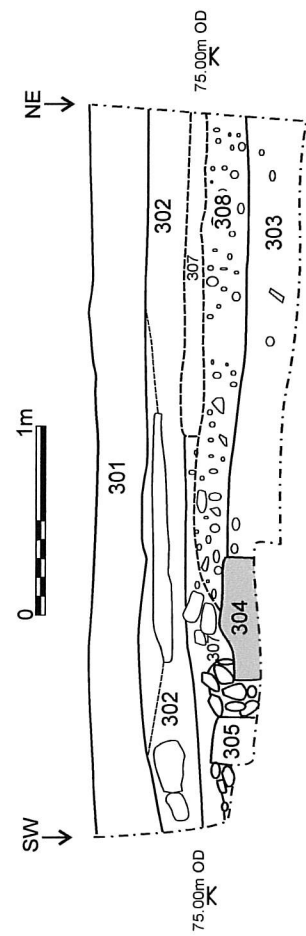


Fig. 14: South-east facing section of trench 3

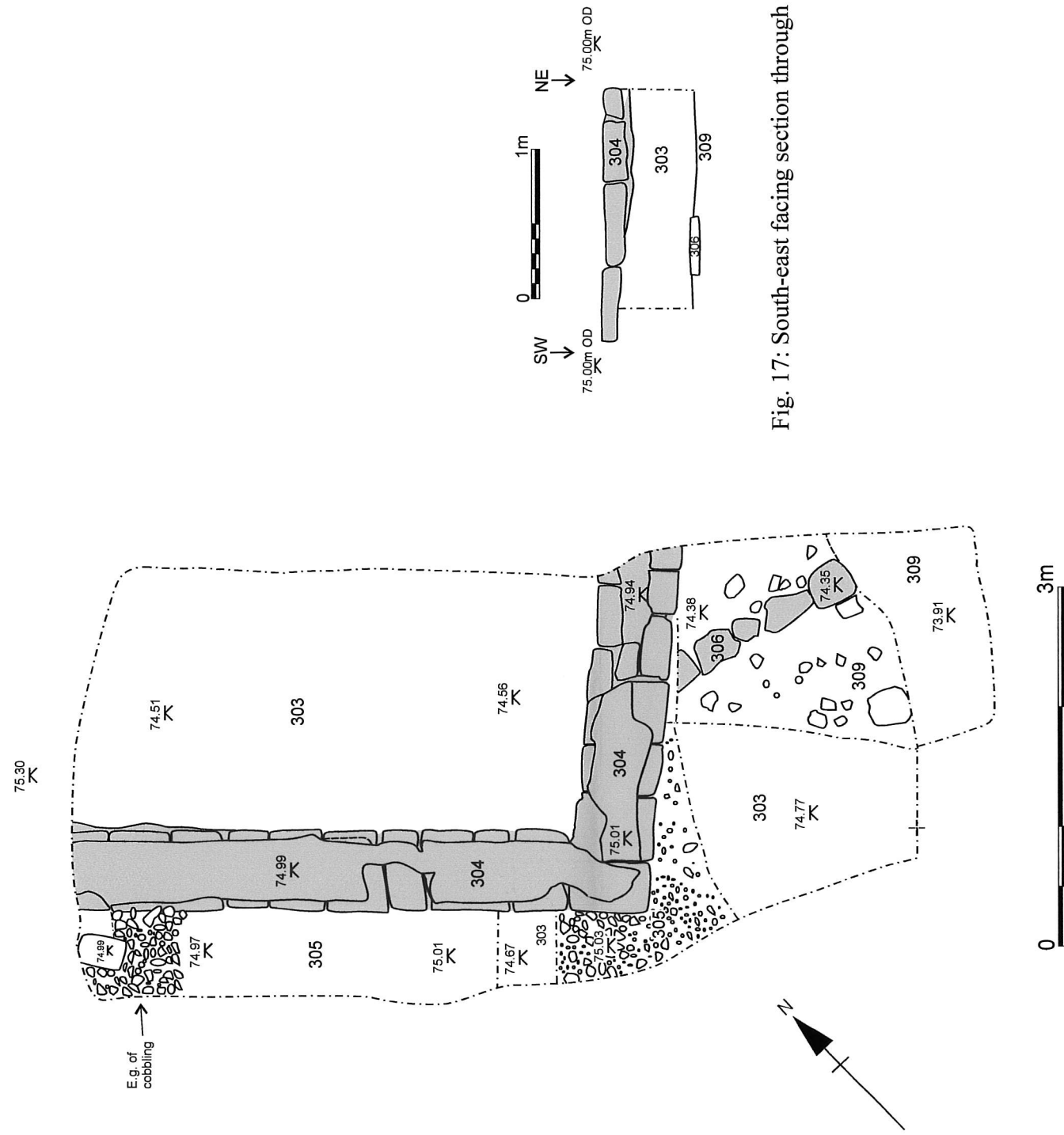


Fig. 17: South-east facing section through wall [304] and [306]

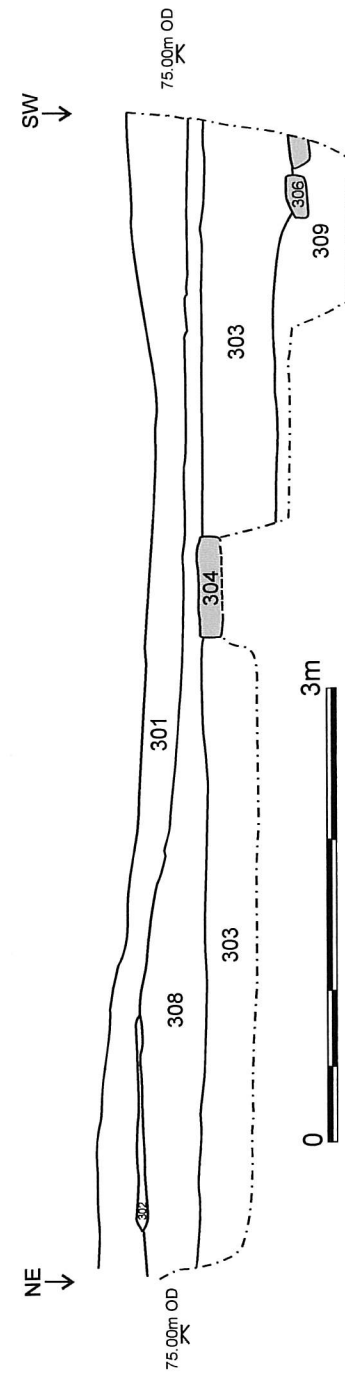
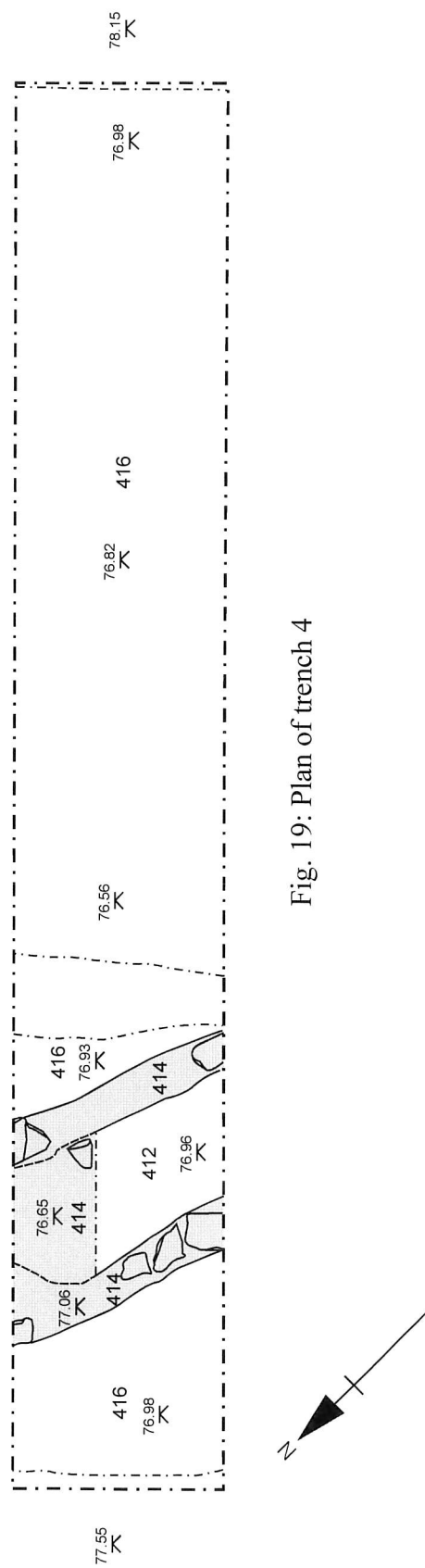
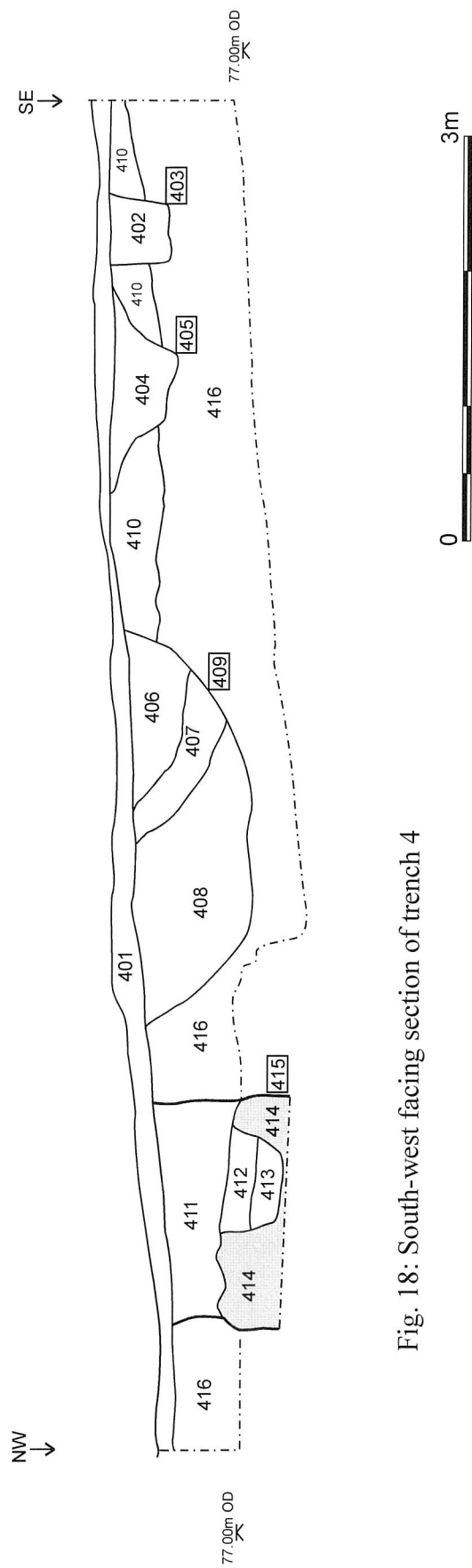


Fig. 16: North-west facing section of trench 3



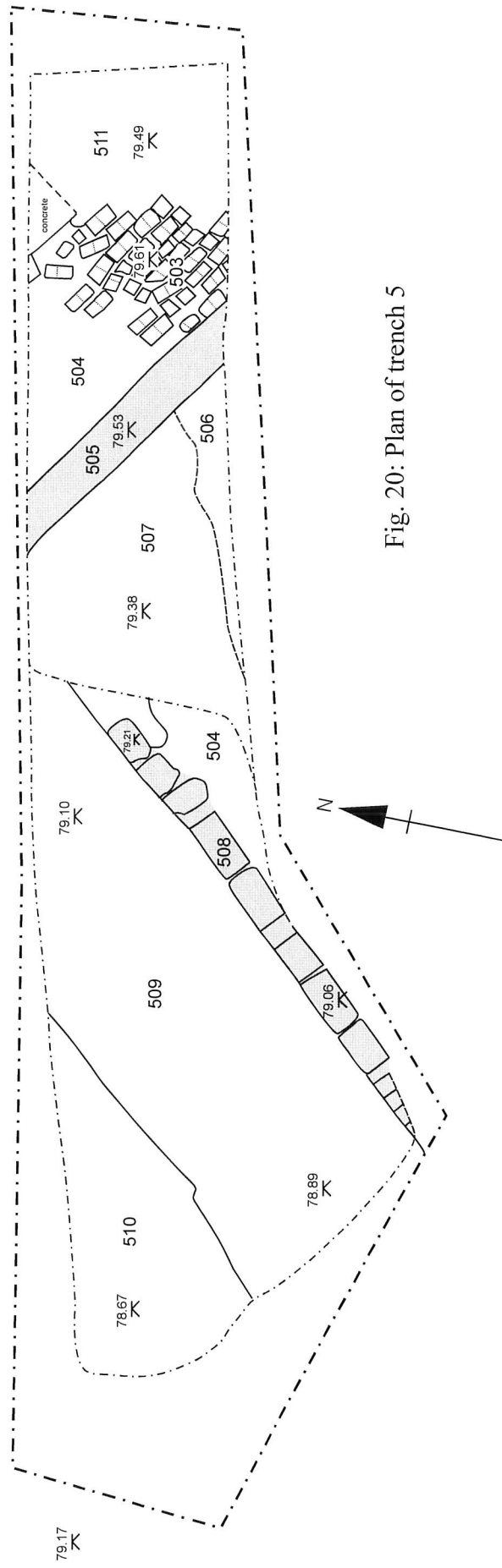


Fig. 20: Plan of trench 5

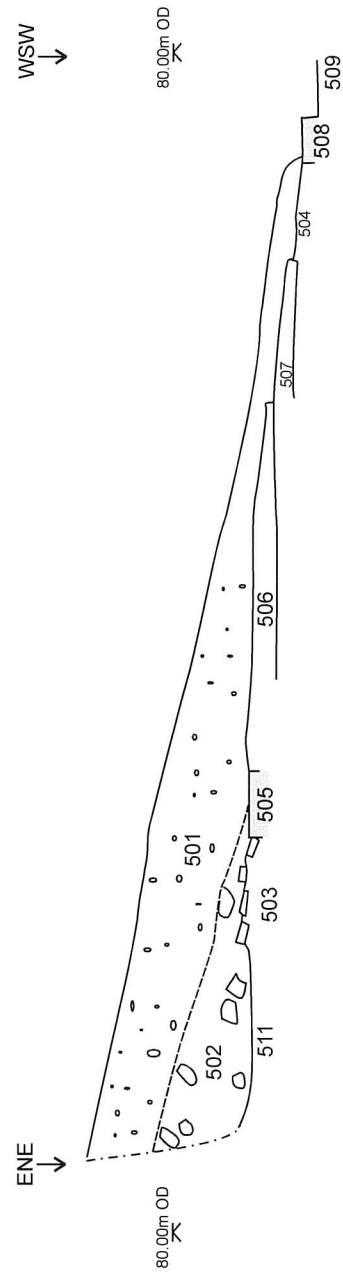


Fig. 21: North-north-west facing section of trench 5

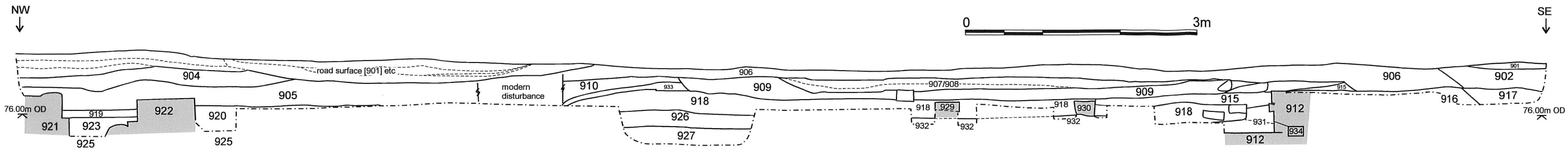


Fig. 30: South-west facing section of trench 9

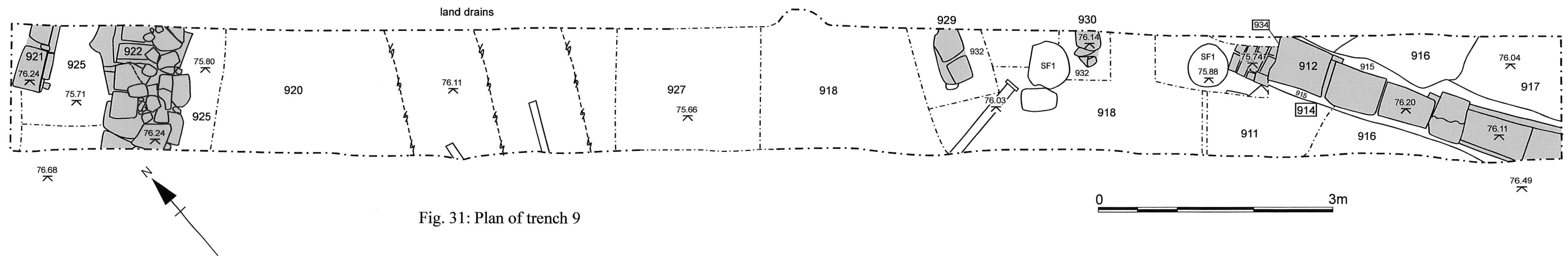


Fig. 31: Plan of trench 9

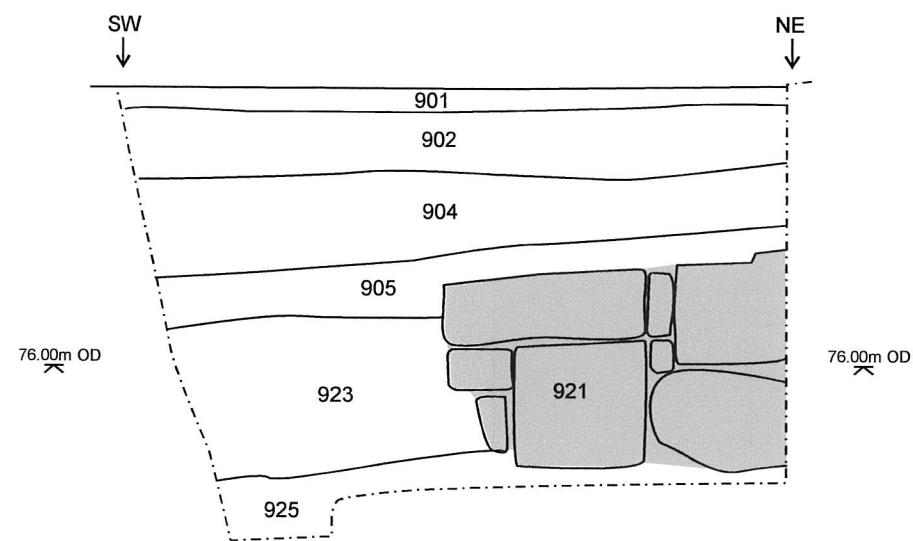


Fig. 32: South-east facing elevation of wall [921]

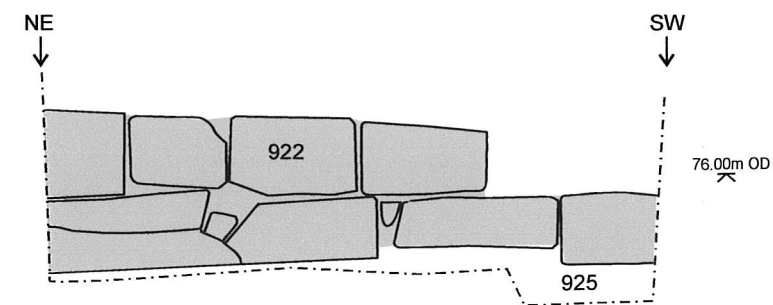


Fig. 33: North-west facing elevation of wall [922]

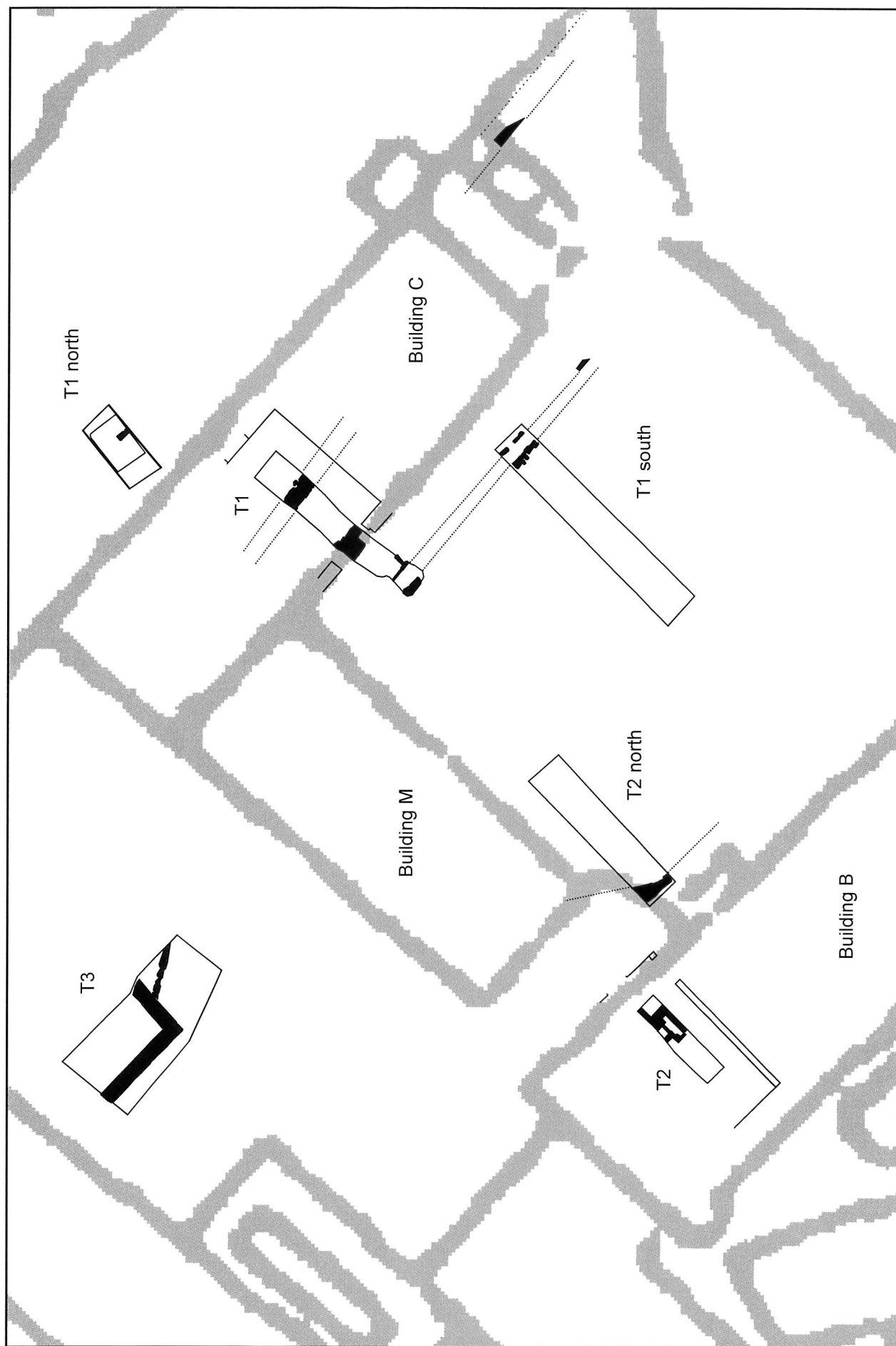


Fig. 34: 1881 OS map overlaid on evaluation trenches 1 to 3

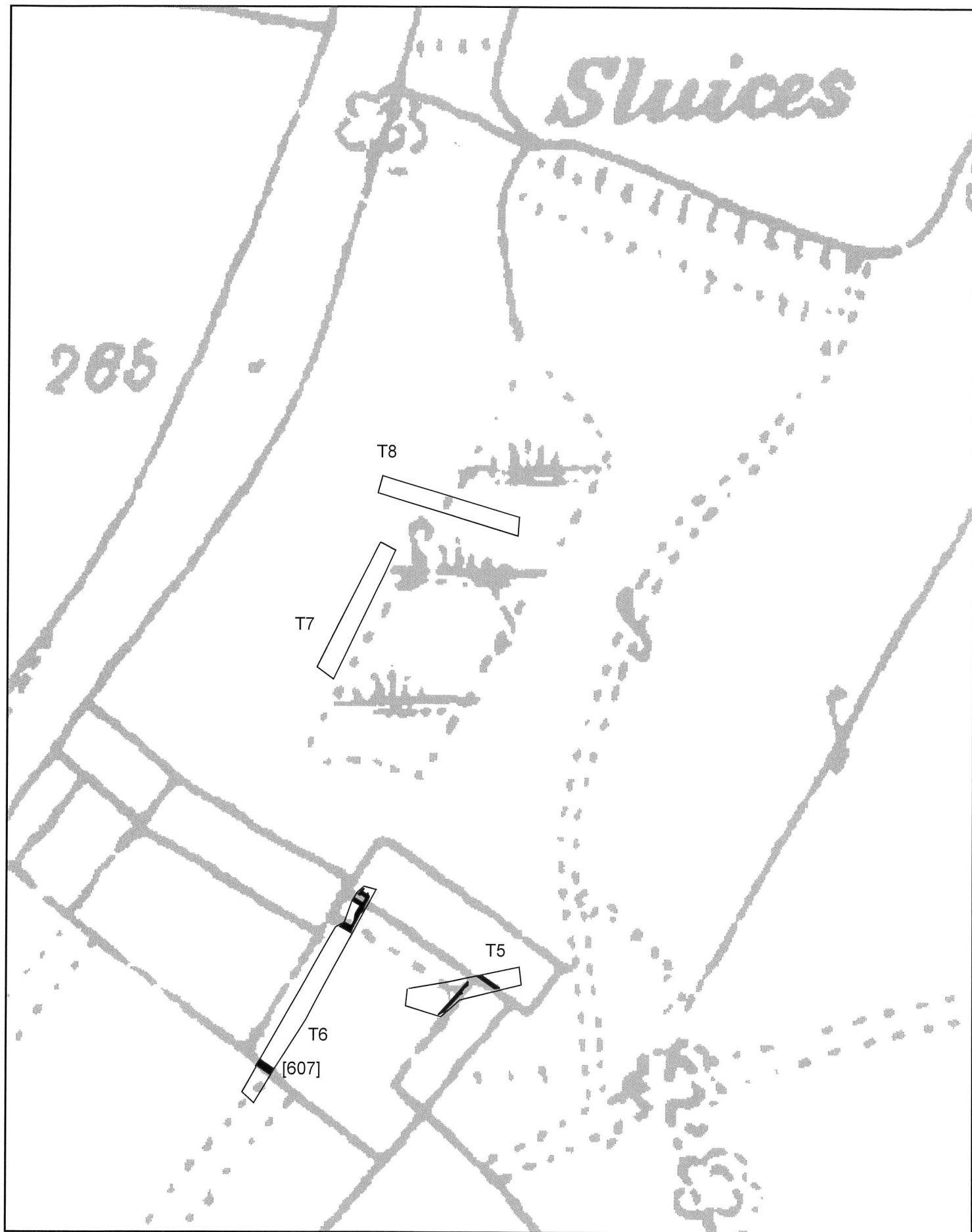


Fig. 35: 1881 OS map overlaid on evaluation trenches 5 to 8