

Archaeological Evaluation
of land at
MARSH HOUSE,
NO.11 MARSH STREET, BRISTOL.
for
Lace Market Properties



Report No. 1466/2005
BUAD No. 4221



Bristol and Region Archaeological Services

Archaeological Evaluation
of land at
MARSH HOUSE,
NO.11 MARSH STREET, BRISTOL.

Centred on
N.G.R. ST 58688 72804

Client: Lace Market Properties
Agent: RPS Group

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NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

April, 2005.

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SUMMARY

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services carried out evaluation trenching in the car park to the rear of Marsh House, 11 Marsh Street, Bristol. The area was drained and built on following the diversion of the River Frome in 1240-7. The northern part of the area was removed by basements in the early 20th century, and here a drainage ditch was found which predated occupation on the site. In the southern part of the site archaeological deposits and features survive to a much greater degree. Here the remains of 18th and 19th-century buildings were found, and it is expected that medieval and early post-medieval features and deposits survive beneath them.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services were commissioned by RPS Group on behalf of Lace Market Properties to carry out an archaeological trenching evaluation at Marsh House, 11 Marsh Street, Bristol, in response to an application for development.
- 1.2 The proposed development will entail alterations to the extant building, an extension in the rear courtyard and the reduction in height of the upper car park level; there may be disturbance to the lower car park. The evaluation was therefore focussed on the rear courtyard.
- 1.3 The evaluation area is centred on NGR ST 58688 72804 and bounded to the north and west by Marsh House, to the east by the Telephone Exchange and to the south by Netherton House (**Fig.1**). The ground level in the upper car park is 9.73m aOD, and that in the lower car park is 6.75m aOD in the area of the trench, rising to 7.97m aOD in the southeast corner. The underlying geology is alluvial clays.
- 1.4 The evaluation was carried out from 11th to 15th April 2005, in response to a brief prepared by the City Archaeologist's office and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by BaRAS (BaRAS 2005). Two trenches were sited in the rear courtyard, one on the upper car park level and one on the lower (**Fig.2**).
- 1.5 The archive from the evaluation will be deposited with Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery under the accession number BRSMG 2005/19. A copy of this report will be sent to the National Monuments Record in Swindon.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An archaeological desktop study has been carried out for the site (BaRAS 2004). What follows is a summary of the findings.
- 2.2 Historically the area lay within the parish of St Stephen, until 1958 when St Stephen's was amalgamated with All Saints' and St Nicholas to form Bristol City Parish. It was known as St Stephen's Marsh and was drained and subsequently built on after the diversion of the Frome in 1240-1247.
- 2.3 Marsh Street was in existence by the middle of the 13th century, when it was referred to as "Scadepullestre in the Marsh of St Stephen" or the "Street of St Stephen". The name Marsh Street was in use by 1361, although the street was still being called Skatepulstret in 1376. Smith's map of 1568 shows a stretch of water east and south of the site, which is also shown by Hoefnagle in 1581 and Speed in 1610 (**Fig.3**) but not by Millerd in 1673. The Old English word "scade" refers to a parting or division (P Insole *pers comm*), and the stretch of water may have given the street its original name if it was either a Law Ditch dividing the marsh from the inhabited area, for example, or a division of the river, which survived as a water feature after the diversion.
- 2.4 During the 17th century properties on the east side of Marsh Street are known to have been occupied by mariners, merchants, shipwrights and other craftsmen. The eastern boundary of the site was established by 1742 (**Fig.4**) and the site was largely built up by 1828 (**Fig.5**). The northern boundary was formerly defined by Pinn's Court, a narrow alley that survived until the building of Telephone Avenue and the widening of Marsh Street c1900 (**Fig.6**). The 1927 Goad Fire Insurance plan shows a warehouse on the site, the northern part of which is basemented (**Fig.7**). This basement corresponds to the area of the current lower car park.
- 2.5 The Bristol Urban Archaeological Database records finds of lead bullets near to the site, as well as cannon balls, medieval pottery and clay tobacco pipes. An archaeological evaluation carried out in 2001 at numbers 6-22 Marsh Street found archaeological deposits surviving at a depth of over 3m below the present road level. Fragments of medieval walls have been identified at the junction of Baldwin Street and Telephone Avenue.

3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The objectives of the evaluation were set in the brief prepared by the City Archaeologist's office (Jones 2005). They were:
To provide sufficient information to enable the importance of the surviving archaeology in national and local terms to be assessed and to guide the production of a suitable mitigation strategy
To attempt to determine the degree to which archaeological deposits and features have been disturbed by more recent activity
To attempt to establish the full date range of occupation of the site.
- 3.2 The evaluation did not aim to excavate completely all deposits encountered, but to target specific areas for detailed examination in order to meet the above objectives.
- 3.3 The trenches were opened using a 3-ton tracked excavator and a concrete breaker. They were then cleaned by hand and observed contexts were excavated and recorded using the BaRAS single context recording system. Plans were drawn at 1:20 and sections at 1:10. All contexts were photographed using colour slide and monochrome print films, and digital photography.

4. THE EVALUATION

4.1 Trench 1 (Pl.1, Fig.8)

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 was located in the lower car park, accessed from Telephone Avenue. A depth of up to 0.18m of reinforced concrete was removed, under which was a layer of rubble up to 0.3m thick acting as bedding for the concrete. This directly overlay archaeological features and deposits, and alluvial clays that were present at a height of 6.4m aOD.
- 4.1.2 The earliest feature present was a linear feature running north to south across the trench. Two sections were excavated across it. At its north end a discrete section (109) showed the full profile of the feature (**Pl.2, Fig.9**); at its south end (107) it was truncated by a later pit (105) (**Fig.10**). The two sections produced very few finds, but a small sherd of pottery from 107 has been dated to AD1050-1150.
- 4.1.3 The fills of both sections were extremely clean, with very little charcoal flecking. Apart from the single sherd of pottery mentioned above, the only finds were an oyster shell and a small fragment of animal bone. Samples were taken for assessment of the preservation of pollen, diatoms and forams but the results are not yet available.
- 4.1.4 The pit 105 produced no datable finds, but flecks and small fragments of brick were observed during excavation. These could be intrusive from the rubble layer above. Pit fill 106 did contain animal bone and two small fragments of tap slag; the slag is most likely to have been brought onto site by accident as the quantity is not sufficient to indicate smelting on site. Also undated was a small fragment of Pennant Sandstone floor surface (104) that lay at the west end of the trench, and had been pressed into the alluvium.
- 4.1.5 At the eastern end of the trench a sondage was dug using the machine. This exposed the alluvial clays to a depth of 0.55m. Two different layers were observed in the clays, although the division between them was diffuse and indistinct. The upper layer was predominantly a pale greyish blue with frequent patches of orange oxidation; the lower layer was light greyish brown with much less oxidation present. A column sample was taken for geoarchaeological analysis (**Pl.3, Fig.11**), the results from which are not yet available.

4.2 Trench 2 (Pl.4, Fig.12)

- 4.2.1 Trench 2 was located in the upper car park. A layer of reinforced concrete similar to that in trench 1 was removed, beneath which was a layer of crushed concrete bedding. The presence of a second layer of concrete, much thicker than the upper layer, entailed the reduction of the excavated area by half. Archaeological deposits were encountered beneath the bedding for the second concrete layer.
- 4.2.2 The earliest deposit encountered was 226, which underlay two fragments of possible flagstone floor, at 7.61m aOD. 226 was not fully excavated and no finds were retrieved from it; it consisted of clayey sand and charcoal. Overlying it were 210 and 224, which appeared to be disturbed fragments of the same Pennant Sandstone floor surface. 210 was abutted by wall fragment 209.

- 4.2.3 Wall 209 lay at 7.99m aOD, and formed a corner with an area of flagstone floor (213) to its west and possibly another (210) to its south (**Pl.5**). 209 was constructed of a mixture of stone types, with limestone predominating, bonded with a yellowish sand and lime mortar. Like 210, 213 was of Pennant Sandstone slabs, but was better constructed.
- 4.2.4 The structures were overlain by a series of dumping or levelling layers (**Fig.13**). There was little mixing between the layers, indicating that they were sealed from bioturbation soon after deposition. Pottery retrieved from the most substantial of these layers (207/222) covers a range of dates from the late 17th to the 19th century. The layers also produced animal bone, a few oyster shells and a fragment of slag from smithing.
- 4.2.5 Above the levelling layers was a wall (214) again of mixed stone, bonded with a hard ashy grey sand and lime mortar (**Pl.6, Fig.14**). Probably contemporary with this wall was a Pennant Sandstone flag floor (203), which lay directly beneath the bedding layer 202. After wall 214 went out of use a drain was installed across the top of it; a second drain cut through the levelling layers east of 214 (**Fig.15**).
- 4.2.6 A narrow brick wall was seen running along the northern edge of the trench. This was part of the car park construction and coincided with the edge of one of the concrete slabs. The fill to the north of this wall could be seen in the trench section (**Pl.7**) and consisted of loose brick rubble; this was markedly different from the tightly packed concrete and brick seen south of the wall. This suggests a difference in the underlying deposits and features, and it is possible that the area north of this wall is cellared.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Interpretation

- 5.1.1 The linear feature in trench 1 is interpreted as a drainage ditch, predating occupation in the area, and probably connected with land reclamation following the diversion of the Frome in 1240-47. The single sherd of pottery retrieved from the ditch has been dated to AD1050-1150, at least a century earlier than the diversion of the river, but it is likely to be residual. The cleanliness of the ditch fill is a strong indication that there was little or no occupation in the immediate vicinity, and the ditch appears to have silted up naturally. The rate at which it did so may become apparent from the analysis of soil samples.
- 5.1.2 The remains in trench 2 represent structures of the 18th to 20th centuries. The walls found could not be related to any buildings shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey or other 19th-century maps, and are probably internal walls. They give a clear picture of demolition and levelling raising the ground level with new structures being built above older ones. The range of finds retrieved from the levelling layers is consistent with rubbish from domestic and small industrial premises of the type present on the site before the late 19th to early 20th century.

5.2 Degree of survival

- 5.2.1 The evaluation has shown that archaeological deposits survive in good condition to the rear of Marsh House. The level of survival varies (**Fig.16**) but can be summarised as follows.
- 5.2.2 The highest level of preservation is to be found at the south of the area, around trench 2. Here, levelling deposits for the early 20th-century structures overlie earlier masonry, and it is most likely that earlier deposits survive beneath those observed in the trench. The trench was excavated to 7.61m aOD, which compared with the alluvial layers at 6.4m aOD indicates the survival of approximately 1.2m of archaeological deposits and features below the level reached in the trench.
- 5.2.3 North of trench 2 lies an area of unknown condition. It is possible that this area is cellared, in which case there will be only partial survival of archaeological features and deposits. This is not proved, however, and it should be assumed that there is the same level of preservation as in the area to the south until shown otherwise.
- 5.2.4 The lower car park is the area of least archaeological survival. The alluvial deposits were encountered at 6.4m aOD, between 0.5m and 0.6m lower than at Broad Quay (P Insole *pers. comm.*), indicating truncation well below the upper surface of the alluvium. It can be expected that only the bases of the deepest features would survive here.
- 5.2.5 The degree of preservation of archaeological remains indicates a high potential for clarification of the early development of this part of Bristol city centre.

6. REFERENCES

BaRAS 2004 *Archaeological Desktop Study of land at Marsh House, Marsh Street, Bristol* (Dave Stevens; BaRAS report number 1305/2004)

BaRAS 2005 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation at Marsh House, Marsh Street, Bristol* (privately circulated)

Jones, R H 2005 *Marsh House, 11 Marsh Street, City Centre, Bristol: Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* (privately circulated)

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BaRAS would like to thank Lace Market Properties, RPS Group Ltd and King Sturge for their assistance. Peter Insole monitored the project for the City Archaeologist's office. The evaluation was carried out by Elizabeth Davis, Abby George and Darren Lankstead. Matthew Park of Farmtrac carried out the machining. Dave Stevens surveyed the trench locations. This report was prepared by Elizabeth Davis, with contributions by Reg Jackson. The illustrations were prepared and the report produced by Ann Linge.

APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

NATIONAL POLICIES

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work which would affect a SAM.

DOE PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE

The Planning Policy Guidance of Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16) consolidates advice to planning authorities. The Guidance stresses the non-renewable nature of the archaeological resource, details the role of the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), encourages early consultation with county and district archaeological officers and sets out the requirement for developers to provide sufficient information on the archaeological impact of development to enable a reasonable planning decision to be made.

PPG 16 also indicates the circumstances where further work would be necessary and outlines the use of agreements and conditions to protect the archaeological resource.

DISTRICT POLICY

Bristol City Council Adopted Local Plan Written Statement (1997) states (policy B22):

- (i) There will be a presumption in favour of preserving any archaeological features or sites of national importance, whether scheduled or not.
- (ii) Development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desktop study, and where appropriate a field evaluation. Where there is evidence of archaeological remains, development will not be permitted except where it can be demonstrated that the archaeological features of the site will be satisfactorily preserved in situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals upon important archaeological remains and their settings; or, if this is not possible and the sites are not scheduled or of national importance, provision for adequately recording the site prior to destruction is made, preferably by negotiating a planning agreement to ensure that access, time and financial resources are available to allow essential recording and publication to take place.

APPENDIX 2: Context information

No.	Trench	Description	Dimensions within trench
101	1	Modern concrete	7m x 2m x 0.18
102	1	Bedding for 101; brick & concrete rubble	7m x 2m x 0.3m
103	1	Upper layer of natural alluvial clay	7m x 2m x 0.33m
104	1	Remnant of Pennant flag floor	0.62m x 0.32m
105	1	Rounded cut, near vertical sides, only partly within trench; filled by 106	1.3m x 0.27m x 0.43m
106	1	Fill of 105; mottled silty clay with patches of clayey silt	1.3m x 0.27m x 0.43m
107	1	Linear n-s cut, truncated by 105; filled by 108	0.75m x 1m x 0.35m
108	1	Fill of 107; clean light greyish brown silty clay, rare charcoal flecks	0.75m x 1m x 0.35m
109	1	Linear n-s cut, as 107; filled by 110	0.5m x 0.94m x 0.28m
110	1	Fill of 109: clean light greyish brown silty clay, rare charcoal flecks	0.5m x 0.94m x 0.28m
111	1	Lower layer of natural alluvial clay	Depth >0.25m
201	2	Modern concrete	7m x 2m x 0.09m
202	2	Rubble makeup for 201, also includes underlying concrete layers	7m x 2m x 0.82m
203	2	Pennant flagstone surface below 202	1.3m x 0.7m x 0.09m
204	2	Bedding layer for 203; black sandy clay, frequent mortar flecks and patches	1.56m x 1.31m x 0.24m
205	2	Dump/levelling layer; dark greenish brown silty clay, redeposited natural	1.45m x 0.45m x 0.23m
206	2	Dump/levelling layer; dark reddish brown clayey sand; stone & brick rubble	1.46m x 0.47m x 0.2m
207	2	Dump/levelling layer; loose black clayey sand and charcoal	1.46m x 0.44m x 0.4m
208	2	Dump/levelling layer; firm, mid greyish brown sandy clay; white mortar fragments	0.84m x 0.47m x 0.18m
209	2	Limestone wall, yellow to white sand/lime mortar	0.63m x 0.54m x >0.3m
210	2	Pennant flagstone floor abutted by 209	0.77m x 0.25m x 0.1m
211	2	Cut for modern drain	1.7m x 0.85m x 1.10m
212	2	Fill of 211, includes drainpipe	1.7m x 0.85m x 1.10m
213	2	Pennant flagstone floor abutting 209	0.66m x 0.56m x 0.08m
214	2	Mixed stone wall, n-s; ashy grey sand/lime mortar	1.6m x 0.66m x 0.38m
215	2	As 204, at west end of trench	1.8m x 0.68m x 0.26m
216	2	As 205, at west end of trench	1.8m x 0.87m x 0.28m
217	2	As 206, at west end of trench; not excavated	1.8m x 1m
218	2	Dump of mid brownish grey clay and sand above wall 214	1.6m x 0.46m x 0.26m
No	Trench	Description	Dimensions within trench
219	2	Cut for modern drain above wall 214	1.7m x 0.54m x 0.43m
220	2	Fill of 219, includes drainpipe	1.7m x 0.54m x 0.43m
221	2	Ashy dark grey to black deposit containing mortar; above 214	1.6m x 0.49m x 0.19m
222	2	As 207, running beneath 214	1.6m x 0.42m
223	2	As 208, running beneath 222	1.6m x 0.22m
224	2	Pennant flagstone floor remnant beneath 214	0.7m x 0.16m
225	2	Yellowish brown sand & sand/lime mortar, frequent mixed stone rubble	1.03m x 0.33m
226	2	Very dark brown to black clayey sand and charcoal deposit below 224	0.95m x 0.86m x >0.2m

APPENDIX 3: Finds information

Pottery *By Reg Jackson*

Context	Quantity	Fabric	Date
108	1	Bristol C ware (BPT2)	1050-1150
202	1	English tin-glazed ware (BPT99)	18th century
207	2	Staffs white salt-glazed stoneware (BPT179)	c.1700-1770
207	1	South Somerset (Donyatt) ware (BPT96)	L17th-18th century
222	1	Black glazed earthenware (BPT339)	L18th-19th century

Clay tobacco pipe *By Reg Jackson*

Context 207 4 fragments, not datable

Animal bone

Context	Quantity	Description
106	1	Tibia shaft fragment, ovis
	1	Ulna, distal end, ovis
	1	Vertebra fragment, species unidentified
	1	Rib fragment, species unidentified
	1	Unidentified fragment
110	1	Longbone shaft frag, possibly domestic fowl
	1	Femur, proximal end, unfused, possibly ovis
206	1	Radius shaft fragment, probably ovis
207	1	Tibia shaft fragment, bos
	1	Femur, ovis, juvenile
	4	Fragments, unidentified
	1	Fishbone
222	1	Unidentified fragment, probably bird

Shell

Context	Quantity	Comments
110	1	Oyster; complete
206	1	Oyster; fragment
107	1	Oyster; complete
222	1	Oyster; complete

Slag

Context	Quantity	Comments
106	2	Tap slag; very small fragments
206	1	Corroded lump; probably from smithing

Stone

Context 207 two fragments, heavily burnt; type unidentified

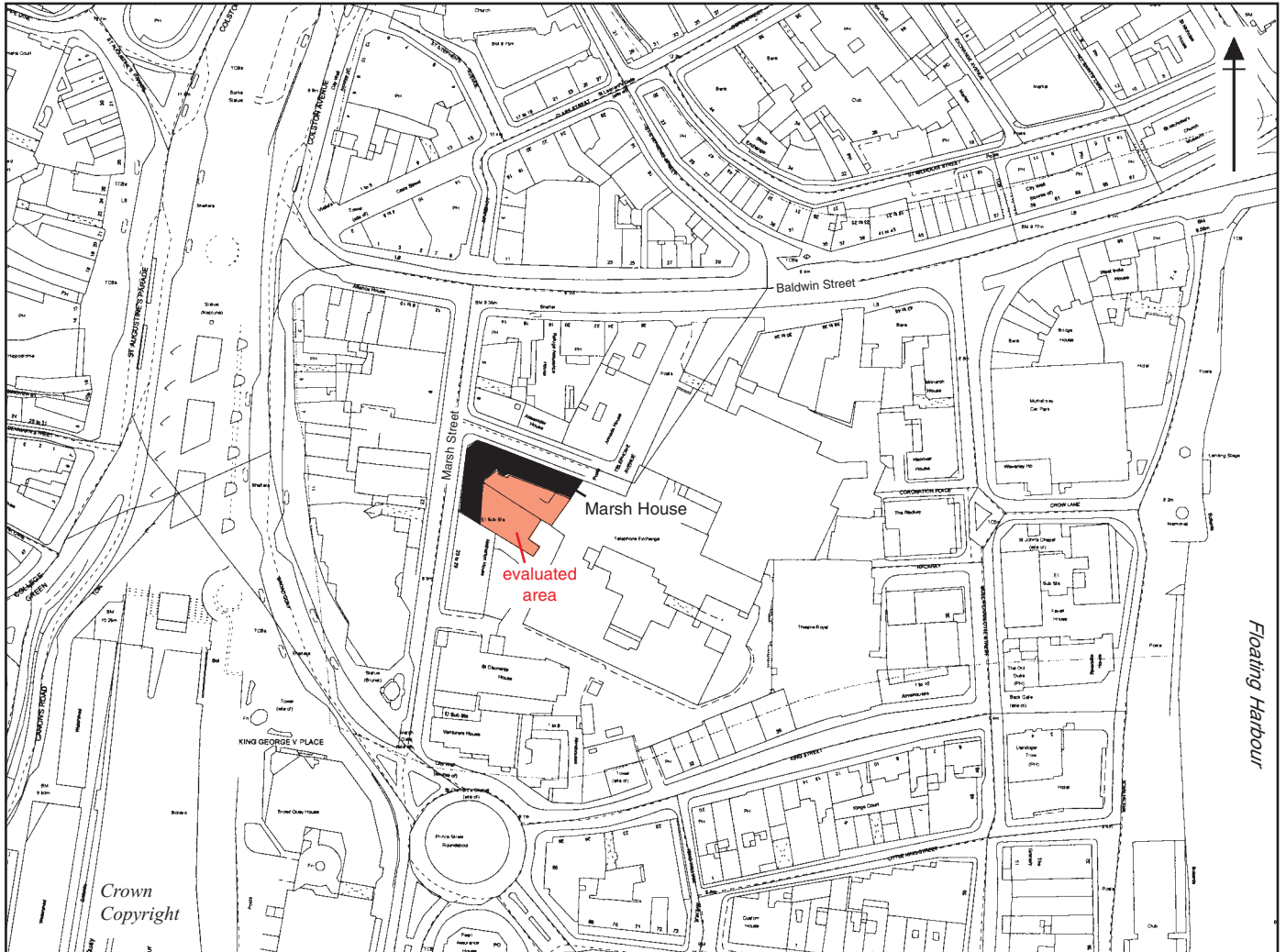


Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:2500

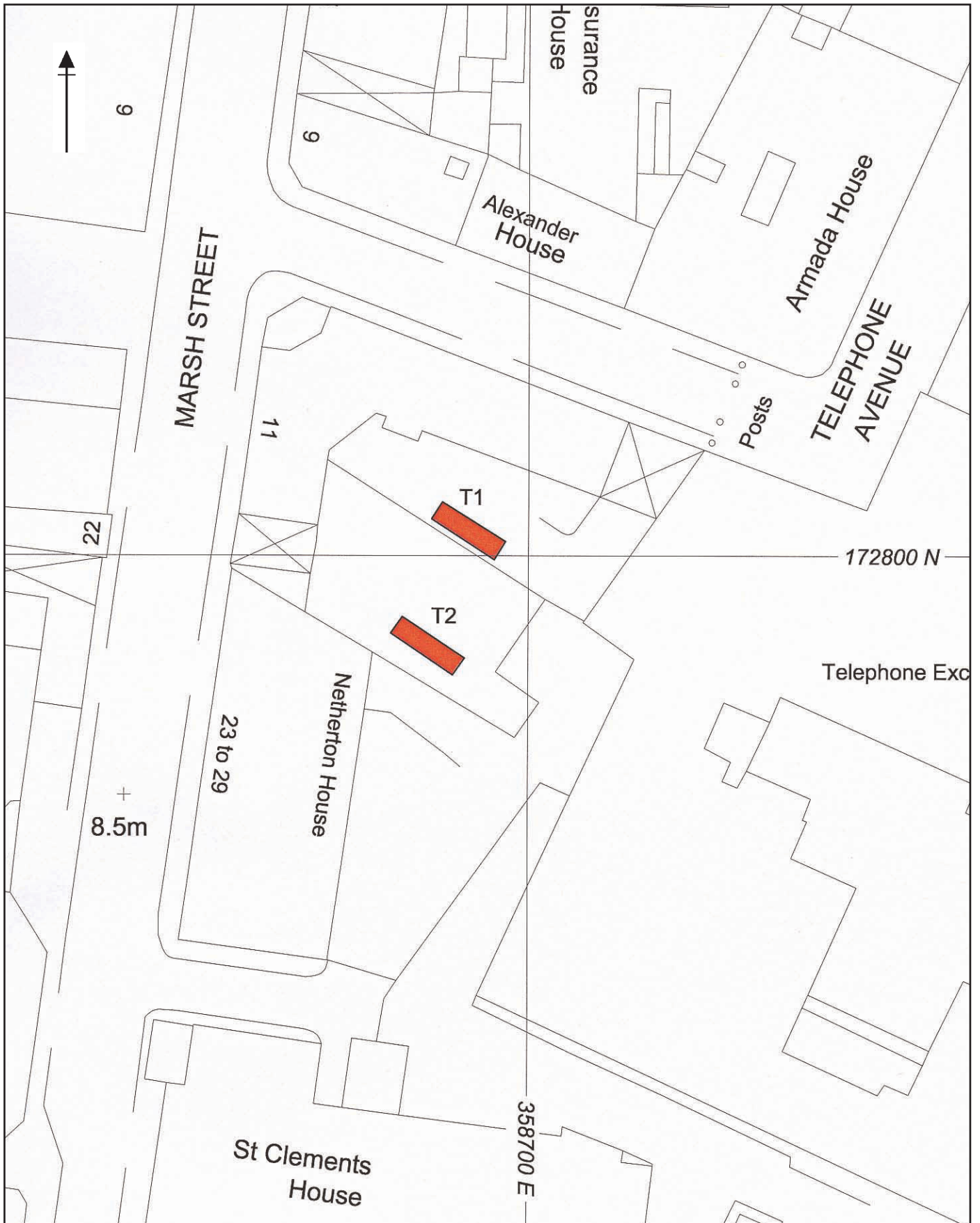


Fig.2 Trench location plan, scale 1:500

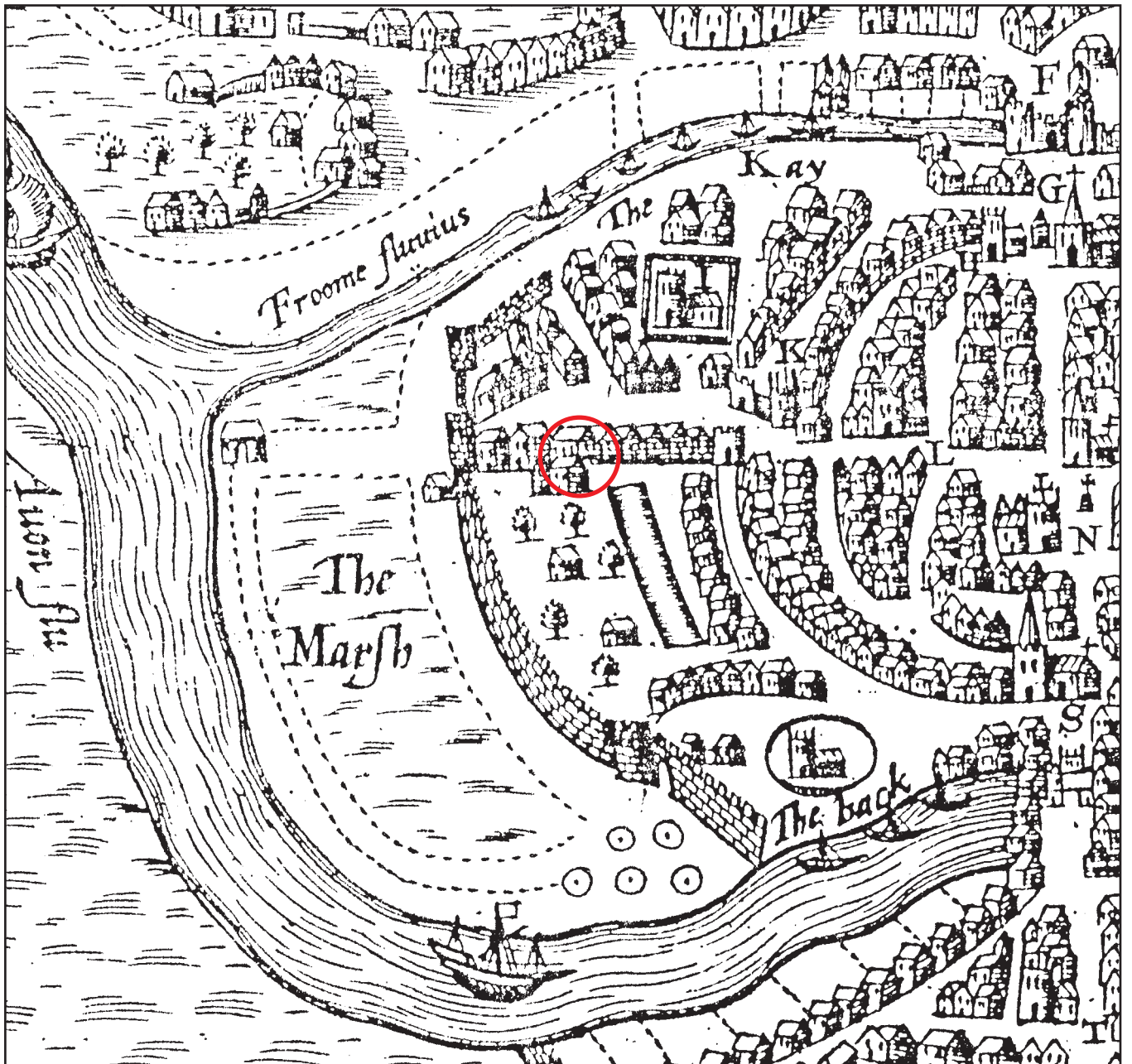


Fig.3 Extract from John Speed's map of 1610



Fig.5 Plumley and Ashmead, 1828



Fig.6 Ordnance Survey First Edition, scale 1:500

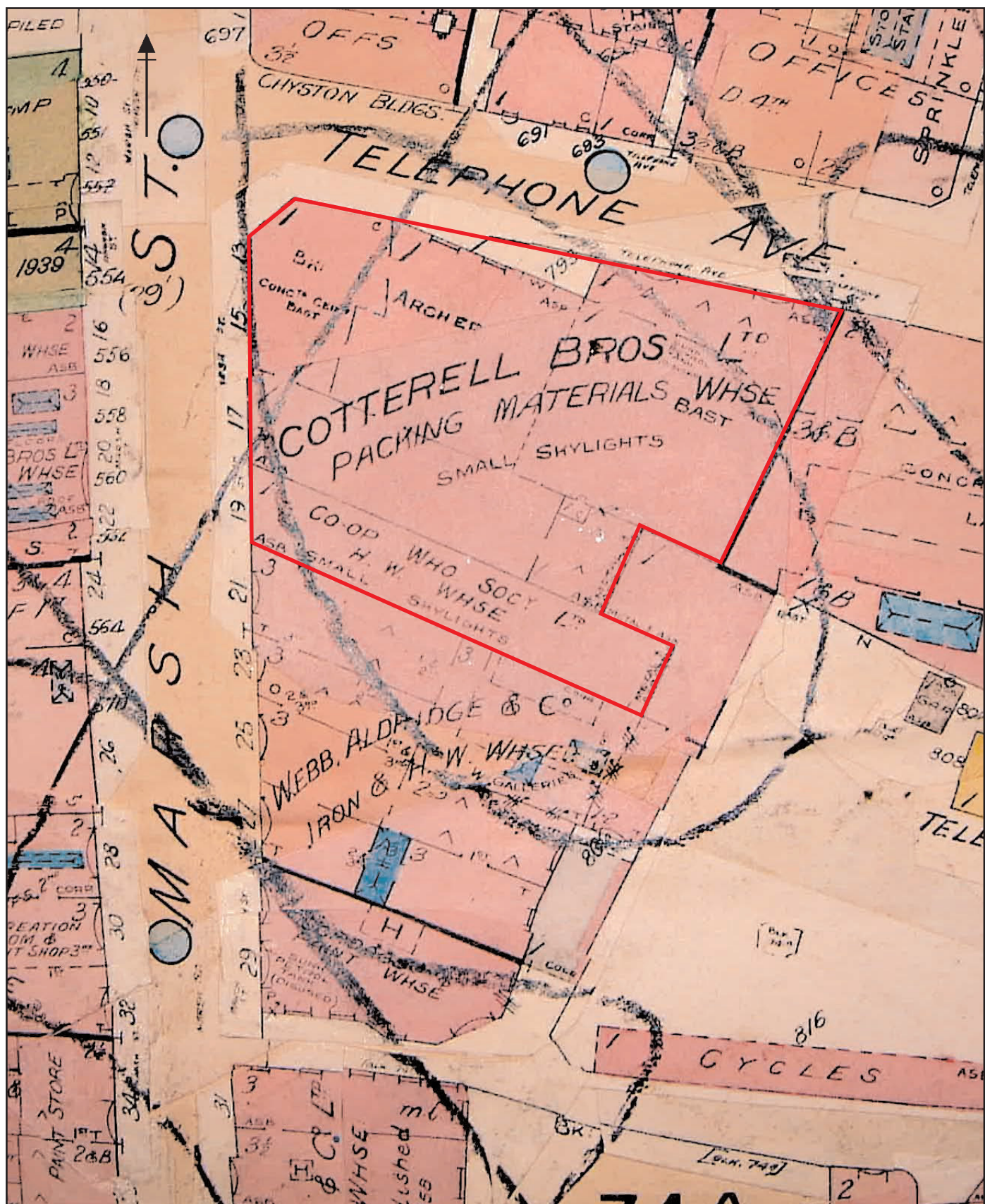


Fig.7 Goad's Fire Insurance plan, 1927 edition



Fig.8 Plan of Trench 1, scale 1:20

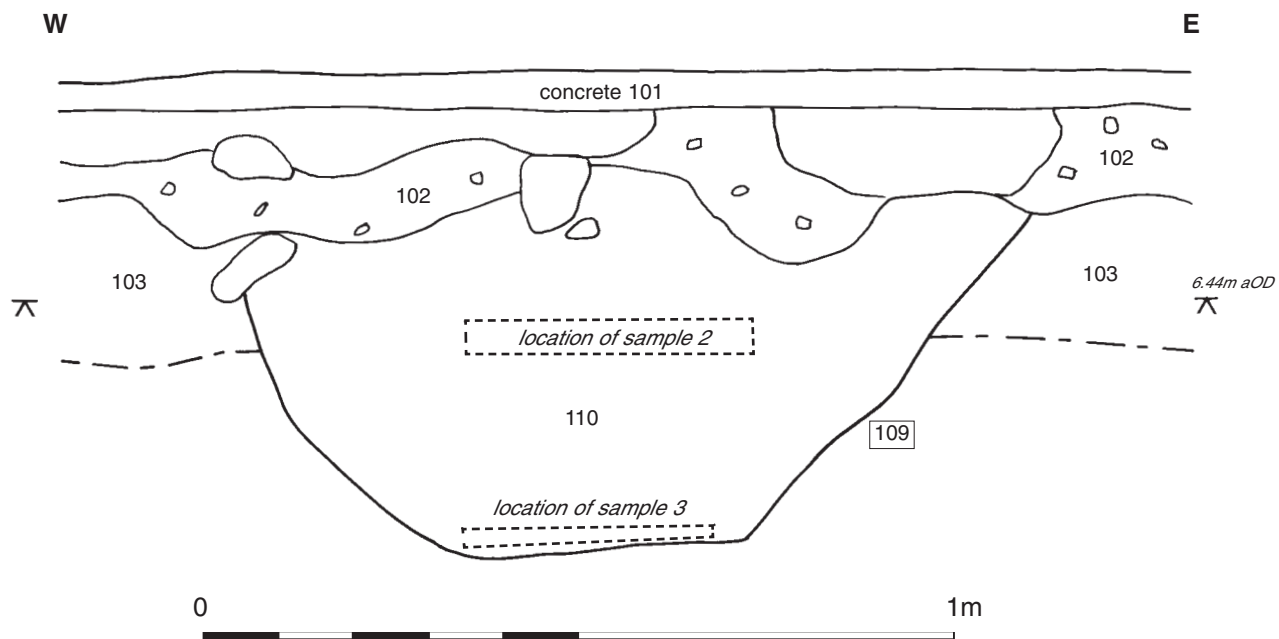


Fig.9 Trench 1: south-facing section across ditch 109, scale 1:10

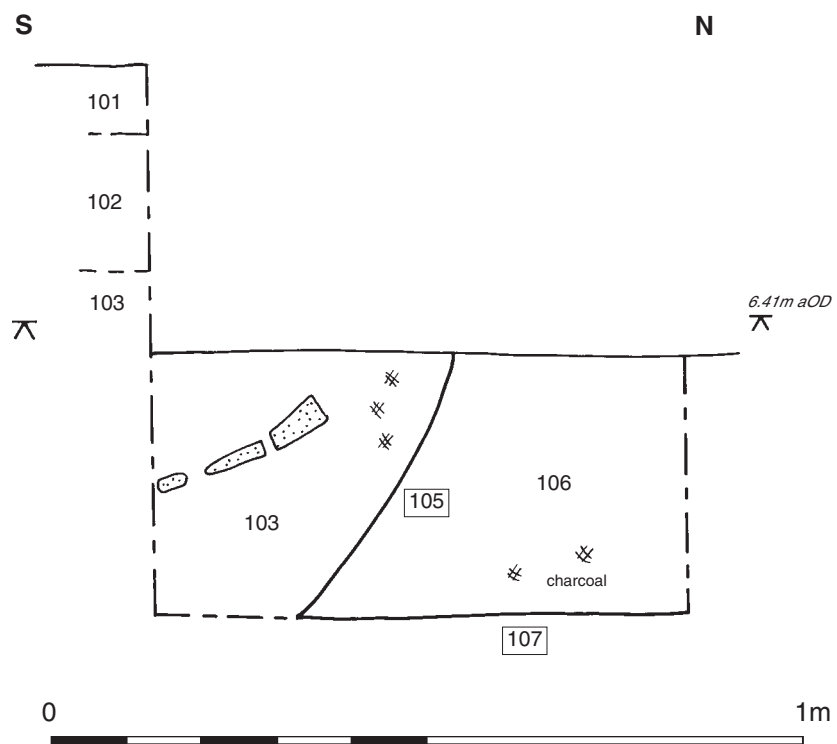


Fig.10 Trench 1: east-facing section across pit 105 and ditch 107, scale 1:10

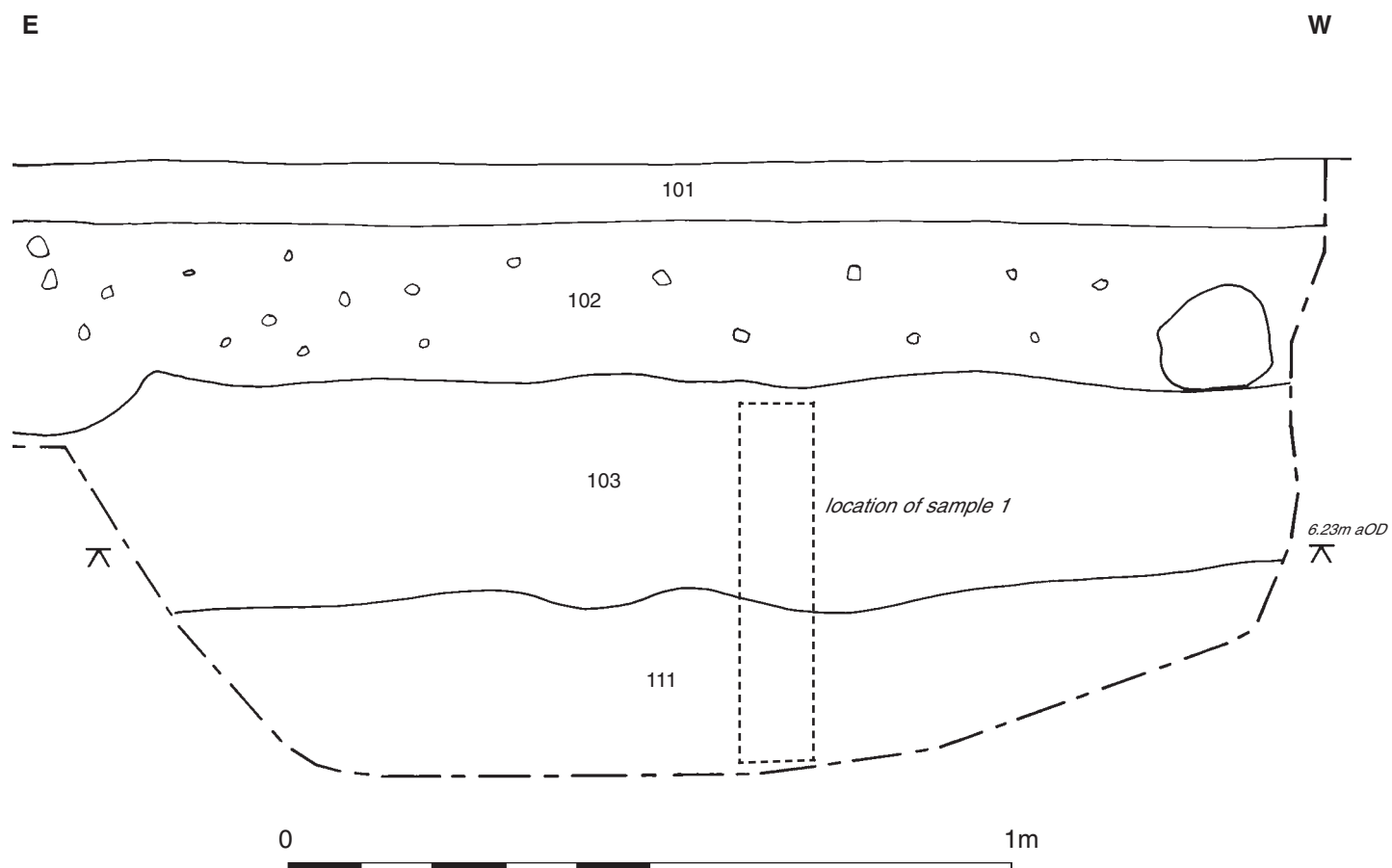


Fig.11 Trench 1: north-facing section through alluvial clays, showing location of column sample, scale 1:10

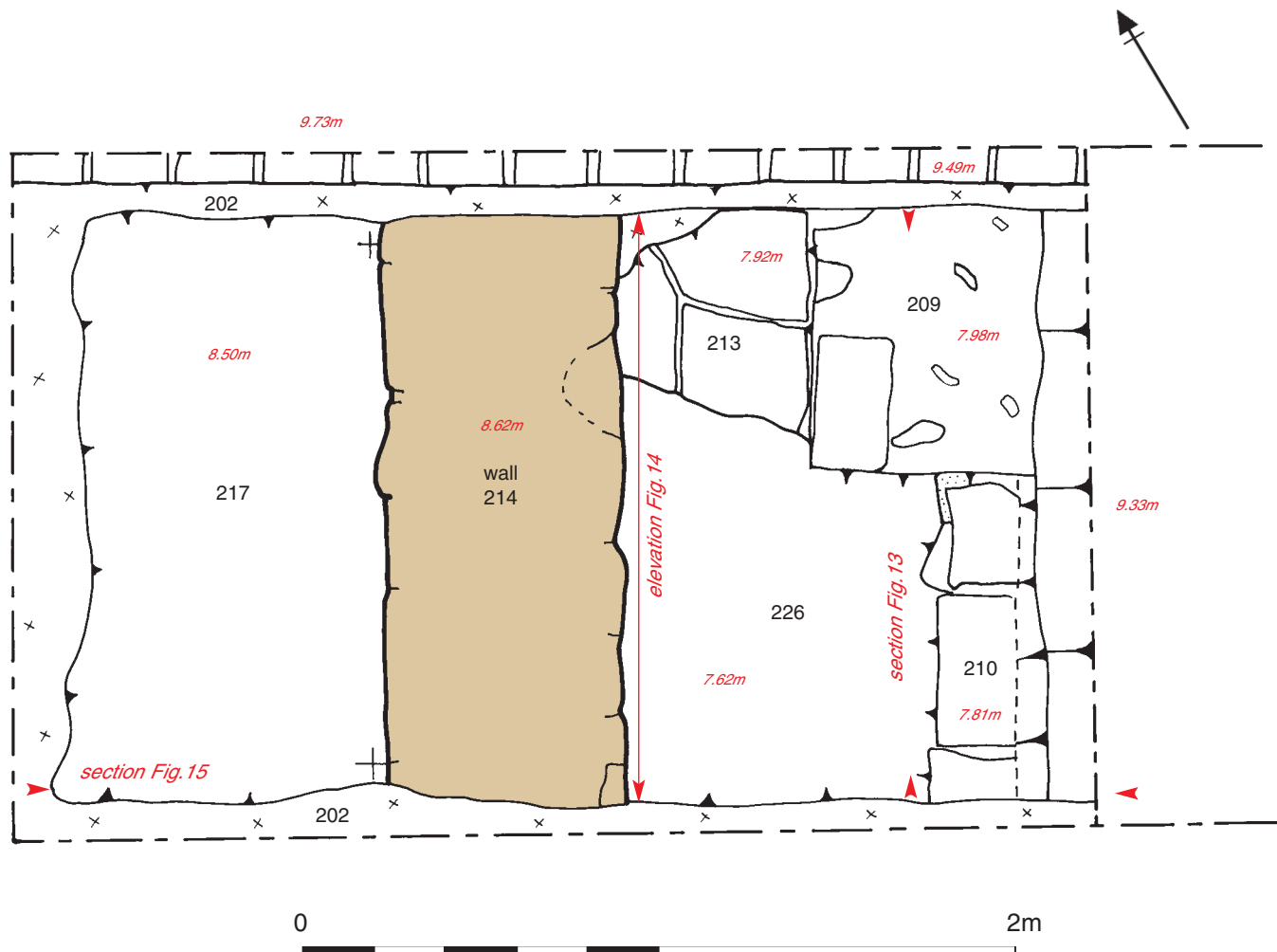


Fig.12 Plan of Trench 2, scale 1:20

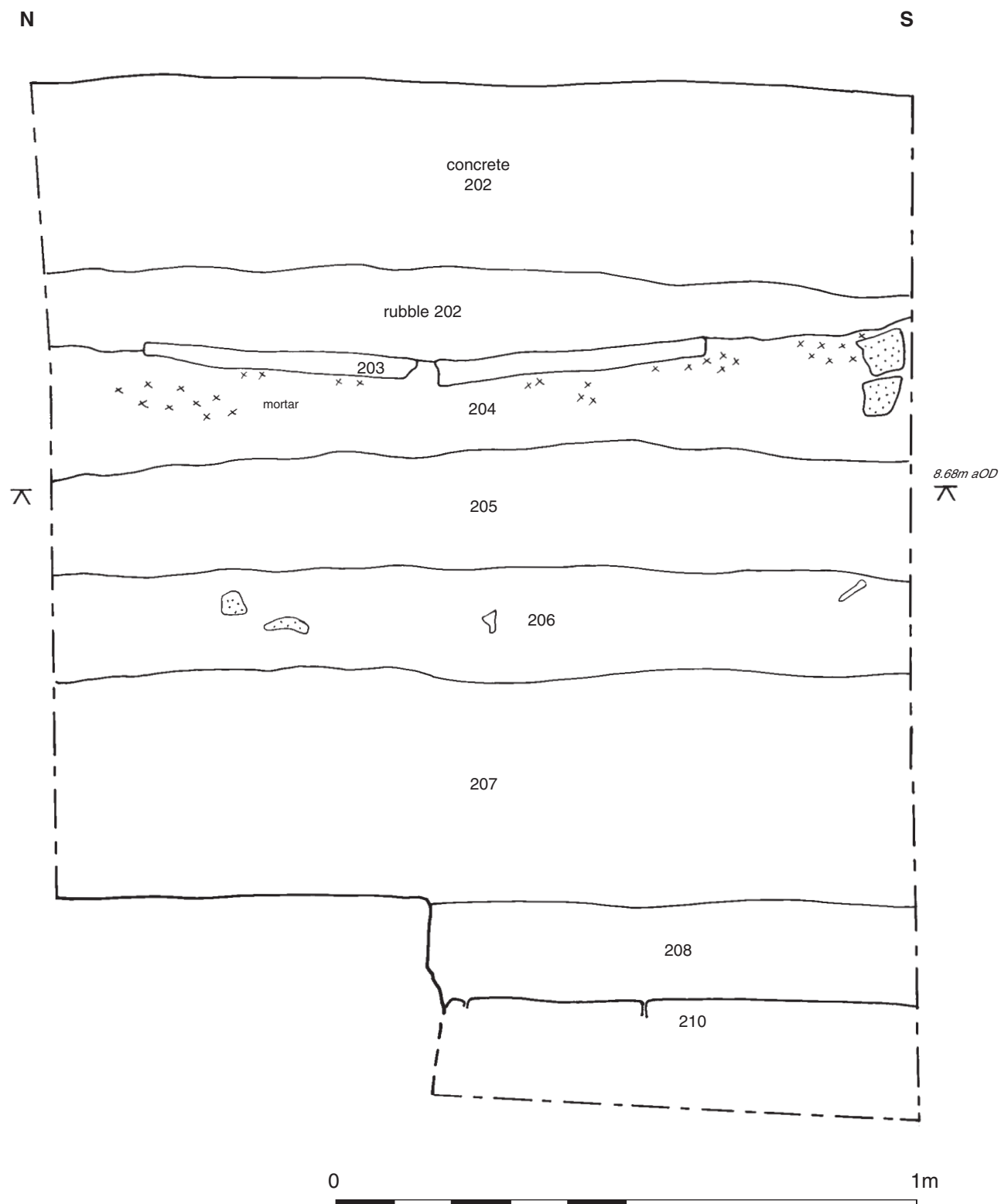


Fig.13 Trench 2: west-facing section, scale 1:10

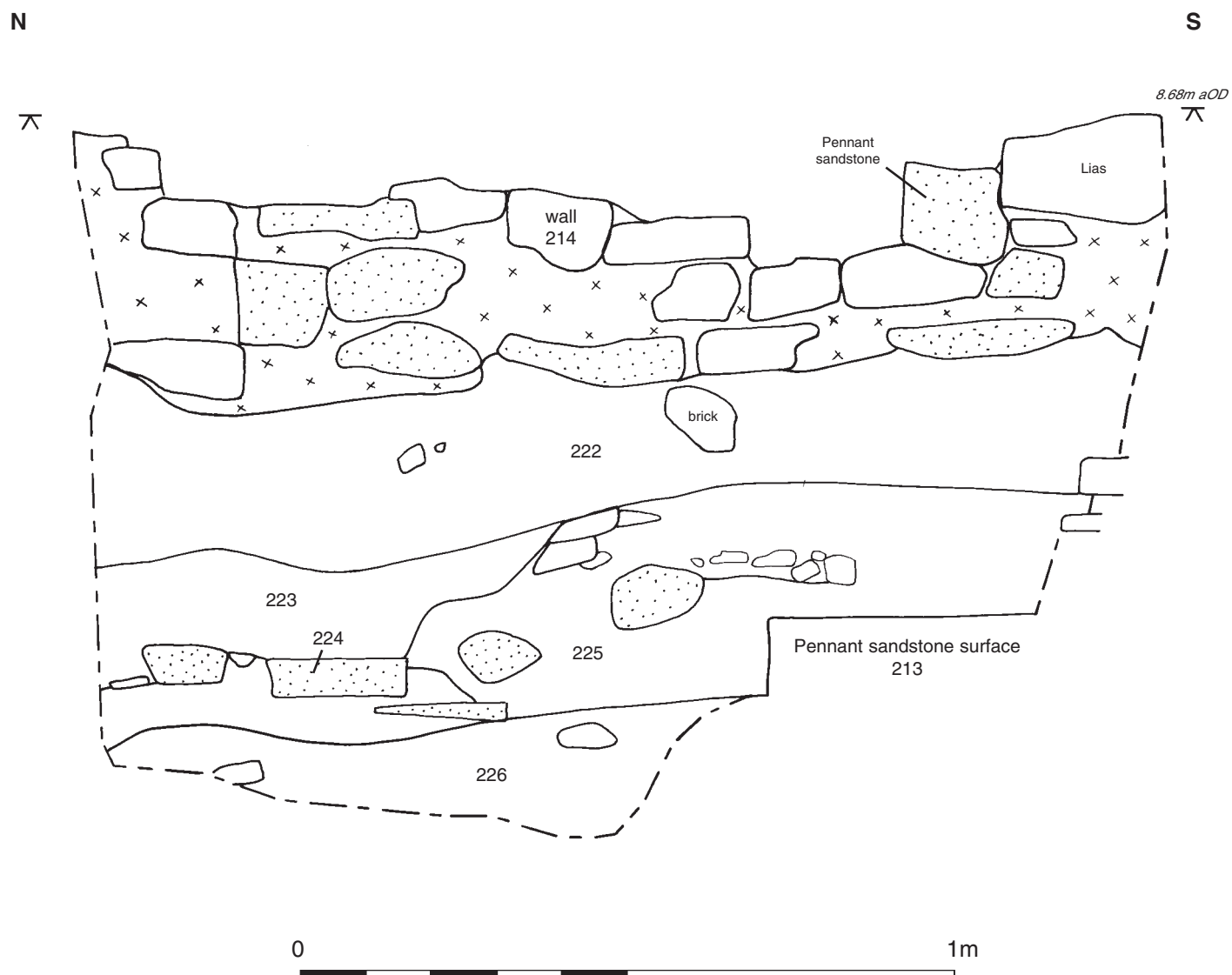


Fig.14 Trench 2: west face of wall 214, scale 1:10

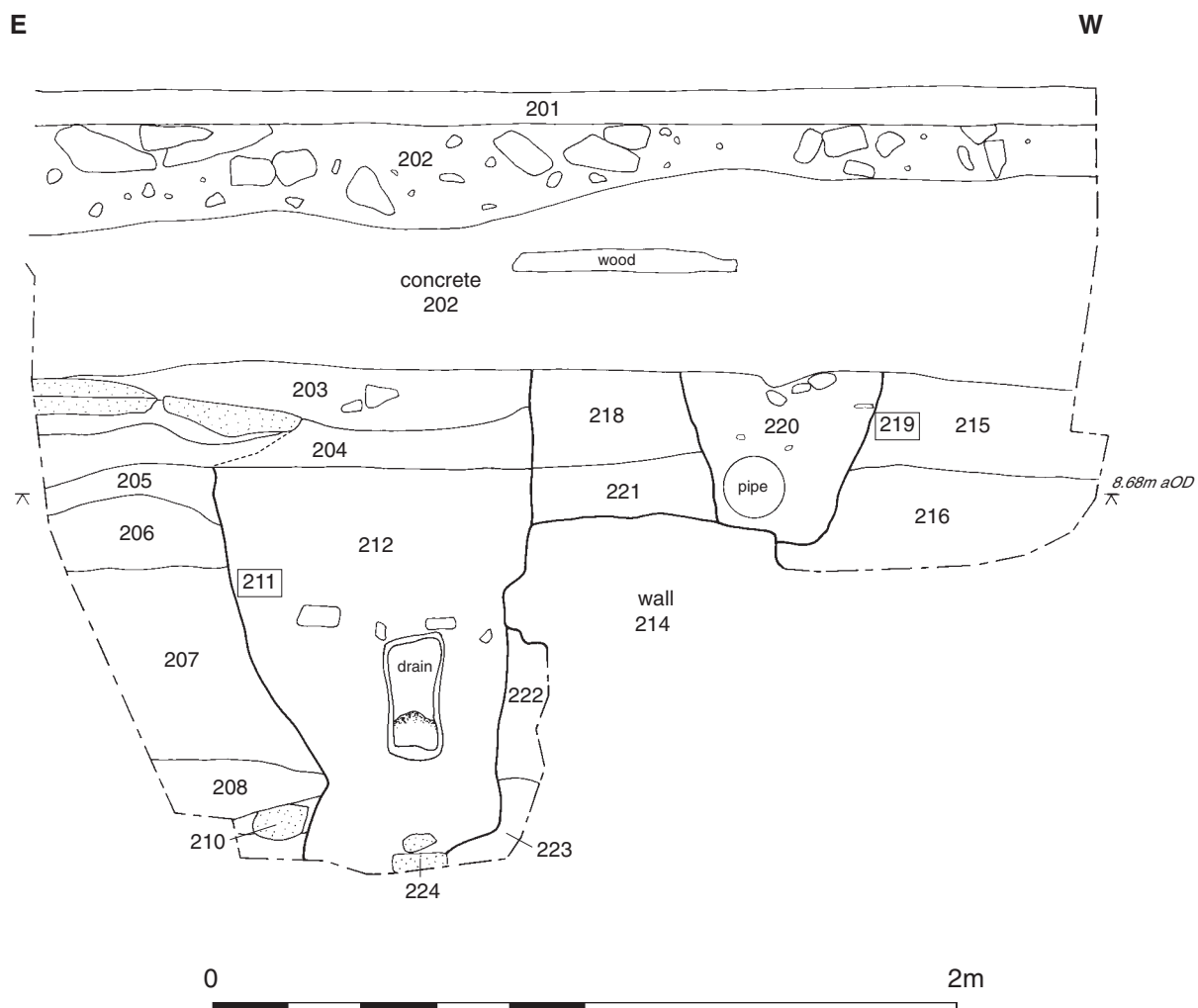


Fig.15 Trench 2: north-facing section, scale 1:20



Fig.16 Plan of site, showing varying degrees of survival of archaeological remains



Plate 1 Trench 1, during excavation, looking west



Plate 2 Trench 1: south-facing section across ditch 109, looking north



Plate 3 Column sample being taken from alluvial clays, looking south-east



Plate 4 Trench 2, looking east



Plate 5 Wall 209 (bottom right) and floors 210 (bottom left) and 213 (middle right), looking west



Plate 6 Wall 214, looking west



Plate 7 Trench 2: south-facing section, looking north-west