

TOTNES CASTLE

An Archaeological Evaluation



by
Stewart Brown Associates
March 2002

TOTNES CASTLE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION FOR NEW KIOSK
FEBRUARY 2002

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Summary

Two evaluation trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m within the castle bailey, close to the present entrance. Both trenches exposed a series of late 17th- and 18th-century earth dumps that extend to depths of between 0.8 and more than 1.2m below the present ground surface. One of the trenches located a wall footing of medieval or early post-medieval date, 1.05m beneath the present ground surface. The wall footing was cut through the surface of a clean clay deposit located at a depth of 0.8m. The clay represents either natural subsoil or an archaeological deposit of medieval or early post-medieval date.

THE PROJECT

The evaluation was undertaken by Stewart Brown Associates on behalf of English Heritage South West. The work took place in advance of proposed development of the area immediately to the east of the present entrance into the bailey. Ian Ashby provided a brief for the archaeological project (Appendix 1). The evaluation comprised two trial excavation trenches each measuring 2m by 1m. It was agreed beforehand by telephone with Ian Morrison (IAMHB) that the excavations should not exceed 1.2m in depth for safety reasons.

THE EVALUATION

Fig. 1 shows the location of the two trenches. Fig. 2 shows the section drawings from both trenches and a plan of the wall footing located in Trench 2.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

Trench 1 exposed a series of six post-medieval deposits, the lowest of which (Layer 6) continued below the 1.2m depth limit of the evaluation trench, so was not fully excavated.

Post-medieval deposits

Layer 1 is a dark grey/brown organic topsoil.

Layer 2 is a dark grey aerated friable claysilt with organic content, and containing abundant small stones, charcoal flecks, and occasional slate fragments.

Layer 3 is a mid grey gritty aerated friable claysilt containing abundant small and medium-sized stone fragments, charcoal flecks, slate fragments, mortar lumps, and animal (food) bones.

Layer 4 is a mid grey/brown aerated friable gritty claysilt containing abundant small stones, occasional slate fragments, charcoal flecks, mortar lumps and animal bones.

Layer 5 is a mid orange/brown gritty aerated friable claysilt containing abundant small stones, occasional slate fragments, and charcoal flecks.

Layer 6 is a mid grey/brown gritty aerated friable claysilt containing abundant small stones, occasional slate fragments, charcoal flecks, and animal bones [not fully excavated].

Finds

Deposit/feature	Finds	Date range
1	group including stoneware bottle	late 19 th cent
2	cream ware; Staffordshire red stoneware; clay pipe stem	c.1800-1830
3	Brick with hard fabric; South Somerset 18 th -century coarseware; Staffordshire true white salt-glazed stoneware, after c.1740	mid 18 th cent or later
4	Delftware tile with ship; Westerwald chamber pot Totnes type wares; clay pipe stem	c.1720-50
5	Tudor green ware; residual Saxo-Norman chert-tempered cooking pot	16 th -early 17th cent
6	Totnes type wares; clay pipe stem; Dutch Delftware c. 1670+	

Trench 2 (Plate 2)

Trench 2 exposed a series of five post-medieval deposits, the lowest of which overlies both a wall footing and a layer of clean yellow clay that may represent natural subsoil.

Post-medieval deposits

Layer 1 is a dark grey/brown organic topsoil.

Layer 2 is a dark grey aerated, friable claysilt with organic content, and containing abundant small stones, charcoal flecks, and occasional slate fragments.

Layer 3 is a mid grey/brown gritty aerated friable claysilt containing abundant small and medium-sized stone fragments, charcoal flecks, slate fragments, clay lumps, mortar lumps, and animal (food) bones.

Layer 4 is a yellow/brown gritty aerated friable claysilt containing abundant small stones, occasional slate fragments, charcoal flecks, mortar lumps and animal bones.

Layer 5 is a mid brown gritty aerated friable claysilt containing abundant small stones, occasional slate fragments, mortar lumps and charcoal flecks.

Wall footing 6 (Plate 2)

Wall footing 6 is on average 0.6m wide and comprises stone rubble bonded with yellow/brown claysilt containing mortar lumps. The footing is aligned approximately at right angles (80°/100°) to the existing post-medieval wall that replaced the medieval bailey perimeter wall in this area.

Post-hole 7

A post-hole was located at the north-west corner of the trench. The infilling of the post-hole was a dark grey aerated, friable claysilt containing small stones and slate fragments, as well as organic content. The infilling was overlain by layer 2. The post-hole was cut through layer 3.

Layer 8 - possible clay subsoil

On the west side of the trench, at a depth of 0.8m, the excavation exposed the surface of a layer of clean compact yellow clay (unexcavated). The clay is overlain by layer 5, and was cut through by the foundation trench for wall 6. The clay resembles natural subsoil in the area and may represent the horizon at which undisturbed geological deposits survive. Alternatively, it may represent a medieval or early post-medieval deposit that is made up primarily of re-deposited natural clay.

Finds

Deposit/feature	Finds	Date range
1	discarded	
2	discarded	
3	early brick; Delftware wall tile; Staffordshire grey stoneware c 1620-50; Staffs/Nottingham English stoneware; Totnes type wares; clay pipe stems; late Westerwald ware; Frechen jug handle	c. 1720-50
4	none	

5	Westerwald chamber pot, early-mid 18 th cent; late med/early post-med ridge tile	c. 1710-20+
6	none	
7	Totnes type ware (*1 sherd should be drawn); South Somerset coarseware	17 th or 18th cent

Discussion

Post-medieval dump deposits

A series of post-medieval deposits covers the area immediately adjacent to the two evaluation trenches to a depth varying from 0.8m to more than 1.2m. These deposits contain building demolition waste and animal bones (food remains), and were evidently dumped onto the area in order to make up the ground level. The earliest of the deposits in Trench 1 (layer 6) produced pottery finds dating from the late 17th century or later, and that in Trench 2 (layer 5) produced finds dating from the early-mid 18th century. The series of dumps therefore dates from after the late 17th century, and could all date from the 18th century. Finds of 19th-century date were confined to the uppermost two layers in Trench 1 (layers 1 and 2), which both incorporate organic content and can be regarded as topsoil of fairly recent origin.

The wall footing in Trench 2

The wall footing underlies the lowest of the post-medieval dumps, and was therefore probably demolished sometime before the 18th century. It could have been built in either the medieval or early post-medieval period. The footing is 0.6m wide and clay bonded, so is unlikely to have supported a structural wall associated with a large building such as a gatehouse. It is more likely to have supported a wall of a single-storey building, or alternatively, an internal partition wall of a building for which there is at present no other evidence.

Possible clay subsoil (Trench 2, layer 8)

This layer was left unexcavated since it is cut by the foundation trench for wall 6, and is therefore earlier than the wall. The layer comprises clean compact clay that appears undisturbed, so its surface may possibly represent the level of natural (geological) subsoil, although without deeper excavation, this cannot be established with certainty.

IMPACT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF A NEW BUILDING IN THIS AREA

The impact on the archaeology of a new building in this area will be minimized if ground disturbance associated with the new building is restricted to depths of less than 0.8m below present ground level. The evaluation has shown that the archaeological levels above 0.8m depth comprise dumped earth and rubble deposits dating from the late 17th and 18th centuries. The deposits contain building demolition waste, animal (food) bones, and post-medieval and residual medieval pottery finds, but otherwise are of limited archaeological interest.

At a depth of 0.8m in Trench 1, the character of the archaeology changes abruptly. Here, the excavation exposed a clean, compact clay layer, as well as wall footing of medieval or early post-medieval date. Archaeological deposits and remains surviving at and below this horizon are of considerable interest with regard to the development of the castle, and should not be disturbed without prior archaeological excavation and recording.

It is known from photographs that building remains were still standing above ground in the mid 20th century to the south of this area (your letter of the 1st February). Any expansion southward of the proposed development, beyond Trench 1, would therefore almost certainly uncover archaeology of a different and more complex nature to that encountered in the evaluation.

Piling anywhere within the area of the former medieval bailey would almost certainly cause damage to features of archaeological interest (eg wall 6), and should be avoided if at all possible. Piling cannot be monitored archaeologically, so the damage would remain unseen until excavations in the future reveal it. Even if a core is retrieved from the ground before piling, this has limited value in terms of an archaeological record.

PROPOSED MITIGATION STRATEGY

If the new development entails restricted ground disturbance, ie to depths of less than 0.8m below present ground level (a maximum of 0.7m depth would be preferable - in order to allow some leeway), then archaeological mitigation could be confined to a watching brief during all groundworks. If ground disturbance is to exceed this depth, then prior full archaeological excavation and recording will be required.

APPENDIX 1 - THE BRIEF

TOTNES CASTLE

1st February, 2002

1. English Heritage is considering siting the proposed Ticket Office building in the area shown on the drawing (provisional size shown subject to design). The building has not yet been designed and the foundation design has therefore also still to be determined but may consist of small diameter bored piles. A service trench will also be required running down the path towards Castle Street. The purpose of the excavation is to investigate the archaeological potential of the area and evaluate the impact on archaeology of the proposed new building.

The site is within the Bailey of the Castle and is believed to be on the edge of a former moat (see Fig. 6 in your report dated May 1998). It is known that there were buildings adjacent to this area in the mid C20 (see Figs.5 & 6 in your report and copies of photographs from NMR enclosed). Ian Morrison is preparing a Conservation Statement for the site and will be able to provide additional information.

3. The location and size of the trial holes are shown on the attached drawing. The depth of the holes should extend down to bedrock or undisturbed soil. [The latter sentence was subsequently amended by agreement with Ian Morrison over the telephone. The depth was not to exceed 1.2m for safety reasons]
4. The report should record the findings of the excavation, set out the impact on archaeology of a new building in this area, and propose a draft mitigation strategy.
5. The work should be carried out on site at dates to be agreed with English Heritage. A draft of the report should be submitted by 31st March 2002. The draft should be agreed with Ian Morrison and a final version submitted within one month of agreement of the draft. Copies should be sent to English Heritage, the National Monuments Record and the County/Site Monument Record.
6. You should include in your price the cost of all labour and plant involved in the excavation. You will be responsible for the management of work on site and for complying with all relevant Safety Regulations.
7. The treatment of any finds arising from the excavations is to be agreed with Ian Morrison at the time and need not be included in your present quotation.

8. A strategy on the *detailed* analysis and publication of any excavated archaeology will be discussed and agreed with Ian Morrison once the shop proposals have been finalised. You should not allow for this in your present quotation.
9. Your quotation should consist of a rate per day for the excavation, a reasonable estimate of the duration of work on site, the cost of all necessary plant and equipment and the cost of preparing and submitting the report.

Yours sincerely

Ian Ashby
Project Coordinator

cc Ian Morrison

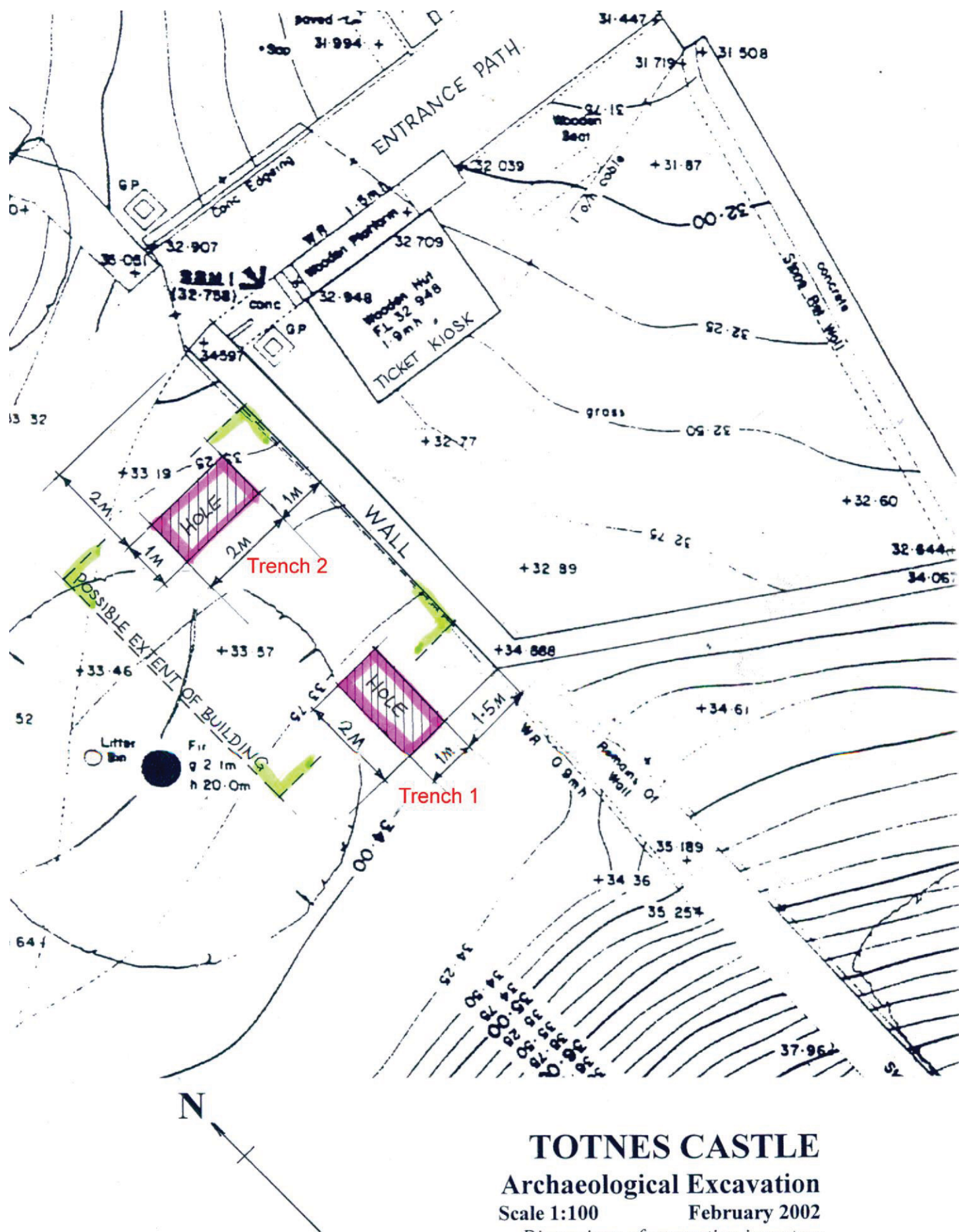
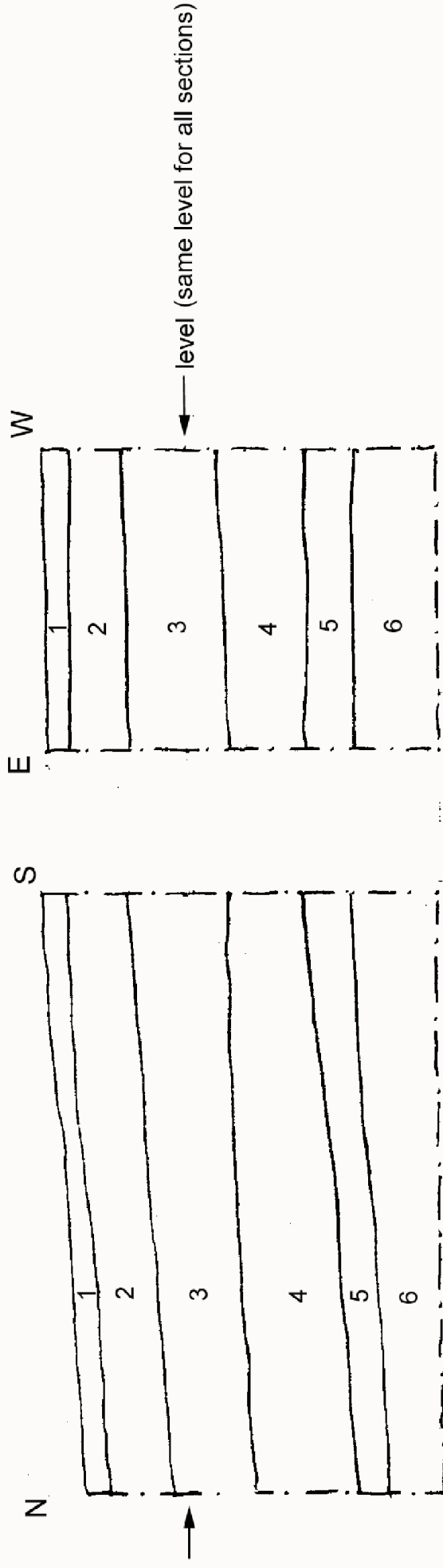
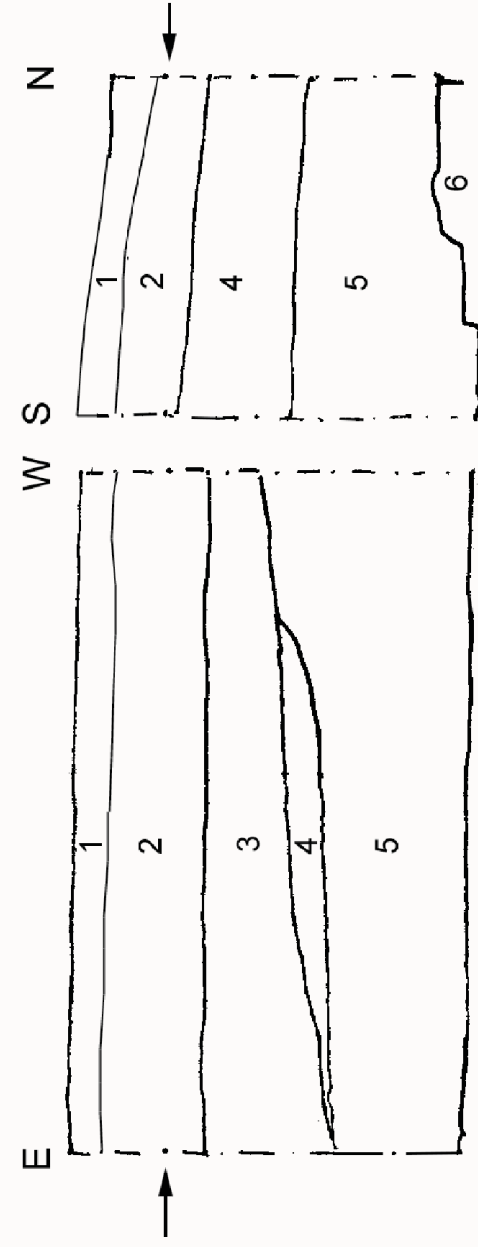


Fig. 1 Location of evaluation trenches (plan supplied by English Heritage)

Trench 1 sections



Trench 2 sections



Trench 2 plan

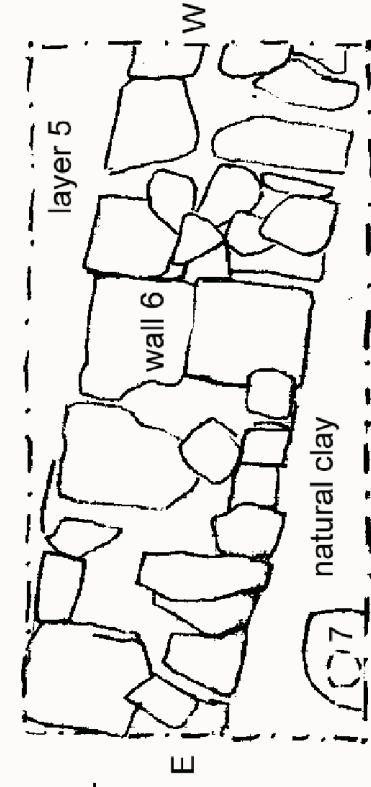


Fig. 2 Sections and plan (all scale 1:20)



Plate 2 Trench 2, looking East

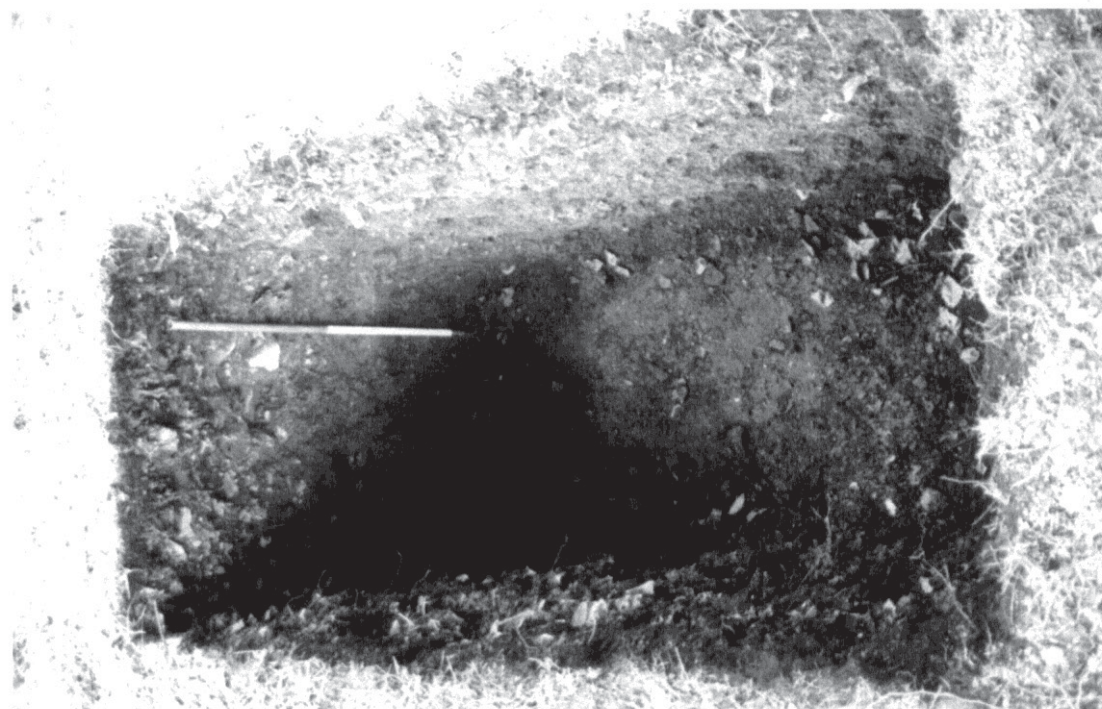


Plate 1 Trench 1, looking South