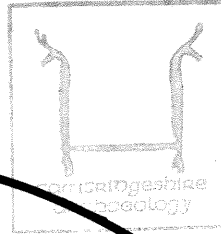
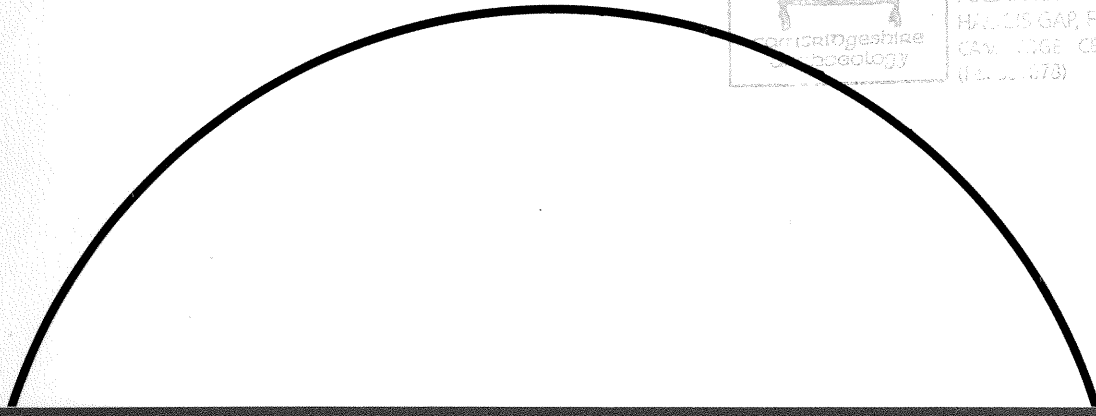


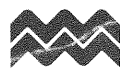
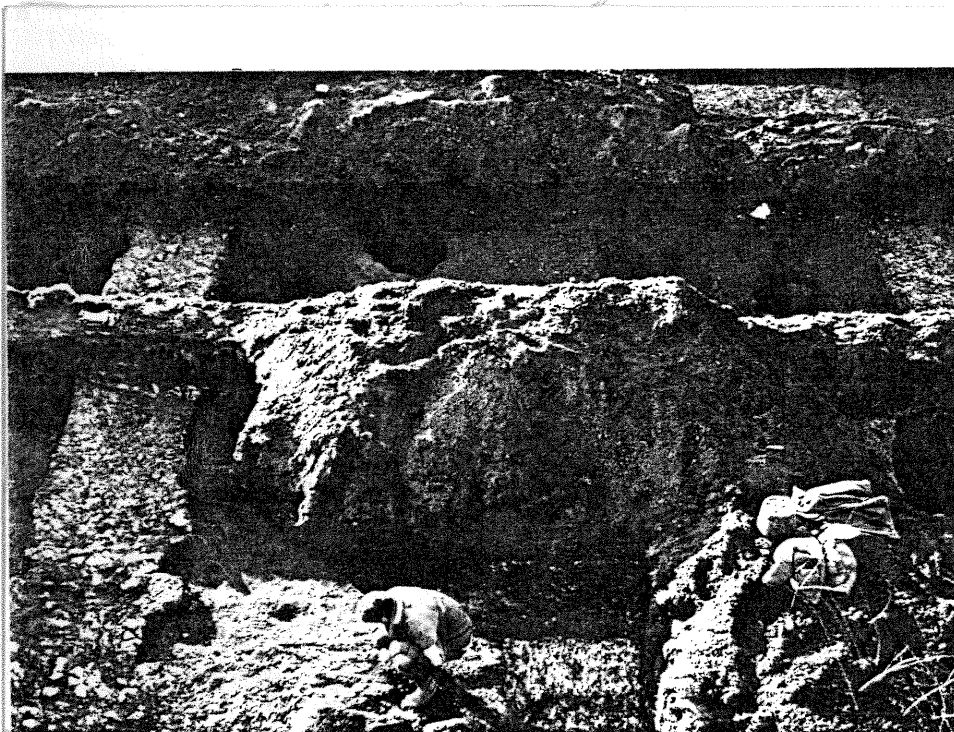
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STRETHAM RECTORY 1990



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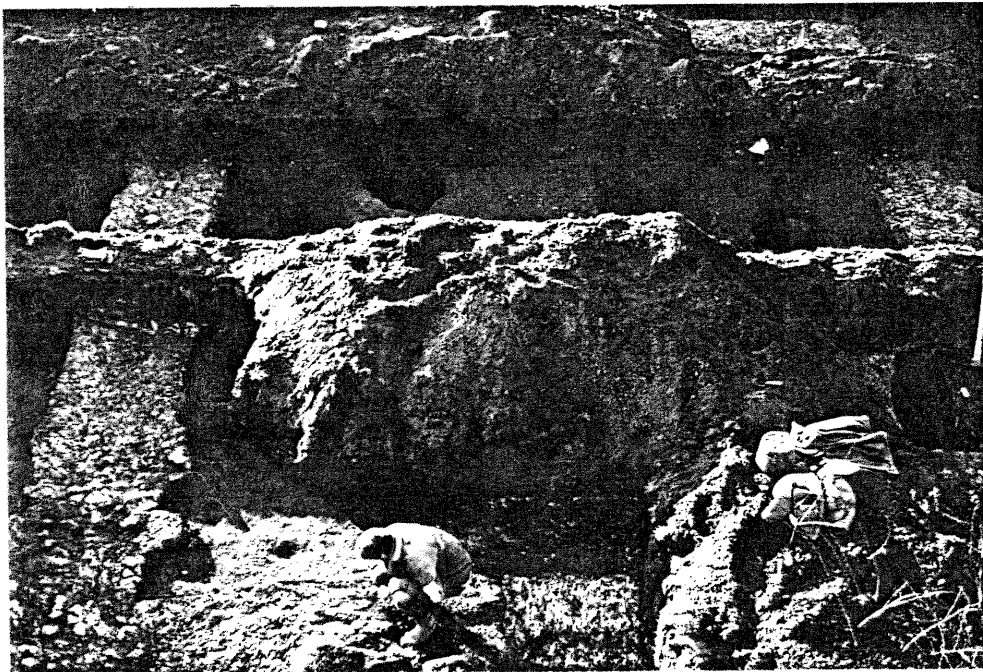
Rural Strategy

1st Edition

STRETHAM RECTORY 1990

TL 5115/7455

Wendy Horton and Gavin Lucas



Ely Diocesan Board of Finance

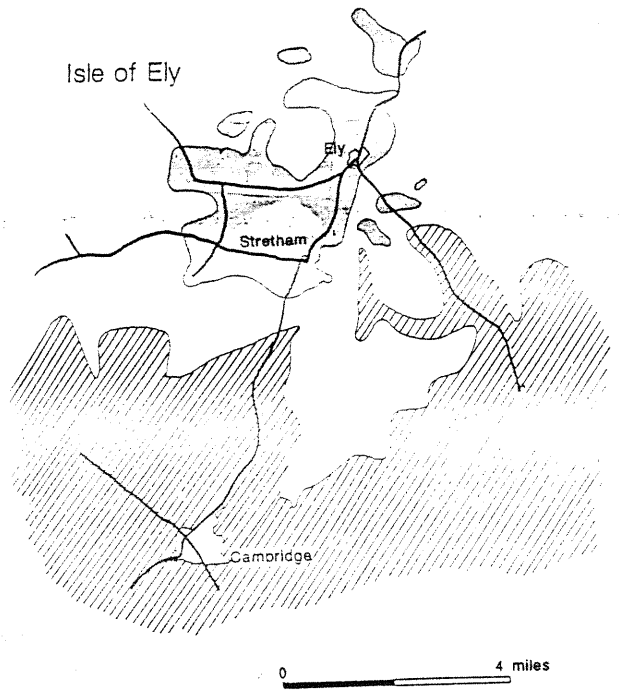
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STRETHAM RECTORY

Abstract

An excavation in the garden of Stretham Rectory revealed the foundations of two buildings, one of which appears to be directly associated with the upstanding rectory. It is likely that both structures are earlier phases of the rectory, one of them possibly an early mediaeval parsonage itself.

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8 Appendix (photographs, catalogues etc..)	- (forthcoming)



Location Plan
Strettham Rectory

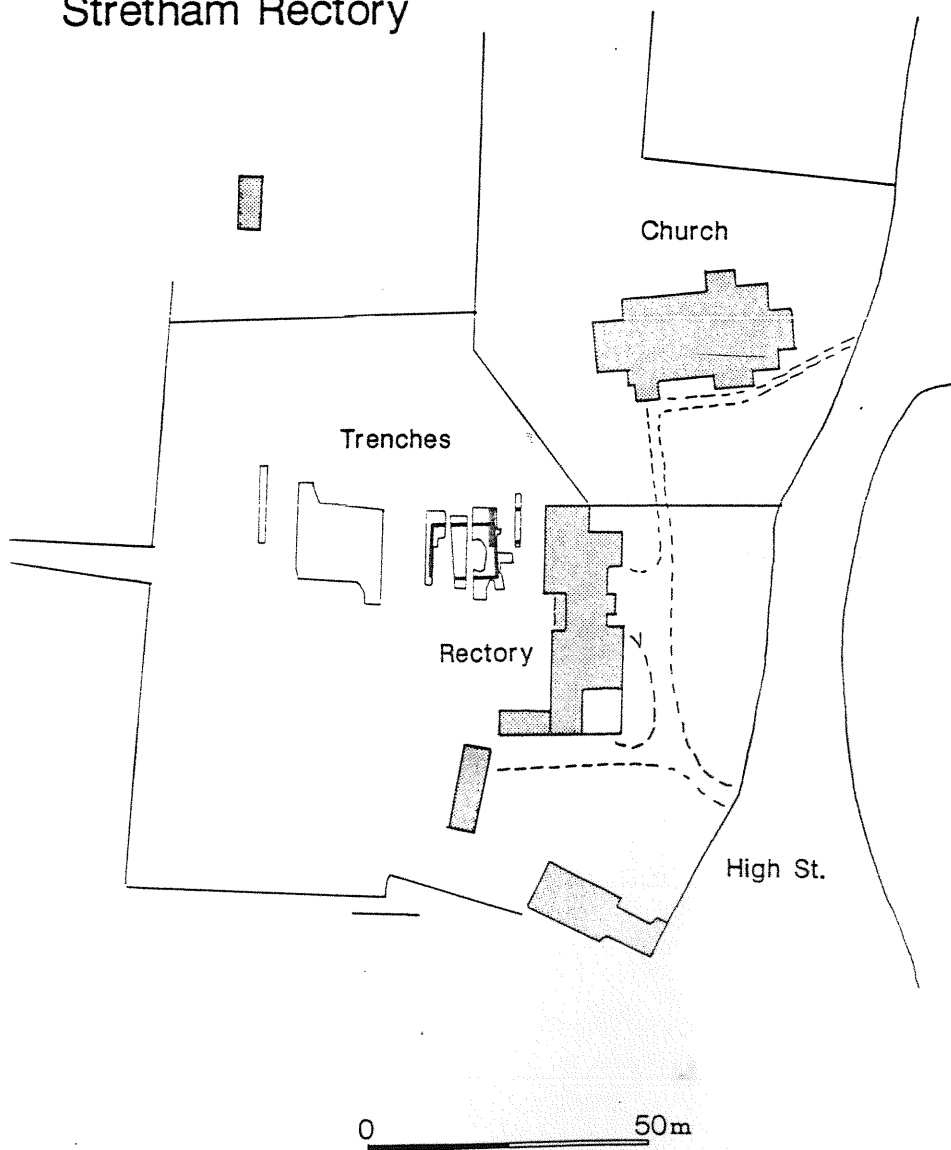


Fig.1

INTRODUCTION

An excavation in the garden of Stretham Rectory was undertaken by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Unit in February and March 1990. The project was funded by the Diocese of Ely in order to complete an archaeological investigation of a site under proposal for commercial development. The potential of the site was originally brought to light by Anne Holton-Krayenbuhl of the Ely Archaeological Society and in response, a trial excavation was carried out in November 1989 which indicated the need for a full-scale investigation.

BACKGROUND

Stretham is a village and parish on the southern end of the Isle of Ely, an elevated outcrop of Kimmeridge clay in the Fens, capped by a band of lower greensand. The village lies four and a half miles south of Ely at the junction of the A10, A1123 and B1085, and is dominated by the church of St. James which occupies a high and central position in the village. The rectory lies just to the south (Fig. 1).

Stretham takes its name from the Roman road which ran north-east out of Cambridge (Akeman street), i.e. 'the village (ham) on the street (straet)'; it is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as Straetham in 975, and in the Domesday Book as Stradhham in 1086.

The origins of the church, and by implication the rectory, are unknown, but architectural evidence from the church and documentary sources pertaining to rectors indicate that both were established by the beginning of the thirteenth century. The east wall of the chancel appears to date to the end of the 12th century, and there are fragments of carved stone, including part of a grave slab, of the same time built into the inner walls of a modern porch. Stitt (1922) mentions a record of a rector called Arnuff in 1222, and a certain Thomas de Wymbych was rector in 1276, when he renounced all claims to tithes from Thetford, a village just north of Stretham, and under the ecclesiastical supervision of the Stretham rector (B.M.Add.MS.5847, f. 16). Also, on a tomb in the chancel is a slab with a French inscription in Lombardic lettering to Nicholas de Kingeston, who was rector at the end of the 13th century.

Thus there is good evidence for the existence of a Norman church with a rector; by implication there should have also been a rectory, though there are no records of comparable date referring to a residence for the incumbent. The present rectory is chiefly an 18th century remodelling of an earlier 16th century range, with a 19th century extension attached at the southern end. There are however some interesting architectural features at the north end which date to the 14th century, the same time to which a large part of the church dates, including the western tower and northern arcade, although it too was largely renovated in the 19th century. The features in question are a four-centred arch, typical of late mediaeval design, and stone ashlar with carved rosettes on the outer face set in the wall. The whole part of the north end of the rectory associated with these features is built from stone ashlar in contrast with the modern brickwork of the rest of the building, and has been described as a 14th century range (Pevsner, 1982:462; VCH, 1967:157).

The first archaeological work carried out in the garden of the rectory was in November 1989 by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Unit, to test the archaeological potential of the site which is due for development. This was funded by the Diocese of Ely and gave rise to the present project. An account of that trial excavation (Horton, 1989), can be obtained from Shire Hall; in brief, the investigation revealed two parallel wall foundations, 7m apart and each about 1m wide. Several features were also found between the walls, including pits, a well and what was interpreted as a possible floor. The small quantity of associated finds, suggested a mediaeval date for the structure.

STRATEGY

The results from the trial excavation of two substantial wall foundations and associated features warranted sufficient grounds for expecting the remaining part of a structure to be uncovered by further excavation. Consequently, two trenches were cut on either side of the original trial trench (trenches 1 and 3), as well as a third trench (2) laid out at the western end of the garden on the possibility that Roman remains might be unearthed due to the proximity of the Roman road that is considered to have run just beyond the back of the garden. Roman artefacts have been found in the area.

Trenches 1 and 2 produced very few features and no trace of the foundation walls which were found in the trial trench. However, trench 3 did contain them, and on the assumption that the walls must therefore continue eastwards toward the rectory, a series of three more trenches (4, 5 and 6) were cut to discover the extent and nature of the structure. This was duly revealed, as was a second structure which cut the first at its north-eastern corner, and subsequently trenches 4 and 6 were joined by removal of the baulk to find the relation between it and the original structure, plus one more trench (7) and a smaller bore hole was laid out to find its dimensions. On the conjecture that this second structure might represent a demolished wing of the rectory, a couple more bore holes were dug at the southern end of the rectory, the same distance out as the second structure extended, though nothing was found.

Thus the excavation was carried out in three stages :

- a) trenches 1 - 3
- b) trenches 4 - 6
- c) trench 7 (plus three bore holes)

The method of excavation involved laying out two parallel base lines 16m apart and at 5m intervals, at the north and south ends of the garden, and then cutting the trenches with a three-ton track digger to remove the topsoil and subsoil to an average depth of 75cm, until any archaeological features were exposed. All further digging was carried out by hand.

RESULTS

a) Stage I

TRENCH 1

The largest trench to be opened covers almost all the western half of the garden, and after removal of topsoil by the digger, and hand-cleaning, all the features were excavated, partially or in full, and recorded (fig.2).

[1] - Topsoil constituted a dark brown silty loam to a depth of 70cm and may have been brought in specially for the garden. The subsoil was a soft mid-brown silty sand with areas of natural clay and gravel. All the archaeological features were cut from this level.

[24/25] - A sub-rectangular pit (94x60cm) with initial steep sides, gently sloping to an uneven bottom at a maximum depth of 1.05m. It was filled with a fine, mid-grey silt, including occasional small/large pebbles and fragments of mortar.

Ditches [8/9],[6/7],[10/11],[16/17],[18/19] and [23/34]

[8/9] - A ditch, between 1.5 and 2m wide, running east-west and filled with a very hard, sticky blue-grey clay with occasional pebbles. It ends about 1.12m west of the section and is very shallow, about 10cm

deep. It overlies feature [6/7].

[6/7] - A ditch, which runs north-east/south-west, and through which two sections were dug. In both, two distinct fills were apparent. [6a] was the north section where the ditch was wider, about 4.1m; on the west side of the ditch, the fill consisted of a dark, grey-brown matrix and went down for about 0.5m to a flat bottom. On the eastern side, there was a deeper cut, with a much browner fill. Fragments of clunch and mortar, and large animal bones were present in both fills. [6b] was the southern section and definitely consisted of two channels, the west one at a higher level than the eastern one. The former was cut through a patch of natural gravel and clay and was about 80cm wide and 18cm deep. The east channel was 1.2m wide and 45cm deep. Both channels were lined with an orange/cream sticky clay containing flecks and small fragments of charcoal. A post-hole [39] (39x32cm) cuts through the ditch; it has almost vertical sides, except the north side which is slightly undercut, and a flat bottom at a depth of 65cm. The fill was a fine, dark grey silty clay.

[10/11] - A very narrow gully, about 20cm wide, 5-8cm deep and over 2m long, running east-west from the section to ditch [6/7], (by which it is cut) filled with a mid-grey brown silty sand and occasional pebbles and fragments of mortar.

[16] - A curvilinear ditch which appears to run in the south-western corner of the trench, though the surface edges were not very distinct. One section was dug which rendered a useful profile. It was about 2m wide in all - on the northern edge there was a shallow ledge about 30cm deep and 1m wide, before a sharp descent into a deep, narrow V-shaped ditch, 90cm deep. The fill was predominantly a friable grey-brown/black ashy silt with lenses of red-brown sand lower down and fragments of clunch, mortar and pebbles. The feature is cut firstly by a small gully [23/34] and also by a post-hole [35/36].

[18/19] - A straight ditch which starts about the middle of the trench and runs south-west into the large ditch [16]. It was about 63cm wide, 24cm deep and ran for at least 4m; the sides are regular and steep, breaking sharply to a flat bottom. The feature was filled with a very dark grey ashy silt with flecks of charcoal and occasional pebbles and fragments of mortar. The relation with ditch [16] is unknown.

[20/22] and [23/34] - A linear deposit [20] nearly a metre wide orientated north-south, and comprised chiefly of clunch rubble, red and yellow brick fragments, tiles and pot sherds. The main section is north of ditch [16], but there is a smaller stretch just south of [16]. It rested on a slope running west to east which led into a narrow gully [23] about 1.8m wide and at least 0.5m deep, also running north-south, and which was filled with a friable, mid-grey clayey silt including flecks of mortar and tile [34]. Above [20] lay a linear band [22] about 60cm wide, of mid-grey brown silty sand with occasional pebbles and fragments of mortar.

[35/36] - A post-hole and packing fill [36] were found cut into the gully [34] where it cuts [16]. A roughly oval hole (50x40cm) was filled with a compact, dark grey black silt with patches of yellow sand and flecks of charcoal, and in the centre of this packing was a square steak-hole [35], (18x14cm), 25cm deep, filled with a fine, mid-grey silty clay.

Other features [2/3],[4/5],[21],[26],[27],[28/29]

There were a number of features rather similar in terms of an irregular shape and a fine grey to brown silty fill, with a general lack of inclusions.

[2/3] - sub-rectangular depression (1.7x1.15m) about 13cm deep, filled with a fine grey-brown silt and very occasional small pebbles and flecks of charcoal.

[4/5] - semi-circular pit with undulating circumference (1.35x2.55m) about 85cm deep, filled with a fine

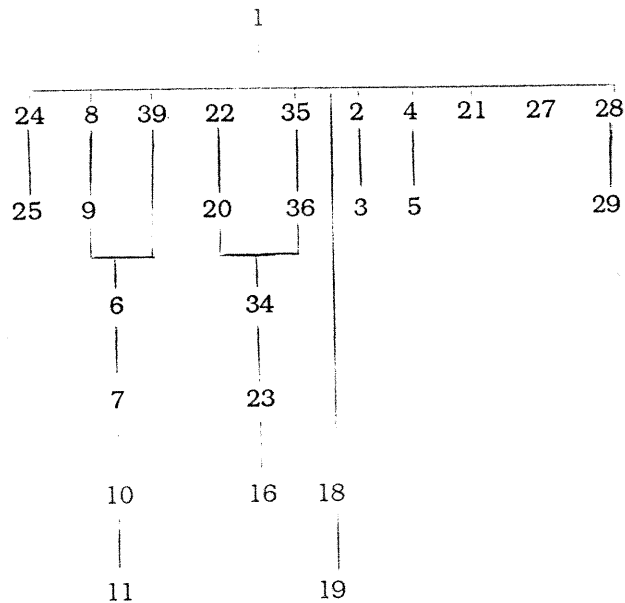
grey-brown silt and very occasional small pebbles, flecks of charcoal and fragments of clunch. [26] is a small hole just north of [4/5] about 38cm in diameter and at least 17cm in depth (though it was seen in the section extending up 33cm), and could be part of [4/5], as it contained the same kind of fill.

[21] - An oval feature (1.8x1m), unexcavated but with the same dark grey-brown silty matrix.

[27] - An oval feature (60x37cm) with steep sides and a flat bottom sloping down from the north-west to the south-east at a maximum depth of 11cm. The fill was a friable dark grey and red-brown silt with very occasional flecks of charcoal, mortar and small pebbles.

[28/29] - An irregular/sub-rectangular depression (1.85x1.4m) with a depth of 40cm and filled with a fine and friable dark grey silt, including very occasional flecks of charcoal, mortar and pebbles.

TRENCH 1 [Matrix]



TRENCH 2

A long, narrow slit trench laid out at the far, west end of the garden. Several features were exposed, all linear and at right angles to the orientation of the long axis of the trench (fig.2).

[30/31] - A shallow ditch about 60cm wide and 14cm deep, filled with a fine, mid-grey silty clay and very occasional small pebbles.



Plate I General view of building.1 (east)

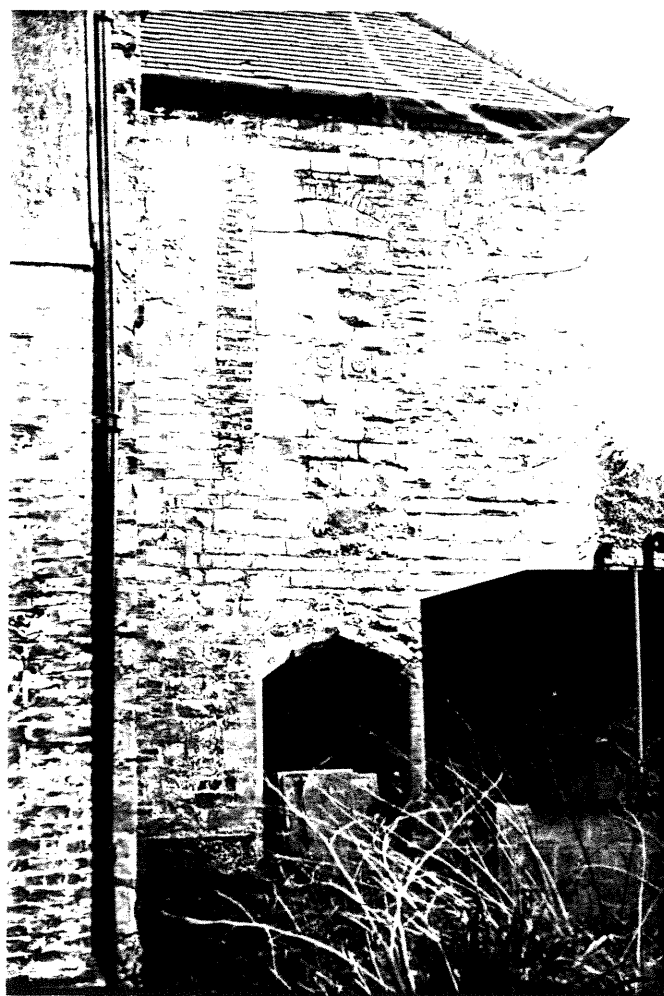
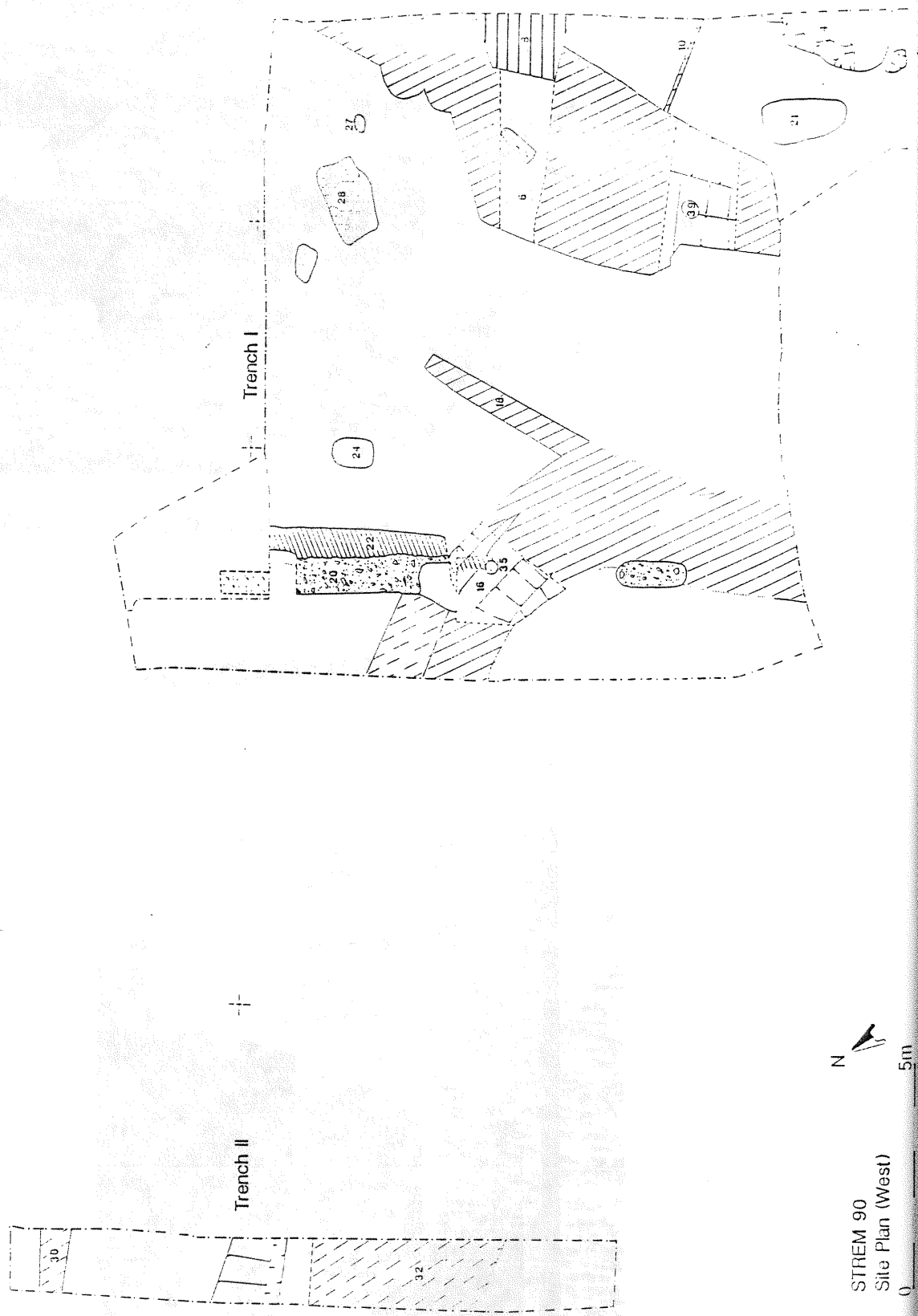


Plate II North end of Rectory - 14th century
(east)



STREM 90
Site Plan (West)



Trench I

Trench II



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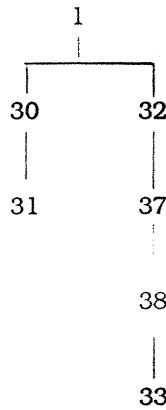
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13 [32/33] - A wide ditch extending down about 48cm and filled with a fine mid-grey brown silty sand, including very occasional fragments of stone upto 4cm across. A gulley [37] is cut (?) into it, along the same orientation; it is about 25cm wide and 30 cm deep, and filled with a fine, dark-grey brown silty sand and very occasional pebbles. The gulley could in fact be part of the same cut as [33], but the difference in fill due to differential silting.

TRENCH 2 [Matrix]



b) Stage II

TRENCH 3

This was the most extensively excavated trench, though only a sondage along the western edge was taken down to natural for drawing a section. However, most of the features were cut into natural anyway. In addition, a cross-section was cut through wall [44] on the west section (fig.3).

Topsoil and subsoil [1]

Beneath the topsoil was a mixed subsoil of debris in a hard, mid-brown silty sand. The debitage consisted of a great deal of clunch and mortar fragments with occasional flecks of pot and charcoal. The whole layer extended to an average depth of 0.5m and covered the whole of the trench, although at the southern end the soil matrix was a compact, dark brown clayey silt [45].



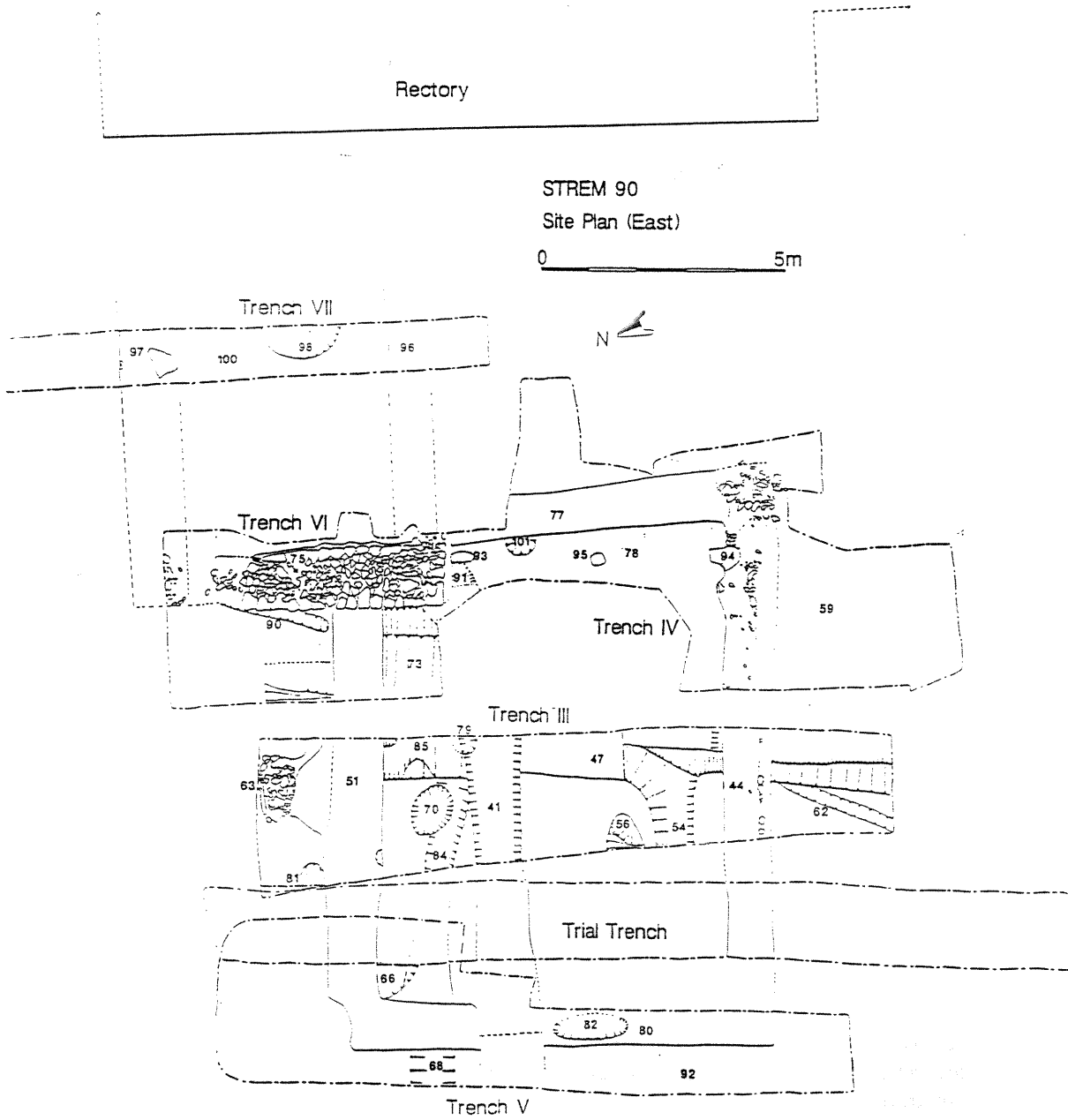


Fig. 3

Trench III East Section

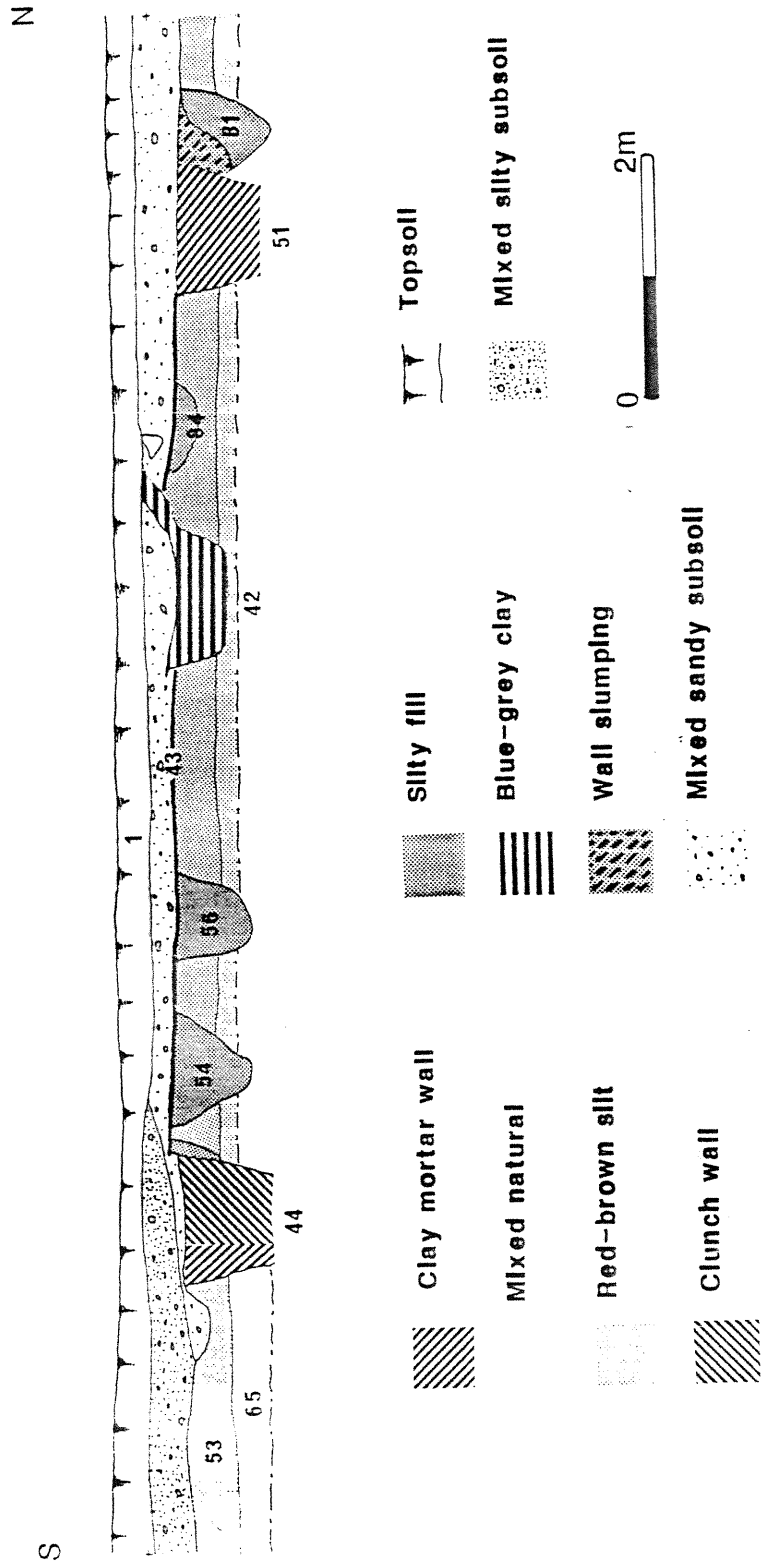


Fig. 4

Clay ditch [41/42]

A large, shallow ditch, about 1.6m wide, 0.52m deep and between 16m and 19m long, also visible in trenches 1 and 5, filled with a very hard, sticky blue-grey clay. It cuts through the mortar layer [43] as well as layer [53]. The fill is very homogenous throughout.

Mortar layer [43]

Below the subsoil was a thin (about 1cm thick), almost continuous layer of compacted, creamy-yellow clay mortar delimited by the two foundation walls [44] and [51], and cut by the clay ditch [41/42] (Fig.4). It sealed both the layer [53] beneath and the various features that were cut into that layer. In between the clay ditch [41/42] and wall [51], the mortar layer was beneath an area of concentrated debris [49] in the subsoil which contained clunch rubble and tile fragments. Beneath that, was a thin layer of grey-brown silty sand with white clunch fragments and burnt sandstone [50], and there was an area of the wall [51] next to this layer which was burnt. Of related interest is an ashy deposit [60], between 15 - 20cm thick underneath the subsoil [52] in the north-west corner of the trench, containing similar burnt debris though in a grey matrix, lying over a thin lens of fine, black ash.

Foundation walls [44], [51] and [63]

[44] - This wall was about 1m wide and eventually shown to be about 1.3m deep with a rounded bottom; there are two interesting aspects to it, namely the absence of a foundation trench (which was in fact common to all the walls of this building, and was also noted in the trial excavation), and secondly a double phase construction, which was exclusive to the south wall of the building (Fig.5). In the first phase [44a], the same construction materials were used as for the other three walls - alternate layers of a hard, light brown sandy clay mortar and friable, mid-brown silty sand. In the second phase [44b], a slightly narrower and shallower wall, about 0.7m wide and 1m deep with a relatively flat bottom, appears to be cut through the original wall on the north side. The materials used differed markedly from the earlier phase, consisting of clunch rubble set in a friable, light brown silty sand mortar. On the top of the wall lay a few large fragments of clunch. The only feature directly associated with wall [44] in this trench was the ditch [46/47] which was cut by the wall (see below).

[51] - The construction materials and methods are the same as for [44a] (see above); cut into the south side of the wall is a semi-circular slot 30x25cm and about 15cm deep. Also, there is a patch of burning on the south side of the wall opposite [63], where the clay mortar has turned red. Another interesting feature is [63] itself, which abutts the wall on the north side (see below).

[63] - A rectangular structure of packed clunch rubble, 0.75x1.25m and at least 0.5m deep (though the bottom was never ascertained), which abutted [51], though it appears as though the clay mortar of [51] projects out to join [63]. This could be merely due to slumping as it also occurs beyond the junction of [51] and [63], to overlie feature [81] (see below).

Pits [56/57], [70/71], [79] and [81]

[56/57] - A semi-oval feature (80x80cm) in plan with irregular profile, which continues into the east section; the sides are almost vertical but undercut along the south-east side where it reaches its deepest point at 80cm. It cuts into layer [53], and the fill, which is mid-dark grey silty clay with flecks of mortar, charcoal and fragments of burnt sandstone, is sealed above by the mortar layer [43]. The bottom of the pit shows signs of burning.

[70/71] - An oval feature (90x78cm) with near vertical sides gently curving to a rounded bottom at a

depth of 65cm, cutting through [53] and [83/84]. The fill comprises bands of dark brown silt and soft, very black ash, though very few inclusions - occasional small pebbles and flecks of clunch. There is iron concretion at the bottom.

[79] - A small sub-rectangular slot (50x25cm) about 50cm deep cut by [41/42] and cutting [85/86], with a rounded bottom. It was filled with an ashy matrix of grey and black bands and occasional small pebbles.

[81] - A semi-oval feature (50x50cm) which continues into the east section. The wall [51] is slumped over the top of this feature (Fig.4), but it also appeared to cut it further down. The pit has a U-shaped profile and a depth of 75cm and was filled with a mid-brown sandy silt.

The Ditches [47/48],[85/86],[54/55],[62],[83/84]

[47/48] - This large ditch appears to run across the site from north to south and shows up at the north end of trench 3 as [85/86]. About a third to a half of its width is exposed, measuring 1.25m at the southern end and 0.75m at the northern end, giving it a total width of probably about 3m. The ditch that shows up in trench 6 as [73] is more than likely the eastern edge of [47/48] (see below). It is cut by both walls [44] and [51], the small pit [79], and also the clay ditch [41/42], and has three smaller ditches leading into it from the west, [62], [54/55] and [83/84] (see below). The fill of the ditch is a fine, dark grey-brown silt with occasional flecks of clunch and mortar. The profile of the cut reveals a gentle slope for about a metre (though this varies depending on the height from which the edge of the cut was visible), before a sharp break, sloping steeply to the bottom. It either represents a ledge to the ditch or a later, shallower recut, though there was no discernible difference in the fill to indicate the latter. The small feature [87/88] in the corner between the section and wall [51] is probably part of this ditch and not a separate unit as the fill was identical and the cut of [47/48] was not perfectly regular.

[54/55] - This was a complicated feature, partly because of its association with [47/48], partly because it turned out to be two units :

[54a] - This is a ditch about 75cm wide and 75cm deep which runs from the west to join [47/48]; it appeared in the trial trench but not in trench 5, so it must presumably turn (south ?) between those two trenches or come to an end. It was filled with a dark grey-brown silt, indistinguishable from that in [47/48], making the relationship between these two ditches extremely problematic.

[54b] - This is a narrow, L-shaped slot cut into [47/48], with one arm aligned with [54a], (though the whole feature is about 50cm higher than [54a]), the other with [47/48]. The fill was mortar.

[62] - This is a shallow ditch about 0.5m wide and 20cm deep running from the section into the main ditch [47/48], orientated NE-SW. It was filled with a compact mid-grey brown silty sand with occasional small pebbles and fragments of mortar.

[83/84] - A shallow ditch, again coming from the west into the main ditch [47/48], about 70cm wide and only 20cm deep; it is undoubtedly the same feature as [68/69] in trench 5, and therefore cut by the west wall [80] of the structure, and is also cut by the pit [70/71]. The fill consisted of a compact, dark grey-brown sandy silt with very occasional small pebbles and flecks of charcoal.

Trench III
Cross-section (West)
Wall [44]

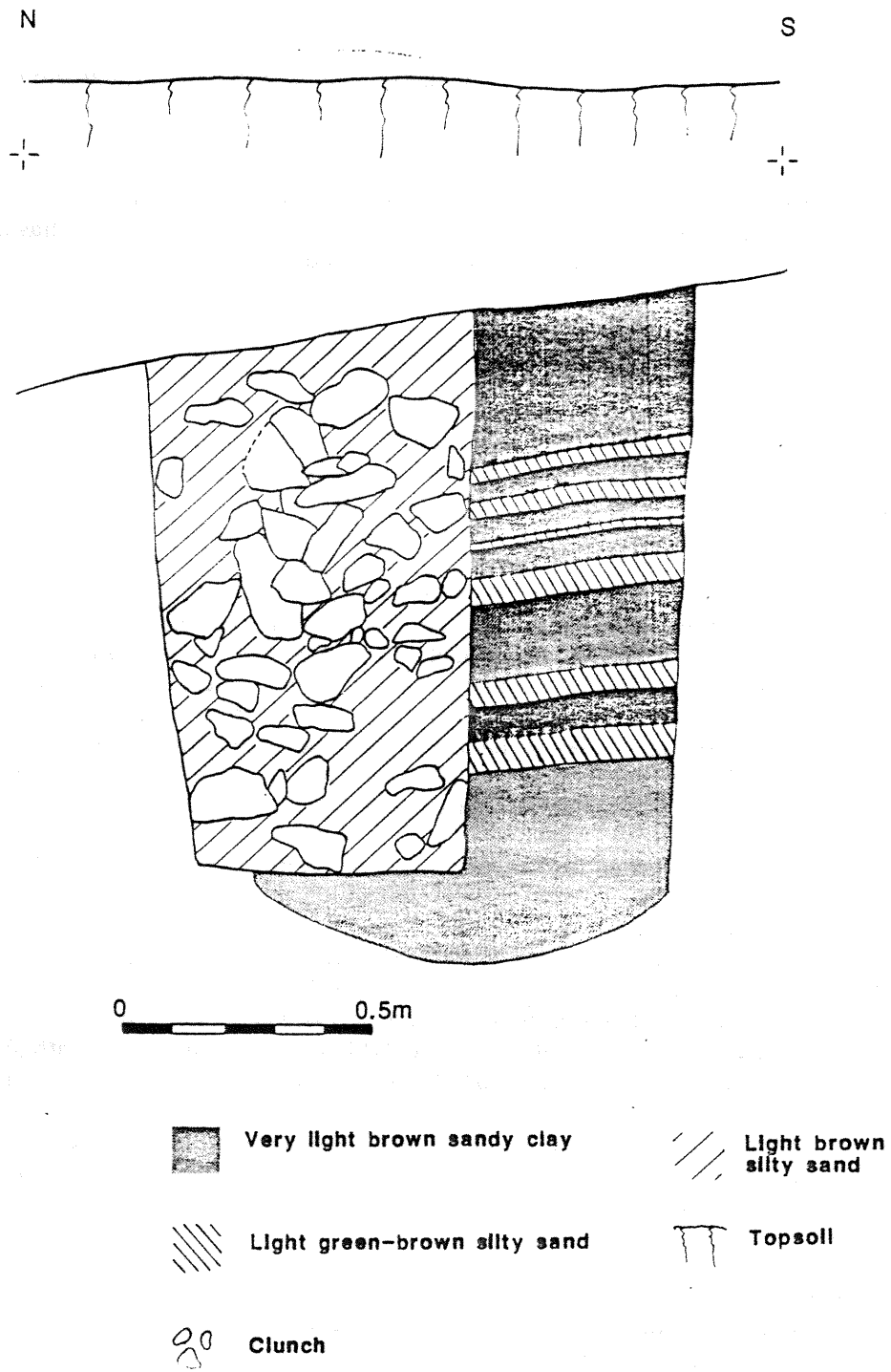


Fig. 5



Plate III North end of trench 3 (south)

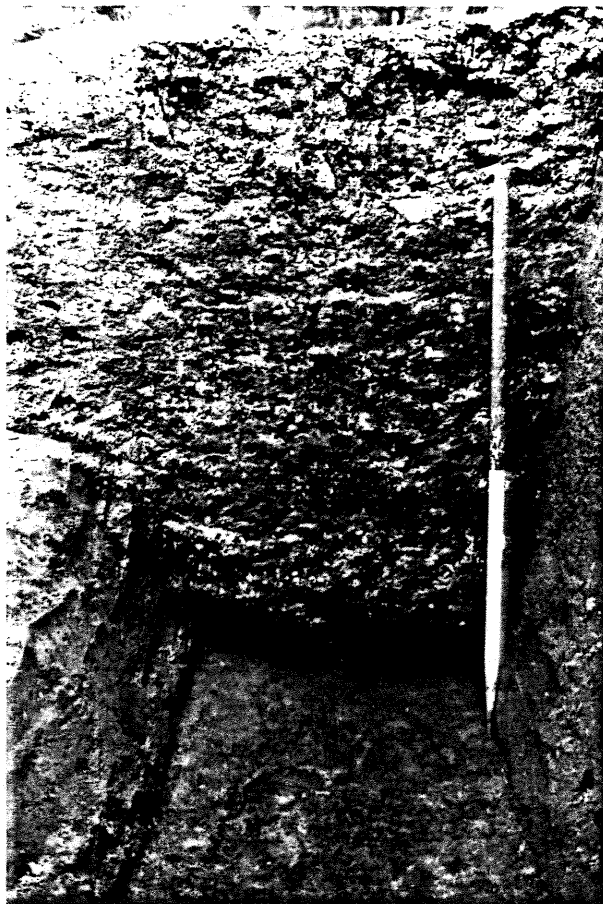
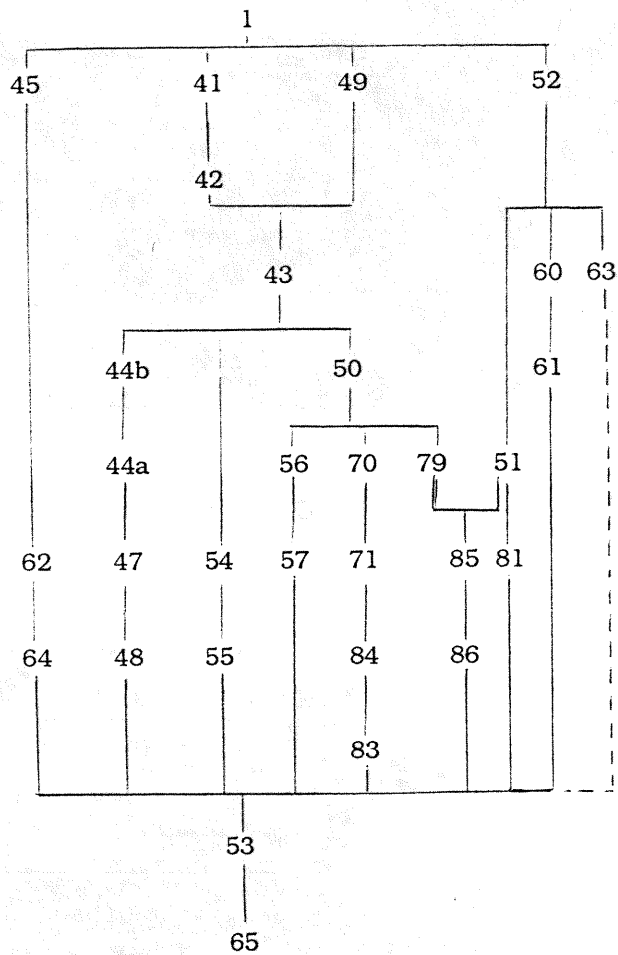


Plate IV Elevation of wall [44] trench 3 (south)

TRENCH 3 [Matrix]



TRENCH 4

After the digger removed the topsoil, the trench was cleaned to expose the features and only a strip along wall [77] was taken down to a layer of mixed natural (fig.3).

Foundation walls [44] and [77]

Wall [44] has already been described in trench 3 and wall [77] was constructed in the same way as [44a] and [51], as far as can be seen. Obviously the interesting question is to know how [44b] is related to [77];

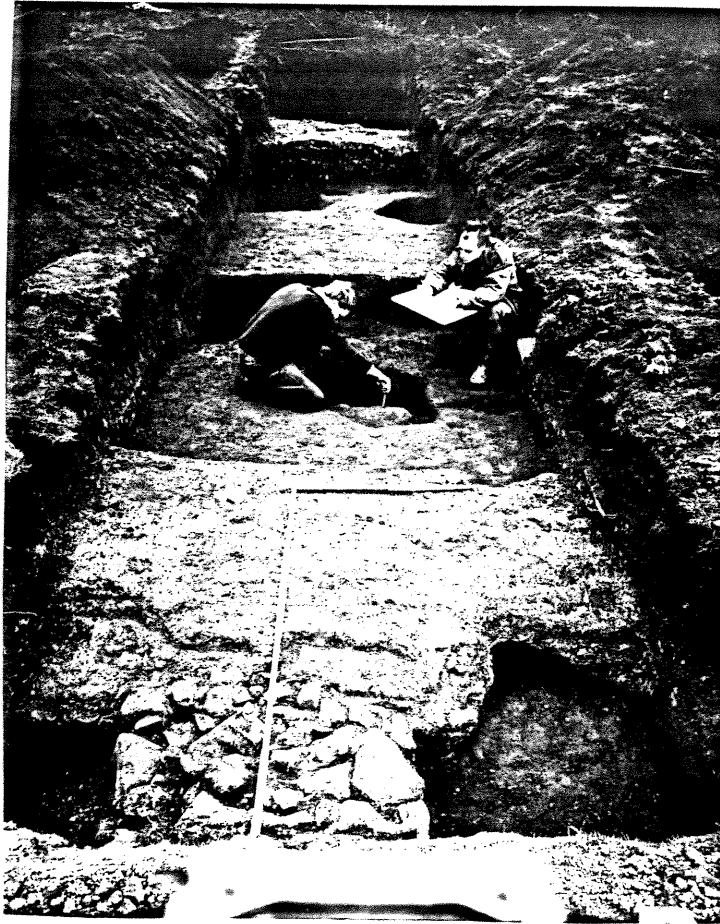


Plate VII trench 3 (north)



Plate VIII Wall [44] and ditch [47] (north)

P

[44a]
o [77];



Plate V South-east corner of building.1 (south)



Plate VI Walls [75] and [51] (north)

without the opportunity to excavate fully, from a plan view alone it seems that an angle-joint was used at the conjunction of [44] and [77] (see Fig.9). That corner of the structure was also quite badly disturbed in the top 10cm, showing a wide rubble spread of clunch. On the north side of wall [44] there was a rectangular slot [94] (60x45cm) cut into it, filled with a hard, light grey-green/brown clay, which extended the same distance out from the wall, and went down to a depth of about 50cm.

Other features [95],[101],[59] and [78]

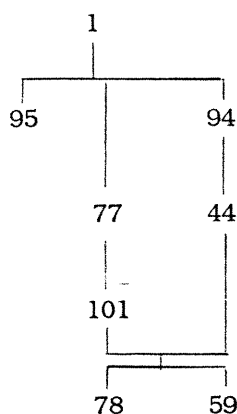
[95] - This was a small hole (30x30cm) cut through layer [78] to a depth of 35cm, and filled with hard, light grey-green/brown clay, occasional small pebbles and flecks of charcoal.

[101] - A shallow, semi-circular depression (60x40cm) at the edge of wall [77] with a fill very similar to [78].

[59] - A layer beneath the topsoil and to the south of wall [44], consisting of a friable, mid-grey brown silty sand with occasional flecks of charcoal and mortar and small pebbles. Some darker material was coming up on the western side which could be the other edge of the main ditch [47/48], though there was no time to excavate this area properly. It probably is equivalent to the subsoil layer in trench 3.

[78] - The layer within the walls [44] and [77], comprised of a fine, dark brown silty sand with occasional pebbles and fragments of mortar and clunch. It also turned up an unusually large quantity of finds (bone and pottery). All the features appear to be cut through it except for layer [59].

TRENCH 4 [Matrix]



TRENCH 5

After the removal of topsoil by the digger, the area was cleaned to show up any features, and only a strip along the west edge of wall [80] at the southern end was taken down to mixed natural (fig.3).

The clay ditch [41/42]

The same ditch that appears in trench 3; it cuts the wall [80].

The foundation walls [80] and [51]

[80] presumably joins [44], and constitutes the west wall of the structure. About half-way along its length there is a shallow depression [82] (1.6x0.5m) on top of the wall. At the junction of [80] and [51], the outer edge of the corner has a large kink, which could indicate some disturbance - since the area was not fully excavated it is unknown whether there was a more regular corner preserved lower down.

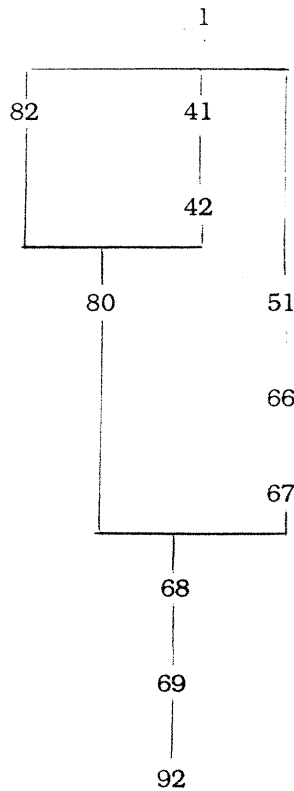
Other features [66/67], [68/69] and [92]

[66/67] - A pit in the inside corner of walls [80] and [51], which extended further east into the trial trench. It extends 80cm from the edge of [51], by which it may be cut, and gently slopes to a depth of 23cm. It was filled with a very soft and loose mid-dark grey ashy matrix with frequent fragments of burnt sandstone, mortar, clunch and flecks of charcoal. It cuts the ditch [68/69].

[68/69] - A shallow ditch about 1m wide and 22cm deep which runs east-west and also appears in trench 3 as [83/84]. It is cut by the wall [80] and the feature [66/67]. It was filled with a mid-grey brown silty sand with occasional small pebbles.

[92] - A friable, mid-brown sandy silt layer beneath the subsoil, including occasional small pebbles and flecks of mortar, pot and charcoal. All the features in this trench appear to cut through it.

TRENCH 5 [Matrix]



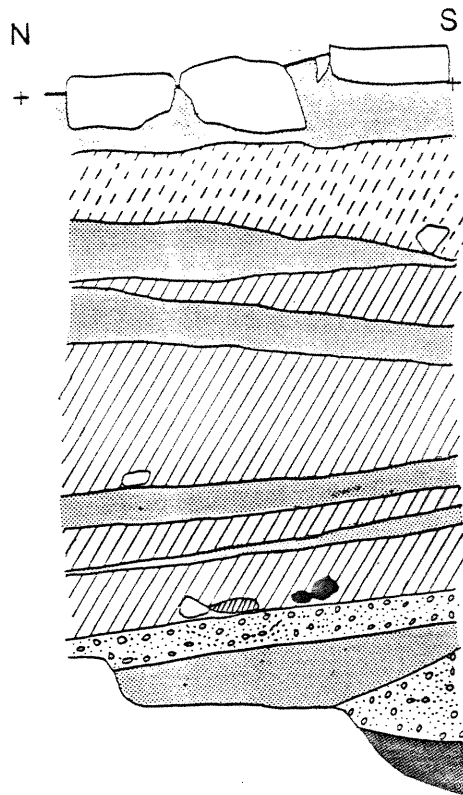
TRENCH 6

The only part of this trench that was taken down to natural was a section cut through the wall [75] at the north end of the trench, mainly because this area was very badly disturbed. However, feature [73] was cut into natural which showed up on excavation (fig.3).

Foundation wall [75]

What primarily distinguished this wall from all the others so far found was that it had the substantial remains of a first course of sandstone ashlar edging. Furthermore, it did not line up with the expected course of wall [77], and extended northwards beyond wall [51]. This suggested the possibility of either another structure or a major alteration of the existing foundations. From the section taken through it and the elevation exposed by the excavation of feature [73], it was seen to have been constructed in different materials, though by a similar method in that no foundation trench was found, and the materials were laid down in layers. The two layers were a friable, light brown silty sand mortar with frequent

Trench VI
 Elevation West face
 Wall [75]



0 0.5m









-  Red-brown gravelly sand
-  Dark brown clayey silt
-  Light brown silty sand
-  Clunch
-  Grey-brown sandy silt
-  Flint
-  Grey-brown silty sand
-  Ceramic

Fig. 6

small pebbles and fragments of clunch, and a compact, mid-grey/brown sandy silt with occasional small/large pebbles and flecks of clunch. At the very bottom however, there were two bands of a friable, light reddish-brown gravelly sand with frequent small/medium pebbles. The remaining first course of sandstone ashlar was laid along the edges with an infill of clunch rubble (fig.6). Also, on the east side of the wall there was substantial remains of plaster. Unlike the other walls, potential dating evidence was recovered in the form of a few fragments of tile and a clay-pipe stem (though this latter is dubious, since the area of the wall from which it came had been highly disturbed). The wall was about 1.25m wide and cut down to a depth of about 0.95m. For a discussion of the relation between [75] and [51] see below.

Foundation wall [51]

For a description, see trench 3 (also : fig.7); it cuts the ditch [73], and a small ditch [90] ends just at its northern edge. More problematic is the relation with the other wall [75]; certainly [51] stops at [75] and there is no sign of it on the other side. The interface between [75] and [51] is very tight and the edge of [51] which abuts [75] appears very straight. The question is whether it was made to abut [75] or whether [75] cuts [51] very cleanly (see Discussion below).

Mortar layer [72]

Quite a thick layer of friable, creamy-yellow sandy mortar (4cm thick) covering the area to the south of wall [51], with fragments of clunch and tile. Part of it is probably the mixed subsoil found in trench 3 and the rest, the same as the mortar layer [43] also in trench 3.

Ditch [73]

A fine, dark grey-brown silt was found to fill the area between walls [51] and [75] in the south-west corner of the trench, and after excavation, gently sloping sides cut into natural were exposed, aligned north-south, parallel to the edge of the main ditch [47/48] in trench 3. Further excavation on the north side of wall [51] revealed the continuation [76] of this feature, confirming that it is cut by the wall [51]. It is worth noting however that the fill north of the wall [55] was harder and more clayey. At the bottom of the ditch there is heavy iron concretion. The maximum depth reached about 1m. It seems as though another ditch or pit [89], joins [73] in the south-east corner, though the fills are indistinguishable and it only showed up in section. Also a small, funnel-shaped hole [74], about 20cm in diameter and 45cm deep, is cut into [73] and filled with the mortar from [72].

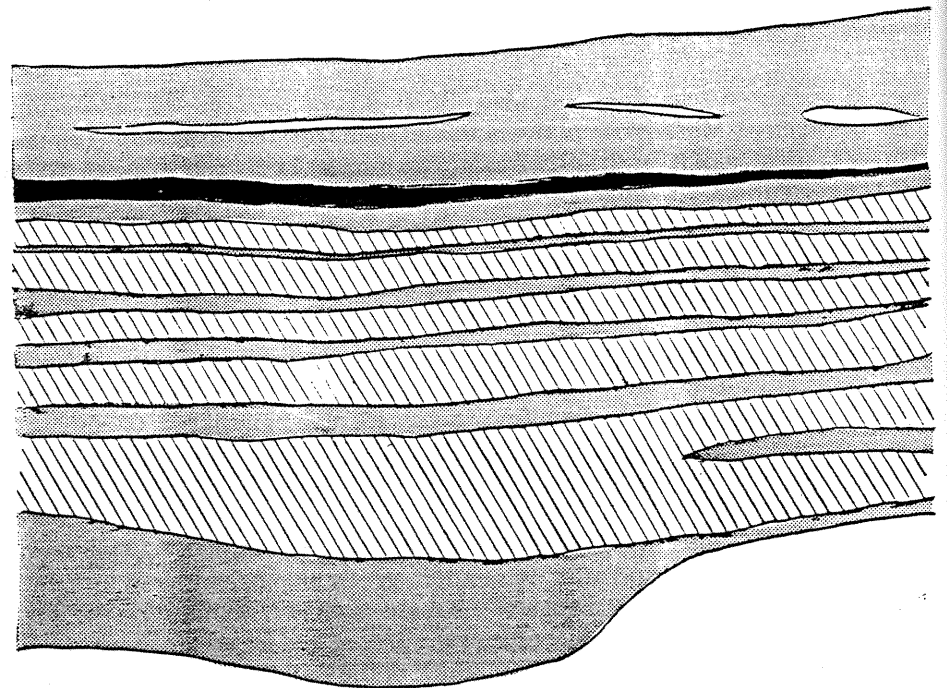
Ditch [90]

A narrow ditch about 40cm wide and 30 cm deep runs north-south on the west side of wall [75] and stops abruptly before wall [51]. It is cut by [75], but cuts through the ditch [73], and is filled with a compact, dark grey-brown sandy silt with frequent flecks of mortar, charcoal and pot, and medium/small pebbles, and a large quantity of pottery and bone.

Trench VI
Elevation South face
Wall [51]

W

E



0 0.5m



Very light brown sandy clay



Mortar



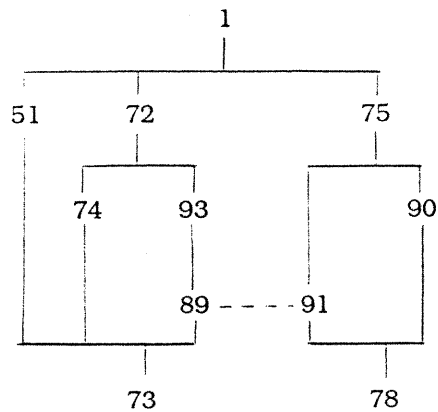
Light green-brown silty sand



Pulverised clunch

Fig. 7

TRENCH 6 [Matrix]



c) Stage III

The first task was to join trenches 4 and 6 to see the relationship between wall [77] and [75]; this was done by hand. Then the digger was brought in again for some final trenching and backfilling. Initially, a narrow strip (trench 7) to the east of trench 6 was dug, which revealed two more foundation walls as expected. To check that another wall did not lead off northwards, a small bore hole (2x1m) about a meter deep and just over a metre to the north of trench 6 was sunk using the digger, but nothing was found. Secondly, a couple more bore-holes of similar dimensions were dug at the southern end of the site, about 8m west from the rectory and between 6 and 8m south of trench 4, but again nothing turned up except a thin layer of gravel just below the topsoil, which was probably the remains of the garden path (Fig.12).

AREA BETWEEN TRENCHES 4 AND 6

Removal of the topsoil and mixed subsoil quickly revealed that wall [75] came to an end and turned eastward into the section, and that wall [77] abutted it like [51], though here it did appear that a thin pile of mortar debris was wedged between the two walls; it could not be ascertained how deep this went. Two more features were also uncovered (fig.3).

[91] - A pit or edge of a ditch [89?] which appeared in the corner between the wall [75] and the section. It was filled with a dark brown, hard sandy silt, with occasional small pebbles and flecks of charcoal.

[93] - A rectangular slot which cuts through [91] and the mortar layer [72], as well as the mortar pile that lay between [75] and [77]. The slot (45x25cm) was about 0.5m deep and filled in the upper part with a light brown, friable silty sand mixed with fragments of clunch, mortar and tile, and lower down with a light, greenish-brown hard clay.

TRENCH 7

A narrow slit trench about 1 metre wide was cut in between trench 6 and the rectory with the digger and then the rest cleaned by hand. No proper excavation was involved, just the removal of topsoil to expose any features (fig.3).

Feature [99]

About 15cm from the ground surface a collection of broken and some complete clay pipes with broken pottery and fragments of glass was unearthed by the digger. No cut was immediately discernible and there was no time to investigate it properly; it did not appear to be associated with the other features in any way, being on a much higher level.

Foundation walls [96] and [97]

Two walls at right-angles to [75] and running towards the rectory appeared beneath the subsoil - no ashlar edging stones were present but the same rubble fill and sandy mortar foundations as [75] were extant.

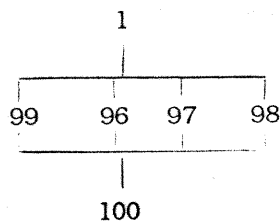
Pit [98]

A semi-circular feature showed up about half-way along the trench in between the two walls [96] and [97], filled with a dark brown, hard clayey silt. It was only partially excavated.

Layer [100]

The area in between the two walls was occupied by a light/mid-brown sandy matrix, however it may have been very shallow for along the west edge of the trench an area of light, greyish brown clay started to appear and seemed to continue under the sand, which could therefore represent a demolition layer, made up of the sandy mortar from the walls. Certainly there was nothing comparable with the compacted clay mortar layer [43] found elsewhere, in this trench.

TRENCH 7 [Matrix]



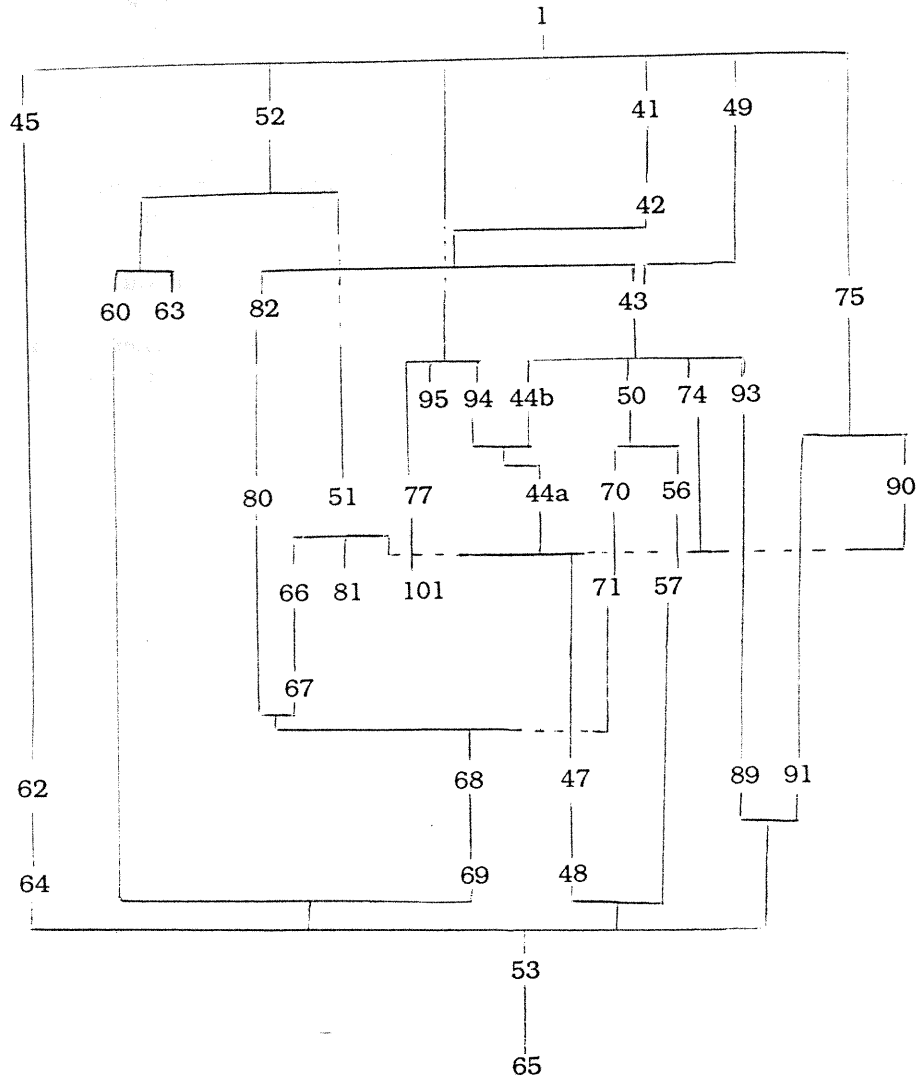
Summary

The results of the excavation revealed quite substantial archaeological features, with the concentration at the eastern end of the garden close to the rectory. A series of ditches and pits appear all over the site, though the stratigraphic relation between those in trenches 1 and 2 on the one hand and those in trenches 3 to 7 on the other is unknown; certainly the ditches (except the clay one - see below) are the earliest features in their respective trenches. Also, the one feature that is common to trenches 1,3 and 5, ie. the clay ditch, is the latest feature.

In between, are the foundation walls and some of the pits; the latter, at least in trench 1, are not tied in with any other features stratigraphically, which makes it difficult to place them in a sequence. However, these pits are perhaps nothing more than the bottom parts of flower beds, or the product of animal burrows or tree roots (see discussion below). The pits within the walls on the other hand are a little more secure stratigraphically, and are certainly more archaeologically significant. The walls themselves appear to constitute two separate buildings : one being made from banded clay mortar, and the other structure of banded sandy mortar, clipping the former one at its north-eastern corner, and apparently continuing towards the rectory. Whether the latter is actually connected to the foundations of the standing rectory is a fact we were unable to ascertain, but certain conjectures can be put forward (see below). Similarly, one must consider the relation between the two buildings (see Discussion below).

Upon completion of the excavation, the site was backfilled leaving the walls mostly intact, and although extensive, the work carried out was by no means exhaustive. It is recommended that any development should avoid disturbance within an area 30m west of the rectory at a depth greater than 0.5m.

TRENCHES 3,4,5,6 (Matrix)



DISCUSSION

The archaeological contexts on the site can be generally placed in three categories - buildings, ditches and garden features.

Garden Features

The latter are the least interesting and are confined to trench 1; All the irregular depressions in the south-east corner of the trench with a silty fill are probably the bottom parts of flower beds which have since been moved. Two of these features, [4] and [28], had a few sherds of pottery dating to between the 8th and 13th centuries, though this in itself means very little. The arrangement of the lawn differs today from its layout about a hundred and fifty years ago, where four oval beds were set at the four corners of the garden (fig. 12). A tile and brick dump [20], running north-south lies at the western end of trench 1, which could be the remains of either construction or demolition work, though there are some curious features which invite further thought. First, it lies in a very tidy, straight line, and secondly, it has an associated ditch; perhaps it is another abandoned garden feature, such as a rockery? Certainly all the pottery from these features are post-medieval in date.

Ditches

The ditches which cross-cut the whole of the garden have been stratigraphically placed as among the earliest features. A small quantity of Roman pottery came from all the main ditches in trench 1 [16],[18], and [6], and a Roman coin from ditch [47] in trench 3, though all these ditches, except [18], contained Saxon and mediaeval pottery too. Only one ditch [16], had any post-mediaeval ceramics. Unfortunately, the ditch fill does not really provide reliable dating for the ditches themselves, since they could have been filled at a much later time and even contain a mix of material from many different periods. However most of the pottery does date to between the 10th and 13th centuries, and the lack of any later material, except for [16], might suggest an early mediaeval date for the abandonment of the ditches. This is a useful post terminus quem for the walls of building 1 which cut these ditches. The ditches themselves are probably enclosure and/or drainage ditches between paddocks or horticultural allotments.

The one feature which cuts the walls however, is the clay ditch [41] which contains pottery from the same period as the other ditches as well as some Roman material. Does this mean that the clay ditch, the walls and the earlier ditches are all roughly contemporary? This is difficult to say, especially without knowing the function of the clay ditch. One interpretation is that it is another garden feature, such as an abandoned pond which had been lined with clay, but perhaps it is rather too narrow and shallow for that. Also it could relate to construction work such as a pit for storing the clay used in the production of mortar or clay bats. Both these views would put the ditch quite late, certainly later than building 1. However, if the ditch is roughly contemporary with the building, perhaps it was incorporated into the foundations as a subterranean conduit which could have fed into ditch [6]. If for example it had conveyed sewage from a garderobe in the building, it is quite likely to have been lined with clay and even backfilled with clay when it went out of use, to seal it.

Buildings

These features merit the most attention because of their association with the upstanding architecture, namely the rectory and the church. Two aspects need to be discussed here - the construction methods and the function of the building.

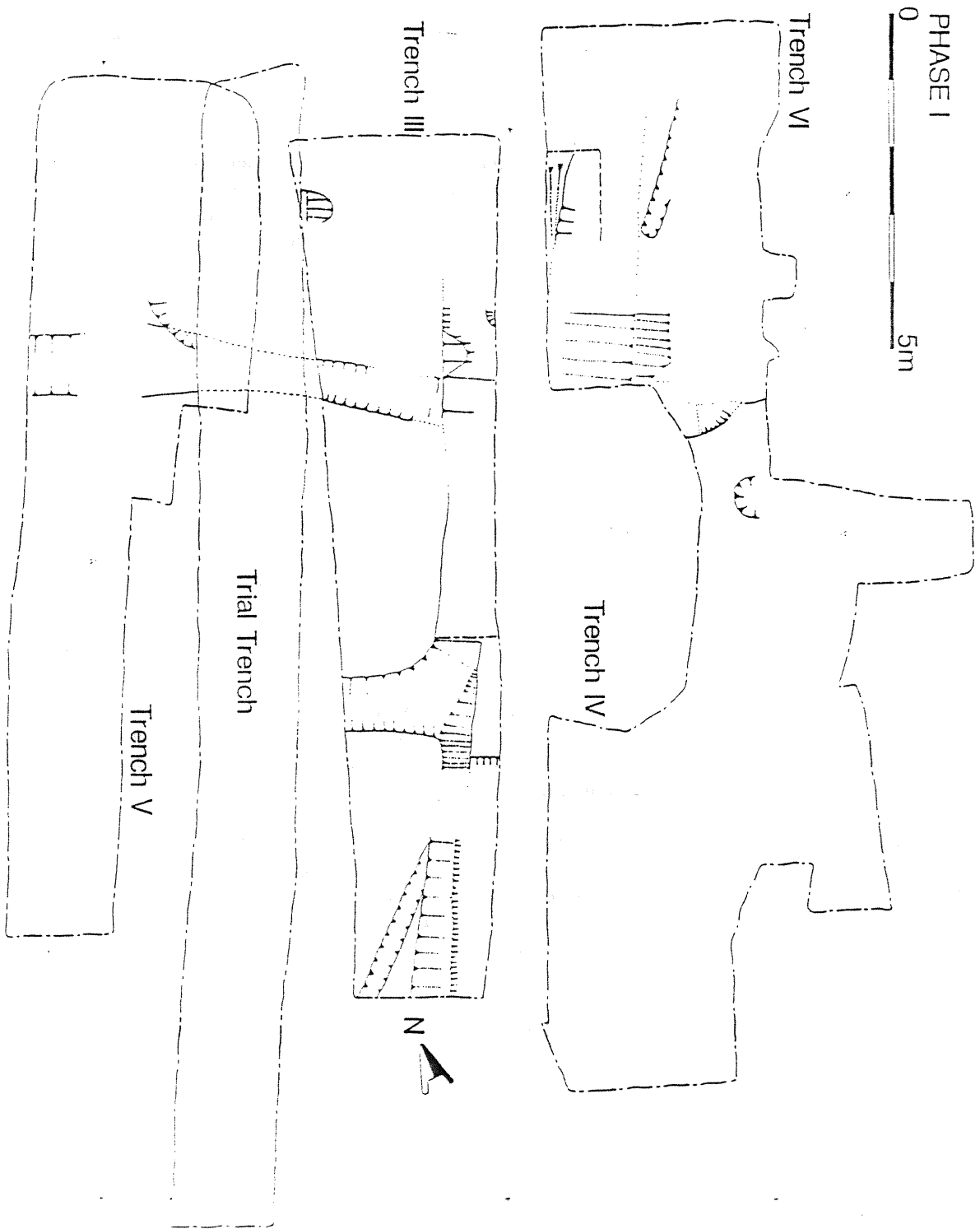


Fig. 8

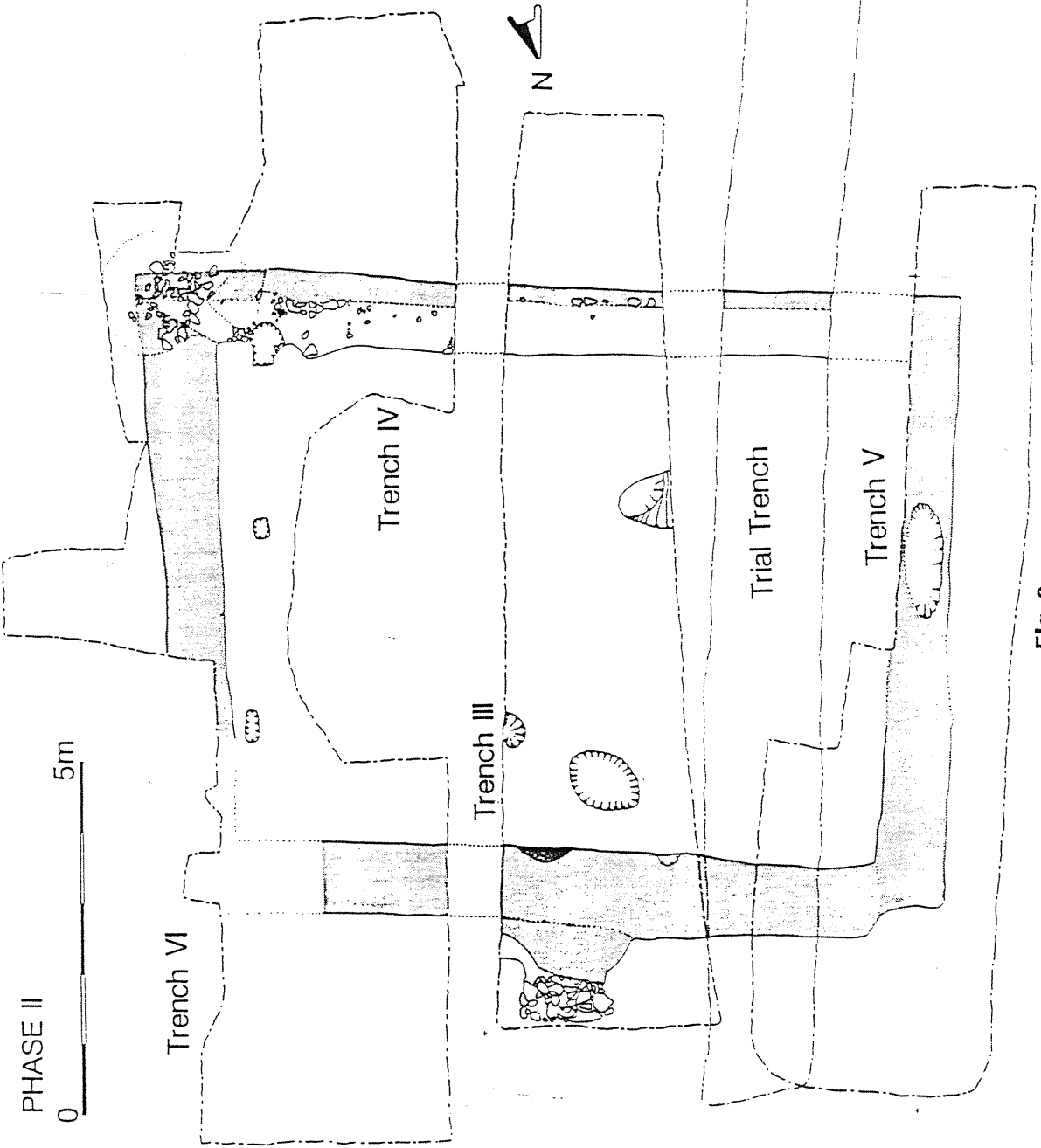
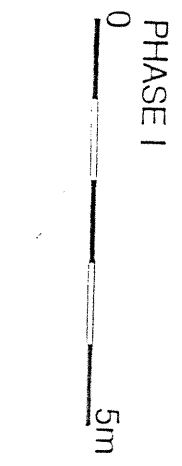


Fig. 9

Building. 1

i) The foundations of the two structures appear to have been laid in similar ways : first a trench was cut, slightly tapering in to a rounded bottom, to about a metre depth, and then packed in layers with the respective materials. In this structure, it consisted of light brown sandy clay and a light green-brown silty sand. During a later phase of the same structure, the south wall was recut on the inside and filled with clunch rubble in a light brown silty sand matrix. Similarly, on the north wall, outside face, a clunch rubble buttress in the same mortar was positioned more or less centrally along the wall. The two later modifications are probably contemporary, and may in fact be related in a structural sense. The recut of the south wall has not made the wall any wider than it would have been, and it could be that part of the superstructure on the south side was unstable and required extensive reparation (yet this would not necessarily involve rebuilding the foundations). The buttress on the north side could be part of the same repair work where it was considered unnecessary to rebuild the north wall. However, another interpretation is that an (extra) upper storey was added to the building requiring a recut of the foundations, though this would not explain why only the south side of the wall foundation was rebuilt, unless the extra storey did not extend over the whole of the building. The buttress on the north side of the wall would then counter-balance the force from the heightened south wall. Another possible interpretation for the 'buttress', is in fact that it is the foundation for a chimney stack, since there are signs of intense heat on the inside of the north wall just opposite to where the 'buttress' is added. Finally, it could be the foundations for a stairway, which were commonly external in mediaeval buildings.

Nothing remains of the superstructure of this earliest building, except a few large fragments of clunch scattered along the southern wall, which might indicate clunch walls above ground, but it could equally be just the disturbed top of the clunch foundation recut [44a], particularly so since they are only present along the south wall. If this is the case, then it is difficult to say what the superstructure was constructed out of - given the lack of stone in the area, and that the foundations are not built from stone, a timber or cob building is not unlikely.

The other features probably associated with this building include two pits, several post-holes and a mortar layer. There are three post-holes [93,94,95] aligned alongside the eastern wall [77], which have all been backfilled with the same light green-brown clay, and there is another one [79], about half-way along the north wall [51] and aligned with [93], though filled with an ashy matrix. Two further possible post-holes are the semi-circular cut into the wall [51] in trench 3 and the feature [87/88], which are aligned with [79]. These are probably for the posts which may have supported the roof or an upper story. Certainly the post-hole [94] is cut into the rebuilding of the southern foundation, which could make that row contemporary with this alteration, and therefore structurally related.

Two pits [70,56] were found inside the building, one of which at least post-dates the ditches, and the fills of both were similar, containing ashy layers, not as dark or silty as the ditch fills. The pottery from these two pits date between the 10th and 12th century, though one Roman, and some early Saxon sherds were found in [70]. If they are contemporary with the building, they could possibly be large post-holes for the scaffolding when the building was being erected, for they contain patches of mortar and flecks of clunch, the debris of building material which went in the holes when the scaffolding was removed and the pits backfilled. It is most unlikely they are domestic features since they contain no great quantity of artefacts.

All the other contexts associated with this earlier building relate to its demolition : the areas of disturbance on the walls such as the south-east corner and feature [82], while the mortar layer [43] indicates the depth to which the general activity of demolition was carried out. However, if the mortar layer is a demolition layer, the clay ditch cannot be related to the structure since it cuts this layer; alternatively, this layer could be a construction layer, ie., the trampled accumulation of debris fallen when the superstructure was being erected. This in turn, must imply that the pits interpreted as scaffold post-holes, are probably not that, since the scaffolding would have probably been removed after a construction layer had built up, unless this layer dates to the second phase of rebuilding (see above), which could also make the clay ditch of the same period.

ii) Ultimately, the function or nature of this building has to be questioned : what was it ? There are really only four means of answering this question - the nature of the foundations (ie. size and materials), the association with other archaeological features, the association with the upstanding architecture, and the elimination of alternative interpretations. Below is a discussion of the alternatives in relation to the other three parameters.

a) There are rumours pertaining to the existence of an early Saxon church in the rectory garden, no doubt fostered by the Reverend Stitt, who in his history, proposed that it 'would have stood somewhere on what is now the Rectory lawn'(Stitt, 1922;3). He described it as a 'circular hut made of osiers or wattle, roofed with mud'(ibid.) Climate of opinion has somewhat changed since then, and it seems more plausible that any early Saxon church would have stood where the present church is located. However the size and construction methods of the building discovered are not at all dissimilar to what would be expected of an early Saxon church.

b) Given its proximity to the present rectory, another interpretation of the structure is that it is an earlier rectory or associated building. As was noted previously (see background above), the present rectory in terms of above ground architecture, dates only back to the 14th century, while documents record the existence of a church and rector at least as early as the 13th century. It therefore seems likely that an earlier rectory existed beneath or near the present one. If the building was an early rectory, it would have been small, but that is not at all unusual; at Winford in Somerset, the old Rectory measures 7.6 x 5.7m, compared to this building of about 8.5 x 11.5m (Pantin, 1957;144). Pantin suggests that this type of priest's house must originally have been widespread, but no longer extant, with average dimensions of 9 x 6m. It would have consisted of a single room hall/kitchen with entry and dispenche on the ground floor, and attic room above. The chief argument against this interpretation is the size of the foundations - would such substantial walls have been built in the 12th century for a small priest's house ? The same would apply to it, if it is seen as a detached kitchen, or indeed any domestic architecture of the same period. Also, the Faculty books of the 18th century record the issue of a licence to pull down a dovecote 'which is an injury and a nuisance'(Palmer 1935), yet it is unlikely that a dovecote would have those foundations, and be situated so close to the house, especially where the barn, orchard and vegetable garden were all set away to the south of the main range (fig. 12).

c) Finally, the very substantial foundations might indicate a building of some height such as a tower house (eg. Longthorpe, Cambridgeshire.). Although not technically a fortified building, in practice it could be a defensive structure as well as a residence, with the living area on the first floor. *Domus defensabiles* are recorded in the Domesday book, although the highpoint of activity was between 1270 and 1370.

Building.2

i) The foundation walls for this building differ only in the materials used; a similar trench was cut and alternate layers of light brown silty sand and grey-brown sandy silt were rammed into the trench, except at the bottom there were two layers of red-brown gravelly sand. The extent of the walls cover at least 6 x 6m, though it is probable that they continue east to join up with the present rectory. What is really required is an investigation into the foundations of the north end of the standing rectory. Fortunately, some of the superstructure survives for this building in the form of a first course of ashlar edging stones with clunch rubble fill, quite similar to those at the north end of the present range. Also, there is the remains of plaster work on the inside of the west wall.

ii) The notable feature of this building is that the north wall aligns almost exactly with the north wall of the upstanding rectory which ostensibly dates to the 14th century (fig. 10). It is possible therefore that there might originally have been a rectangular range orientated east-west, and building.2 represents the western half of that, which was later demolished at some stage in the development of the rectory (see Reconstruction below).

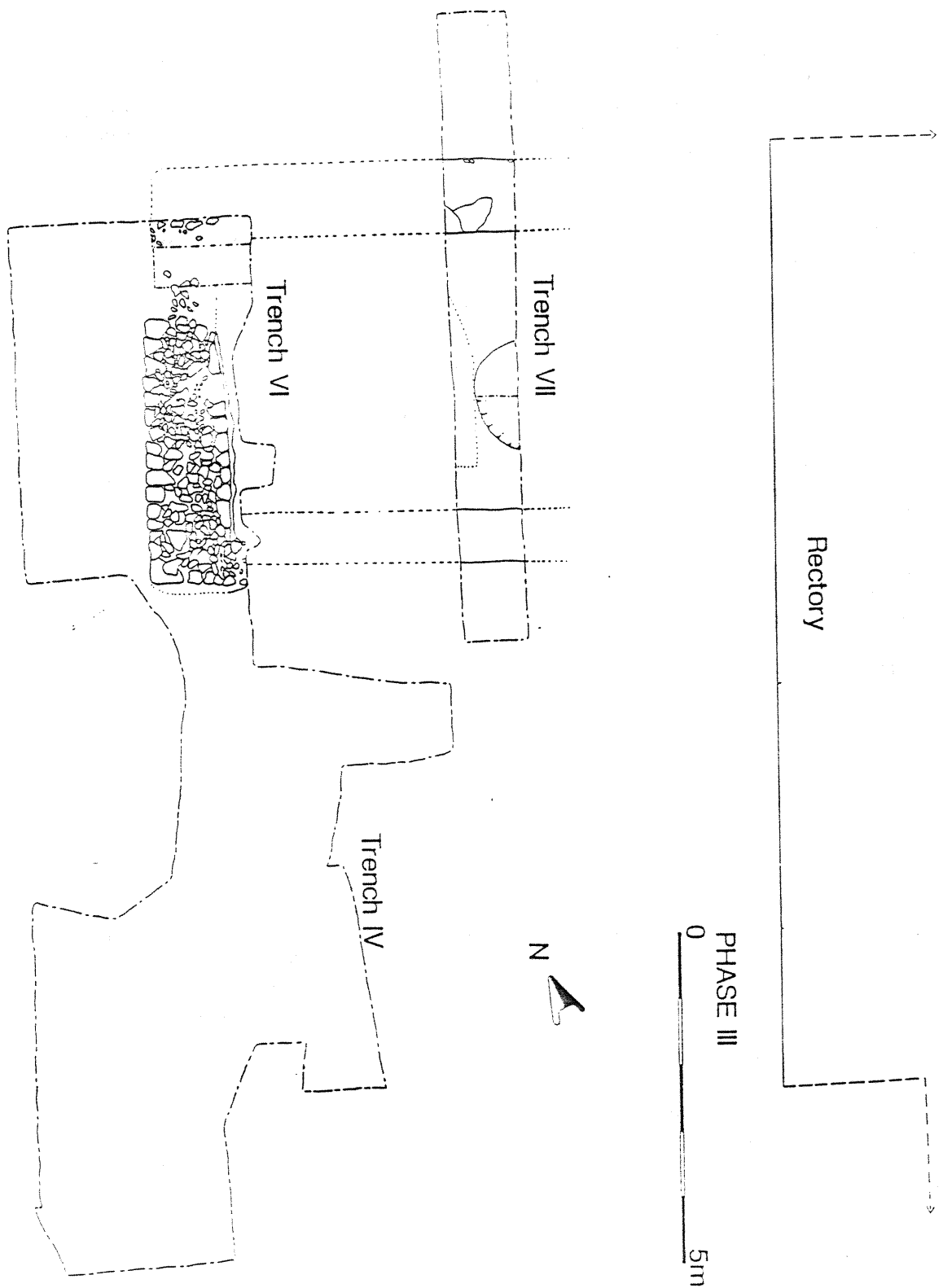
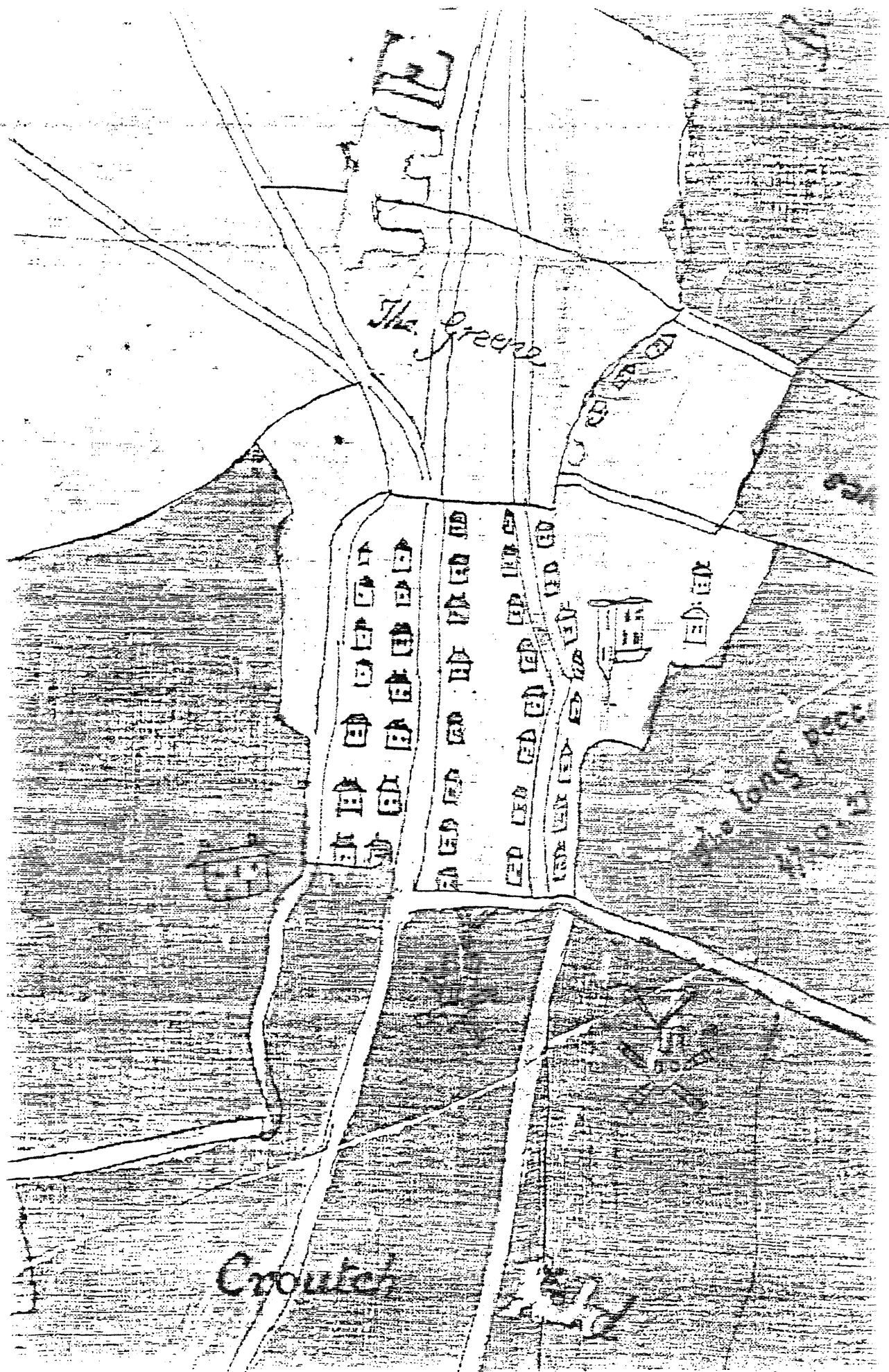


Fig. 10



STRETHAM VILLAGE 1605

Stretham Rectory 1828

NB. NOT TO SCALE

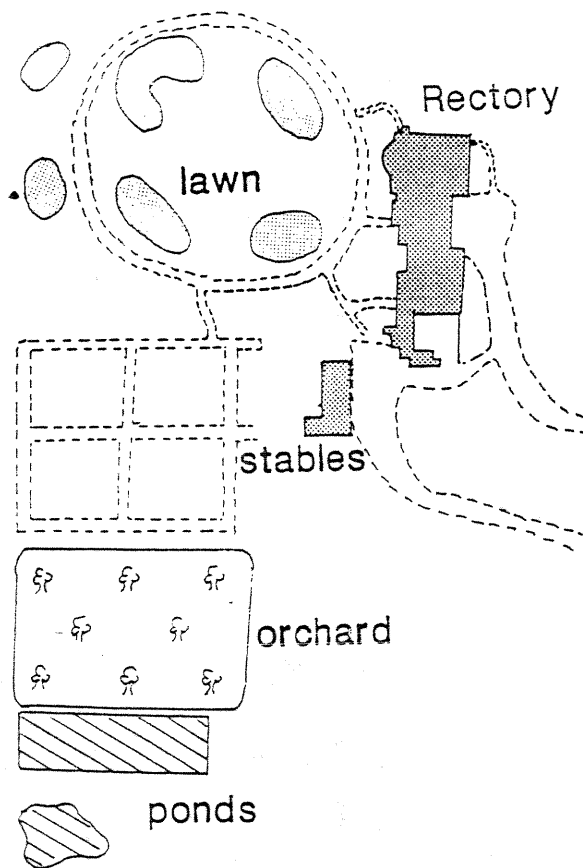


Fig.12

STRETHAM RECTORY

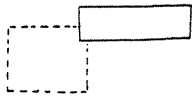
Building phases

0  50m

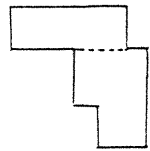
12th century



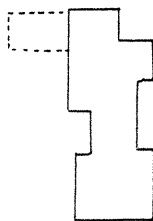
14th century



16th century



18th century



19th century

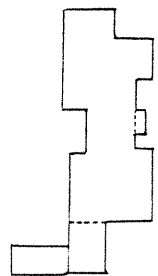


Fig.13

latter, yet the foundations of building.1 are a fairly homogenous clay, and it is not at all inconceivable that a clean cut might have been produced, unlike had they been built out of rubble for example. Also, if building.2 is part of the 14th century range, and building.1 is a 10th-12th century structure, then the wall [51] and [77] are definitely cut by [75]. Furthermore, the position of building.1 at the corner of building.2 might suggest an unlikely place to attach a new structure.

Synthesis

What follows is a hypothetical reconstruction of the building phases in the rectory grounds, based on the archaeological and architectural evidence, and is certainly open to reinterpretation.

- i) After the Norman invasion, probably sometime in the 12th century, the earliest building was erected; almost certainly it was an ecclesiastical enterprise, where the building was inhabited by the incumbent at Strettham, sent from Ely. Given the substantial foundations and the period in question, the structure could have been a tower-house, especially on account of the political conditions of the time (ie. the Norman invasion and Hereward the Wake, 1070, and the period of Anarchy with Geoffrey de Mandeville, 1139-1154).
- ii) By the 14th century, the tower house was replaced by the more conventional parsonage, a rectangular building of ashlar.
- iii) In the 16th century the rectory was extended with a south wing in brick, to produce an L-shaped range. This enlargement of the parsonage was a common occurrence at that time, related to two factors. Firstly, the general increase in prices meant a corresponding increase in the rectorial income, since the greater part of it came from tithes. This rise in the value of the benefice afforded the rector greater comfort in his living conditions, one of which might be the erection of a larger residence. Secondly, the abolition of clerical celibacy meant that parsons who had families would desire more spacious living quarters.
- iv) In the 18th century, the whole of the rectory was remodelled; the western end of the original 14th century range was demolished, and the building was extended further south, in brick, with eastward projecting wings, and a great deal of refenestration took place.
- v) In the 19th century, minor alterations were made, such as the addition of a porch, and the attachment of a small kitchen block on the southern end of the range.

POTTERY REPORT

by Jane Carr

- [1] - A mixed group with a lot of post-Mediaeval material, but also :
St.Neots type ware - 1 rim (10th - 12th century)
Thetford type ware - 1 rim (10th - 12th cent.)
Early mediaeval sherds from more than 1 vessel (12th -13th cent.)
- [2] - Middle Saxon, Ipswich type - 2 sherds, (c.650 - 850 A.D.)
Thetford type, 1 bowl rim, (10th - 12th cent.)
- [6] - 1 Roman pedestal base
2 sherds Ipswich type, (c.650 - 850 A.D.)
1 sherd Thetford type, (10th - 12th cent.)
1 sherd St.Neots type (10th - 12th century)
- [10] - 2 small sherds of Early/Middle Saxon date, Ipswich and other.
- [16] - Roman - colour-coated rim; flanged bowl
Thetford type body sherds, (10th - 12th cent.)
Some brick/daub, grass marked.
Post-mediaeval fragments.
- [18] - Small sherd of Roman (samian)
- [20] - Post-mediaeval stoneware, and glazed earthenware
- [22] & [34] - Post-mediaeval
- [28] - Ipswich type, 1 sherd (c650 - 850 A.D.)
Early mediaeval coarseware, 2 sherds, (12th - 13th cent.)
- [32] - Thetford type sherds, (10th - 12th cent.)
1 other coarseware sherd (11th - 13th cent.)
- [40] - Thetford type, 2 sherds (10th - 12th cent.)
1 other coarseware sherd, (11th - 12th cent.)
- [41] - Roman, 2 or 3 sherds
Thetford, 1 sherd, (10th -12th cent.)
St.Neots type, 1 rim form inturned bowl (see Baker 1979, fig.104,no.132) (10th - 12th cent.)
1 coarseware sherd, (11th - 12th cent.)
- [47] - Ipswich type, 1 sherd
St.Neots type, 1 sherd
Thetford type, 1 rim and 1 sherd
- [47], south of wall [44] - Thetford type, 11 sherds, 1 rim, 1 applied strip, 1 rim from spouted bowl or pitcher
St.Neots type, 1 rim

Stamford ware, 1 glazed sherd from jug, (11th - 12th cent.)
coarseware, 7 misc. sherds

[47], north of wall [44] - St.Neots type, 2 sherds

Thetford type, 1 rim, 1 rouletted body, 4 other sherds
Stamford, 1 bodysherd, fabric B/glaze 1, (late 11th - 12th cent.)
Coarseware, 9 sherds, 1 rim

[47], west of wall [44] - St.Neots type, 1 rim, 1 body sherd
coarseware, 5 sherds

[49] - some glazed tile

[50] - Developed Stamford, (late 12th - 13th cent.); decorated green glazed, glaze 3/Rouletting M9
Fabric a bit coarse but glaze and decoration correct for Stamford

[54] - Thetford 1 rim, various sherds
coarseware, 1 sherd

[54b] - 1 ? handmade sherd. ?Early Saxon.
Early mediaeval coarseware, 1 rim, 1 sherd
Post-mediaeval small glazed sherd

[54c] - Thetford type, 1 handle, 1 rouletted sherd, 6 other sherds
St.Neots, 1 sherd

[56] - Thetford, 2 sherds
St.Neots type, 2 sherds
coarseware, 17 sherds, 1 with applied strip
sandy ware, 3 sherds, (11th - 12th cent.)

[59] - Thetford, 1 rim
Post-mediaeval mostly

[60] - Coarseware, 4 sherds

[62] - Thetford, 1 rim

[66] - Coarseware, 1 sherd

[68] - St.Neots type, 1 rim from inturned bowl
coarseware, 1 sherd

[70] - Ipswich type, 1 sherd
Thetford, 1 sherd
Stamford, 1 sherd (12th cent.)
Handmade, 1 sherd, ?Early Saxon
Roman, 1 sherd

[72] - St.Neots type, (12th cent. or later), 1 rim
coarseware, 3 sherds

- [73] - Early Saxon, 3 joining body sherds, 1 other
 Thetford, 5 sherds, 1 piece of handle
 St.Neots type, 2 rims, 1 sherd
 coarseware, 1 rim, 10 sherds
- [76] - St.Neots type, 1 sherd
 Thetford, a few sherds
 coarseware, various sherds and 1 applied strip, 1 orange glazed sherd
- [78] - Post-mediaeval sherds, various
 Late mediaeval, 1 pipkin handle, 1 green-glazed bodysherd
 Thetford type, 2 rims, one from angled bowl with pronounced carination, cf. Rogerson &
 Dallas, 1984, p. 150, fig. 173 no. 324
 3 rouletted sherds, 1 rim ; 35 other sherds
 1 spout; 1 rim with part pulled down for addition of spout
- [81] - coarseware, 2 sherds, (11th - 12th cent.)
- [86] - St.Neots type, 1 rim with lid seating (from straight-sided cooking pot) cf. Bedford, Baker 1979,
 fig. 109 no. 273
 2 other body sherds
 1 coarseware sherd
- [88] - 1 flanged rim from dish or bowl, in fine sandy ware, probably early mediaeval
- [90] - Middle Saxon, 1 handmade sherd
 Thetford, 1 sherd with rouletting
 coarseware, 2 rims, 2 bases, (11th - 13th cent.); various sherds
 Late mediaeval glazed handle or foot from large vessel - could even be roof furniture
 13th - 14th cent. jug rim with handle in brick-red ware, green glazed with applied brown glazed
 dots; London/Heddingham type, but fabric not right - imported from Aardenberg, maybe. (12th -
 14th cent.)
- [91] - Thetford, 2 sherds very small, one rouletted
- [92] - Roman, 2 sherds
 Handmade sherd, ?Pagan Saxon
- [97] - St.Neots type, 1 rim
- [99] - Post-mediaeval, including cream ware, glazed earthenware
- Spoil; poss. [99] - Large pieces of Pantheon, brick-red fabric, overall lead glaze, trailed cream slip
 decoration. See Baker 1979, fig. 139 no. 857
- Cleaning from above west walls of building. 1 - ?Thetford type, 1 sherd, 2 pieces glazed floor tile, Ipswich
 type, 1 sherd, and coarseware, 1 sherd.

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