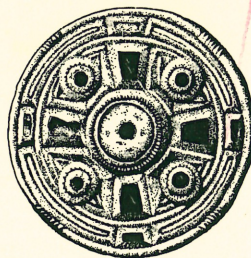


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Archaeological Field Unit

Archaeological Recording at 90/91 High St, Huntingdon

R Heawood

1994

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No 97

Commissioned By Headly Stokes Associates

**Archaeological Recording at 90/91 High St,
Huntingdon**

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1994

Editor: P Spoerry B Tech PhD

Report No 97

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SUMMARY

The Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted a recording brief between July and December 1993 at 90/91 High Street, Huntingdon (TL 2371/7194). The work, carried out for architects Headly Stokes Associates, consisted of inspection and recording of archaeological deposits revealed during construction work on a shop refurbishment and extension. A considerable density of archaeological remains was discovered, starting at a depth very close to the present ground surface. In particular, at least twelve pits were recorded which could be dated by finds of pottery to the period A.D. 1000 - 1200. This suggests occupation very nearby in the eleventh to twelfth centuries, but perhaps more importantly, it demonstrates that valuable archaeological deposits survive in this area with the potential to shed light on the development of medieval Huntingdon.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In July 1993 Country-Wise Properties began construction work on the extension and refurbishment of a shop, a listed building, at 90/91 High Street, Huntingdon (TL 2371/7194). An accompanying archaeological recording brief was required by the Local Planning Authority, and Cambridgeshire Archaeology were contracted to perform the work by architects Headly Stokes Associates. The scheme involved two main phases of ground works likely to have an impact on archaeological deposits in the yard area to the rear of the property: firstly, the excavation of c 32.5m of foundation trenches c 1.0-1.5m in depth which was completed by early August, and secondly, the excavation of service trenches and drains, c 0.45-1.05m in depth, completed in December.



Plate 1 The site during construction work. Trenches I-III can be seen to the right, filled with concrete. Still to be excavated were Trenches IV-VI (centre), and Trenches VII-VIII (left)

2 TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies on flat land in the Ouse Valley c 0.75km north-west of the river. The subsoil is a silty sandy clay but the British Geological Survey 1:50,000 map shows that this overlies First Terrace river gravels.

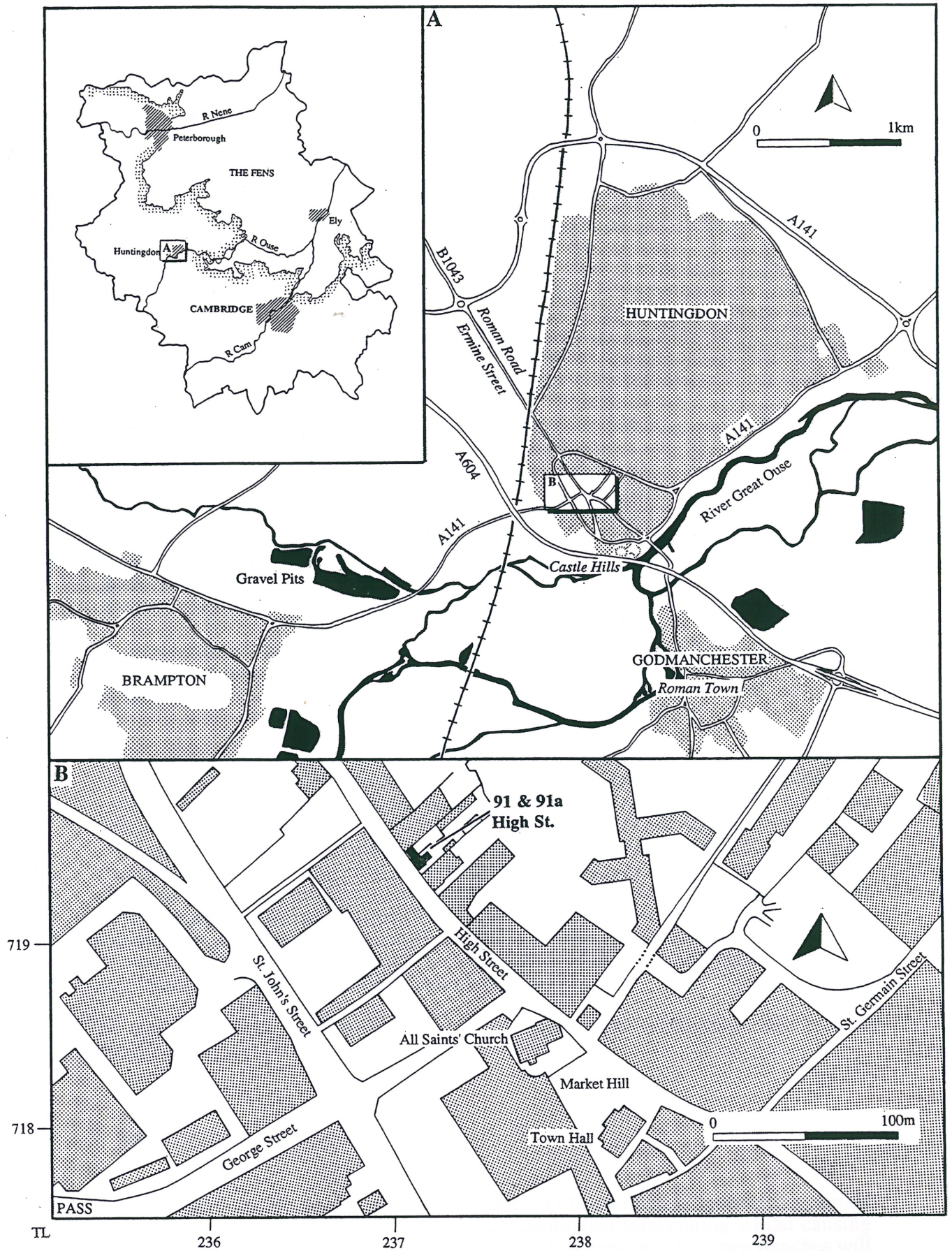


Figure 1 Site Location Map

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A pronounced lack of documentary sources means that it is not at present possible to establish the exact use of the site during the medieval period (P Saunders, pers comm), although by the survey of 1572, the property seems likely to have existed as a tenement in private tenure (Dickinson 1972). Dickinson's association of the old Greyhound Inn with the present site of the National Westminster Bank suggests that Number 90/91 next door was then a tenement in the tenure of Sir Henry Cromwell. Yet despite the lack of direct evidence for the earlier period, it seems clear that the site lay within the medieval borough of Huntingdon. The house of Austin Friars further to the north-west is known to have been within the medieval borough (VCH 123), whilst the extent of development shown on John Speed's map of 1610, with the frontages of this part of the High Street fully built up, is thought to have been reached several centuries earlier (VCH 121). The use of long, thin tenement plots, the boundaries of which still surround this property, is thought to have first developed in England in the late-Saxon period, continuing to be used as a means of land organisation for over 500 years (Carver 1987). It is possible that the street frontage at 90/91 High Street was first built up in the thirteenth century, when the town may have covered the same area as in the early twentieth century, with sixteen ecclesiastical parishes compared with the present two (VCH 122). The date at which this area of Huntingdon was first occupied has, however, remained conjectural, and this is one of the questions to which the present archaeological recording contributes. The earlier Saxon burh and Norman town are usually thought to have been focused further south, close to the northern end of the river crossing, where the motte of the Norman castle still survives (VCH 122).

More generally, it can be stated that Huntingdon probably first grew in importance in the late Saxon period, at which time it is likely to have been the lowest bridging point on the river Ouse (VCH 121). Records suggest that Edward the Elder restored the burh in A.D. 921, with evidence of a mint after 955-959, and of a market from at least 974 (VCH 121). It is clear from the Domesday Book that the town was by far the largest in the region in terms of numbers of burgesses at the Norman Conquest, and according to Ordericus Vitalis, their numbers did not decline during the years following, despite instability and the taking of land for the construction of the castle. The town may have suffered more during the Anarchy of Stephen's reign, with the taxable value of the borough decreasing by half between 1135 and 1144 (VCH 122). Partial demolition of the castle after c 1150 may have ushered in a period of greater peace and prosperity, culminating in the thirteenth century when the borough could boast sixteen ecclesiastical parishes and six religious houses (VCH 122). For the following three centuries, the written sources give an impression of economic decline, with frequent complaints that the borough could no longer sustain previous levels of taxation, and indications that a large number of churches had fallen derelict (VCH 123).

To date there have been no recorded archaeological interventions in this part of Huntingdon.

4 METHODOLOGY

Guidance supplied by the County Archaeological Office explains that recording briefs are intended to allow for the recovery of archaeological information whilst causing minimal disruption to a development programme. It is expected that open trenches will be examined, but that any delay will extend to hours but not days (Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Guidance Note 1).

Accordingly, trenches were examined once open and recorded as fully as possible in the time available. In the case of the foundation trenches excavated (Trenches I-VI), machining was sufficiently deep to remove almost all archaeological features, so that only clean natural subsoil remained below. Here, the sections of the machine trenches were recorded using photography, section drawing, and context descriptions, but planning was not appropriate. When Service Trench VII was excavated, it was less deep, and archaeological deposits remained visible in the base. Here, the trench was planned, and features described, but extensive disturbance of both sections meant that accurate section drawing was not worthwhile. Outside excavated trenches, the widespread presence of rubble and sand, as well as machine compaction, made additional definition of features in plan impractical. Wherever possible, pottery was recovered from the trench sections to assist the dating of deposits, but because proper excavation in plan was not an option, with finds coming mainly from section, it must be stressed that quantities of pottery and animal bone recorded as present in features are greatly under represented. As a further consequence of the lack of hand excavation of features, it was difficult to prove that cuts seen in section were pits rather than the butt ends of linear features. Where there seemed good reason to regard these features as pits, they are described as 'probable pits' in the results, and are treated as such in the interpretation.

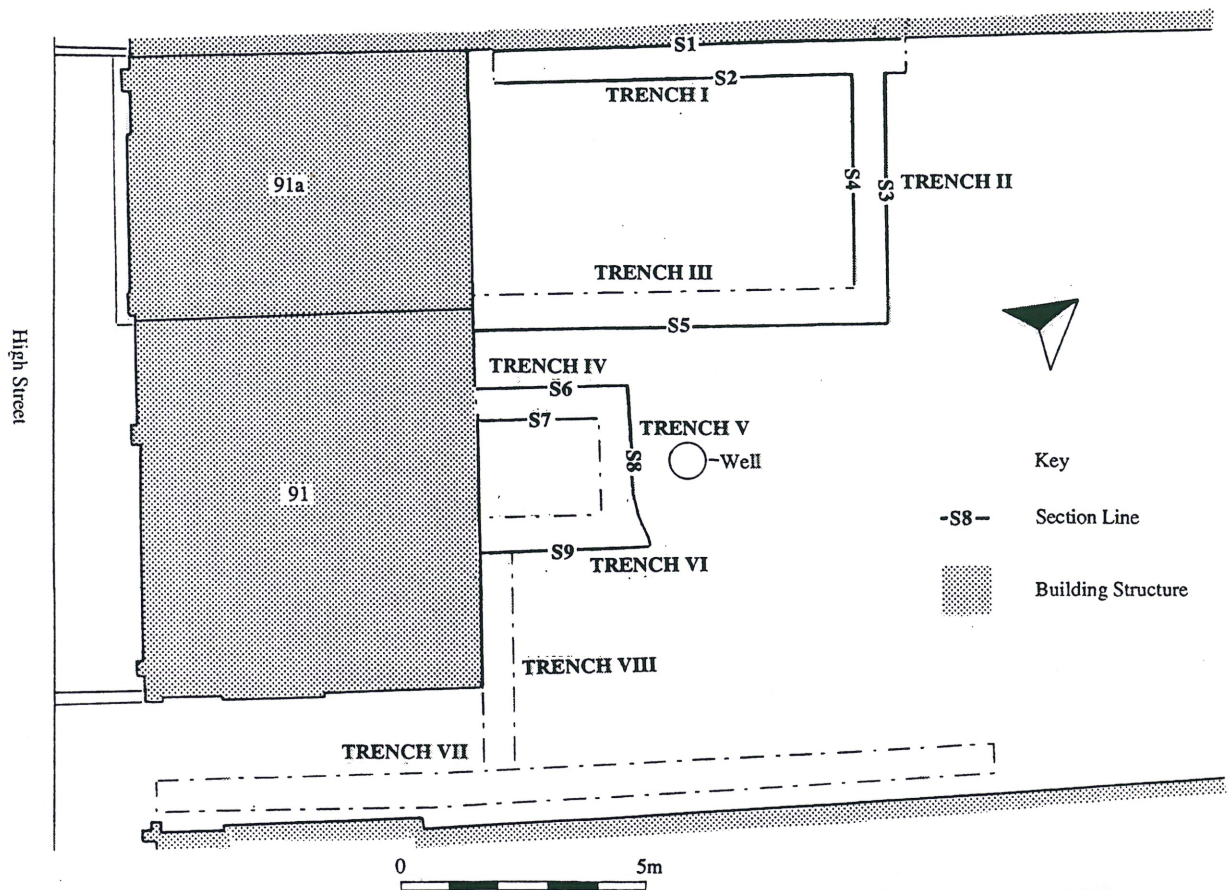


Figure 2 Location of Trenches

5 RESULTS

Trench I

General Trench I was a foundation trench excavated along the north-west edge of the property, 8.40m long x 0.70m wide x 1.20m deep (measured on the south-east side). The ground surface after initial clearance varied between 11.21 and 11.34m OD to the south-east, but to the north-west a concrete surface ran along the edge of the property at a height of 11.98-12.08m OD. Different archaeological deposits were visible in all the sections of the trench, and all were cleaned and recorded.

Section 1 (south-east facing) A thin concrete floor surface, (32), was present at the top of the section. To the south-west it sealed Fill (18) within Construction Cut 19. Elsewhere, it lay directly over Deposit (2), a very mixed deposit up to 1.00m thick, consisting of sandy silt and clay with *c* 20% red and yellow brick fragments, and occasional post-medieval pottery and peg tile. Below this, three deposits, one probable pit, and one pit or ditch, were visible:

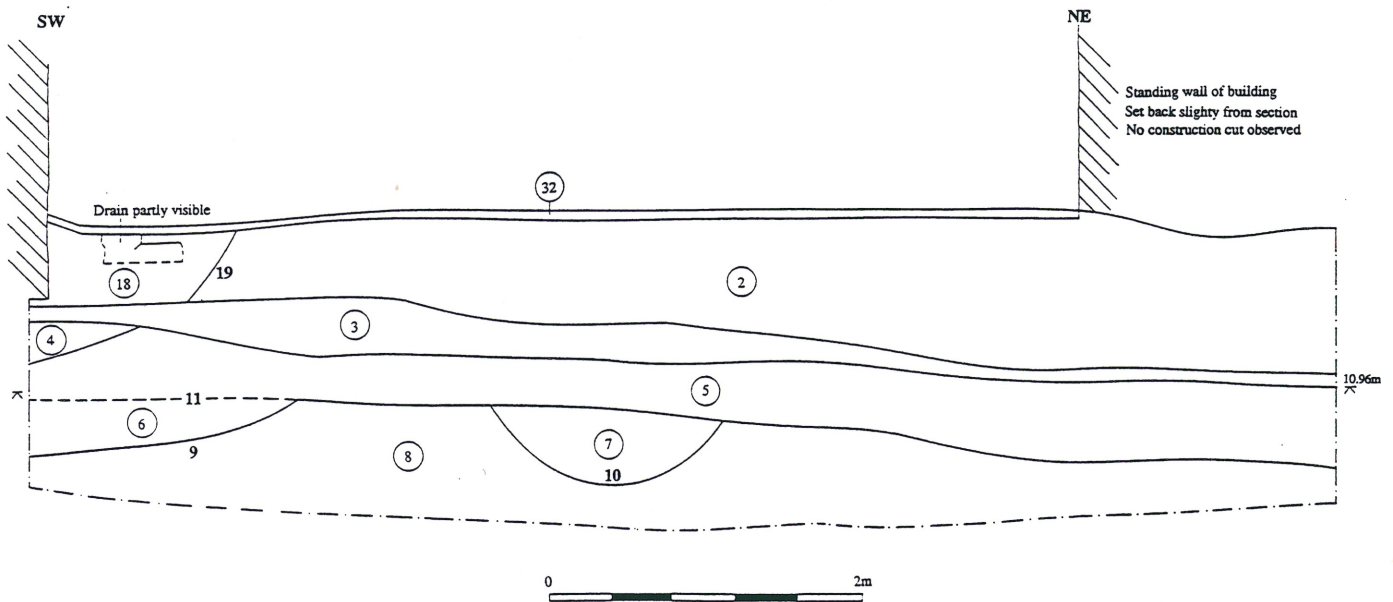


Figure 3 Section 1, Trench I

Deposit (3) was a mottled blue grey and yellowish brown clay of maximum depth 0.37m and extending the full length of the 8.4m trench. It was generally very clean and compact, the only visible inclusions being chalk flecks and mortar flecks (<1%).

Deposit (4) was a dark grey / black sandy silt with occasional small fragments of brick. It lay below (3), 0.70m long x 0.20m deep, but was only present at the extreme south-western end of the section. It may represent the base of a heavily truncated pit.

Deposit (5), a dark grey sandy clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks, red burnt clay flecks, mortar flecks, animal bone, and pottery, was 0.5m thick and again extended the full 8.40m length of the trench. Stratigraphically below (4), it lay physically below (3) for much of its length. Although giving the appearance of being a layer, the other sections of Trench I suggest that (5) may in fact be a fill within a cut (Cut 11)(see p 7).

Cut 10, a probable pit, 1.48m long x 0.48m deep, contained a greyish brown sandy clay silt, Fill (7), with occasional flecks of charcoal, yellow mortar, oyster shell, and red burnt clay, plus two sherds of pottery.

Cut 9, a pit or linear feature > 1.70m long x 0.70m deep, contained a grey brown sandy silty clay, Fill (6), with occasional chalk flecks, pottery, yellow mortar flecks, and red clay flecks, plus one nail. The cut was not fully understood from the limited portion seen in section. As with Cut 10, it was cut into strong brown silty sandy clay subsoil.

Section 2 (north-west facing) At the two ends of the section, rubble layers or dumps formed the ground surface left after initial clearance (21) and (27). Adjacent to and stratigraphically below (27) was a yellowish brown sandy clay silt deposit (26) with occasional charcoal flecks, again exposed at the surface. Underlying (21), a small blue grey clay deposit (30) may be related to the large clay deposit (3) present in Section 1. Stratigraphically below these upper deposits, elements of six probable pits and a further layer were present:

Cut 29, a probable pit, >1.26m wide x 0.66m deep, contained a brown sandy silty clay, Fill (28), with one complete brick visible, and a band of charcoal at the base.

Cut 17, a probable pit, >0.20m wide x 0.30m deep, contained a light yellowish brown silty clay, Fill (16). The feature was probably subject to horizontal truncation, and also appears in the short south-west facing section.

Cut 25, a probable pit, >0.50m wide x 0.65m deep, contained a brown clayey sandy silt, Fill (24), with occasional charcoal and mortar flecks. It was truncated by Cut 17.

Cut 22, a probable pit, >1.14m wide x 0.34m deep, contained a brown sandy clay silt, Fill (23), with occasional charcoal, yellow mortar, and red burnt clay flecks. The cut was lined with a thin charcoal deposit, Fill (35).

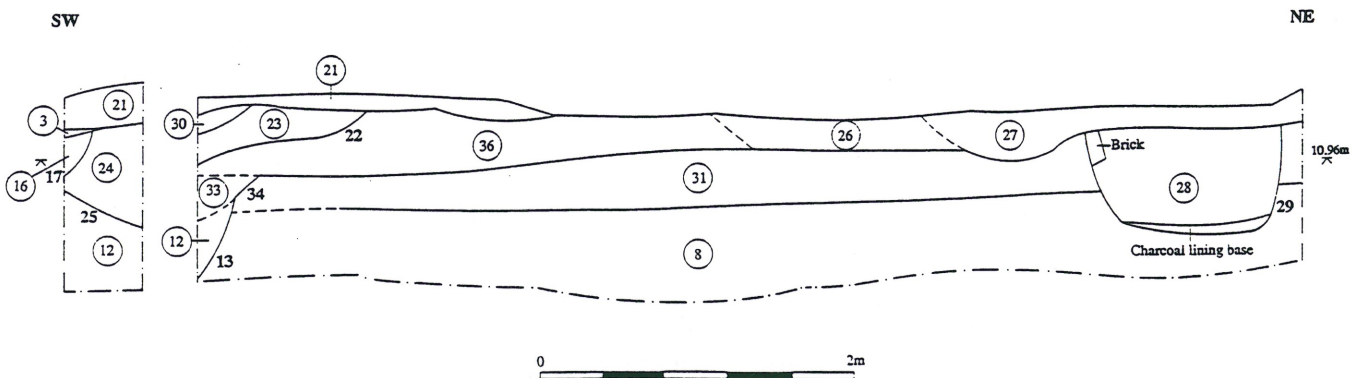


Figure 4 Section 2, Trench I

Deposit (36), a dark greyish brown sandy clay silt 3.50m long x 0.40m deep, was truncated by Cut 22. It contained occasional charcoal, yellow mortar, and red clay flecks, and though similar to (5) it was clearly lighter in colour.

Cut 34, a probable pit, 1.14m wide x 0.70m deep, contained a greyish brown sandy clay silt, Fill (33), with occasional red burnt clay flecks. The fill was sealed by (36), and seemed to have been subject to horizontal truncation. The feature was also seen in Trench II, where four sherds of pottery were recovered from it; only a small portion of the cut was visible in Trench I.

Cut 13, a probable pit, measuring >2.4m north-west / south-east x >1.4m north-east / south-west x >0.9m deep, contained a mottled greyish brown sandy clay silt, Fill (12), with occasional animal bone, charcoal flecks, yellow mortar flecks, and pottery. Only a part of this substantial feature was seen in this section. It was also present in the south-west facing section of Trench I, and in Sections 3 and 4, Trench II. In this section, it was cut first into (31), a dirty subsoil deposit very similar to Subsoil (8), but with occasional charcoal flecks.

North-east facing section Parts of deposits (3) and (4) seen in Section 1 were again visible. Deposit (5) was present, but significantly, this now appeared to lie within a rather unclear concave cut, 11, sloping down from south-east to north-west with a gradient of c 2 in 1. Below, Cut 9 was seen to have an upper fill, (20), a brown sandy clay silt with occasional charcoal, red clay and mortar flecks. It still remained impossible to determine the precise shape of this feature in plan.

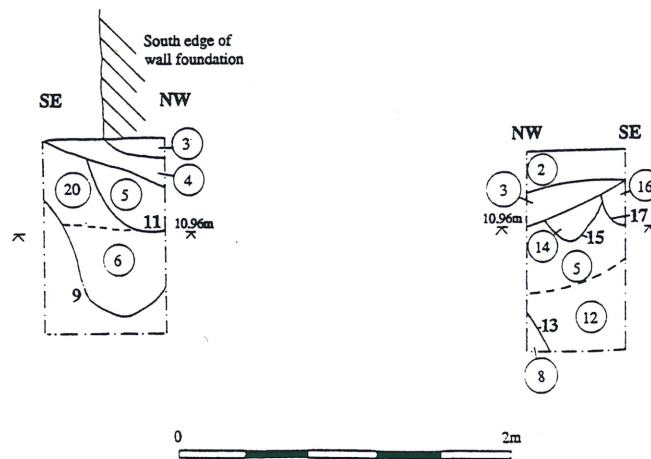


Figure 5 North-east facing and south-west facing sections, Trench I

South-west facing section The mixed rubble deposit (2) seen in Section 1 was again present, though horizontally truncated by 0.56m at 11.42m OD. Beneath, the mottled clay deposit (3) could be seen sloping gradually down from south-east to north-west. Deposit (5) and the substantial Cut 13 were visible below, as was a further probable pit:

Cut 15, a probable pit, 0.35m wide x 0.25m deep, contained a yellowish brown sandy clay silt, Fill (14), with occasional red burnt clay flecks. This feature lay between Deposits (3) and (5); it seemed possible that (3) might have occupied a cut which had truncated the probable pit.

Within Trench I, archaeological deposits were present to at least its maximum depth of 1.30m (measured from the ground surface to the south-east).

Trench II

General Trench II was a north-west / south-east foundation trench 5.40m long x 0.70m wide, and excavated to a maximum depth of 1.60m. The ground surface after initial clearance varied between 11.34 and 11.42m OD. The archaeological deposits visible in the two sides varied considerably, so both long sections were cleaned and recorded.

Section 3 (south-west facing) A layer of very pale brown sand and mortar dust a maximum of 0.32m deep, with c 50% red and yellow brick fragments, extended across the top of the section for its full length. Below lay several cuts, some very shallow, others more substantial:

Cut 64, a probable pit, 2.24m wide x 0.34m deep, contained Fill (63), a deposit of burnt materials in five distinct bands: two of charcoal, two of dark red burnt clay, and one of very pale grey ash. The feature may have been horizontally truncated at some time before the deposition of the rubble layer above.

Cut 66, a pit or linear feature, 0.44m wide x 0.46m deep, with a 'v'-shaped profile, contained a greyish brown sandy clay silt, Fill (65), with occasional charcoal flecks. This feature was again located immediately below the rubble layer.

Cut 62, a probable pit, 1.08m wide x 0.36m deep, was truncated by Cut 64. It contained a mottled red, yellowish brown and grey sandy silty clay, Fill (61), with occasional charcoal mainly at the base.

Deposit (69), 1.14m wide x 0.16m deep, appeared to be truncated by Cuts 62 and 64. It was a strong brown silty clay sand, which may have been part of a layer, or possibly the base of a heavily truncated pit.

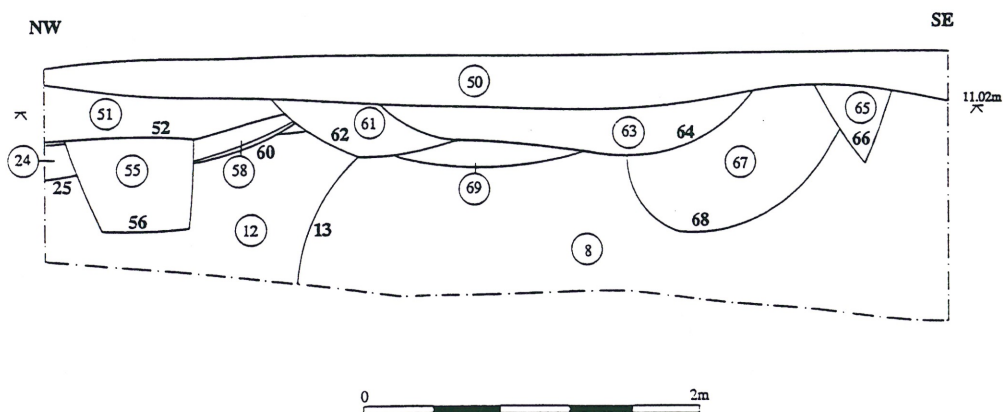


Figure 6 Section 3, Trench II

Cut 52, >1.40m wide x 0.16m deep, appeared to be truncated by Cut 62. It contained a brown sandy silt, Fill (51), with occasional charcoal, yellow mortar, and red burnt clay flecks plus one fragment of handmade brick, and can be described only as part of a shallow cut.

Cut 56, a probable pit, >0.78m wide x 0.57m deep, was truncated by Cut 52. It contained alternate bands of dark grey brown sandy silty clay and yellowish brown coarse sand, Fill (55), with no obvious inclusions.

Cut 60, >0.59m wide x 0.28m deep, was truncated by Cut 56. It contained a grey sandy clay silt, Fill (59), with occasional red burnt clay flecks and a layer of charcoal at the base. Little of this feature remained; it appeared to be a cut of some form, although it is possible that it represents a dump deposit slumped into the large feature below (Cut 13).

Cut 68, a probable pit, 1.26m x 0.89m deep, was truncated by Cuts 64 and 66. It contained a brown sandy silty clay, Fill (67), with occasional charcoal, yellow mortar, and red burnt clay flecks.

Parts of Cuts 25 and 13 were visible in this section; they were also present in Trench I and have been described above. The subsoil at the base of the section was again a strong brown silty sandy clay.

Section 4 (north-east facing) A rubble layer was again present extending along the top of the section. Below, the cuts of four probable pits were visible at the north-west end of the section. Three of these were thought to be parts of Cuts 22, 34, and 13 also present in Trench I and described above. One further cut and two deposits were recorded:

Cut 106, a probable pit, 0.76m wide x 0.28m deep, was truncated by Cut 104 (=34). It contained a mottled grey brown sandy clay silt, Fill (105), with occasional red burnt clay and yellow mortar flecks. It was sealed by Deposit (109), a thin band of charcoal, which appears to tip into Cut 102 (=22) to the north-west.

Deposit (110), 1.29m wide x 0.24m deep, was a mottled greyish brown sandy clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks. The base was comprised of hard reddish purple burnt sandy clay. The relationship with Cut 106 remained slightly uncertain, but it seemed likely that (110) was cut by 106.

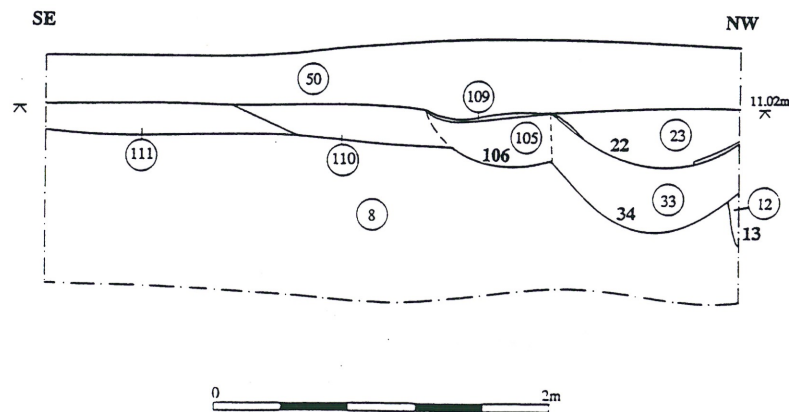


Figure 7 Section 4, Trench II

Deposit (111), >1.5m wide x 0.24m deep, was a mottled dark yellowish brown sandy clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks. It appeared to underlie (110).

Strong brown silty sandy clay subsoil was again present at the base of the trench. At the north-west of Trench II, archaeological deposits (within Cut 13) were present to the full 1.30m depth of the trench, and were visible in the base.

Trench III

General Trench 3 was a north-east / south-west foundation trench, joining the south-eastern end of Trench II. It measured 8.4m long x 0.70m wide, and extended up to 1.25m in depth. The ground surface after initial clearance varied between 11.30 and 11.40m OD. The north-west facing side appeared to show potentially interesting features; this section was cleaned and recorded.

Section 5 (north-west facing) At the top of the section, a mixed clay and rubble deposit a maximum of 0.32m in depth extended over the length of the trench. It sealed the probable construction cut for the present shop building. Below, two cuts not extending into the opposite section were visible, and a further deposit extending over the length of the trench.

Cut 81, a probable pit, 1.18m wide x 0.50m deep, contained a mottled dark brown / grey clay silt, Fill (82), with occasional small fragments of mortar and red brick, and occasional charcoal flecks and small fragments.

Cut 83, a possible pit or posthole, 0.38m wide x 0.54m deep, contained mixed brown silt and sand, Fill (84), with occasional small fragments of charcoal.

Deposit (80), 7.16m long x 0.40m deep, was a mid grey brown clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks, animal bone, and pottery. It appeared to be cut by the two probable pits.

Beneath, strong brown silty sandy clay subsoil was again present. Within Trench III, archaeological deposits were present to a maximum depth of 0.85m.

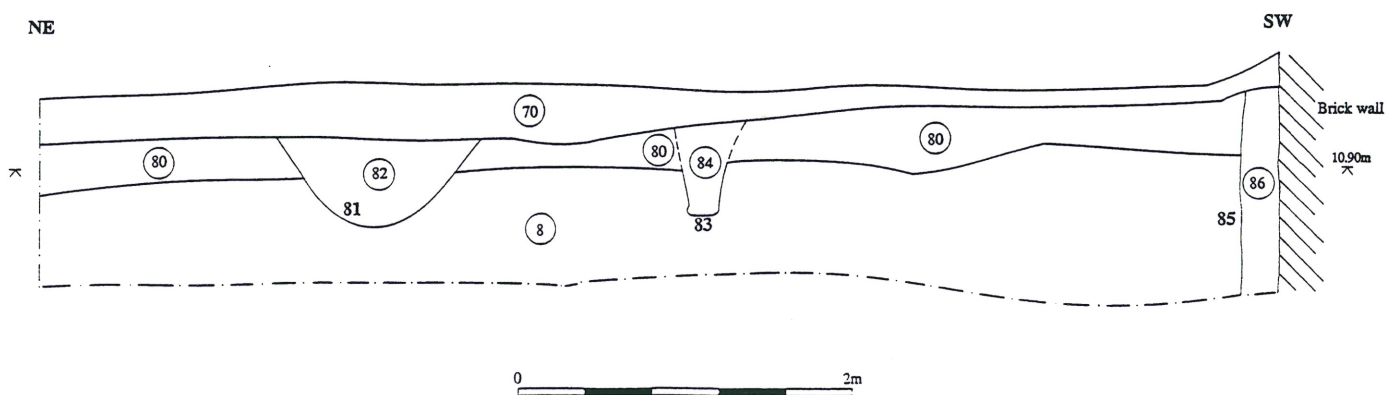


Figure 8 Section 5, Trench III

Trench IV

General Trench IV was the north-western part of a foundation trench excavated to support a new stair well. It measured 3.10m in length x 0.65m in width, and was 1.15m deep, the ground surface after initial clearance varying between 11.38 and 11.42m OD. As differing archaeological deposits were visible in the two long sections, both sides were cleaned and recorded.

Section 6 (south-east facing) Deposit (150), containing modern rubble, lay banked up against the present building, sealing (151), the fill of a vertical cut 152. This latter appeared to cut (153), a sandy clay deposit 0.18m deep which formed the ground surface (after clearance) for much of the length of this trench, and contained a high proportion of red brick. Below (153), three pits were visible:

Cut 162, a pit, > 1.22m wide x > 1.00m deep, contained a brown sandy clay silt, Fill (161), with occasional charcoal and red burnt clay flecks and pottery.

Cut 172, a pit, > 0.50m wide x 0.56m deep, contained a brown sandy clay silt, Fill (171), with occasional charcoal flecks and animal bone.

Cut 160, a pit, >1.56m wide x 0.74m deep, contained a dark olive grey sandy clay silt, Fill (159), with occasional charcoal flecks and a high organic content. It was truncated by Cuts 162 and 172, and was cut into strong brown silty sandy clay subsoil.

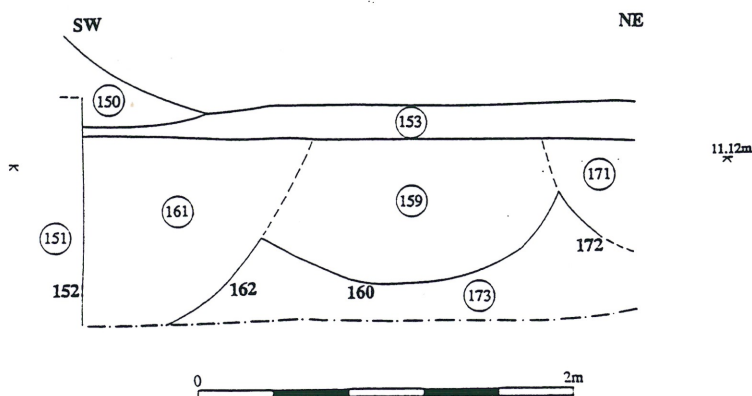


Figure 9 Section 6, Trench IV

Section 7 (north-west facing) Deposits (150), (151) and (153) were again present. The section differed in that the substantial cut for a brick lined well, Cut 156, could be seen truncating (153). Below (153), a pit and a layer were visible:

Cut 158, a pit, >1.35m wide x 0.95m deep, contained a dark brown sandy clay silt, Fill (157), with occasional charcoal flecks, oyster and mussel shell, and pottery.

Layer (154) was a dark yellowish brown sandy clay silt with occasional small fragments of mussel and oyster shell. It was cut by Cut 158, and overlay strong brown silty sandy clay subsoil.

In Trench IV, archaeological deposits were present to at least its maximum depth of 1.15m within Cut 162.

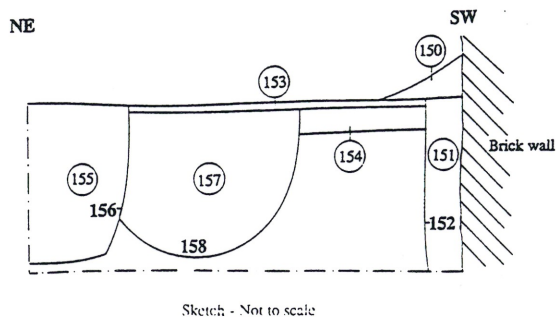


Figure 10 Section 7, Trench IV

Trench V

General This was the north-eastern arm of the stair well foundation trench. It measured 3.15m long x 0.65m wide, x 1.30m deep. The ground surface after clearance varied between 11.42m and 11.52m OD., and as the long sections were very similar, only one was recorded.

Section 8 (south-west facing) The ground surface was formed by a rubble deposit, (184), 0.25m deep. Below lay the red brick fabric of Well 1, within Backfill (155) and Cut 156. The cut extended down beyond the base of the trench, and to the north-west it could be seen truncating the edge of one of the pits seen in Trench IV (Cut 172).

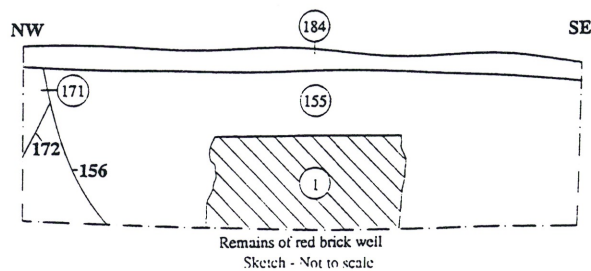


Figure 11 Section 8, Trench V

Trench VI

General This was the south-eastern arm of the stairwell foundation trench, with dimensions of 3.40m long x 0.65m wide x 1.35m deep. The ground surface left after initial clearance varied between 11.54m and 11.66m OD. The more substantial archaeological deposits were visible in the north-west facing section, so it was this side that was cleaned and recorded.

Section 9 (north-west facing) At the top of the section, two shallow layers, (174) and (175), overlaid the cut of the well pit, 177, seen also in Trench V (=156). Stratigraphically below lay three probable layers and a cut:

Layer (178) was of very mixed grey silty clay and sand, with *c* 25% small pebbles and stones, and no finds. At the south-west end of the section it formed the ground surface. It overlaid layer (179).

Layer (179) was a grey sandy clay silt with *c* 40% medium pebbles, *c* 0.12m deep. It appeared possible that it might have slumped into Cut 183 as Fill (182) had subsided.

Cut 183, a probable pit, >1.57m wide x 0.96m deep, contained a very dark greyish brown sandy clay silt, Fill (182), with occasional animal bone, red burnt clay flecks, and pottery. The north-eastern edge appeared to have been subject to slumping, but seemed to cut layer (181).

Layer (181), a brown sandy clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks and oyster and mussel shell, overlay strong brown silty sandy clay subsoil.

Archaeological deposits predating the well were present to a depth of 1.26m in Trench VI.

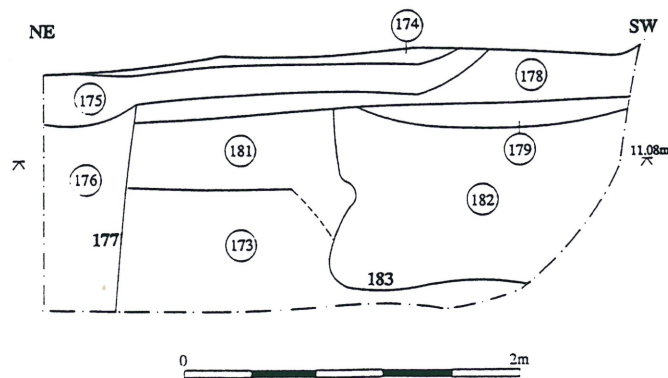


Figure 12 Section 9, Trench VI

Trench VII (Fig 13)

Trench VII was a service trench excavated along the south-eastern edge of the property, and extending 17m back from the street front. It was 0.65m wide, and varied between 0.80 and 1.05m in depth. Limited time was available for recording before the laying of pipes began, so the base of the trench was planned and brief field notes made. Planning was appropriate for this trench because it was slightly shallower than Trenches I-VI, and several archaeological features were visible in the base. The two sections were sketched: these were largely uninformative as most of the features seen in plan were truncated by a foundation trench to the south-east, and a pipe trench for a metal pipe to the north-west. The foundation trench appeared to relate to the building standing to the south-east and was 0.8m deep; the pipe trench was 0.6m deep.

At the south-western end of the trench, a feature was seen in plan extending 2.9m back from the street frontage. It was thought to be a substantial cut, 211, extending into both sections and under the pavement, and was filled by a very mixed greyish brown clay silt and orange sand with occasional animal bone (210). In section, the cut appeared to be truncated by the pipe trench at a depth of *c* 0.6m. The relationship with the foundation trench to the south was unclear.

Beyond, c 4m from the street, a pit was visible, Cut 209, 1.5m long x 0.3m wide but extending into the north-west facing section. The fill was a very mixed grey and dark yellowish brown sandy clay silt with occasional animal bone, charcoal flecks, and burnt clay flecks. It was truncated by the foundation trench seen in section at a depth of 0.8m.

To the north-east, c 7m from the street, a pit was seen, Cut 207 c 1.1m long x 0.25m wide and extending into the south-east facing section. It contained a dark greyish brown clay sandy silt, Fill (206), with occasional charcoal flecks and one small fragment of oyster shell. In south-east facing section, this pit was seen to be truncated by the old pipe trench at a depth of 0.6m. The base of Trench VII was here 1.0m deep.

A small pit, Cut 205, was visible c 9m from the street, with a diameter of c 0.5m, extending into the south-east facing section. It contained a mottled greyish brown and green clay sandy silt, Fill (207), with occasional charcoal flecks. This feature touched Cut 203 to the north-east, but the relationship between them remained uncertain. Fill (204) was truncated by old pipe trench seen in south-east facing section.

To the north-east, at least two features were present, probably pits, clearly cutting the natural in the base of Trench VII, and extending into both sections. The fills were very similar, so that the precise extent and shape of each probable pit was very difficult to define. Cut 203 appeared to be of at least 2m in diameter with a very mixed fill containing c 3% gravel, Fill (202). One sherd of pottery was visible. Cut 201 was perhaps larger, again with a mixed fill with c 3% gravel, and one sherd of pottery on the surface. The two features were truncated by both the pipe trench and the foundation trench.

At the north-east end of Trench VII, no features were seen in the base, but in the south-east facing section, a very mixed, deposit was present, thought to be filling a cut 0.95m deep, Cut 213, which appeared to truncate the old pipe trench. The base of Trench VII was here 1.05m deep.

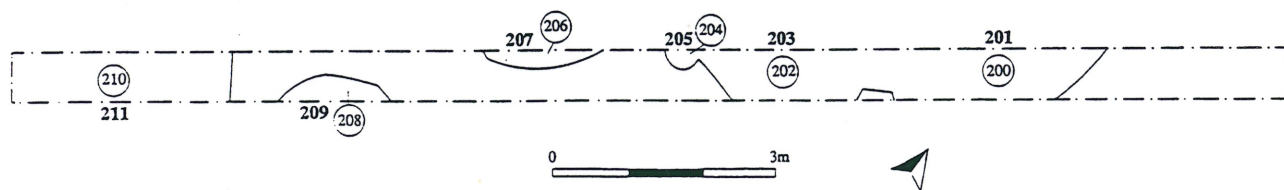


Figure 13 Plan, Trench VII

Trench VIII (Fig 2)

Trench VIII, a trench dug to lay drains, was briefly inspected. This extended for 5m from south-east to north-west from the south-eastern property boundary, and was 0.45m deep. At least part of this drainage trench appeared to lie within a foundation trench associated with the rear of the present shop building, and no additional archaeological features were observed.

It was not possible to observe other shallow trenches dug during the laying of drains as work could not proceed at the scheduled time. However, all new groundworks related to drainage were towards the front of the property, close to the areas already inspected during the excavation of building foundations.

Well

During levelling and clearance of the site by machine before the excavation of foundation trenches, a well was located in plan by the contractors. It lay *c* 3.5m to the rear of the existing shop building, and was lined with creamy yellow bricks. The narrow opening measured 0.45 x 0.50m internally, though below, the main shaft of the well had a diameter that was estimated at 1.60m. Later, when Foundation Trench V was being excavated, a large construction pit for the well was seen, Cut 156, measuring at least 3m in length from north-west to south-east. The exterior of the shaft was also exposed and found to be constructed of red brick.

6 INTERPRETATION

Trench I

The thick rubble deposit (2) seen near the top of Section 1 (Fig 3, Plate 2) may date to the eighteenth century rather than any later period. The pottery recovered is exclusively a mix of seventeenth and eighteenth century types, with the exception of one small sherd of Tudor Green, and other finds included hand made brick and peg tile. No modern material was observed. The deposit was not present in Section 2 and may have been truncated previously. However, it seems at least as likely that the rubble may relate more to the next property to the north-west. Other deposits such as (23), probably older than (2), were present on the south-eastern side of Trench I, suggesting that (2) may never have extended to the south-east.



Plate 2 Section 1, Trench I, showing Deposits (2), (3), and (5), and Cut 10; compare with section drawing, Figure 3

Below, two further deposits were present extending the full length of Section 1. Mottled clay (3) was undated, whilst from the dark grey sandy clay silt beneath, (5), nine sherds of early medieval pottery were recovered, including two sherds in the St. Neots tradition. This group seems to date to the twelfth century, or the early thirteenth century at the latest (Appendix A), and the absence of later artefacts suggests that the pottery accurately reflects the date of the deposit. Both of these two deposits give the appearance of tipping down from south-east to north-west in the two short sections of the trench, with (5) thought to lie within indistinct Cut 11 (Fig 4). Likewise in the south-eastern side of the trench, (3) may be intermittently present at a higher level ((3) and (30), Fig 5), whilst (5) is not present at all. Here (31), probable dirty natural subsoil, is present at an equivalent depth, suggesting that (5) has not been truncated, and probably does lie within a cut. Thus it seems that (5), and possibly also (3), represent either the edge of larger deposits extending north-west, or fill a linear feature located along the present property boundary. In either case, the line of the present boundary seems to have existed as a significant physical division in the twelfth century.

Between (3) and (5), small Cuts 15 and 17 remain undated. Their size and shape suggest a possible function as postholes. Sealed by (5), Cuts 9 and 10 seem to be of eleventh to twelfth century date; the fills of both contain pottery of this period, and no later material. The shape in plan of Cut 9 remains uncertain, but Cut 10 probably represents the base of a rubbish pit. Also apparently sealed by (5), part of Cut 13 was visible at the base of the short south-west facing section. This cut was also visible in Section 2, Trench I, and in Trench II, and seems to be part of a very substantial rubbish pit at least 2.4m long. The fill contained relatively large quantities of animal bone, and the three sherds of St. Neots Ware pottery and sherd of Stamford Ware recovered suggest an early twelfth century date at the latest. No finds datable to a later period were recovered with the exception of one fragment each of modern brick and concrete. These were most probably intrusive, derived from modern rubble present on the surface when the trench was machined.

At the top of Section 2 (Fig 4), the rubble deposits (21) and (27), present at the two ends, were modern in appearance, as was pit 29, sealed by (27). The clay intermittently present below (21) may be related to the undated clay deposit present in Section 1. Beneath, Cut 22 was probably the base of a pit, with three sherds of eleventh or twelfth century pottery indicating a probable early medieval date. It cut into (36), apparently a layer, which is exposed on the surface c 1-2m to the south-west. This suggests that, in this particular place, the initial limited clearance of the site by the building contractors had here been sufficient to expose an early medieval deposit. Cut 22 also truncated Pit 34; this was also visible in Trench II, where four sherds of eleventh or twelfth century pottery were recovered. The fact that this pit itself cuts large Pit 13, already described, means that in this section alone, at least three phases of early medieval pit digging can be identified. A further pit, 25, which also truncates Pit 13, remains undated.

Trench II

The rubble layer visible at the surface appeared to be very recent. Below, in Section 3 (Fig 6), Cuts 62, 64, and 65 must be regarded as undated. Shallow Cut 52 underlying 62 produced one sherd of St Neots type pottery, so that this cut, and Cut 56 below, may be of early medieval date, although the bands of fill within 56 were very sharply and cleanly defined. Cut 60, (truncated by 56), contained at least two sherds of shelly eleventh or twelfth century pottery, and is perhaps more likely to date to that period. It cuts the large early medieval pit (13) seen in Trench I. To the south-east, rounded Cut 68, predating Cut 64 and containing at least one sherd of St. Neots type pottery and no later material, is considered probably an early medieval pit. Deposit (69), truncated by Cut 62 but containing one sherd of heavily leached Roman grey ware, is undated.

In the Section 4 (Fig 7), a further probable pit was recorded, Cut 106, which, stratigraphically, should be dated to the eleventh to twelfth centuries or earlier. The abundant burnt clay at the base of deposit (110) may indicate that some craft or "industrial" activity involving heat had taken place nearby.

Trench III

The two cuts seen in Section 5 (Fig 8), 81 and 83, remain undated, although 81 contained medium fragments of brick and mortar. Cut 81 may be a rubbish pit, 83 a posthole, although interpretation of features seen in a single section can only be tentative. Below, the continuous deposit (80) is probably early medieval: it contained the rim of a large eleventh or twelfth century vessel, and no obviously later material. It should be noted that, towards the south-west, this deposit lay no more than 0.10m below the surface cleared by the building contractors. It lies immediately over natural silty sandy clay, and may represent a spread of early medieval occupation debris.

Trenches IV-VI

With the exception of the cut for the well, all four pits visible in Trench IV seem to be early medieval or medieval in date, and covered by only a thin layer of rubble 0.05-0.12m deep. Cut 161 contained a brown fill and a sherd of coarse quartz tempered medieval pottery that could not be accurately dated; it is suggested that this was an early medieval or medieval rubbish pit. To the north-east c 1-2m, Cut 172 had an almost identical fill, although in this case animal bone was recovered but not pottery. This is likely to be a rubbish pit of the same date. Truncated by these two cuts, Cut 160 was earlier, and the dark olive grey fill with large organic component indicates a probable function as a cess pit. In Section 7, Cut 158 had similar dimensions and profile, but in this case sherds of St. Neots Ware and standard Stamford Ware allowed this probable rubbish pit to be dated to perhaps the eleventh century, or the early twelfth century at latest. It remains possible that all the pits of similar size and shape referred to here are of approximately the same date. Truncated by 158, Deposit (154), containing mussel and oyster shell, may be a layer of early medieval occupation debris lying only 0.05m below the cleared ground surface.

In the sections of Trench V, any further early medieval or medieval features would have been removed by the excavation of the cut for the well (1), which extended for the full depth of the trench.

In Trench VI, early medieval deposits were again present. In Section 9 (Fig 12), apparently modern dumps overlaid the well. The well cut then truncated an undated though very mixed deposit (178). The remains of a possible cobbled surface lay slumped into the fill of Cut 183 below. This latter contained at least three sherds of eleventh or twelfth century pottery and no later material, and seems to be another substantial rubbish pit which can be dated to these centuries. Deposit (181), truncated by the pit, perhaps represents either more dumped occupation debris, or the fill of a further cut not definable from this one section alone.

Trench VII

The five pits and two larger cuts recorded in Trench VII are difficult to date. The larger cuts at either end had very mixed, disturbed fills and may be modern. Of the smaller pits, Cut 203 contained one sherd of local quartz tempered cooking pot dating to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries; this feature may date to this period or later. Cut 201 contained one sherd of red slipware probably of the seventeenth century, though again the feature may be later. The other pits contained no artefacts, though Cut 209

contained charcoal and animal bone, and Cut 207 charcoal and oyster shell. Four of these smaller features may be rubbish pits; Cut 205 was smaller and may be a posthole. With the exception of the foundation trench for the present building to the south-east, there was no indication of the edge of the property: Pits 209, 203, and 201 appeared to continue under the adjoining building. Inspection of Trench VII has, though, shown conclusively that archaeological deposits continue to be present right up to the current property boundary. No early medieval pottery was recovered, but undated Pits 209, 207, and 205 could be early medieval in date, as, equally, they could be later.

Well

The mixture of creamy yellow and red brick used in the lining of the well suggests that, in the form in which it survives, this is a modern feature.

Extent and density of archaeological features

In all the trenches examined, a total of fifteen pits were recorded which can be dated to the early medieval or medieval periods. Twelve of these were dated by pottery which may be firmly attributed to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the remaining three pits may also be of this period. A further seven deposits were thought to be early medieval, and many of these may be dumps of occupation material. In addition, five pits remained undated.

The early medieval / medieval features were not confined to one area of the site: deposits of this period were encountered in each of Trenches I-VI. These features were also present in considerable density. As a crude indicator, the fifteen pits in Trenches I-VI were found in an area of *c* 22 m². When, in Trench VII, it became possible to investigate an area parallel to the present south-eastern property boundary, further archaeological deposits were found extending up to and beyond that boundary.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This Recording Brief strongly suggests that there was intensive activity on the site in the eleventh or twelfth centuries, prior to the thirteenth century date often assumed for the development of this part of Huntingdon. However, these dates do not necessarily conflict. The archaeological evidence recovered relates to pit digging rather than the presence of structures. Whilst it is quite possible that contemporary structures existed along the street frontage itself, where for a width of *c* 6.5m the archaeological deposits have been destroyed by later cellars, the first structures may have been built later. At least two rubbish pits containing pottery from no later than the twelfth century were recorded within *c* 7-8m of the street frontage (183 and 158), and a cess-pit that was either contemporary or slightly later (160) extended to within *c* 8m of the street. The fact that these pits were so close to the street frontage may suggest that the tenement plot had not yet been laid out, or that buildings had not yet been erected, and that this pit digging was from an earlier phase of activity. However, the date of the first buildings remains uncertain, though it must now be clear that there was occupation very close to this part of the High Street from at least the twelfth century. Many of the pits and other deposits recorded were rich in pottery and animal bone, and this material is unlikely to have been moved very far at a time when rubbish disposal in towns was usually carried out within close proximity to living and activity areas (Carver 1987).

The most significant finding of the present project must be that, in this area of Huntingdon, important archaeological deposits may survive virtually intact. Where early tenement boundaries survive, the yard areas may never have been subject to disturbance. Undisturbed pits such as those recorded, potentially rich in artefacts and ecofacts, offer great potential for reconstructing the economy and environment of the specific areas in which they are located. Were they to be preserved for future investigation on a sufficiently large scale, the reconstruction of the changing patterns of trade and commerce on which Huntingdon depended would be a possibility. However, the vulnerability of these deposits must also be highlighted. In places, early medieval features were found to lie at the level of the present ground surface after only minimal site clearance.

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APPENDIX A SPOTDATING OF POTTERY FROM 90/91 HUNTINGDON HIGH STREET (Dr P Spoerry)

| Context | Present | Date |
|---------|--|-----------|
| 2 | Tudor Greenware | 1380-1550 |
| | Metropolitan Slipware | 1600-1700 |
| | Red/green post medieval redware | 1600-1700 |
| | Post-medieval redware | 1600-1800 |
| | Staffordshire Slipware | 1700-1800 |
| | Later English Tin Glaze | 1700-1800 |
| 5 | Shelly, in the St. Neots tradition: 2 sherds | 1100-1250 |
| | Very coarse shelly ware, handmade: 1 sherd | 1100-1250 |
| | Slightly shelly ware: 2 sherds | 1100-1250 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|------------------------------------|
| | Standard quartz tempered ware: 4 sherds | 1100-1250 |
| 6 | St. Neots Type Ware, wheelmade: 2 sherds | 1000-1200 |
| 7 | Probable St. Neots Type, wheelmade: 3 sherds | 1100-1200 |
| 12 | Thetford Type Ware: 1 sherd Stamford Ware (standard): 1 sherd St. Neots Ware: 3 sherds | 1000-1150 1000-1200 |
| 20 | St. Neots Ware: 1 sherd Less shelly ware: 1 sherd | 1000-1200 1000-1200 |
| 23 | St Neots Type Ware Wheel made buff fabric, hard fired: 1 sherd | 1000-1200 Uncertain |
| 51 | St. Neots Type Ware, oxidised: 1 sherd | ?900-1200 |
| 57 | St. Neots Type Ware: 1 sherd | 900-1200 |
| 59 | Slightly shelly pottery: 2 sherds | Pre 1200 |
| 67 | St. Neots Type Ware: 1 sherd | 1000-1200 |
| 69 | Grey ware, heavily leached | Roman |
| 80 | Slightly shelly pottery: 1 sherd | 1000-1200 |
| 103 (=33) | St. Neots Ware: 1 sherd St. Neots Ware variant: 2 sherds Local quartz tempered ware: 1 sherd | 1000-1200 1000-1200 Medieval |
| 157 | Stamford Ware (standard): 1 sherd | 1000-1150 |
| 161 | Quartz tempered coarseware | Medieval |
| 182 | St. Neots Type Ware Lightly shell tempered ware, local: 2 sherds | 1000-1200 1000-1200 |
| 200 | Slipped redware | 1600-1700 |
| 202 | Wheel-made, quartz-tempered cooking pot: 1 sherd | 1200-1400 |

APPENDIX B LIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES TAKEN

A number of environmental samples were taken during fieldwork from features which appeared to have relatively organic fills. These have not been analysed for the purposes of this present report, as collectively, they were considered to form too small a group to yield significant findings. However, they have been retained, and are available for analysis should it be wished to assess the environmental potential of some of the deposits recorded.

| Sample | Context | Trench |
|--------|---------|--------|
| 1 | 5 | 1 |
| 2 | 154 | 4 |
| 3 | 157 | 4 |
| 4 | 159 | 4 |
| 5 | 161 | 4 |
| 6 | 171 | 4 |
| 7 | 182 | 6 |



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