

Archaeological Field Unit

Medieval and Later Deposits at
Marshall's Garage, High Street, Huntingdon

K Welsh

1994

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 105

Commissioned By Paul Bancroft Architects

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Marshall's Garage, High Street, Huntingdon**

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SUMMARY

During December 1993, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an assessment at Marshall's garage, High Street, Huntingdon (TL 2406/7167). Three trenches were excavated, all of which revealed a variety of archaeological deposits. The earliest of these may date to before the Norman Conquest, although this is by no means certain. A gravel surface, perhaps part of a yard, pits, and possible structural evidence were also revealed and appeared to date to the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

The next period of activity recognised archaeologically was an apparently deliberate raising of the ground surface, perhaps to combat problems of flooding. Large quantities of clay and other materials, much of it burnt, were observed in all three trenches and may have been dumped there at the end of the medieval period.

Following this, a cellared building was constructed on the High Street frontage, perhaps around 1500. This building may well be one of three inns mentioned in a document dating to 1572. It was probably partially demolished in the seventeenth century. Evidence of a seventeenth century building, probably fronting onto Hartford Road, was also recorded. These buildings seem to have survived until the early nineteenth century, when they were demolished to make way for St Mary's vicarage. Wall footings belonging to the vicarage were seen just beneath the present tarmac and gravel surface, the building having been demolished in the 1930s to widen the junction between the High Street and Hartford Road.

The assessment showed widespread survival of medieval and post-medieval deposits, including structures and other occupation evidence. The deliberate dumping of material on the site, probably at the end of the medieval period, means that the earliest levels have only been partially disturbed by later building work, and the fact that much of the area remained open during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has further protected the archaeology.

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Topography and Geology	1
3.0	Background	1
4.0	Methodology and Constraints	2
5.0	Results	4
5.1	Trench I	4
5.2	Trench II	8
5.3	Trench III	12
6.0	Interpretation	18
7.0	Conclusions	19
	Acknowledgements	20
	References	20
	Appendix A Saxon and Medieval pottery from Hartford Road, Huntingdon	21

FIGURES

Figure 1	Location Map	2
Figure 2	Plan of Trench I	5
Figure 3	South-west-facing section (S1), Trench I	7
Figure 4	Plan of Trench II	9
Figure 5	South-east-facing section (S2), Trench II	11
Figure 6	Plan of Trench III	13
Figure 7	North-east-facing section (S3), Trench III	15
Figure 8	South-west-facing section (S4), Trench III	17

1.0 INTRODUCTION

From the 13th to 23rd December 1993, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological assessment at Marshall's car sales site in Huntingdon. The work was carried out at the request of Paul Bancroft Architects on behalf of Marshall's Garage, and in response to a brief prepared by the County Archaeology Office in order to produce a planning determination. The proposed development of the site includes the excavation of an underground car park, over the entire area, to a depth of about 3m.

The site is located on the High Street at the junction with Hartford Road (*Figure 1*) and is centred on TL 2406/7167. Its location within the Medieval and, almost certainly, the late Saxon settlement meant that the site was considered of prime importance in understanding the development of Huntingdon as an urban centre. It was particularly hoped that evidence of the documented Anglo-Scandinavian occupation of the town might have been present.

2.0 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site lies on flat land about 300m north-west of the river Great Ouse at a height of 13m OD. The British Geological Survey 1:50000 map shows the site lying on 1st and 2nd terrace river gravels overlying Oxford Clay

3.0 BACKGROUND

Huntingdon straddles the major Roman road, Ermine Street on the north-western side of the River Great Ouse. However, settlement during the Roman period was focused across the river at Godmanchester with Huntingdon forming only a northern bridgehead (or, just possibly, a suburb) of that settlement.

It is likely that Huntingdon originated as a settlement in the middle Saxon period since it is recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 656 as 'Huntedune-porte'. 'Porte' generally refers to a market centre, implying that Huntingdon was by then a settlement of some importance. In the later ninth century, Huntingdon became a Danish stronghold. This situation prevailed until, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 921, Edward the Elder occupied the 'burh' of Huntingdon and began repairing its defences. The importance of Huntingdon after this date is demonstrated by the presence of a mint in the town - the earliest known issue was struck during the reign of Eadwig (955-959)

It is recorded that, in 1068, William the Conqueror visited the town and had the castle built, whilst the Domesday book states that the town had 256 burgesses, three moneyers, two churches and a mill. It also contains evidence that, prior to Edward the Confessor's reign, the town had become reduced in size but that, from Edward until the Domesday survey, very little, if any, contraction had occurred.

A period of difficulty followed, with figures showing that the taxable value of the town had been halved by the mid-twelfth century (VCH 1974). In the later part of the century, the castle was dismantled and the town entered a period of increased prosperity

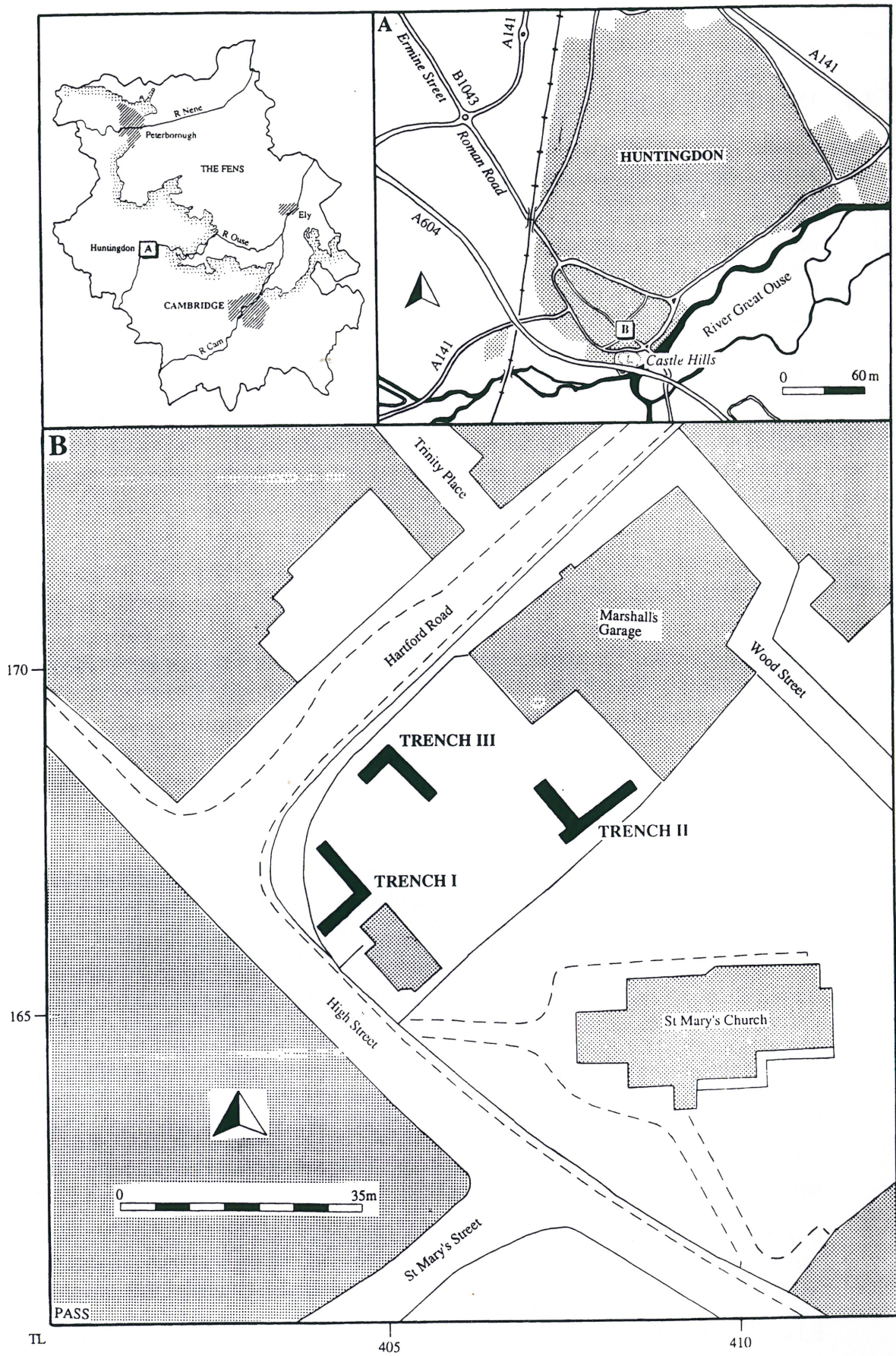


Figure 1 *Location map*

which lasted through the thirteenth century. During this time the town acquired a total of sixteen churches as well as numerous other religious foundations. However, fortunes changed during the next century and the town suffered greatly from economic hardship and depopulation, and by the late fourteenth century as many as eleven of the churches were redundant.

The site lies within the southern part of the presumed area of the pre-Conquest town, although probably not within the defended 'burgh'. Its position on the High Street frontage indicates that it would have been occupied throughout the town's history. The earliest map of the town (Speed 1610) shows that the High Street frontage and, possibly, the Hartford Road frontage (called, at various times, Swan Lane, St Mary's Lane, Three Tuns Lane, and Bear Lane) were built-up by the early seventeenth century. This does not match data from a slightly earlier document (Survey of the Town and Lands in Huntingdon, 1572), and Dickinson (1972) has suggested that Speed had simply confused Hartford Road with the adjacent Germain Street, then one of the main routes into the town. This same document also appears to place three inns (the Swan, the Cock in the Hoop, and the Bull) on the High Street frontage of the site. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Hartford Road frontage was certainly developed. By the mid-nineteenth century, the area was partly occupied by a vicarage, with a still-extant, timber-framed building of the seventeenth century forming part of a second property. The vicarage was demolished in the 1930s in order to widen the junction between Hartford Road and the High Street - its foundations now lie largely under the road.

4.0 METHODOLOGY AND CONSTRAINTS

Much of the site is occupied by Marshall's car showroom and offices, so that only the gravel forecourt (about half of the total area) was available for evaluation. It was hoped that redundant service trenches, or other recent features, could be located, and their fills removed, in order to record the earlier deposits with as little disturbance as possible. Unfortunately, this was not possible and so a scheme of trenching was devised which attempted to cover both those areas known to have been built-up in the nineteenth century and earlier, and those areas of, apparently, open ground or garden. It was felt that the most useful data, in terms of the urban and economic development of the town, would be retrieved from refuse and activity areas to the rear of historic buildings where damage from later building work would be less likely.

Three trenches, totalling 57m in length, were opened using a mechanical excavator with a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket (see *Figure 1*). Trench I was positioned to avoid the nineteenth century buildings so as to investigate the earlier High Street frontage. At the back of the vicarage and the adjoining property was a small cul-de-sac recorded, on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map, as Hartford Place, and Trench II was located so that it was partly within the street and partly within a small row of houses. The area was not built-up until after the mid-eighteenth century and probably not until the nineteenth. Trench III was located to investigate the Hartford Road frontage and the area immediately behind it.

It was originally intended to open all three trenches at the same time, which would have allowed strategic decisions to be made with regard to the best use of the available time. In order to allow the continued operation of the car showroom, however, it was agreed that each trench be opened, recorded, and back-filled before starting the next one. In the event, this did not cause any serious problems and the evaluation was completed on time.

During machining, the decision had to be taken whether or not to remove deposits based on their age and also on their nature. For example, where it was clear that a layer was composed of demolition material and was presumably quite extensive, or where clean gravel had been dumped, it was felt that its removal would cause minimal loss of information whilst greatly increasing the recovery of evidence from earlier periods.

Once machining was completed, each trench was cleaned by hand, and photographed. They were then planned, and appropriate vertical sections drawn. Where possible, pottery was retrieved from well-defined deposits so that some idea of date range could be established. Excavation was kept to a minimum with only occasional features partially excavated for specific objectives. In places, where it was clear that extensive layers remained, small trial holes were hand-dug in order to produce dating evidence and to establish the total depth of archaeological deposits.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Trench I (*Figure 2*)

Deposits recorded in south-west-facing section (*Figure 3*):

Layer 101, up to 0.16m thick, was a brown, sandy clay which contained frequent flecks of charcoal. Below Layer 73.

Layer 73, 0.42m thick, was a dark brownish grey, sandy silty clay which contained occasional pottery sherds and charcoal fragments. Below Layer 72.

Layer 72, up to 0.1m thick, was a dark grey, sandy silty clay with frequent charcoal fragments. Below Layer 71.

Layer 71, up to 0.09m thick, was a brown, silty clay with occasional charcoal fragments and oyster shell. Below Layer 70.

Layer 70, up to 0.13m thick, was a mixed, dark brownish grey, silty clay and dark yellowish brown, clay with occasional charcoal fragments. Cut by 69.

Cut 69, at least 0.47m by 0.17m deep, contained Fill 68, a dark brownish grey, silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks. Cut by 67.

Cut 67, more than 0.45m by 0.27m deep, contained Fill 66, a dark grey, silty clay with occasional charcoal fragments. Below Layer 65.

Layer 65, 0.05m thick, was a mixed charcoal and yellowish brown clay with a thin charcoal layer forming the upper 5mm. Below Layer 64.

Layer 64, up to 0.23m thick, was a dark grey, silty clay containing frequent charcoal fragments and red, burnt clay fragments. Cut by 55 and 57.

Cut 55, more than 0.52m by 0.20m deep, contained Fill 54, a dark red, burnt silty clay. Cut by 53.

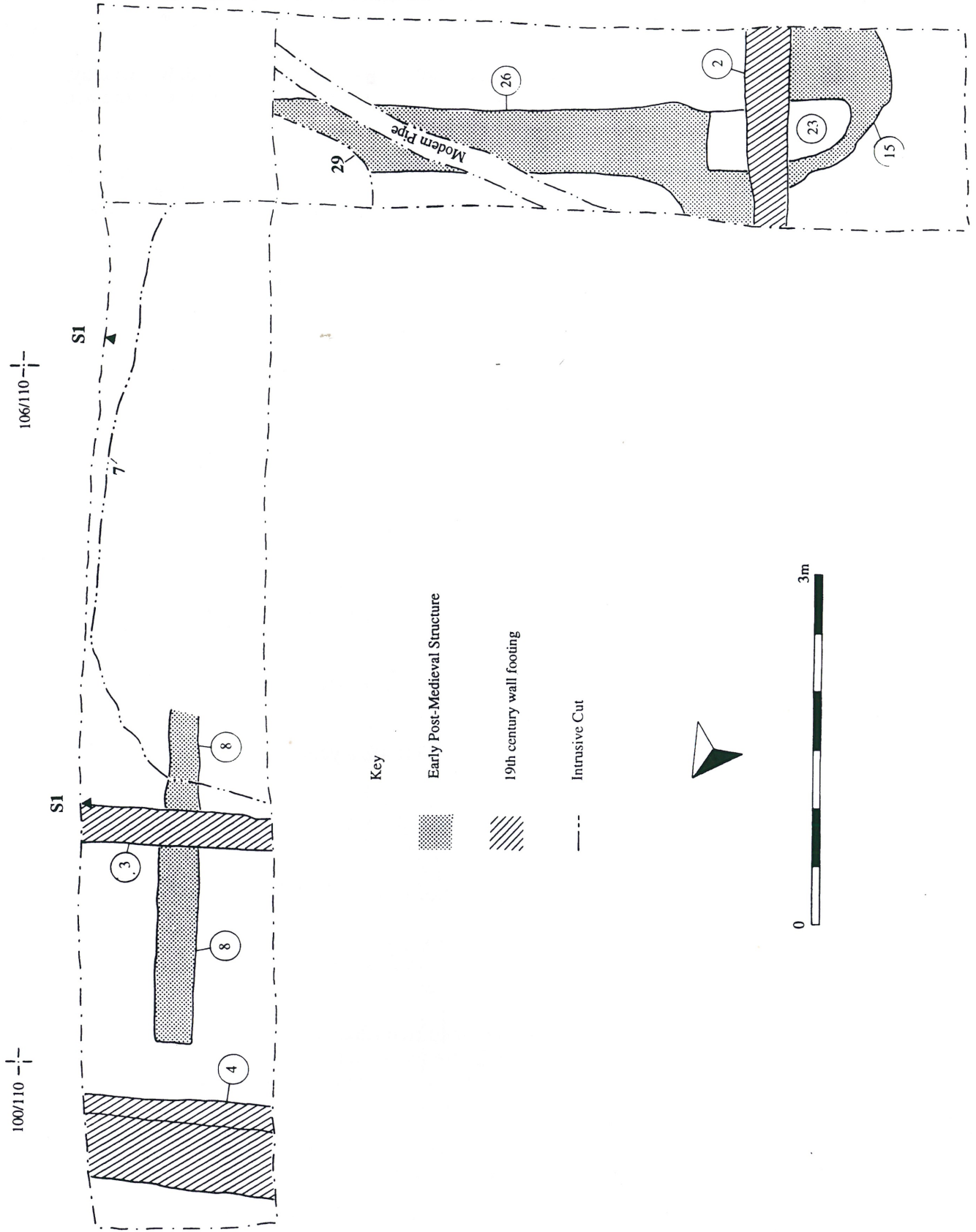


Figure 2 Plan of Trench I

Cut 57, 0.14m by 0.23m deep, contained Fill 56, a compact, yellowish brown clay. A central 'pipe', 0.12m across, contained a loose, fragmented, yellowish brown, clay.

Cut 59, 1.19m by 0.35m deep, contained Fill 58, a yellowish-brown, clay with occasional charcoal fragments. The edge of the cut appeared to have been burnt *in situ* resulting in a thin, less than 10mm, layer of red burnt clay and a layer of charcoal/ash, less than 10mm thick.

Layer 62, 0.12m thick, was a yellowish brown clay. Cut by 61.

Layer 63, 0.11m thick, was a mixed layer of brown clay, mortar fragments, and roof tile.

Cut 61, 0.10m by 0.35m deep, contained Fill 60, a brown, silty clay.

Cut 53, 0.78m by 0.40m deep, contained Fill 52, a dark red, burnt silt and ?crushed brick with a lens of bluish grey clay. Below Layer 47 and cut by 49.

Wall 75, orientated north-east to south-west, was constructed from river cobbles (up to 220mm across) and mortar, with two courses of worked stone forming the upper 0.29m

Layer 47, 0.01m thick, was composed of charcoal (50%) and dark brown silty clay. Below Layer 46.

Layer 46, 0.06m thick, was a brown clay with occasional charcoal flecks. Cut by 51.

Cut 49, 0.35m by 0.09m deep, contained Fill 48, a yellowish brown, clay. Below Layer 45.

Cut 51, 0.29m by 0.24m deep, contained Fill 50, a yellowish brown, clay. Below Layer 45.

Layer 45, 0.01m thick, was composed of charcoal (50%) and dark brown silty clay. Below layer 43.

Layer 43, 0.23m thick, was mixed brown clay and red burnt clay, containing fragments of mortar and brick. Cut by 42.

Cut 42, 1.50m by 0.30m deep, contained two fills, 40 and 41. The lower fill, 41, was a greyish brown, sandy clay with frequent charcoal fragments, and occasional mortar and tile fragments. Fill 40 was composed of mortar and roof-tile fragments. Cut by 39.

Layer 44, up to 0.15m thick, was composed of mortar and roof-tile fragments. Probably a fill of 42 and equivalent to Fill 40.

Cut 39, more than 1.85m by 0.57m deep, contained Fill 38, a dark brownish grey, sandy silty clay. Cut by 36.

Cut 36, 1.74m by 0.34m deep, contained Fill 35, a brown, clay sand with frequent gravel.

Layer 37, 0.35m thick, was a dark brownish grey, sandy silty clay.

Layer 34, 0.15m thick, was a dark brownish grey, sandy silty clay.

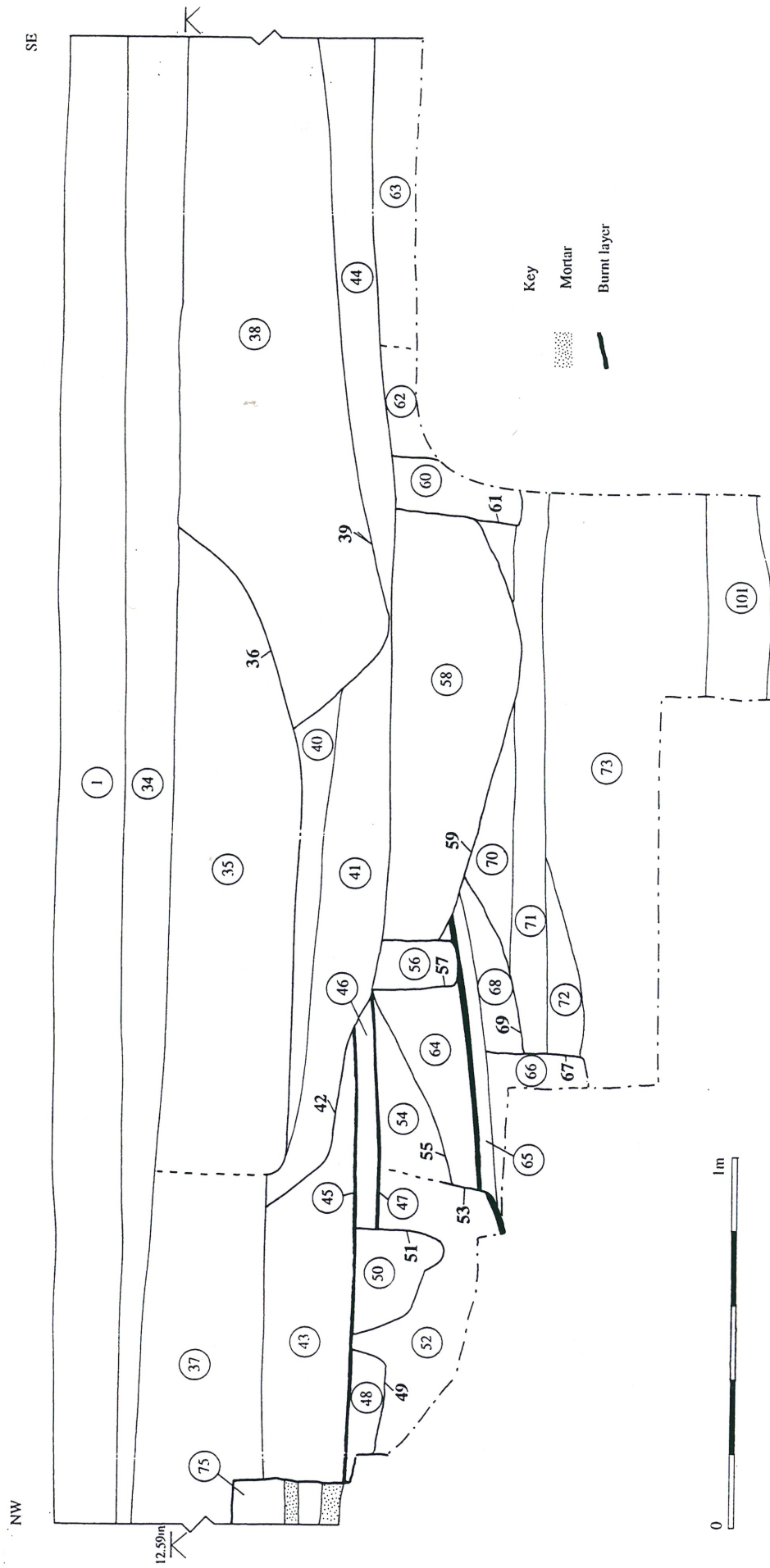


Figure 3 South-west-facing section (S1), Trench I

Layer 1, up to 0.20m thick, was the modern tarmac and rubble make-up.

Deposits recorded in plan (*Figure 2*) - largely unexcavated:

Layer 14 was a dark, greyish brown sandy clay which contained occasional flecks of brick, charcoal fragments, and sherds of pottery. Cut by **30**

Orientated parallel to the High Street was a cellared building from which Wall 75 projected to the north-east. The cellar measured about 6m north-east to south-west and 4m north-west to south-east and was formed by contexts 8 and 26. The base of the cellar is at about 1.6m below the present ground surface.

Cut **30**, at least 7m by 5m, and 1.2m deep, was the construction cut for the cellar. Not excavated. Contained contexts 8 and 26.

Context 8, composed of river cobbles (up to about 200mm across) and mortar, lined the north-east and north-west sides of the cellar and continued beyond it to the north-west and, as 75, to the north-east. Cut by **7**.

Context 26, composed of mottled orange and brown clay, lined the south-east side of the cellar.

Context 15, largely truncated but composed of unfrogged, red bricks and thick mortar, formed a roughly semi-circular structure. Below **23**.

Layer 23, up to 0.05m thick, was a sandy clay containing up to 50% charcoal fragments and flecks and frequent pottery sherds from a single vessel.

Cut **7**, at least 5m across, contained Fill 27, largely composed of peg tiles and some brick fragments. It also contained a sherd of pottery. Cut by **29**.

Walls 2 and 3 were constructed of unfrogged, red and yellow, bricks (on average 160 x 100 x 80mm). Wall 2, 0.38m wide and orientated north-west to south-east, survived to a maximum of four courses. Wall 3, 0.32m wide and orientated north-east to south-west, survived to a maximum of two courses. It had been constructed on top of Wall 75.

Wall 4 was constructed of unfrogged, red and yellow bricks, and survived to at least 5 courses. It was 0.60m wide and orientated north-east to south-west.

Cut **29**, at least 0.58m by 0.50m, and 0.20m deep, contained Fill 28, a dark grey, sandy clay and occasional sherds of pottery.

5.2 Trench II (*Figure 4*)

Deposits recorded in south-east-facing section (*Figure 5*) and in plan; largely unexcavated:

Cut **248**, at least 1.0m by 0.28m deep, contained Fill 218, a greyish brown, silty clay, with occasional pottery sherds. Below Cut **213**.

Layer 229, 0.22m thick, was a dark brownish grey, silty clay containing occasional charcoal fragments. Below Layer 216.

Layer 216, up to 50mm thick, was a very compact gravel. Pottery fragments on the surface of the gravel were assigned the Context Number 211. Cut by **213** and **217**.



Figure 4 Plan of Trench II

Cut **213**, at least 1.6m long, 0.78m wide, and 0.32m deep, orientated north-west to south-east, contained Fill 212, a greyish brown, silty clay with occasional pottery fragments. The upper 30mm of the fill contained frequent gravel and was very compact. Below Layer 228.

Cut **217**, more than 1.7m wide, and 0.15m deep, contained Fill 214 (also numbered 210), a yellowish red, gravelly sand. Below Layer 226.

Layer 215, up to 0.25m thick, consisted of large cobbles and limestone fragments, some of which were worked. Below Layer 228.

Layer 228, up to 0.40m thick, was a mid greyish brown, silty clay with frequent lenses of orange and red, burnt clay. Below Layer 226.

Layer 226, up to 0.6m thick, was a dark brownish grey, silty clay with occasional charcoal fragments and oyster shell. Below Layer 225.

Layer 225, up to 0.36m thick, was a dark brownish grey, silty clay with occasional charcoal fragments, and lenses of red, burnt clay. Below 224.

Layer 224, up to 0.42m thick, was an orange brown clay with occasional lenses of red, burnt clay. Below Layer 223.

Layer 223, up to 0.64m thick, was a dark greyish brown, silty clay. Below Cut **222** and masonry structures 203, 204, 209, and 220.

Cut **222**, 1.0m wide, and 0.5m deep, contained Fill 221, a mixed dark greyish brown, silty clay and orange brown, clay. Below Layer 219.

Masonry structure 203, 1.38m by more than 1.10m, was constructed from unfroged, red bricks and survived to a depth of three courses. Orientated north-west to south-east.

Wall-footing 204, 0.5m wide, and more than 1.8m long, was constructed from unfroged, red bricks and survived to a depth of four courses. Orientated from north-west to south-east.

Wall-footing 209, 0.18m wide, and more than 1.8m long, was constructed from unfroged, red bricks and survived to a depth of one course. Orientated from north-west to south-east.

Masonry structure 220 was constructed from unfroged, red bricks and survived to a depth of six courses. Orientated from north-east to south-west.

Layer 219, up to 0.33m thick, was composed of brick fragments and mortar fragments, with frequent charcoal fragments. Below Layer 231.

Layer 231, up to 0.36m thick, consisted of modern ironwork (car parts, oil tins, etc) and rubble. Below Layer 230.

Layer 230, up to 0.04m thick, was the modern tarmac surface.

Deposits recorded in south-west-facing section (not illustrated), largely unexcavated:

Layer 240, more than 0.22m thick, was a grey, sandy silty clay with occasional pottery fragments. Below Layer 239.

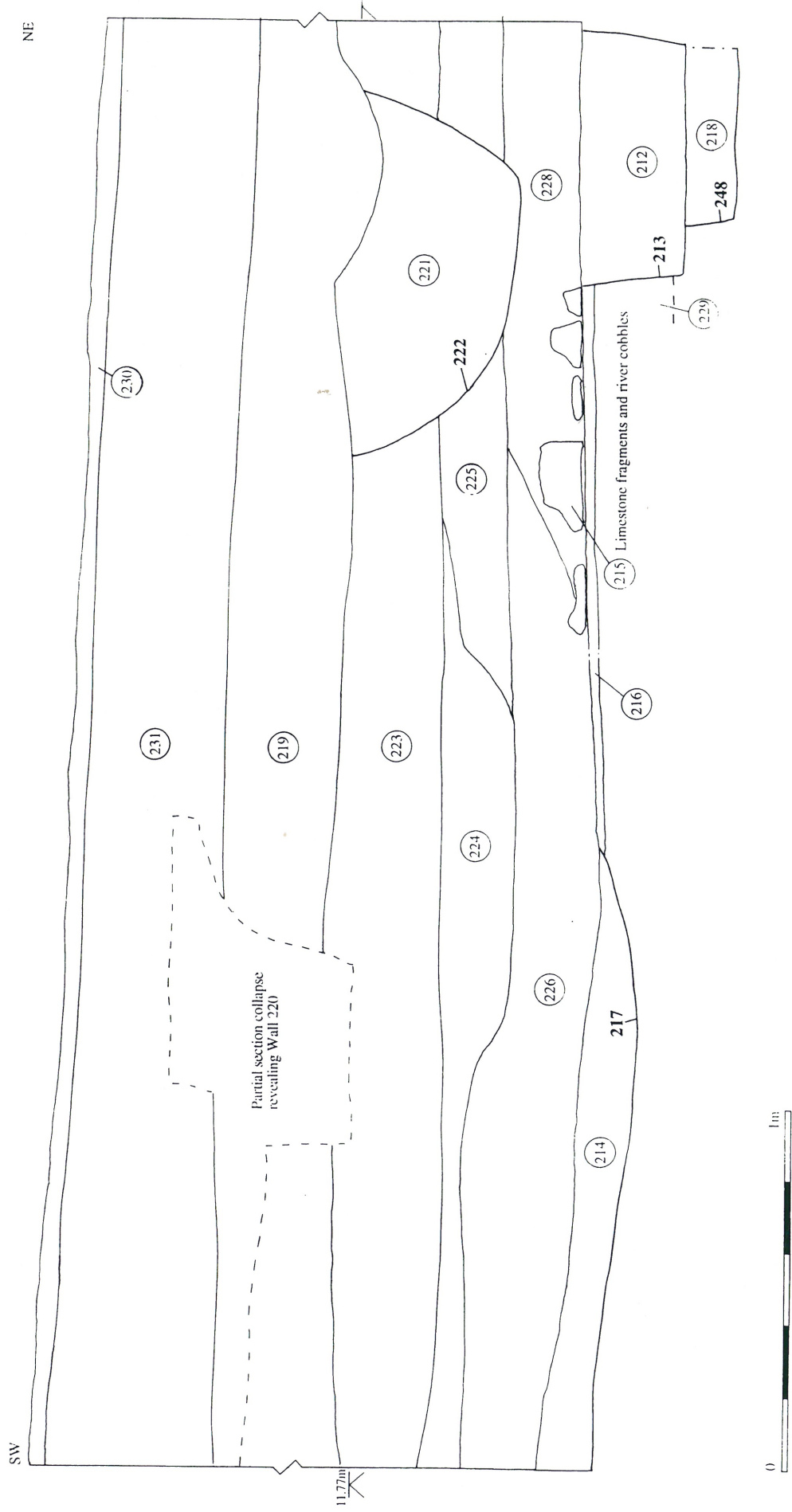


Figure 5 South-east-facing section (S2), Trench II

Layer 239, 0.10m thick, was a light grey, clay containing occasional pottery and bone. Below Layer 238.

Layer 238, 0.18m thick, was a yellowish red, gravelly sand. Probably equivalent to 214. Below Layer 237.

Layer 237, 0.05m thick, was a dark greyish brown, sandy clay with occasional pottery fragments. Below Layer 236.

Layer 236, up to 0.25m thick, was a reddish yellow, clayey sand with occasional pottery, bone and tile fragments. Below Layers 241 and 247.

Layer 247 was a greyish brown, silty clay. Below Layer 246.

Layer 246 was a greyish brown, sandy clay with occasional pottery fragments. Below Layer 235.

Layer 241 was a dark greyish brown, silty clay with occasional tile fragments. Below Layer 235.

Layer 235, up to 0.35m thick, was dark greyish brown, silty clay with occasional mortar and tile fragments. Below Layer 234.

Layer 234, 0.18m thick, was a pinkish grey, gravelly clay with occasional tile fragments. Below Layer 233.

Layer 233, up to 0.21m thick, was a black sandy gravel. Below Layer 232.

Layer 232, 0.3-m thick, consisted of brick and tile fragments. Below Layer 231.

5.3 Trench III (*Figure 6*)

Deposits recorded in north-east-facing section (*Figure 7*); largely unexcavated:

Cut **335** contained Fill 336, a dark greyish brown, silty sandy clay containing occasional pottery sherds. Below Layer 334.

Layer 334, up to 0.15m thick, was a dark greyish brown, sandy clay containing occasional pottery sherds and animal bone. Below Layer 333.

Layer 333, up to 0.20m thick, was a grey, clayey sand with lenses of clay. It contained occasional pottery sherds. Below Layer 332.

Layer 332, up to 0.09m thick, was a reddish yellow, sandy clay containing occasional pottery and animal bone. Below Layer 328 and 331.

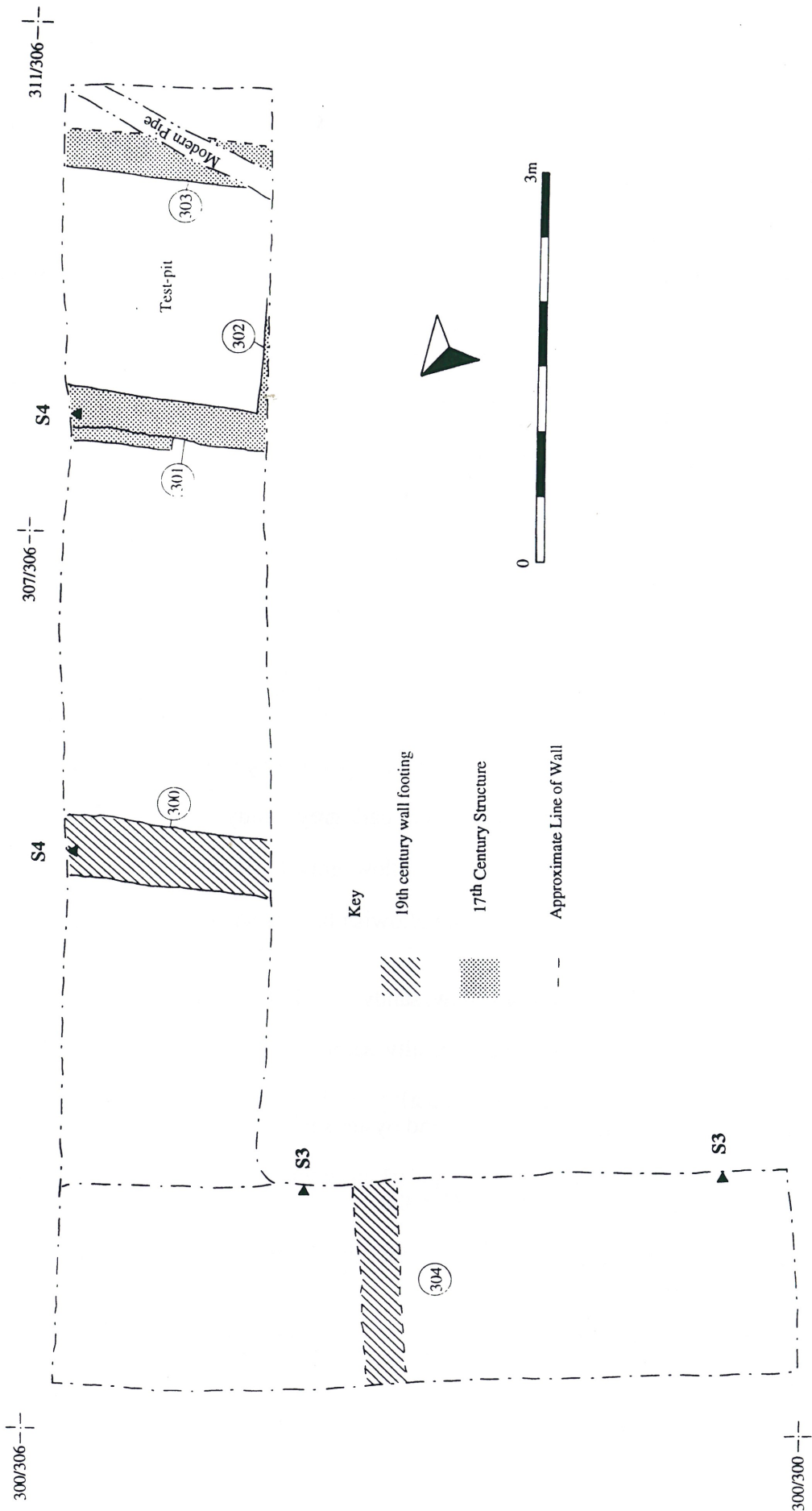
Layer 328, up to 0.23m thick, was weak red, clay. Below Layers 330 and 326.

Layer 331, up to 0.08m thick, was a yellow clay. Below Layers 330.

Layer 326, more than 0.20m thick, was a yellow clay. Below Cut **339** and Layer 325.

Layer 330, 0.05m thick, was a reddish grey, silty clay. Below Layer 329.

Layer 329, up to 0.07m thick, was a black charcoal layer. Below Layer 325.



PASS

Figure 6 Plan of Trench III

Cut **339**, more than 0.6m wide, and more than 0.15m deep, contained Fill 327, a dark reddish grey, silty clay with dark red mottling. Below Layer 324.

Layer 325, up to 0.15m thick, was a dark reddish grey, clayey silt with frequent charcoal fragments. Below Layer 324.

Layer 324, up to 0.33m thick, was a reddish yellow, coarse sand and gravel. Below Layer 323.

Layer 323, up to 0.58m thick, was a dark greyish brown, silty clay containing frequent tile and brick fragments, occasional pottery sherds, animal bone, and oyster shells. Below Layers 315, 318, and 322.

Layer 315, 0.04m thick, was a reddish yellow, coarse sand and gravel. Below Layer 314.

Layer 318, up to 0.08m thick, was a yellow, silty sand containing occasional tile and brick fragments. Below layer 317.

Layer 322, up to 0.15m thick, was a yellow, coarse sand and gravel. Below Cut **338**.

Wall 304, orientated from north-west to south-east, was constructed from unfrosted, red bricks. It survived to a depth of three courses.

Layer 314, 0.02m thick, was black charcoal. Below Layer 313.

Layer 313, up to 0.19m thick, was a very dark grey, sandy clay. Below Layer 312.

Layer 312, 0.07m thick, was a reddish yellow, gravel. Below Layer 311.

Layer 311, 0.07m thick, was a light yellowish brown, sandy gravel. Below Layer 310.

Layer 310, 0.03m thick, was a yellow, sandy gravel. Below Layer 309.

Layer 309, 0.13m thick, was a brown silty, sand and gravel. Below Layer 305.

Layer 317, up to 0.14m thick, was a dark greyish brown, sandy silt and gravel with occasional brick and tile fragments, and oyster shells. Below Layer 316.

Layer 316, up to 0.24m thick, was a dark grey, clayey silt with occasional brick fragments. Below Layer 307 and Cut **320**.

Layer 307, up to 0.20m thick, was a light olive brown, sandy silt and gravel with occasional brick fragments. Below Layer 305.

Cut **338**, more than 0.85m wide, and 0.19m deep, contained Fill 321, a dark greyish brown, sandy silt with occasional charcoal fragments and oyster shells. Below Cut **320**.

Cut **320**, 1.55m wide, and 0.50m deep, contained Fill 306, a yellow, coarse sand and gravel. Below Layer 305.

Layer 305, up to 0.20m thick, was the modern tarmac and rubble make-up.

Features in south-west-facing section (*Figure 8*) of south-eastern extension of trench; not excavated.

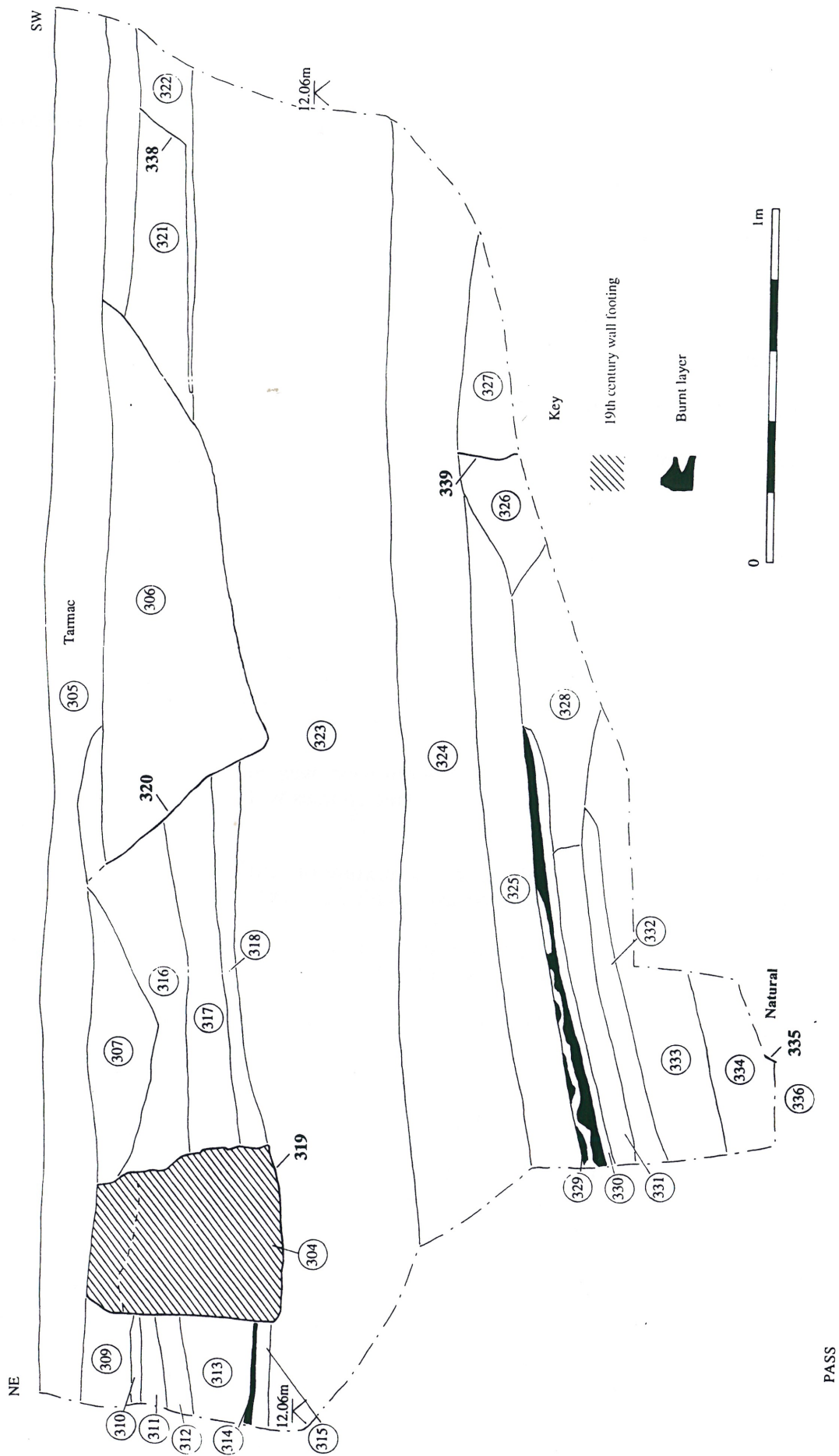


Figure 7 North-east-facing section (S3), Trench III

Layer 359, up to 0.05m thick, was a yellowish brown, sandy gravel. Below Layer 358.

Layer 358 0.25m thick, was a reddish brown silty clay with frequent bunt clay fragments and charcoal fragments, Below Layer 356.

Layer 356, 0.26m thick, was a reddish yellow, sandy gravel. Equivalent to Layer 324. Below Layer 355.

Layer 355, up to 0.07m thick, was a brown, silty clay. Below Layer 354.

Layer 354, 0.48m thick, was a greyish brown, silty clay. Below Cuts **345** and **353**.

Cut **345**, 0.58m wide, and 0.28m thick, contained Fill 344, a dark brownish grey, silty clay. Construction cut for Wall 300. Below Layer 343.

Wall 300, orientated north-east to south-west, was constructed of unfrosted, red bricks. It was 0.45m wide and survived to a depth of three courses.

Cut **353**, 0.37m wide, and 0.38m deep, contained Fill 352, a brownish grey silty clay with frequent tile fragments. Below Cut **351**.

Cut **351**, 0.42m wide, and 0.24m deep, contained Fill 350, a dark brownish grey, silty clay with occasional tile and brick fragments, and pottery sherds. Construction cut for Wall 301. Below Layer 349.

Wall 301, orientated north-east to south-west, was constructed from unfrosted, red bricks and survived to a depth of nine courses with a single tile course above the lowest course.

Layer 349, up to 0.05m thick, was a mixture of crushed, off-white mortar and greyish brown, silty clay with occasional tile fragments. Below Layer 348

Layer 348, 0.23m thick, was a dark brownish grey, sandy silty clay with occasional tile fragments. Below Cut **347**.

Cut **347**, 1.1m wide, and 0.65m deep, contained Fill 346, a brownish grey, sandy silty clay with frequent brick and tile fragments. Below Layer 343.

Layer 343, up to 0.7m thick, was a orange brown, sand and gravel containing lenses of greyish brown silty clay, Below Layer 340.

Layer 340, up to 0.18m deep, was the modern rubble make-up and tarmac. Cut **342**, a post-hole, was cut from below the tarmac but through the rubble make-up.

Features recorded in plan; not excavated.

Wall 302, orientated from north-west to south-east, and Wall 303, orientated from north-east to south-west, were constructed from similar bricks to those in Wall 301.

A trial pit was excavated, by machine, between Walls 301, 302, and 303. Due to its depth, the deposits within the trial pit could only be partially recorded. Layers of gravel, silty clay, and burnt materials, similar to those in the north-east and south-west facing sections, were observed to a depth of about 1.7m. Below this was a layer of dark brownish grey, silty clay. This sealed a pit, cut into natural silty clay, which contained dark greyish brown, silty clay with occasional pottery fragments.

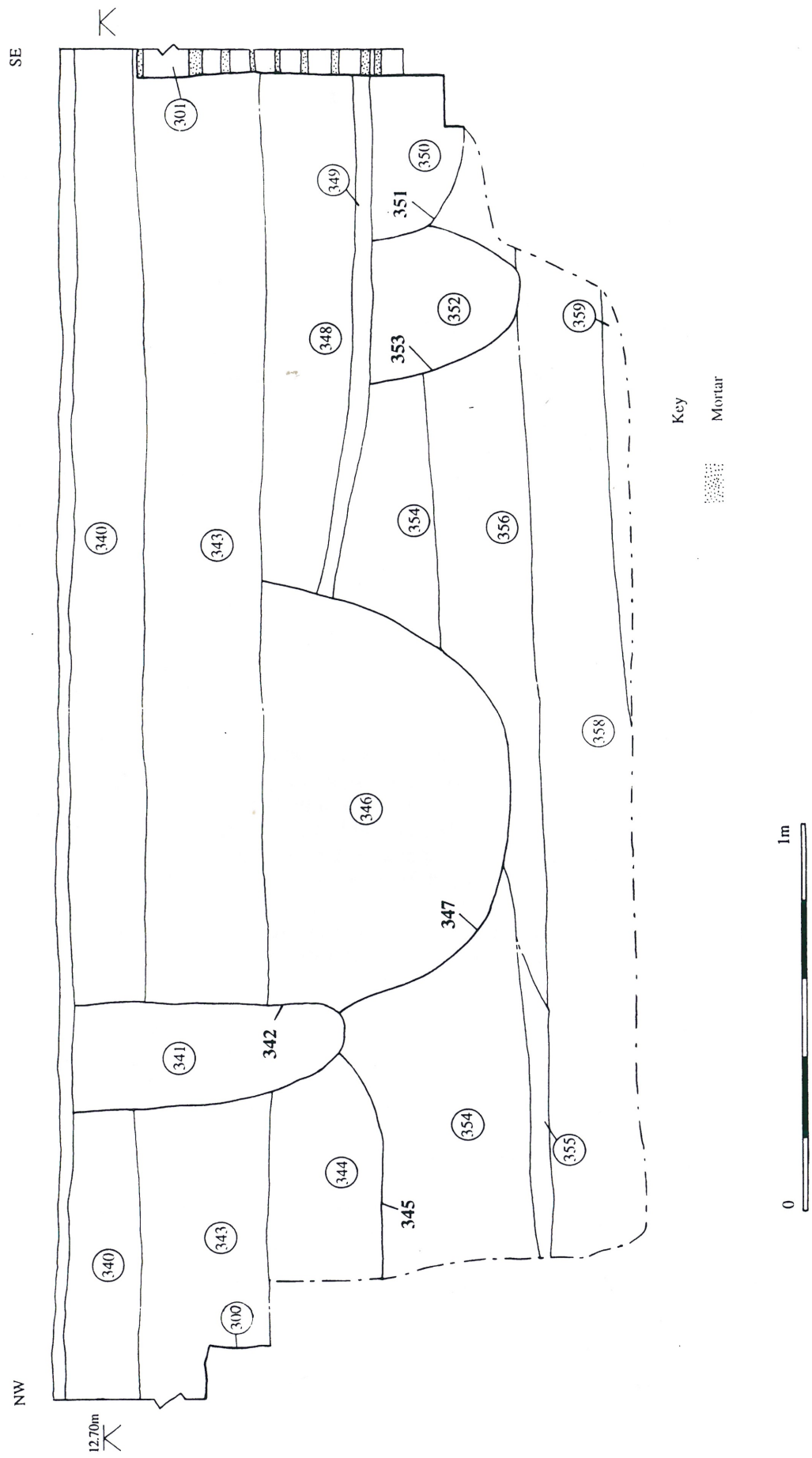


Figure 8 South-west-facing section (S4), Trench III

6.0 INTERPRETATION

In Trench I, the earliest, undated, level was sealed by two layers, 72 and 73, each containing a rim sherd of St Neots type ware. This shelly ware has a date range of 900-1150AD, but the lack of any other pottery from these contexts precludes any certainty of their date of deposition.

In Trench II, the gravel layer, 216, was very compact and is almost certainly a surface, perhaps of a yard. Pottery recovered from its surface was not very diagnostic, although one sherd of St Neots type ware was present. It could indicate a pre-Conquest date for the gravel, but it is more likely to be residual. Layer 216 was cut by a linear feature, 213, and a spread of limestone fragments and river cobbles, 215, respected the edge of this cut, indicating that it may have been upcast from it. It may, therefore, be a 'robber trench', excavated so that the stone footings of a wall could be recovered for re-use elsewhere. However, no traces of masonry were found in 213 itself, so this interpretation is uncertain. Pottery from the fill of 213, and from the fill of an earlier cut, 248, suggests a date of between 1150 and 1250AD. The gravel surface was cut by a second feature, 217, which has been dated to the range 1250-1500. It is, therefore, difficult to date this phase of activity with any confidence, but a thirteenth to fourteenth century date would not be unreasonable.

A similar date can be assigned to Cut 335 and the pit recorded in the test-pit, seen in Trench III.

Overlying the features in Trenches II and III were several, very well-defined, layers of clay and silty clay, showing considerable signs of burning, as well as layers of gravel. They may derive from the demolition and burning of nearby structures or, alternatively, the material may have been brought in from outside. Either way, it is likely that it was deliberately dumped, perhaps to raise the ground level if flooding was a problem. The pottery recovered from these layers dates from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. It is likely that the pottery is residual and that the material was dumped here at the end of the medieval period, It may be connected with the phase of activity that included the construction of the cellared building seen in Trench I.

This building can be dated, from an almost complete, though broken, vessel from an associated structure (Structure 15, Fill 23) to around 1500 or a little earlier. If the interpretation of the Survey of Huntingdon, of 1572, is correct (Dickinson, 1972), then it could have belonged to one of the three inns apparently to be found on the High Street frontage a century later. The date of its demolition is not so clear - a single sherd of Cistercian ware (1500-1600) in the back-fill of the cellar could be residual, but fragments of Tudor and post-medieval redwares in Cut 29, which post-dates the cellar lining, suggest a date not later than the mid-seventeenth century. However, this may have been only a partial demolition, since Wall 3, belonging to the nineteenth century vicarage, was built directly onto Wall 75 indicating that it was still standing in the early nineteenth century.

Somewhat later brickwork, Walls 301, 302, and 303, was seen in Trench III, perhaps forming part of a building fronting onto Hartford Road. Pottery recovered from the construction cut, 351, of Wall 301 included a sherd of German stoneware, and indicates a seventeenth century date. This building was probably not demolished until the nineteenth century, when St Mary's Vicarage was built.

Walls 2 and 3, in Trench I, and Walls 300 and 304, in Trench 5, can be matched with the Vicarage garden walls shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1885, while Wall 4 formed the south-east wall of the Vicarage building itself. The walls

evident in Trench II also date to the nineteenth century and form part of the small cul-de-sac shown on the 1885 map.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that this is an important site, at least in terms of the post-Conquest development of Huntingdon. The earliest deposits encountered may date to the pre-Conquest period and, together with a few sherds of residual Saxon pottery from later contexts, may indicate an early phase of use of the site, although this is by no means certain. Deposits in Trenches II and III, at a depth of 1.4 to 1.7m, included cut features, a gravel surface, and a possible robber trench, and appear to be thirteenth to fourteenth century in date. They certainly indicate occupation of the site away from the High Street and further excavation could reveal contemporary structural evidence, such as post-holes, on the High Street frontage, surviving beneath the later cellared building, at a depth of 1.6m.

The next phase represented seems to be a general raising of the ground surface across the site in the late medieval period. This may have been in response to damp conditions or flooding. Cut into these layers is the very late medieval or early post-medieval cellared building - it is not clear whether the clay-filled pits and post-holes in Trench I abut this building or are cut by it.

During the seventeenth century, the cellared building was probably (partially) demolished and a building, perhaps fronting onto Hartford Road, was constructed. There was no evidence to indicate the order of these events and they could have been entirely unconnected.

During the nineteenth century, the remaining buildings were demolished to make way for the vicarage, and Hartford Place was laid out.

In conclusion, then, there is a high potential for the survival of medieval and early post-medieval deposits across much of the site. In spite of its prime location on the High Street there are, in places, as little as 0.4m of later deposits above the late medieval and early post-medieval levels, and the probable seventeenth century structure in Trench III survives at depth of only about 0.25m below the modern ground surface. In the area occupied by the car showroom and workshop, survival should also be good since the building's foundations are unlikely to be very deep. Some loss of archaeological deposits can be expected due to the modern brickwork, probably a storage tank, seen in Trench II.

In addition to structural and other stratigraphic evidence, further excavation should allow a much greater understanding of the medieval and early post-medieval ceramic sequence at Huntingdon, which at present is poorly understood (Appendix A). There is also much potential for the analysis of faunal and macrofloral remains from medieval features, particularly from cess and rubbish pits expected to the rear of the High Street properties. It is also possible that some evidence of pre-Conquest activity exists. The topography of the town in this early period is largely unknown, in particular that of the Middle Saxon and Danish phases, and any new information could be invaluable in producing a clearer picture of Huntingdon's early development.

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APPENDIX A

Saxon and Medieval pottery from Hartford Road, Huntingdon

1 Background

Study of Saxon and medieval pottery in Huntingdonshire has advanced little since discussion of the origins of St Neots ware in the 1950s (Hurst 1956). Perhaps the most valuable comparable study of more recent date is that undertaken on the pottery from excavations in Northampton (McCarthy in Williams 1979, Denham in Williams, Shaw and Denham 1985).

Northampton, as a market centre, was probably fairly comparable with Huntingdon in the late Saxon and 'high' medieval periods, both being Anglo-Scandinavian burghs and centres of shires on the Danelaw fringe. Both also enjoyed some Royal patronage. Cambridge is closer to Huntingdon than Northampton; Cambridge being c. 18 miles to the south east, whilst Northampton is c. 30 miles to the south west, however, Cambridge has not yet provided a good ceramic sequence.

The progression of major fabrics in Northampton (after McCarthy 1979) is:

Local black gritty coarse ware	400-900
Local red-brown gritty coarse ware	400-900
Maxey/St Neots ware	650-1100
St Neots ware	850-1100
Northampton (quartz-tempered) ware	850-1100 (esp. 10th)
Stamford ware (incl. developed)	850-1250
Northants rural wares (Lyveden-Stanion & Olney Hyde)	1100-1400
Brill ware	1250-1500
Pottersbury	1250-1500
East Midlands Oxidised/Reduced	1350-1600
Cistercian ware	1470-1550
Midlands Black wares	1550-1700

This list must, in the first instance, form the larger part of a framework for a sequence at Huntingdon. It may be expected, however, that the assemblage at Huntingdon will differ in several key areas. These can be summarised thus:

- i) A different *local* middle Saxon product is expected; this may be manifested as more Maxey/proto-St Neots.
- ii) St Neots ware should be more dominant. In the tenth century at Northampton the very local Northampton ware is very common. This is unlikely to be anything more than rare in the Huntingdon assemblage, being a low-grade local product, and the alternative is likely to be either another very local cooking ware fabric, and/or a greater presence of St Neots ware.
- iii) Thetford-type wares are a minor component of the Northampton late Saxon assemblage. On geographical grounds a greater presence might be expected at Huntingdon.
- iv) Northamptonshire/Buckinghamshire rural medieval wares, particularly Lyveden-Stanion (Rockingham Forest) and Olney-Hyde products, are likely to be less dominant from the twelfth century onwards at Huntingdon, than they are at Northampton. The Bucks producers are much too distant, but Lyveden-Stanion products should still be expected in some quantity. More local alternatives must

have been used; probably in the Colne ware tradition, production of which was presumably centred on the Fen Edge.

- v) In the late medieval/early post-medieval period there are liable to be further local Hunts/Cambs producers in the area. Quartz tempered later Colne-type material is expected, as are perhaps some south Lincs Bourne types.
- vi) Some Cambridge Sgraffito ware should be present in the late medieval/early post-medieval period.

2 Discussion of the pottery from evaluation trenches at Hartford Road.

The presence of fabric types is shown in Section 3. The total amount of pottery constitutes less than one box, for 21 contexts, and thus quantification has not been deemed useful.

Trench 1

Two contexts may be pre-Conquest (72) & (73), however, each has only one sherd of St Neots ware, so either context could be later. Late medieval dates (1300-1500) have been assigned to two contexts (14) & (23) on account of the presence of MRSW. An early post-medieval date has been assigned to the Cellar fill, however, this is again from one sherd only, this time of Cistercian ware. Another post-medieval group, this time 7 sherds of redwares, dates (28) to 1550-1650. One context (89) has a nineteenth century date. The cleaning layer produced several post-medieval types including Bichrome Redware and German Werra slipware.

Trench 2

One context may be pre-Conquest (211), although of the four sherds only one is of a truly dateable type (St Neots ware). A reasonably firm date of 1150-1250 can be assigned to (212), and perhaps also to (236) and (239). These dates are mostly derived from the presence of Developed Stamford ware alongside unprovenanced medieval types. Two other contexts (218) & (237) are broadly dateable to 1150-1250 and 1200-1350, respectively, although these brackets must be seen as little more than general guides. One context (210) produced just two pieces of Lyveden-Stanion type material, giving a date that cannot be narrowed down from the bracket 1250-1500.

Trench 3

The pit fill from the test pit in the base of this trench produced three sherds, one of Lyveden-Stanion type, providing a date of 1250-1350. The layer sealing this pit contained one residual pre-Conquest sherd. St Neots ware alongside other less well identified types gives a date of 1150-1350 to (329). St Neots ware was also present in three further contexts, albeit probably as residual material (333), (334) and (336). The presence of Lyveden-Stanion sherds and one other Oolitic fragment (MORW) suggests, however, that these three contexts have a rather later date (after 1250). One context (350) contained two sherds of post medieval redware, possibly originating from the Surrey-Hants industry (RBOR), alongside one sherd of a German Frechen stoneware bottle. This material gives a date of perhaps 1600-1700.

3 Spotdating Data

Ceramic Type Codes used

BCHIN	Bone china
BICR	Bichrome redware
CSTN	Cistercian ware
DEST	Developed Stamford ware

FREC	Frechen stoneware
LYST	Lyveden-Stanion (Rockingham Forest) type ware
MCHW	Medieval chalk tempered ware
MHSW	Medieval hard sandy ware
MLW	Medieval limestone tempered ware
MORW	Medieval Oolitic red ware (where not LYST)
MRSW	Medieval reduced sandy ware
MSSHW	Medieval sandy shelly ware
NEOT	St Neots type ware
PMBL	Post-medieval black glazed redware
PMR	Post-medieval redware
RBOR	Red border ware (Surrey-Hants)
SHW	Shelly ware (where not NEOT)
SXSHW	Saxon Shelly ware (not NEOT pre-Conquest)
TUDR	Tudor redware
WERR	Werra German slipware

Ceramic Type Occurrences

Context	Date Range	Fabric Codes	Sherds
Trench 1			
Cleaning layer	-	PMR PMBL BICR MCHW MRSW WERR	6
14	1300-1500	MRSW MHSW	5
23	1300-1550	MRSW	17
Cellar Fill	1500-1600	CSTN	1
28	1550-1650	TUDR PMR	7
72	900-1150	NEOT	1
73	900-1150	NEOT	1
89	1800-1900	BCHIN	3
Trench 2			
210	1250-1500	LYST	2
211	950-1150	NEOT MSSHW MHSW	4
212	1150-1250	MRSW MCHW DEST NEOT	10
218	1150-1350	MSSHW NEOT	10
236	1150-1250	DEST MRSW	5
237	1200-1350	MSSHW MORW	3
239	1150-1250	DEST MSSHW	4
Trench 3			
Machining	-	LYST MHSW NEOT	3
329	1150-1350	NEOT MSSHW	5
333	1250-1500	NEOT MORW MHSW	3
334	1250-1350	SHW NEOT LYST	6
336	1250-1350	LYST NEOT	2
350	1600-1700	FREC RBOR	3
Dark layer sealing pit in sondage	pre-1110 but resid.	SXSHW	1
Pit fill in sondage	1250-1350	SHW MSSHW LYST	3



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