

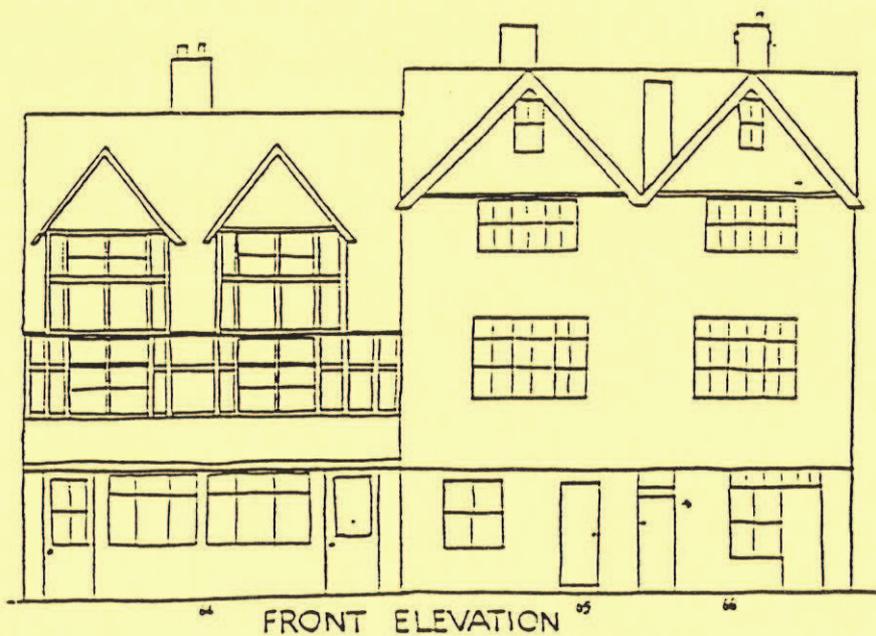
Laing Homes

64-66 St. Thomas Street

Oxford

NGR SP 5080 6170

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeological Unit
May 1997

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SUMMARY

Excavations at 64-66 St. Thomas Street revealed the possible back wall of an early medieval stone building which would have stood along the frontage of St. Thomas Street. To the north of this building a large 13th century cob wall was discovered which was built possibly on the edge of a stream channel in order that the land to the south of this wall could be built-up and reclaimed for settlement. Evidence for the survival of a post-medieval building was also discovered near the road frontage and further to the south a post-medieval wall, back yard deposits, surfaces and a well were investigated. In the north of the site, near the back stream, approximately two metres of post-medieval levelling deposits were discovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and Scope of Work

In May 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at 64-66 St. Thomas Street on behalf of Laing Homes in respect of a planning application for the construction of two buildings housing seven flats (Planning Application No. 97/243/NF). The evaluation was based on a brief set by the Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service and a WSI agreed with the OAAS. The development site lay at SP 5080 6170 and covers an area of approximately 650 square metres.

1.2 Geology and Topography

The site lies on the floodplain of the River Thames within 200 m from the edge of the Summertown-Radley (2nd) Gravel Terrace on which Oxford is built. The natural subsoil is alluvium, which overlies the gravel, this alluvium was discovered at approximately 55.38 m OD in this area. The site is situated within a tarmac area used as a car park, laid out in the 1960s after the 17th century houses on the site had been demolished.

1.3 Historical and Archaeological Background

The archaeological background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desktop study (64-66 St. Thomas Street, Archaeological Desktop Study OAU 1997), the results of which are summarized below.

1.3.1 *Historical Background*

The site is situated in what was a suburb of the medieval town, established in the late 12th or early 13th century, probably sponsored by both Oseney Abbey and the lord of North Oseney. The later medieval history of the site can be traced through the extensive records of Oseney Abbey and from these it is possible to deduce that the site was used in this period for domestic and industrial purposes and that the St

Thomas area sustained much continuous development throughout the medieval period. Growth continued in the 16th century, increasing the population density in the area. As a consequence smaller houses were constructed in the yards behind the houses fronting St. Thomas Street. This continued into the 17th century with brewing, tanning and building being the core forms of employment. Loggan's Map of 1675 shows that the yards behind 64-66 St. Thomas Street was developed in this way and the buildings in the yards may well have been used for these industrial purposes.

The frontage of St. Thomas Street was gradually rebuilt in the 16th and 17th centuries and on the development site buildings still standing from this period were investigated before they were demolished in the 1960s. They were timber framed with brick chimney stacks. No 64 St. Thomas St. was built near the end of the 17th century with 18th century extensions at the back. No. 65 was built in the late 17th century/early 18th century and incorporated in its east wall 16th century timbers, probably originally belonging to the building to the east, No. 66. No 66 was entirely rebuilt at the end of the 19th century. These buildings can be seen on the 1:500 (1873) map of the area, when the yard behind Nos. 65 & 66 was known as Wareham's Yard/Court. This was developed in the 18th century, in 1884 it contained 12 distinct dwellings, probably a mixture of domestic, industrial and storage buildings. These were demolished in 1906 as part of a programme of slum clearance. In 1873, the yard behind No. 64, which was then a pub known as the Windsor Castle Public House, was relatively clear of this type of slum buildings, possibly due to the clearance of the yard when the building became a Public House. However, small buildings are shown at the extreme north end of the property.

The proposed development site therefore has the potential for both medieval and post-medieval frontages and evidence for both medieval and post-medieval rubbish pits, yard surfaces, industrial processes and domestic and industrial buildings. Loggan's Map also shows that at the back of the properties is an open piece of land bounded on either side by streams running into or out of the larger stream running to the east of the site. Streams covered much of the medieval suburb of St. Thomas due to the wet nature of the island, and were crucial to the development of the parish. The presence of these streams so close to the site may therefore have led to the preservation of organic remains from the medieval period and later and these remains may include evidence for the industrial processes which were carried out on the site.

In addition to the significant archaeology of the medieval suburb, earlier occupation is also of interest, including the early ditches pre-dating the suburb, whose function is allusive but which have been discovered from other archaeological excavations along St. Thomas' Street.

1.3.2 *Archaeological Background*

There have been three previous excavations along St Thomas' Street and a reference to observations made during the 1940s. To the immediate south of the site The Hamel was excavated by the Oxford University Archaeological Society (Palmer 1980), and to the west, the former Halls Brewery Site and 54-56 St Thomas Street were excavated by the OAU (reports in press). The findings of these excavations included 17th-19th century houses, 13th-14th century cob walled buildings and associated domestic deposits, medieval and post-medieval cobbled surfaces, a mid/late 13th century ditch, pits of the same date, an orchard, a well and other buildings dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods. At 54-56 St Thomas Street one of the cob walled building was replaced in the 13th century by a limestone rubble building and the associated deposits, which had very good organic preservation, indicated that a herb garden was being cultivated nearby. At the Hamel they discovered a prehistoric land-surface, with plough marks, which had a child beaker burial associated with it.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

To establish whether there are any important archaeological remains on the site which could represent a significant constraint on the development, or which might need to be taken into account in the detailed engineering design of the development, or otherwise mitigated. To provide sufficient information to allow informed decisions to be made on any mitigation measures. To make available the results of the excavations and to create an ordered archive.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation was based on a c.4.5% sample of the development area, and consisted of three trenches, trench 1 measuring 10.8 m by 1.5 m, trench 2 measuring 8 m by 1.5 m and trench 3 measuring c.1.1 m by 1.5 m (figure 2). The overburden was removed down to a significant archaeological horizon by a JCB under close archaeological supervision in trenches 1 and 2. Due to the small size of trench 3 this was excavated totally by hand.

3.2 Fieldwork and recording

The trenches were cleaned by hand and the features revealed were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the OAU *Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson), 1992.

The curator (Mr. Durham) suggested that trench 3 should be excavated at the frontage of the site as this area was originally to have been included in trench 1 but the presence of services in the area prevented this. It was also suggested the western side of the southern end of trench 1 should be taken down to 1 m below the pavement on St. Thomas Street as this was the depth that may be damaged by services and ground beams. The curator also suggested that trench 2 should be further investigated by a machine cut sondage to the subsoil or the water table to find out the depth of the deposits.

3.3 Finds

Spoil heaps were scanned for pottery relating to the machined layers and a sample of the more diagnostic finds were kept. Only a sample of pottery from each hand-excavated modern or Victorian context was kept. All finds from the post-medieval and medieval contexts were kept.

4 RESULTS GENERAL

4.1 Soil and ground conditions

The general soil type was clay loam with generally good preservation of bone. Ground conditions ranged from wet to dry depending on the weather, and became wetter nearer to the water table.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

All of the medieval and the majority of the post-medieval deposits occurred within 15 metres of the street frontage, the trench at the back (north) of the site contained at least a two metres of Victorian and post-medieval deposits before the excavation of the trench was halted at the water table.

4.3 Presentation of results

All the pottery dates noted below are *terminus post-quem* dates, and reflect the latest dated pottery found within the context. The results of the evaluation are described from the earliest deposits onwards and divided into phases, based on the medieval and post-medieval periods. After the results of the excavations are described there is a discussion of the significant results and the significance or otherwise of these deposits in relation to the proposed development.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Trench descriptions

5.1.1 Trench 1 - (see fig 3)

5.1.1.1 The Medieval deposits

The trench was not excavated down to the natural gravel, the earliest deposit on the site was a clay/gravel layer (58), the full depth of which was located in a small sondage excavated to the north of the wall, but not in the sondage excavated to the

south of the wall, indicating that the deposit sloped downwards to the south. Pottery from this layer dates it to the early 13th century. Overlying this deposit was a large medieval cob wall (29) which contained pottery dating it to the early 13th century. This wall was 1.4 m wide and 0.88 m in depth and the cob was characterised as a mid-orange/brown silt/clay with 5% charcoal and between 5-10% pea grit and small stones. The wall was orientated in a east-west direction across the width of the trench. A section across the wall, against the baulk, was excavated to clarify the techniques of construction. It had a partial stone foundation, made up of 1-2 large stones along the southern end and its base was not flat but followed the sloping contours of the surface of the deposit (58) below. It appeared not to have been built in blocks but instead built up against a timber revetment as suggested by the two postholes found cut into the layer 58 and abutting its southern face.

These postholes, 54 and 56, filled respectively by 55 and 57, were approximately 0.30 m - 0.40 m apart. The revetment that they formed probably stopped just short of the top of the surviving wall, and once the wall was in place and had hardened and the revetment removed, the land on the south side was infilled with layer 44. This sequence of events is suggested as there appears to be no trace of the postholes in the infilled material against the south side of the wall. However, near the top of the wall was a line of stones which have been interpreted as packing between the timber framework and the wall, which remained *in-situ* once the posts had been pulled out. The postholes were not cut very deep into the deposits below the wall and it is thought therefore that this revetment was probably propped up by slanting posts to the south, the post holes for which lay outside the excavated area. The pottery from the wall and post-holes indicates that the wall and its associated revetting dated to the early 13th century.

The main area of deliberate build-up to the south of the cob wall was layer 44, this was a homogenous dark/grey brown silty/clay containing 10-30% of gravel. This extended nearly to the top of the cob wall at a level of 56.22 m OD. Above this were a series of thin layers of deposits which probably represent medieval occupation layers on top of the built up land. These included layer 40, a small lens of sand and gravel in the south of the trench, layer 41, a clay/gravel layer which could represent a medieval external surface, and on top of this layer 36, a medieval stone paved path. This consisted of slabs, c.0.25 m by 0.20 m by 0.04 m, laid to form a single coursed surface of which 1.25 m by 0.80 m survived within the excavated area. Pottery from these deposits indicate that they were deposited during the 15th century.

Overlying this surface were two deposits 35 and 42, the upper surfaces of which ran on a level plain with the top of the paved area (36) and may represent later attempts to patch-up and maintain a level surface at this height. Layer 35 was a clay/loam gravel which partially overlay the cob wall (29), and layer 42 was a

tenacious silt/clay with less gravel than layer 35. Directly overlying the cob wall and under the northern extent of the layer 35 was a band of gravel (28), which could represent the remnant of a gravel path overlaying the wall. Directly on top of this was another thin band of material, 27, composed of a patchy, grey, sandy, clay. It was from this layer that a near complete Brill/Boarstall (OXAM) jug, and large fragments of another similar vessel were discovered, dating from c.1400.

The deposits to the north of the cob wall were more varied than those to the south, implying that those to the north were built up more gradually, rather than being the result of one deliberate phase of build-up, as layer 44 was to the south. The earliest deposit on the north side of the wall, which lay above layer 58 (which ran under the cob wall), was 49, dated by its pottery to c.1400. This was a small layer of tenacious mid-yellowish/brown sandy/clay containing 25-30% pea grit and gravel. Overlying layer 44 was a small regular deposit of mid-yellow/grey/brown clay (50). Above both these deposits lay a thicker band of material (48), which extended the width and length of the excavated area. This was a very tenacious, mid grey/brown silt/clay with a small amount of gravel and pottery which dated it to the early 16th century. Overlying this to the south, butting the wall 29, was layer 43, a tenacious dark grey clay/silt which appeared very humic with much charcoal within its fill and dated by pottery to the early 16th century. It appeared to represent a dump of material from a hearth or fire. Sealing this dump and layer 48 was another thick band of tenacious mid-brown clay loam (62). It was deposited up against the wall and may represent a layer of levelling on which later medieval occupation levels were lain.

Over the southern extent of layer 62, butting the wall, was layer 34, a thin band of loose, mid-dark grey, silt/clay with an abundant amount of gravel. Overlying this and the rest of layer 62, was layer 32, a tenacious mid-dark brown clay/loam containing a small amount of gravel. This was built up to the top of the cob wall and formed a level surface along with layer 28, which sat on the wall, and layers 35, 36 and 42 to the south of the wall. These layers represented the level where the activities to the south and north of the wall became linked and therefore marked the time after the cob wall had been demolished and was no longer standing above ground level. The layer 32 dates to the early 16th century and overlying it to the north lay a layer of material 61, a friable mid-grey clay/silt, only part of which was present within the excavated area.

5.1.1.2 Post-medieval Deposits

Over layer 61 and stretching across the whole of the northern part of the trench was layer 19, a friable mid-brown clay/loam with pottery dating it to the mid-17th century. It was cut to the south by the foundation trench (22) for the post-medieval wall (21), which was built just to the north of where the medieval clay wall was positioned. To the south of the wall 21 the same foundation trench (22) was cut through layer 18, of similar height and depth to layer 19, and was a compact dark-grey silt/clay layer with 10% pea grit and pebbles. It also had

pottery dating it to the mid-17th century, therefore making it roughly contemporary with layer 19. The fact that the foundation trench for the wall cut two different deposits either side of it (18 & 19) implies that there was an earlier boundary here which initially divided the two contexts. Layer 18 overlay the surface below formed by layers 42, 36, 35 28, 27 and part of 32. Layers 18 and 19 probably represented the early post-medieval ground surface associated with both the wall (21) and the well (46) (see below).

At the northern end of the trench, cut into the layer 19, was the construction trench cut 46 for the post-medieval well. The construction trench stratigraphically cut the layer 23, which lies on top of layer 19 to the west of the well. This was a thin layer of patchy mortar which included silt patches and brick and charcoal fragments. The construction trench 46, which cuts this patch of mortar, was filled with the well wall (26) and a backfill (33) which infilled the space between the wall and the construction cut and filled in after the well wall was built. The backfill of the well itself dated to the 19th century and only the upper fills were excavated, which meant that only 5-6 courses of the well wall were exposed. The well wall (26) extended to a depth of 0.48 m and was constructed of roughly dressed boulders of an average size of 0.20-0.25 m long and 0.15 m in depth. Some of the upper stones of the well, which would have formed the top of the well and were probably on show, were more carefully worked and dressed. The stone blocks within the well were not laid to form a smooth face and were quite roughly laid and those in the lower parts of the well were stepped inwards. The mortar between the stones was light yellow in colour.

The backfill (33) between the construction cut and the well wall was only partially excavated in two small sections dug to a depth of 0.10 m in order to obtain dating evidence for the construction of the well. The gap between the well and the construction trench measured c. 0.33 m, the width of fill 33. Pottery obtained from this fill dated to the early 18th century, making it broadly contemporary with the post-medieval wall (21) to the south and linked by the associated ground surface, layer 19.

The post-medieval wall (21), which lies approximately 2.0 m to the south of the well, was built within the foundation trench 22 cut into the surfaces comprising of 19 to the north of the wall and 18 to the south. The wall's foundation trench (22) had a gently sloping side to the north into which a layer of backfill (20) was deposited in the space between the wall and the cut, which was 0.56 m wide. The cut to the north was almost vertical and the wall was built hard up against the side of the foundation trench so no backfilling was needed. The overall width of the trench was 1.00 m and the depth 0.24 m. The backfill (20) was a moderately compact, dark grey/brown loam with some charcoal and gravel. It contained many broken brick fragments, tiles and pottery which dated it to the 18th century. The wall itself was partially removed by later features but could be seen in the

western section surviving to 3 courses of roughly worked stone and small natural boulders, average size 0.20 by 0.20 m. The infill of the wall, between the two faces, was made up of smaller, rougher stones. The wall was 0.46 m wide, survived to a height of 0.61 m, and ran from east to west across the width of the trench.

Above the surface formed by 18 and 19 there appeared to be another, later surface, associated with, and butting the wall. This was numbered 17 to the south of the wall and 4 to the north. The layer 17 butting the south of the wall, was a shallow deposit, approximately 0.10 m deep, made up of a combination of a yellow/orange sand and a greasy grey clay and contained quite a high proportion of charcoal. It probably formed an external yard surface associated with the wall (21). No dating evidence was found associated with this layer. To the north of the wall lay the layer 4, dated to the early 19th century by the pottery found within it. The maximum depth of this layer was a 0.34 m, though it was thinner to the south than to the north. It was a compact, dark brown, clay/silt layer which extended throughout the excavated area to the north of the wall. Although a surface associated with the wall it was probably not a yard surface, but one which represents the level of what was possibly the garden soil or back yard deposit.

It was from the level of this surface, (4 & 17), that the well was backfilled, indicating that the well was in use from the early 18th century, associated with the surface 19, to the early 19th century, associated with the surface 4. The earliest well backfill deposit excavated was 31, the pottery in this fill dated it to the middle of the 18th century, however comparisons between this deposit and the two other backfills of the well, dated to a later date, was so similarly distinct that the three fills must have been deposited at a similar time, later than the mid 18th century. The fill 31 was a compact dark brown/black silt/cinder fill with much charcoal. The predominance of cinders indicates that the well was filled with discarded hearth/burnt deposits. Above this was fill 30 which lay on top of both fill 31 and the layer 4. This was a compact light yellow mortar layer with finds dating it to the early 19th century, the same date as layer 4. Into the top of this fill and into 4, an irregular shaped pit was cut (60), directly over the position of the backfilled well, into which another layer of backfill (6) was deposited, which was almost identical to the fill 31. The cut 60 was steep-sided to the south, shallower to the north and had a relatively flat base. The fill (6) was a compact dark brown/black silt/cinder layer with a high proportion of charcoal. It was dated by pottery as being the same date as layer 4 and the fill below it (30) i.e. to the early 19th century.

Above the layer 4, running from the north of the trench to the wall (21) to the south, which it butts, was another layer (38), a compact brown clay/silt/gravel layer with patches of black charcoal. This appeared to be a make-up layer dating to the Victorian period. Between this layer and 4, was a large lens of burnt

material (13) c. 0.20 m deep, approx. 2.0 m long. At a corresponding level to layer 38 to the south of the wall (21), and also butting it, was layer 15, a loose, friable, light brown/yellow layer with patches of mortar, rounded pebbly gravel, brick fragments and gravel, 0.22 m deep. Layer 15 butts up against and lies over a modern concrete structure (16), the base of which was cut (59) into the lower fills of the south-western trench deposits.

Above layers 38 and 15 was a layer of what appeared to be a modern, make-up layer (3) extending over the northern part of the site but which had been cut away by later features in the south of the site. This was a predominantly yellow/light brown sandy layer up to 0.20 m deep. Into this layer (3) a series of modern features had been cut; pit 53 a small 'U'-shaped feature, filled by 52 a very mixed layer 0.30 m deep, and pit 5 a 'U'-shaped cut which cuts the deposits above the well, filled by (7), a mortar fill very similar to the well fill (30) but with more mixing including a band of charcoal within its fill, 0.50 m deep. Also cutting layer 3 was the pipe trench 8, seen in the east-facing section as a shallow irregular sided pit, 0.25 m deep but in the western section as a narrower, steep sided pit with a flat base, 0.60 m deep. It was filled by 9, a mid-yellow/brown sand/silt fill with lumps of brick and charcoal with the remains of both a ceramic and lead pipe. The cut for this pipe trench had heavily truncated the post-medieval wall in the eastern side of the trench.

To the south of this pipe trench the north/south west facing section was made up totally of the foundation cuts, fills and wall belonging to what appeared to be a modern brick structure. Only 0.10 m of the north-south wall was visible in the west facing section, but enough could be seen to conclude that the east-west wall of the structure ran along the same alignment and in the same direction as the earlier post-medieval wall. The brick wall 12, which survived to a depth of 0.70 m lay on top of a poured mortar foundation (11). It was butted to the west by a one brick deep brick floor (14), built on top of layer 15. The wall sat in a foundation trench (10 & 24) which was partially backfilled by 25.

Sealing the features cutting layer 3, including the brick building, was the modern make-up layer below the tarmac (2) and the tarmac itself (1).

5.1.3 Trench 2 (*See fig 4*)

The earliest deposits in trench 2 were those found when a small part of the trench in the south was taken down by machine to the water table, circa 2.4 m from the level of the tarmac. Just above the water table and continuing below it was an almost black clay/silt layer which was water-logged and which contained pottery dating it to the post-medieval period. Above this was a layer of redeposited grey clay alluvium, c. 0.50 m deep, which rose up to the south in a band, which was partially excavated within the main trench, by hand, as 107. Above this was a mid-brown clay/silt gravelly/stony layer, c.0.40 m deep which lay underneath

106, the lowest layer excavated within the length of the main trench. All these deposits contained pottery dating them to the post-medieval period. On the opposite section of the machine cut trench the natural alluvium was noted approximately 2.10 m down from the tarmac at a height of 55.38 m OD.

A strip of the layer 106 was excavated/cleaned by hand in the bottom of the whole of trench 2, as the top of 106 was the level at which the initial machining off of deposits was halted (approximately 1.00 m below the surface of the tarmac). It was also excavated in a small sondage 0.50 m wide at the bottom of the trench for datable material, which dated the context to the 17th century. Layer 106 was a moderately loose grey/brown silt/clay layer with some sand. Within the hand excavated sondage the clay deposit (107) was discovered which was initially thought to have been within a cut (109), possibly sealing a pipe of some sort. However, on excavating the main machine dug sondage just to the north of this area it was concluded that this clay fill was in fact part of the larger band of redeposited alluvium/clay which rose upwards in this area, the edge of which was discovered at this point.

Between 106 and the layer above it (105) in the northern end of the trench was a band of loose brown/yellow sandy material (108). This was only 0.06 m deep and extended 1.40 m before disappearing under the north and western edge of the excavation. The layer above both 108 and 106, extended across the whole of the trench and was numbered 105. This was a moderately loose mid/brown, silt/clay/sand with evidence of root disturbance. Cutting the top of this layer was 104, a vertical sided, flat bottomed, post-hole/pit, although no post was in evidence within the fill. It was filled by 103, a dark brown/black fill with a predominantly silty make-up. This fill was the same as 102 above it and the filling of this post-hole/pit and the laying down of the layer above it was probably part of the same deposition process, where 103 filled the open cut (104) within 105. Layer 102 extended the length and width of trench 2 and contained pottery which dated the layer and feature to the Victorian period.

Over this layer was a modern make-up layer (101) laid prior to the laying of the tarmac (100).

5.1.3 Trench 3 (see fig 5)

The earliest feature contained within this trench was an early medieval wall (169), running east-west across the trench. Its full depth was not revealed but it had survived to a depth of c. 0.70 m below the level of the tarmac, at 56.33 m OD. It was c.0.76 m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.44 m. It was built of roughly squared edging stones, average size 0.30 m by 0.18 m by 0.14 m deep, with less regular stones filling the core between the two faces. It had survived to 4/5 courses which were well built and regular, with the upper course of the southern face overlapping those courses below by about 0.07 m, forming a curb to

the wall at this level. There was a 0.2 m off-set to the footings on the north side near the bottom of the exposed part of the wall and a 0.12 m overhang at the same level on the south side. The actual stones within the wall were given the number 170 and the bonding between the stones numbered 171. This mortar consisted of a stiff, mid-brown/yellow clay with flecks of yellow mortar.

Butting up against the southern face of the lower courses of the wall was a layer of make-up (164), dated by the pottery within it to the early 13th century. This was a grey/brown sandy/loam with 15% gravel and charcoal flecks. Its total depth was not excavated due to excavations stopping before the base of the context was reached, but its excavated depth was 0.30 m. The corresponding layer to the north of the wall, butting up against the lower course to just below the top of the surviving wall, was 163. This was 0.36 m deep, although once again its full depth was not revealed. This was a dark grey/brown sandy loam, darker than (164), with less gravel and less charcoal flecks. This also contained pottery dating it to the early 13th century.

Overlying the layer 164 to the south of the wall (169) was the layer 162, this appeared to be a make-up layer for the floor which sat above it. It was 0.11 m deep and was made up of a dark grey sandy/loam which contained 10% gravel, charcoal flecks, occasional small pieces of limestone and contained pottery dating from the early 13th century. Over this, the medieval floor (159) associated with the medieval wall, was laid. This was a loose mid/brown sand/fine gravel layer, 0.05 m deep, which butted the wall but lay over the projecting courses near the top of the wall. This floor was the latest deposit found associated with the medieval wall and occurred at the same height as the top of the surviving medieval wall.

Overlying the floor surface (159) and over the medieval wall (169) in the southern half of the trench was the layer 158, a friable, mid-brown sandy silt deposit with prominent charcoal and mortar flecks within its make-up. It was truncated to the north by the cut for the post-medieval drain (172). Layer 158 contained pottery dating it to the late 15th century and probably represented a post-demolition layer or levelling over the medieval wall. This layer was cut by the foundation trench (168) for the post-medieval feature (165), built within the cut, directly on top of the medieval wall (169) and the layer butting (169) to the north, (163).

This construction 165 was made up of an area of masonry of which only 4/5 courses had survived within the excavated area. It formed a corner seen only in the north-east of the trench. The structure stepped inwards in two stages towards the north-eastern corner of the trench. It was built of roughly squared and roughly dressed blocks, larger at the base than at the top, laid in regular courses. Its upper courses survived to approximately 0.13 m below the surface of the tarmac and survived downwards to a depth of 0.70 m. Its visible width at its base was 0.82 m

north/south by 0.60 m east/west. The upper part revealed within the excavation was 0.40 m north/south and 0.38 m east/west. The blocks within this wall were numbered 166 and the mortar binding them together 167, the mortar was a hard, pale yellow/grey sandy material. This evidence suggests that it may represent the corner of a post-medieval chimney base.

Backfilling the space between this feature and its foundation trench cut to the south, was the fill 173, a brown silt/clay deposit with charcoal flecks. No foundation cut was seen to the west of the wall, here instead was a dump/levelling layer, 161. This was a friable, grey/yellow sandy/loam layer which contained fragments of brick and mortar and flecks of charcoal with pottery dating it to the early 18th century.

Sealing the fill 173 and the cut 168, to the south of the chimney was 157, a layer of make-up over the foundation cut and fill, which butted the chimney and built this area up to the same level as the top level of 161 to the north of the chimney. This was a friable mid grey/brown sandy loam with small fragments of brick, mortar and charcoal, On top of layers 161, 157 and 158 was a post-medieval floor associated with the building of which the chimney was part. This was made up of a paving slab (154) and a mortar floor (156). (154) was a limestone slab 0.55 m square and 0.07 m deep with blackening on the surface suggestive of burning. It was butted by layer 156 which also butted the chimney structure. Layer 156 was a friable pale yellow/grey sandy/loam mortar with fragments of brick within it, it butted the chimney near the top of the surviving structure, c.0.20 m below the surface of the tarmac.

To the west of the chimney, the floor (154 & 156) butted up against what appeared to be a drain associated with the floor of the post-medieval building. This drain must have been cut from the level below, (i.e. cutting (157) and (161)) and bricked up to the level of the floor when it was then butted by the floor. The drain consisted of a vertical sided cut (172), with a flat base which had been cut down to the depth of the medieval wall on which it sat. The edges of the cut were lined with a single skin of brick (155). The fill within the bricked structure, (160), appeared to have been deposited after the feature had ceased to be a drain and consisted of a very loose, dark/grey, silty loam with up to 20% charcoal and some mortar flecks. Pottery dated this fill as being of the late 18th century. There was no evidence of the surface of this hole being covered, which was unusual in that its surface was on the same level as the floor and one would not have expected there to be an open hole within the floor or surface. It is possible that the hole was covered with a less robust cap, which had not survived.

Overlying the floor, (156 & 154), and the drain (172), was the layer 153, a possible later post-medieval floor which butted the chimney. This was a thin band of friable mid-grey sandy/loam with mortar and brick fragments within it. It was

overlay by 152, which overlay the chimney to the east and north but butted the chimney to the south and west. As it partially overlay the chimney it was obviously deposited after the chimney was demolished to its present level. It consisted of a loose mid brown/yellow sand and gravel which contained strips of rotten wood, possibly from the building below. This was overlaid by 151, the make-up layer associated with the laying of the tarmac (150).

5.2 Pottery (Paul Blinkhorn)

The pottery was examined and catalogued into the Oxford type series (Mellor 1994). This assemblage has a range of ware types which is typical of medieval pottery groups from the city of Oxford. Most of the context specific assemblages are small in size making it difficult to ascribe any chronology other than a *terminus post quem*. The exception is the group from context 27, which included a near complete Brill/Boarstall (OXAM) jug and large fragments from another similar vessel.

None of the groups are earlier than AD 1200, although small quantities of redeposited Saxo-Norman pottery (the early forms of OXAC) hint at occupation in the vicinity during that period.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

No factors were noted which would have affected the reliability of the archaeological record.

6.2 Overall interpretation

The evidence suggests that the earliest revealed activity relates to a programme of reclamation of low lying and marshy land, possibly part of a stream channel, to the north of the line of St. Thomas Street, which took place at the end of the 12th century. The reclamation was achieved by the means of the construction of a cob wall built to contain the levelling material to the south. The area to the north of the wall was left at its original level, which in the succeeding two centuries slowly rose with the accumulation of occupation deposits. This programme appears to have formed a further part of the initial development of the north side of St. Thomas Street.

It is possible that the medieval stone building revealed in trench 3 represents the subsequent 13th century building on the reclaimed land. However, no definite dating evidence for the wall was found, and the pottery from the layers abutting the north and south sides of the wall could be residual, implying that the wall could be a replacement for an original cob walled building, as was the case in the excavations at 54-56 St. Thomas Street.

There is no obvious link between the post-medieval stone structure in trench 3, interpreted as a chimney, and the plan drawn up in the 1960s by Doran. By superimposing the excavation plan on a scaled down version of Doran's drawing, this structure runs along the line of a partition wall of the post-medieval building (No. 64 St. Thomas St.) and does not coincide with the area of the chimney noted on Doran's plan. However, the internal plan made of this building when it was demolished in the 1960's, had been the subject of much alteration in the 18th and 19th centuries when the extensions were built on the back, and the area of masonry discovered in trench may be an original chimney associated with an earlier post-medieval phase in the buildings history, present before it was extended northwards. The fact that it coincides with, and runs along what would have been the back wall of the earlier medieval building may imply that the original 17th century house was built within the same foot-print, with a chimney in the back wall, which was demolished at a later date in order to increase the size of the house to the extent seen on the 1873 1:500 map. Loggan's Map of 1675 seems to imply that the building on the site at this time was a single width building and it could be this post-medieval building that the chimney relates to.

The post-medieval wall found in trench 1 runs along the approximate line of the early medieval cob wall, which may itself run along the line of an earlier post-medieval fence, indicating perhaps a continuation in the use of this line as a boundary between different land uses (rather than a property boundary). It is probable therefore that the wall represents a boundary wall separating the garden area in the north from the domestic area to the south, a theory supported by the fact that yard/floor surfaces butt the wall to the south whereas the surfaces butting the wall to the north are more reminiscent of surfaces building up within a garden.

The brick structure discovered in the western most part of the trench would have had its northern east west wall on the same alignment as the post-medieval wall noted above. The main extent of the brick structure would have been to the west of the excavation. No evidence for a corresponding structure can be found on the plans mentioned above but its stratigraphic position indicates that it was a late, even 20th century, construction and not one of the extensions noted by Doran.

There was no evidence for a build up of small post-medieval back yard properties discovered in the excavated area as discussed in the desk-top. However this was not unexpected as the 1873 map of the yard behind No.64 shows that it was clear of properties along this side of the yard, in contrast to Wareham's Yard to the east, behind Nos.65 and 66.

It appears from the evidence within trench 2 that the northern area of the site has either been the subject of heavy pitting within the post-medieval period, which has removed most of the medieval deposits, or that the ground has been built up so much in order to make it level with the rest of the site that the medieval deposits

have only survived at a greater depth than it was possible to investigate within the remit of the evaluation.

6.2.1 Summary of results

6.2.1.1 Trench 1

The depth of the tarmac at the north end of the trench was 57.28 m OD and at the south was 57.10 m OD. The trench was stripped to an early post-medieval horizon, corresponding to a depth of c. 57.62 m OD. Within this horizon various post-medieval surfaces were discovered associated with a post-medieval east-west wall, which had survived to a height of 56.96 m OD, c.0.24 m below the ground surface at this point. Approximately 2.5 m to the north of this wall a post-medieval well, complete with its stone wall construction, was discovered. Its later 19th century backfill was partially excavated.

Below the post-medieval wall were a series of medieval deposits butting a cob wall, built c. 1200. Some of these deposits were deliberate build up layers and some can be interpreted as surfaces. The cob wall was possibly built on the edge of an early river channel running across the site in order that the land to the south of the wall could be infilled and levelled for building. The base of the wall was at 55.46 m OD and survived to a height of 56.40 m OD.

6.1.1.2 Trench 2

The trench was excavated by machine to a depth of 1.0 m, c.56.46 m OD, and a slot was then excavated into the base of the trench to a depth of 1.20 m. All the fills within the trench at this point dated to the Victorian/post-medieval period. A small part of the trench was excavated a further 1.40 m by machine to the level of the water table, at 55.06 m OD, through post-medieval deposits which continued below the water table. The natural was noted in one area of this machine excavated trench at 55.38 m OD. The area evaluated by this trench has clearly been subject to considerable modern and post-medieval infilling, rendering any surviving medieval deposits inaccessible, given the constraints of the evaluation brief.

6.1.1.3 Trench 3

The tarmac at the top of this trench was at a depth of 57.01 m OD. This small trench was excavated by hand, just back from the St. Thomas Street frontage. At 0.12 m below the surface of the tarmac the remains of a post-medieval building was discovered which appeared to be part of the chimney stack. The chimney, along with its associated post-medieval deposits, including a floor and drain, survived to a depth of 0.70 m below the tarmac. The floor survived at 56.75 m OD, 0.25 m below the ground surface. Immediately below this structure lay an east-west medieval wall, at 56.33 m OD, with a floor butting the top of the surviving wall at approximately the same level. This wall was excavated to a

depth of 0.44 m, at 55.97 m OD, where excavations were halted, the wall and its associated deposits therefore continued down below this level.

6.2.2 Significance

The site evaluated further adds to our knowledge about the development of the suburbs of Oxford and especially within the context of the area to the west of the castle, around St. Thomas Street. What makes this excavation more important is the discovery of one of the earliest medieval features on the site, the cob wall, which provides an insight into how, in places, land actually had to be reclaimed within the area of the island, before development could take place. This discovery is important in relation to the initial medieval development of this part of Oxford.

In general, the most important area of the site, in the areas evaluated, is the land fronting onto St. Thomas Street, where evidence of a medieval building and its associated deposits were found undisturbed only 0.70 m below the present day ground surface. It is here also that remains of an early post-medieval building was discovered, also relatively in-tact. Therefore from the evidence discovered in the evaluation both post-medieval and medieval buildings appear to have survived along the frontage of St. Thomas Street.

6.2.3 Impact of Development

Any development which disturbs the ground 0.70 m below the ground surface at the frontage of the site will impact upon the preserved medieval deposits associated with the medieval buildings in this area. These medieval deposits lay at a depth of 56.33 m OD. Any development which occurs above this height and 0.25 m below the tarmac in this area will impact upon the preserved deposits associated with the post-medieval building. This lies at a depth of 56.75 m OD.

Away from the frontage, within the area of trench 1, any development which disturbs the ground 0.24 m below the ground surface (at 56.96 m OD), will impact upon the post-medieval wall and the deposits and surfaces associated with it. Any development which disturbs the ground 0.64 m below the tarmac (56.47 m OD), will impact upon the medieval deposits above, and associated with, the cob wall. It appears that some of the post-medieval deposits to the east of the southern part of trench 1 may have been destroyed by the foundations of a modern brick building.

The depth of the 19th century and post-medieval dumping in the north end of the site suggests that it is likely that any surviving medieval or early post-medieval deposits of significance will not be affected by the proposed development unless disturbance of greater than 1.5 metres is proposed.

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CXT	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	DATE	COMMENTS	FINDS
Trench 1						
1	Layer	-	0.09	Mod	Tarmac	-
2	Layer	-	0.13	Mod	Make-up for tarmac	-
3	Layer	-	0.10	P-M	Floor	-
4	Layer	-	0.34	P-M	Make-up	Pot - 1820+ Bone/Glass/Clay pipe
5	Cut	1.38	0.50	Mod	Pit	-
6	Fill	1.94	0.48	P-M	Fill of 60	Pot - 1820+ Bone/Glass/Clay Pipe
7	Fill	1.38	0.50	Mod	Fill of 5	-
8	Cut	0.80	0.60	Mod	Pipe Trench	-
9	Fill	0.80	0.60	Mod	Fill of 8	-
10	Cut	4.80	0.70	Mod	Foundation trench for brick building	-
11	Fill	4.80	0.70	Mod	Packing round foundation within 10	-
12	Structure	4.40	0.70	Mod	Modern brick wall	-
13	Layer	1.40	0.20	P-M	Charcoal lens	-
14	Structure	-	0.07	Mod	Brick floor associated with 12	-
15	Layer	-	0.20	Mod	Make-up layer for 14	-
16	Structure	-	0.48	Mod	Concrete structure	-
17	Layer	-	0.14	P-M	Surface associated with 21	-
18	Layer	-	0.16	P-M	Surface associated with 21	Pot - 1620 + bone/shell
19	Layer	-	-	P-M	Surface associated with 26	Pot - 1650+ bone/cufflinks
20	Fill	0.50	0.26	P-M	Fill of 22, backfilling of construction trench	Pot - 1775+ bone/carved bone knife handle
21	Structure	0.48	0.60	P-M	E/W boundary wall within 22	-
22	Cut	1.04	0.20	P-M	Foundation trench for 21	-
23	Layer	1.20	0.03	P-M	Mortar spread	Bronze obj.
24	Cut	0.44	0.64	Mod	Construction trench for 12	-
25	Fill	0.44	0.64	Mod	Fill of 24	-
26	Structure	1.8	-	P-M	Stone wall to well	-
27	Layer	0.62	0.06	Late Med	Sandy clay lens	Pot - 1400+ Bone/Shell
28	Layer	1.0	0.09	Late Med	Gravel surface over 29	-
29	Structure	1.4	0.88	Early Med	Cob built wall	Pot - 1200+ Bone/Mollusc
30	Layer	1.5	0.14	P-M	Backfill of well	Pot - 1820+ Bone/Glass/Metal/ Clay Pipe
31	Fill	1.0	-	P-M	Backfill into well	Pot - 1760 + Bone/Metal
32	Layer	-	0.17	Late Med	Layer butting 29	Pot - 1500 Bone/Nail

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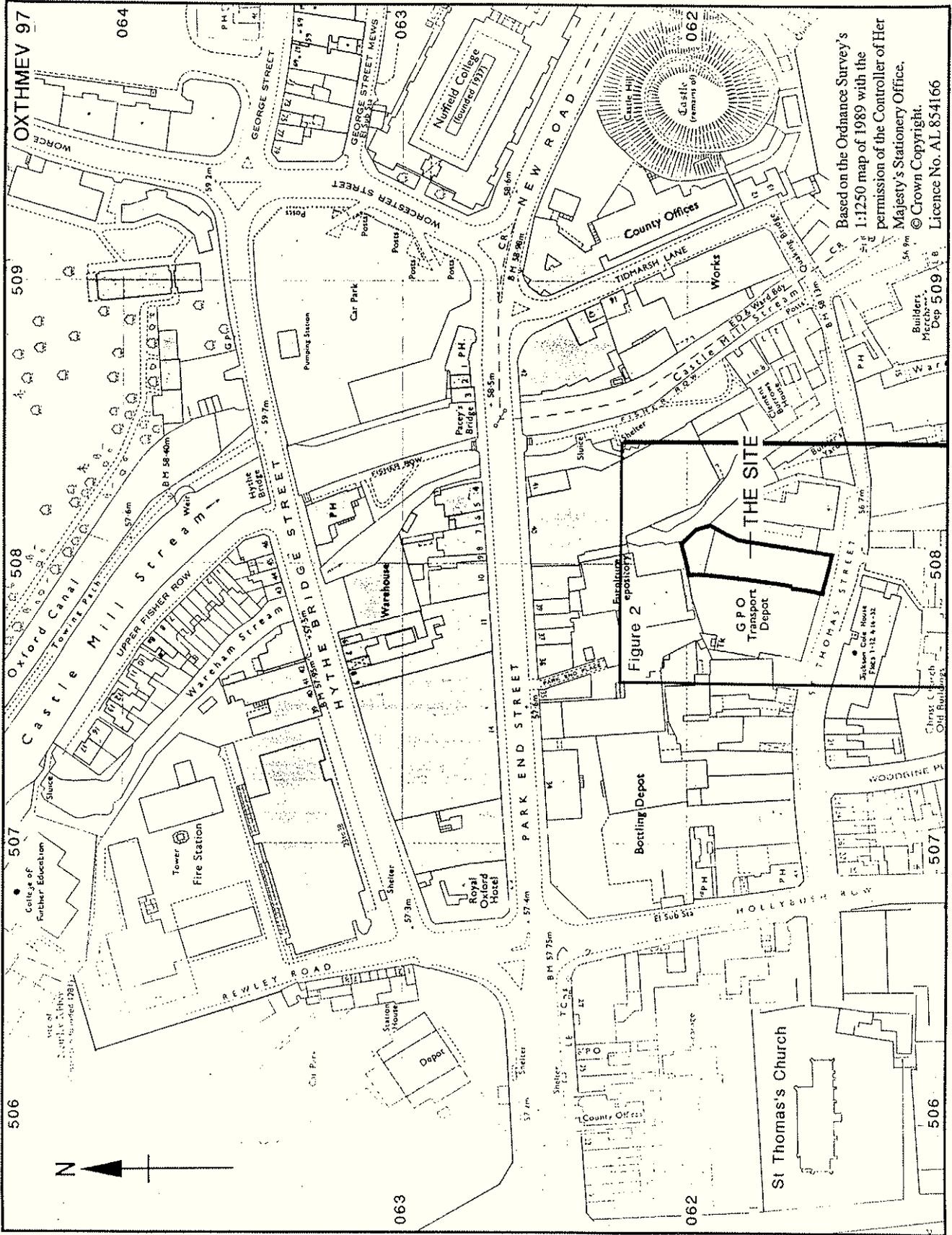
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CXT	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	DATE	COMMENTS	FINDS
33	Fill	0.33	-	P-M	Backfill of well construction trench 46	Pot - 1710+ Bone/Clay Pipe
34	Layer	0.80	0.06	Late Med	Gravel lens butting 29	-
35	Layer	1.00	0.17	Late Med	Clay/loam deposit	Pot - 1600 Bone/CBM
36	Layer	1.25	0.04	Late Med	Paved Surface	Pot - 1200 CBM
37	Layer	0.80	0.20	Late Med	Line of stones	-
38	Layer	-	0.35	P-M	Make-up layer	-
39	Layer	0.40	0.02	Late Med	Lens of gravel	-
40	Layer	-	0.04	Late Med	Lens of gravel	-
41	Layer	-	0.08	Late Med	Clay/gravel layer	Pot - 1200+
42	Layer	-	0.06	Late Med	Silt/Clay deposit	-
43	Layer	1.00	0.13	Late Med	Accumulation butting 29	Pot - 1500+ Bone
44	Layer	-	0.60	Late Med	Deliberate backfill butting 29	Pot - 1400 Bone/Metal/ Worked bone
45	Layer	0.45	0.30	Late Med	Collapse of Cob wall?	-
46	Cut	2.5	-	P-M	Construction cut for well	-
47	Fill	-	-	P-M	Fill of pit	-
48	Layer	-	0.26	Late Med	Make-up layer butting cob wall 29	Pot - 1400+
49	Layer	-	0.08	Late Med	Make-up layer	Pot - 1400+
50	Layer	0.20	-	Late Med	Irregular clay make-up	Nail, FE obj
51	Layer	-	0.16	Early Med	First layer of make-up butting north of 29	Pot - 1200+
52	Fill	0.90	0.30	Mod	Fill of modern pit	-
53	Cut	0.90	0.30	Mod	Modern pit	-
54	Cut	0.50	0.30	Early Med	Cut of revetment posthole	-
55	Fill	0.50	0.30	Early Med	Fill of 54	Pot - 1200+
56	Cut	0.30	0.10	Early Med	Cut of revetment posthole	-
57	Fill	0.30	0.10	Early Med	Fill of 56	Pot - Med
58	Layer	-	-	Early Med	River deposit under 29	Pot - 1200+
59	Cut	-	0.50	Mod	Cut for concrete structure	-
60	Cut	1.48	0.48	P-M	Pit backfilling well	-
61	Layer	-	0.16	Late Med	Make-up layer	-
62	Layer	-	0.30	Late Med	Make-up layer butting 29	-
63	Fill	1.00	-	P-M	Backfill of well	-
Trench 2						
100	Layer	-	0.09	Modern	Tarmac	-
101	Layer	-	0.27	Modern	Make-up for tarmac	-
102	Layer	-	0.34	P-M	Make-up	-
103	Fill	0.48	0.42	P-M	Fill of 104	-
104	Cut	0.48	0.42	P-M	Posthole	-
105	Layer	-	0.42	P-M	Make-up	-
106	Layer	-	0.36	P-M	Make-up	1620+
107	Layer	-	0.60	P-M	Clay capping	-
108	Layer	-	0.06	P-M	Band of sand/gravel	-
109	Cut	-	-	P-M	Cut for 106	-

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CXT	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	DATE	COMMENTS	FINDS
Trench 3						
150	Layer	-	0.05	Modern	Tarmac	-
151	Layer	-	0.10	Modern	Make-up for tarmac	-
152	Layer	-	0.08	Modern	Make-up for tarmac	-
153	Layer	-	0.06	Modern	Demolition levelling	-
154	Structure	0.55	0.07	P-M	Paving slab	-
155	Structure	0.40	0.50	P-M	Brick lining to drain 172	-
156	Layer	-	0.06	P-M	Mortar floor	-
157	Layer	-	0.16	P-M	Make-up for floor	-
158	Layer	-	0.30	Late Med	Surface through which 168 cut	Pot - 1480+ Bone
159	Layer	-	0.05	Early Med	Floor	-
160	Fill	0.40	0.50	P-M	Fill of drain 172	Pot - 1790+ Bone/Clay Pipe
161	Layer	-	0.46	P-M	Make up under floor 156	Pot - 1710+ Bone
162	Layer	-	0.11	Early Med	Make-up under floor 159	Pot - 1200+ Bone/Tile
163	Layer	-	0.36	Early Med	Exterior Surface/Make-up	Pot - 1200+ Bone
164	Layer	-	-	Early Med	Make-up	Pot - 1200+ Bone
165	Structure	-	0.65	P-M	Chimney foundation	-
166	Structure	-	-	P-M	Building stone of 165	-
167	Structure	-	-	P-M	Mortar used for 165	-
168	Cut	-	0.30	P-M	Cut for chimney foundation	-
169	Structure	0.74	-	Early Med	East west wall	-
170	Structure	-	-	Early Med	Stone used in 169	-
171	Structure	-	-	Early Med	Mortar used for 169	-
172	Cut	0.40	0.50	Vict	Cut for drain	-
173	Fill	0.30	0.30	P-M	Fill of 168	-

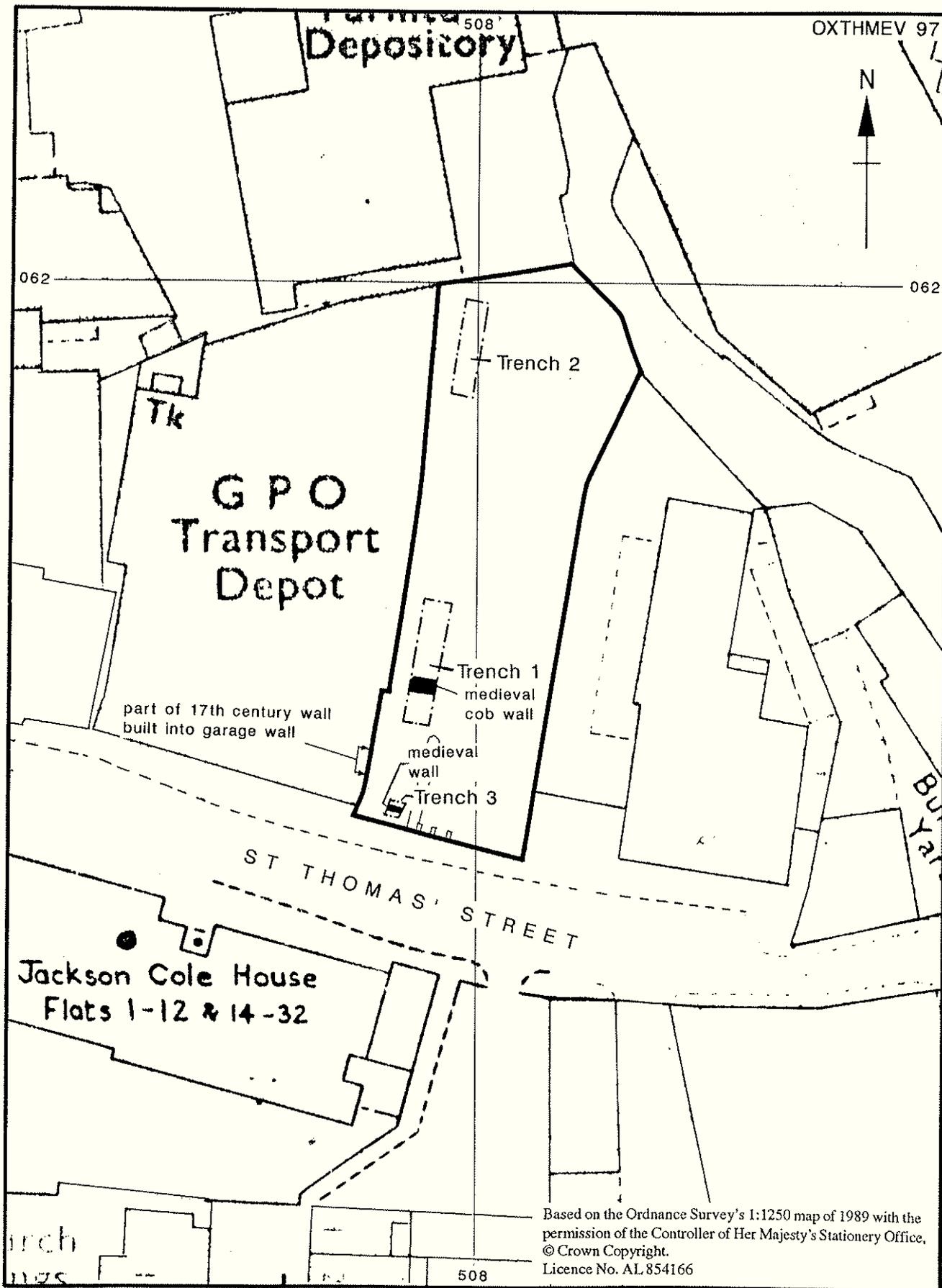


Based on the Ordnance Survey's
 1:1250 map of 1989 with the
 permission of the Controller of Her
 Majesty's Stationery Office,
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Figure 1

Site location plan

scale 1:2000



scale 1:500

Trench location plan

Figure 2

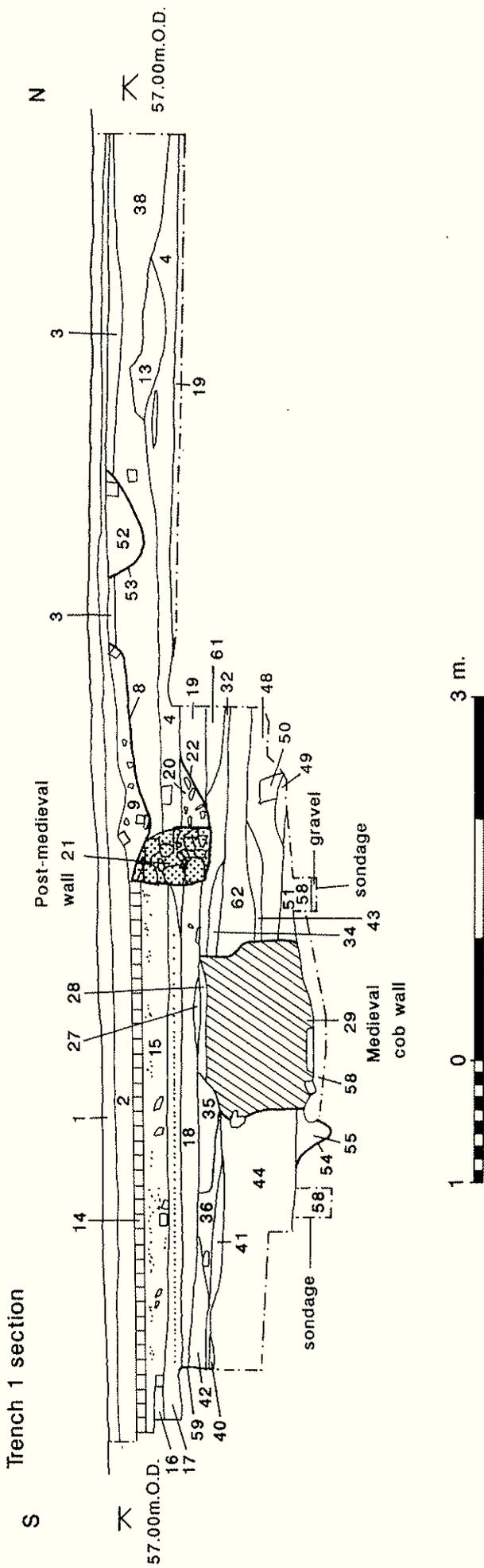
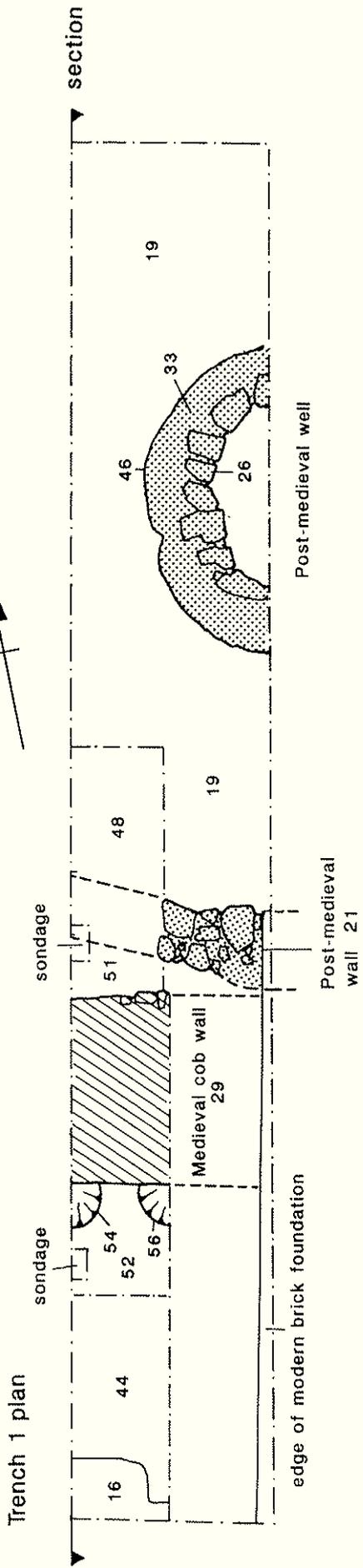


Figure 3

Trench 2 sample section

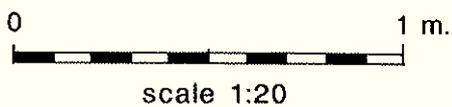
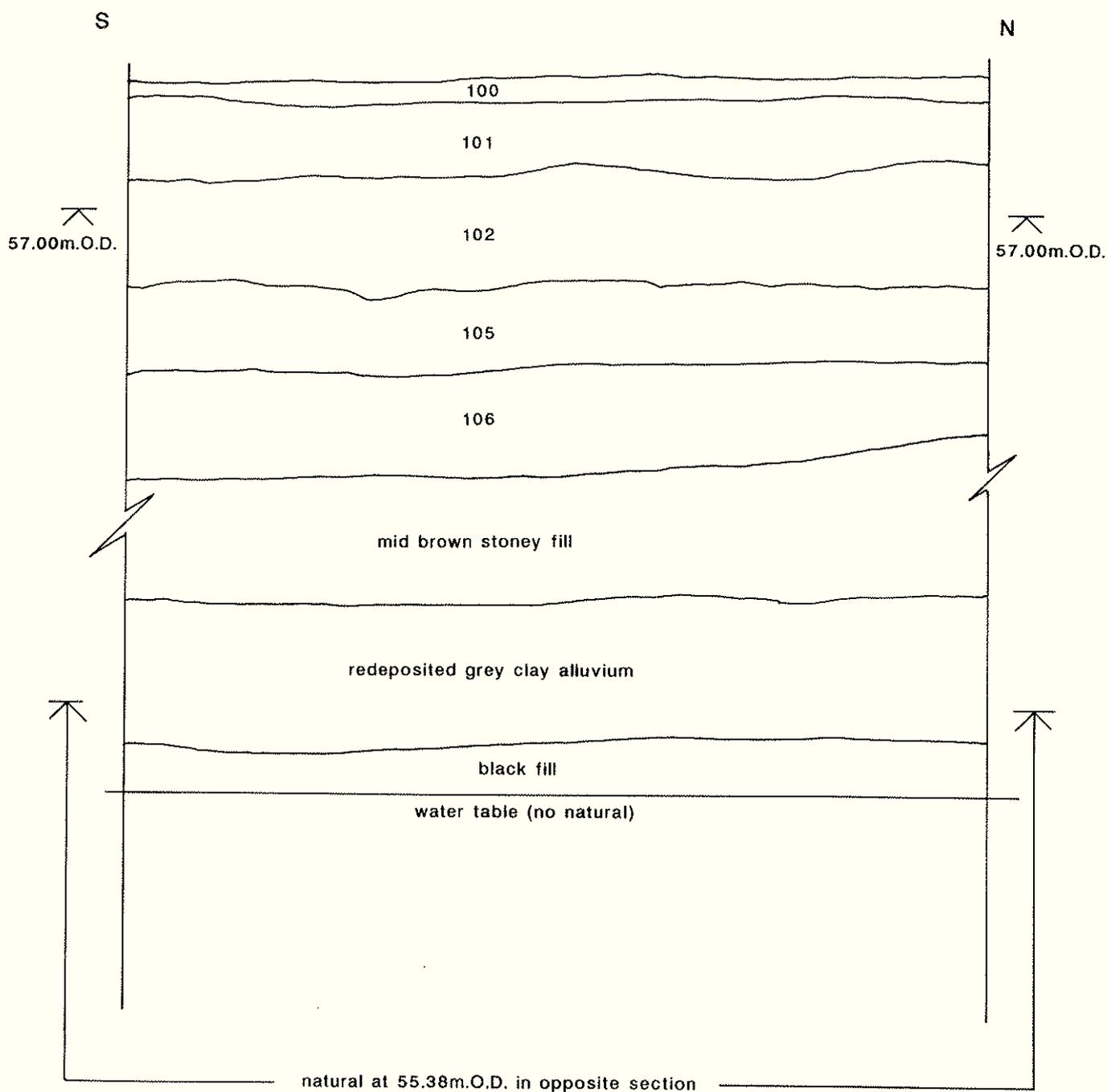
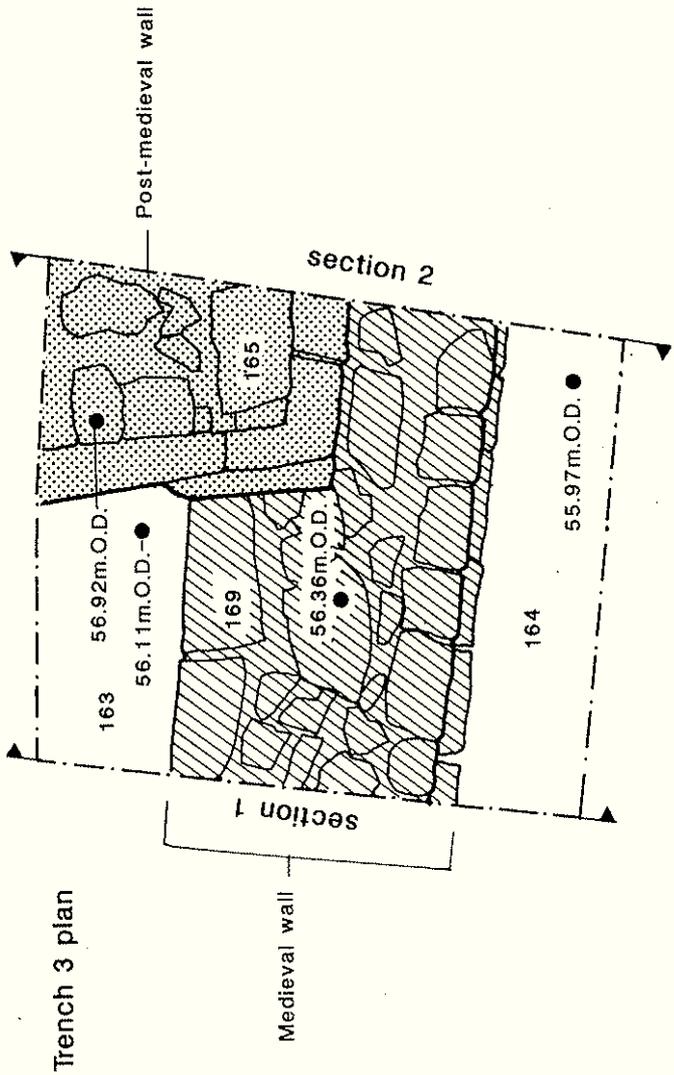


Figure 4



scale 1:20

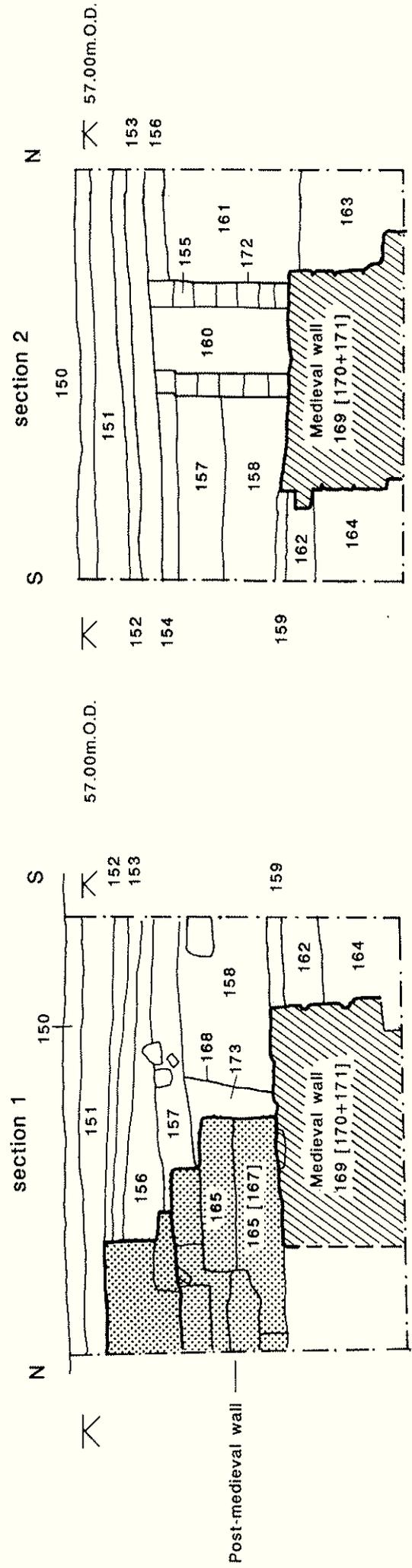


Figure 5



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