



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
BARCLAYCARD, MAREFAIR, NORTHAMPTON**

STAGE 2: TRIAL EXCAVATION

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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1998

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
BARCLAYCARD, MAREFAIR, NORTHAMPTON**

STAGE 2: TRIAL EXCAVATION

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON THE SITE OF THE FORMER
BARCLAYCARD, MAREFAIR, NORTHAMPTON STAGE 2

AUGUST - OCTOBER 1998

Abstract

Archaeological evaluation has established that late Saxon and medieval features and deposits survive at a variety of locations around the former Barclaycard Premises, Marefair, Northampton. Early and middle Saxon or earlier activity is attested by residual material.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Great Portland Estates have applied to redevelop the site of the former Barclaycard premises, Marefair, Northampton. (NGR SP 750 604; Fig 1).
- 1.2 The site is bounded by Marefair to the south, Horsemarket to the east, St Mary's Street to the north and Dodderidge Street to the west and was last developed in the late 1960's and early 1970's when little archaeological fieldwork took place. Desk-based assessment has already established that the potential existed for the survival of significant archaeological deposits despite the depredations assumed to have been caused by the erection of the present buildings (Northamptonshire Archaeology reports 1998).

Former excavations which have taken place since the 1970's attest the survival of prehistoric and, particularly middle- and late Saxon remains around what became St Peter's Church, Marefair, in the form of a sequence of high-status Palaces (Williams J.H., et al 1985), with the late Saxon and medieval frontage of St Peter's Street to the south (Williams J.H., 1979). In addition early-middle Saxon building remains have been identified on the north side of Marefair adjacent to the Barclaycard centre (Williams, F., 1979) and others off Chalk Lane (Williams J.H., 1981).

- 1.3 Accordingly a brief for archaeological evaluation dated 21 May 1998 was issued by Northamptonshire Heritage, requiring trial excavation to take place prior to determination of the planning application.
- 1.4 The evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology between 24 August and 9 October 1998.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Fifteen evaluation trenches were dug in order to establish the presence, depth of burial, date and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits across the site (Fig 1).

2.2 The general objective set out in the Brief for Archaeological Evaluation dated 21 May 1998 was:

"to determine whether remains of early prehistoric, Saxon medieval or post-medieval date survive within the site and, if so, establish their date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial".

2.3 Deposits of modern date were removed using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching blade. Upon exposure of significant deposits or features machining was halted and excavation continued by hand.

3. CONSTRAINTS

3.1 While the former Barclaycard premises are now untenanted and considerable internal stripping out has taken place, many of the consumer connections for the utilities remain live. Similarly the entire site still drains its surface water into a working drainage system, itself the subject of a CCTV survey which took place at the same time as the evaluation (digital plan in archive).

3.2 Final positioning of trenches was achieved in consultation with Northamptonshire Heritage, taking into account the services and the limited access possible for a mechanical excavator. One trench (10) was moved when major unmapped electricity cables were encountered.

4. OBSERVATIONS

✓ 4.1 Trench 1 measured 6.75m x 2.2m x 2.9m deep (not separately illustrated). A 19th century brick cellar took up most of the trench. To the north lay infill rubble and topsoil behind the cellar north wall. Machine excavation progressed through the cellar floor (of brick and quarry tile) to expose the underlying natural ironstone beneath. No archaeological features survived beneath the trench. The cellar was infilled with the demolished building which had stood over it when the Barclaycard premises were erected in about 1970.

✓ 4.2 Trench 2 measured 7.3m x 3m x 1.5m deep (Fig 2). Beneath about 800mm of modern overburden (1) lay a compacted dark olive-brown cultivation soil (2) into which was set a 19th century culvert (5). Layer 2 contained fragments of clay pipe and lay up to 600mm thick. It was cut at the

eastern end of the trench by a large sewer trench.

Beneath the cultivation soil, was a red-orange sandy clay loam (3) the likes of which have been recorded elsewhere in Northampton (generally known as the red loam). Into this layer were cut a cluster of pits of medieval date in the western half of the trench (12, 14, 16). Their fills (13, 15, 17 respectively) produced pottery dating between the early-middle Saxon period and the 16th centuries. In the eastern half of the trench the red loam was cut by a shallow timber building slot (8) and two adjacent post-holes (6, 10). They produced pottery a late Saxon to early medieval date.

Where unaffected by pits the red loam was removed to reveal the underlying Ironstone, cut into which and sealed by the red loam was a hollow. This produced no finds whatsoever. It is probably a natural, geological feature.

- √4.3 Trench 3 measured 6.7m x 2.4m x 2m deep (Fig 3). It was shored temporarily while investigation took place to date and characterise features within.

Beneath 1.8m of modern overburden (1) lay the natural ironstone (2). Into this had been cut a series of almost concentric medieval pits (8, 6, 4 in chronological order). Lying in the top of the pits was the foundation of an undated ironstone wall (3).

- 4.4 Trench 4 measured 14.6m x 2.3m x 1.5m deep (Fig 3). Beneath 1.4m of modern overburden (1) lay a spread of dark olive brown loam (8) which contained pottery up to 16th-17th century in date. This was excavated to reveal a shallow, linear trench (7) cut into the same red loam (14) already seen in trench 2. Overlapping and partly filling this shallow trench was ironstone rubble (9, 11). This was so poorly bonded that it is not possible to say whether it was a wall or part of a hardstanding. To the west of this rubble-based feature was a shallow, rubble-filled ditch (2) cut into the natural ironstone, while to the east lay a single post-hole (16) and parts of two medieval pits (18,20). At about the midpoint of the trench lay two earlier features comprising a post hole (3) and part of a large pit only partly exposed within the trench (5). Both of these features were cut into the natural ironstone but were not covered by the red loam layer. They produced pottery of late Saxon date.

The red loam layer (14) was removed. It contained one sherd of pre-historic, probably Bronze Age, pottery but its removal revealed only one feature, a single stake hole; it is undated.

- 4.5 Trench 5 measured 11.5m x 1.7m x 1.2m deep (Fig 3). Beneath 600mm of modern overburden (1) lay the natural ironstone (2). Cut into this were three large medieval pits (6, 8, 10). Into the top

of pit 8 had been set an irregular foundation which was locally but severely scorched (3). All of the features were medieval.

- 4.6 Trench 6 measured 6.0m x 5.2m x 1.7m deep (Fig 3). Beneath brick pavements and sand bedding was a deep deposit of dark olive brown cultivation soil (1). Under this lay the ironstone linings of two deep, square intercutting pits (3, 7); the fill of the former (2) was 19th century while the latter (6) was medieval. These were cut into an earlier soil horizon which survived at the south side of the trench (11). This was also cut by two shallow pits (9, 13). Beneath the larger pit (13) lay the red loam (15), some 250mm thick and overlying natural ironstone. The red loam contained 21 sherds from a single vessel in possible middle Saxon Maxey Ware.

- 4.7 Trench 7 measured 5.0m x 4.0m and was contiguous with Trench 2, dug to further explore structural features found in Trench 2 (Fig 2). Beneath the brick pavements dark olive brown cultivation soil similar to that in Trench 2 was removed to a depth of 1m to reveal red loam (18). A series of features cut the red loam and date from the late Saxon and medieval periods. These comprised a medieval pit (13), an irregular hollow (10) containing two post holes (16 and 17), three post holes (11, 14 and 20) and three stake holes (26, 27 and 28). Most prominent were two phases of building slots. The later, a single slot (9) was medieval and was aligned north-south, while the earlier (12) was joined to another, perpendicular slot (23) and was aligned north-east to south-west. This is a continuation of the timber structure in Trench 2 and was found to have been cut into a shallow linear trench (25).

The red loam was removed to reveal the natural ironstone and exposed further the hollow seen in Trench 2. It contained no finds and probably represents a geological feature.

- 4.8 Trench 8 was dug at the extreme north-eastern corner of the site along the internal access carriageway (Fig 4). It measured 8.0m x 1.8m and was aligned approximately east-west.

Compacted modern disturbance with rubble (3) lay beneath the brick pavements and sharp-sand bedding. The disturbance lay up to 700mm thick over most of the trench but deepened sharply at the extreme east end. In the north-west corner of the trench the corner of a mortared ironstone structure may represent part of a 19th century cellar thought to front onto St Mary's Street.

At the base of the disturbance lay a 100mm-thick medieval soil (7) cut by a pit (5). Its fills (6, 10, 11) also produced exclusively medieval or earlier pottery. The soil was removed to reveal further pits (8, 11, 18, 20, 24, 25) and two stake holes (22 and 23) cut into the red loam (26). These produced pottery of late Saxon and early medieval date.

The red loam was removed to expose weathered natural ironstone. No archaeological features were found.

- 4.9 Trench 9 This trench was dug in the centre of the site to locate any remains potentially associated with Pike Lane (Fig 5). It was aligned east-west and measured 8m x 1.6m.

Beneath the brick and sharp sand bedding lay a mixed deposit of ironstone rubble, brick, granite setts and fragments of salt-glazed pipes overlay at about 700mm depth a variety of features and layers relating to a stone building. The trench was bisected by the trench of a vaulted brick culvert (3) into which a number of subsidiary pipes once drained.

The trench for the culvert was flanked by layers of ironstone rubble in dark brown soil (2, 5). These layers, possibly demolition material, were each bounded by an ironstone wall (6, 9), believed to be opposite sides of a late medieval stone building. Outside each wall was a deep cultivation soil (7, 16) with the extreme west end of the trench also containing the edge of a foundation of blue engineering bricks on a 19th century concrete strip (8).

The building may have been erected over earlier pits as beneath the rubble (5) lay dense, compacted layers of ironstone rubble and a greenish grey loamy soil layer 100mm thick (11). Alongside this lay a deposit of grey ash and charcoal (10). Both were at least 100mm thick. All produced early medieval pottery. The rubble layer (2) on the east side of the culvert trench (3) was removed to reveal a layer similar to 11 but which lay slightly less than 100mm thick directly over natural ironstone.

- 4.10 Trench 10. This trench lay at the northern edge of the site and was dug to clarify the level of damage caused by the foundations of the existing building to the buried archaeology (Fig 6).

The trench was dug directly against the outer face of the Barclaycard north wall and measured 5.5m x 4.2m and involved the removal of brick pavements on a sharp sand bed, overlying a considerable depth of dark brown cultivation soils (5).

The trench exposed a type 19B (two pile configuration, each of 19" diameter) pile cap was exposed (2), together with a portion of the concrete pile beneath (4) and the adjacent ground beam (3).

The pile cap was 1m thick and supported the ground beam. The former stood clear of archaeology by at least 700mm, the latter by over 1.2m. Close to the building's north wall, the action of driving the foundation pile had produced a characteristic distortion of the stratigraphy. The layers through

which it had been driven had been warped by the action of pile driving, each one drawn down in an inverted cone towards the central pile (9,10). Close to the pile itself, the layers were mixed together by the resultant vibration and liquefaction in a sleeve around the pile a few centimetres thick (8). As a result, the area of damage and distortion from each individual pile can be quantified as a circle, of radius c1.0m.

Away from the pile the archaeology comprised a large stone-revetted apsidal pit of a sort seen previously at the Guildhall (Shaw et al in Selkirk, ed., 1997, 413) possibly connected with malting (6), a gully (11) and two stake/post holes (13,16). Pottery recorded indicates that all were medieval in date and were cut into surviving red loam (15). 1160/01394

- 4.11 Trench 11 (Not illustrated). Following use of a breaker to remove the 200mm thick ferro-concrete delivery bay above this trench, machine excavation removed 300mm of modern demolition material to expose natural ironstone directly beneath. There were no archaeological features in this trench which measured 6m x 1.8m.

- 4.12 Trench 12. This trench was dug to test the effect of foundations of the existing building on the buried archaeology in an area piled but not built over directly (Fig 4).

The trench measured 4.6m x 3.0m and was dug through brick pavements on sharp sand which overlay a 1.2m thick cultivation soil (3). A type 19G pile cap identified in the south section of the trench lay 300mm above the archaeology which comprised two medieval pits (5 and 7) cut into red loam. 1160/395/14.

- 4.13 Trench 13 measured 3.6m x 3.4m and was, like Trenches 10 and 12, cut to examine the effects of the foundations on the archaeology (Fig 4).

Beneath the brick pavements and sharp sand bedding lay up to 1.5m depth of cultivation soils (2), only the top of which had been damaged by the ground beam of the current building. At the base of the trench lay a single pit (5) with medieval pottery from its fill (6). This was cut through a thin layer of the red loam (7) into the natural ironstone. 1160/395/15

- 4.14 Trench 14 measured 6.6m x 5.4m and was dug adjacent to Marefair to locate any building remains associated with the former frontage (Fig 7). The trench lay close and at right angles to the former Trench 3.

Beneath brick pavements and modern building rubble 1.6m deep lay an ironstone rubble spread (5) and a rubbly loam layer (4) which produced medieval pottery. Within the rubble an arc of stones

may suggest the location of a well or hearth rim. No further characterisation was possible due to the depth of the trench.

- 4.15 Trench 15 measured 6.0m x 4.0m (Fig 7). Beneath brick pavements and sand bedding lay up to 1.3m of dark olive brown cultivation soil (2). An earlier layer of similar material c500mm thick (7) was cut by two late medieval pits (3 and 5). The early cultivation soil lay directly on top of natural ironstone. A further pit (11) was seen to cut the ironstone at the base of the trench.

5. SURVIVAL

- 5.1 The effects of the foundations of the current building are now known to have been restricted to the piles themselves and a radius of approximately 1m of distortion around each one, little more than areas of the pile caps themselves (Fig 6: Trench 10). The result of this is that beneath each building a high proportion of the archaeology will have remained unaffected by the foundations.
- 5.2 Trenches 10 and 12 were dug particularly to evaluate the levels of damage from pile caps and ground beams. While the architect's plans and sections of the 1960's were used to construct a pattern showing the AOD levels of the pile cap soffits on paper (Fig 8), the two trenches tested the data. The results indicate an exact correlation in both, the pile caps (and as a result the ground beams also) well clear of the archaeology.
- 5.3 It has been possible to predict the natural contours across the site together with those of the uppermost surviving archaeology and areas of known loss of archaeology such as basements and cellars (Fig 9). Other damage to the archaeology is believed to be minor, such as the sewer trenches in excess of 1.5m depth, which are few and of narrow width.
- 5.4 The survival of archaeology and all relevant aOD level data can be represented in tabular form (Table 1):
All heights are expressed as metres above Ordnance Datum;
Deposit thicknesses are in mm.

Trench	modern ground	pile cap soffit where tested	top of archaeol where present	natural geology where seen	Thickness red loam where present	Thickness all archaeol. (inc red loam)
1	70.72	-	-	67.82	-	-
2	70.70	-	69.50	68.90	400	600
3	69.44	-	67.41	67.41	-	300 +
4	71.45	-	70.55	70.15	100	400
5	69.44	-	68.55	68.55	-	300 +
6	69.67	-	67.74	67.49	250	250 +
7	70.80	-	68.61	68.20	410	410
8	71.24	-	70.08	69.40	680	680
9	70.52	-	69.83	68.89	-	1060
10	71.75	70.46	69.76	69.16	-	600
11	69.04	-	-	68.39	-	-
12	70.68	69.28	68.98	-	-	300 +
13	70.68	-	69.12	69.12	-	300 +
14	69.44	-	67.43	-	-	450 +
15	69.38	-	67.37	66.58	-	790

Table 1.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 There was no evidence of the prehistoric land surface. Any survival is probably limited to where the red loam survives thickest.

6.2 Features predating the red loam produced no dating material. No early-middle saxon features were found although pottery of this date was found residual in later contexts.

Where found elsewhere in Northampton the red loam has sealed the early-middle Saxon (or earlier) deposits. Although this layer was stripped off by hand, only one undated stake hole predated it, together with a probably geological hollow. However, the presence of contemporary buildings on other sites, together with residual pottery found in the present evaluation may suggest that similar occupation may have survived and its absence may simply be due to the limited sample exposed in the evaluation.

- 6.3 Late Saxon or early medieval features were located in numerous trenches and close to the northern edge of the site include remains of building phases eccentric to the former alignment of Pike Lane.
- 6.4 Later medieval features survive across the site. These include a stone building fronting onto the former Pike Lane.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX A: POTTERY

A total of 507 sherds of pottery was recovered in 20 fabrics or types. Only two trenches, nos 1 and 11 produced no pottery. The sherd count by fabric and trench/context is set out in Tables 2 and 3 below.

CTS Key

The following is a breakdown of those fabrics recorded from the evaluation. The numbers refer to the designation in the Northamptonshire County Type Series and are reproduced in Tables 2 and 3 below (CTS).

BA?	Bronze Age
EMS	Early/middle Saxon (c400-800)
97	Maxey-type ware (c800-900) or early St Neots type of same date (formerly Northampton type S3/T1)
100	St Neots type ware (c800-1000)
130	Northampton ware (c900-975)
200	St Neots type ware (11th-12th century)
205	Stamford Ware (10th-11th century)
320	Lyveden Stanion B (mid 13th -15th century)
324	Brill/Boarstall (mid 13th - 15th century)
329	Potterspury (mid 13th - 15th century)
330	Shelly Coarseware (13th -15th century)
331	Developed Stamford Ware (12th century)
332	Surrey Whiteware (late 14th - 15th century)
333	Midlands splashed ware (14th century)
347	Nuneaton A ware (c1250-1300)
365	Late medieval reduced ware (14th-15th century)
403	Midland Purple ware (15th - 16th century)
404	Cistercian ware (later 15th -16th century)
407	Glazed red earthenware (mid 16th - 17th century)
411	Midland Black ware (c1600 - 19th century)

The pottery betokens a wide span of occupation on the site from the 9th to the 15th centuries, with the most concentrated level of occupation in the 10th-13th centuries. While the pottery is in itself unremarkable the levels of Northampton Wares from only evaluation trenches suggest that large quantities of this type will have been deposited across the site as a whole. A kiln source for this pottery type was found very close by at the corner of Horsemarket and St Mary's Street in 1971 (Williams J.H., 1974).

Cts /Tr	EMS	97	100	130	200	205	320	324	329	330	331	332	333	347	365	403	404	407	411	BA?
2/8			3																	
2/11			1																	
2/13			2	2																
2/15					4			2	3	1						1	4			
2/17			4																	
3/5			1		1		1			1										
3/7					3		1			7	1									
3/9			3																	
4/4				2																1
4/5				2																
4/6					1				1	4										
4/8	2		1	1	9	3		2		15		1						3		
4/10			3																	
4/11						1														
4/13									2					1						
4/17			3	1																
4/21				4			1			5										
5/4							1			1										
5/5										1										
5/7							5		2	25					3			1		
5/9										16										
5/11			1					1		15										
6/3																		1		
6/4													1				1			
6/6			1	4			5		3	1										
6/8			1							1			1							
6/11		21	5																	
6/12		1																		
6/14			4																	

Table 2

Cts /Tr	EMS	97	100	130	200	205	320	324	329	330	331	332	333	347	365	403	404	407	411	BA 7
7/4			2	4																
7/7			2				1	7	19	22										
7/8				4																
8/6			2		1															
8/13			4	1																
8/16			17																	
8/17										4										
8/21			3																	
9/1								1		1										
9/2													1							
9/3									1											
9/5				1			1	1		23			1		1			1	1	
9/6										1										
9/9				2	2				1	1										
9/10			1	3	1			1		6				3						
9/11			1							28										
9/13							1			1										
9/15			1	1						4										
9/16			4				1		3	10			1							
10/5									2	4	1	1						1		
10/7							2		1	9			1							
10/1 2		1	1	2																
10/1 9			1	2																
12/6						1	3		2	1	1									
13/2									2					1						
13/3					1															
13/6			3		5															
14/6					7															
15/7					6					12	1							2		
15/9					1															

Table 3

Schedule of Illustrations

- Fig 1 The site with location of archaeological evaluation trenches, geotechnical test pits and boreholes
- Fig 2 Plans of Trenches 2 and 7, conjoined
- Fig 3 Plans of Trenches 3, 4, 5 and 6
- Fig 4 Plans of Trenches 8, 12 and 13
- Fig 5 Plan and section of Trench 9
- Fig 6 Plan and section of Trench 10
- Fig 7 Plans of Trenches 14 and 15
- Fig 8 Levels of pile cap soffits projected from architects' plans (tested as accurate in Trenches 10 and 12); contours of top of archaeology projected from evaluation trenches
- Fig 9 Natural contours, contours of the top of the overlying archaeology superimposed; areas of existing basements and former cellarage from Borough Insurance maps.

Project Manager: Steve Parry MA MIFA

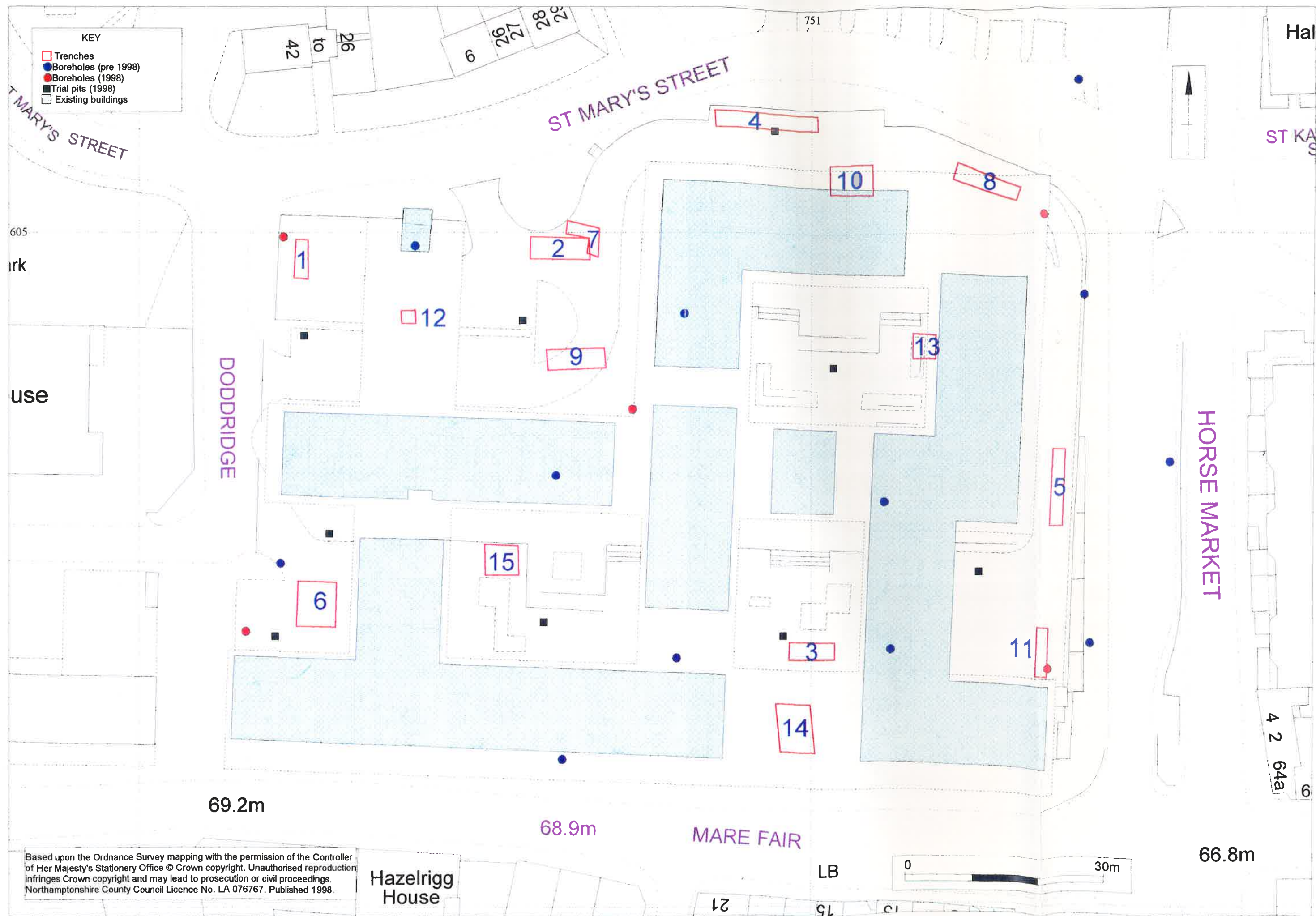
Project Officer: Iain Soden BA MIFA

Fieldwork: Robert Atkins BA, Tony Baker, Richard Barrett BA, Kate Brimblecombe BA, Iain Charles, Robert Clapham, Shelley Duddy, Brigid Gallacher BA, Steve Hayward BA, Erlend Hindmarch BA, Richard Jennings BA, Patrick Kent BSc, Peter Masters BSc PIFA.

Text: Iain Soden

Edited: Steve Parry

Illustrations: Tony Baker and Peter Masters



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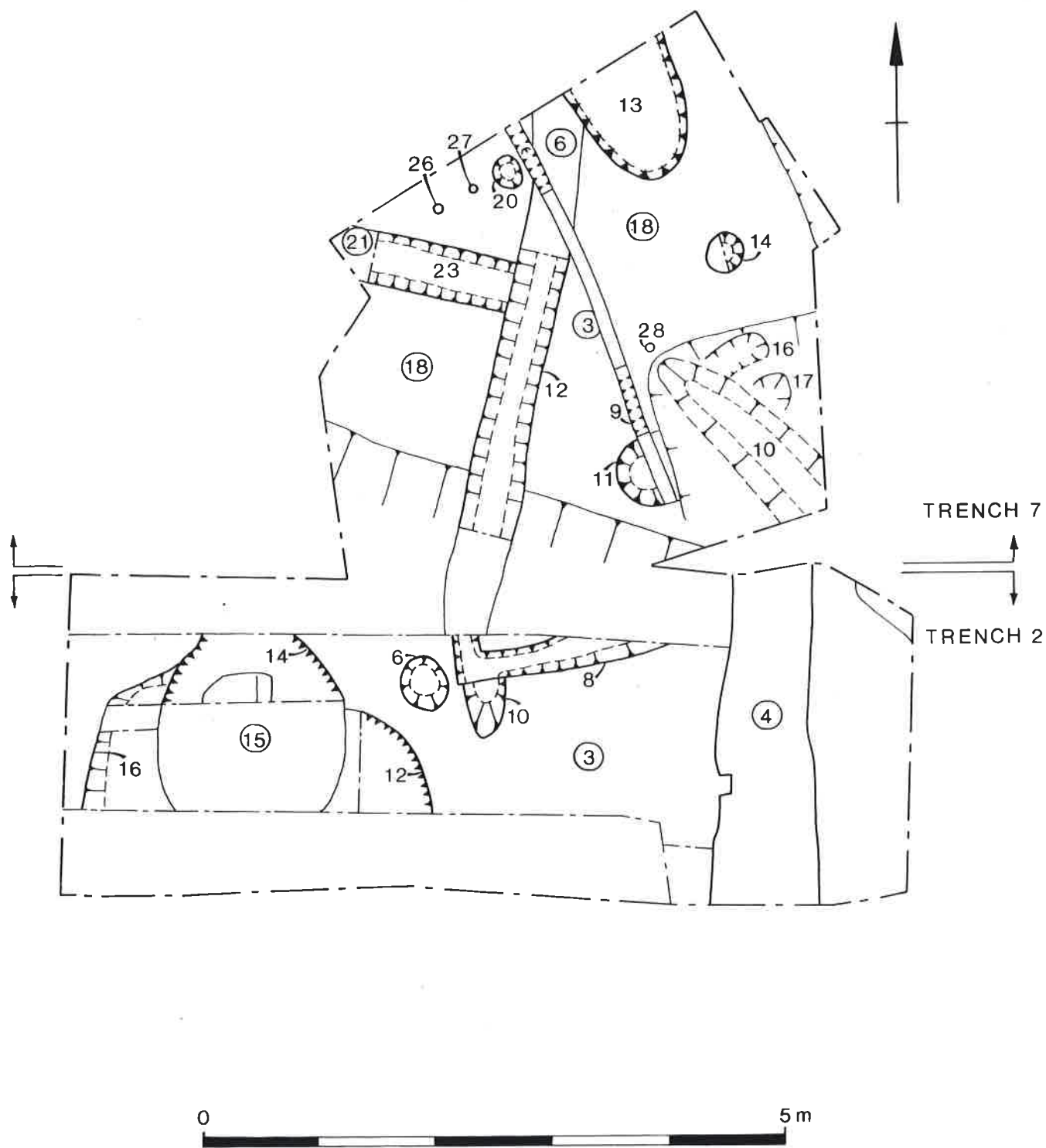
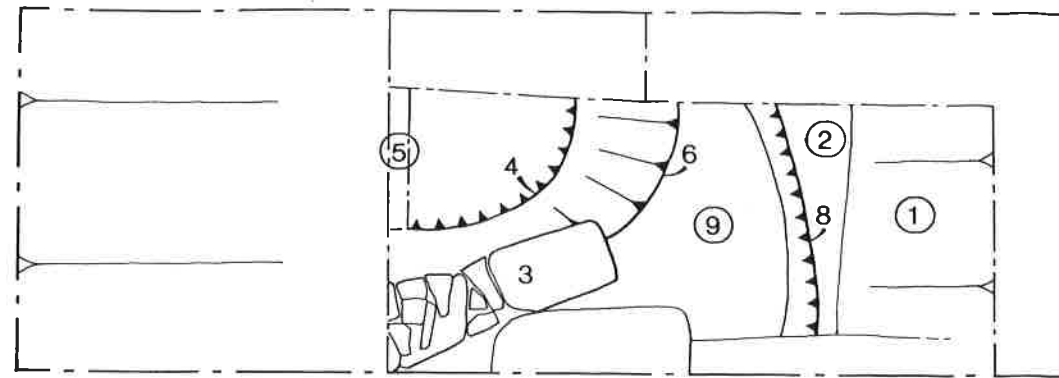
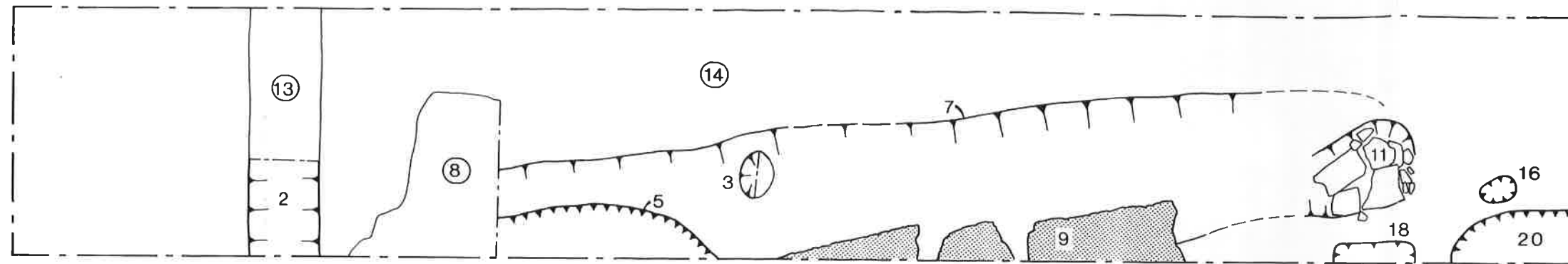


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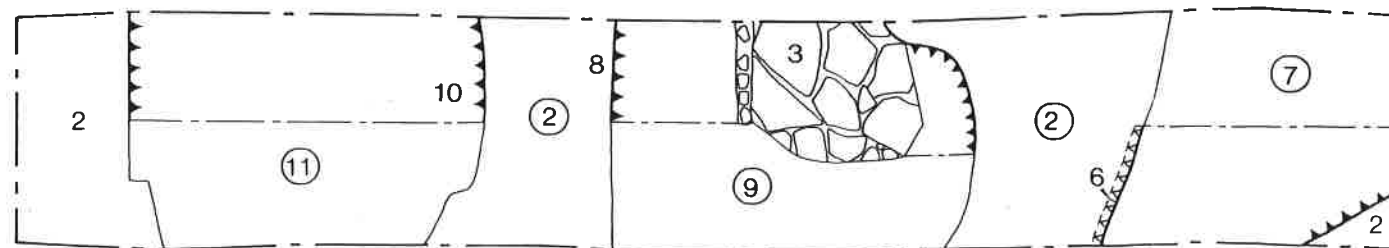
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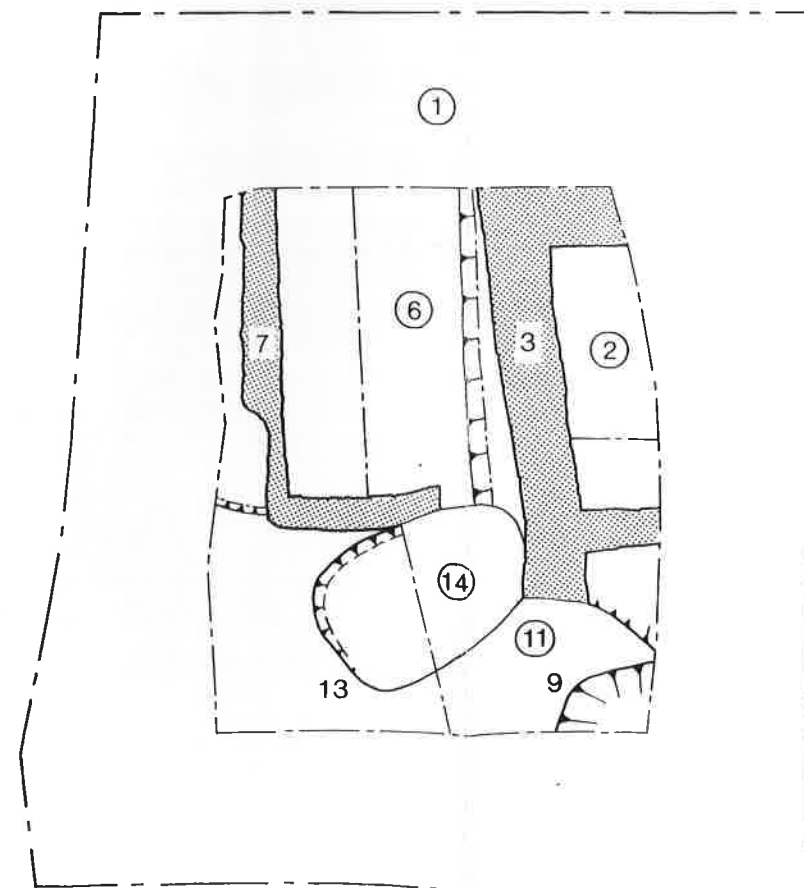
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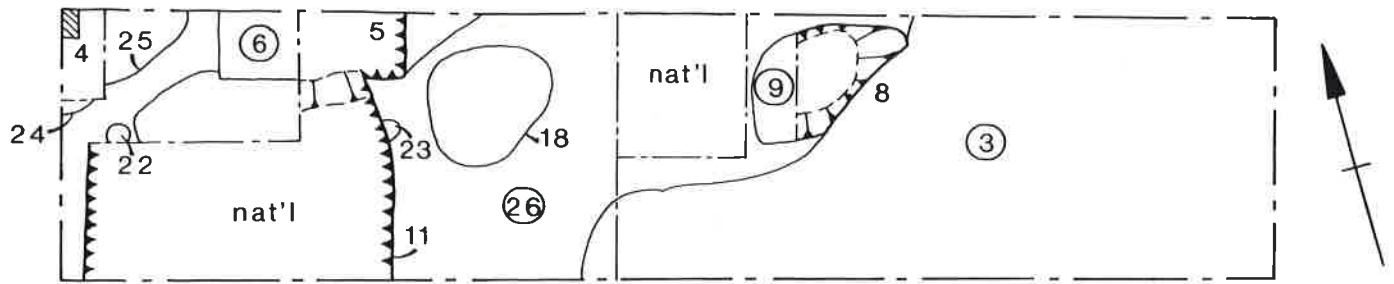


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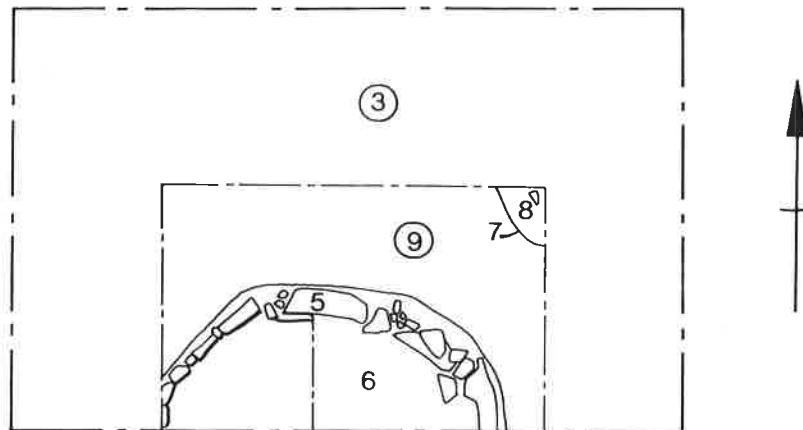


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TRENCH 8



TRENCH 12



TRENCH 13

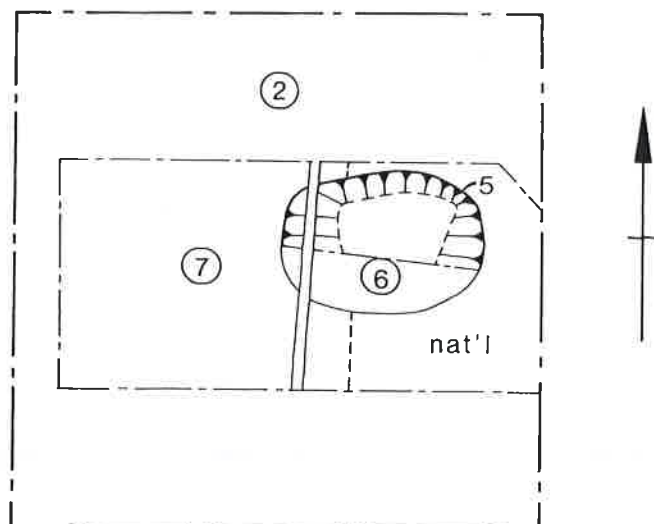
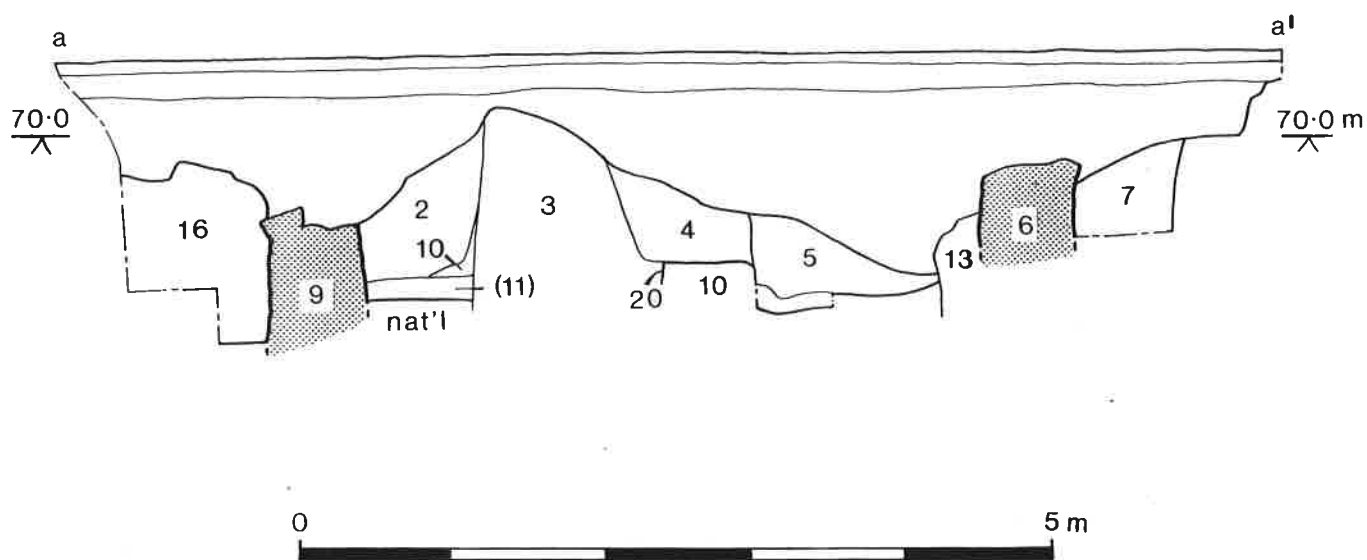
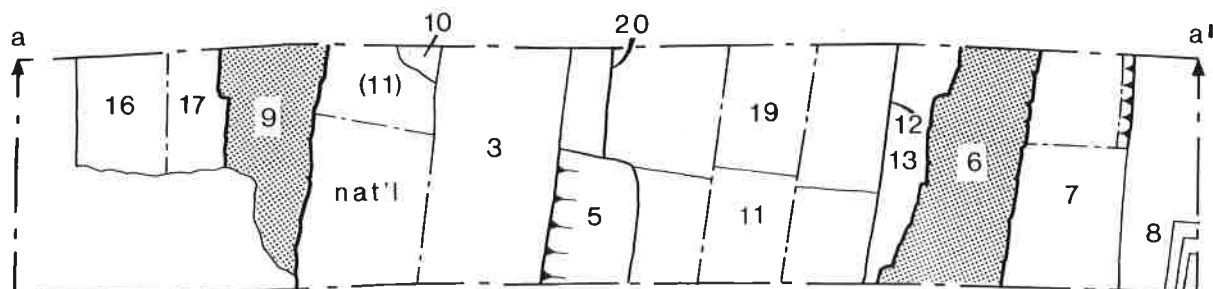


Fig. 4

TRENCH 9



TRENCH 10

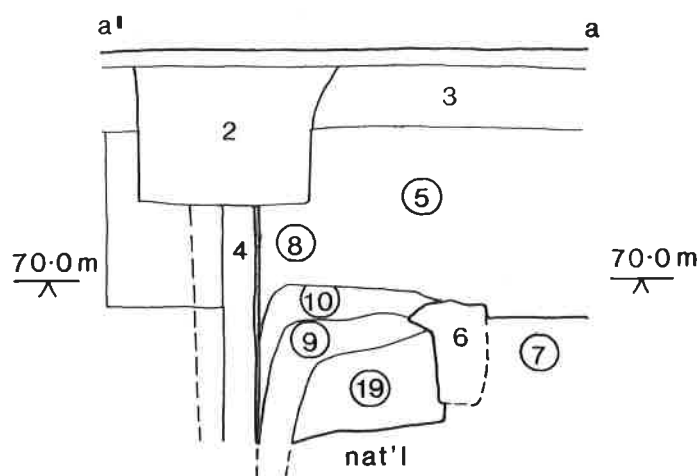
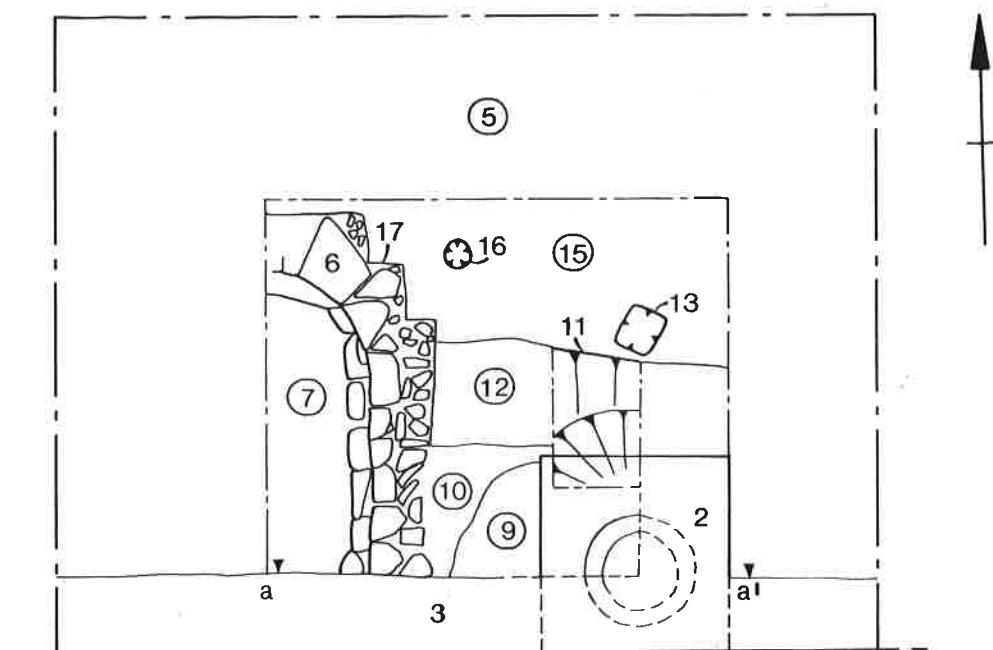
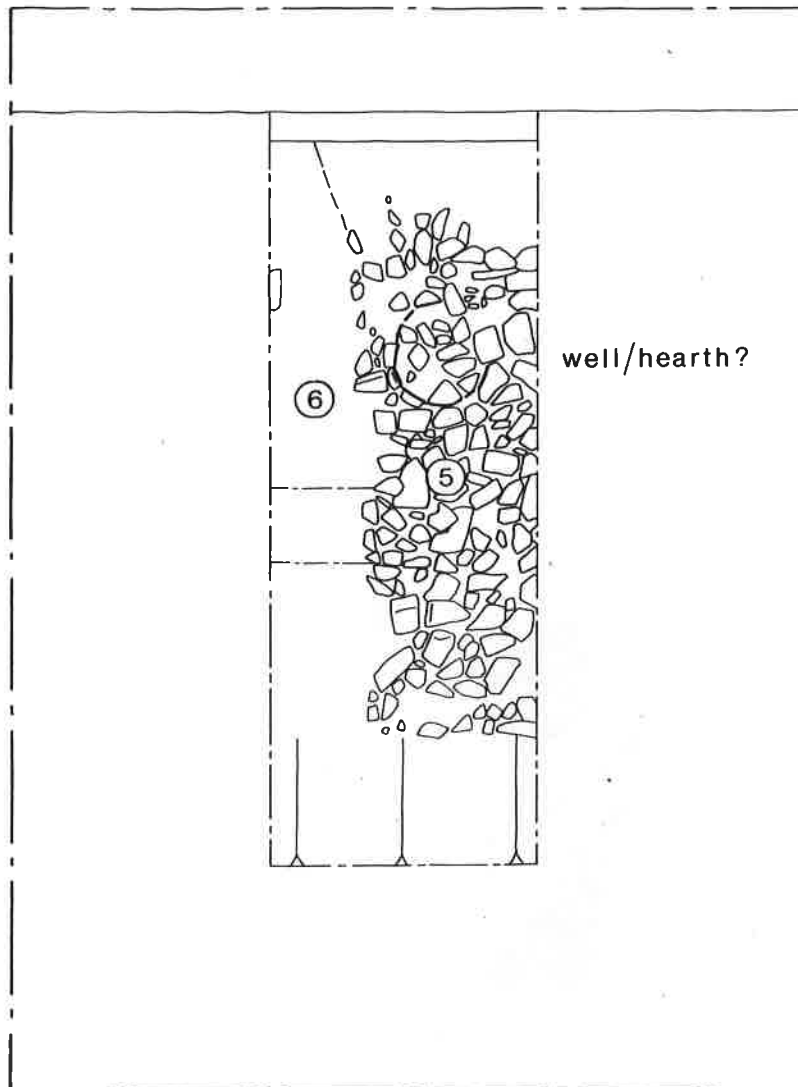
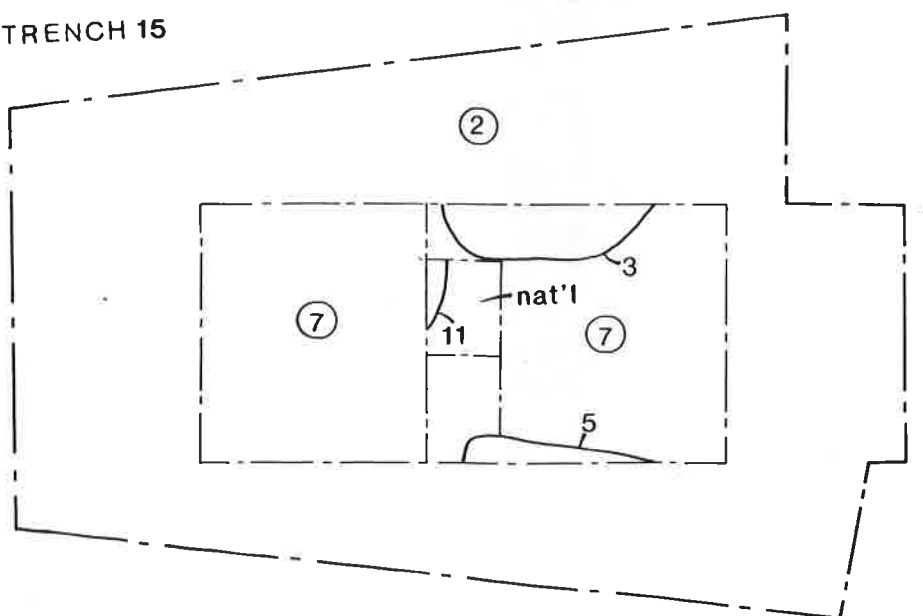


Fig. 6

TRENCH 14



TRENCH 15



0 5 m

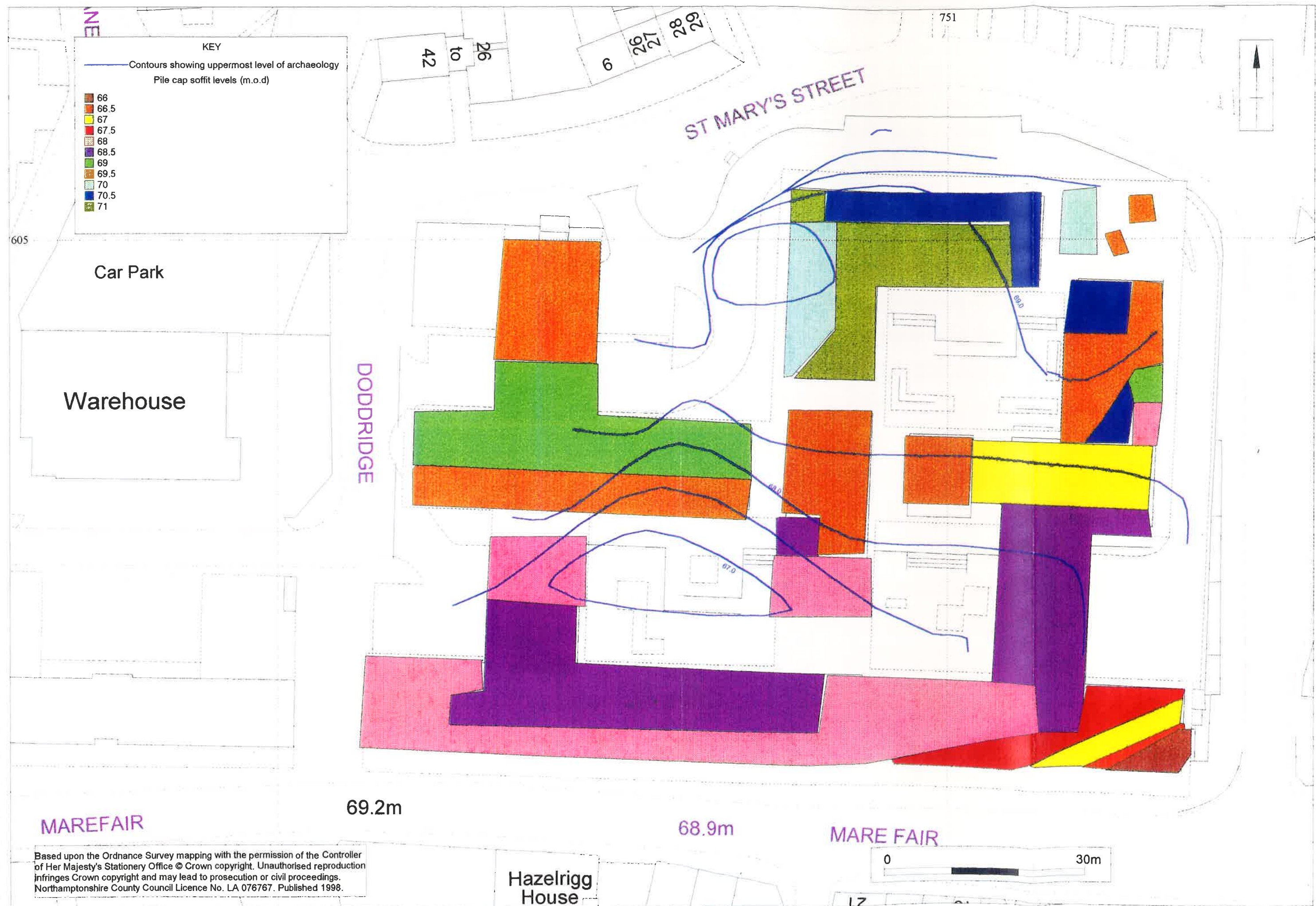
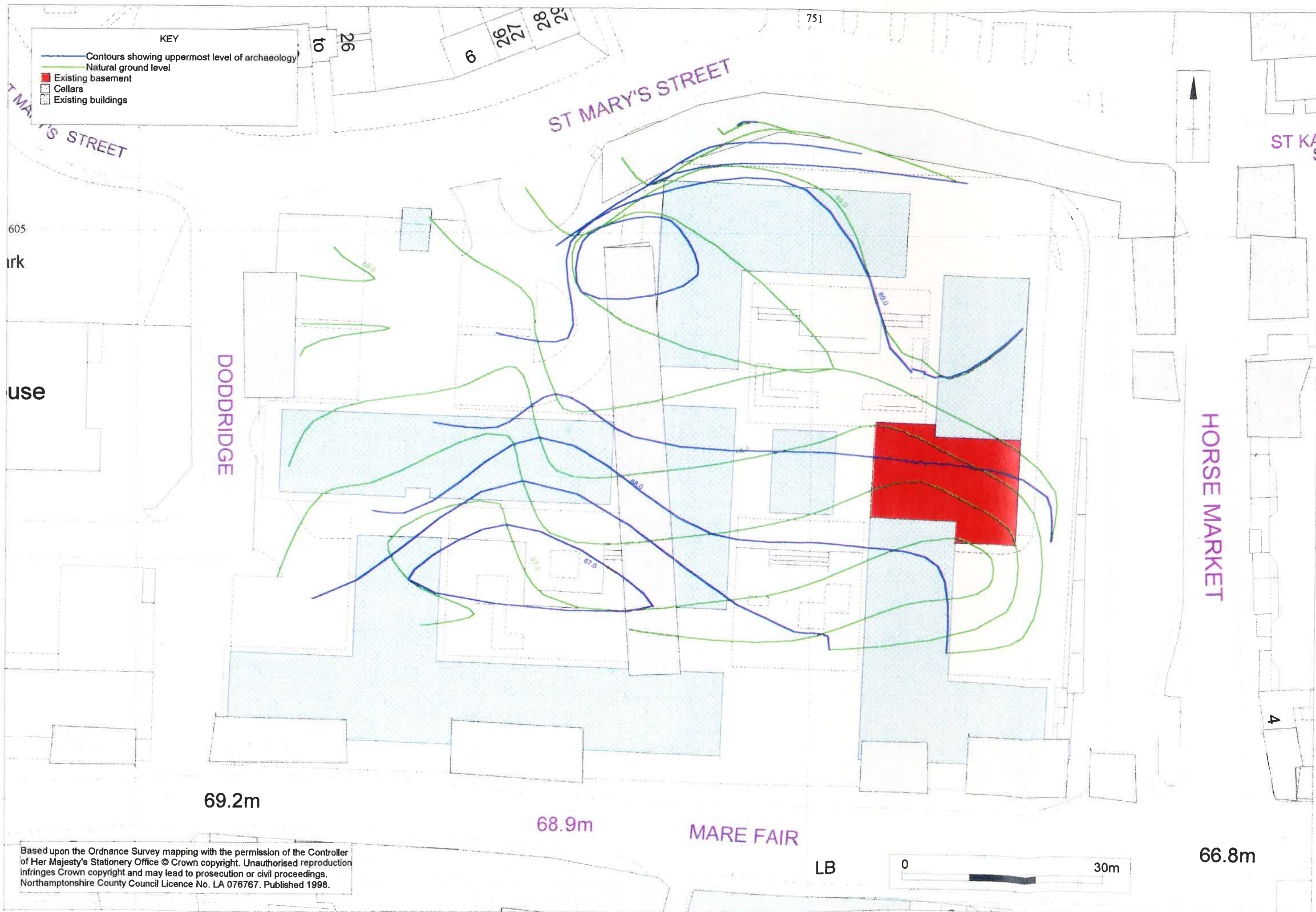


Fig. 8



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**Northamptonshire
County Council**
Planning and Transportation
Services

Northamptonshire Archaeology
2 Bolton House Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 9BE

Tel Northampton 700493/4
Fax Northampton 702822

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