



**Archaeological Programme of Work undertaken at Priors
Street Hospital, Carmarthen - Area A**

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Cover Photograph: The mid 19th century frontage of the Priory Street Infirmary, Carmarthen

Archaeological Programme of Work undertaken at Priory Street Hospital, Carmarthen - Area A

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Border Archaeology was commissioned by Mr Dorian Davies of Plas Cwrt Hir Carmarthen to conduct a further programme of archaeological works on land formerly the Priory Street Infirmary (NGR SN 4170 2027). The agents for the programme of works were Keith R. Pearce Chartered Quantity Surveyors.
- 1.2 This programme follows on from previous work undertaken on the site. The site, having been divided into four sections, this programme is concerned with Area A which is located at the far eastern end of the site. The programme follows civil engineering impact by the developer, in the form of footing trenches, on potentially significant remains within this area.
- 1.3 The purpose of this limited programme was to assess the nature of any archaeological remains and to indicate any mitigation requirements. It was initially considered by Cambria Archaeology that this development had significant archaeological implications and that archaeological remains - in particular, Roman deposits, features and structures - were present.
- 1.4 This archaeological programme required stringent on-site procedures that complied with present Health and Safety standards set by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
- 1.5 A copy of this report will be submitted to Mr Doran Davis and Cambria Archaeology. Further copies will be deposited with the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The programme of archaeological work commenced on the 8th January 2002 and was completed to the 11th January 2002.

2.1 GEOLOGY

- 2.2 The drift geology in the southern and eastern parts of Carmarthen relates to riverine deposition, what the SSE&W (1983) refer to as a TEME 561b. Generally, these soils consist of light, yellow-brown, deep, stoneless, permeable silty soils. Some soils are variably affected by ground water. Naturally lain gravely subsoils provide a sub-base for urban deposits.
- 2.3 Concerning soils exposed in a number of recently excavated water utility trenches (along The Esplanade), many show evidence of severe disturbance, mainly due to previous pipe-laying and maintenance activity. Despite the disturbance, the profiles expose mainly gravely soil that contains small rounded stones, indicative of riverine terracing or periglacially laid deposits. Due to the fact that the Afon Tywi flows within 30m of the north-eastern section of The Esplanade, it is more than probable that the gravels relate to post-glacial riverine activity and/or are the result of earlier glacial till deposition (forming a moraine plateau).
- 2.4 Identical soil profiles recognised by Border Archaeology were also recorded in a bore-hole survey undertaken by Integral Geotechnique Ltd (Bristol). This survey undertook four bore holes which were located across the rear of the site. Bore hole depths extended to approximately 3.5m below the (then) existing level. In Bore hole 1, four contrasting deposits were recorded. For the sake of this report these will be referred to as BH 001 - BH 004. Bore hole 1, the uppermost deposit consisted of 'fill'; comprising of 'soft compressible moderately to very organic grey black very gravelly silt/clay including fine black and slate fragments, medium coal and brick and gravel to cobble size mudstones, grading to brown moderately gravelly clayey silt'. This deposit measured approximately 1m in thickness and possibly represents Border Archaeology's context (001). Border Archaeology's context (004) is represented as colluvium¹, which lies approximately 1.5m below the (then) existing level. The survey report describes this (significant) deposit as a soft-to-loose, brown-to-yellow, gravelly silty clay or sandy-silt.
- 2.5 Underlying the 'fill' and the 'colluvium', and extending a further 2m below the existing ground level, are extensive 'sand and gravels' (located between 12m and 14.5m AOD). These deposits form part of the glacial terraces which run through most of Old Carmarthen.

3.1 A BRIEF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

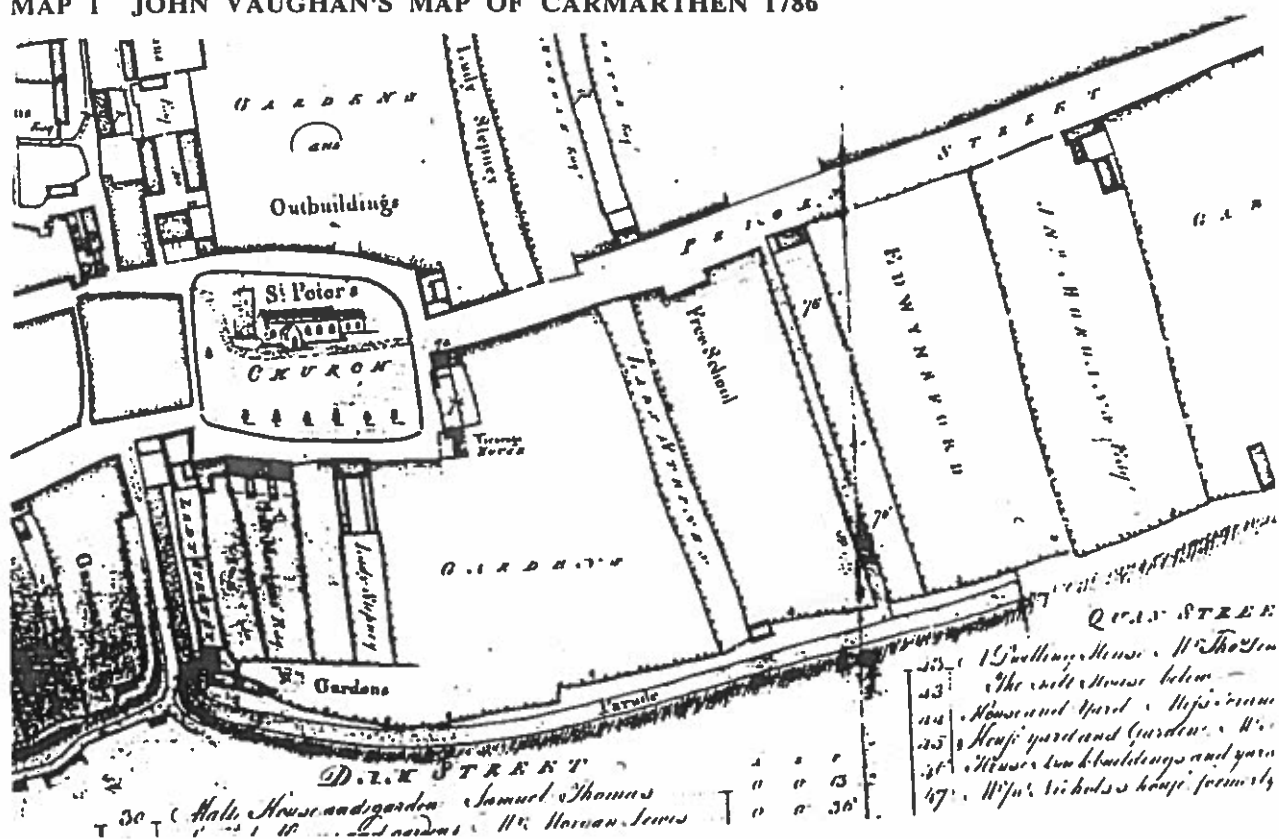
- 3.2 Border Archaeology has previously undertaken a brief desk-based assessment of the site (BA 2001/11 GHN). It should be noted that nationally important sites (SAMs) lie within Old Carmarthen, to include areas that incorporate Morfa Lane (to the west of the Castle [County Hall]), north of Park Hall, east of the Amphitheatre (PRN 31) and The Esplanade. In addition to nationally important sites, there are a number of sites that can be considered of regional and local importance.
- 3.3 The Roman and old Medieval town of Carmarthen is located on a substantial [peri-glacial] moraine plateau on the northern side of the Afon Tywi. The Roman town, known as *Moridunum Demetarum*, and associated fort are located beneath what is referred to as 'Old Carmarthen' (Grid Ref. SN 4120).

¹ weathered material, in this case periglacial in form - transported by gravity (i.e. slope material).
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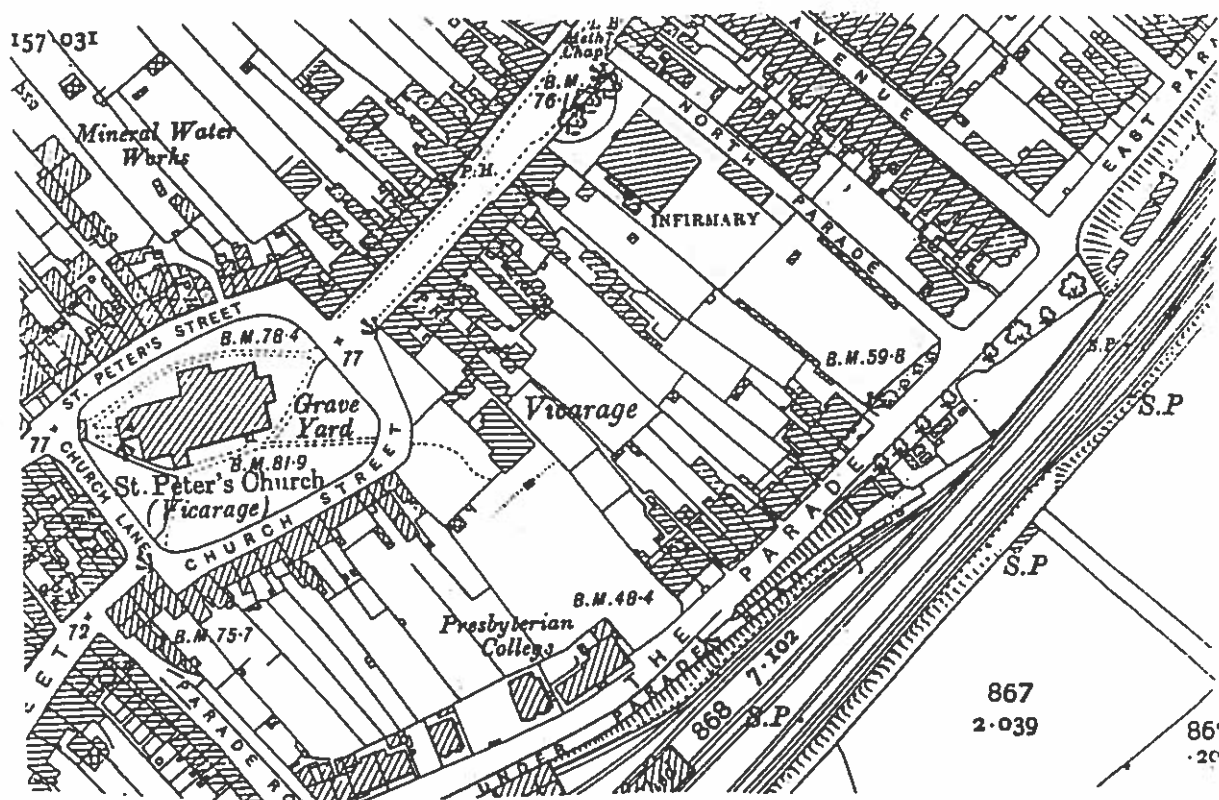
- 3.4 The Roman town of *Moridunum* was of a considerable size, encompassing an area of between 5.7 and 6.1ha. It is more than probable that the town layout is built on a centralised grid system. Wachter has suggested that parts of the present Old Town road layout delineate previous Roman thoroughfares (1981:390). However, according to James (forthcoming: 16), and, more importantly, archaeological investigations around SN41452038 (PRN 34) [between Priory Street and Richmond Terrace], the layout is different. A Roman road surface uncovered in 1923, west of North Parade (PRN 21) and a road referred to as [Roman] Lammas Street, ran through the middle of the town and north of the fort. The town's grid system appears to be more symmetrical (see James' Plan 1,6, forthcoming). Associated with the grid system is the formal layout of civic, commercial and domestic buildings. Extensive research on this aspect of the town is covered within the forthcoming volume on the 'Excavations of Carmarthen' by James. It should be noted that *Moridunum* is probably similar in layout to other Roman towns in the west and north of Britain. This being the case, the more prestigious civic buildings would have been located along, or just off, the main street - [Roman] Lammas Street. Therefore, land either side of Priory Street, and within the confines of the Roman town, is archaeologically highly sensitive - for example the northern extents of North Parade, The Avenue, Peniel Street, land north of Priory Street, St Peter's Car Park and land around Church Street. One should also not ignore land around the Amphitheatre and the southern slopes of Park Hall.
- 3.5 In order to obtain a better understanding of the site, six maps were consulted.² The first was John Vaughan's Street Plan of 1786 (**Map 1**). The site is incorporated into land which is described as 'Free School'. This land later became occupied by the Carmarthen Grammar School. The boundaries are roughly similar to the present day boundary of the Priory Hospital. North Parade, located to the east of the site, is present but unnamed. Land immediately to the west of the site was owned by Lady Stepney. It appears that no buildings were present on the site during the latter part of the 18th century. The 1886 Ordnance Survey shows the existing Priory Street Infirmary which comprises the rectangular building at the Priory Street end (still standing). To the rear of this building, and incorporating Areas A-D, the land use consists of open ground. The 1906 Ordnance Survey map shows little change to the site (**Map 2**). Two rectangular greenhouses and a small shed are the only additions. The rear area of the site may have been utilised as a walled garden.
- 3.6 By 1938, the Ordnance Survey map shows significant additions to the rear of the original hospital building in the form of a long rectangular building (now demolished) which was constructed along the north-eastern boundary. More development had occurred to the rear of the site by 1969.

² Border Archaeology would like to thank Mr Terry Wells of the Carmarthenshire County Record Office for providing maps and information concerning this site.
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MAP 1 JOHN VAUGHAN'S MAP OF CARMARTHEN 1786



MAP 2 ORDNANCE SURVEY 1906 (SCALE 1:2500)



4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The aim of the programme of archaeological work was to locate and record any archaeological remains revealed during the course of the ground works phase of the development (Area A). It was considered that this area of the site required a programme of work in order to assess and locate deposits, features and structures which had been impacted by the developer.
- 4.2 All archaeology with Area A was recorded including those features and structures which had been partially or wholly damaged by the developer during archaeologically unsupervised ground works (the excavation and laying of footings).
- 4.3 For the limited desk-based assessment only secondary documentary sources, including cartographic and pictorial records, were used to provide an overview of the site. Sources of cultural heritage information were obtained from the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, SA19 6AF and Carmarthenshire County Records Office.
- 4.4 Additional information was taken from the as-yet-unpublished draft 'Excavations in Roman Carmarthen 1978-1992' by Heather James (supplied with kind permission by Cambria Archaeology). Cultural Heritage information focused upon The Parade, North Parade, The Avenue and Priory Street.
- 4.5 All spoil was scanned for artefacts, which were recorded and will later be archived.
- 4.6 The depth and complexity of deposits across the whole site was assessed. Written and photographic records of all machine-excavated areas were made in accordance with best archaeological practice. Records included an overall plan of the site (Figure 1).

5.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROGRAMME OF WORK

- 5.1 Archaeological deposits on the site had been heavily impacted by the laying of concrete foundation trenches within the southern-end of the site (Context [110]). The concrete foundations were up to 0.40m in thickness, with most of this impacting below the level that had been observed during the programme of work by Border Archaeology in late 2001. The included site plan details the area of the foundation trenches (Figure 1). Several areas of the site had been badly damaged by the excavation and laying of these trench footings. This included the south-eastern part of the site, where up to 0.60m of deposits had been removed below the level of archaeological deposits uncovered during the earlier watching brief by Border Archaeology (observed 14th November 2001). Several features recorded during this work had been badly damaged (Features 12 and 13). Also in the south-western and southern area of the site two potential stone features had been totally excavated without archaeological supervision. The area at the southern-end of the site had been unexcavated (lying south-east of Features 12 and 13). However, building debris had been dumped onto this area and then compacted into the ground (see Figure 1).
- 5.2 Located between the newly-laid foundation footings were areas or baulks of undisturbed archaeological deposits upon which were dumped spoil and building debris from elsewhere on the site [100]. For the purposes of this report, each

baulk of spoil and undisturbed deposits was numbered. Descriptions of each baulk and NGR number are given below.

- 5.3 Baulk 1 (NGR SN 41727 20242)
Up to 0.40m of undisturbed deposits remained in this baulk, beneath up to 0.50m of spoil and building debris. Two deposits were visible within this undisturbed baulk: Context [101], a yellowy orange clayey soil overlying a dark brown silty clay loam [102]. No archaeological features were visible in these contexts.
- 5.4 Baulk 2 (NGR SN 41731 20236)
Undisturbed deposits were only visible in the west-facing section. The remaining part of the baulk had been stripped to the layer of the concrete trenching. Between 0.05 – 0.30m of undisturbed deposits were visible underlying up to 0.50m of backfill. Within this, only one context was visible, a brown silty clay loam [102]. No archaeological remains were visible within this context.
- 5.5 Baulk 3 (NGR SN 41734 20235)
Between 0.02 – 0.05m of undisturbed deposits were visible within this baulk. Lying above these deposits was up to 0.45m of spoil and building debris that were left by the building contractor. One context was visible within the undisturbed deposits, a brown silty clay loam [102]. No archaeological remains were visible in this context.
- 5.6 Baulk 4 (NGR SN 41731 20238)
Undisturbed deposits were only visible in the south-facing section, of which up to 0.80m of re-deposited building debris and spoil overlay 0.10 – 0.20m of undisturbed material. This material consisted of one context, a brown silty clay loam [102]. The north-facing section consisted entirely of the concrete foundation remnants of the old hospital building [109]. No significant archaeology was visible within Context [102].
- 5.7 Baulk 5 (NGR SN 41736 20239)
The majority of deposits within this baulk were composed of concrete foundations from the old hospital building [109]. These foundations underlie up to 0.30m of spoil and building debris. Only the south-facing section of the baulk had any undisturbed deposits, with 0.15 – 0.25m of a brown silty clay loam deposit [102] visible beneath the spoil. No archaeology was visible within this context.
- 5.8 Baulk 6 (NGR SN 41741 20242)
In the south facing section, hospital foundations [109] were still visible extending below the line of concrete foundations installed by the contractor [110]. In the east- and north- facing sections there were deposits that had already been heavily impacted by the construction of the hospital, featuring loosely-compacted brown silty clay loam with large quantities of Post-Medieval frogged and unfrogged brick, tile and metal [102]. No significant archaeology was visible within these heavily disturbed deposits.
- 5.9 Baulk 7 (NGR SN 41747 20243)
The north- and west-facing sections contained up to 0.30m of undisturbed deposits (above the height of the new concrete foundations). Two contexts were visible within this undisturbed material. Context [102], a brown silty clay loam overlay [103] (recorded previously as [004]), an orangey-brown colluvial clay loam. Context [102] contained frequent occurrences of Roman ceramic building material (CBM) towards the northern-end of the baulk. This material appears to have been severely disturbed at the edge of the baulk, where mechanical

excavators have stripped back the soil to lay the foundation trench. A small percentage of undisturbed material remains in the eastern-facing section of the baulk, comprising entirely of context [102]. At the southern end of the baulk, the ground seems to have been impacted less in terms of depth, than at the northern-end. Up to 0.50m of spoil and building debris had been heaped onto the undisturbed deposits.

5.10 Baulk 8 (NGR SN 41745 20259)

In the northern-facing section between 0.20 – 0.40m of undisturbed deposits were visible. These comprised two separate contexts, [102] a dark brown silty clay loam and [103]-(004), an orangey-brown colluvial clay loam. In Context [102] frequent occurrences of Roman ceramic building material (CBM) were visible. As with Baulk 7 these appear to have been severely disturbed at the edge of the baulk where mechanical excavators have stripped back the soil to lay the foundation trench. Along the east-, south- and west-facing sections, the remains of previously identified hospital cellarge were clearly visible [108], and it is unlikely that undisturbed deposits were damaged any further. Overlying these deposits was 0.30 – 0.40m of spoil and building debris.

5.11 Baulk 9 (NGR SN 41751 20249)

The north-facing section contained 0.30 – 0.40m of undisturbed deposits underlying 0.40 – 0.50m of spoil and building debris. The undisturbed deposits consisted entirely of one context, a brown silty clay loam [102]. This context contained frequent occurrences of Roman CBM that had been disturbed by the excavation of a concrete foundation trench. The other sections within this baulk were on top of original hospital cellarge [108].

5.12 Baulk 10 (NGR SN 41753 20245)

This baulk did not extend above the layer of the concrete foundations laid down by the contractor.

5.13 Three other features were located within the area of the brief. At NGR SN 41744 20255 was a potential pit feature containing a single context of brown silty clay loam [106] (within Cut [107]) with frequent inclusions of Roman CBM. This feature had been interpreted during earlier work as potentially related to kiln activity. The second feature was located at NGR SN 41743 20253. This feature was a concentration of scatters of Roman CBM. Both this and the former feature were visible at ground level during the earlier watching brief and were interpreted as being related to kiln activity. Finally, at NGR SN 41738 20247 was a potential pit feature [111]. Two contexts were visible within this feature; Context [112] a light brown silty clay loam overlay [113], a dark brown silty soil. Located within [109] were frequent occurrences of Roman CBM; also in [110] were charcoal flecking and flecks of degraded CBM material, some of which was potentially Roman.

6.0 SUMMARY

- 6.1 Area A contained deposits, features and structures which date from the Roman period and can be considered as archaeologically significant. This archaeology probably represents one of the industrial areas of Roman Carmarthen. Located within adjacent Area B was evidence of a kiln and associated foundations of a building.
- 6.2 The foundation/footings installed by E.N.S.D. Ltd. have impacted on a number of the archaeological features uncovered during the course of previous archaeological work on the site, particularly two features that were visible during the December 2001 watching brief/soil stripping. Examination of the work undertaken by E.N.S.D. Ltd. revealed that this phase of civil engineering exposed several potentially important archaeological features.

7.0 COPYRIGHT

- 7.1 Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

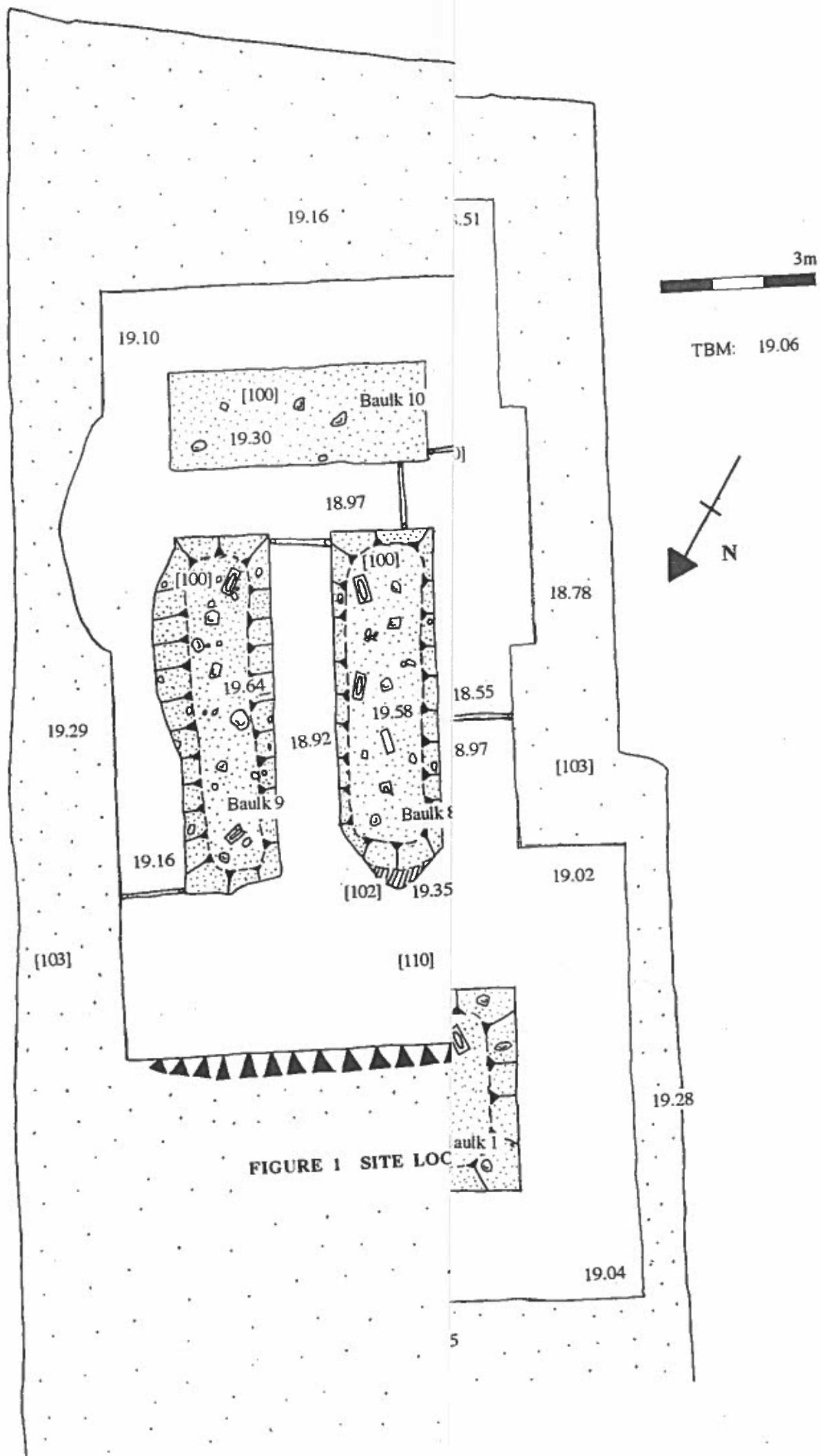


FIGURE 1 SITE LOC

PLATE 3 BAULKS 8 AND 9 LOOKING NORTH-EAST

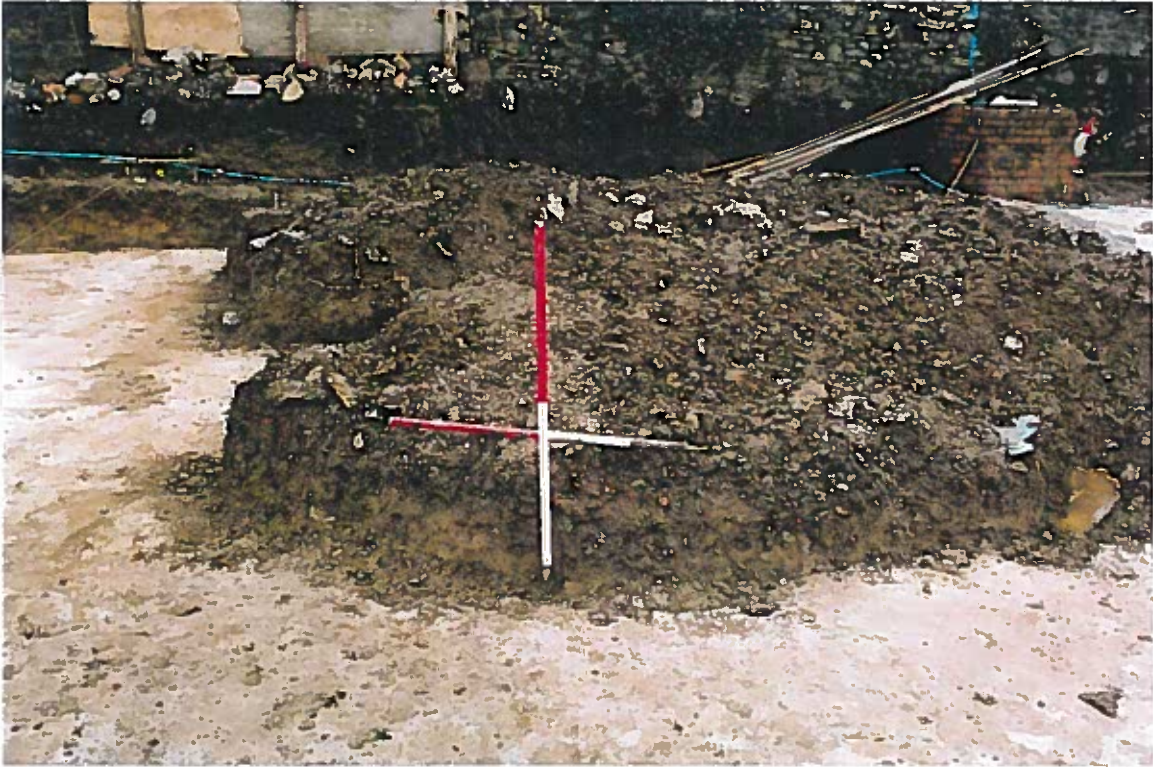


PLATE 4 NORTH-EASTERN SECTION - ADJACENT TO NORTH PARADE



PLATE 1 BAULK 6 LOOKING NORTH-EAST



PLATE 2 BAULKS 7, 8, 9 AND 10 LOOKING EAST

