

An archaeological excavation at 64-76 Hythe Hill, Colchester, in 1999

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Summary

This is the report on a limited programme of excavation on the site of a series of medieval and post-medieval properties on the Hythe Hill frontage, directly opposite St Leonard's Church. The investigation followed an evaluation in October 1999 (see pp 58-61). The site is 60m west of 79 Hythe Hill, where similar medieval and later buildings were excavated in 1994-95 (Brooks 2000). The investigation was conducted on the basis of a brief drawn up Martin Winter of Colchester Museums. The work was commissioned and funded by Tendring Construction Ltd.

The 1994-95 excavation provided an indication of the type of archaeological remains which might be expected on this site. With this in mind, a mitigation strategy was devised to protect and preserve as much of the archaeological strata as possible. This meant that the new buildings were erected on beams as high above the archaeological levels as possible, and archaeological excavation was only undertaken where the ground-beams intruded into the archaeological levels. The shape of the resulting excavation (as shown in plans in this report) was therefore a reflection of the shape of the new structures on the Hythe Hill frontage, and not of their medieval and later predecessors.

Small quantities of prehistoric flint and Roman building materials and pottery indicate prehistoric and Roman occupation in the area.

The principal activity was in the late medieval to early post-medieval periods (11th/12th-16th century), represented by a number of pits and post-holes (the latter possibly indicating a building). During the 17th century, the street frontage was built up and occupied by a series of timber-framed buildings, probably three properties. These buildings were set on mortared plinths with internal clay floors and gravelled yards to the rear. One of the buildings may have had a tiled floor. While these properties appear to have been domestic, there is evidence for two phases of industrial activity associated with one of them; the earlier phase of this is thought to be iron-working, probably black-smithing, and may represent a workshop fronting onto Hythe Hill.

The archaeological sequence is comparable to that from the 1994-95 excavation at the adjacent 79 Hythe Hill, though the main building development there is slightly earlier, dating from the 16th century (Brooks 2000). The medieval and later structures excavated at 64-76 Hythe Hill are numbers 197 to 201 in the Colchester Buildings numbers series.

Archaeological background

The Hythe area has been the main port for Colchester probably since the Norman period. Originally known as 'New Hythe', it seems to have superseded an earlier landing place at Old Heath (*Ealdeheth*) located closer to the mouth of the River Colne (CAR 1, 47 & fig 40). However, very little is known about the early development of the Hythe as a port, and the physical remains of medieval waterfronts or port facilities have not yet been identified. There is the possibility of an earlier port here in the Roman period. A Roman road from the direction of Mistley can be traced to within half-a-mile of the Hythe, suggesting a possible

crossing-point on the river close to the bottom of Hythe Hill, though to date there is only limited evidence for Roman occupation in the Hythe area, consisting of some pottery and building materials (section 4, below; Brooks 2000).

The excavation described here was located a short distance (approximately 250m) uphill from the river, opposite the parish church of St Leonard's (Fig 1). There was a church here from at least AD 1237, but it is thought that its origins are probably much earlier (CAR 1, 47), and the area around it is likely to have been a focus for early occupation. Most of the surviving fabric is of the 14th-15th century (Rodwell & Rodwell 1977, 36). The excavation in 1994-95 just to the east of the present site (Fig 1) produced some finds of Anglo-Saxon and medieval date, though the main sequence of occupation with structural remains dated from the 15th or 16th century onwards (Brooks 2000). A photograph of the site road frontage taken in the 1940s (Fig 2) shows a number of buildings occupying the area which can be related to the property boundaries on the 1896 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. However, by the late 1960s, these had been cleared away to make a car park for Paxman's Engineering Works. The archaeological evaluation of the site by CAT in April 1999 showed surviving remains of early post-medieval buildings occupying the road frontage (pp 58-61; CAT Archive Report 36).

The archaeological sequence

The lines of the new footings were laid out by the contractors, and the modern deposits in the tops of these were machined out under archaeological supervision. The trenches were then excavated by hand. The earlier evaluation trench located in the centre of these footings was cleaned, though not excavated further except where the new footings crossed it. Each of the footing trenches was approximately 0.5m in width, which restricted the maximum depth of hand excavation to about 1.0m.

Though the excavation of the footings produced clear archaeological sequences, the limited area of exploration of the archaeology as a whole means that the identification of separate buildings and details of their phasing is not always clear.

Site phasing

The site is divided into periods and phases within periods, based on finds dating and stratigraphic sequences combined with documentary evidence from maps and photographs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Based on the documentary evidence, three properties have been identified. Due to the limited nature of the excavation, the Period 2 phasing is applied to the archaeological sequence for individual buildings within each plot and the phase numbers do not imply contemporary development between the properties. The site phasing is as follows:

Period 1	11th/12th to 16th century – topsoil and pits		
Period 2	17th to mid 20th century – three plots with buildings (Buildings 197-201)		
	Plot 1	Plot 2	Plot 3
	Phase 2a (Building 197)	Phase 2a (Building 198)	Phase 2a (Building 199)
	Phase 2b (Buildings 197 & 201)	Phase 2b (Building 198)	
	Phase 2c (Building 198)		

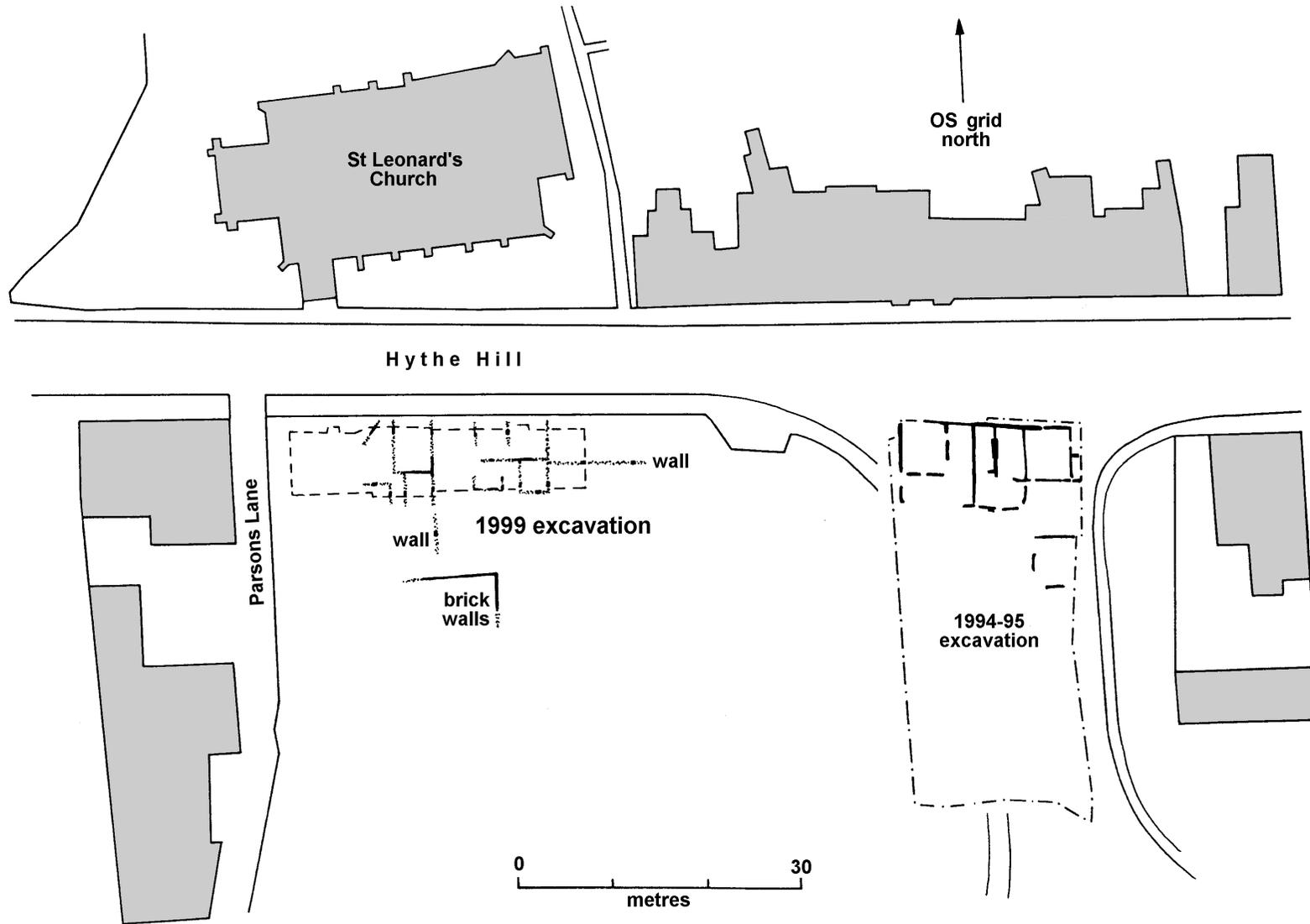


Fig 1 Site location. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 100039294 2004.



Fig 2 South side of Hythe Hill street frontage opposite St Leonard's Church in the 1940s. Photograph by Horace Poulter of Colchester Museums. Photograph copyright Colchester Museums.

late Period 2	Phase 2c (Building 201)	Phase 2d (Building 198)	Phase 2b (Building ?199)
Period 3	mid to late 20th century, c 1960-present – demolition on all three plots for car park		

Pre-Period 1: prehistoric and Roman

Although no contexts pre-date Period 1, there were earlier finds of flints and Roman material (section 4 below). The flints consist primarily of a few waste flakes of indeterminate date, and the Roman finds comprised nine grey ware sherds, a fragment of red painted wall-plaster, and a small quantity of tile and septaria fragments.

Period 1: 11th/12th to 16th century

The earliest identifiable activity on the site is represented by a soil layer, a number of large pits, and a possible post-built building or structure at the east end of the site (Fig 5). These contexts are dated by small amounts of pottery. The earliest is of 11th- to 12th-century date, though most are dated to the 12th/13th to 14th century, and a few sherds are of 15th-century date. A single coin from the site (although unstratified) is of Period 1; this is an Edward I farthing struck in the early 1280s (p 41).

The early soil layer

Across almost the whole site area, and sealing the natural clay subsoil, there was a blanket of clay-loam soil (Layer or L81) which varied in thickness but was frequently between 0.3m and

0.5m deep. The greater surviving depths were recorded on the south of the excavation area, suggesting that the ground surface may originally have sloped down in that direction (see sections Figs 11-13). The soil appeared to be a generally undifferentiated brown sandy clay loam, which frequently had a faint greenish hue, presumably from the incorporation of decayed organic matter. It contained small quantities of pottery of 12th- to 13th-/14th-century date, with a few sherds dated to the 15th century, and it is presumed to represent the accumulation of a former, possibly cultivated soil over the site area.

The early pits

Pits were located in almost all of the areas where the early soil layer was stripped to natural, which suggests that they extended over most or all of the excavation area (Fig 5). Though some were intercut, the fills were of slightly greenish or brown sandy-clay loam which was indistinguishable from the early soil layer, and generally it was not possible to recognise relationships between them or from what height they had been cut. However, the nature of the fills indicates that they probably post-date the formation of the soil layer L81. The narrow trenches prevented full excavation of many of the pits but, where significant portions of them were examined (mostly on the east end and north side of the site), they contained small quantities of pottery dated to the late 12th-13th/ 14th century. One pit (Feature or F151) contained pottery dated to the 15th to 16th century. The only significant individual find was a stone spindlewhorl of late Saxon to early medieval date from pit F147 (Fig 16.1). The small amount of material in the pits suggests that they were not primarily intended



Fig 3 Same view as Figure 2 but in 1999.

for rubbish-disposal. As the subsoil is clay, it seems likely that at least the largest examples may have been used for clay extraction.

Features on the eastern area of the site suggest the possible remains of a building fronting onto Hythe Hill (Fig 5). A concentration of small features here (F152-F153, F158-F159, F163-F164, F167-F168 & F150) cut into natural and extend at least to the southern limit of the excavated area. These represent either small pits or post-holes pre-dating contexts of Period 2, though their relationship to the soil layer L81 was not clear. The finds from these features consisted of a small quantity of sherds of 11th- to 12th-century date from F150 and of 12th- to 14th-century date from F167. Just to the west of the possible building was what appeared to be a remnant area of metallised surfacing which may be associated with it. This consisted of cobbles (L128) covered by a slightly more extensive layer of gravel (L127) which may be resurfacing. This had been cut on its west side by one pit (F151), though possible remnants of the cobble surface appeared to seal one of the other pits (F166).

Period 2: 17th to mid-20th century

A number of mortared plinths representing the wall lines of buildings were located on the central and eastern parts of the excavation (Fig 4B). As the extent of the excavation was limited, and as the survival of the building remains was patchy within the excavated areas due to later intrusive features, no clear overall building plans could be recovered. Also the frontage wall line of these buildings was not located as it lay beyond the north edge of the excavation area, probably approximating to the south side of

the modern pavement. However, buildings and property boundaries could be ascertained, based on the plan of surviving lengths of wall on the site, in conjunction with the 1896 1st edition Ordnance Survey map and a photograph of the site frontage taken in the 1940s (Fig 2). These enable three separate areas to be traced on the ground (Fig 4). As property boundaries are usually very durable this allows further, though slightly speculative interpretation of the nature of the early building remains, which would not be possible based on the archaeology alone. In Fig 4, the area of the three plots is represented by the Victorian terraced houses (Building 201) east of the corner of Parsons Lane (Plot 1), the large jettied building (Building 198) in the centre of the photograph (Plot 2), and the timbered building (Building ?199, possibly re-faced in the 18th-19th centuries; pers comm David Stenning) closest to the viewer (Plot 3).

The plinths on which the earliest buildings were constructed consisted mostly of mortared, water-worn flint cobbles, though some contained occasional peg-tiles and rare brick pieces. Some of the plinths were built directly on the top of existing surfaces, probably using shuttering as their sides were generally smooth and material deposited to either side of them was generally of different character. Some sections were built in construction cuts; they were mostly about 0.25m-0.3m wide, and between about 0.15m and 0.2m in depth, though two were up to 0.35m deep. Internal floors were of clay: either brown clay loam, up to 20cm thick and containing some fragments of building materials, or thin layers of cleaner brownish-yellow clay which had often been patched or partly resurfaced. Areas around the buildings had

metalled surfaces of gravel or cobbles with some peg-tile fragments. The earliest phase of the buildings cannot be dated closely as, while they seal Period 1 contexts, only very small quantities of finds were associated with them, most of which were residual. However, the limited dating evidence from the site suggests that the earliest building phase is no earlier than the 15th-16th century. This can be summarised as follows:

Plot 1	
Building 197	Period 1 soil (L81) sealed by one of the floors contained pottery dated to the 15th century
Building 200	one of the wall plinths (F107) sealed a layer which was also sealed by one of the wall plinths (F108) of Building 197
Plot 2	
Building 198	one of the Period 1 pits (F151) sealed by the earliest floor-level contained pottery dated to the 15th-16th century, and material accumulating on one of the early yard surfaces (L87) associated with the building is dated to the 15th-16th century
Plot 3	
Building 199	the one remaining plinth from this building (F120) appeared to be sealed by gravel surfaces associated with Phase 2a of Building 198

In the summary of the archaeology which follows, the Period 2 phasing is applied to the archaeological sequence for individual buildings within each of the postulated plots and the phase numbers do not imply contemporary development between the properties.

Plot 1: Buildings 197, 200 and 201

This plot is defined by Parsons Lane to the west and the boundary of Plot 2 to the east. By the late 19th century, a row of four terraced brick-built cottages (Building 201) occupied this plot (Fig 2).

Phase 2a: Building 197

The area closer to the centre of the site preserved several plinths (F1, F74, F2 & F83) which define a building fronting onto Hythe Hill. The party wall (F2/F83) suggests that Building 197 and Building 198 (Plot 2) are contemporary (Fig 6). Between the wall plinths, the area of the building was floored with thick clay loam containing some fragmented building materials (L2 & L53).

To the south of the building, in the angle formed by the wall plinths F1 and F113, there was an uneven spread of cobbles with some peg-tile (L100), possibly an external surface such as a yard or path (Fig 6 & Fig 14 section). However, there was no indication of any occupation debris on top of the cobble spread, which was patchy and did not appear to have been very extensive; it may represent dumped building materials used as make-up or to consolidate the soil surface. Further to the west, two small depressions or cuts also contained a similar mix of cobbles and peg-tile pieces (F17 & F91; Fig 6), of which one (F91) is certainly of this phase. These could also represent either remnants of a metalled surface, consolidation or dumping, or possibly wall- or post-bases.

Phase 2b: Building 197 and Building 200

A room was added to the rear of Building 197 and formed by the construction of a new wall plinth F108 to the west of the wall line F113 (Fig 7). This plinth was built on top of a thick layer of clay-

loam make-up (L69) deposited over the earlier cobble spread (Fig 14 section). Bricks from the top of F108 are dated to the 16th-17th century. The room itself was floored with thick clay loam (L59 & L69) containing some fragments of building material.

To the south-west of Building 197, two lengths of wall plinth (F89 & F107) form the corner of what appears to be a separate building (Building 200); these sealed the make-up layer L69 and so can be assigned to Phase 2b (Fig 7 & Fig 14 section). The observed sections of both plinths were entirely of mortared, water-worn cobbles, which in places protruded from the edges, and there were sloping construction cuts on either one or both sides. There were no traces of any surviving floor-levels within this building.

The area between Building 197 and Building 200 was metalled over with cobbles and some peg-tile fragments (L60) forming what was probably a yard surface (Fig 7), and a thin greenish brown layer containing numerous oyster shell fragments accumulated on it. The yard appeared to be bounded on its west side by a wall (F48) which ran obliquely away from the buildings and the road frontage (Fig 7). This fragment of wall differed from the other plinth walls on the site as it contained a greater mix of building materials, which included mortar lumps. It was not mortared, rather being bound together with clay, and possibly represents the base of a free-standing boundary wall.

Phase 2c: Building 201 (Fig 9)

The buildings on Plot 1 (Building 197 and Building 200) were demolished and replaced with a row of Victorian brick-built terraced houses (Building 201) which conform with the building outlines shown for this plot on the 1848 Monson and 1896 1st edition 1:500 Ordnance Survey maps. At the rear of Building 201, a larger peg-tile-filled pit (F110) was located inside the former rear wing of Building 197. This pit contained pottery of 18th- to 19th-century date, and is also assumed to be a soakaway, with the tiles filling the pit probably deriving from roof demolition.

Plot 2: Building 198

In the 1930s, this plot was occupied by a timber jettied building (Fig 4). The building can be dated to the 17th century (possibly between 1620 and 1670; pers comm David Stenning, Essex County Council Historic Buildings Section), and it is probably the surviving original building (Building 198). By the time of the photograph, this building had been subdivided into three properties with a through-passage near the western end. These can be traced on the 1896 1st edition 1:500 Ordnance Survey map defining the original plot, and can be related to the fragmented wall remains excavated on the site (Fig 2 & Fig 6). This building almost certainly defines an early plot, the boundaries of which are the wall lines F2, F83 and F113 to the west and F144 to the east. These frame a plot 12.1m (39.7 feet) in length, approximating to a property division of 40 feet. As there are precedents for property units of this length in Colchester from the late medieval period (Colchester Buildings 75 and 76; CAR 3, 189-204), then this may form an early or original property division on the Hythe Hill frontage. This plot dominates most of the site area containing surviving structural remains although, apart from the western plot boundary, the remains of walls from the early phases of this building were only located on southern areas of the site. It should be noted that due to the limited nature of the excavation, the remains gathered under each of the Period 2 phases for plots or areas of individual buildings are not necessarily contemporary; they are broadly grouped on the basis of a similar stratigraphical phasing for each area.

Phase 2a (Fig 6)

At the western end of the plot, close to the Hythe Hill frontage, a length of the available excavation area had been entirely removed by a modern pipe-trench (F18). The southern part of the excavation area had also seen extensive modern disturbance.

However, the sections of the evaluation trench close to the wall F2 contained at least two occupation surfaces relating to this building (Fig 15,+ section 7); the lower surface (L122), presumably of this phase, was formed of clay. This did not appear to extend into the area of the southern footing trench (though clay flooring extended across the area of the evaluation trench), and so the rear of this part of the building must have been located between the evaluation trench and the footing. The early floor is possibly equivalent to an area of clay-loam floor (L43, L48 & L62) close to the road frontage to the east which had slumped slightly into one of the Period 1 pits (F151; Fig 12 section). The western part of this floor area had been cut away by the modern pipe-trench, and close to this were areas of scorching from a fire or hearth set on or above it (L99). To the east of these hearths was a linear patch of mortar and peg-tile fragments (F84) in which was a line of three stake holes (F92, F93 & F94). This latter appears to represent the remains of an internal feature; this was either connected with the hearths or possibly represents a wall line. One of the stake holes (F94) contained a fragment of medieval floor-tile. Approximately 4m east of this feature were a small pit or post-hole (F142) and a stake hole (F143) which probably belong to this phase, though the only certain dating for them is that they are cut into the Period 1 soil and sealed by later clay floors within Building 198.

In relation to the earliest clay floor-levels in the western part of the building, the early surfaces on the eastern side were at a lower level by approximately 0.3m (Fig 12 section), and the length of the building must have required that it was partly terraced into the slope. In the area close to the road frontage there was a thin metalised gravel surface (L96) in which was set a clay hearth or oven (F138). The hearth, which extended beyond the section edge, was built of clay; occasional small fragments of very degraded iron or smudges of iron oxide were noted in the gravel surface and are probably associated with it, suggesting industrial activity. To the west of the hearth base there was a small shallow pit (F137). Though no wall lines were located in this area, the change in levels indicates that there was a wall line just to the west, in an area later occupied by several brick walls (Period 3 and Period 4) which would have removed all trace of any earlier walls. To the east, the plot boundary is also marked by the location of a later brick wall (F23). A feature seen only in section (F172), sealed by clay floors of Phase 2c, appeared to be structural (being comprised of stone, burnt daub and septaria). This feature was possibly a wall or hearth base, and may define the southern limit of the room (Fig 15 section 5).

To the rear of the east end of the plot, three wall plinths were located on the southern edge of the site (F144, F121 & F157), though the eastern plinth (F144) had been almost completely cut away in the area of the excavation trench. These plinths indicate a wing at the rear of the property. The floor of this was surfaced with clay loam (L119), on top of which was a thin dark occupation deposit (L113; Fig 13 section). The room appeared to extend to the area of the possible wall base F172. Outside the rear of the building was a metalised yard surface which consisted of small cobbles or stone with some peg-tile fragments (L92 & L125; Fig 13 section). This was covered with a deposit of oyster shells (L87) which were not crushed or broken, suggesting that they may have accumulated as a midden; pottery from this layer is dated to the 15th-16th century. Gravel was later deposited over the oyster shell layer, forming a new yard surface (L86).

Phase 2b (Fig 7)

In the central western part of the building, a clay floor (L48) was laid in which were the remains of a tile-based hearth (F68). This was positioned relative to the line of the west side of the former structural feature base F84, the traces of which were sealed by the new floor surface. The hearth base was of red rectangular tiles or thin bricks (230mm x 115mm x 35mm), which remained

whole *in situ* but which had been degraded by the heat to the point of crumbling to fragments when disturbed.

In the east part of the building close to the road frontage, the gravel floor L96 was covered with clay (L77), and set in this were the poorly-preserved remains of a small brick-built structure (F35) which appears to have been a hearth. The hearth was at a slight angle to the other building remains, and it extended as far as the north section edge as a thin mortar foundation with faint brick impressions. The south end formed a right-angle and was more substantial, being set into a large construction cut or pit. Some remaining brick pieces were dated to the 16th-17th century. In the angle formed by the hearth walls there were a few upright peg-tiles along the east edge, and a clay surface (L23) which had a patchy appearance, possibly being made from slightly mixed redeposited material. Part of this surface near the north section had been scorched red-brown (F96). Traces of mortar (L22) on the clay surface appeared to be of the same material as had been used in F35 and may indicate that it originally had a constructed mortar base which had later been almost entirely removed. To the east of this feature were some thin banded layers (L17) forming a series of surfaces of alternate gritty black coal dust with sand and pale brown/whitish sandy loam, in total up to 0.12m thick (Fig 12 section). These appeared to have been deposited as flows of material, possibly carried by water. The stratigraphic relationships of this material to the hearth structure F35 suggest that it was directly related to it and represents a repetitive use or process, probably industrial.

The west wall of the projecting wing resting on the Phase 2a plinth (F157) must have been demolished, as a new wall plinth (F156), which contained brick dated as 16th-17th century, was built directly on top of the old one (Fig 13 section). The new plinth appeared to have a construction trench on its west side, and this cut through a layer of soft pale yellow-brown mortar (L84) which may represent demolition material; however, the feature probably represents a localised disturbance as otherwise the top of the plinth would have been below ground-level. The floor was raised, with a thick new clay surface (L98). A number of fragments of a mortared cobble-built wall (F63, F122 & F145) probably represent the remains of a second small wing or extension which was added at the rear of the property and which was cut through the earlier metalised yard surfacing of Phase 2a (Fig 13 section). Almost all of the interior area of this wing available to the excavation had been cut away by a later pit.

Phase 2c (Fig 8)

The west wall of the western wing room (F156) was replaced with a new wall (F119), immediately on its east side and partly overlying it (Fig 13 section). This wall line corresponds with part of a new set of plinths (F5 & F6) constructed entirely from mortared cobbles. Layers probably representing demolition had been used as make-up inside the area of the wing; the lower of these contained brick, peg-tile and mortar (L91), and above was a layer of soft white lime mortar (L90). To the west of the new wall, a layer of pale yellow-brown mortar (L84) is probably also part of this demolition. The western rear wing or extension was demolished and much of the remains of its plinths were cut away by a large pit (F162).

Towards the road frontage was a length of brick wall (F39), the bricks from which are dated to the 16th-17th century. The south end of the wall had been cut away by a later Period 3 wall (Fig 12 section). On the east side of this feature and butting against it was a neatly laid base of bricks (F28) also dated as 16th-17th century. The base was one brick thick, laid on demolition material (L19) probably deriving from the Phase 2b hearth F35, and with traces of burning on its surface. These brick features probably represent parts of a chimney base. This would correspond with the location of the nearer of the two chimney-stacks visible above the roof of Building 198 in Figure 2. At some point the brick base

had been covered over and raised with rubble (F27), which was carefully laid rather than just being rubble dump (Fig 12 section), and brick and pottery from this rubble are dated to the 15th-16th century. A large soakaway or possibly a well (F3), lined with bricks dated to the 16th-17th century, was placed within the area of the former wing (F63, F122 & F145). At the east end of the building, set against the top of the west side of the wall, plinth F2 and a probable tile hearth with a flagstone floor area to its east was recorded in section (Fig 15 section 7). This would approximately correspond with the location of the further of the two chimney-stacks visible above the roof of Building 198 in Figure 2. Also it is possible that the angled wall to the east of Building 197 is contemporary with this phase, as the bricks from it are dated to the 16th-17th and 17th-18th centuries.

Phase 2d (Fig 9)

A brick wall (F82) was inserted on the top of the presumed western boundary plinth (F83) of Building 198. Also possibly indicating major structural changes are two large, undated peg-tile-filled pits (F34 & F41). These cut through clay-floor layers of Building 198, and F34 was sealed by an undated brick wall line, while remnant later floor-levels survived which had sunk into the top of F41.

Near the road frontage, a large brick foundation (F38) was built against the west side of the earlier brick wall F39, bricks from which are dated to the 18th-19th century (Fig 12 section). The southern end of the wall formed a T-shape with wing walls extending away from it; although the ends of these lay beyond the excavated trenches, they could be traced as surface features. The shape of the wall, with its wing extensions, suggests that this could have been a chimney base with a fireplace to each side. This (like F35, Phase 2c) would correspond with the location of the nearer of the two chimney-stacks visible above the roof of Building 198 in Figure 2. Sealing this at its south end was a sunken brick-box (F4). In the central southern area of the site there was a rough line of post-holes (F56, F114-F115, F118, F127, F130 & F140) which contained material of 19th- to 20th-century date.

Plot 3: Building 199

Phase 2A

Plot 3 is defined by the eastern boundary of Building 198 (marked by the Period 2 walls F144 and F23; Figs 6 & 9), and it extended beyond the excavation. The area occupied by Building 199 was formed by this boundary and the wall plinth F120 (Fig 6). The plinth line was traced for a further 5m to the east during the watching brief subsequent to the excavation (Fig 6), but at some point beyond this its line had been obliterated by a very large modern pit, probably a soakaway connected with the Period 3 car park. The party wall line (F144/F23) suggests that Building 199 and Building 198 are contemporary.

In the area back from the road frontage there were two gravel surfaces (L102 & L88), which represent two phases of metalling of external yard surfaces to the rear of the property (Figs 6 & 7). These surfaces extended east from plinth F144 (Phase 2a of Building 198), and they continued as far as the rear wall line of Building 199 which was formed by the plinth F120. Within the area of the building close to the plinth there were two thin gravel layers (L104 & L102) which only extended a short distance from it and could not be traced as far as the road frontage area. In this area a number of clay layers (L11, L12, L15 & L89) representing floor surfaces (designated L15) and floor patching directly sealed the Period 1 soil (Fig 12 section). These clay floors merged into a more mixed and patchy clay layer (L89) which sealed the gravel layers L104 and L102 within the room area on the north side of the wall plinth.

Phase 2b (Fig 9)

The timbered front of the building occupying Plot 3 in the 1940s photograph (Fig 2) is of 18th- to 19th-century date (pers comm David Stenning), though this may simply be re-facing of the earlier building, so the Phase 2a building number (Building 199) is retained. The later phase of this building is probably associated with the brick foundation F23 and the possible wall line represented by F24.

Period 3: mid to late 20th century, c 1960-present

The buildings on all three plots were demolished to make way for a car park for Paxman's Engineering Works.

The finds

Pottery, coin, small finds and medieval tile reports are given in full here, and the animal bone report in summary. For reports on other materials (shell, glass, slate, clay pipes, Roman building material, flint, post-Roman brick, slag, iron nails), see archive report.

The small finds

by Nina Crummy

This small assemblage contains several items typical of medieval and early post-medieval sites, but is unusual in that the only dress accessory is a post-medieval button. This absence of dress fittings might be an indication of very low social status, or might simply be an accident of recovery.

Two objects were found in Period 1 pits. One is a leather shoe sole repair fragment (2, not illustrated). The tunnel stitches used to attach the repair to the outside of the original sole are irregularly spaced and give the impression of low-quality cobbling, but the patch lasted long enough for the tread to wear through. The fragment has no diagnostic features to enable a close date to be given.

The other item from Period 1 is a spindlewhorl (Fig 16.1) of the plano-convex form typical of stone spindlewhorls of the late Saxon and early medieval periods. The weight of this whorl, 29 gm, suggests it was used for spinning wool (Margeson 1993, 184). Hard fine-grained limestone was the preferred material for spindlewhorls in East Anglia and in the East Midland compared to a dense chalk along the south coast (eg Woodland 1990, 216). Limestone whorls of various forms, with cylindrical examples dating to as late as the 16th century, come from Thetford (Rogerson & Dallas 1984, 111), King's Lynn (Geddes & Dunning 1977, 315-17), Northampton (Oakley & Hall 1979, 286-9), London (Pritchard 1991, 165), Norwich (Margeson 1993, 185), Lincoln (Mann 1982, 22), York (Waterman 1959, fig 20), and Whitby (Peers & Radford 1943, fig 23). Other limestone whorls from Colchester come from Middleborough and Long Wyre Street (*CAR* 5, fig 34, 1932-3), and from an adjacent site at Hythe Hill (Brooks 2000). The source of the limestone is uncertain, with either the Mendips or the Pennines being put forward by Ellis (note in Geddes & Dunning 1977), but the eastern distribution and the absence of limestone whorls from West Country sites such as Exeter argues against the Mendips. Moreover, given the trades in hones from Norway and lava querns from Germany that have the same easterly distribution pattern and cover the same long date range (see below), a continental source cannot be ruled out.

The majority of the other items come from Period 2 contexts. A chicken radius worked to a point (Fig 16.2) appears to be a small version of the implements made from goose radii which may have been used as pens, as 'pen-holders' which enabled the points of broken quills to be reused, or for measuring out small quantities of liquids (MacGregor 1982, 125-6, fig 67, h-i). Goose

radius pens first appear in Norwich in the 14th century (Margeson 1993, 69), and an example from Culver Street, Colchester suggests that they continued to be used into the early post-medieval period (CAR 5, 97).

A fragment of a mica-schist hone (4, not illustrated) is an example of the long-standing trade in Norwegian ragstone hones mentioned above. The fine-grained schist was quarried at Eidsborg, near Telemark, and imported into Britain from the 9th century onwards as either finished hones, as shown by the cargo of hones in a wrecked Viking ship (Graham-Campbell & Kidd 1980, 134), or as blocks of stone to be worked to shape at the port of entry. Waste and semi-finished ragstone hones were found in an early 14th-century context at Ludgate (Museum of London Archaeological Archive, LUD82 [1062]). In the late Saxon and early medieval periods Norwegian ragstone hones dominated the markets of eastern and southern Britain (Crummy *et al* forthcoming), even in towns with a reasonably close native source of suitable stone. York, for example, imported both Norwegian ragstone hones and Millstone Grit hones from the Pennines, but the former were by far the most popular (MacGregor 1982, 77-80). Schist hones have been found in Colchester on sites in Crouch Street, Lion Walk, the Cups Hotel (now Greytown house), Middleborough, Culver Street, St Mary Magdalen's Hospital, and at earlier excavations on Hythe Hill (CAR 5, 77; Brooks 2000; Crossan forthcoming). The trade appears to have continued into the early post-medieval period at Northampton (Moore & Oakley 1979, 283) and Winchester (Crummy *et al* forthcoming). Evidence for their import into Colchester at this late date is less convincing, with those from post-medieval contexts, such as this one, being particularly poorly-preserved and so most likely to be residual.

Hand-querns of lava from the Eifel region of Germany were first imported into Britain at the Roman conquest. The trade was interrupted during the Migration Period, but was re-established through Middle Saxon ports such as Hamwic, and continued through to the post-medieval period. Broken fragments were sometimes reused as rubbing stones or building material, though the three small fragments from this site (5-7, not illustrated) show no sign of reuse.

The unstratified mudstone netsinker or anchor weight reflects the proximity of the site to the river. The date of this object is uncertain. It may be quite modern, though the technique of drilling the hole from both sides is a characteristic of hand drilling in antiquity.

1. Fig 16.1. SF 9. (137) F146. Pit. Period 1. Plano-convex spindlewhorl in a hard fine-grained unfossiliferous pink limestone, spalled at one point on the convex surface. Diameter 37.5 mm, height 17.5 mm, diameter of spindle hole 9 mm. Weight 29 gm.
2. *Not illustrated*. SF 10. (175) L122. Pit fill. Period 1. Repair fragment from the front end of the leather sole of an adult's right shoe. Irregularly-spaced tunnel stitches around the worn edge show it to have been attached to the outside of the original sole. A short length of an oblique cut edge remains at the waist. The fragment has split across a worn patch on the lateral side of the tread. Length 172 mm, maximum width 99 mm.
3. Fig 16.2. SF 2. (5) L39. Demolition/make-up. Period 2. Chicken radius, the shaft split obliquely to form a point. The edges of the fracture and the point are worn. Length 56 mm. Probably a small pen or 'pen-holder'.
4. *Not illustrated*. SF 12. (191) L108. Dump/make-up. Period 2. Fragment of a large shattered mica-schist hone. Maximum dimensions 67 by 32 by 21 mm.
5. *Not illustrated*. SF 6. (94) F50. Pit. Period 2. Edge fragment from the upper-stone of a hand-quern of Niedermendig lava.

Diameter greater than 500 mm, thickness at edge 29 mm. The grinding surface is very worn and retains no tooling marks, the external surface is roughly pecked.

- 6-7. *Not illustrated*. SF 4. (26) F36. Period 2. Two fragments from lava querns. 1) Probably from an upper-stone, with traces of sickle dressing on the working surface. Maximum dimensions 107 by 65 mm, maximum thickness 42 mm. 2) Edge fragment. One surface is slightly convex and worn but not smooth, the other has split across a large vesicle partly filled with crystals of a secondary mineral, probably quartz. Maximum dimensions 98 by 67 by 43 mm thick.
8. *Not illustrated*. SF 8. (126) F64. Foundation base. Period 2. Corroded copper-alloy button with slightly raised edge. The attachment loop on the back is broken. Diameter 22 mm.
9. *Not illustrated*. SF 7. (99) L87. Accumulation on yard surface. Period 2. Octagonal copper-alloy plaque with central perforation. Width 20.5 mm, thickness 2 mm.
10. *Not illustrated*. SF 5. (70) L59. Floor make-up. Period 2? Fragment of a tapering iron object, probably a handle. Length 82 mm.
11. *Not illustrated*. SF 11. (191) L108. Dump/make-up. Period 2. Two fragments of iron sheet, possibly from a lock-plate. Maximum dimensions 65 by 57 mm, 45 by 28 mm.
12. *Not illustrated*. SF 1. (3). Unstratified surface find. Modern. Large roughly oval slab, probably a netsinker or anchor weight. The edge of a suspension hole set off-centre at one end is worn at the point where the weight of the object would cause a string to lie. The sides of the hole are very smooth, but it has the hour-glass profile typical of a hole drilled from each side, and varies from 10 to 12 mm in diameter. The surfaces are very roughly worked, and have marks from a chisel blade in some places. They are also, particularly on one side, pitted with man-made holes which vary in size and in some cases have adjacent scratches where the drill slipped. These holes appear to be early attempts to perforate the slab, particularly a fairly large pair that lie opposite each other close to one edge. Maximum dimensions 189 by 110 by 45 mm.

The medieval coin

by Marion Archibald

SF 3 (6)

Unstratified, Edward I (1272-1307) farthing, London mint.

Obverse: EDWARDVS REX

Reverse: LONDONIENSIS

Reference: North 1991, no 1051

The coin was struck in the early 1280s, but this type could have survived in circulation considerably later. The coin is only slightly worn, but wear is a less reliable indicator of deposit date in the case of farthings than pence. It is thus impossible to give a close bracket for its loss but it is most likely to have been deposited before c 1350, although an abnormal later loss remains possible.

The Roman pottery

by Stephen Benfield

There was a total of eight Roman sherds from the site weighing 70g; all are coarse grey ware (CAR 10, Fabric group GX: other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares), and none can be dated as other than Roman. This very small number of sherds does not really allow further comment, though it should be noted that only one Roman sherd was recovered in the more extensive excavations in 1994-95 just to the east of the present site (Brooks 2000).

The data can be tabulated as follows:

context	find	fabric	description	wt (g)
F19	1	GX	1 grey ware sherd	15
F131	107	GX	2 grey ware sherds	20
L2	72	GX	2 grey ware sherds	10
L112	150	GX	4 grey ware sherds	25
			Total wt (g):	70

Medieval and later pottery

by Howard Brooks

The material

A total of 620 sherds weighing 7.64kg was examined. These came from 114 bags representing 94 site contexts. The material was classified according to CAR 7. Material from each bag was listed, weighed and identified. These lists are summarised in Appendix 2 in CAT Archive Report 125. Other details are in the archive.

Discussion

This is largely a medieval collection, dominated by Fabrics 13 and 20 (early medieval sandy and medieval grey wares), whose combined weight is 52.1% of the group. Other large groups are Fabric 21/21a (sandy orange ware – 9%: split into Fabric 21 – 7%, Colchester ware Fabric 21a – 2%), Fabric 40 (PMRE – 10%), and Fabric 48 (modern ironstones – 12%). There were smaller groups of fabrics 12a (early medieval shell-tempered), 22 (Hedingham), 36 (London-type), 41 (Tudor Green), 45 (stonewares), and 51 (modern earthenwares and flowerpot). There were also several Roman and unidentified sherds.

Interesting pieces were a Fabric 20 bowl with a hollow pouring handle from F154, and a Hedingham ware green glazed figurine from L114 which was presumably from a jug handle. Matching rim types included fabrics illustrated in CAR 7 as figures 20.5, 20.14, 20.18 and 20.33. Many of the Fabric 13 and 20 sherds were sooted, indicating that they were used as cooking pots, presumably in a domestic setting.

The massive amount of Fabric 13 and/or 20 from this site would indicate a late 12th- or early 13th-century start to activity, with a continuing high level of activity until the 14th century. Thereafter, there is much less pottery (and activity?) from the 15th to 16th centuries, and again from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Equally, there is not strong enough evidence to argue for a break in occupation anywhere in this sequence. Compared with the pottery recovered from the nearby site at 79 Hythe Hill in 1994-95 (Brooks 2000), there are similar quantities of early medieval wares, but none of the Low Countries red wares and other Continental imports such as the Saintonge ware found at 79 Hythe Hill.

The church and the site

This site is opposite St Leonard's Church, and therefore a potential site of buildings or other activity connected with the church. It is therefore worth considering whether the pottery dates tie in with the church dates. Rodwell and Rodwell (1977) describe the surviving work as mainly 14th and 15th century, but with a misalignment of chancel and nave which is presumably a relic of an earlier plan. The pottery dates must indicate activity starting on this site in the 12th century, if not in the late 11th century. This would fit the date of the Rodwells' supposed earlier church.

The medieval and later tile

by Pat Ryan

Summary

The tile was weighed and measured, and distinctive features were noted. The assemblage consists of one complete tile, one part tile, and nine fragments of floor-tile, in addition to two fragments of wall-tile and three of roof-tile. Details of quantities and weights are included in the archive report.

Floor-tile

One very worn fragment of floor-tile from F36 is of a different fabric to the remainder of the floor-tile from F41, F59, F92, F117, F140 and L89. The complete tile from F59 is 123mm square and 20mm thick; its upper surface is worn and its edges slightly undercut. All the other floor-tile fragments are about 24mm-25mm thick. A part tile in F92 is 125mm wide. Two joining fragments from F140 were rather poorly made and have a dished upper surface with a number of deep striations. They show no sign of wear. The fragment from F117 has been slightly overfired in a reducing atmosphere and glazed, so giving a very dark brown appearance. The flake from F118 had been coated with white slip and then glazed, and the five joining fragments from L89 had a white slip applied very roughly before being glazed. All the above tiles were made in sanded moulds and had slightly undercut edges. They are probably medieval in date.

Wall-tile

A fragment of red-bodied, white-slipped and glazed wall-tile, 8mm thick (from F15), is machine-made and of 19th- to 20th-century date. It has a yellow mottled appearance.

A corner fragment of tin-glazed white earthenware tile occurs in F56. It is 11mm thick and has a nail hole in the corner of the upper surface. The blue decoration consists of a large fleur-de-lis in the corner with a square diamond-shaped border to a central motif. Kor illustrates very similar tiles in figures 232 and 233 (Kor 1963, 104). It is a Dutch delftware tile of the mid 17th century.

Roof-tile

The assemblage includes three small fragments of glazed roof-tile in L81, L85 and L98. The fragments are really too small to be certain whether they are all from tiles of the late 13th-/early 14th-century period when some roof-tile was glazed, or whether these represent accidental occurrences of glaze running off other products which were being fired in the kiln at the same time.

Animal bone (summary)

by Alec Wade

The excavation produced a small assemblage of 163 pieces of mammal, bird and fish bone from 44 excavated contexts. The deposits dated from the late medieval (late 11th/12th to 14th/15th centuries), post-medieval (15th-16th/17th centuries), and modern periods. In character with most urban assemblages, the material was generally in poor condition, being quite fragmented and eroded.

The majority of the assemblage was fairly evenly distributed between the late medieval (Period 1) and post-medieval (Period 2) deposits – 70 and 82 pieces respectively – with the remainder from contexts of uncertain or modern date.

The domestic species identified included sheep or goat, pig, cattle, chicken, horse and dog. No wild species were positively identified, though bird and fish bone (indeterminate species) was also present in the assemblage. The minimum number of individual animals represented by the assemblage was one for each species in each site period except for two sheep/goats (no distinction being made) and two birds, probably domestic fowl, in the post-medieval contexts.

Evidence of butchery was found on 21 pieces of bone (13% of the assemblage), and dogs had gnawed 22 pieces (13%). These fragments were also distributed fairly evenly between the late medieval and post-medieval deposits.

Other details in archive report.

Discussion

Prehistoric and Roman

A few flint flakes and a piece of burnt flint suggest some limited prehistoric activity in the area. The small quantity of Roman finds were mostly building materials (fragments of tile, septaria and a fragment of wall plaster) and these, in the absence of any Roman features, were probably imported onto the site for use in constructing the later buildings; however, they include a small quantity of Roman pottery which suggests Roman occupation nearby.

Period 1 (late medieval to early post-medieval)

Judging by the date of the pottery, there is no evidence of any significant activity on the site prior to the 11th-12th century. Overall, the evidence for late medieval activity suggests an open area, possibly cultivated, with the incorporation of organic and small amounts of other material into the soil, pit-digging possibly for small-scale extraction of clay, and some limited rubbish-disposal. A number of small pits or post-holes may indicate an earth-fast building, and there must have been occupation nearby.

It is just possible, though not considered likely, that a gravel surface (L96) and hearth (F138) could be associated with this possible building rather than with Building 198 in Period 2. The surface is similar to that of L128 and L127 (rather than to the clay floors of Period 2) and its extent might be defined by the line of the post-holes F152 and F153. However, the gravel surface was directly sealed by a clay floor (L77) in Building 198, which suggests direct replacement rather than any interval or major building phase between the surfaces. The clay floor is more likely to be re-flooring in the Period 2 building; also the probable continued use of this room for light industrial activity points to continuity.

Period 2 (post-medieval to mid-20th century)

The earliest certain buildings occupying the site date from the post-medieval period, probably the 17th century, based on the style of construction of Building 199 (Fig 2). The party walls at the east and west sides of Building 198 (Plot 2) suggest that all of the original buildings (Buildings 197, 198 and 199) are contemporary and that the three plots were developed at the same time. These buildings were timber-framed, resting on mortar plinths. The floors surfaces were of clay, and though some floor-tile fragments were recovered these were of medieval or probable medieval date and are possibly residual pieces. From the fragmented archaeological sequence recovered from the site, it was not possible to define fully building plans and individual buildings. However, using later documentary sources plus a photograph taken of the street frontage in the 1940s (Fig 2) and the 1896 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, it is possible to trace three earlier plot divisions; these are securely matched with walls excavated on the site (Fig 4). Assuming continuity from the earliest phase of Period 2, which seems likely as property boundaries are very durable, the fragmented remains on the site can be interpreted as being those of three buildings relating to three plots. The centre plot on the excavation area (Plot 2) at 12.1m corresponds to a division of 40 feet wide which has been recognised for plots of late medieval date in Colchester (Buildings 75 and 76; CAR 3, 189-204).

The two hearths F99 (Phase 2a) and F68 (Phase 2b) in the central western area of Building 198 could indicate an earlier building with an open hall and service rooms on its east side

represented by the wing at that end. However, given the archaeological dating evidence for the earliest phase of building of not earlier than the 15th-16th centuries (section 3.4), and that the three plots appear to have been developed at the same time, it is probable that the 17th-century jettied building (Fig 2) is the original building occupying Plot 2 (Building 198). The hearths F99 and F68 may therefore represent the sites of ovens or industrial hearths in rooms fronting the street which could be vented by hoods with the fumes being conducted out through the wall.

However, overall there was little to suggest that the main purpose of the Period 2 buildings was other than domestic, though there is some evidence that the room at the east end of Building 198 on the road frontage was used as a workshop. Originally this appears to have involved iron-working, possibly black-smithing, around a clay hearth set into a gravel surface. Later a brick and tile-built hearth was associated with banded thin coal and sand layers which also appear to represent a repetitive, possibly industrial process. The limited number of finds from the buildings precludes any real attempt to define their status. There are a number of fragments of probable medieval floor-tile from features on the central area of the site (western area of Building 198), and though most of these are from late-dated features, one fragment is from an early Period 2 feature (F92). This suggests that one of the earliest building phases may have included a tiled floor and been reasonably well-appointed. An undated bored stone small find (p 41, no 12), possibly a netsinker or anchor weight, may indicate some activity connected with the river and estuary.

Overall, the late Period 2 walls and buildings (Buildings 198, 199 and 201) conform to those shown on the Monson map of 1848 and the 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1896. The buildings on Plot 1 (Buildings 197 and 200) were demolished and replaced with a row of brick-built terraced houses (Building 201).

Period 3 (mid to late 20th century, c 1960-present)

The buildings on all three plots were demolished to make way for a car park for Paxman's Engineering Works.

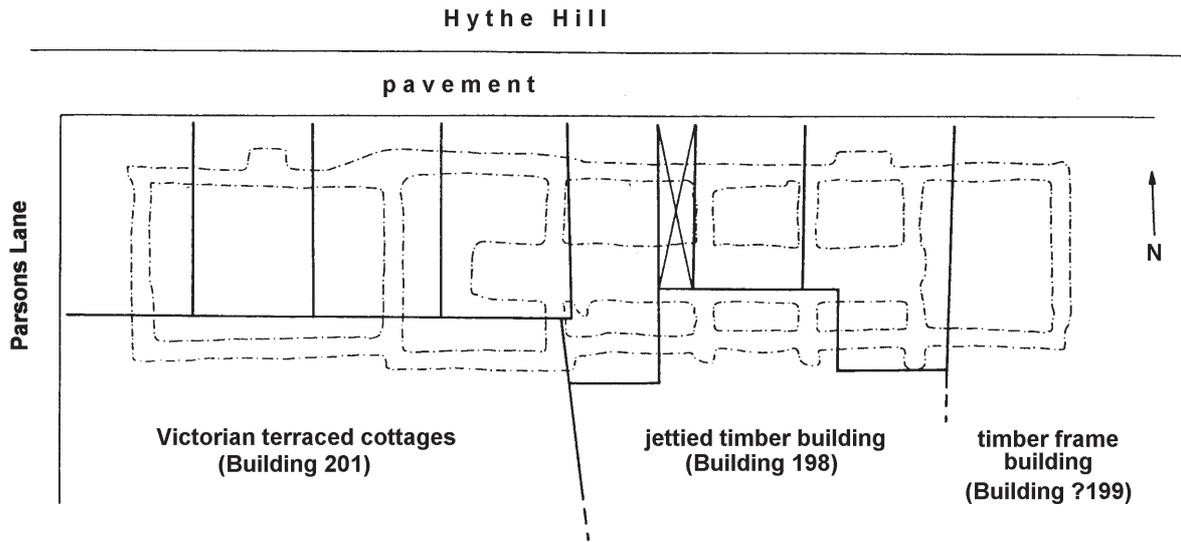
The archaeology of the 1994-95 and 1999 sites compared Although limited in extent, the 1999 excavation provides a broad archaeological sequence which can be compared with the 1994-95 area excavation 60m to the east at 79 Hythe Hill (Brooks 2000) and the Hythe area in general.

Finds on both sites indicate limited activity in the prehistoric and Roman periods, though the source of the Roman material is unknown. There is certainly activity on these sites from the late 11th to 12th century, although, prior to the post-medieval period, the areas appear to have been mostly open, with pits (for clay extraction?) and possible cultivation located on the 1999 site. However, there may have been some occupation on both sites as small pits or post-holes suggest the locations of buildings. On the 1994-95 site, occupation along the road frontage was established in the early post-medieval period (16th century), though the 1999 site was not developed until probably the 17th century. All of these buildings were timber-framed. They had internal clay floors and gravel metalled yard areas at the rear. The frames were set on mortared plinths. The relationship of the buildings to the street (ie they were set longways along it) and the slow infilling of the frontage in the late medieval and post-medieval periods indicate that there was little pressure on building land. Although these properties appear to have been domestic, on both sites there is evidence for industrial activity. In two cases this is thought to be iron-working (probably blacksmithing), possibly representing small workshops on the street frontage.

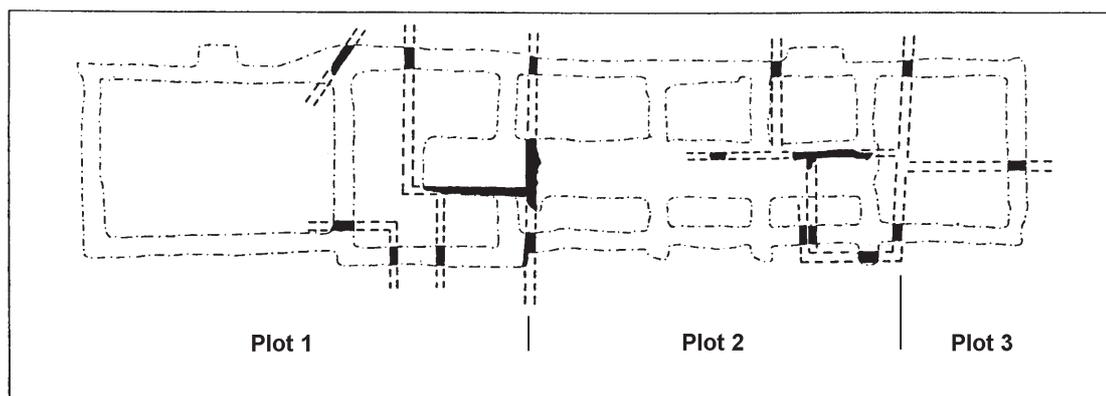
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A Wall lines taken from 1896 1st edition OS map superimposed on excavation area with buildings identified from 1934/1940 photographs



B Walls recorded on site and inferred building plots

Fig 4 Comparison of wall lines from 1896 1st edition OS map and walls found on site.

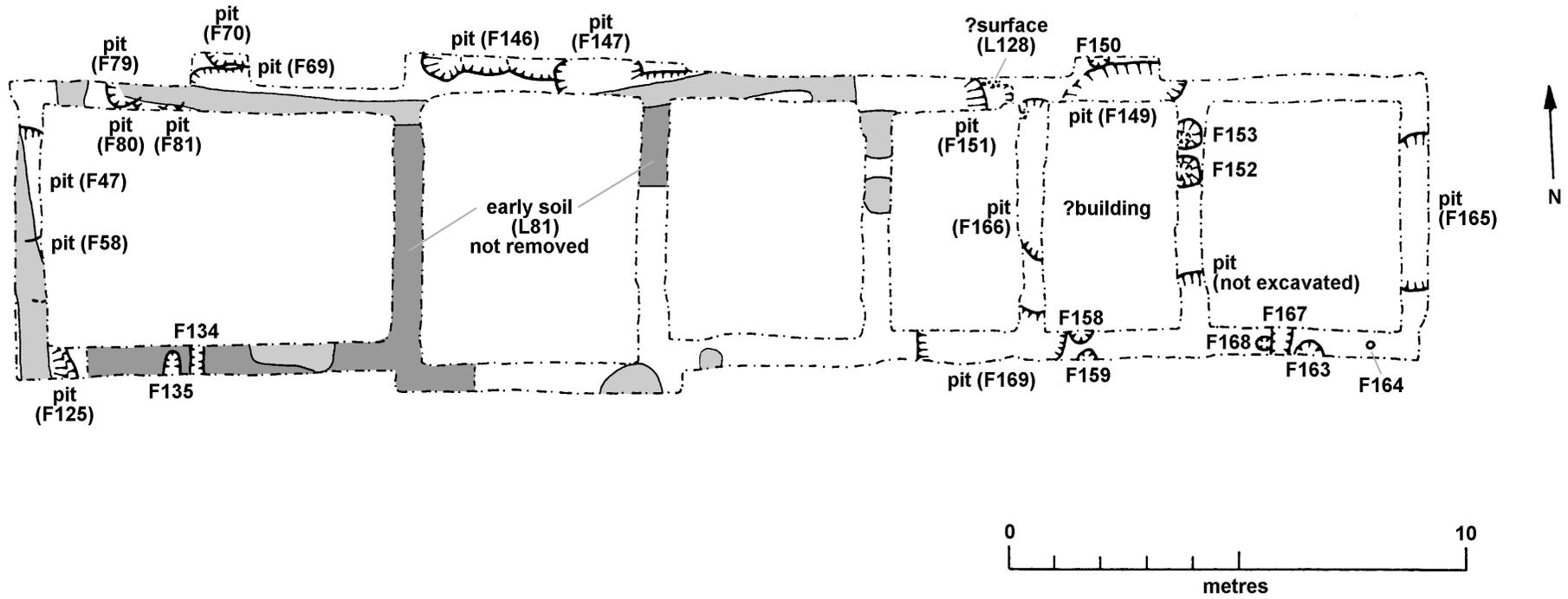


Fig 5 Period 1.

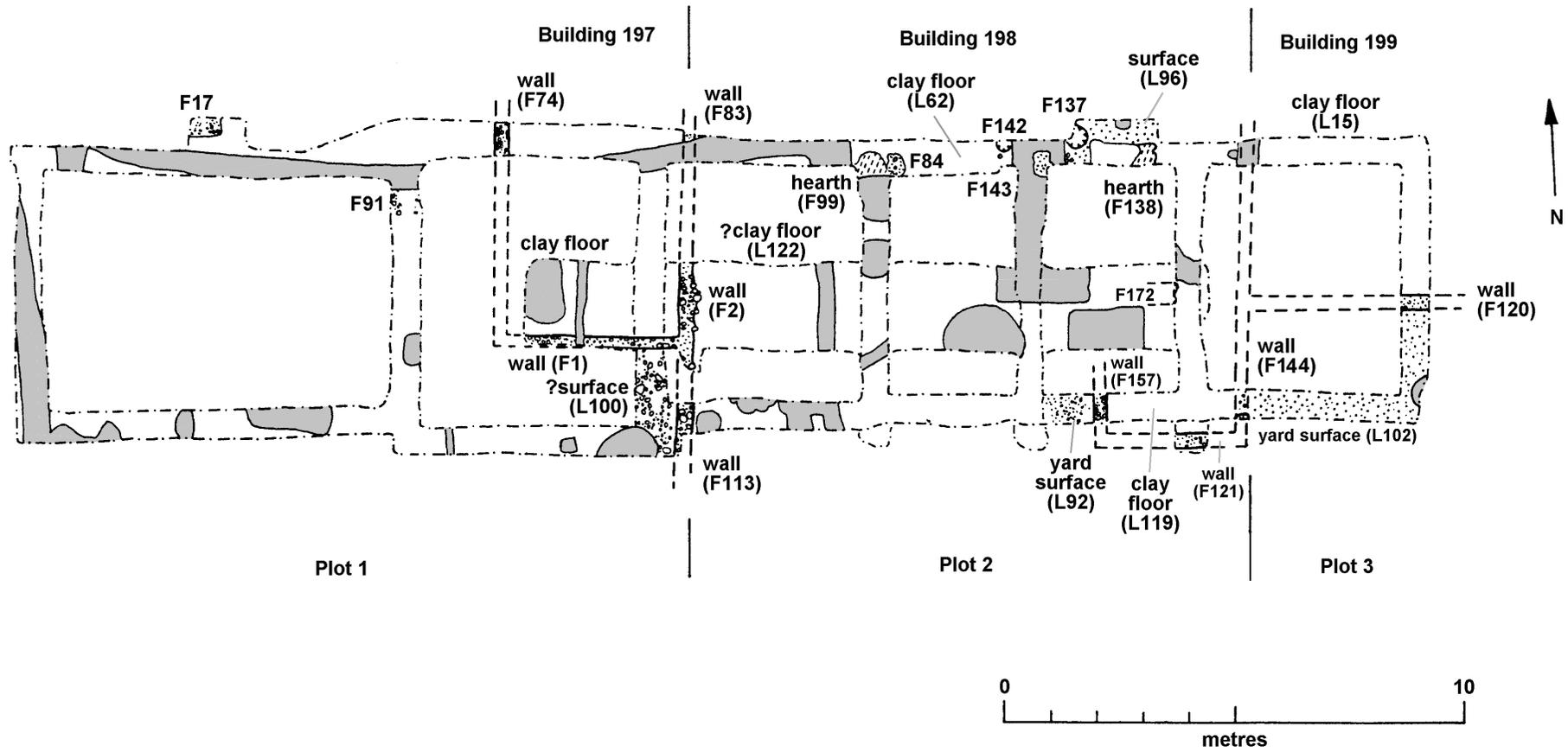


Fig 6 Period 2 (all plots, Phase 2a).

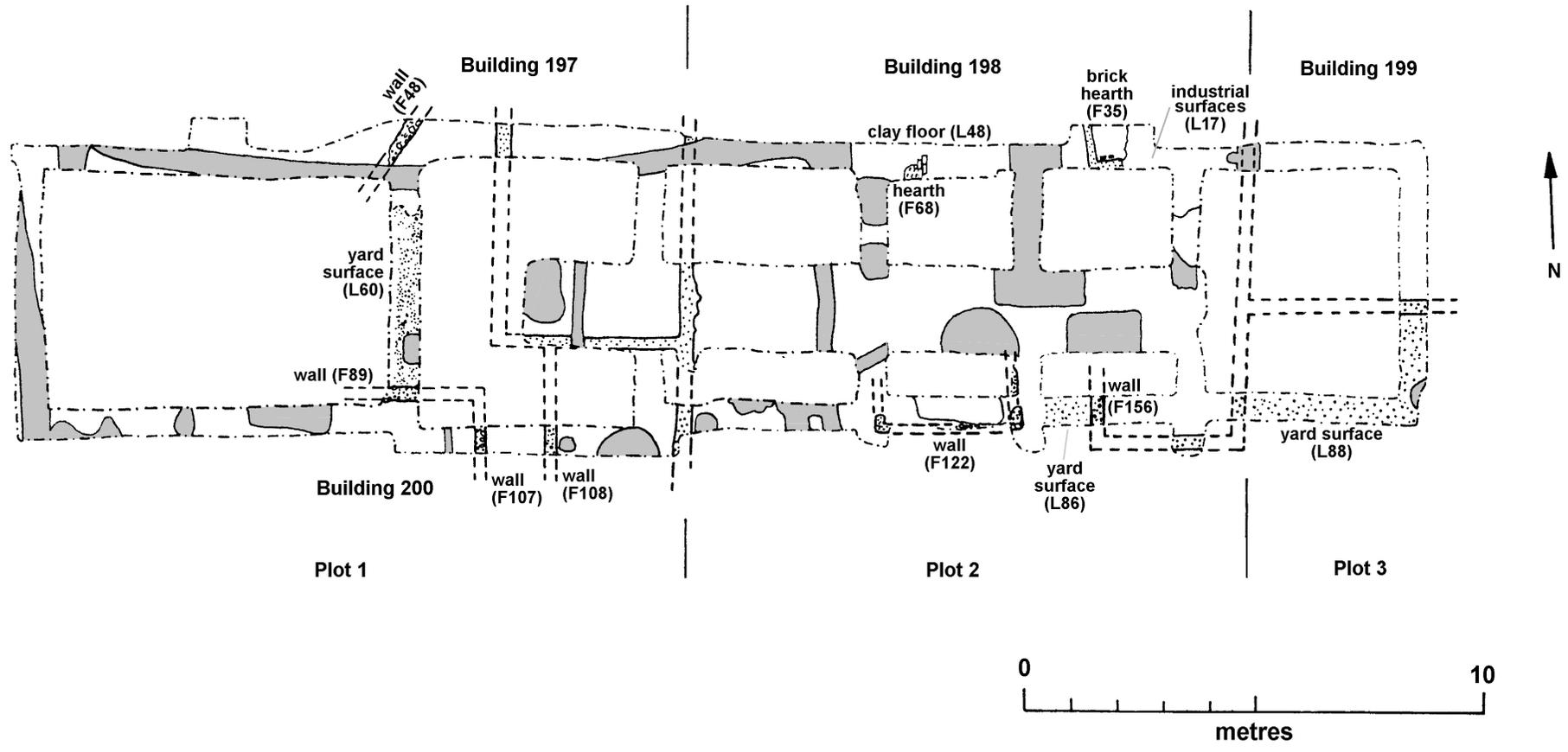


Fig 7 Period 2 (all plots, Phase 2b).

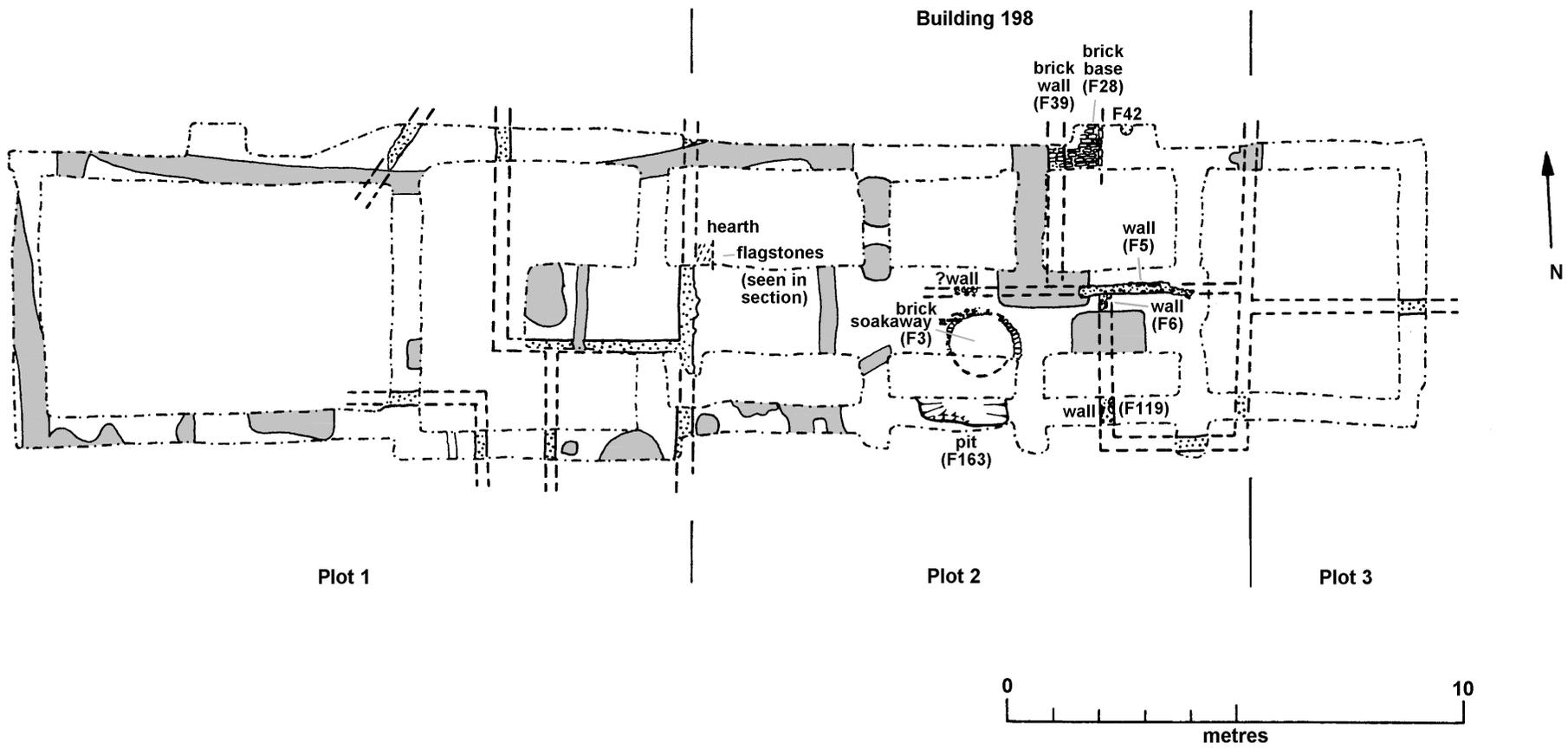


Fig 8 Period 2 (Plot 2, Phase 2c).

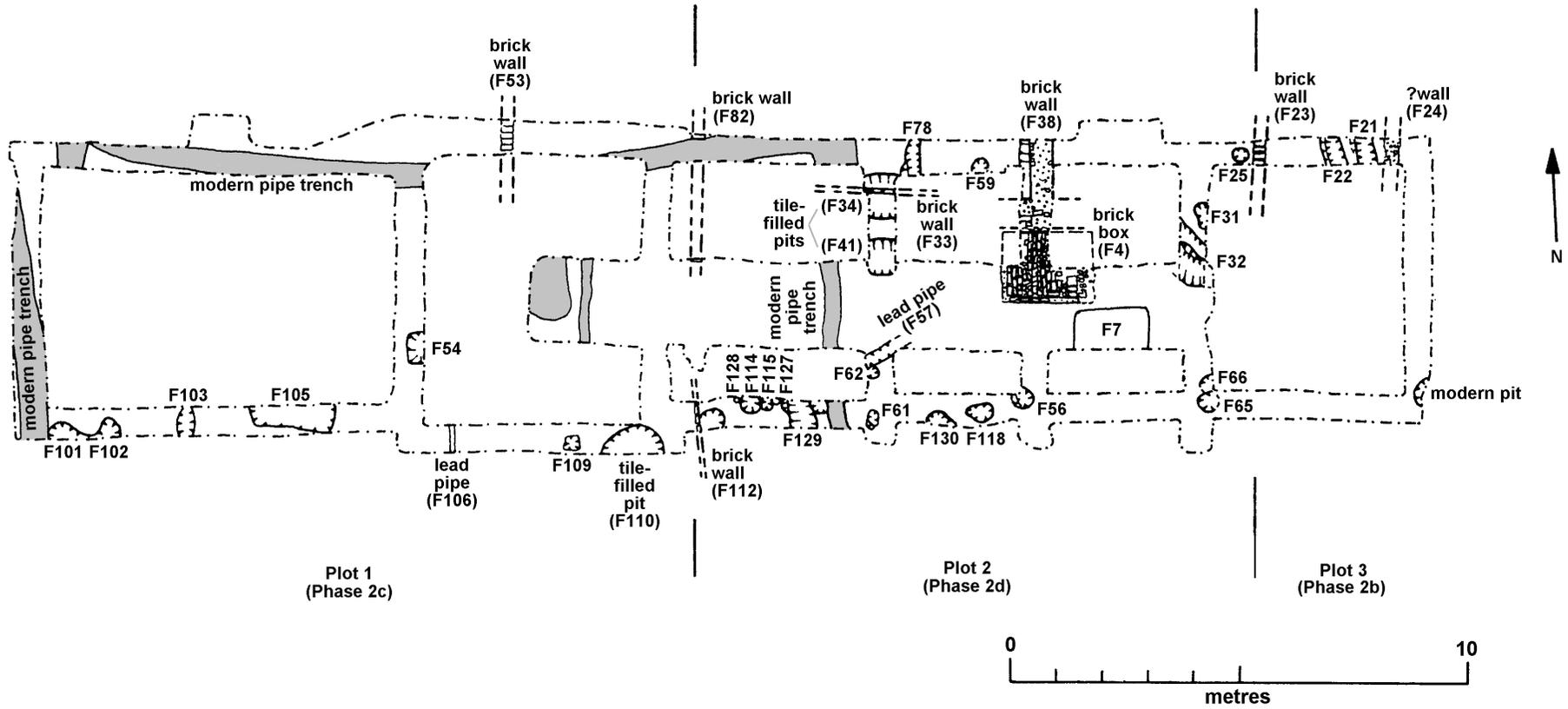
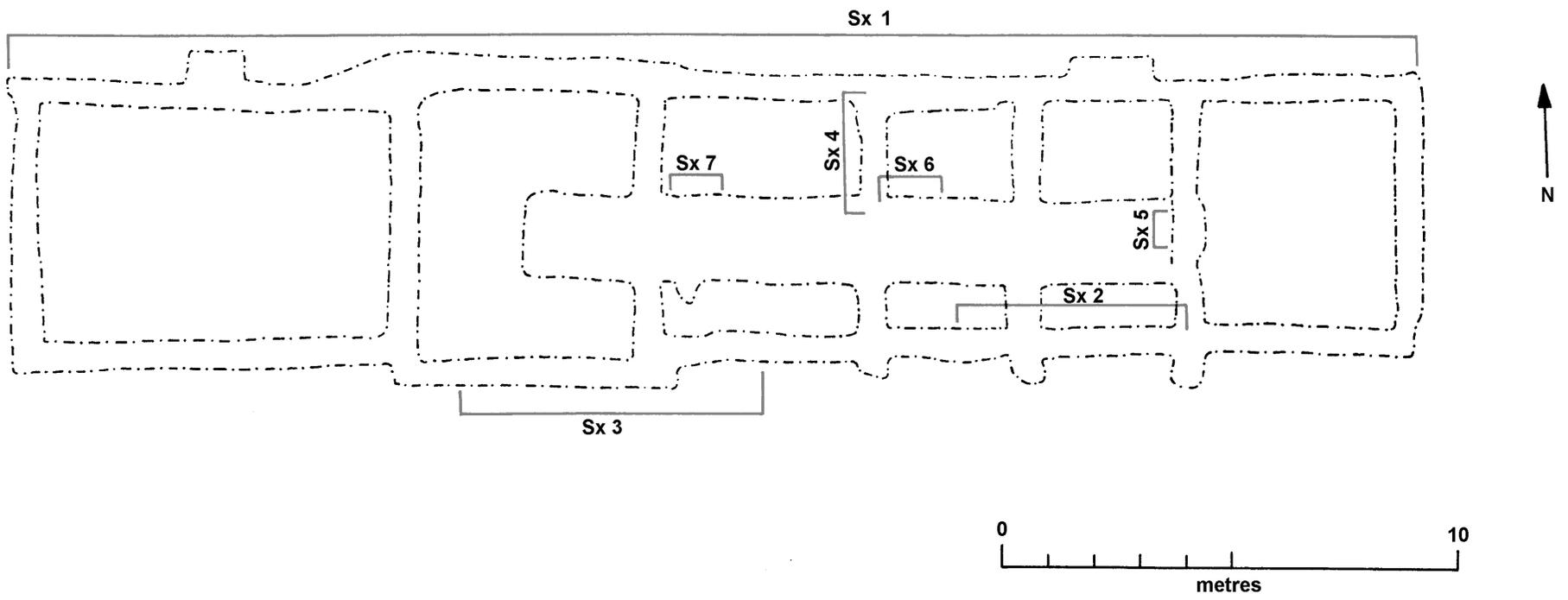


Fig 9 Later Period 2.



An archaeological excavation at 64-76 Hythe Hill, Colchester, in 1999

Fig 10 Location of sections.

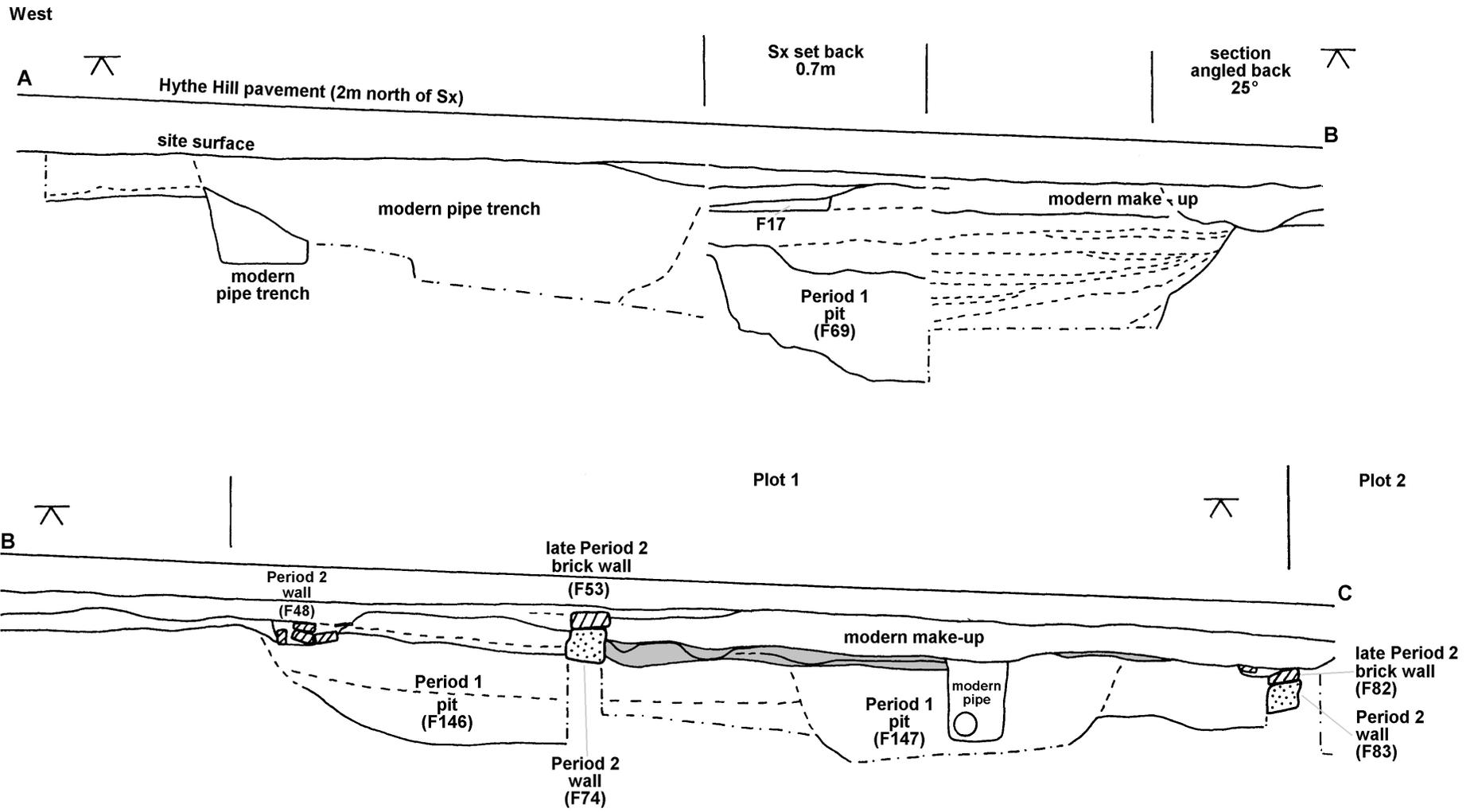


Fig 11 Section 1.

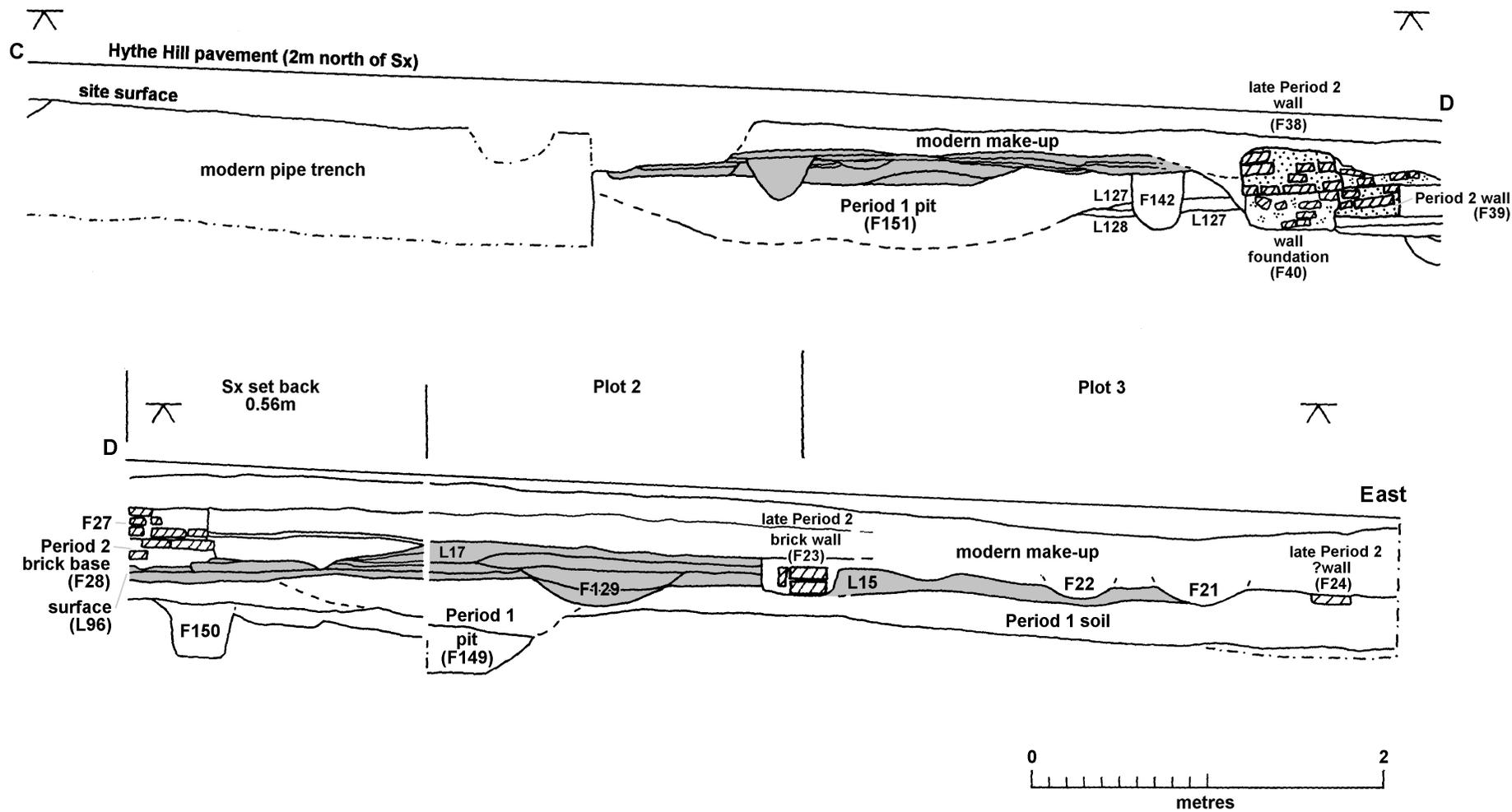


Fig 12 Section 1.

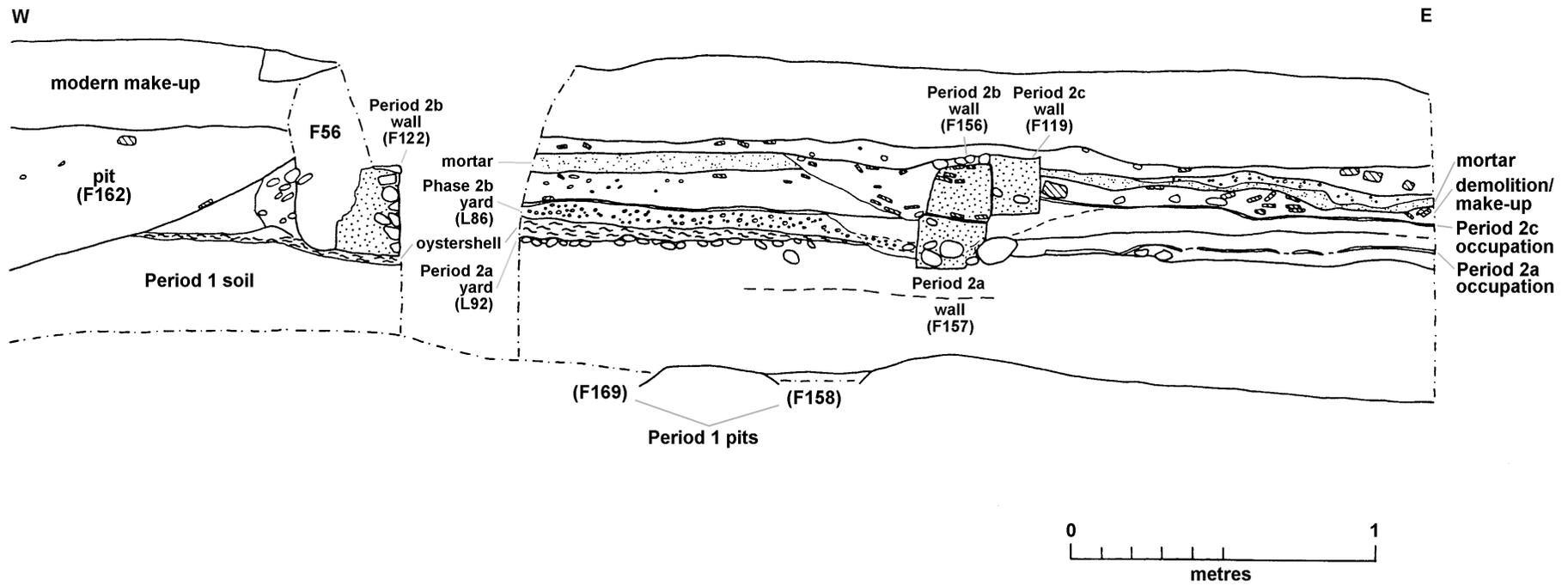


Fig 13 Section 2 (Plot 2).

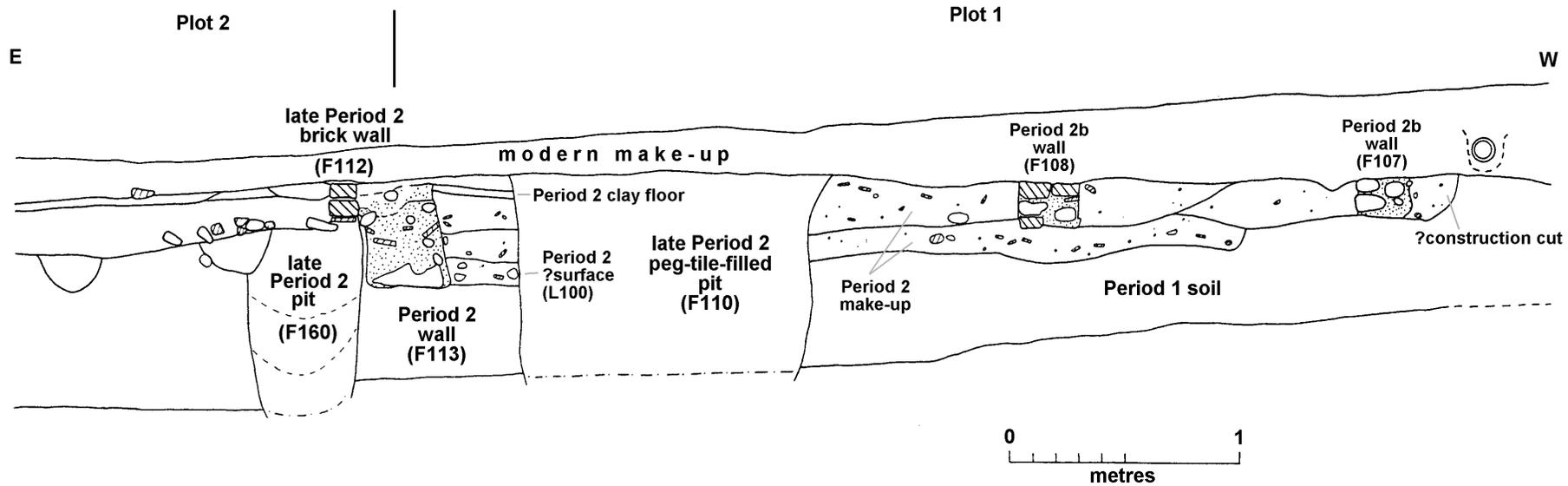


Fig 14 Section 3 (Plot 1).

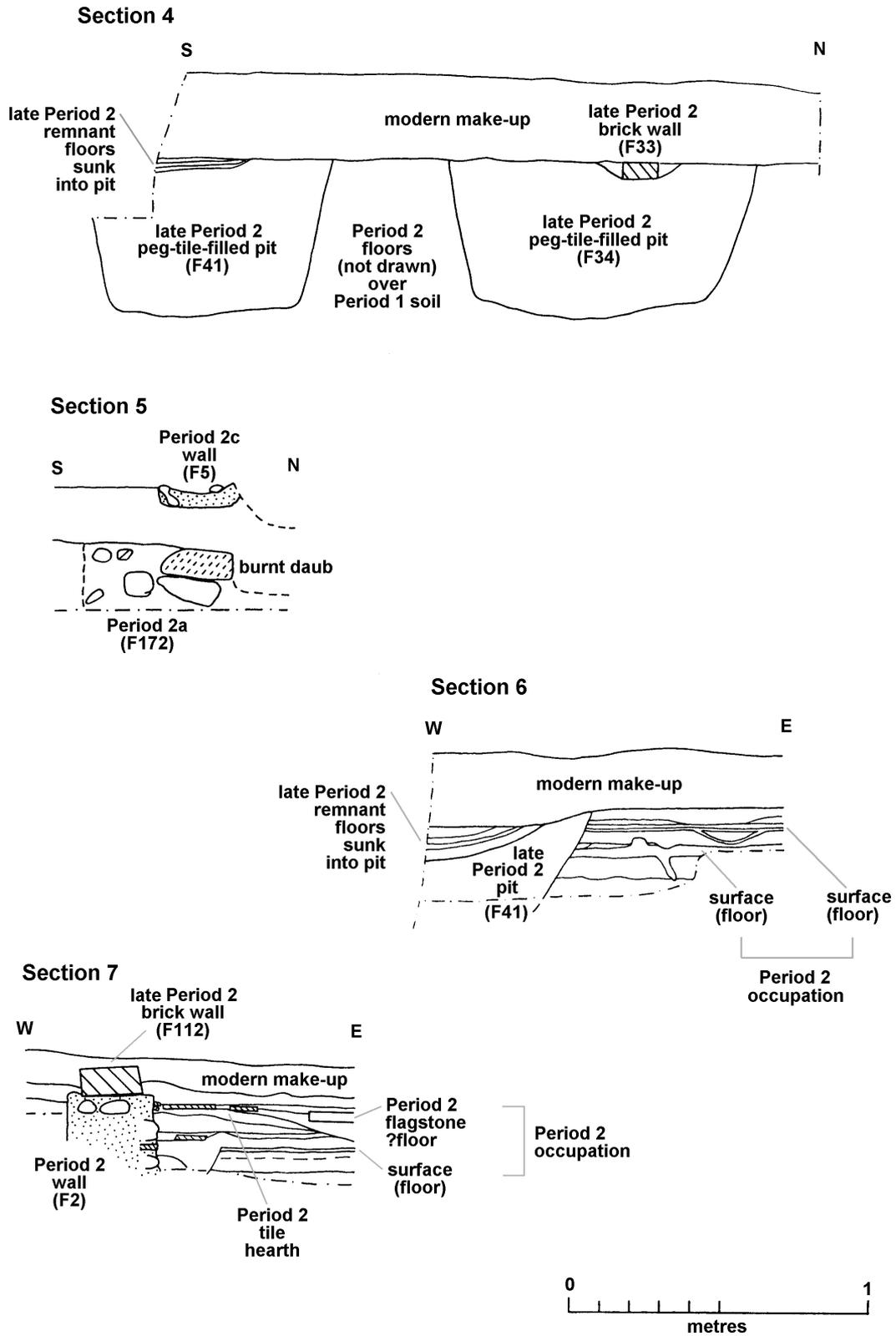
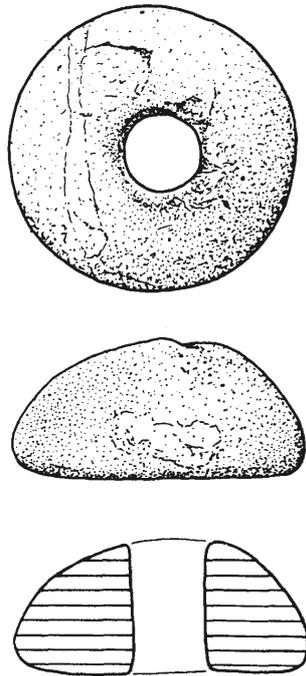
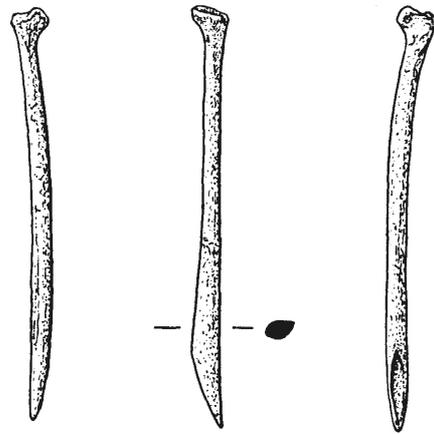


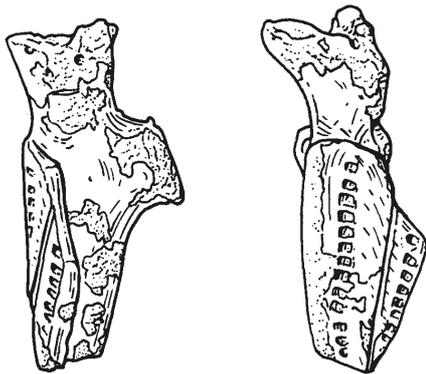
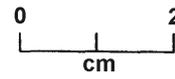
Fig 15 Sections 4-7 (Plot 2).



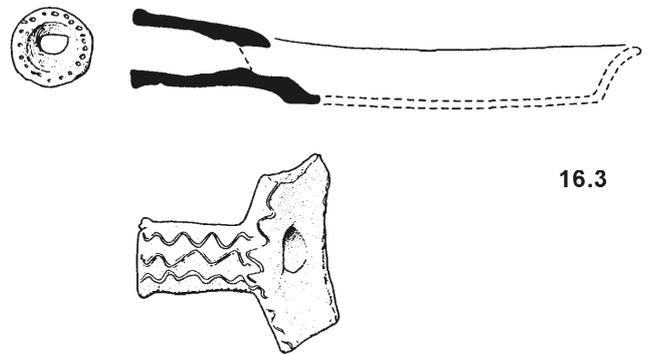
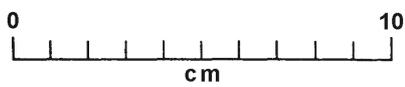
16.1



16.2



16.4



16.3

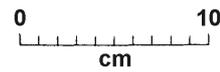


Fig 16 Selected finds from the site.