

**No. 2 Grape Lane
York**

Archaeological Recording Brief

**Site Code YORYM: 1995.433
MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd
July 1998**

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Introduction

From the 7th - 9th of May 1997, MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. carried out an Archaeological Recording Brief at 2 Grape Lane, York (SE 6043 5246). The site was an area of open ground, used partly for car-parking, with buildings on the north, east and south sides, and fronting Grape Lane to the west (Fig. 1).

The Recording Brief was proposed by J. Oxley, Chief Archaeologist, City of York Council, as a way of archaeologically recording the site in advance of the erection of a new building.

All work was funded by the site owner, R. Smart, and was arranged through M. N. Davison, the site Architect.

The site code allocated by the Yorkshire Museum for the site is YORYM: 1995.433 (the site having been already evaluated by MAP in July 1995).

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Summary of Previous Archaeological Work

A series of trenches were excavated by YAT in 1989-90, covering areas fronting onto Grape Lane, behind Swinegate and at the corner of Little Stonegate/Back Swinegate.

Of greatest relevance were the three complete late medieval properties delineated by alleyways running from the street into backyards or gardens, which were identified on the Grape Lane frontage (Interim 15 1990) c. 15m south of the site. The central property was a hall-like structure, aligned lengthways to Grape Lane, with a row of evenly spaced padstones running along the centre to carry timber supports for the upper storey and roof. Later on, low sleeper walls were inserted between the timber supports to subdivide the building, and this coincided with the appearance of small hearths which were industrial in nature.

Two trenches were dug 10m behind the Swinegate frontage. The smallest trench revealed a 2m deep homogenous deposit of horticultural soil dating from the 11th century to the present day, covering late Roman structural remains. The other trench also revealed a great depth of cultivated soil, divided by fences into four properties. Associated with these properties were cess pits and surfacing indicative of 'back-land' activities. These deposits were preceded by a short-lived cemetery, almost certainly associated with the vanished St. Benet's church. Roman deposits lay beneath the burials (Interim 14 1990).

The excavations at the corner of Little Stonegate and Back Swinegate revealed a series of late medieval buildings fronting onto both streets. The buildings fronting Little Stonegate

had small chambers to the rear, possibly industrial in function.

When the rear wall of 65 Low Petergate was under-pinned, a Watching Brief by YAT (site: 1984.1009) recorded medieval external dump deposits in the 2.5m deep trench. The 18th century building had a stone foundation, which could imply it re-used an earlier, possibly medieval, foundation. Anglo-Scandinavian deposits underlay the medieval remains.

The redevelopment of the plot at 59 Low Petergate (site: 1981.1028) revealed a 0.5 - 0.75m depth of post medieval material.

MAP excavated a trench at Norman Court, behind 13-19 Grape Lane, c. 50m to the south-west of the site. The earliest deposits consisted of an 11th century dump, cut by two 11th/12th century pits. The pits were sealed by a number of surfaces/paths of 12/13th century dates, which were in turn covered by a dump of building rubble in the 14th century. The late medieval period saw further pits excavated and more dumping, this being capped off by building rubble in the post-medieval period (MAP 1995a).

Methods

The evaluation had determined the level at which significant late medieval deposits occurred (c.15.5m AOD). This resulted in the designing of a raft for the new building's foundation which would restrict disturbance to above the 15.5m AOD level.

The archaeological specification (formulated in a meeting of 11.9.95) allowed for the machine reduction of the development area in three spits to the 15.5m AOD level, with recording by

A desk-top assessment by YAT of the 2 Grape Lane site showed that the present street frontage lay further west than that shown on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map, thus sealing the later medieval street frontage below the pavement (YAT 1995).

The 1995 evaluation at 2 Grape Lane was carried out in a very small area (c.1m square), but even so revealed a group of distinct stratified deposits (MAP 1995b). The earliest feature recorded was a narrow wall of mortared, undressed limestone aligned 90 degrees to the street frontage, possibly of late medieval date and associated with mortar flooring. The next phase was characterised by the deposition of a large number of thin laminations of occupation-type material. A subsequent phase saw the construction of a brick wall, also running perpendicularly to the Grape Lane frontage, the form of the brick was dated to the 16th century or later. A later medieval deposit could have represented levelling or dumping.

This body of previous archaeological work in the area, particularly the YAT excavations at Grape Lane and the 1995 MAP evaluation, clearly showed the potential for the site to have significant preserved archaeological deposits.

photographic or conventional planning means at the base of each spit. In the event, an engineering solution was found which meant that the raft was installed at the base of the first spit (bottom of 1995 evaluation layer 1009, c.15.75m AOD).

Excavation by spit creates problems for proper stratigraphic recording, as it destroys a site's unique configuration. Spits are "arbitrary stratigraphic sequences" which do not "have the analytical value which a normal stratigraphic

sequence possesses" (Harris 1989, 118); that being so, all attempts were made to incorporate the arbitrary, machine-excavated material into the site sequence. Because the nature of spit-excavation means that the site sequence is open to interpretation, it is possible that another writer could put forward an alternative sequence, but it must be stressed that the narrative in the Results Section (below) is an honest attempt to fit the evidence.

Results

The two elements of the site to be recorded were the sections of the machine-spitted deposits and the two-dimensional surface exposed at the base of the machine spit (Figs. 2-3). Given the nature of excavation by spit (outlined above), there were obviously problems with establishing a fully reliable sequential framework for the site, but it has been possible to arrive at a generally plausible, even reliable, structural sequence of eight phases (I-VIII). There are instances where interpretation has been used in the place of reliable fact, but it should be clear in the text where it has been necessary to do this.

Phase I

This phase concerned the single deposit (context 2059) which was earlier than the Phase II structure. Context 2059 was a spread of very pale red mortar extending both sides of the later wall (context 2055), which suggested that it pre-dated the wall. Traces of similar mortar were located by the 1995 evaluation (context 1014), and these appear to represent floor surfaces.

Phase II

Phase II concerned the earliest structural phase discernible on site, consisting of two parallel walls (contexts 1015 and 2055 - Structure 1) aligned north-west to south-east at 90 degrees to the Grape Lane frontage. Wall 1015 had been

The trench was 9m in length north-south, and had a maximum width of 5m. The area was planned at a scale of 1:20, with sections being drawn at 1:10. A photographic record was taken in colour transparency format. Pottery samples were recovered to try to establish a chronological framework.

revealed in the 1995 evaluation, and consisted of undressed, angular limestone bonded by a weak yellowish mortar, with a width of 0.25m, extending for c. 2.5m from the western baulk. Wall 2055 was situated c. 1.4m south of 1015, and though of similar construction, at 0.5m it was almost twice as wide. It extended 3.7m eastward into the trench from the direction of the Grape Lane frontage. It is likely that the two walls formed a corridor within a building with its axis along Grape Lane, as the distance between them was too narrow for anything but a narrow chamber. However, there is also the very real possibility that the walls flanked an alleyway between two properties.

At the extreme southern end of the trench a linear deposit of cobbles (context 2036) could represent a wall belonging to this phase; if so, it would have formed the southern wall of a 2.1m wide chamber bounded to the north by wall 2055.

Phase III

This phase contains deposits related to the use of Structure 1. A linear spread of mortar (context 2043), possibly the remains of flooring was located at the southern end of the trench. A very mixed silty clay deposit (context 2042) overlay the mortar spread, and this would seem to equate with similar mixed deposits (context 1012) from

the 1995 evaluation. In this area an edge-set tiled hearth (context 2039), and perhaps a number of other features (contexts 2038, 2040 and 2041) appear to represent domestic activity within the structure.

Deposits similar to context 2042 (contexts 2048 and 2053) probably equated with the evaluation trench context 1013.

Along the northern baulk of the trench a linear deposit of rubble (context 2047), which included limestone blocks, possibly represented a demolished structural element of this phase.

Deposits of mortar, sand and tiles (contexts 2028, 2029, 2030 and 2037 overlying wall 2055, might represent destruction of the wall. Context 2037 contained 16-17th century sherds, and this could provide a date for the demolition of this possible wall.

Phase IV

This phase was associated with a brick-walled structure (Structure 2) aligned with the Grape Lane frontage, whose east-west wall had been recorded in the 1995 evaluation (context 1010). The bricks in the wall were identified as being 16th century or later in date. The east-west wall ran for 2.5m eastwards into the trench at which point it met another wall (context 2044) which ran perpendicularly northwards out of the trench. Unfortunately, robbing or later disturbance had destroyed the relationship between 1010 and 2044, but it is reasonable to assume that they belonged to the same structure, forming a room at least 2.5m x 3.9m in size. The same disturbance/robbing disrupted the relationship between 1010 and traces of a similar wall (context 2049) in the east baulk; this continued 1010's line and hence had apparently also formed part of Structure 2.

Phase V

Phase V encompassed activity contemporary with the occupation of Structure 2, and formed two separate groups, one to the north, and the other to the south, of wall 2049.

A possible hearth butted up to the northern face of wall 2049, and consisted of a grouping of thin tiles (context 2032) and a limestone block (context 2033) within a bowl-shaped cut (context 2069). Much of the hearth lay to the east, outside the trench, but it was at least 0.55m north-south and 0.2m east-west. An apparent dump of flat tiles (context 2009) overlay hearth 2032, along with another dump of tiles (context 2010) positioned to the north, this time with a mortar matrix. Context 2010 overlay a clay deposit (context 2011), perhaps traces of flooring.

Subsequently, three sandy silt deposits were laid down (contexts 2008, 2007 and 2005), which showed a southwards tilt, suggesting that they were tipped or dumped from the north. However, the presence of charcoal lenses within 2005 might suggest that this context at least was domestically derived, and it could be that contexts 2010, 2009, 2008 and 2007 were dumped to raise the floor level of Structure 2, with occupation-type activity creating context 2005.

South of wall 2049, the earliest deposit of this phase was a small area of clay (context 2021), perhaps traces of flooring, which was cut through on the southern side by a shallow feature (context 2066), with a silty clay fill (context 2020). Three subsequent layers (contexts 2014, 2015 and 2017) would seem to be occupation-type deposits, with 2014 perhaps representing a mortar floor.

The deposits further to the east were different in character, with mortary layers (contexts 2018 and 2019 - the latter with tile inclusions) which

were cut by a tile-filled feature (cut 2031, fill 2016). This group of deposits would seem to represent structural modifications south of the wall.

Subsequently, a very mixed layer (context 2013) was deposited, and this was cut through on the north side by a shallow bowl-shaped pit (context 2065), with a very dark silty fill (context 2012). Context 2025 in the west part of the site probably reflects a similar process (?dumping) as that responsible for the deposition of 2013.

Lastly, interleaving deposits of sandy silt, mortar and brick fragments (context 2006) were deposited across the whole of the eastern part of the site, with a similar deposit (context 2024) along the site's western baulk.

Phase VI

Phase VI concerned the demolition/robbing of wall 2049 in the eastern part of the site, and was represented by a vertically-edged, rubble-filled robber trench (cut 2004, fill 2003). The robber trench extended westward to the point where 2049 met the north-south wall 2044; west of this point, the 1995 evaluation had shown the deposition of a number of fairly regular, relatively modern levelling deposits (contexts 1003, 1004 and 1005) subsequent to the wall's demolition. Context 2027, a rubbly deposit visible in the south baulk of the trench, presumably equates to the same process.

Phase VII

Phase VII is not a strict archaeological phase, but serves as a way of categorising those contexts which cannot be assigned with confidence to any particular phase.

In the north-east corner of the site three features cut through context 2053, but from an unknown level. Context 2050 was the rubble fill

of a moderately-sized pit (context 2071), and context 2051 the fill of an almost contiguous small pit or posthole (context 2072). Another rubble-filled pit or posthole (cut 2073, fill 2052) was situated c. 1m to the south.

In the central part of the site, two features (context 2074 and 2077) were present, again are cut from an unknown point; these had dark silty fills (contexts 2056 and 2063 respectively). A deposit of rubbly material (context 2060) is also included here.

At the south-east corner of the site, a straight-sided pit (context 2070) was identified, with a brick lining (2034) and rubbly fill (context 2035). Context 2035 contained late medieval and post medieval pottery.

Phase VIII

Phase VIII encompasses all demonstrably modern features and deposits identified at the site.

An amorphous pit in the central part of the site (context 2062) would appear to have had a modern date because of the cindery nature of its fill (context 2061).

A rectangular pit cut (context 2058) with a brick-lining (context 2075) and rubbly fill (context 2057), was modern in date as it cut from a high level and contained modern material.

Various concrete surfaces were identified (contexts 2023, 2026 and 2001), with a layer of sand (context 2002) forming the bedding layer for the latter.

Finally, an area of modern disturbance (context 2054) in the central part of the site showed the presence of MAP's 1995 evaluation trench.

Conclusions

Walls 1015 and 2055 (Structure 1) represented the earliest demonstrable structure at the site, but this was apparently preceded by an occupation phase (I) shown by mortar surface 2059. The two parallel walls delineated either an internal corridor or an external alley leading to the rear yard of the property. As no surfacing was present between the two walls, it seems most likely that an interior feature was represented as some form of metalling would be expected for an exterior surface.

Assuming that the less substantial wall traces at the southern end of the trench (context 2036) belong to phase II, an internal subdivision would appear to be represented here, this room being equipped with a substantial edge-set tile hearth (2039) and having mortar flooring pointing to domestic use. The early post-medieval pottery from the disturbed surface of wall 2036 (context 2037) point to 16/17th century demolition of this structure.

Overall, the Phase II activity seems to have been a remodelling of a pre-existing building by subdividing it internally. This scenario of the late-medieval subdivision of buildings was recorded during YAT's excavation along the Grape Lane frontage c. 20m south of 2 Grape Lane, so there would appear to be some correlation between the two sites.

The demolition of Structure 1 apparently prepared the way for a brick-walled building (Structure 2) on the same general alignment. It has been previously stated that the form of its bricks gave it a 16th century or later date. Structure 2 consisted of an east-west wall (contexts 2049 and 1010) and a perpendicular

north-south-wall (context 2044). The substantial form of wall 1010 suggests that it was an exterior rather than interior feature and its position in relation to wall 1015 located slightly to the south implies a continuity of property boundaries.

The archaeological record for the building sequence effectively ends with the demolition of Structure 2, but it is unclear when this event took place. The 1852 Ordnance Survey map shows a building on the site, but there are no records for its construction. At this date a pair of four-storey buildings built by Thomas Marfitt in 1745/6 continued to occupy 59-63 Low Petergate, immediately north of the site. At the time of the RCHM survey in 1961, the building on the site appeared to be of similar construction (though of three storeys only) to the 59-63 Low Petergate houses, but it is possible that it incorporated an earlier building, ie. Structure 2. The form of the bricks of Structure 2 would seem to rule out contemporaneity with the adjoining 1745/6 buildings.

The buildings on 59-63 Low Petergate were demolished in 1962/3, and it seems likely that the 2 Grape Lane building was removed at the same time, because whereas it showed on a 1961 RCHM photograph, it was absent from the 1966 O.S. map.

The 59-63 Low Petergate plot was redeveloped in 1981, but 2 Grape Lane remained a vacant area. The present redevelopment of the site can be seen as the latest in a sequence of buildings at 2 Grape Lane which extends back at least as far as the late medieval period.

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APPENDIX 1

Context Listing

1995 Evaluation Trench

1010	Wall
1013	Deposit
1014	Deposit/Floor
1015	Wall

1997 Recording Brief

2000	Machine Trench Cut
2001	Concrete
2002	Sand
2003	Fill of 2004
2004	Cut of robber trench
2005	Occupation deposit
2006	Occupation deposit
2007	Deposit
2008	Deposit
2009	Deposit
2010	Deposit
2011	Deposit
2012	Fill of pit 2065
2013	Dump deposit
2014	Dump deposit
2015	Dump deposit
2016	Fill of pit 2031
2017	Dump deposit
2018	Dump deposit
2019	Dump deposit
2020	Fill of pit 2066
2021	Dump deposit
2022	Not assigned
2023	Concrete
2024	Dump deposit
2025	Demolition deposit
2026	Modern deposit
2027	Dump deposit
2028	Mortar deposit
2029	Deposit
2030	Cobble deposit
2031	Cut of shallow pit
2032	Hearth deposit
2033	Fill of pit 2069
2034	Structure - brick wall
2035	Dump deposit

2036	Structure - wall
2037	Deposit
2038	Deposit/Fill of posthole
2039	Hearth deposit
2040	Deposit/Fill of posthole
2041	Deposit
2042	Dump deposit
2043	Structure - ?floor/wall
2044	Structure - brick wall
2045	Fill of construction trench 2046
2046	Cut for construction trench
2047	Dump deposit
2048	Deposit - ?pit fill
2049	Structure - brick wall
2050	Fill of pit 2071
2051	Fill of pit 2072
2052	Deposit - ?pit fill/?floor
2053	Dump deposit
2054	1995 evaluation trench cut
2055	Structure - stone wall
2056	Deposit - ?pit fill
2057	Fill of modern feature 2058
2058	Cut of modern feature
2059	Deposit - ?floor
2060	Dump deposit
2061	Fill of pit 2062
2062	Cut of small pit
2063	Fill of pit 2077
2064	Cut for brick wall 2049
2065	Cut for shallow pit
2066	Cut for pit
2067	Cut for pit
2068	Cut for pit
2069	Cut for hearth pit
2070	Cut for brick structure 2034
2071	Cut for large pit
2072	Cut for possible pit
2073	Cut for possible pit
2074	Cut for pit
2075	Structure
2076	Cut for wall trench
2077	Cut for pit

APPENDIX 2

Finds Catalogue

2012	Pottery - 1 sherd, 0.020kg 1 body sherd: Siegburg Stoneware	Medieval
2017	Pottery - 3 sherds, 0.010kg 3 body sherds: Humber ware	15-16th
2035	Pottery - 6 sherds, 0.139kg 2 rim sherds: 1 Hambleton type ware, 1 Red ware 1 handle fragment: Red ware 2 body sherds: Humber ware Animal Bone - 1 fragment (bird), 0.001kg	16-17th
2037	Pottery - 3 sherds, 0.042kg 3 body sherds: Red ware	16-17th
Unstratified	Pottery - 15 sherds, 0.473kg 3 rim sherds: 1 Black ware, 2 Red ware 3 base sherds: 1 Hambleton type ware, 1 Humber ware: 1 Nottingham type stoneware 2 handle fragments: 1 purple glazed ware, 1 Red ware 7 body sherds: 2 York glazed ware, 1 Humber ware, 3 Hambleton type ware, 1 Red ware Ceramic Building Material - 4 fragments, 0.999kg	16th-18th

APPENDIX 3

Sequence Matrix

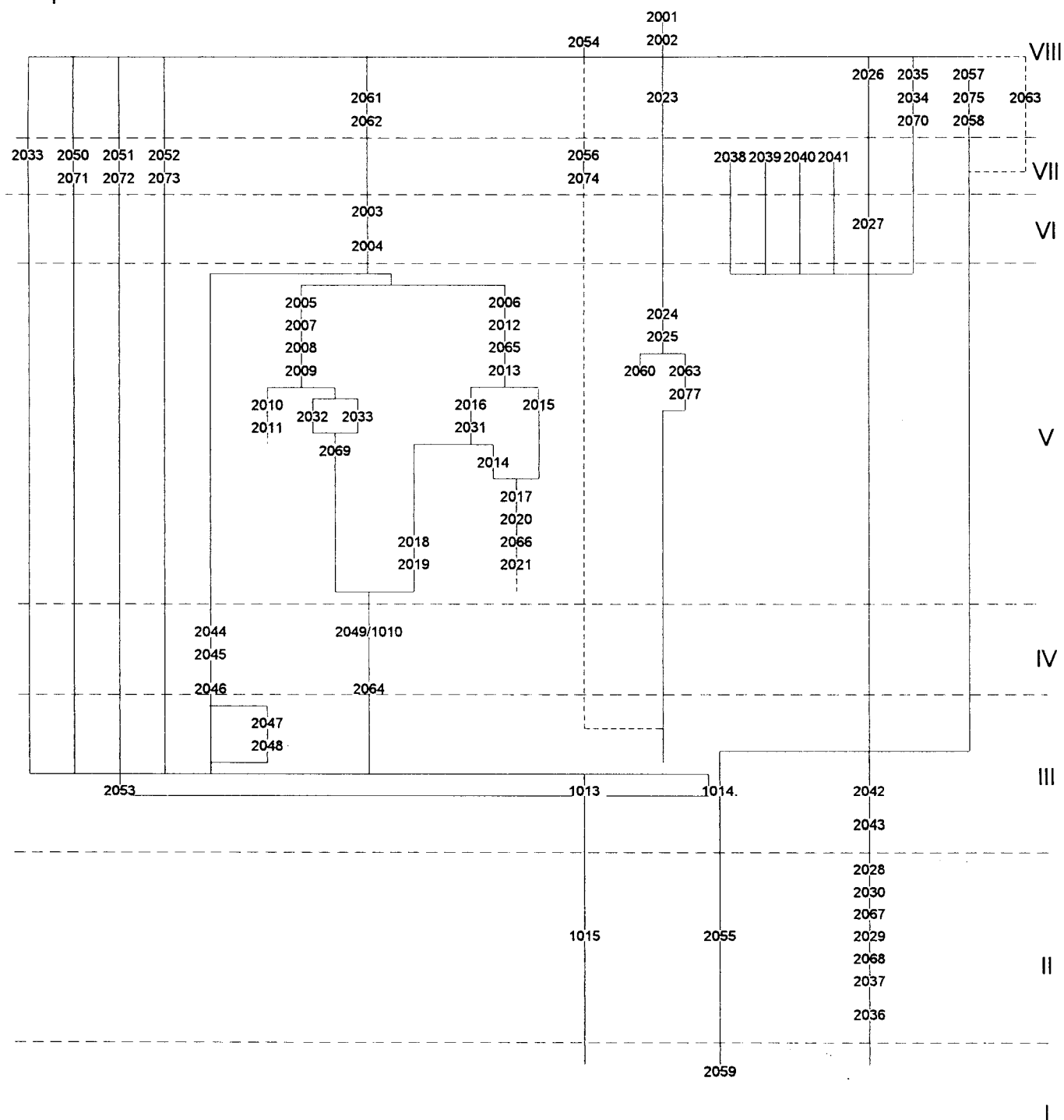




Figure 1. Site Location.

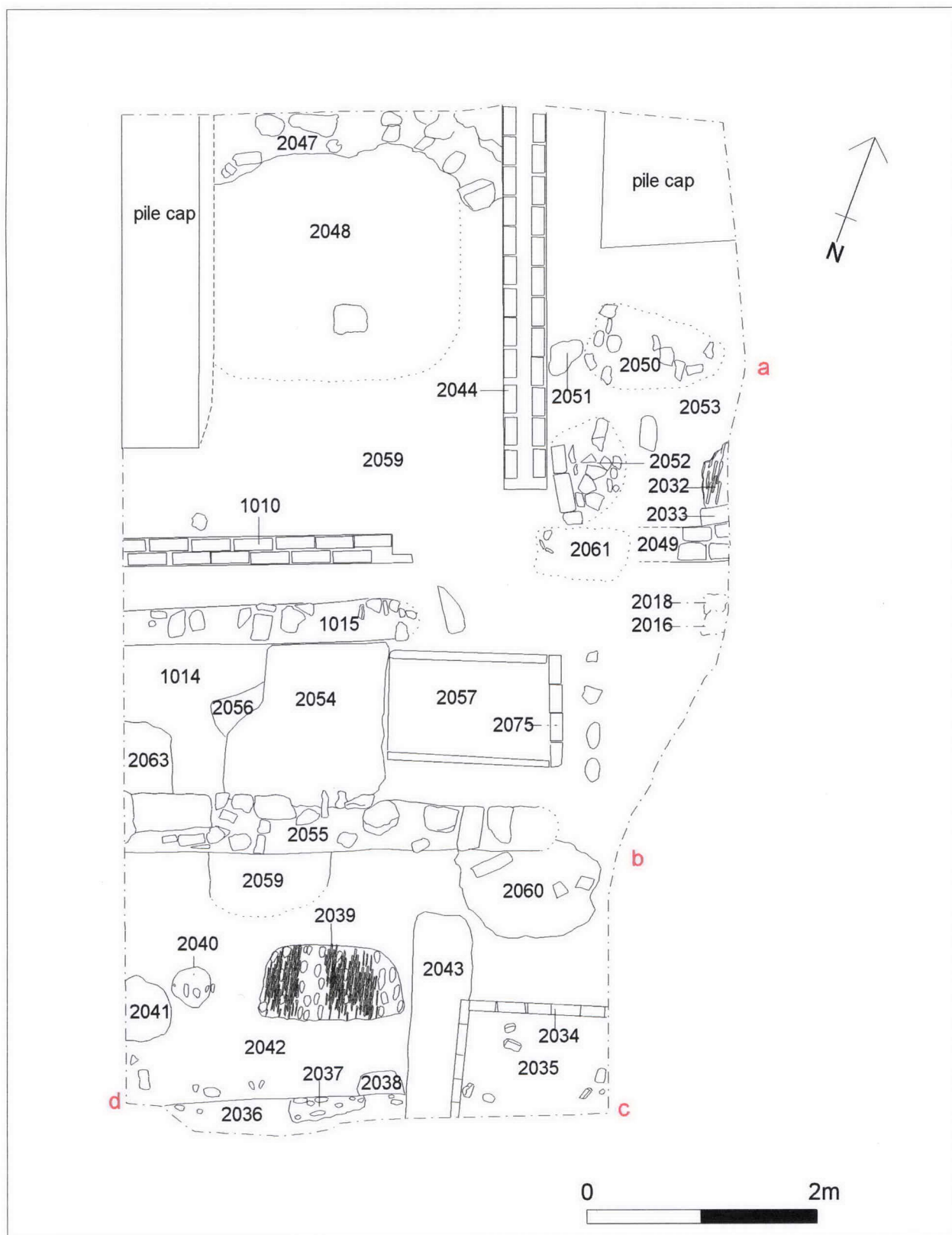


Figure 2. Plan of Trench.

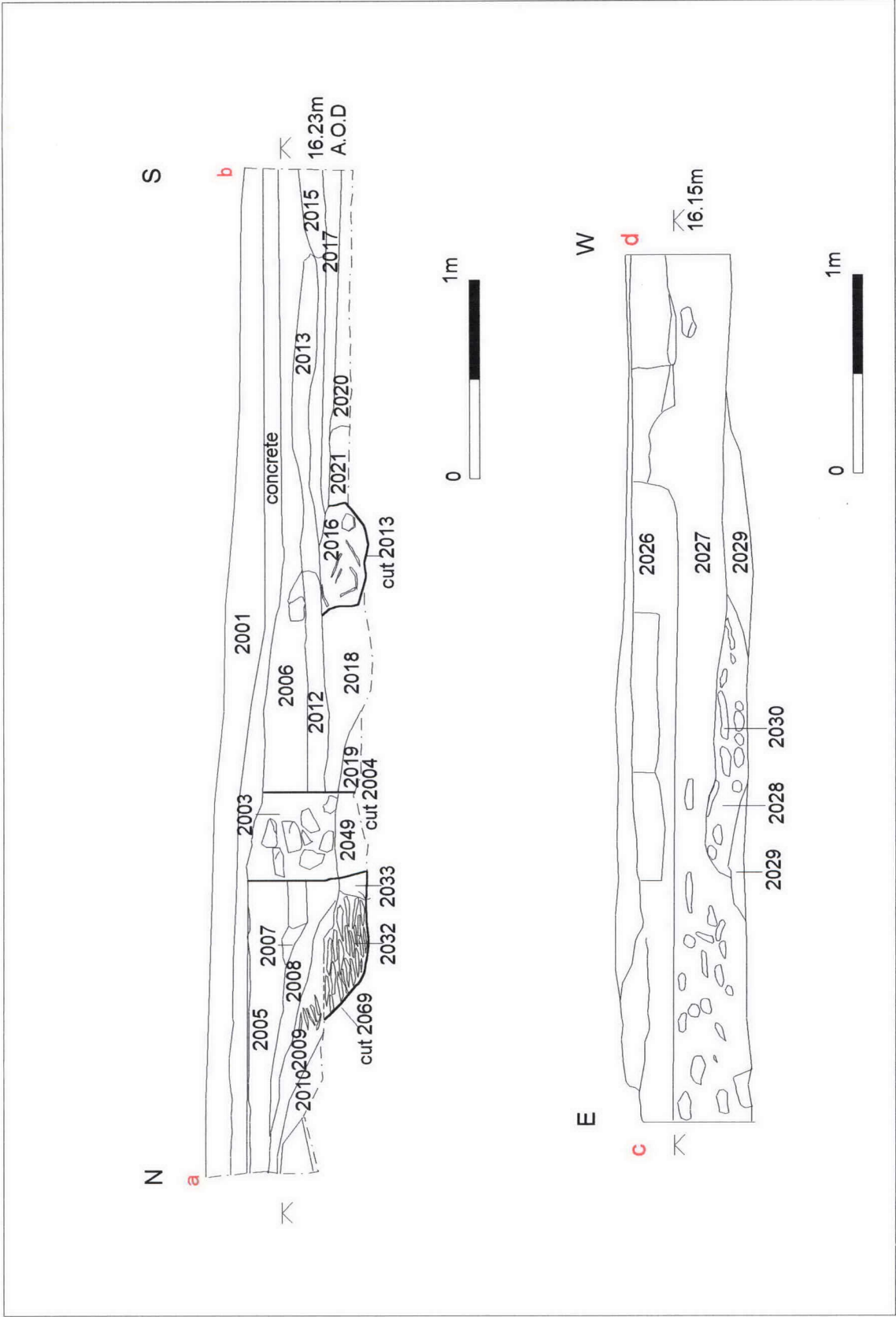


Figure 3. Sections.