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ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
T R U S T

**1 MIDDLETHORPE COTTAGES,  
MIDDLETHORPE,  
YORK**

**REPORT ON AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF**

**1998 FIELD REPORT  
NUMBER 47**

# **1 MIDDLETHORPE COTTAGES, MIDDLETHORPE, YORK**

## **REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was required at 1 Middlethorpe Cottages as the result of a planning condition on the application made by Middlethorpe House Hotels Ltd. Engineering advice was provided by Dossor Taylor, Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers Ltd.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Russell Marwood on behalf of the York Archaeological Trust, starting on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1998.

All records of the watching brief are stored under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM: 1998.716.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The watching brief consisted of the observation of ground works and the recording of any archaeological deposits, with the aim of establishing their nature, character and date. Recording followed the procedures laid down in the York Archaeological Trust *Context Recording Manual* (1996).

The work observed consisted of a series of hand dug underpinning trenches along the north, south and west walls of 1 Middlethorpe Cottages. This was undertaken in two phases with the intervening areas of material being removed after the first series of trenches had been backfilled with concrete.

## 3. GEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Middlethorpe is a hamlet to the south-east of the Knavesmire and south of York. In the Middle Ages it was a small Lordship within the manor of Dringhouses, belonging to Byland Abbey. It lies on an outcrop of glacial sand and gravel drift geology which is cut by the alluvium of the flood plain of the River Ouse. This may indicate why the ancient manorial seat of Middlethorpe was set back from the river an appreciable distance. Indeed, Middlethorpe is comparable with several other small, early settlements along the valley of the Ouse such as Kelfield and Stillingfleet, which are located just off the flood plain on higher ground.

The early settlement of Bustardthorpe, lying between Middlethorpe and York, had disappeared by the 16<sup>th</sup> century and its area was added to that of Middlethorpe proper.

After the Dissolution the Waller family became Lords of the Manor with their seat at Middlethorpe Manor, some 100 metres to the east of the observed excavations. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Manor was owned by William Brearey, merchant and Sheriff in 1598-9. His death in 1637 saw the Manor bequeathed to his son, Christopher.

The building, now under the name of Middlethorpe Manor, may be located slightly to the west of Brearey's house, for the earliest location of Middlethorpe Manor has not been accurately traced. The later manor was rebuilt in the late 17<sup>th</sup> early 18<sup>th</sup> century with wings and extensions added throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century to produce the building which stands today.

The last Brearey, Christopher, died in 1826 and his estates were broken up. The Lordship still existed however and in 1893 was held by the Hon. E.W. Lascales. His daughter married Captain H.D. Brocklehurst who became resident in 1901. H.E. Preston was incumbent in 1908 and Brigadier General the Hon. O.U.G.A. Lumley resided there in 1917. By 1927 Colonel Bryan C. Fairfax was Lord of the Manor.

Middlethorpe Hall, located 60 metres to the south-east of the Cottages, was the second house of note in the lordship. It was built c. 1699-1701 by Thomas Barlow of Leeds who bought the site in 1698. Several existing outbuildings and a dovecote seem to suggest that there was a dwelling on the same site before this which may have been occupied by Sir Henry Thompson who died in 1692 (Fig. 2).

Side wings were added to the main south elevation in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century by Francis Barlow, (1690-1771), High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1735 and at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the west wing was enlarged and several alterations took place on the north and south faces of the buildings.

The house remained in the possession of the Barlow family until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu resided at the Hall in 1713-15. In 1836 arms were granted to John Bower whom was resident at the Hall, but by 1838 it was held by the Rev. Edward Trafford Leigh, husband of Frances, daughter of John Barlow, and in 1875 by her second husband, M.A.E. Wilkinson. Their son, Colonel G.A.E. Wilkinson was owner from 1893 until his death. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century however, saw the Hall sub-let. Lady Mary Stourton was incumbent in 1823 and in 1875, a Miss Ann Marion Johnson who kept the Hall as a private boarding school. L.C. Paget was living in the Hall after 1912.

The cottage undergoing renovation does not appear on the Ordnance Survey map of 1852 (Fig. 3) but is marked on the 1952 edition (Fig. 4).

#### **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

There have been several archaeological discoveries made around the Middlethorpe area giving credence to the theory of occupation from Roman times to the present day. Five burials were discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century along Bishopthorpe Road. These finds consisted of two stone coffins unearthed in 1813 and two more in the same field in 1826. In 1839 a skull and a coin of Claudius Gothicus were found near Campleshon Road.

Roman occupation debris was also discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the gravel terrace overlooking the Ouse during gravel digging. This debris included Flavian Samian pottery sherds, metal objects and a great many cattle bones.

## 5. OBSERVATIONS

The work observed consisted of the hand digging of five trenches, dug to varying depths along the south, west and north walls of the property (Fig. 5-6).

### 5.1 Excavation Number 1

This was located up against the south side of the structure and measured 1.10m by 0.80m. Its longest axis ran parallel to the building and it was dug to a maximum depth of 2.00m BGL. The brick built south wall of the building was found to continue down to 0.50m BGL and be sitting on a 0.16m thick concrete ground beam. Dark, firm, grey/green laminated clay sub-soil was encountered 0.80m BGL, above which was a layer of loosely packed, medium to large cobbles. Sealing these were deposits which contained much ash and cinder.

Context Number	Description
1001	Gravel
1002	Friable dark brown clayey silt
1003	Dark grey silty clay, ash
1004	Compact mid brown clayey silt
1005	Compact very dark brown clayey silt, much cinder
1006	Medium to large cobbles
1007	Heavy, firm, dark grey/green laminated clay

### 5.2 Excavation Number 2

This trench was 1.20m by 1.00m and reached a depth of 1.90m BGL. It was located up against the west side of the structure with its longest side running parallel to the building. The brick west wall was found to continue down to 0.50m BGL whereupon it was set on a 0.16m thick concrete ground beam which projected out into the trench 0.14m. Natural sub-soil, in the form of a firm, orange/brown, sandy clay was encountered around 0.70-0.80m BGL. This contained occasional lenses of dark, firm, grey/green laminated clay. Above this was a spread of flat, broken tile fragments which had been cut by a modern service trench. The remainder of the deposits encountered consisted of a series of modern dumps, backfill and a dis-used service pipe together with garden debris and modern building rubble.

Context Number	Description
2001	Friable brown silty loam. Moderate ash, roots
2002	Limestone rubble, brick rubble, hardcore
2003	Very dark brown silty loam
2004	Friable mid brown clayey loam, moderate charcoal & ash
2005	Hardcore backfilled service trench
2006	Soft brown silt backfilled service trench
2007	Compact brown clayey loam, moderate small pebbles, charcoal & ash
2008	Flat laid dumped tile fragments
2009	Firm orange sandy clay, lenses of firm dark grey/green laminated clay

### 5.3 Excavation Number 3

This excavation was located 0.70m to the north of Excavation No. 2. and consequently produced similar results. The wall extended down another course of brickwork to 0.65m BGL with the concrete ground beam slightly thinner. Natural sub-soil was located 0.75m BGL with a layer of gravel and the occasional tile fragment similar to those found in Excavation No.1 sitting above it. Above this was the continuation of the disused service pipe and trench together with garden debris and modern building waste.

Context Number	Description
3001	Friable mid brown clayey loam, moderate charcoal & ash
3002	Limestone rubble, brick rubble, hardcore
3003	Very dark brown silty loam with much gravel
3004	Hardcore backfilled service trench
3005	Compact brown clayey loam, moderate small pebbles, charcoal & ash
3006	Gravel and tile dump
3007	Compact, firm, orange/brown, sandy clay

### 5.4 Excavation Number 4

The ground level at this trench location was c.0.20m lower than any of the other excavations. This trench was dug against the north wall of the structure and measured 1.05m by 0.80m with its longest side along the north/south axis. It was dug to a maximum depth of 1.40m BGL with a 0.40m deep, 0.20m wide step running along the south facing section.

The brick north wall was found to continue down to 0.40m BGL before a 0.16m thick concrete ground beam was encountered. After the removal of 0.20m of topsoil, all the deposits removed in this excavation seemed to consist of loose sand and hard sandy clay.

Natural sub-soil, in the form of a firm, orange/brown, sandy clay was first encountered at approx 0.50m BGL.

Context Number	Description
4001	Mid brown silty loam, turf
4002	Compact orange sandy clay with lenses of fine cream sand
4003	Firm, orange/brown, sandy clay

### 5.5 Excavation Number 5

This was located 0.80m to the north of Excavation No. 5 and measured 1.00m by 1.10m, its longest axis being north/south. It was dug to a finished depth of c.1.90m BGL but only observed for the first 1.00m of depth. The brick wall continued down to 0.60m BGL, with the concrete ground beam adding 0.16m to the finished depth of construction. Natural sub-soil, in the form of a firm, orange/brown, sandy clay was encountered 0.60m BGL. Sitting on top of this was a layer of small cobbles and large pebbles in a matrix of mid brown clayey silts. The top 0.20m of deposits removed consisted of garden soil and turf.

Context Number	Description
5001	Mid brown silty loam, turf
5002	Mid brown clayey silts, charcoal & gravel
5003	Small cobbles, large pebbles, loosely packed
5004	Firm, orange/brown, sandy clay

## 6. FINDS ASSESSMENT

The bulk of the finds material comprises plain tile, in the usual York form of peg tile, with a single square or circular peg hole centrally placed at the top edge of the tile. Most of the fabrics seem to be within the usual type, with one example of a 14th century, or later, fabric.

There is one fragment which has an uncertain identification. It may be a fragment of tegula, which is a Roman roof tile. It has a body thickness of 0.024m which is within the range for a tegula, perhaps of civilian or later Roman military manufacture. However, it lacks a flange, and there is the possibility that it is either an early medieval flange tile (usually identified by the shape of the flange and fabric) or a medieval nib tile. In addition, the tile is not in a recognisable Roman tile fabric, but neither is it in a currently identifiable medieval fabric. As it is clearly hand-made it probably dates to no later than the medieval period.

This sample of ceramic material is mainly medieval in nature, with a classic range of medieval roof tile.

As Middlethorpe is a little outside York, this sample should be retained for further study, as it will contribute to the knowledge of the distribution of York tile fabrics. As the study of ceramic building materials progresses it may be possible to give a closer date to the fragment with the uncertain form.

Context Number	Form	Date	Spot date
2008	Plain	13-16th	14-16th
2008	Plain	14-16th	
2008	Peg (square peghole)	13-16th	
2008	?Tegula (T24, fabric unusual)	Roman-16th	

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

These excavations show that natural sub-soil occurs between 0.50 and 0.80m of the present ground surface and that much of the archaeological evidence which may have existed on the site seems to have been removed during the building of Middlethorpe Cottages.

The excavations did however produce a limited amount of archaeological evidence. No structures were encountered although dating evidence was gained from the tile assemblage. The discovery of such tiles seems to point to some activity on the site in the medieval period, but it is speculation that these tiles may have come from the earlier Manor House. A layer of cobbling of an indeterminable date was also observed and may have been related to an earlier building.

## 8. LIST OF SOURCES

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Annual Report, (1838) Yorkshire Philosophical Society, p24

Annual Report, (1834) Yorkshire Philosophical Society, p46

Yorkshire Gazette, 14 January 1826

Calendar of Patent Rolls, (1557-8) *York City Records*. p.390

Calendar of Patent Rolls, (1385-9) *York City Records*. p.13

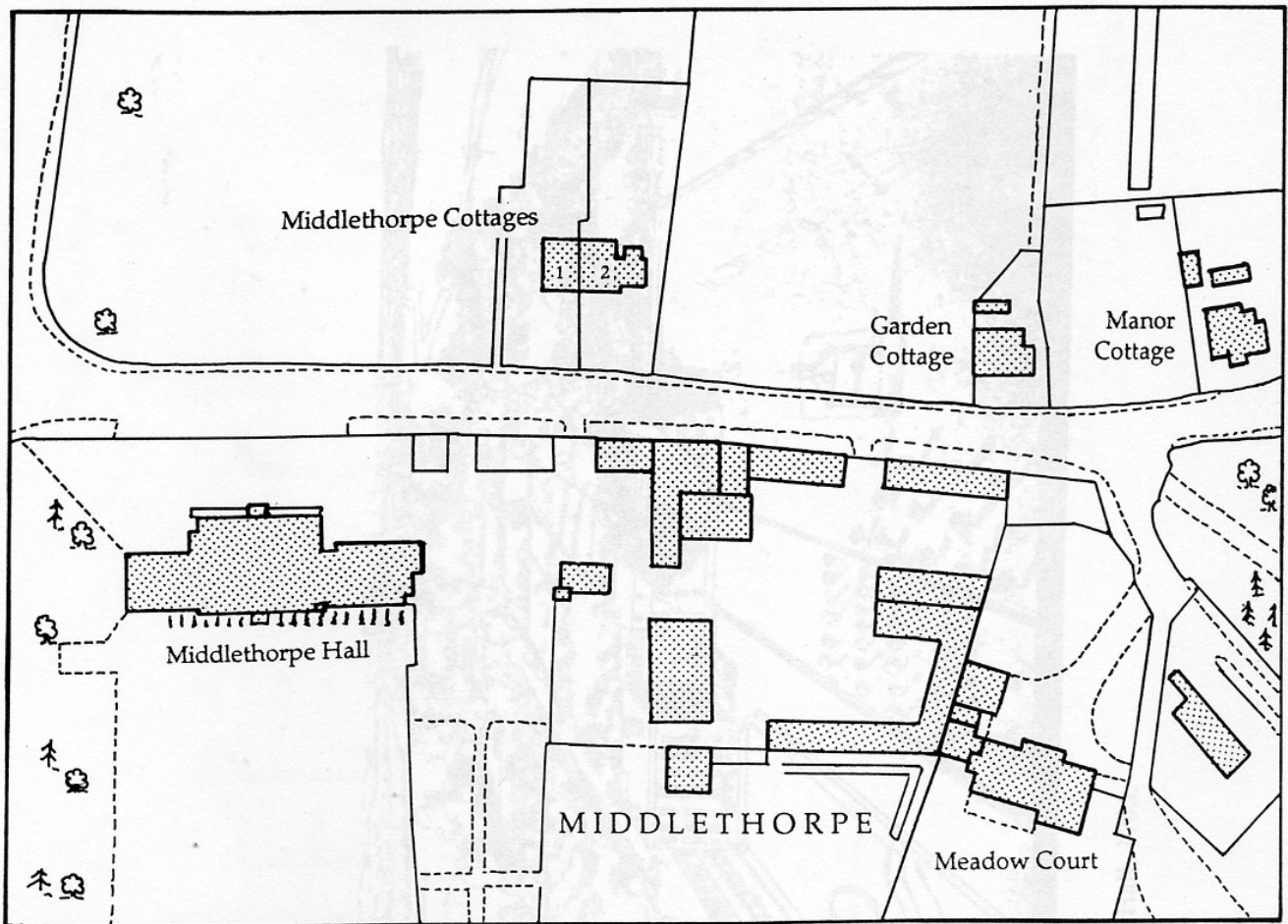
## **9. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS**

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Archive: Christine Kyriacou

Editor: Martin Stockwell



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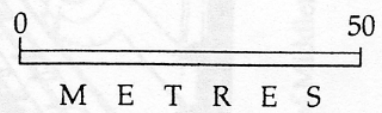


Figure 1. Location of site.

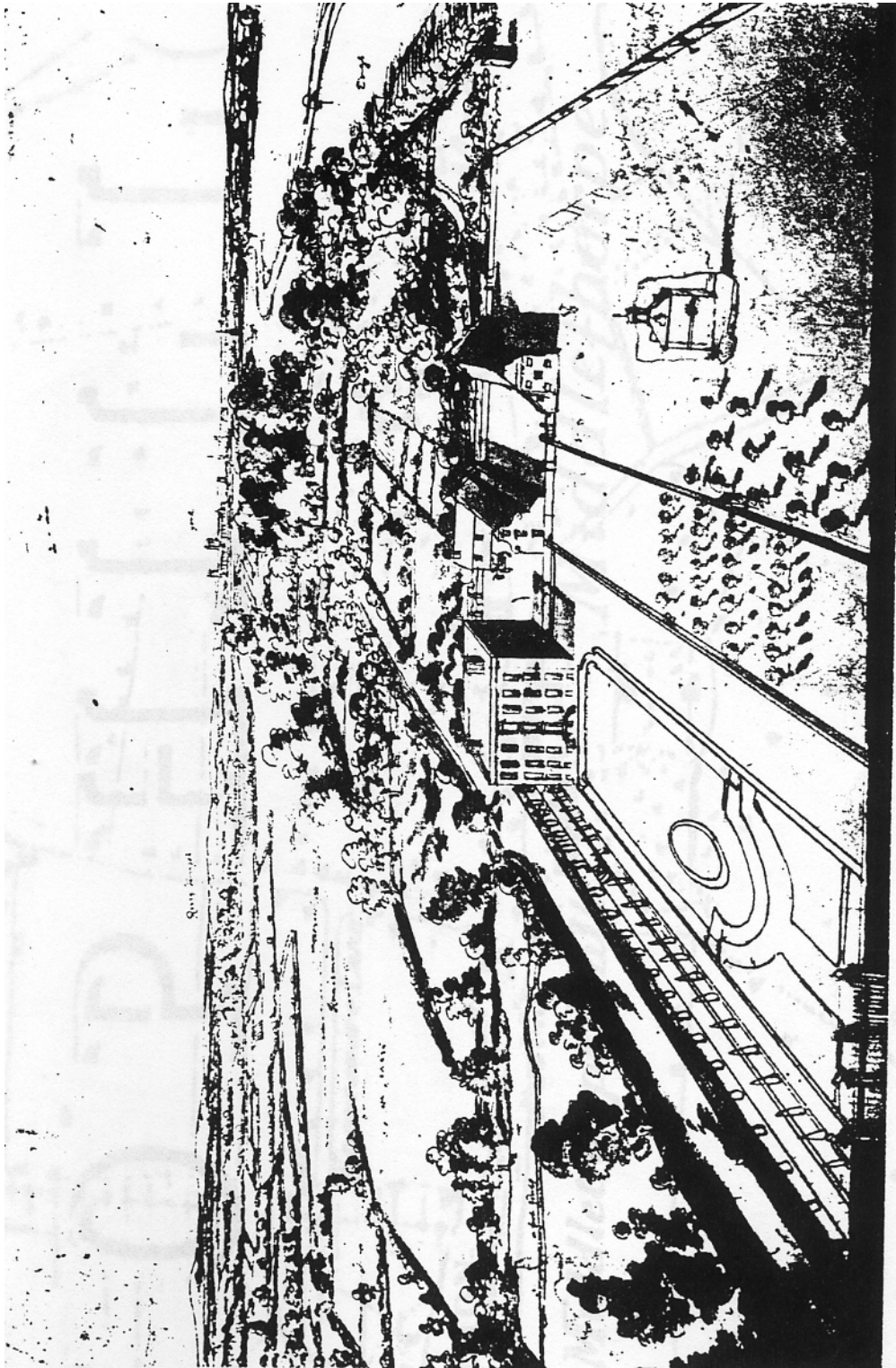


Figure 2. Place's sketch of Middlethorpe Hall, 1705.

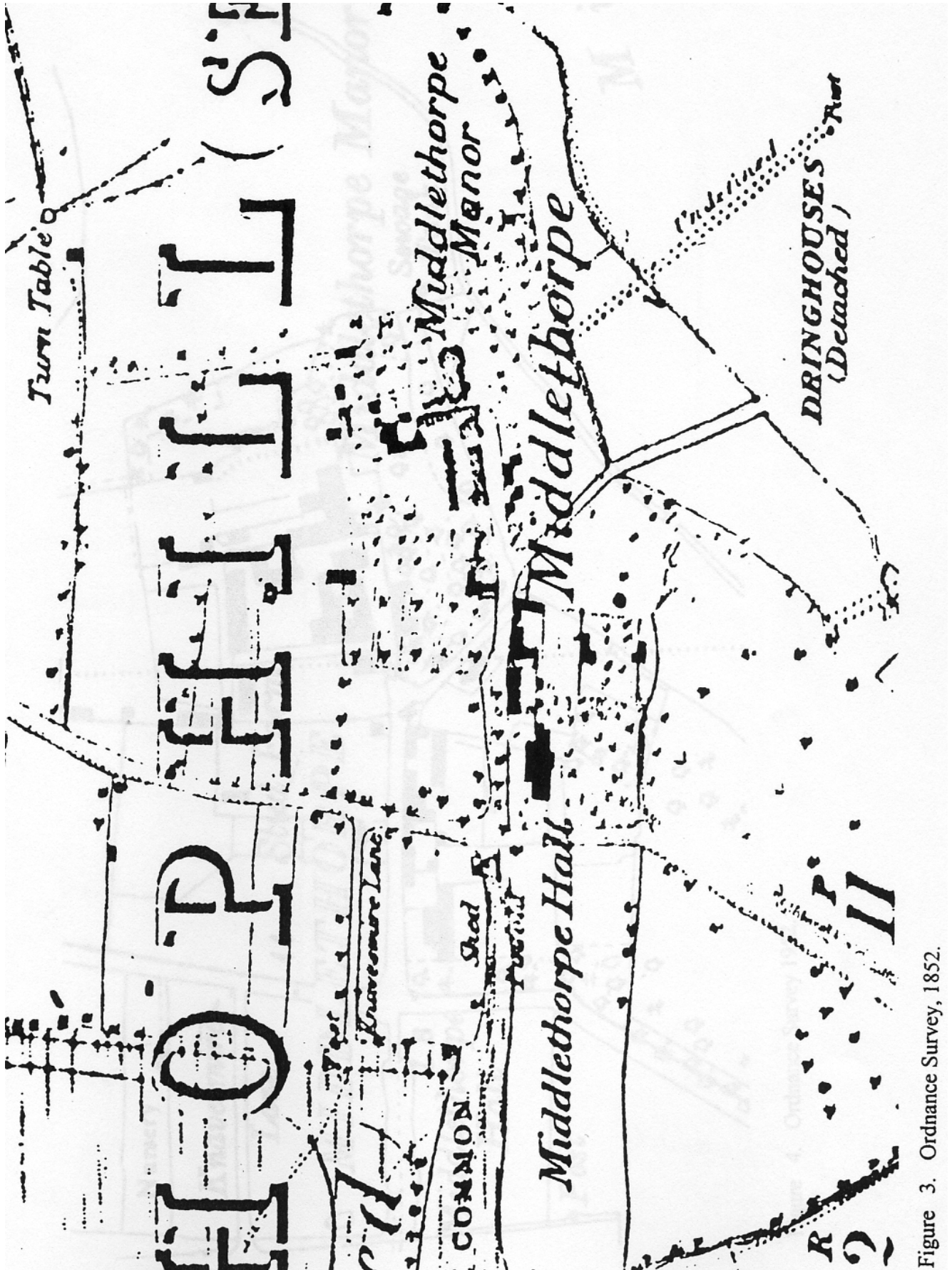


Figure 3. Ordnance Survey, 1852.

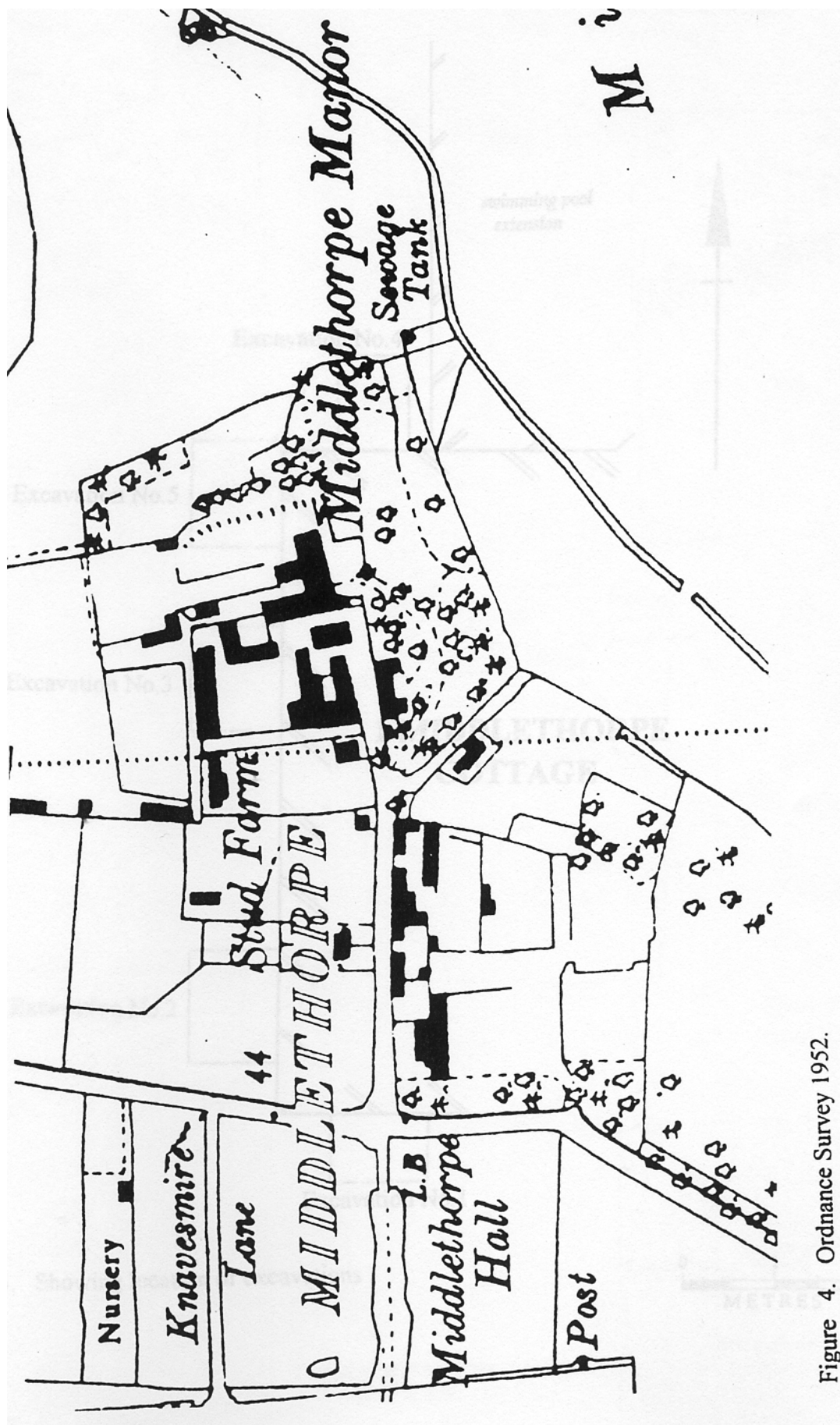


Figure 4. Ordnance Survey 1952.

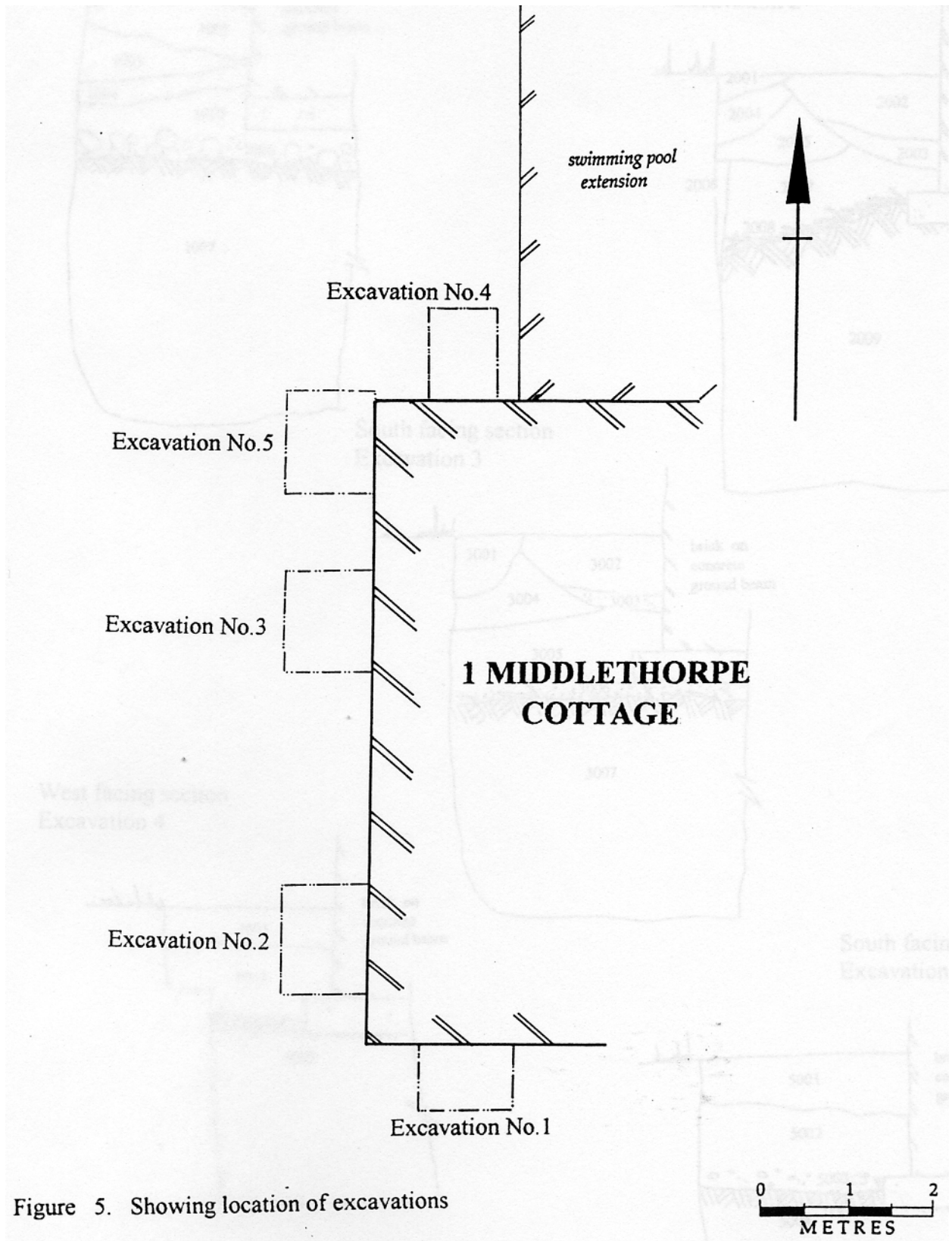
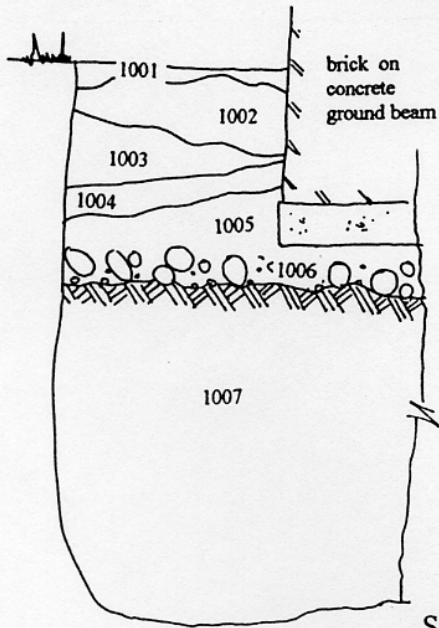


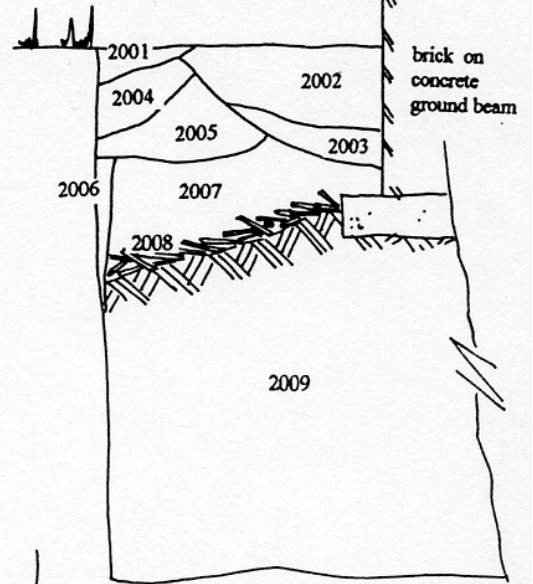
Figure 5. Showing location of excavations

East facing section  
Excavation 1

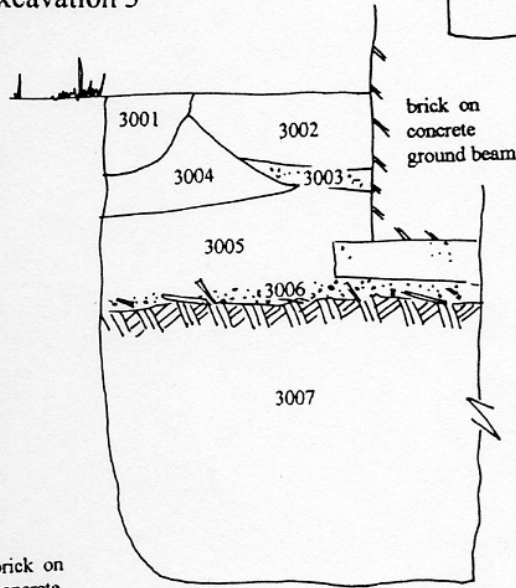


1 Middlethorpe Cottages, Middlethorpe

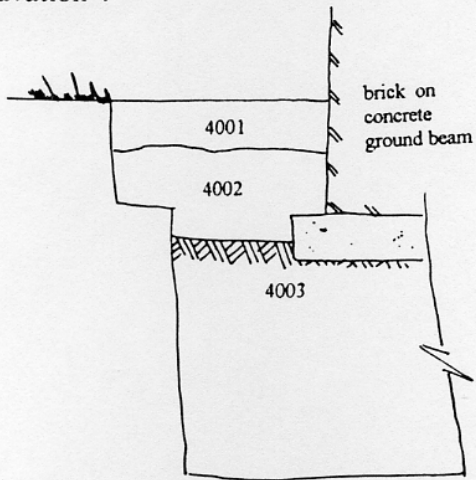
South facing section  
Excavation 2



South facing section  
Excavation 3



West facing section  
Excavation 4



South facing section  
Excavation 5

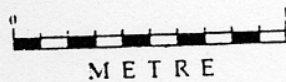
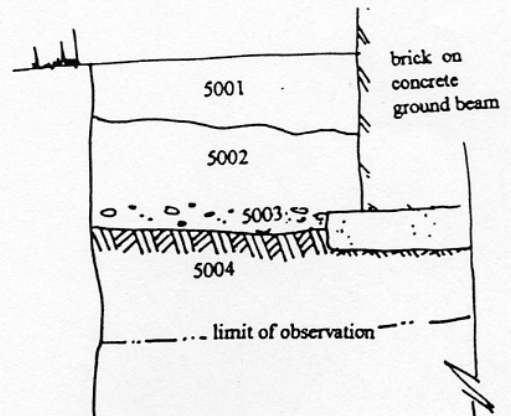


Figure 6. Sections