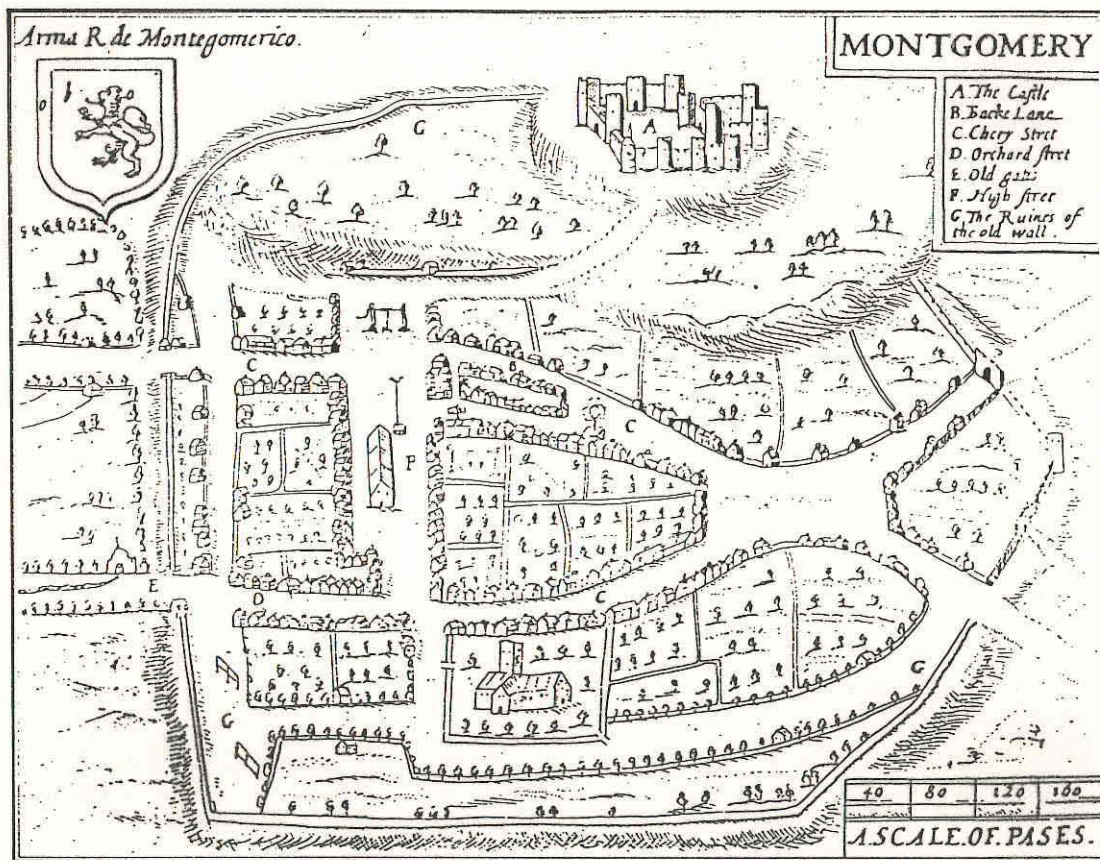


Westmead and adjacent plot Montgomery, Powys

EVALUATION REPORT

February 1992



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by **Alex Gibson**
with pottery report by N W Jones

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INTRODUCTION

Montgomery was founded in 1223 and granted its borough charter in 1227. The town defences, comprising an encircling outer ditch and internal bank which was surmounted by a stone wall, were probably built around 1230 and are still visible today for much of their circuit (Soulsby 1983). The medieval town appears to be preserved more or less intact in the modern street pattern (fig 1) although many buildings fronting the streets were remodelled extensively in the 18th and 19th centuries. Nevertheless, modern development within the borough has been at a minimum, and traces of the original medieval buildings may well survive below many of the present buildings. Most of the property boundaries indicated on early maps such as Speed's map of 1610 can still be identified (fig 2).

The proposed housing development of Westmead and adjacent plot (planning applications M21415 and M21416) affect two undeveloped open areas within the medieval borough (fig 3). M21415 affects a larger plot of pasture (c 0.5ha) bordered to the NW by Chirbury Road and to the SE by School Lane. M21416 affects a smaller area (c 0.1ha) at the junction of School Lane and School Bank and is currently occupied by a domestic orchard. Speed's map of 1610 shows houses fronting the main road in the larger plot (fig 2). The smaller plot is difficult to identify on Speed's map. It would be rash, however, to regard Speed's plan as any more than a schematic representation. A Powis Estate map of 1785 (currently on display in the Old Bell Museum, Montgomery), shows both plots as open areas unencumbered by buildings. A series of earthwork platforms and terraces in the larger plot (CPAT 1991, fig 4, sketch plan) suggested that buildings had formerly been present on the site.

Although it seemed possible that one if not both sites might contain archaeological deposits pre-dating 1610 and which had remained undisturbed since at least 1785, the exact nature and/or presence of the archaeological deposits in these areas was uncertain. Accordingly, Montgomeryshire District Council requested that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken to assess the archaeological potential of the area in order that this might be taken into consideration when assessing the planning applications, as recommended in PPG 16. An evaluation brief for this work was prepared by the County Sites and Monuments Record on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (CPAT 1991).

THE EVALUATION

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned to undertake the prescribed evaluation which was conducted between January 29th and February 3rd 1992.

In order to test for the presence of archaeological features and to evaluate any remains present six trenches were excavated in accordance with the project brief. The location of the trenches is shown in fig 4.

Trenches 1 and 3 were situated on ground steeply sloping downwards from SE to NW in the area of the field nearest Chirbury Road. Trench 2 was located in a similar position but in a quarried area which appeared on the surface to be a possible house platform. Trench 4, at the top, south-eastern end of the field was situated on level ground on the edge of what appeared to be an artificial platform and trench 5 was located near to and parallel with the northern field boundary, on steeply sloping ground and on the edge of a possible platform. Trench 6 was located on more or less level ground in the smaller plot.

In trenches 1-3 and 5, the turf and humus, between 0.1-0.4m deep gave way to varying depths of hillwash, between 0.5-0.9m thick, which overlay the natural stony-clay subsoil into which most of the archaeological features were cut. In trench 4, a thin stony layer, 0.1m thick, separated the turf and humus from the natural stony clay and in trench 6, the turf and humus directly overlay the natural subsoil. All trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator with further cleaning and exploratory excavation by hand. Some archaeological features were partially excavated below subsoil level in order to provide further information of their form or character and if possible to provide stratified dating evidence. Otherwise, archaeological features were left intact.

Trench 1 (8.0 x 1.6m, fig 5)

This trench was located on sloping ground in the northern corner of the field and was designed to determine whether there was evidence of medieval structures fronting onto the road in this area. Four archaeological features were identified. A gully/ditch, only one edge of which was located in the excavated area, (context 1), crossed the northern end of the trench at right-angles and extended beyond the limits of excavation. The depth of the feature was not established. A second feature (context 3), possibly a pit or the butt end of a ditch, extended beyond the eastern limits of excavation. Both features were filled with a smooth, sticky stone-free clay. No dating evidence was recovered from them and their date and purpose remains unclear. At the southern end of the trench, the foundations of a substantial stone wall (context 6), 0.6m across, ran across the excavated area, set within a foundation trench (context 5) whose depth was not established. There was a layer of stone tumble, up to 0.4m thick, on the lower north-western side (see section on fig 5). A fragment of a 13th-14th century cooking pot was recovered from the wall footings (see pottery report). Immediately to the south of the wall a pit or ditch (context 7) was identified, filled with a smooth, dark soil with few stones and some charcoal. The feature was at least 1.7m across and extended beyond the limits of excavation. It was greater than 0.6m in depth, the depth to which it was excavated.

Trench 2 (10 x 1.6m, fig 6)

This trench was located in what a level platform that appeared to be either a house-platform or a quarry scoop on the north-western edge of the field fronting Chirbury Road. Excavation has suggested that the area was more likely to have been a quarry scoop, but two pits of archaeological significance were identified. One pit (context 13) extended beyond the eastern limits of excavation but appeared to be sub-rectangular in plan and at least 2m across. The pit was filled with a smooth, charcoal-rich soil, and was greater than 0.2m in depth. Two fragments of 13th-14th century cooking pot were recovered from the upper levels of fill of the pit (context 14, see pottery report). The second pit (context 15) was more rounded and much more stony than the first pit. It extended beyond the south-western limits of excavation and was at least 2m across. The pit was excavated to a depth of 0.1m and provided no dating evidence. A small semi-circular feature extending beyond the eastern limits of excavation (context 32) probably represents a posthole; it was filled with soft grey clayey soil, with possible evidence of stone packing. Where it entered the sides of the trench it was 0.3m in diameter; it produced no dating evidence.

Trench 3 (7.1m x 1.6m, fig 7)

This was located near the south-western corner of the plot and designed to determine

whether there was evidence of medieval structures fronting onto the road in this area. A stretch of footings of a stone wall (context 10), 0.5-0.6m across, was identified along the middle of the trench, which continued beyond the southern limits of excavation. The wall was set into a substantial foundation trench (context 9), c 0.7m across, the depth of which was not determined. The foundation trench appeared to terminate at the northern end in a large posthole, c 0.3m in diameter defined by a setting of pitched stones. A second possible posthole (context 11), c 0.3m in diameter, of unknown depth and with no evidence of packing stones, was identified towards the western side of the trench. Three sherds of medieval pottery were found within the stone footings and a single sherd of medieval pottery was found within the fill (context 12) of possible posthole 11 (see pottery report). A single fragment of 17th century trailed slipware from the uppermost level of the wall, context 10, may have been derived from the overlying hillwash. A further unstratified sherd from a medieval jug was recovered from the trench.

Trench 4 (10 x 1.6m, fig 8)

This trench was located at the top of the field at the junction of a possible hollow-way running up to a level platform near the south-eastern (uphill) edge of the plot. Stone rubble was noted at the edge of the platform but excavation proved this rubble to be modern, comprising brick, stone and concrete. The surface of the hollow-way appeared to be represented by a gleyed and slightly stony layer, visible in the section drawing (fig 8), c 0.1m thick and immediately above the natural subsoil. Two postholes (contexts 17 and 30) were identified, distinguished by their stony grey clay fills. Posthole 17 contained packing stones, proved c 0.4m deep, c 0.3m across at the top, and was conical in cross-section. Posthole 30 was c 0.2m across and was not excavated. Two shallow gullies (19 and 21) were identified which extended beyond the south-eastern limits of excavation. Gully 19 was c 0.4m across. Gully 21 was c 0.6m across. Both gullies were filled with loose grey soil with some small stones and in neither case was the original depth established. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the fill of gully 21 (context 22, see pottery report). Two iron nails were found within the fill (context 18) of posthole 17.

Trench 5 (10 x 1.6m, fig 9)

This trench was situated on the edge or 'apron' of a platform or terrace midway along and parallel to the north-eastern boundary of the plot. Two stakeholes (contexts 23 and 25) were identified on the edge of the platform. Stakehole 23 was somewhat irregular in plan; it measured c 0.25 x 0.2m across. Stakehole 25 was more regular in plan and was c 0.12m in diameter. Both stakeholes were filled with loose brown soil and had charcoal in their lower fills. They were both excavated to a depth of c 0.2m. Two possible drainage gullies (contexts 27 and 28) were identified towards the north-western end of the trench and were sealed by a layer of stony hillwash, up to 0.6m deep, visible in the section drawing (fig 9). Gully 27 occupied the full width of the trench and was c 0.6m across at the top and c 0.4m deep. It was filled with material similar to the stony hillwash described above. Gully 28 was c 0.5-0.6m across and ended in a rounded terminal near the centre of the trench and extended beyond the south-western limits of excavation. Its depth was not established. It was filled with smooth grey-brown soil and charcoal. Both gullies appear to represent drainage gullies designed to catch or divert rain-water running off the platform. One sherd of 13th or 14th century coarse pottery was recovered from the fill (context 29) of gully 28 (see pottery report).

Trench 6 (9 x 1.6m, fig 10)

Trench 6 was located in the orchard adjoining School Lane c 30m to the south of the main plot. Various features of archaeological significance were identified. A circular pit or posthole (context 51), c 0.75m in diameter, was filled with loose grey-clay soil and small stones. The feature was excavated to a depth of c 0.05m but no dating evidence was recovered. A possible bedding-trench of a timber building (context 55) crossed the trench and continued beyond the north-eastern and south-western limits of the excavation. The feature measured c 0.75m across where it entered the south-western section but it widened to c 2m across at the north-eastern edge of the trench where it was cut by a modern pipe trench (context 53). The fill (context 56) of the possible bedding-trench 55 produced one sherd of 13th-14th century pottery (see pottery report).

A large pit (context 57) c 1.3m across, continued beyond the north-eastern limits of excavation. It was filled with loose, grey stony soil; its depth was not determined. This pit was also cut by a modern posthole (context 59) which still contained the stump of a wooden post. A second pit (context 61) which continued beyond the south-western limits of excavation was c 1.2m across. It was filled with a dirty yellow clay soil, resembling disturbed or redeposited natural; its depth was not determined. This pit was cut by a smaller pit or posthole (context 63), c 0.5m in diameter, filled with a loose, grey stony soil; its depth was not determined. A modern service trench (context 53) containing a 1in diameter metal pipe, was identified towards the south-eastern end of the trench.

CONCLUSIONS

Features of archaeological features were identified in all the evaluation trenches. A high proportion of the features appear to belong to settlement within the medieval borough although the precise nature and dating of some of the features could only be determined by more extensive excavation.

Parts of the foundations of a probable medieval buildings were identified in Trenches 1 and 3 which appear to represent structures fronting onto Chirbury Road which have probably been preserved by later hill-wash. In the case of Trench 3, the apparent association of the footings and posthole suggests that these features represent a timber-framed structure founded partly on earth-fast posts and partly on a sill-beam set on a sleeper wall (cf the building techniques previously identified by archaeological excavations at Pool Road, Montgomery in Britnell and Jones 1989).

Further undated features and a presumed medieval pit or ditch were identified in Trench 1, and pits of probable medieval date were identified in Trench 2. Structural evidence of some antiquity is hinted at in Trench 2 by a single undated posthole. Less substantial evidence of structures were identified in trenches 4 and 5, but it seems possible that further structural evidence would be obtained if more extensive areas were to be excavated within these areas. Trench 6 produced the most complex archaeology with intersecting features suggesting a sequence of different periods of activity including evidence suggesting the presence of medieval buildings fronting onto School Lane.

With the exception of a single piece of 17th century trailed slipware, possibly derived from hillwash in trench 3, all the pottery found during excavation belongs to the 13th or 14th centuries and therefore belonging to the early history of the medieval borough. The nails

from the posthole in trench 4 (contexts 17-18) are undated.

In conclusion, it appears that significant archaeological remains survive in a relatively good state of preservation in both Westmead and the adjacent site.

POTTERY REPORT

By N W Jones

Twelve sherds of pottery were recovered weighing a total of 135g, of which one, from high up in context 10 (24g), was of trailed slipware. The remaining eleven sherds were subdivided macroscopically into four fabric groups on the basis of petrological inclusions as identified with the aid of a x 8 hand lens. The fabrics are coded according to the CPAT Pottery Fabric Series (Courtney and Jones 1989).

The MB fabrics account for the majority of the assemblage and are likely to be of local origin. The two sherds of MC fabric are of 'Herefordshire' micaceous ware. In general, the material is typical of the local 13-14th century pottery sequence.

Catalogue of medieval pottery sherds

CONTEXT	FABRIC	No	Weight(g)	FORM
T3 U/S	MB12	1	13	Jug, rim diam 16 cm
6	MB16	1	6	Cooking pot/jar
10	MB12	1	7	Jug
10	MB12	1	12	Jug base angle
10	MC3	1	10	Jug with vertical (?) applied strip
12	MB16	1	12	Cooking pot with external sooting
14	MB14	1	3	Cooking pot/jar
14	MB16	1	12	Cooking pot, rim diam c 30 cm
22	MB16	1	14	Cooking pot/jar
29	MB12	1	7	Jug with thumb-frilled base.
56	MC3	1	15	Jar with applied fingertip impressed cordon below the rim

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the agents, Mr D Pritchard of Morris, Marshall and Poole, Welshpool, for arranging permission to excavate at the site, to Mssrs D Wayne, B Hart and C Lewis for assisting with the excavation and to Mr A Baldwin for information regarding the Powis Estate map of Montgomery. Plan and section drawings are by B V Williams.

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EXCAVATION ARCHIVE

The excavation archive currently comprises the following records and materials.

Site Records

Plans and sections archive

Three annotated A1 plans of excavation areas and sections

Photographic Archive

48 35mm colour transparencies

Catalogue of colour transparencies

Context record archive

Catalogue and description of contexts

Finds record archive

Catalogue of finds by context

Finds and samples

Initial processing has been carried out on the following types and quantities of material recovered from the evaluation work

Pottery

12 twelve sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery (see report above).

Metalwork

2 iron nails

FURTHER POST-EXCAVATION TO BE UNDERTAKEN

A full excavation report should be prepared for publication in due course, the purposes of which the following work will need to be undertaken.

Publication text

Preparation of summary report for publication.

Pottery

Illustration of appropriate sherds to publication standard.

Site plan

Measured survey of the site onto which the trench locations can be accurately plotted, to publication standard.

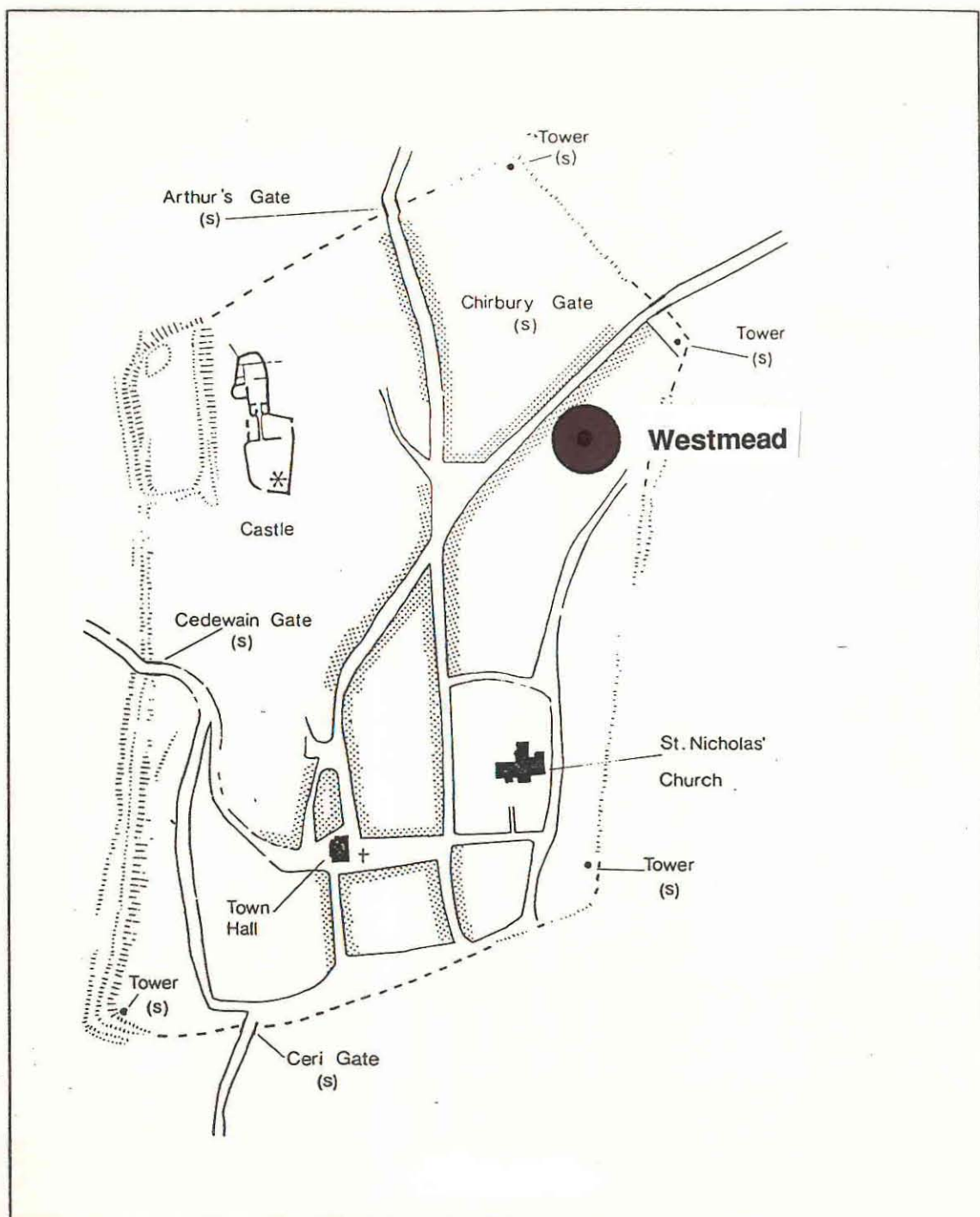


Figure 1
Street frontages of Medieval Montgomery (after Soulsby 1983)

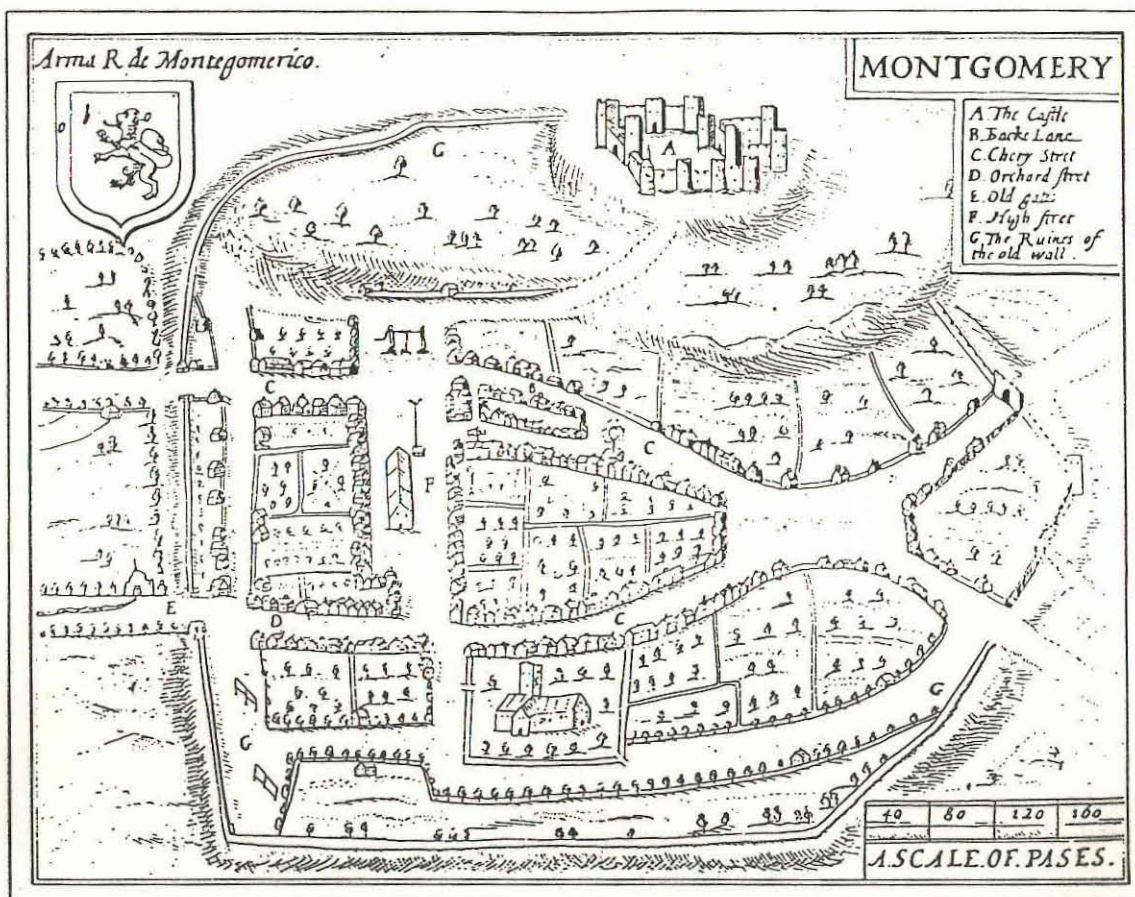


Figure 2
Speed's Map of Montgomery, 1610

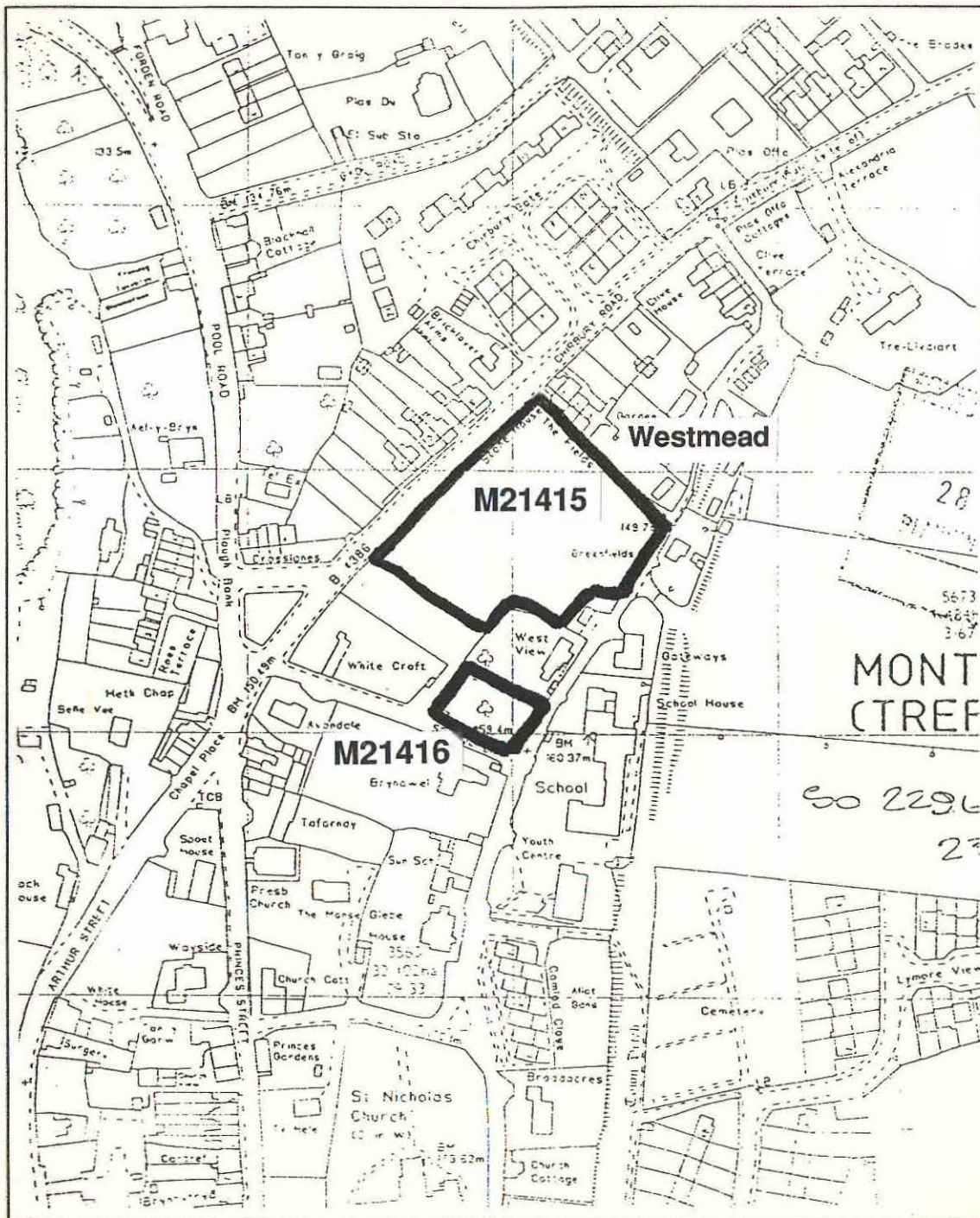


Figure 3
Location of the proposed building plots within the present town plan

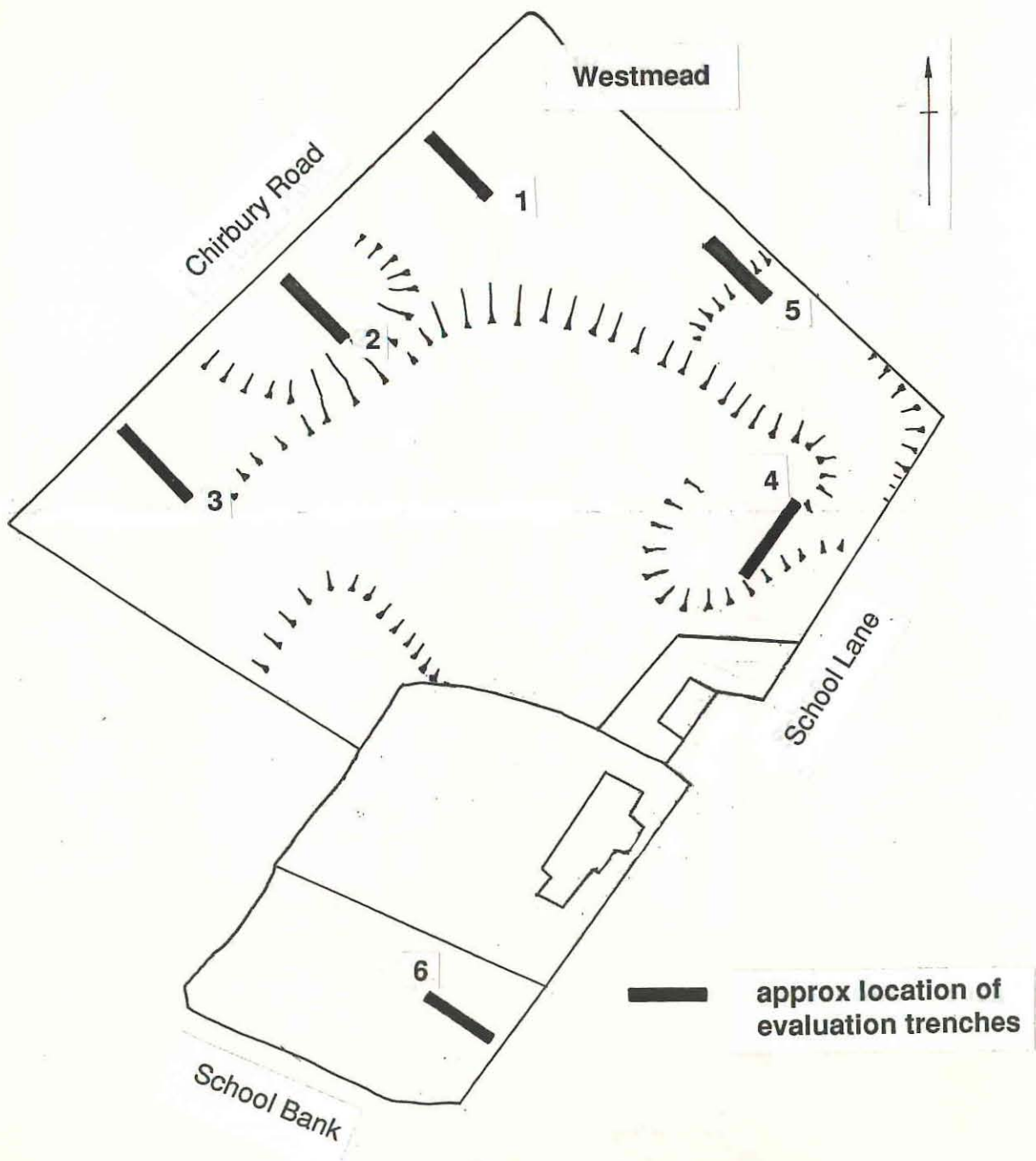


Figure 4
Sketch plan of the platforms and location of the trenches. Not to scale.

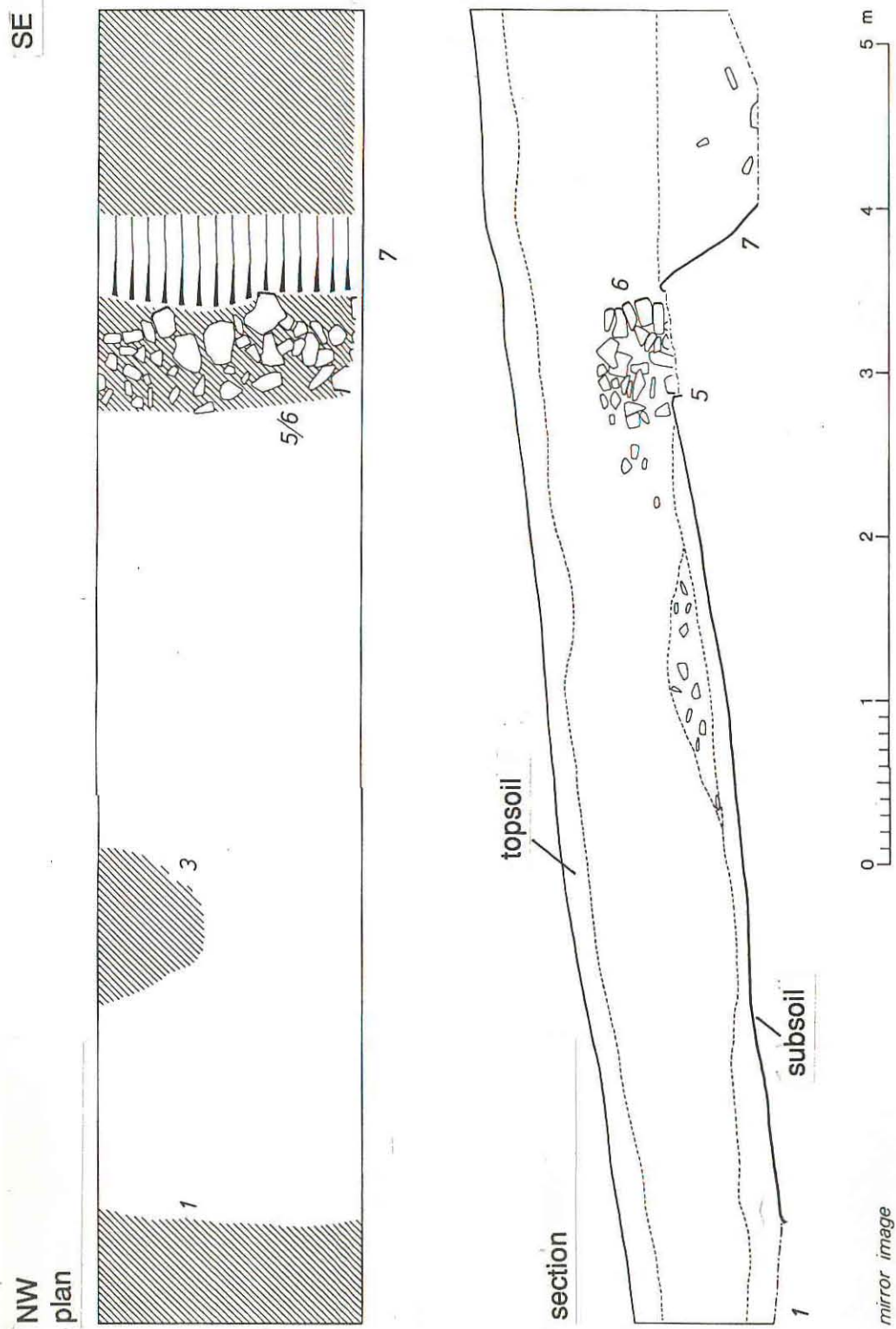
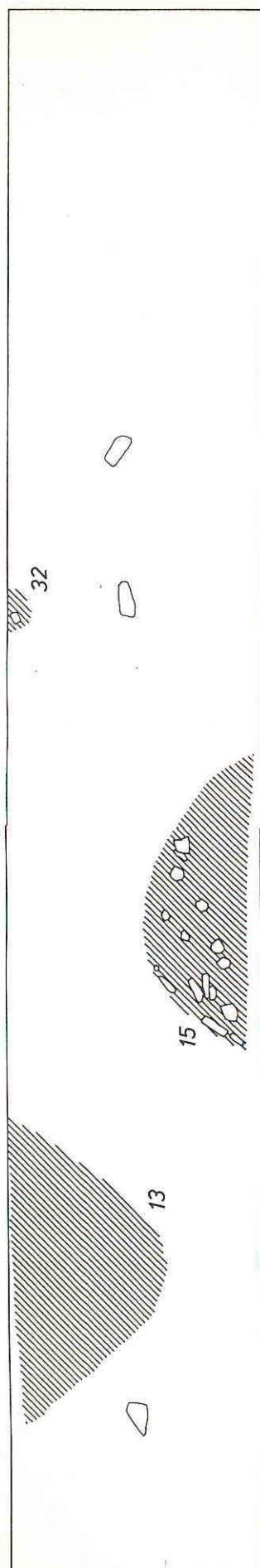


Figure 5
Plan and section of trench 1

SE

NW
plan



topsoil

section

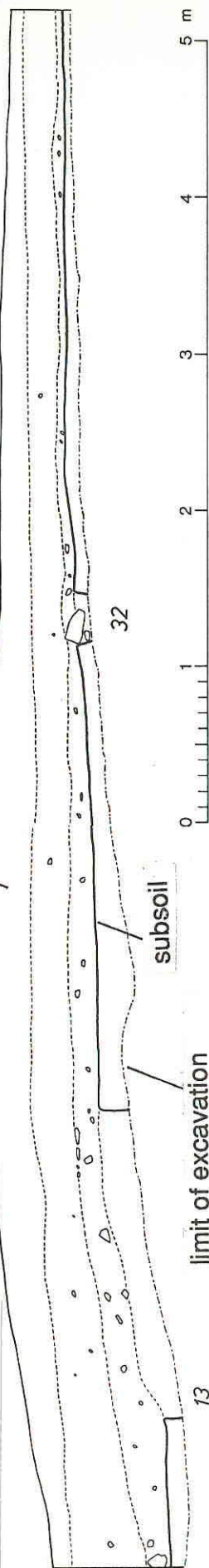


Figure 6
Plan and section of trench 2

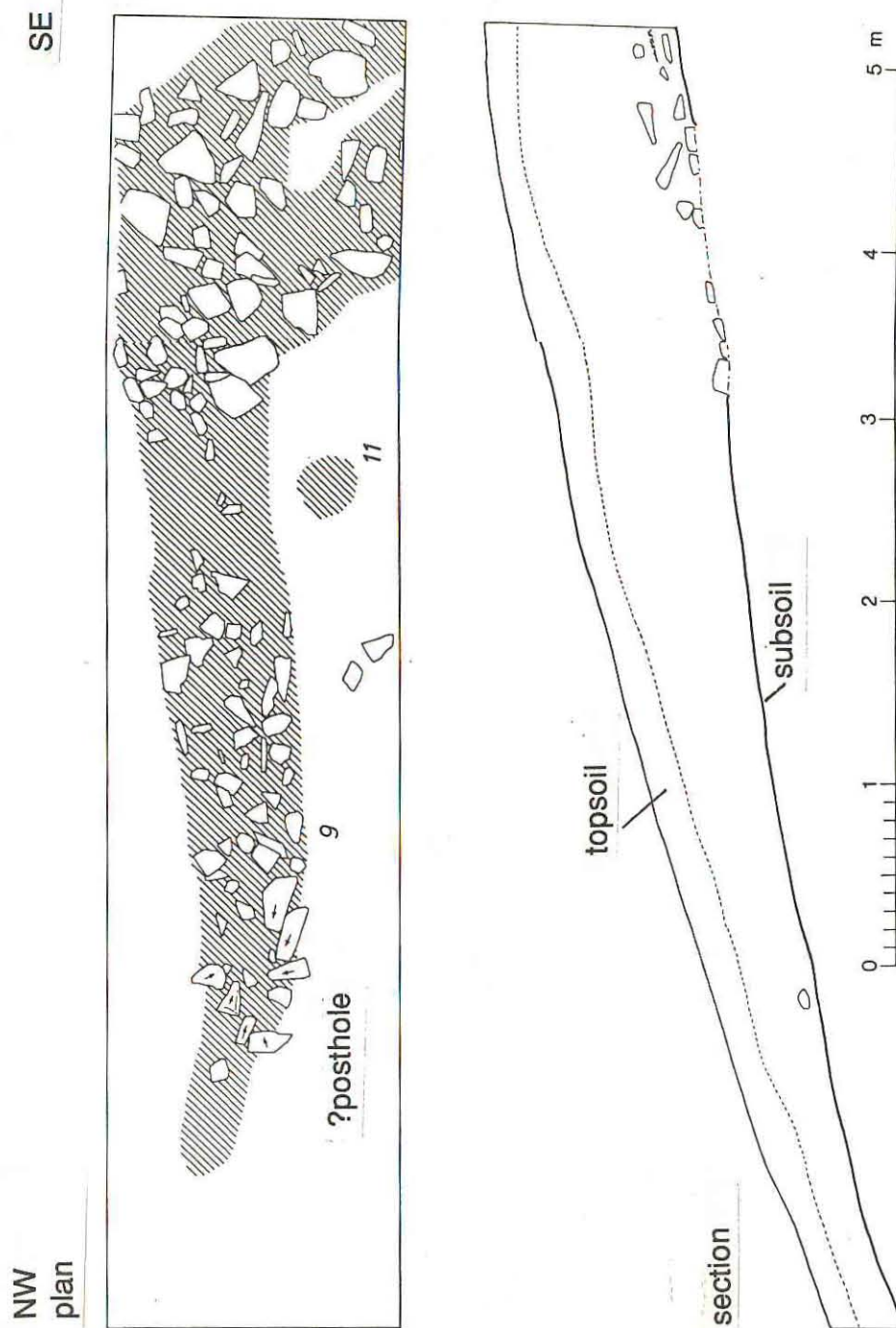
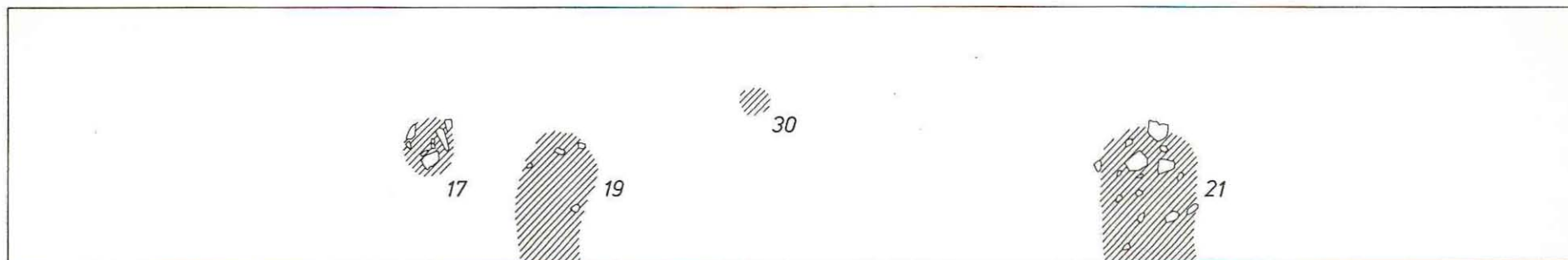


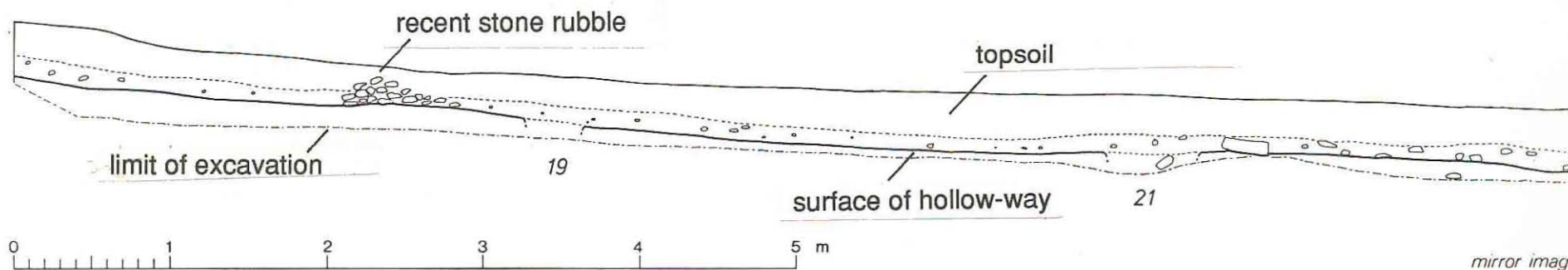
Figure 7
Plan and section of trench 3

SW
plan

NE



section



mirror image

Figure 8

Plan and section of trench 4

NW
plan

SE

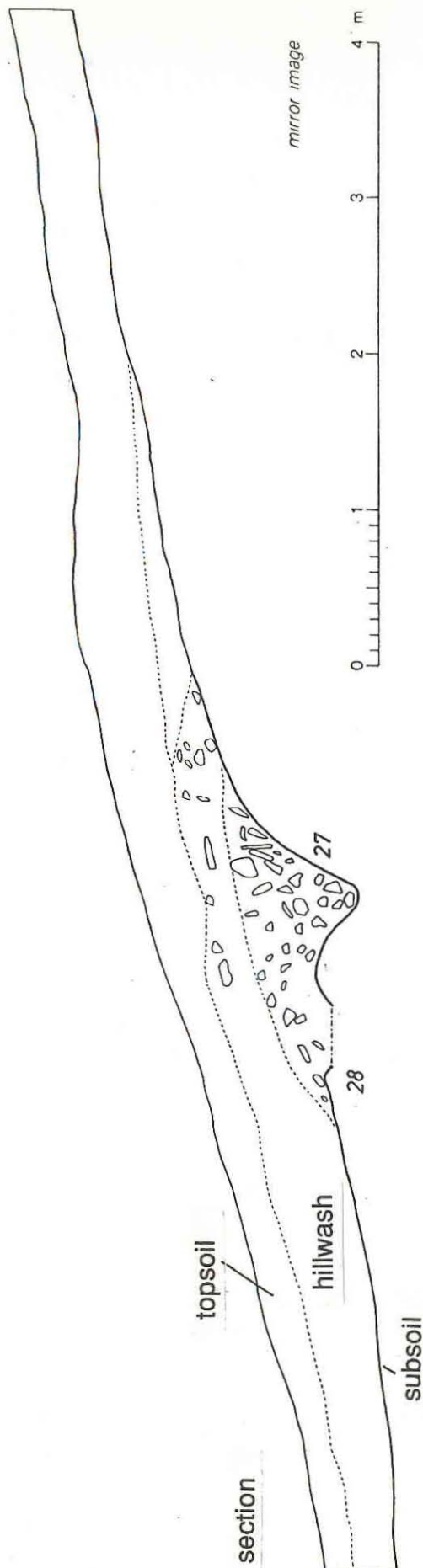
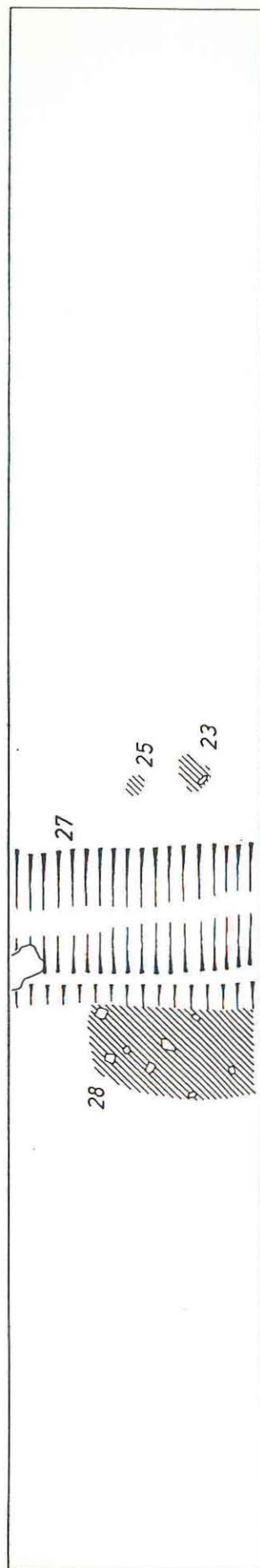


Figure 9
Plan and section of trench 5

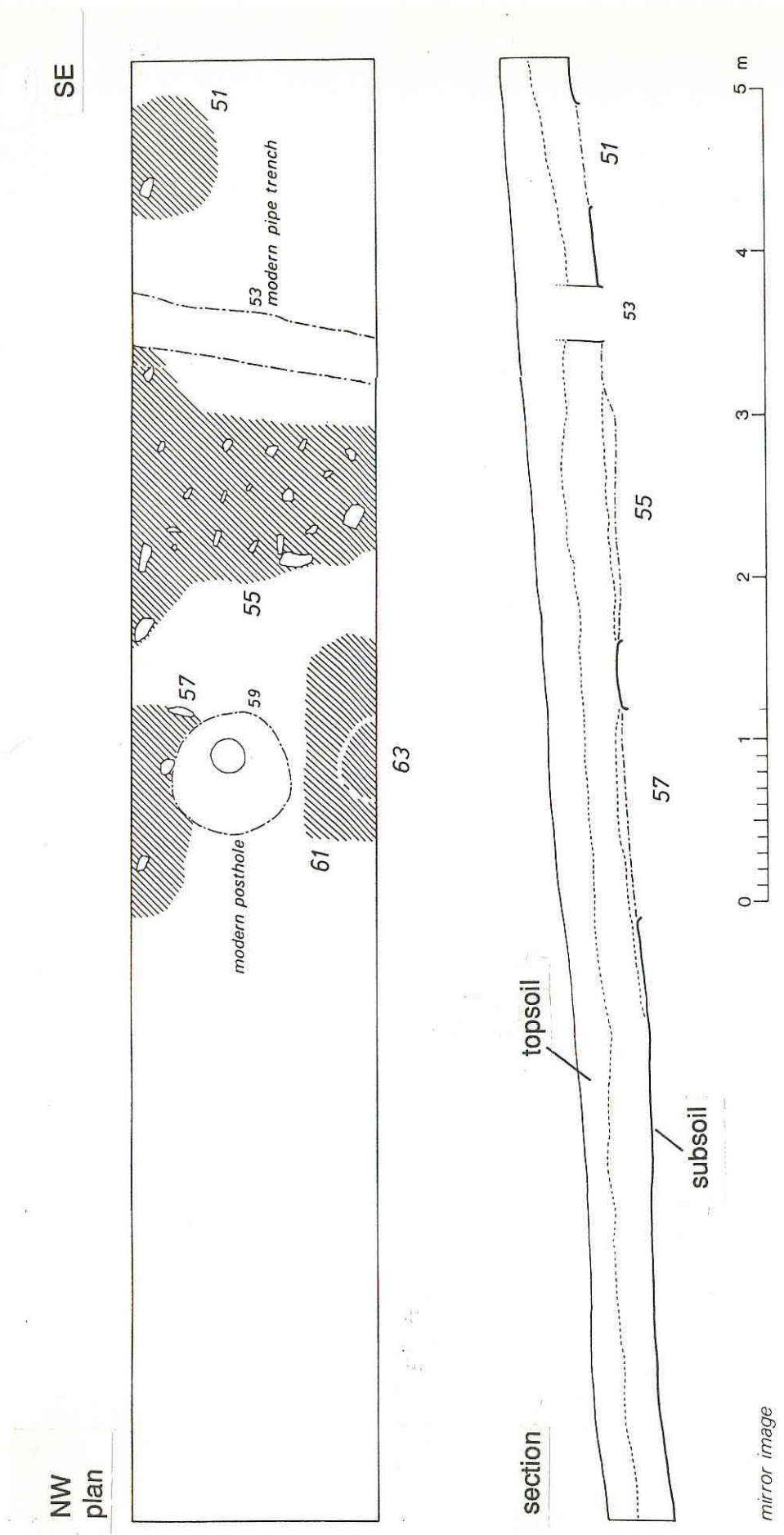


Figure 10
Plan and section of trench 6