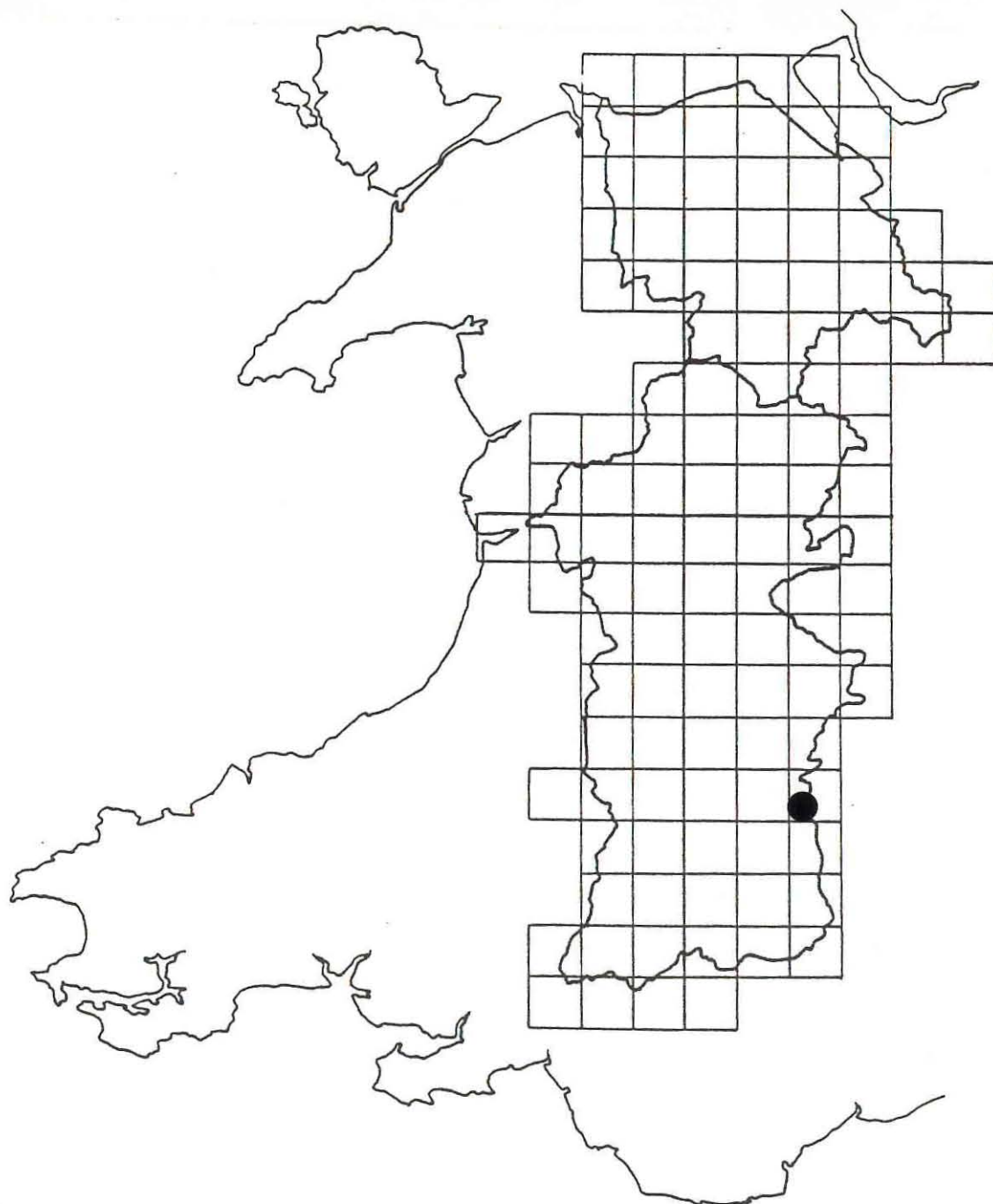


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Belmont Road, Hay-on-Wye, Powys

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT



CPAT Report No 36

Belmont Road, Hay-on-Wye, Powys

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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A REPORT PREPARED FOR WALES AND
WEST HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

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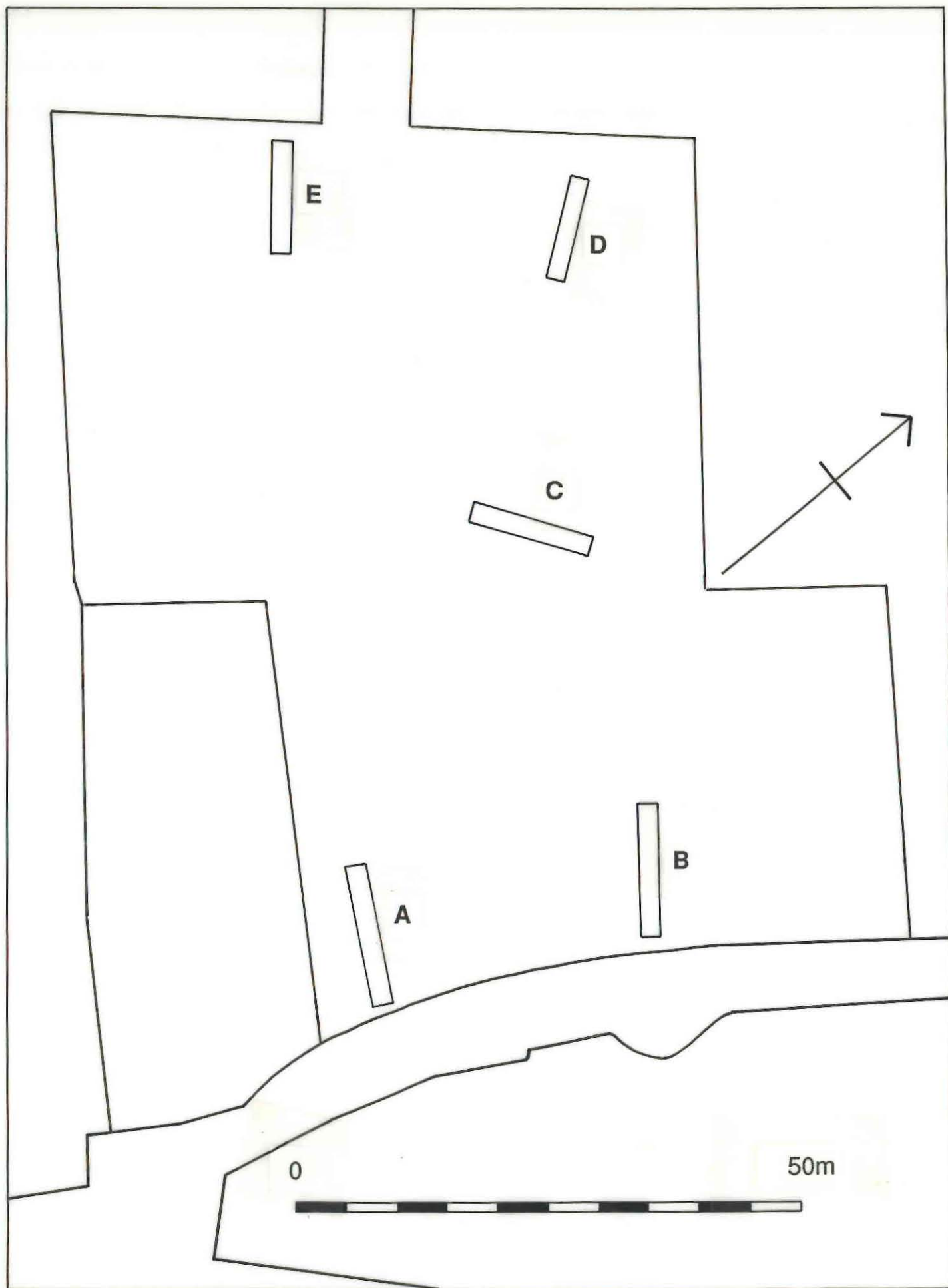


Fig 2: location of trenches

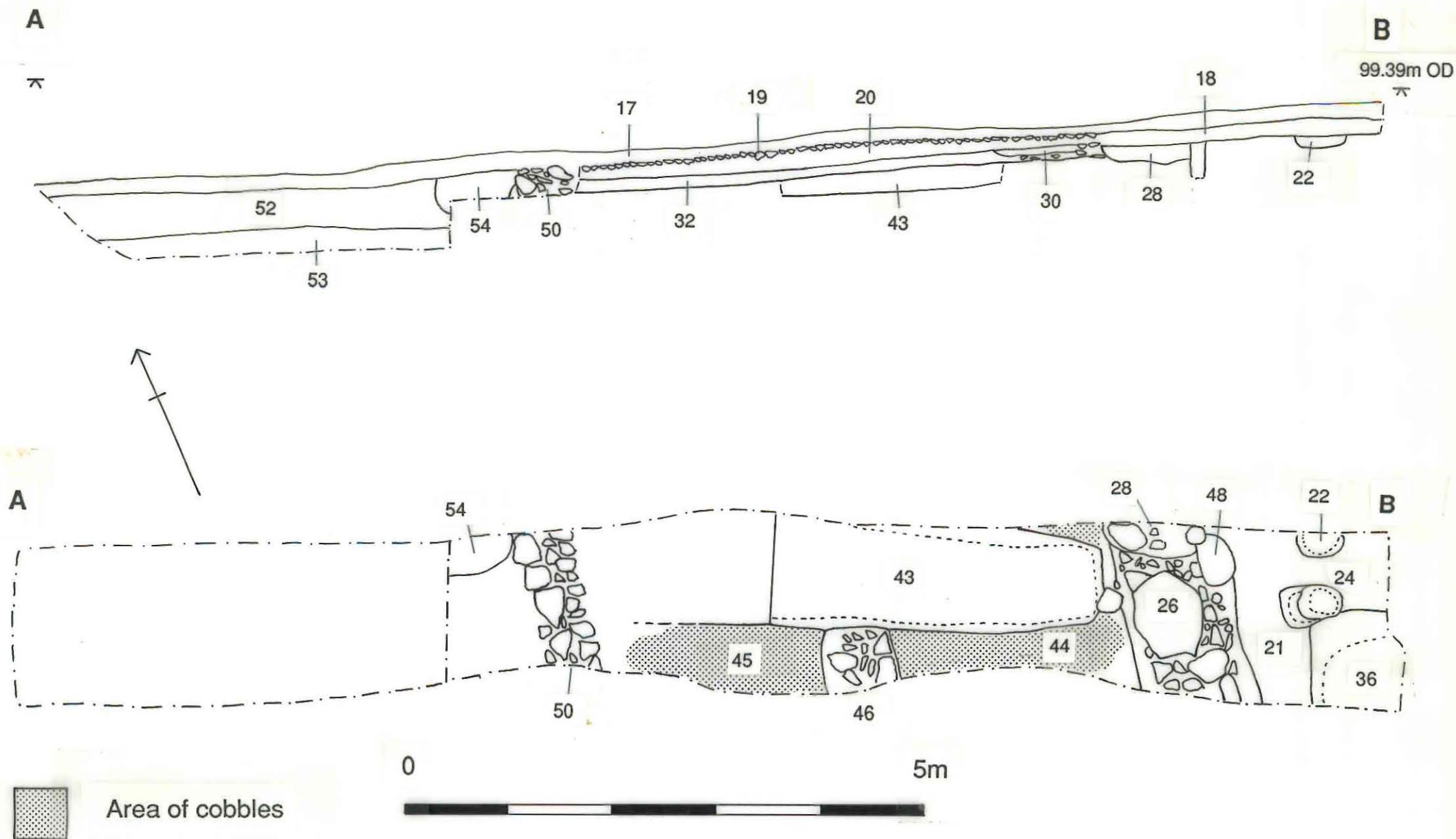


Fig 3: trench A plan and section

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following archaeological evaluation was carried out in response to a planning application for residential development (K12610, received by Brecon Beacons National Park on 5 May 1992). The proposed development lies on the western side of Hay-on-Wye, within the confines of the medieval walled town (Fig 1).
- 1.2 The Norman motte, which lies c.200m SW of the site, was built sometime before 1121, and may have had an associated settlement adjacent to it. In the early 13th century, a planted medieval town was founded to the north-east, replacing the earlier settlement. Belmont Road was one of the main streets of the 13th-century town, and is assumed to have been lined by medieval burgage plots.
- 1.3 The proposed development area is currently the largest undeveloped plot on a former medieval street frontage in Hay-on-Wye, and may potentially include up to five medieval burgage plots fronting onto Belmont Road. In addition, the rear of the plot may contain the remains of the Town Wall, which was known to be in existence until the construction of the railway in 1864.
- 1.4 The Tithe Map of 1846 shows buildings along the street front, and during the nineteenth century part of the plot was occupied by a brewery and cider house owned by the Watkins family of Hereford. Behind this, was an area of orchard and gardens. More recently, much of the area was occupied by a tractor works before the site was demolished and left as waste ground over 20 years ago.

2 THE EVALUATION

- 2.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned by the Wales and West Housing Association Limited to undertake the evaluation, which was carried out between June 22 and 26 1992. In accordance with the evaluation brief, five trial trenches were excavated to determine the extent of the surviving archaeology and to evaluate the significance and likely dating of any features revealed (Fig 2). The trenches were all excavated initially by machine, and subsequently investigated by hand. The results from the excavations were as follows:
- 2.2 **Trench A** (14 x 2m. Fig 3). Numbers in brackets refer to Fig 3.
 - 2.2.1 Beneath recent hardcore (17) lay a well constructed cobbled yard composed of rounded river pebbles up to c.20cm across. This had been laid on a bed of fine sandy silt (20) up to c.12cm thick. Pottery evidence would suggest a nineteenth-century date. The north-west boundary of the cobbles was marked by the remains of a rough wall (50), composed of large rounded stones. Beneath the wall and the cobbles was a layer of red brown stony clay (32) containing eighteenth or early nineteenth century finds. The majority of these layers were removed by machine and recorded only in section.
 - 2.2.2 Cleaning of the area at the base of machining revealed several features of significance, together with four modern pits (22, 28, 48 and 54). Removal of layer 32 revealed a substantial trench (43) running roughly SE-NW, with a fill containing a high percentage of stone, including fragments of micaceous sandstone roofing tile. Pottery from the fill would suggest an eighteenth-century date. It is possible that this was a four-

dition for a building, or perhaps a robbing trench for an earlier wall.

- 2.2.3 The trench had cut through a layer of small cobbles (44 and 45), which were also sealed beneath layer 32. The foundation for a narrow stone wall (46) had also been truncated by the trench, the cobbles apparently continuing up to the wall on either side. To the SE of the cobbles lay the foundations for a substantial stone wall (26), consisting of a trench c.1.05m wide containing large flat angular stones. The alignment of the foundations was clearly slightly different from that of the present day line of Belmont Road, which may suggest that the feature belongs to an earlier period of Hay's history. The cobbles did not extend (or survive) as far as the foundations so that their relationship is unknown.
- 2.2.4 Beyond the foundations to the SE a yellow brown sandy silt (21) had been cut by the foundations, and also by an undated pit or posthole (24) and a shallow post-medieval scoop (31). There was no evidence for any floor layers which might have been associated with the wall foundations.
- 2.2.5 At the NW end of the trench it was apparent that the area had been levelled in two stages by the deposition of stony clay. The upper layer (52) was up to c. 50cm thick and contained post-medieval finds. Beneath this a further layer (53) at least 20cm thick produced no dating evidence. Excavation of these layers was by machine only and no relationship was established between the levelling and the features observed to the SE of the excavated section.
- 2.3 **Trench B** (13 x 1.75m). Numbers in brackets refer to the site archive.
 - 2.3.1 Removal by machine of up to c.50cm of modern demolition rubble (65) revealed a layer of dark ash and charcoally soil (66) containing post-medieval finds. Beneath this, a stony red clay (67) c.30cm thick covered much of the area. At the SE end of the trench, this layer was removed by machine onto the natural subsoil, with subsequent cleaning indicating that the area appeared to have been terraced at some time, removing any trace of medieval archaeology. However, an area of stones (67) running across the trench at the mid-point may be the remains of a wall, although of uncertain date or function.
- 2.4 **Trench C** (c.11.5 x 1.75m). Numbers in brackets refer to the site archive.
 - 2.4.1 Removal by machine of c.60cm of modern buildup and hardcore revealed a brown silt (62) c.20cm thick, which was removed onto a yellow brown silty clay (63). This layer had been cut by three pits (39, 41 and 56), all of which were sealed beneath layer 62. Each feature was investigated, but produced no firm evidence for dating or function.
- 2.5 **Trench D** (c.9 x 1.75m). Numbers in brackets refer to the site archive.
 - 2.5.1 Removal by machine of c.70cm of recent deposits revealed a brown silt (3) c. 70cm thick. This was removed onto the surface of a yellow brown silty clay (4). Cut through this layer were two small pits or postholes (5 and 7), which both produced sherds of medieval pottery. At the NW end of the trench

were the remains of what may have been a wall composed of large angular stones set within a slight foundation trench. It was not possible to determine whether this was part of a building or perhaps a boundary. Certainly, it could not have been the remains of the Town Wall which was assumed to have followed closely the NW boundary of the plot.

2.6 **Trench E** (10.8 x 1.75m). Numbers in brackets refer to site archive.

- 2.6.1 Removal by machine of up to c.60cm of recent deposits revealed a brown silt (15) c. 52cm thick, which contained sherds of medieval pottery. Beneath this, lay a yellow brown silty clay (16) which again produced sherds of medieval pottery, and was cut by a single feature. A shallow pit or gully (34) extending beyond the excavated area produced two sherds of medieval pottery. There were no other features present within the excavated area.

3 **CONCLUSIONS**

- 3.1 The results from the evaluation would suggest that at least part of the area was occupied during the medieval period. As was expected, it would appear that buildings, presumably domestic, occupied the street frontage, with burgage plots containing yards and gardens behind.
- 3.2 The most significant evidence came from Trench A, where the foundation of a substantial stone building was revealed on a slightly different alignment to the present road. Although the foundations remain undated, the differing alignment would argue for the building belonging to a period when Belmont Road followed a slightly different course to the present day. In addition, the position of the foundation and the lack of a parallel wall within the excavation might suggest that this is the rear wall of a building, the front wall of which lies beneath Belmont Road. The road must therefore have been narrower at that time, as might be expected during the medieval period. The existence of an area of cobbling behind the building conforms to a normal medieval pattern where a small yard exists behind the building, with a garden/cultivation area beyond. The build-up of silt deposits containing medieval pottery of the 13th or 14th centuries which were observed in Trenches C, D and E, would also seem to suggest the existence of an area of medieval cultivation at the rear of the plot, such as one would expect within a burgage plot.
- 3.3 The existence of archaeological features within Trench A would suggest that the surrounding area, although disturbed by later building, may contain further evidence for medieval occupation in the form of street frontage dwellings. The evidence from Trench B indicates that the remaining street frontage has already been largely destroyed. The results from the three remaining trenches produced no clear evidence for further medieval building, and no indication that the course of the Town Wall lies within the development plot. However, it must be noted that the excavations were unable to investigate closer than 1m to the existing boundary, which must therefore not rule out the possibility that some trace of the wall still remains within or just beyond the boundary.

EXCAVATION ARCHIVE

69 Context Records

5 A1 plans

3 A4 plans

3 Black and white films with contact sheets and record cards

c.80 colour slides

Photographic catalogue

Finds catalogue

Correspondence

The Finds:

46 sherds of medieval pottery

22 sherds of post medieval pottery

11 fragments of clay pipe

4 fragments of post medieval glass

8 fragments of slag

1 fragment of stone roofing tile

FURTHER POST-EXCAVATION TO BE UNDERTAKEN

Finds:

Marking and bagging of finds

Cataloguing and dating of the pottery