

EXCAVATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS AT THE FORMER JACKLINS SHOP, HIGH STREET, COLCHESTER, 1997.

(Colchester and Essex Museum Accession Code 1997/22)

(Summary for C.A.T. records Jan.1998)

SUMMARY

Archaeological observations and excavation at the former Jacklins premises in the High Street, produced a quantity of samian pottery almost certainly originating from the Roman shop destroyed on the site in the Boudican rebellion of A.D.60. The remains of a substantial medieval stone building, probably dating to the Norman period, were also found.

The samian pottery from the Roman shop is a group of material of international significance. That recovered here was residual in later medieval and post medieval layers to 0.5m below the present surface. Destruction levels relating to the original Roman shop were not encountered. Two bore holes would indicate that the in-situ Boudican destruction deposits (which would include the remains of the pottery shop) occur at between 1.0-1.5 and 2.0 metres below the present surface.

INTRODUCTION

In March 1997 work commenced to incorporate the former Jacklins shop in the High street into part of Williams & Griffins department store. This work was based around the machine insertion of seven pile groups. Each of these groups required a 0.5m deep pile cap to be excavated, together with some linking beam slots of the same depth (see plan).

The site is known to contain archaeology of international importance, being the remains of the Roman pottery shop and its contents burnt down in the revolt of 60 A.D. (Hull 1958). The shops stock contained, amongst other items, a considerable quantity of imported samian ware, which due to frequent changes of style and decoration, is fundamental in helping to date many Roman deposits. The samian from the Colchester pottery shop, as it can be dated so accurately to the year of the revolt, is one of the most important groups of this pottery in Europe.

The archaeological work was carried out in two stages. The first involved the monitoring of two engineers bore holes, and observation following the exploratory excavation by workmen of parts of the two pile cap areas to the rear of the premises (pile caps 1 & 2). The later stage consisted of the archaeological excavation of pile caps 3, 4 & 7 together with part of the beam slot joining them. During this time a watch was maintained on the excavation by the workmen of the remaining pile caps and beam slots which contained the remains of walls of various dates needing to be broken out by power tools.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD RECOVERED FROM THE SITE

The Engineers Bore Holes (see plan)

Two test bores were made at the request of the site engineers. The first was made towards the front of the premises, and the second toward the rear of the shop interior as it then was.

Bore 1 had already been completed when the first site visit was made, but the workmen had put aside some of the material from the hole which included a quantity of burnt daub. They described this deposit as occurring between 1 - 2 metres below the shop floor level, with natural sand at about 2 metres down. The burnt daub would seem to represent the Boudican

destruction deposit of 60 A.D. and a fragment of burnt samian was recovered from this (see appendix 1).

Observation of the second bore hole was complete and allowed a sequence of material to be constructed down to the natural sand at a depth of 2 metres below the then shop floor (see bore hole 2 sequence). This confirmed the approximate depth of the Boudican destruction layer on the site, here being at between 1.5 - 2.0 metres. A second lesser deposit containing burnt daub was encountered at between about 0.7 - 1.0 metres, probably represents material later redeposited by disturbance to the lower destruction level.

Observation of the Exploratory Excavations by the Workmen within the areas of Pile Caps 1 & 2 at the Rear of the Premises

Parts of the two pile caps to the rear of the site were excavated by the workmen after problems were encountered with the initial insertion of the concrete pile cores. Pile cap 2 contained a relatively shallow modern brick wall foundation which they broke out sufficient to their purpose. However pile cap 1 contained a substantial stone built wall which they had removed to 1.5 metres down.

The large wall (F1) in pile cap 1 was constructed from septaria and some Roman tile pieces set in a light brown lime mortar (see plan & section for pile cap1). In places it was clear that the wall had been, at least in part, neatly faced with septaria blocks, but the tile was included in a rather jumbled fashion and not coursed. Examination of the remains showed that the workmen had removed a wall area, or projection which separated two recessed areas. The northern recess did not survive as well as the one south of the division as it was not so deeply set back into the fabric of the wall, but sufficient remained to show that base, or floor level in each recess was at a different level and that each of the floors was blackened with the remains of a thin carbon deposit. The separating projection had presumably come out to meet the line of the wall face which was encountered at a lower level.

Overall the arrangement of this wall and its general make up could be compared with the remains of the stone house demolished in Foundry Yard in 1886 just to the east of this site (CAR 1, Fig 47) and it is probable that this is the remains of one of several important early medieval stone built houses in the town centre. The wall continues on a north-south alignment being located in pile caps 3 & 5.

Archaeological Excavation on the Centre and Southern Pile Caps and Beam Slots, and Observation of Walls Revealed and Part Removed by the Workmen

Removal of the relevant floor areas exposed archaeological deposits which could be excavated by hand in pile caps 3, 4 & 7, and in part of the beam slot between caps 3 & 4. In these places the caps and beam slot were subject to archaeological excavation to the full depth required for the new structural supports of 0.5 metres. The main objective of this work was the recovery of material, especially samian pottery, likely to derive from the stock of the early Roman pottery shop. The only stratigraphic sequence encountered was in pile cap 3 which is recorded here. Elsewhere the soil layer represented there by L1 (a dark-medium brown sandy loam with redeposited red-brown burnt clay/daub) which is general for the material excavated in the other pile caps and appears to be of post-medieval date.

The other areas of new structural supports contained modern, post-medieval and medieval walls, and the necessary portions (to 0.5m) of these were removed by the workmen with power tools. These parts of walls were recorded and are shown on the general site plan.

The archaeological sequence in pile cap 3 (see plan & section for pile cap 3):

This contained part of the major north-south wall (F1) which was sealed by a dark-medium brown sandy loam with redeposited red-brown burnt clay/daub (L1) and contained pottery datable as late as the 15th -16th century. Below this was an general spread of loose yellow-brown mortar with some septaria pieces which sealed patches of whitish mortar. The deposition of this material post-dates the construction of F1. These rubbly mortar spreads overlay a dark sandy loam (L3) which contained lenses of clean yellow sand and red-brown redeposited burnt clay/daub. It appeared that this layer had been cut by the construction of the wall F1. Some pottery from this layer in the base of cap 3 (which was disturbed by the insertion of the concrete piles) can be dated as late as the 15th century, although it also contains early medieval (Saxo-Norman) wares. Excavation of the same layer in the beam slot joining cap 3 and cap 4 produced pottery up to the 12th - 13th century. This would support an early medieval date for F1.

Medieval and post-medieval walls (see plan):

It is a presumption that the early medieval wall (F1) in pile cap1 is the same wall as in caps 3 & 5. Though the face of the wall in caps 3 & 5 is in line with the face as recorded in the southern recess of F1 rather than the face as indicated by the projection and the lower off-set in cap1, it seems most probable that this is essentially part of the same wall running north-south along the east side of the site. The width of the wall F1 is not known at any point, though in pile cap 1 it is a least 1 metre overall. In cap 3 this wall is at least 0.6m deep.

In cap 5 a wall of the same construction as F1 branches to the west (F2) and in cap 6 another section of similar appearance branches off from this to the south (F3). However F2 & F3 are essentially shallow foundations having a surviving depth of about 0.4m. F2 is about 1 metre in width, but F3 is a narrower wall at about 0.44m wide. Both are assumed to be of medieval date as they appear to be of similar construction to F1.

In the west side of pile cap7 a short section of wall foundation was cut through. This is of much slighter construction than the walls recorded above and is only 0.28m wide. Peg tiles were noted in the upper part of its construction and it is thought to be of post-medieval date.

Samian from the site:

Samian pottery was recovered from all of the hand excavated areas and accounted for over half of the Roman pottery present. All of the Roman pottery from the site was residual in later deposits. The samian was submitted to Geoff Dannell and a copy of his report is included as a separate sheet.

REFERENCES

- CAR 1 Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester, CBA RR 39
1981 P. Crummy

Hull R.

1958 Roman Colchester

Stephen Benfield, 1998. For:
Colchester Archaeological Trust
12 Lexden Road
Colchester

CO3 3NF

The Former Jacklins Site, High Street, Colchester 1997 (1997/22)

List of other finds retained:

Find No. 2 U/S base 4

Roman tegula with ?angular face

3 sherds Roman pot (1 sherd Hadam late 3rd-4th)

1 sherd ?med. pot

Find No. 3 L1 base 3

1 frag ?burnt/overfired brick/tile

7 sherds Roman pot

7 sherds med.-late med. pot (10th -11th & 15th-16th)

Find No. 5 L1 base 3/beam 2.

3 frags. Roman glass (2 blue-green, 1 dark yellow-brown)

3 sherds Roman pot (1 Lyon ware pre-Flavian, 1 Col.cc. roughcast 2nd)

3 sherds med. pot (15th-16th)

Find No. 6 L3 base 3

1 piece of Fe slag

2 sherds Roman pot (1 Ox. mort. 4th)

7 sherds med. pot (Saxo-Norman & 15th)

Find No. 7 L3 base 3/beam 3

1 frag. ?overfired/burnt Roman scored flue tile

1 sherd Roman pot

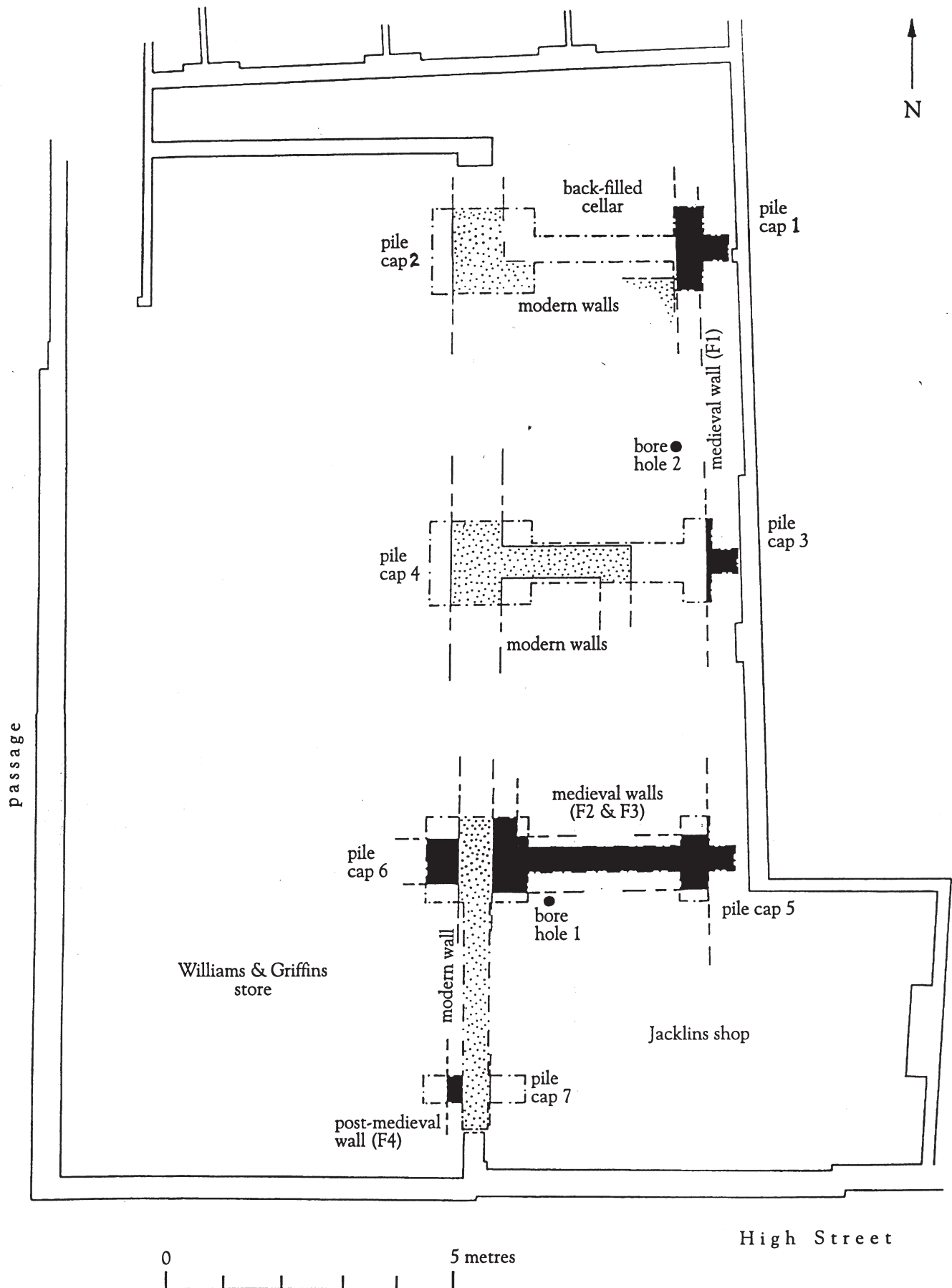
7 sherds med. pot (12-13th)

Find No. 8 L4 base 7

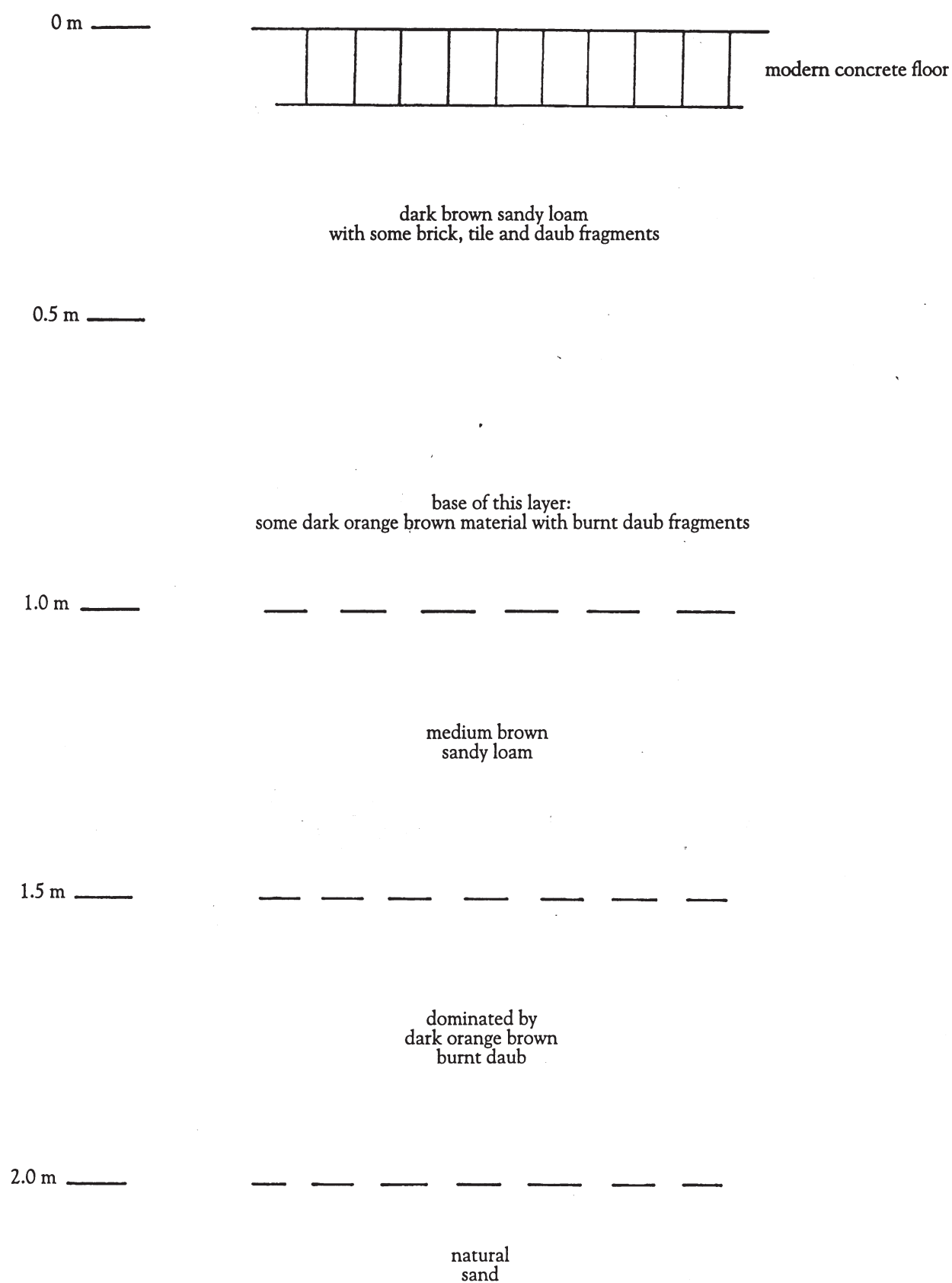
1 frag. Roman glass (blue-green)

1 ?burnt worked bone frag.

3 sherds Roman pot

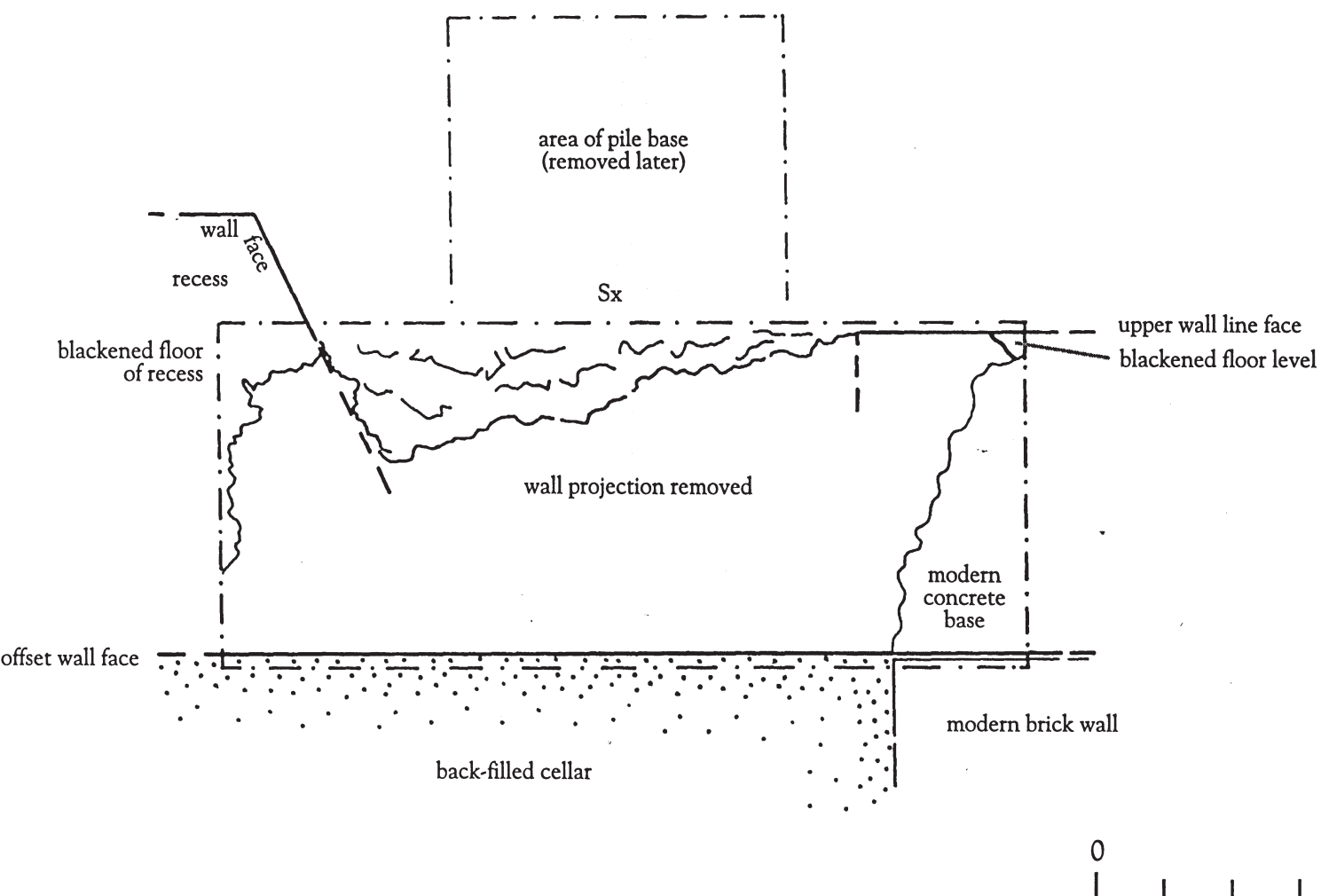


Jacklins, High Street, Colchester, 1997: plan

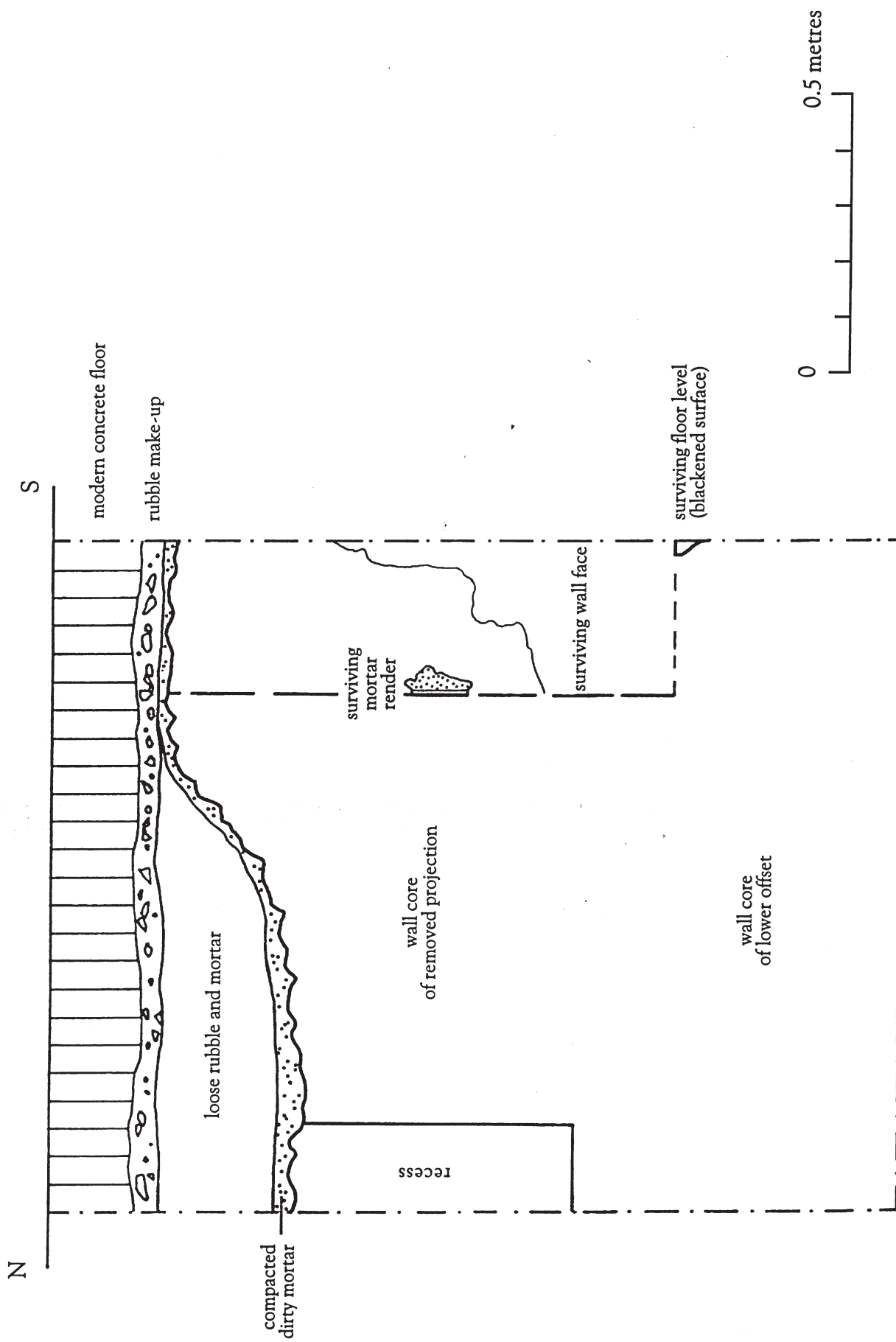


Jacklins, High Street, Colchester, 1997: bore hole 2

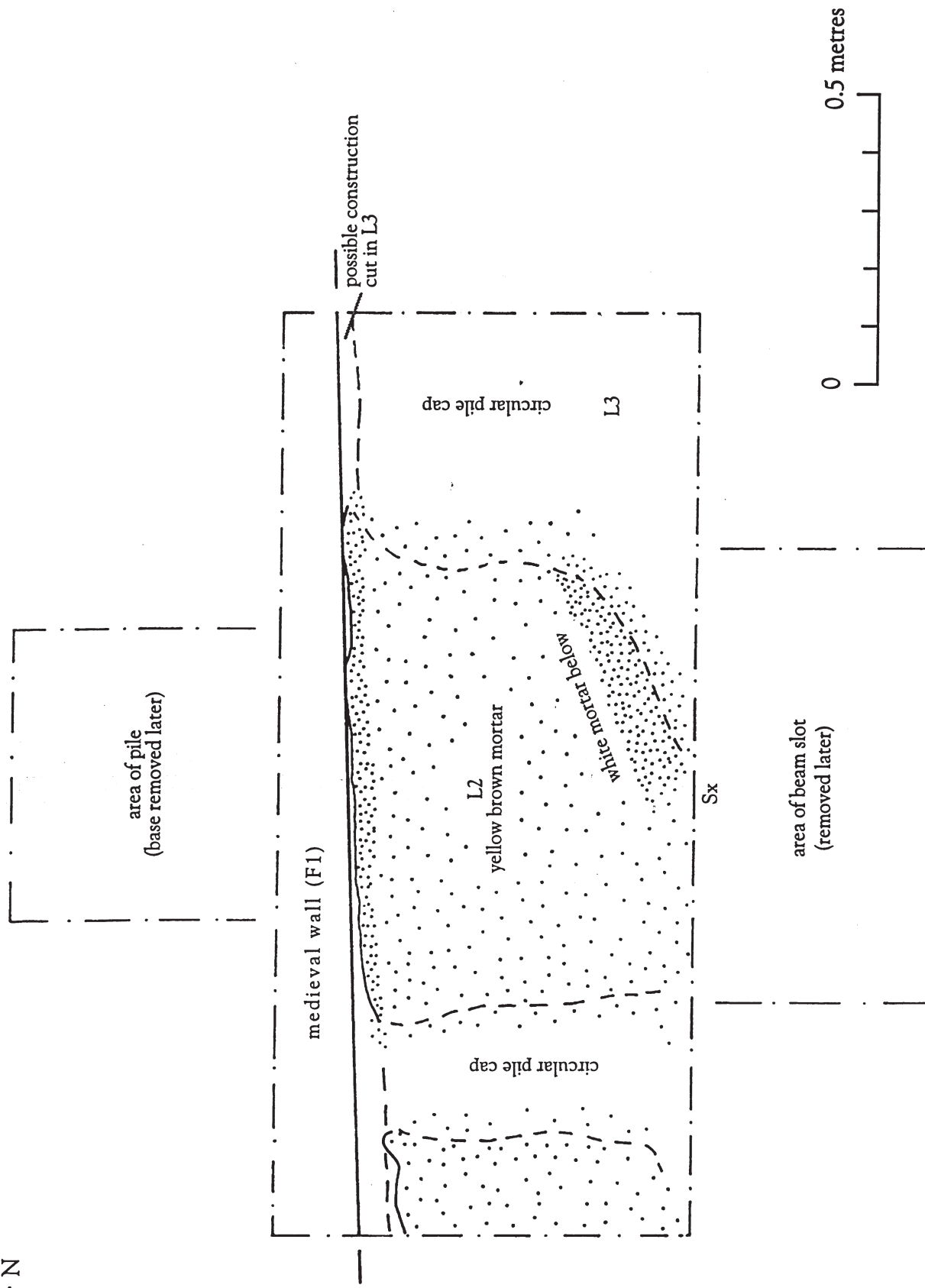
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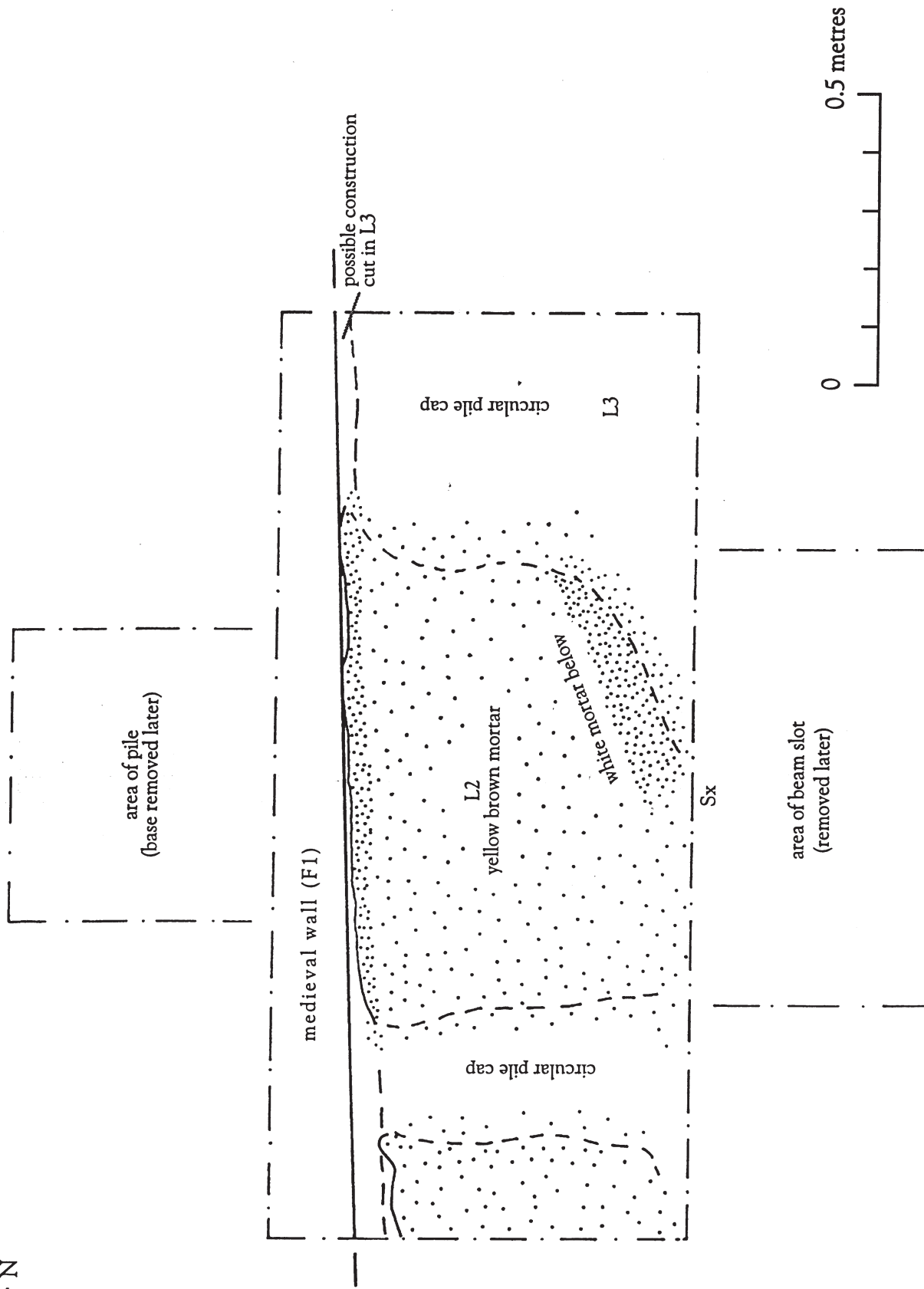
Jacklins, High Street, Colchester, 1997: pile cap 1 - medieval wall (F1), plan



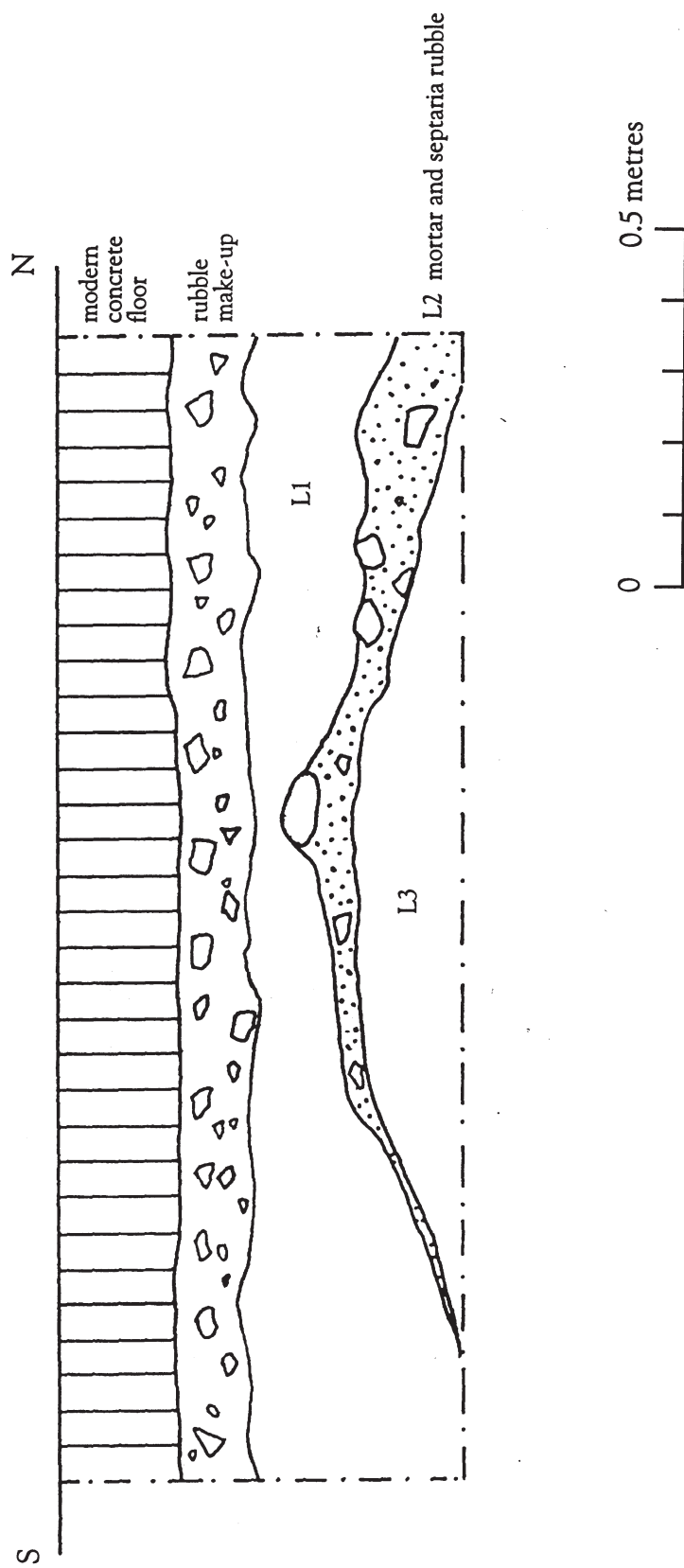
Jacklins, High Street, Colchester, 1997: pile cap 1 - medieval wall (F1), section



Jacklins, High Street, Colchester, 1997: pile cap 3, plan



Jacklins, High Street, Colchester, 1997: pile cap 3, plan



Jacklins, High Street, Colchester, 1997: pile cap 3, section