

Conclusion

Excavations in TT5-1 revealed fills, building materials and features related with construction of the courthouse in the first years of the 19th century. An intact stretch of cobbled surface in TT5-1A dates from the courthouse construction in 1810. Beneath this was a pit with intense burning and lime deposits, which may be a kiln to provide a ready source of lime mortar for building the courthouse. Also related with the courthouse is the large limestone and brick drain at the north of TT5-1B which runs parallel beneath the courthouse's southern perimeter wall, and probably extends west into the river. The plinth on which this drain was built was revealed at 2.8m below the surface. The lime kiln in TT5-1A was cut into sandy fills which date from the land reclamation of the 18th century, below which was a mortared limestone wall which may be interpreted as an early quay wall. The location of this quay wall does not generally correspond with known features, its depth suggests an early date. It was considered that the wall may relate to the northern face of the northern Long Dock pier as shown on Colles's maps of the 1760s. Sections of this quay wall were found in TT5-5 and in the Potato Market and were significantly narrower.



Figure 70 Location of TT5-1A, facing west towards the River Shannon, with Limerick Courthouse to right



Figure 71 Location of TT5-1B, facing east towards St Mary's Cathedral



Figure 72 Lime dump at the southeast of TT5-1A (C5-1A-10)



Figure 73 *Cobbled surface in TT5-1A (C5-1A-07)*



Figure 74 *Pit with burned upper margin in east-facing wall of TT5-1A*



Figure 75 Wall (C5-1A-15) revealed beneath pit in TT5-1A



Figure 76 Investigating wall (C5-1A-15) in TT5-1A



Figure 77 Top of wall (C5-1A-15) after cleaning



Figure 78 North-facing view towards courthouse in TT5-1B

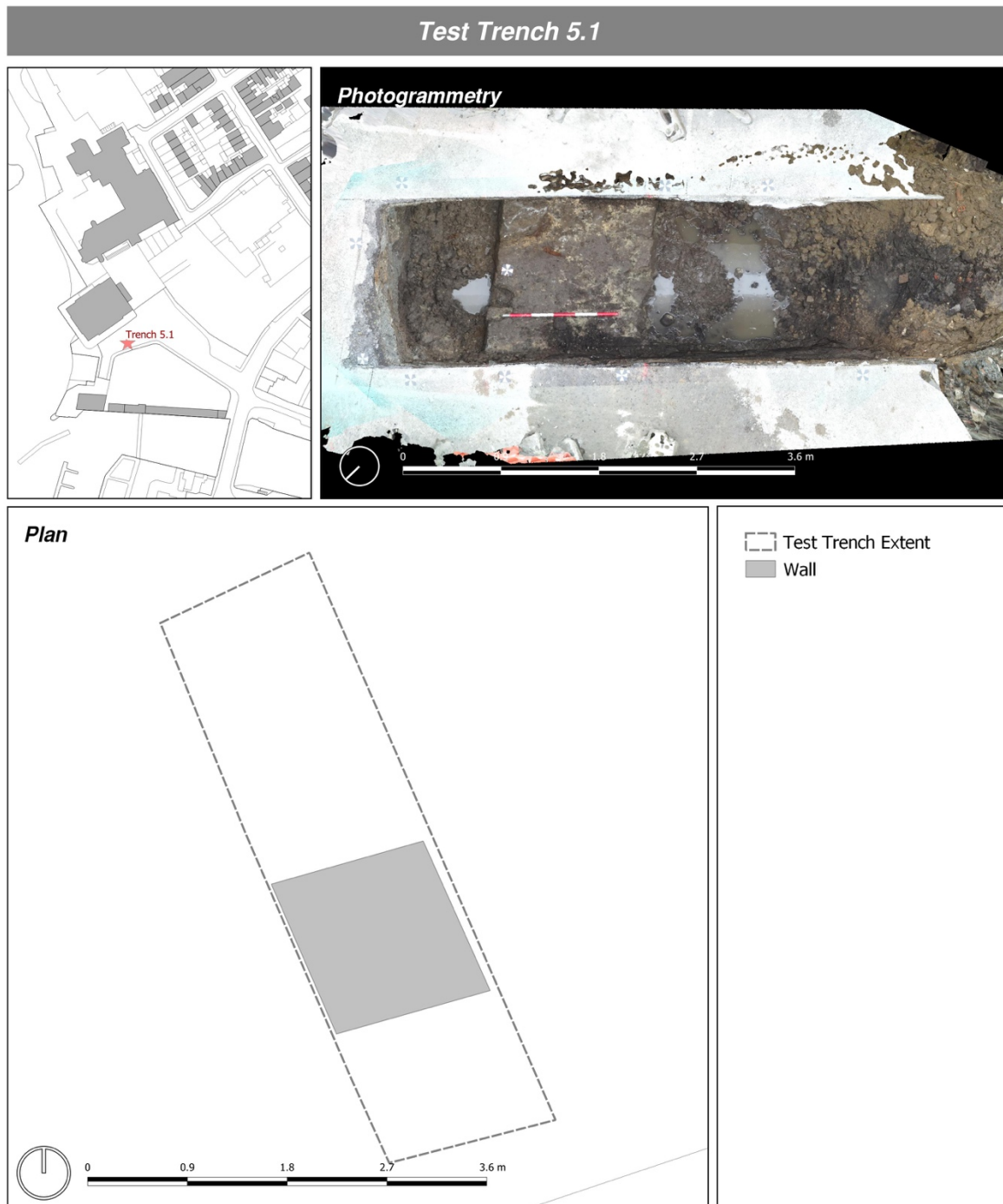


Figure 79 Plan drawing and photogrammetry of TT5-1A.

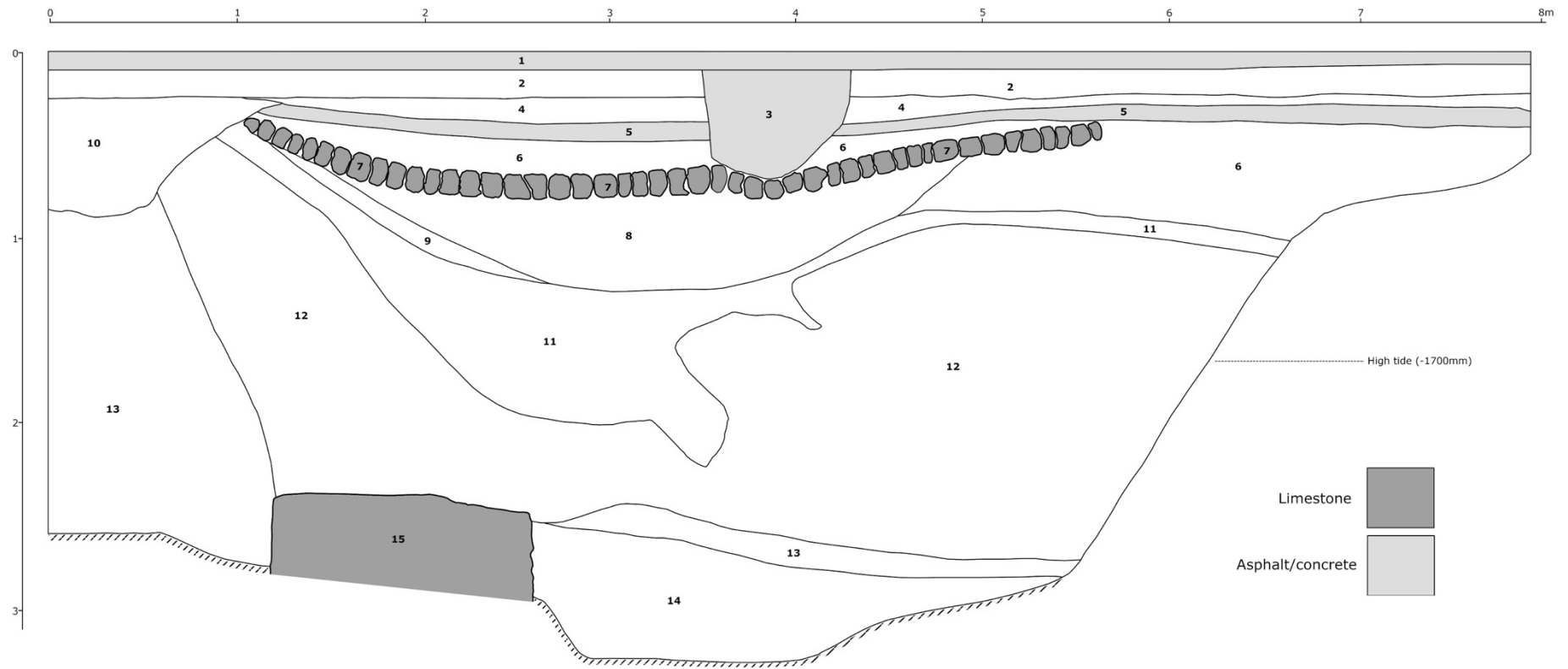


Figure 80 TT5-1A profile drawing of east-facing wall

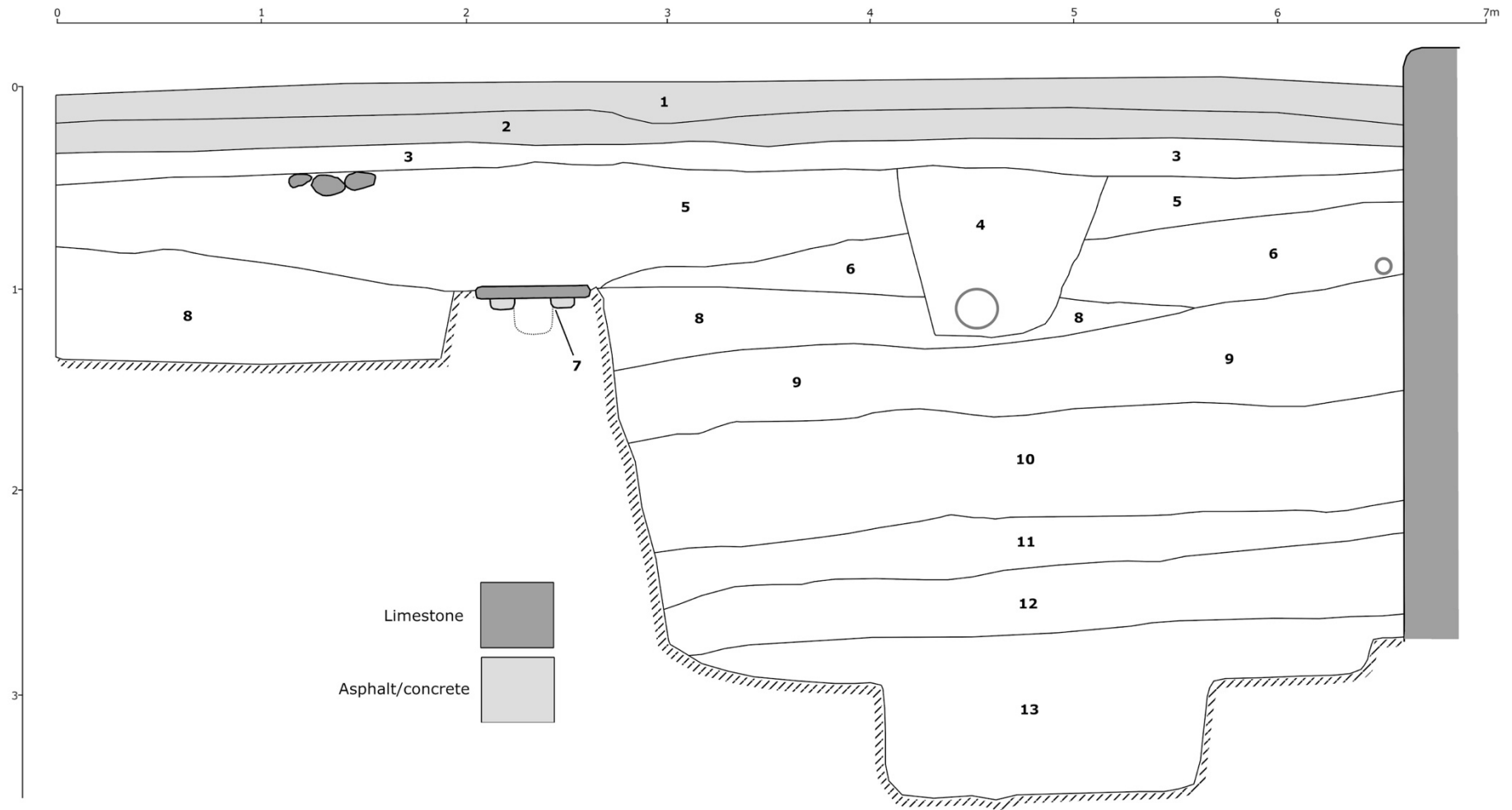


Figure 81 TT5-1B profile drawing of east-facing wall

TT5-2

Trench TT5-2 crosses the eastern end of the car parking area south of the courthouse and extends over the pavement and into the Merchant's Quay roadway (Figure 82). TT5-2 was excavated in three sections between 30 June and 8 July. The trench was aligned southwest/northeast and was excavated in this direction, with TT5-2A in the southwest, TT5-2B in the centre and TT5-2C in the northeast. Though documented separately, several contexts in the three sections of the trench are identical to each other. In total, the trench measured 21m in length, with a 2.5m gap in the centre, and 1.5m width. The ground level rises slightly in the eastern end of the trench. The purpose of the trench was to identify the potential remains of the quay wall, including its medieval phase, where a sub-surface water storage tank is proposed.

Background

TT5-2 crosses the suspected edge of the medieval quay and the in-filled harbour which was built into the present Merchant's Quay. On Philip's 1685 map, the trench falls within the north of the northern harbour of the medieval quay. By the time of Colles's 1769 map, the quay had been reconfigured, with land reclaimed to build the northern arm of the Long Dock further to the west. TT5-2 is positioned close to the edge of both the 17th and 18th century quay before the large-scale land reclamation and building projects of the later 18th century.

Results

Excavations in TT5-2 began by cutting and removing the asphalt surface and then breaking through a thick layer of poured concrete which was highly compacted in the south of the trench (TT5-2A-02) and softer to the north (TT5-2C-02) and below which was grey stony sand fill (TT5-2A-03). At the south of TT5-2A, from 400mm depth, was a cobbled surface which extends for a continuous stretch of 2m (C5-2A-04). The cobbles petered out in the centre of the trench, in TT5-2B, but they reappeared in the northeast, covering another 2m patch in the southern end of the trench (C5-2C-06) (Figure 83). As in TT5-1A, the cobbled surface is regarded as contemporary with the courthouse construction in the early 19th century.

Beneath the cobbles, at depths more than 600-800mm, were sandy fills containing rubble, mortar and brick (TT5-2A-05). In the south of the trench these are intersected by thin lenses of dark, charcoal rich silt (TT5-2A-06 and TT5-2A-07) containing brick, shell and glass, below which is another layer of reddish yellow sand (TT5-2A-08) containing rounded stone, brick, earthenware ceramics and clay pipe stems. This overlays a dense deposit of dark blackish brown silty clay (TT5-2A-09) which, at its southern end, is underlaid by firm grey clay containing angular stone (TT5-2A-10). There is similar stratigraphy in the upper 2m of fills in TT5-2B and TT5-2C, with the black layer up to 2.5m depth (TT5-2C-11).

At just below 2m depth, covering all of TT5-2A and most of TT5-2B, a highly compacted layer of angular limestone was reached (C5-2A-11) (Figure 84). This appears to be a hard core deposited to create a more solid base on the reclaimed land; it cannot be regarded as a surface itself, though its top is quite level. The presence of this compacted stone in the southern two thirds of the trench but its absence in the northeast may correspond to the extent of the former harbour and the in-filling that occurred there. At the south of TT5-2A, a sounding was excavated through the compacted stone, which was found to be 300mm thick, and below as found wet grey silty riverine deposits (C5-2A-12), continuing to the maximum depth of exaction (3.6m). A similar situation was found in TT5-2B, where the stony layer was also broken through in a sounding. These confirm that the southwestern two-thirds of the trench covers land that was within the former harbour.

Discoveries at the northeast of the trench, in TT5-2C confirmed the likely extent of the former quay and the probable location of the quay wall. Beneath the black silty fill (C5-2C-11) was a wet, grey alluvial deposit (C5-2C-12) equivalent to that found beneath the compacted stone to the southwest (C5-2A-11) (Figure 85). This contained very frequent shell as well as glass and ceramic of 18th century date. At 2.7m, the top of an in situ wall was found (C5-2C-13), crossing

the trench in a northwest/southeast alignment (Figure 86). Excavation of the alluvial fill up against the west of this wall recovered dense deposits of shell, supporting the suggestion that this was the quay wall whose outer side faced on to the water. The wall's southwestern side was exposed to a depth of 3.4m. The upper course of the wall is 1100mm width; a second course was formed by a large boulder, acting as a foundation, raising the wall's width to 1.4m.

On the supposed 'inner', northeast side of the wall, the fill was brown clay, contrasting with the grey alluvial sand to the south. This may represent the western limit of natural (i.e. not reclaimed) land at Merchant's Quay (Figure 87). At the northeast end of TT5-2C was a stone lined culvert (C5-2C-09) containing a terracotta pipe (C5-2C-10) which breaks into the 18th/early 19th-century fills to a maximum depth of 1.4m (Figure 88).

Conclusion

The most significant finding from TT5-2 was the identification of the quay wall and the interface between natural ground and reclaimed land. This position is just to the east of what is now the pavement that runs along the west of Merchant's Quay, 10m southeast of the courthouse perimeter wall. The quay wall was identified on the basis of its context, particularly the contrast of grey alluvial sand with frequent oyster shell on its outer west side and brown clay with little shell to its east. Another indication is a layer of compacted stone beneath the cobbled paving of the early 19th century. This is likely to have been deposited as part of the in-filling of the harbour in the second half of the 18th century, and the compacted stone is present in the areas southwest of the wall, but not above the wall or on its eastern side. The wall itself survives at this location as just one course of masonry at 2.7m below ground, sitting on limestone boulder foundations which extend below the maximum excavated depth of 3.4m. It is an important survival of the area's pre-Georgian waterfront.

Table 15: TT5-2 summary of results

Trench number	TT5-2
Dates excavated	30 June-8 July 2020
Location	Merchant's Quay
Co-ordinates (NW corner)	E 557750.4954, N 657560.9788
Dimensions, orientation	20m SW/NE by 1.5m NW/SE
Ground level (ASL)	3.8926m (SW end) to 4.0872m (NE end)
Maximum depth	3.6m (in TT5-2A); 3.2m (in TT5-2B); 3.4m (in TT5-2C)
Services exposed	Stone lined culvert (C5-2C-09) containing terracotta pipe (C5-2C-10) at 500-1400mm depth in the northeast of TT5-2C
Archaeological significance	Cobbled surface (C5-2A-04 and C5-2C-06) at 400-800mm depth. Wall (C5-2C-13) aligned exposed at 2.7m below current ground level, aligned northwest/southeast. One course sitting on limestone boulder foundation which continues below 3.4m depth. Grey alluvial sand with frequent oyster shell against the outer, southwest face. Interpreted as the pre-18th century quay wall.
Recorded contexts	C5-2C-01: Asphalt road base – hard C5-2C-02: Road base, soft concrete C5-2C-03: Limestone paving slabs C5-2C-04: Bricks, mortar, building debris

	<p>C5-2C-05: Aggregate, grey</p> <p>C5-2C-06: Cobbled surface set in yellowish mortar</p> <p>C5-2C-07: Sandy silt, composite</p> <p>C5-2C-08: Cut of terracotta pipe filled with sandy gravel</p> <p>C5-2C-09: Culvert, stone lining for pipe</p> <p>C5-2C-10: 6" terracotta sewage pipe</p> <p>C5-2C-11: Sandy clay, black, with brick, mortar and frequent ceramic</p> <p>C5-2C-12: Silty sand, mid grey, moderate angular stone, frequent shell, wet. Contains clay pipe stems, black glazed ceramics</p> <p>C5-2C-13: Limestone wall and foundation</p>
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Figure 82 Location of TT5-2A, facing northeast towards St Mary's Cathedral



Figure 83 *Cobbled surface in TT5-2C*



Figure 84 *Excavation at the southwest end of TT5-2A, on to the compacted stone*



Figure 85 Stratigraphy along the north wall of TT5-2B



Figure 86 Quay wall revealed in the centre of TT5-2C