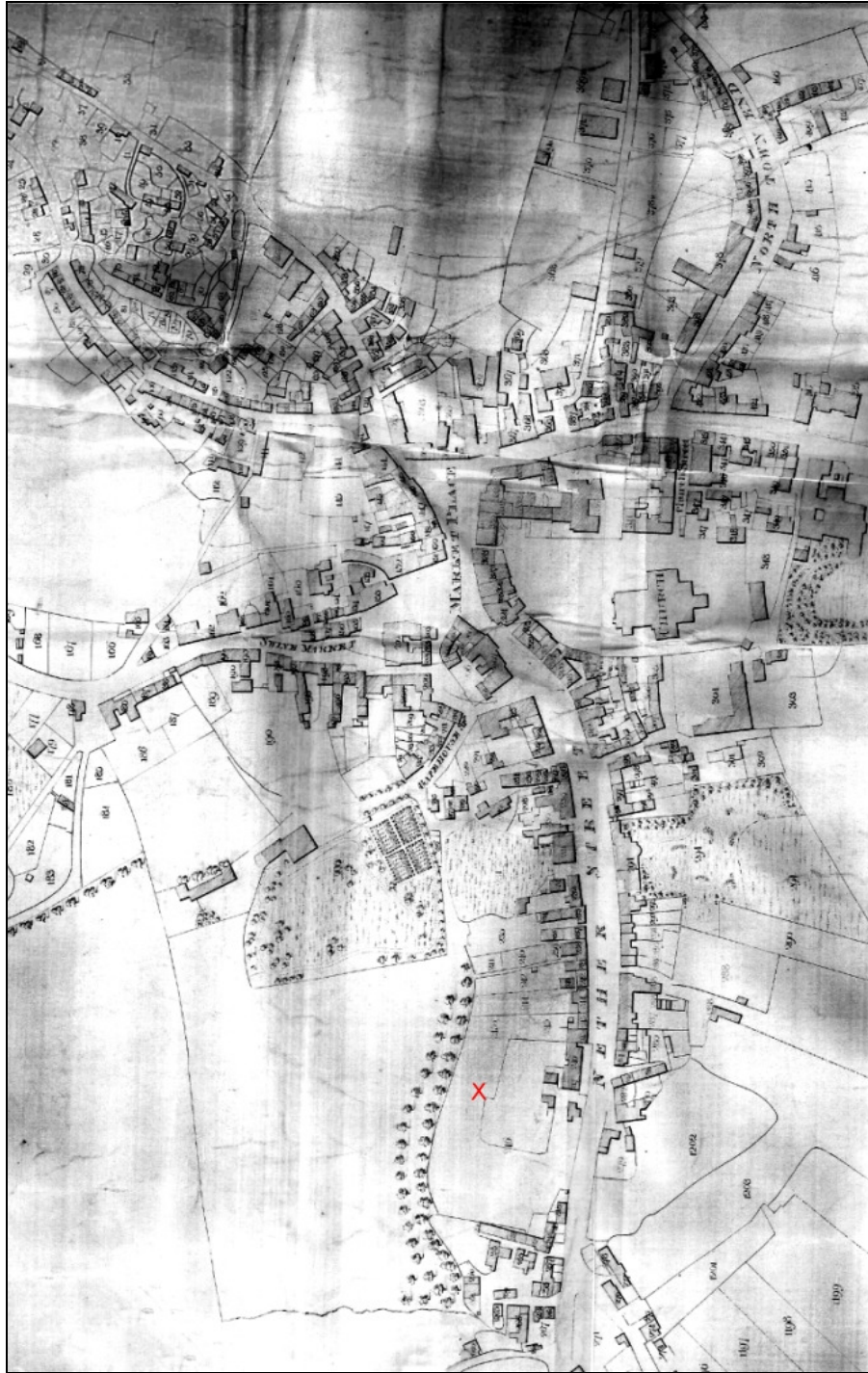


Update March 2014: Section Trench 1

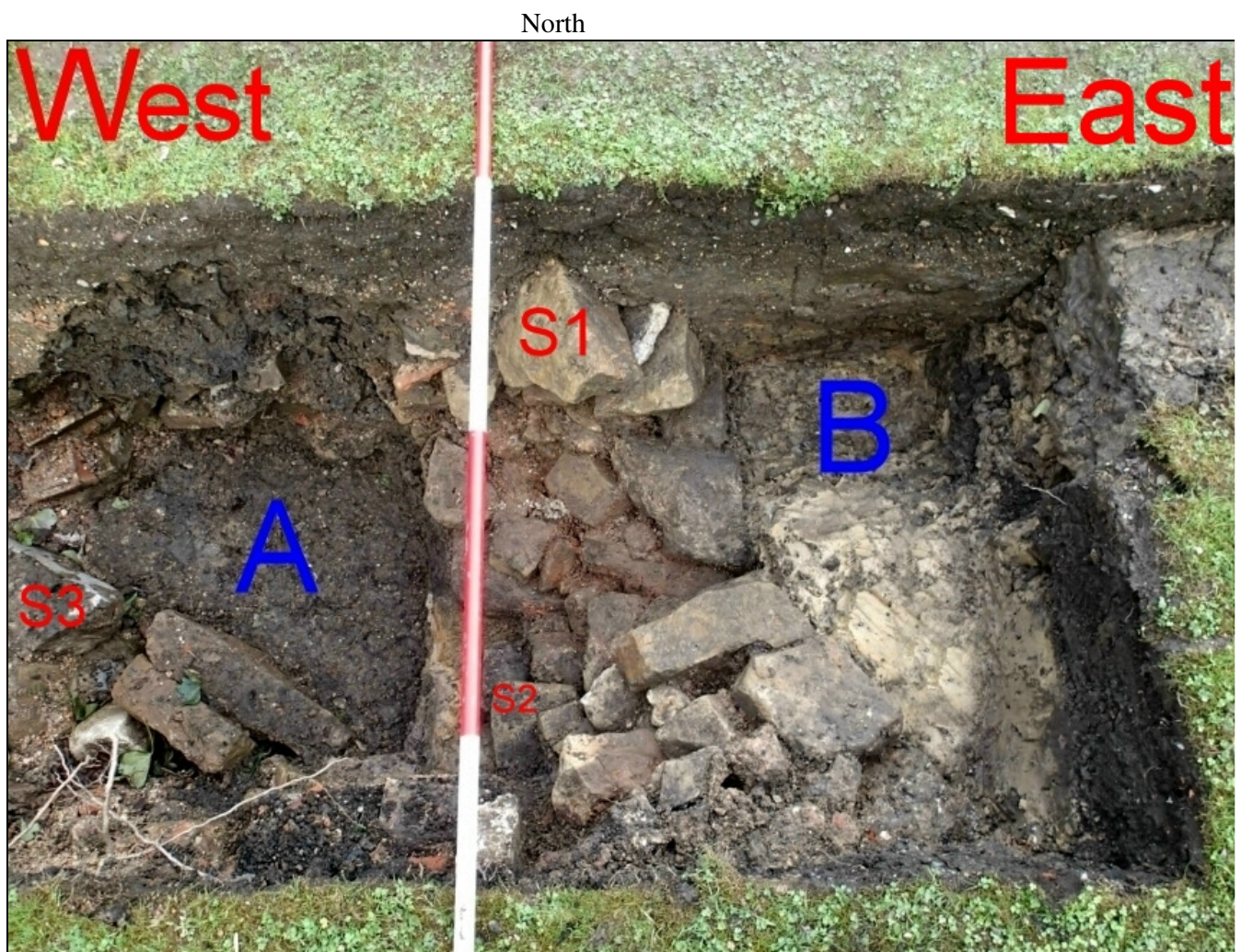
Here is the 1821 map of Wirksworth with an X showing where we are examining the lower garden of number 42 St John Street, given on the map as “Nether Street”.

North



At X we have a section trench running East-West. In the East end of the trench is what appears to be the natural clay bank of the slope of the hill, which rises towards St John Street. The sequence here is topsoil, then heavy fawn clay, sandier fawn clay then shale. Built into this is the remains of a wall with a spread of fallen and disturbed stone up to 2.5 metres wide in front of it. The wall as

it is built into the clay bank is wider at the bottom than the top, and this consists of perhaps only three courses of mixed stone. Spread in front of this is only one course, often of stones on edge in diagonal sequence and sometimes none; but a relatively large amount of building stone, both gritstone and dressed limestone. On top of this spread of stone is a very large amount of tipped brick, tile and mortar demolition rubble over 2 metres wide and up to 80 cm deep, which grows thinner beyond the stone at the front of the feature. The wall back rests on what appears to be a shallow cut trench containing broken shale and small stone; the wall is wider at the bottom in the bank, than it is that the top (which implies either that it was built first and the bank made afterwards; or that a cut was made through the natural clay, the wall built and then the clay tamped down on to the wall. Finally, the bottom of the wall contains a very red clay and palm sized lumps of white mortar. In practice this colouration makes it excruciatingly difficult to disentangle from the red and white of the tipped brick and mortar rubble on top of it. We have removed a section of the wall to see if any dating material was contained in it, but there was nothing. Lying between the fawn clay and the wall was a single handmade brick thinner and smaller than the modern brick contained in the tipped demolition layer in front of it and on top of it.



East End of the section trench

A is the base layer with all the rubble and fallen stone removed. B is the fawn clay bank into which the wall is built. Note the curve of the wall shows in the clay.

S numbers record locating stones. For example S3 can be seen in the picture above and the picture below.

North



East Middle of the section trench

The base layer with all the rubble and lower stone removed except locating stones to expose the substrate

In front of the wall feature is a well stratified section consisting of topsoil 30cm, heavy lumpy black clay with post mediaeval materials 40-50cm, the thinning out demolition layer 20-10cm, then a layer of grey clay 30cm+, which contains roots, charcoal, gravel and quite a lot of coarseware shards. As far as we can tell, this clay layer runs from the front of the wall feature's base (S4) right through our trench westwards to the furthest extent that we have so far reached, about another 3 metres. It overlies what appears again to be the natural substrate of sandy fawn clay and shale, but this requires further examination. S5 appears to be a random stone although the mortar next to it was unusually coherent compared to the rest of the tipped material.

North



West Middle of the section trench

This grey clay layer is not natural, it contains residual roots, gravel, bits of charcoal and so far, coarsewares. We have only had time to examine another few centimetres of it on the most recent

dig day, and we have two more coarseware shards from it to add to our growing collection of them.



I cannot date the coarsewares at the present. On the one hand, were they mediaeval we might expect to find them associated with some greenwares or some Cistercian wares; were they Roman we might expect to find them associated with some Samian or Derbyshirewares. However, this comes with a caveat: very often one finds wares from the Roman to the Mediaeval periods mixed up together, because the land surface concerned (note the residual roots) remained the same over time, and various things accumulated in it. In the picture above, perhaps the bottom and top shards may be mediaeval, but the middle two, smaller and more worn, may be earlier. Our progress will be to continue to examine all of the grey clay context until we have a higher level of certainty what it is and what's in it.

For those of you curious about the fortification issue I would say the grey clay feature does not exclude it (for example it might represent a berm forward of a wall). We still intend to look for a ditch, for only by so doing will we have any certainty in determining whether what is in Ian's garden is indeed the tattered remains of a defensive sequence, or the product of the local gardening fraternity: that is to say a garden terrace.

end.