JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

MINCHERY FARM PADDOCK,

LITTLEMORE, OXFORD

SP 5441 0232

On behalf of

Oxford City Council

October 2006

REPORT FOR	Oxford City Council C/o Mr Martin Lyons Asset Management St Aldate's Chambers 109-113 St. Aldate's Oxford Oxon OX1 1DS
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An evaluation of was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services on behalf of Oxford City Council (OCC) on the site of the Benedictine Priory of St Nicholas at Littlemore. The evaluation revealed good structural remains of medieval buildings as well as a quantity of Roman pottery. The precise function of putative buildings could not be identified, although a fireplace was observed in situ, and floor tiles and possible surfaces were recorded. Ditches were also observed in most of the trenches, as were the edges of significant waterlogged deposits. Roman and prehistoric activity was observed on the west side of the site overlooking the confluence of the Northfield brook and the brook delimiting the west side of the site. These remains were suggestive of light occupation on the headland possibly related to the cultivation soil into which the medieval remains were cut.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location *(Figure 1)*

The site is located to the southeast of Oxford, in the parish of Sandford-on-Thames, and west of the former site of Minchery Farm and the public house 'The Priory' on Grenoble Road. It is situated at the NGR SP 5441 0232 at a height of c. 60m OD, and measures a total area of 1.3ha comprising former garden and woodland as well as wetland. This adjacent area is a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC). The geology comprises alluvial sands overlying Coral Rag.

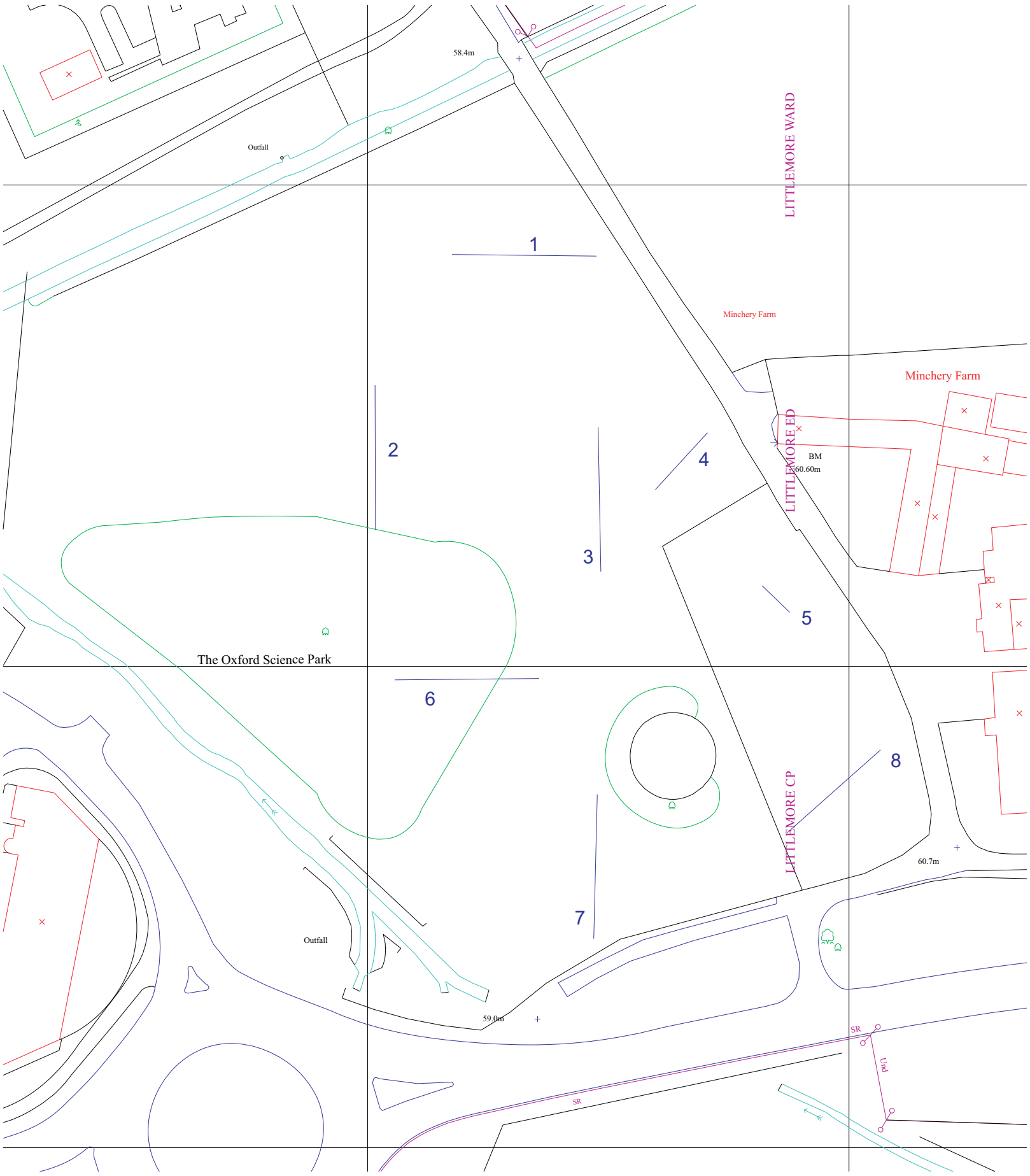
1.2 Planning Background

Oxford City Council is the landowner and is considering development of part of this site. Due to the site's potential to contain remains of archaeological significance an assessment and field evaluation was carried out. Oxford City Council's Archaeologist (OCCA) issued a *Brief* detailing the requirements of the archaeological work. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* detailed the methods to be employed to satisfy the requirements of the Brief.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

The proposed site lies within an area of considerable archaeological potential and is located west of 'The Priory' public house, a Grade II* listed building, the former site of the Benedictine Priory of St Nicholas. The Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) at Westgate House was consulted prior to the evaluation for entries within 1km of the proposed area. The Primary Record Number (PRN) is the SMR's reference number for each record of archaeological activity.

Residual prehistoric sherds and flint were recorded at Oxford Science Park (PRN 16299). A limited number of features as well as residual flints and pottery were recovered during the evaluation carried out at Kassam Stadium (PRN 16787). An arrowhead found during the construction of the Eastern By-Pass (PRN 3658) and finds of Iron Age pottery and coins (PRN 1426 and 1427) are the only prehistoric remains recorded in the immediate area.



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The main body of archaeological evidence in the environs of the proposed site is Roman. The heights east and south of Oxford have since the 19th century yielded a wealth of data concerning the Roman pottery kilns located between Littlemore and Cowley. These comprise the physical remains of kilns found in 1879 east of the current site (PRN 3845) and in 1893 at Rose Hill, Iffley (PRN 3656). During the late 1950s when the Eastern By-Pass was constructed David Sturdy observed evidence for possible kilns, also (PRN 3845). As the Blackbird Leys site was under construction at the same time, there too evidence for Roman kilns was recorded by EH Leggatt (PRN 6143). Paul Booth supervised excavations for Oxford Archaeological Unit in the 1990s at Blackbird Leys Zone 'C' which also evidenced Roman kiln activity (PRN 15954). The land overlooking the Northfield Brook has yielded much stray finds of Roman pottery (PRN 16787, 2151, 1426, 16951).

The line of the Roman road running to Alchester from Dorchester lies 1.5km to the east of the site (PRN 8923).

To the west of the site a Saxon village was recorded under the Oxford Science Park (PRN 16299) (Moore, 2001) comprising a number of sunken featured buildings and associated occupation evidence. A possibly medieval farmstead was also recorded here, which concurs with a wide spread of medieval pottery from sites in the vicinity (e.g. PRN 15837, 16966, 16965).

The Priory of St Nicholas, Littlemore was founded by Robert de Sandford, a knight of the abbot of Abingdon, probably in the middle of the 12th century during the reign of Stephen. It derives its name Minchery from the Old English *mynecu* or *minschen*, a nun. In the 1220s, the Crown paid 40*s* a year for the maintenance a *prebendaria*, a female boarder or almswoman, at St Nicholas, and in 1232 granted it the right to collect dead wood at Shotover. The Templars were patrons of the priory from around 1240 until they were dissolved in 1312.

The priory church would appear to have undergone rebuilding in or around 1245 as the pope, Innocent IV, granted an indulgence of ten days to those who aided in the works. Little else is indicated in the sources for building or other works. The Priory of St Nicholas is not mentioned in Nicholas IV's *Taxatio* of 1291, which might indicate a degree of poverty, despite the priory church reconstruction fifty-odd years earlier; although equally, the Templars being patrons of the priory may be an alternative explanation for it not figuring in the *Taxatio*. The Priory does not feature in Henry VIII's *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, as it had already been dissolved (VCH, 1907).

Certainly by 1445 it had shrunk to a meagre seven nuns. Gossip was rife concerning the life of the prioress, Alice Wakelyn, and the conditions of the sisters who were required to share beds as a result of a lack of means. By 1517 the conditions at the priory were in a shocking state and Katherine Wells, prioress, was accused of having had an illegitimate daughter by a Kentish priest, Richard Hewes, to whom she had also passed on some of the priory plate (VCH, 1907). Furthermore she had also used priory property to furnish her daughter with a dowry. Complaints were slung back and forward as she also alleged the lewd and disobedient behaviour of the nuns under her. By 1524 Wolsey had decided to dissolve the priory (Pantin, 1970).

Evaluations carried out to the east at the site of Oxford United Football Stadium yielded mostly residual medieval pottery, although a ditch and two postholes were excavated (Freke, 1998). The evaluation to the north and east of 'The Priory' public house revealed a better range of medieval remains (Taylor, 2004). Remains associated with the priory church were identified in one of the trenches and a number of graves and grave cuts were observed north of this; a farming or agricultural area was identified towards Grenoble Road (Taylor, 2004).

After it was dissolved, the priory passed to Cardinal College – the predecessor of Christ Church – although by 1549 it was in the hands of the Powell family who held it until the 18th century. Around the beginning of the 17th century the priory complex, such as it was by that time, had passed into secular use. It is not clear whether the tenant farmers who rented the property were responsible for the removal of the rest of the priory buildings or the "considerable reconstruction of the house, c. 1600" (Pantin, 1970:6). An Estate Map from 1849 shows standing buildings to the west of the current public house, as does the first Ordnance Survey of 1876. Illustrations from the 19th century show the farm as looking much as it does today, although one of Buckler's drawings of 1826 seems to concur with the Estate Map and OS data, showing the corner of a low building to the west of 'The Priory' public house. The Minchery Farm continued in use until the post-war period, when the building now known as 'The Priory' became, during the 1970s, the Minchery Tavern; at this time the Minchery Town and Country Club was built to the north of the last remaining bit of the priory. This latter structure was burnt down in the 1990s.

In 1970 WA Pantin published a short article in *Oxoniensia* 'Minchery Farm, Littlemore', the first academic architectural study of the building. Pantin surveyed the current standing structure, and on the back of the identification of Minchery Farm as "clearly represent[ing] the eastern range of the cloister garth" (Pantin, 1970:19) proceeds to establish a complete layout of the priory complex. The article has provided an important body of work for recent archaeological interventions to examine.

Pantin locates the majority of the priory complex to the west of 'The Priory', largely under the present footpath and pub garden, although extending into the proposed development area. This reconstruction shows a typical square closed cloister, presupposing the late medieval priory to be directly modelled on a 12th century predecessor with a claustral layout. Pantin rejects the probability of a complex comprising more open, 'domestic' arrangements.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.

- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.

- In particular

    - to determine the presence/absence and state of preservation of any remains associated with the Priory with specific reference to characterising and defining the limits of any structure. The potential remains are discussed above.
    - to determine the presence/absence of Pleistocene deposits of Northfield Brook.
    - to determine the presence/absence of remains relating to Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon use of the landscape known in the area.

- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* issued by Oxford City Council's Archaeologist a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with OCCA and the landowner. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of a total of 8 trenches across the site (Fig. 1). Furthermore, geophysical investigations using a gradiometer and soil resistance survey were carried out by Mr Roger Ainslie and Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics on the 22nd and 24th September (see Appendix 2).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in a *Written Scheme of Investigation* agreed with the OAAS. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

Eight trenches were excavated across the site. These measured 1.8m wide and varied in length between 8.5m and 30m; they were excavated by a JCB with a ditching bucket. The trenches were excavated to the top of the archaeology or the natural, whichever occurred first. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand, where necessary, prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological features. Trench 5 could not be excavated to the required length due to the presence of trees.

Following site visits by Brian Durham, City Archaeologist, of Oxford City Council, it was agreed to further excavate certain areas adjacent to some of the trenches to better understand certain sequences.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale

plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. cuts; numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material. All measurements are given in metres. A general description of the feature fills is given. CBM refers to ceramic building material.

Trench 1 (Figure 2)
Trench 1 was located at the northern extent of the proposed redevelopment area, and oriented east/west traversing the sandy natural to the more clay natural. It was 30m long. The bottom of the sequence was a deposit, initially believed to be natural but which may be a buried plough soil or land surface (1/05). It was a friable light orange brown slightly silty sand with occasional gravel, although its appearance was more bluish grey at the west end, where a reduced oxygen atmosphere prevailed in the waterlogged area. The land fell from east to west; at the top of the trench the drop was from 59.20m OD to 57.96m OD, while at the bottom the drop was marginally greater between 58.72m OD and 56.84m OD.

Two residual sherds of Romano-British pot were recovered from the possible plough soil (1/05), and three from a tree throw (1/06). A single sherd of medieval pottery was mistakenly assigned to the cut [1/07] of the above tree throw, which cut the plough soil (1/05).

This sandy layer (1/05) was cut by a service trench related to the Littlemore sewage farm towards the east end of the trench and also by a north/south aligned feature [1/08], which was not investigated due to rising groundwater, towards the west end of the trench. This linear feature was filled with firm dark orange brown silty clay (1/09). It was not excavated, but may be a service trench related to the sewage farm.

To the west the sand (1/05) was overlain by a sequence of deposits relating to the Littlemore or Northfield Brook, or to features associated with it. This lay on the edge of the development area. Sealing the sand in the waterlogged area was a layer of bluish grey clay (1/04), c. 0.1m thick. This was overlain by a thick layer of peat (1/03) which measured c. 0.40m deep. An orangey-brown sandy loam (1/02) and topsoil (1/01) sealed all the layers in the trench.

Trench 2 (Figure 2)
Trench 2, which lay to the southwest of Trench 1, was 30m in length and oriented north/south. Four service trenches or drains, including (2/04), oriented southwest/northeast were observed in the trench; these may be associated with the sewage farm. The trench dropped from south to north toward the Littlemore or Northfield Brook between 59.06m OD and 58.13m OD at the trench top, and 58.57m OD and 57.79m OD at the base of the trench.

The natural was reddish brown silty sand (2/07), which was observed in the south end of the trench. This was cut by a sub-circular pit or possible tree throw [2/08], which

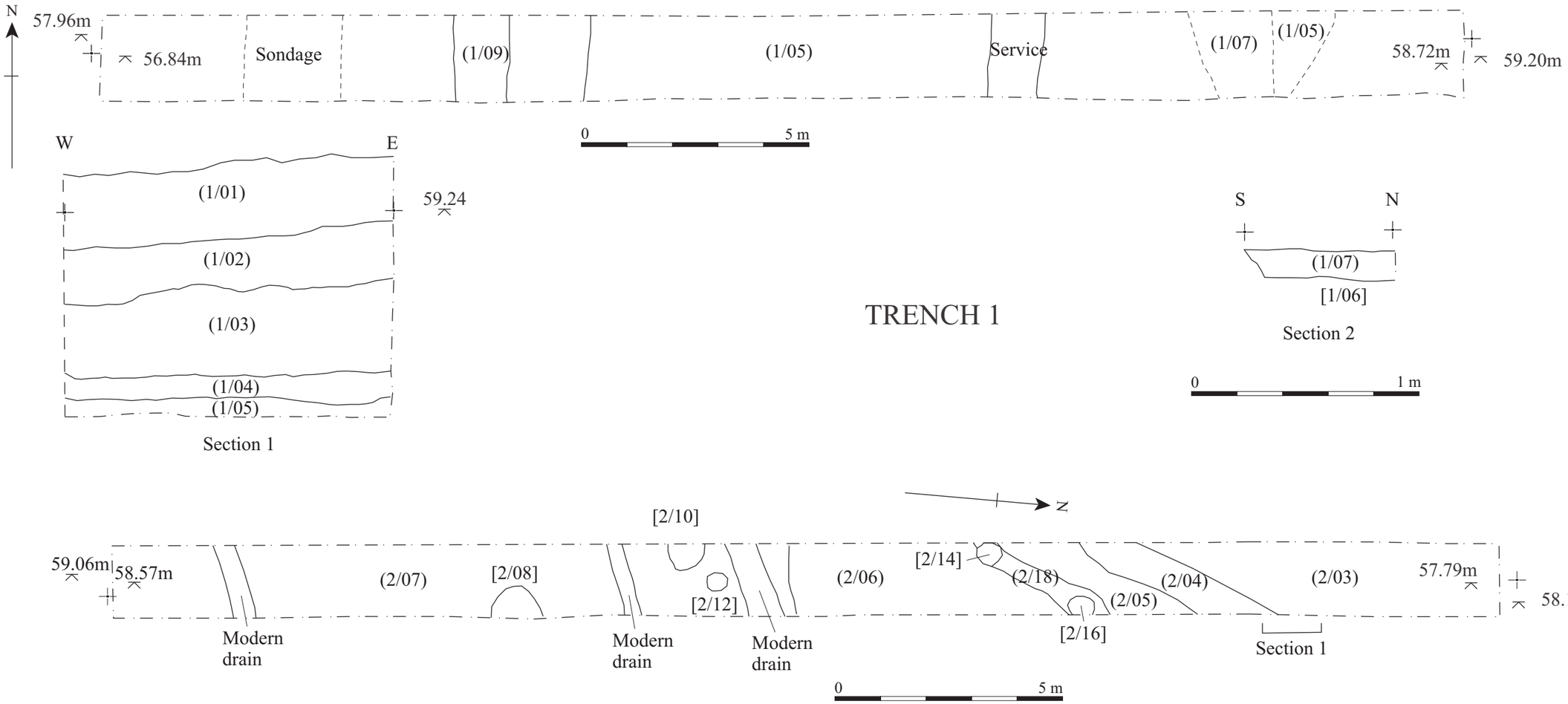


Figure 2. Trenches 1 and 2

extended beyond the edge of excavation. The feature was filled with two fills a lower pale white sand (2/19), c. 0.05m thick, and an upper pale brown silty clay (2/09), 0.35m thick, which contained a flint flake. A second pit [2/10] – also cutting (2/07) was excavated to the north of [2/08], measuring c. 0.8m in diameter, but only c. 0.1m deep. This was filled with orangey brown sandy loam (2/11). Adjacent to [2/10] was a deep posthole [2/12], c. 0.3m in diameter and c. 0.3m deep. The posthole was filled with grey brown silty sand (2/13), and no finds were recovered from either feature.

The sand (2/07) was overlain to the north by bluish grey clay (2/06), which was the same as seen in Trench 1, and was also the same as (2/05) and (2/03); three sherds of Romano-British pot was recovered from the latter. Two flint flakes were recovered from the surface of the deposit during machining. The clay was cut by several features, including a deposit of mid yellow brown silty clay (2/04), which may be the same as (1/09), in Trench 1, a drain associated with the sewage farm.

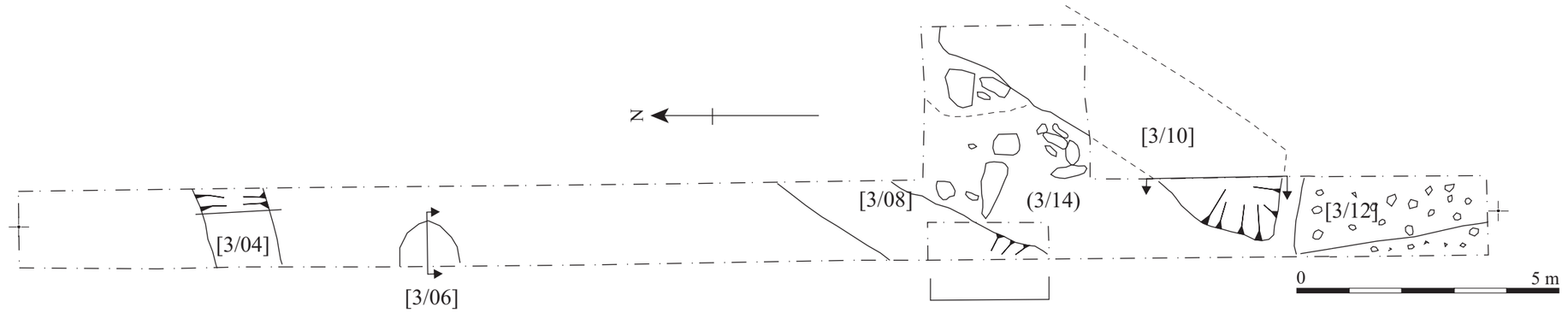
A linear area of yellowish brown silty sand (2/18) oriented northeast/southwest was observed separating (2/06) and (2/05). Two postholes [2/14] and [2/16] were cut into this deposit. The posthole [2/14] was located to the southwest, and measured 0.35m in diameter and was 0.09m deep. It was filled with dark brown silty sand (2/15). The other posthole to the northeast [2/16] was smaller – 0.30m – and deeper – 0.18m, and filled with similar material to (2/15). No dating was recovered from the features.

All features were sealed by a subsoil of silty sandy clay (2/02) – c. 0.25m thick – and topsoil (2/01), which was also c. 0.25m thick.

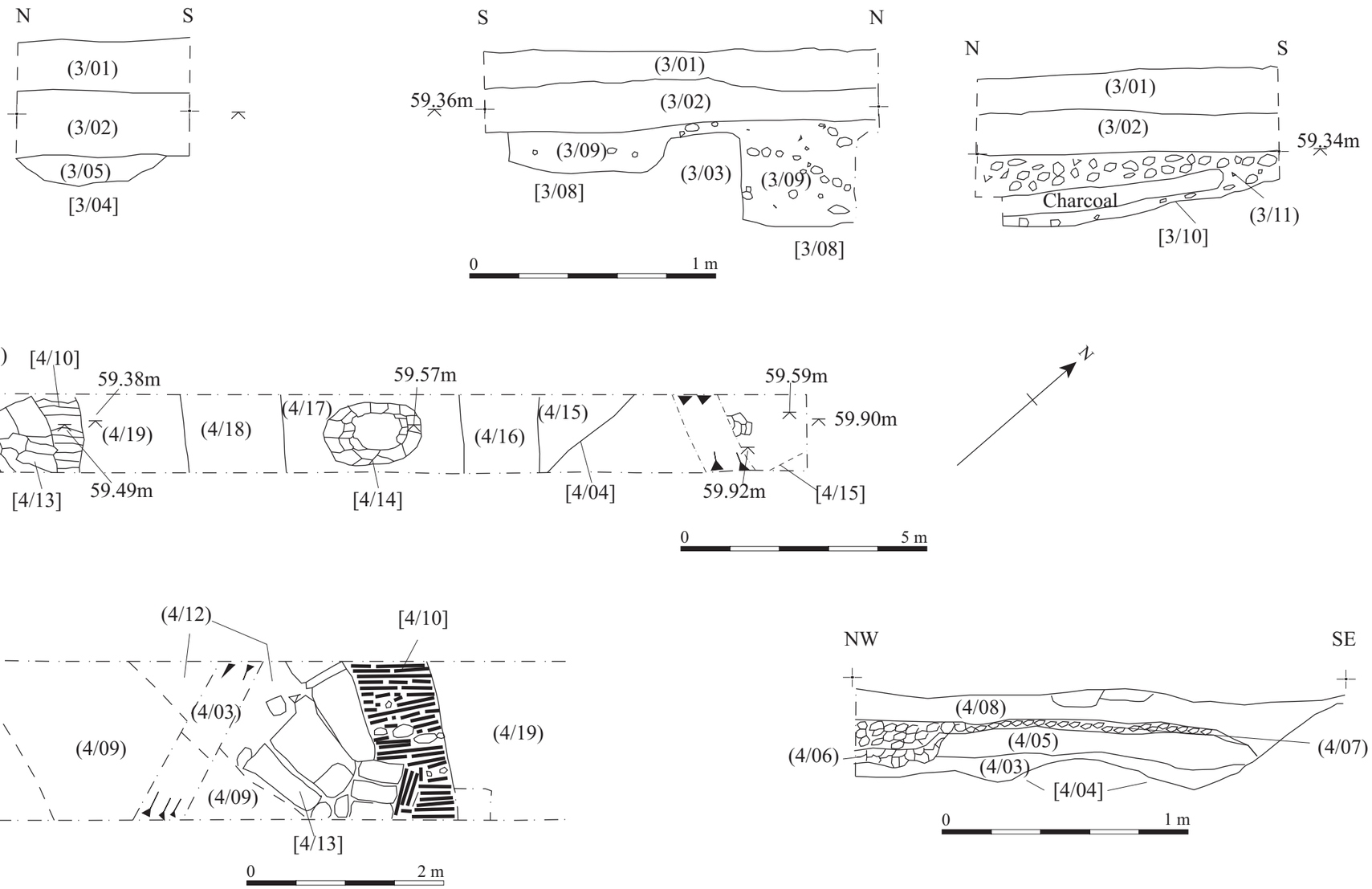
Trench 3 (Figure 3)
Trench 3 was 30m long and located south of Trench 1 and east of Trench 2 on the sandy heights overlooking the break of slope towards the Northfield Brook and the brook on the west edge of the development area. The trench fell from south to north from between 59.78m OD and 59.45m OD at the trench top, and between 59.24m OD and 58.95m OD at the base. A box measuring 3m by 3m was subsequently excavated on the east side of the southern half of the trench following discussions with Brian Durham, City Archaeologist, in order to ascertain the nature of two parallel linear features which defined a stony area.

The natural sand (3/03) was observed across the trench. This was yellowish orange silty sand as seen in all trenches. A possible tree throw or throw [3/06] was recorded at the north end of site. It was filled with pale mottled brown silty sand and gravel (3/07), which was 0.12m thick in an area 0.83m in diameter; Romano-British and two sherds of 11th century pottery were recovered from this fill. Just to the north of this feature was an east/west linear [3/04], 0.7m wide and 0.23m deep; it was filled with a homogenous dark greyish brown silty sand (3/05), which appeared to have formed through natural silting up of the feature. The excavator believed this to be a boundary ditch, rather than robber trench.

To the south of the ditch were a pair of parallel robber trenches, [3/08] and [3/10]. These were oriented northeast/southwest. The northernmost cut [3/08] measured 1.10m wide, at least 3.5m long and 0.44m deep. The break of slope at the top and base of the cut was sharp on the south side, but was not fully excavated to the north



TRENCH 3



TRENCH 4

Figure 3. Trenches 3 and 4

edge. It was filled with a similar fill to (3/11), although there was no charcoal lens. The fill (3/09) extended as a spread to the south over a baulk of natural sand (3/03), nearly dividing the backfill of the robber trench from the contiguous spread beyond the edge of the robber trench. To the northeast, the geophysical survey picked up further areas of high resistance, which might indicate more robbing out of walls (figure 6).

The southern linear [3/10] appeared to represent a cut terminating at both ends. The cut was at least 1.20m wide, 7.5m long and 0.40m deep. Unlike its partner, the break of slope to the cut was gentle. It was filled with dark brownish grey silty sand (3/11) and much small stone, in addition a lens of charcoal, c. 0.10m thick, was visible in section. Further stony spreads (3/12) and (3/13) existed to the south of it, which may indicate a robber trench, or merely be a rubble spread. The pottery recovered from these two linear features, and from the stone spread (3/12), points to a date from sometime over the course of the 13th century.

Between the two robber trenches was an area of hard, apparently natural sand with a quantity of possibly worked stone (3/14). Whether this deposit represents an area of wall foundation – which does not seem likely, given the robber trench to the north – or a dump of walling is not wholly clear given the limited investigation possible. In conclusion, it is more likely the latter. It is possible that the southern cut [3/10] might be an element of some form of staircase foundation butting up to the robbed out wall of cut [3/08].

Sealing all the features were subsoil (3/02) and topsoil (3/01), which were observed across the proposed development site. None of the buried ploughsoil, seen in other trenches, was observed in this trench, though it may be present beyond it.

Trench 4 (Figure 3)
Trench 4 measured 20m in length and was located to the northeast of Trench 3 and due south of Trench 1; it was oriented northeast/southwest and sloped gently from the northeast where the top of the trench was at 59.90m OD to the southwest, where it was at 59.86m OD. The trench base dropped from 59.59m OD to 59.44m OD.

The natural sand (4/03) was observed in places throughout the trench, but rain following machining churned it up heavily. The natural was also recorded as (4/15). A number of features cut or overlay the natural sand. These can probably be associated with one of the various priory buildings.

At the northeast end of the trench an east/west robber trench [4/04] was recorded, cutting into (4/15). It was c. 1.8m wide, 5.5m long and 0.42m deep. The break of slope at the top of the south edge of the cut was gentle and the base was irregular; the north edge of the cut was under the edge of the trench section. Four distinct fills were observed in the cut. The earliest fill (4/05) was brownish grey sandy clay with charcoal flecking, c. 0.16m thick. Abutting this to the north was a dump of stony rubble (4/06) in a sandy clay matrix, which was c. 0.08m thick. Both layers were sealed by a layer (4/07) of stone and crushed stone in an orangey brown sandy clay matrix which varied between 0.11m and 0.02m thick from north to south. Overlying the stone and crushed stone (4/07) was a deposit of greyish brown silty sand (4/08). From the top of this deposit a quantity of early, decorated floor tiles was recovered during machining and two sherds of 13th century pottery.

To the west of this a possible floor, or floor make-up, level was observed (4/16) and (4/18). Greyish brown sandy silt was recorded with a quantity of stones lying flat on it. It may well be the buried ploughsoil, observed elsewhere on site, with stone make-up, or indeed a disturbed hard surface. Rubble, which overlay this layer and was perhaps incorporated into it, limited the investigation of the deposit. The nature of this surface (4/16)/(4/18) could be understood to be some form of hard work area for industrial activity.

Located between these two deposits was a well (4/14). This was only recorded in plan. It measured c. 1.7m externally in diameter and 0.77m internally, comprising rough limestone blocks, which did not appear to have any mortar or other bonding material. The top was backfilled with a dark brown sandy silt deposit (4/11) that strongly resembled the ploughsoil, containing 13th century pottery. Although no cut was recorded for the well, a deposit of mid brown sandy silt (4/17) was observed around the area of the stone wall to the well. It is feasible that the west edge of (4/16) and the east edge of (4/18) may be the edge of the cut for the well. However it was not possible to fully investigate this hypothesis at the time.

To the west of the well and the possible floor surface (4/18) was a northwest/southeast oriented wall (4/13), made of rough limestone blocks – some of which had traces of heavy burning. No bonding was apparent, though heavily sooted silty sand (4/12) was present in the wall fill. It was observed over 2m metres, but extended beyond the trench edges. Its greatest width was 1.5m, but appeared to narrow to the east, perhaps indicating a recessed chimney. To the immediate east of the wall was a large hearth area (4/10) made up of pitched roof tiles – some of which were glazed. Charcoal was well evidenced between the tiles, as was some medieval pottery, dating to the mid 13th century. Associated with this feature was a layer (4/19) of bluish black to dark brown sandy loam with charcoal and CBM fragments, which may be a work area in a putative kitchen area.

Alternatively, the hearth, well and hard floor surface might be components of a light industrial area within a building. To the south of the trench, the geophysical survey located a number of high and low resistance areas which may indicate walls and robber trenches (figure 6). The hearth appears to curve into the wall, perhaps indicating an inset chimney. The evaluation was not able to confirm the full extent of the hearth.

West of the wall a reddish brown clay filled linear feature (4/09) was observed and sample excavated to establish the relationship between it and the wall. Stratigraphy and dating placed it later in the sequence. Excavation ceased when clay pipe was recovered from the slot.

All features were sealed by the subsoil, (4/02), and the topsoil, (4/01). The deposit (4/16)/(4/18) may well be the ploughsoil observed elsewhere on site, but discoloured due to it being associated with later activities within the building.

Trench 5 (Figure 4)
Trench 5 was a short trench of 8.5m, located south of Trench 4 and southeast of Trench 3. It was oriented northwest/southeast. The trench dropped to the north from

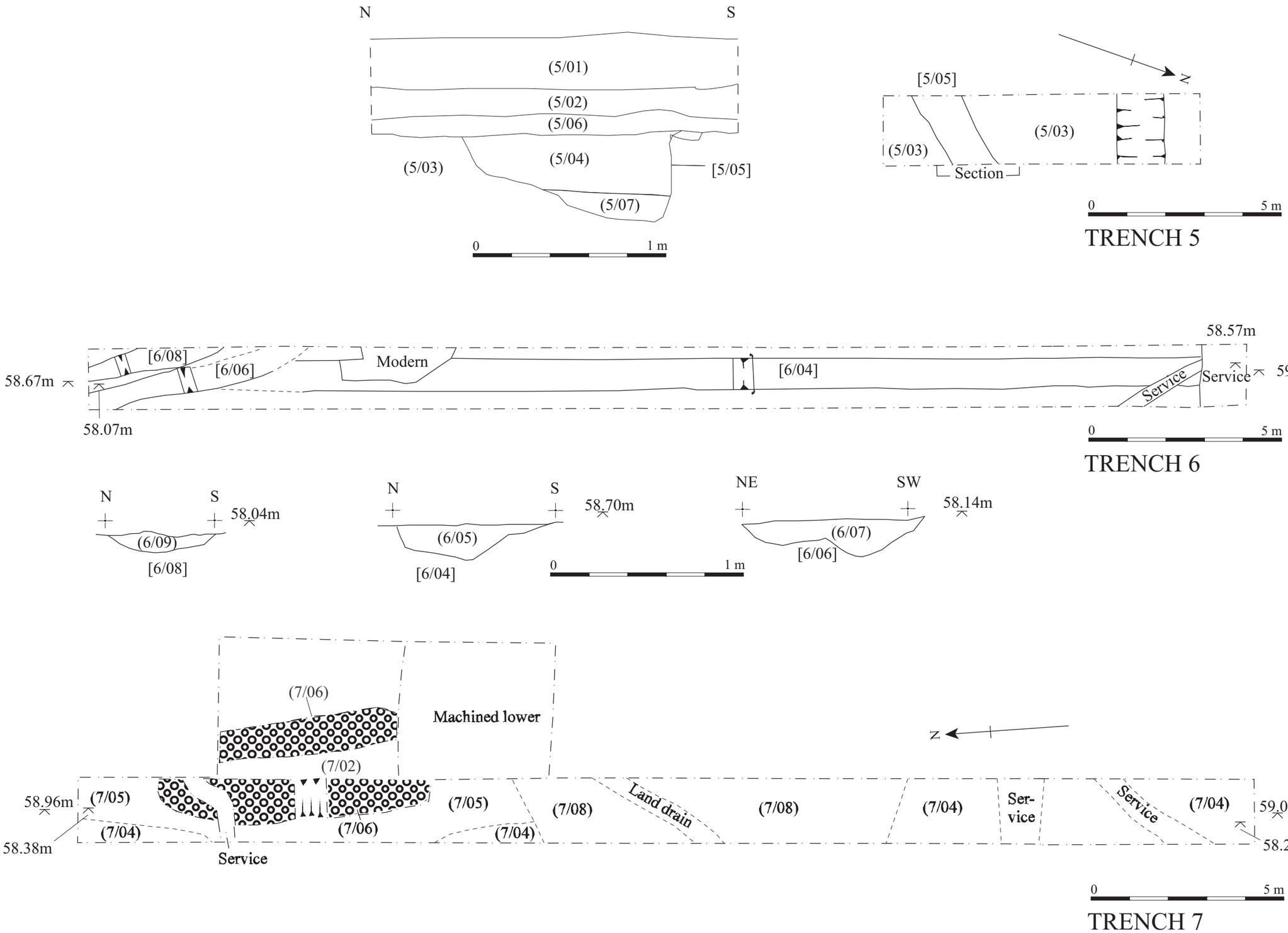


Figure 4. Trenches 5, 6 and 7

60.32m OD at the top of the south end to 60.21m OD; the base of the trench fell away between 59.85m and 59.64m OD. The earliest layer observed was a small area of natural yellow brown clay silt (5/08) in the machine slot at the north end of the trench. This was overlain by a layer of buried silty sand ploughsoil (5/03) c. 0.30m thick; this ploughsoil was observed elsewhere on site e.g. Trenches 1, 4 and 8. Two sherds of 13th century pot were recovered from this deposit. Cut into this layer was the robber trench [5/05]. The putative wall associated with this cut post-dated the ploughsoil, as the spread (5/06) directly overlay the ploughsoil.

A single feature was observed in the south end of Trench 5: a north/south oriented robber trench [5/05]. The robber trench measured 1.10m wide and was greater then 2.1m long. It was 0.46m deep, with a vertical south side and stepped north side; the base was reasonably flat. The robber trench contained two fills and was sealed by a spread of rubble. The earliest fill was a 0.20m thick friable pale yellow to grey sandy silt (5/07), which probably represents churned up natural and silting of the cut. This was overlain by greenish brown sandy silt (5/04) – strongly resembling the proximal ploughsoil – with significant quantities of CBM and rubble through it. Three sherds of 13th century pot were recovered. The whole was sealed by a spread of stony rubble and CBM (5/06) with a north/south extent of some 2.5m.

The features were overlain by subsoil (5/02) and topsoil (5/01).

Trench 6 (Figure 4)
Trench 6 was oriented east/west and lay south of Trenches 2 and 3, and east of Trench 5. It was 30m long and fell gently away from the sandy heights toward the basin of the junction of the Littlemore or Northfield Brook and the brook at the west edge of the property. The top of the east end of the trench was at 59.29m OD and the west was at 58.67m OD – that is a difference of 0.62m. The base dropped less so, between 58.57m and 58.07m OD, a drop of only 0.50m.

The natural was orange clay (6/03), into which were cut three archaeological features, two modern disturbances and a service trench. The modern disturbances were not investigated.

The trench was largely composed of a single ditch running east/west [6/04], which was truncated by modern activity at the east end and by later ditches – [6/06] and [6/08] – at the west. The ditch [6/04] was a shallow feature c. 1m wide with a single fill of greyish brown sandy clay (6/05) c. 0.13m deep. A single sherd of Roman pot was recovered from the ditch fill.

At the west end of the trench two northeast/southwest oriented ditches truncated the east/west ditch. The earlier westernmost ditch [6/08] was c. 06m wide, at least 3.5m long and 0.1m deep, filled with dark grey clay (6/09); it was cut by [6/06]. The easternmost ditch [6/06] was observed for c. 6m in plan. It was c. 0.85m wide, 0.17m deep and U-shaped; the break of slope at the top was sharp, though the base was uneven. The ditch was filled with dark grey clay (6/07) with no finds. The shape of the cut suggests that it may have been recut, but the fill was homogenous within the feature.

All features were sealed by the subsoil (6/02) and the topsoil (6/01).

Trench 7 (Figure 4)
Trench 7 was located to the south of Trench 6 and west of Trench 8, oriented north/south and 30m long. The trench fell away to the south toward Grenoble Road, where a Watching Brief carried out by Mark Roberts of OAU (pers. comm.) recorded a brook running northwest toward the junction of the Littlemore or Northfield Brook and the brook on the west edge of the proposed development area. The top of the trench at the north end was at 58.96m OD and at the south end at 59.03m OD. In the base of the trench, the north end was higher at 58.38m OD, while the south end tipped into the brook at 58.25m OD.

The natural sand (7/05) was observed at the north end of the trench, where this was overlain by a sequence of alluvial clays comprising (7/08) and (7/04), and the peat (7/03) which formed the northern edge of the palaeochannel observed by Mark Roberts of OAU.

Cut into the sand on the eastern edge of the northern part of the trench was a shallow area filled with stone (7/06). This was exposed to examine its extent (c. 2m east) but was not excavated. Initially believed to form the west precinct wall to the priory, following further machining, it was clear that it was a spread of rubble, probably related to the destruction of the priory, and not a part of a feature such as a wall.

All features were sealed by the subsoil (7/02) and the topsoil (7/01).

Trench 8 (Figure 5)
Trench 8 lay on the southern edge of the proposed development area, east of Trench 7 and south of Trench 5. It was oriented northeast/southwest and was 25m in length, with a box measuring 3m by 4.5m extending from the south side of the trench. The trench dropped gently from north to south at ground level – 60.08m to 59.56m OD – but the base of the trench fell away more steeply – from 59.63m to 58.71m OD.

The sandy layer (8/13) was observed in the base of the trench – this was the same buried ploughsoil observed in Trenches 3, 4 and 5. The walls [8/01], [8/03] and [(8/06] were laid in trenches cut through this deposit. A possibly earlier ditch [8/16], which cut the ploughsoil, but was not excavated may be overlain or truncated by the later walls. This slightly curved linear was c. 1m long and 0.5m wide and filled with dark greyish brown silty sand (8/15).

Wall [8/01] was oriented north/south and comprised rough-hewn limestone blocks. It was at least c. 0.7m long and 0.55m wide; although only a single course was observed and the wall went under the southern section edge, it is at right angles to the wall [8/03]. The cut [8/02] for the wall appeared not to have been packed, but rather was tight to the face of the wall.

To the southwest at 90° to [8/01] was the slightly larger wall [8/03], which was in the wall trench [8/04]. This wall was oriented east/west; it was observed for c. 2m within the trench and was c. 0.7m wide. The north face of the wall was rough and unfaced, the south was faced with remains of plaster adhering to it. A similar sandy gravel material was seen and recorded in the make-up of both walls. Although the right-angle where the two fragments of wall joined was located beneath the edge of the

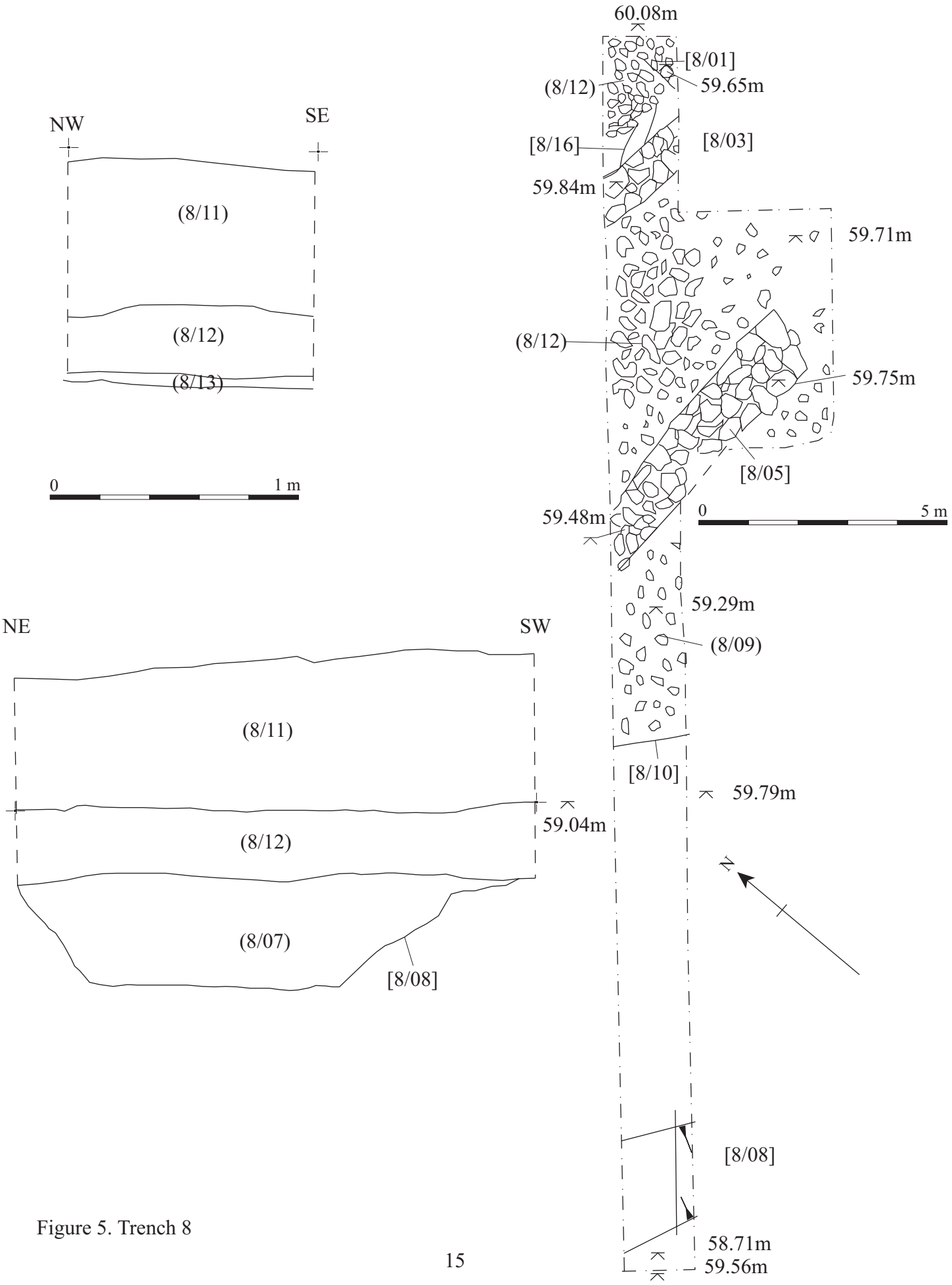


Figure 5. Trench 8

section, it is reasonable to identify them as a corner within a structure. It is possible that the walls defined an external area located in the northwest corner of the trench, which was sealed by (8/12), a deposit of stony material extending southwest to the wall [8/03]. Equally, the width of [8/01] was less than [8/03], which is suggestive of it not having been a supporting wall. If this is so, it is reasonable to envisage the right angle between the two walls having been an internal – rather than external area – such as a room. The rubble (8/12) might then represent the collapse or destruction of the upper courses.

Parallel to [8/03], and c. 3.5m to the south was the third wall [8/05]. This wall was 0.8m wide, observed over a length of 6m within the trench and had at least two courses of angular limestone standing. The bonding material was the same sandy gravel mix observed in (8/01) and (8/03). All the observed sides of the wall were faced – including that on the east end, suggesting an entrance into the space defined by [8/03] and [8/05]. Render was similarly observed on the internal (north) face of the wall opposite that on the wall parallel, [8/03]. As in the other walls, the cut [8/06] was tight to the wall. The space between the two walls was largely left unexcavated, bar some cleaning, as during machining it became apparent that the tree standing on the northern section of the trench was well-rooted in amongst the rubble. To the south of the wall [8/05] were two discrete dumps, (8/09) and (8/10). The former was a dark greyish brown silty sand matrix into which the more stony (8/10) was mixed. The deposit (8/09) yielded two sherds of 13th century pot.

West of the dump, and sealed by it, was the ploughsoil (8/13), which at the west end of the trench was cut by an east/west aligned ditch [8/08]. The ditch was 2.1m wide and 0.5m deep. It extended beyond the edge of excavation, and was aligned northwest/southeast. There was a single fill (8/07) recorded from the ditch, a dark greyish brown silty sand with occasional patches of natural. Flint and two sherds of pot were recovered from the fill of the ditch, which the excavator believes to have been open for quite some time and which silted up gradually, providing a 13th century date. It is not clear what this ditch is, although it may well be the precinct wall to the priory

All features were sealed by the subsoil and topsoil (8/11), which in this trench were conflated and treated as a single deposit.

5 The Finds

5.1 The Pottery *by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 42 sherds with a total weight of 868g. It mainly comprised a mixture of Roman and medieval material. The latter consisted of types which are well known in the region, and spanned the 11th – 13th centuries.

It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1989; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 1 sherd, 6g.
OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050 – 1400. 5 sherds, 89g.
OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 7 sherds, 153g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 14 sherds, 328g.
OXBG: Surrey Whiteware. Mid 13th – mid 15th C. 1 sherd, 5g.
OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 2 sherds, 93g

In addition, 12 sherds (294g) of assorted Romano-British pottery were present. A single sherd was stratified, the rest being residual and all the sherds of this type were abraded to a greater or lesser degree.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem.*

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

		RB		OXAC		OXBF		OXY		OXAM		OXBG		OXDR		
Tr	Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
	U/S							1	14							U/S
1	5	2	103													RB
1	6	3	95													RB
1	7													2	93	M16thC
2	3	3	62													RB
3	6	1	10			1	10	1	34							L11thC
3	8					1	21									M11thC
3	10	1	12					1	9	1	4					13thC
3	12							1	62	1	4					13thC
4	U/S	1	6			1	45			3	29					U/S
4	8							1	18	1	7					13thC
4	10							1	4	1	5	1	5			M13thC
4	11					1	4			1	58					13thC
5	3									2	34					13thC
5	4			1	6			1	12	1	2					13thC
6	4	1	6													RB
8	7					1	9			1	11					13thC
8	9									2	174					13thC
	Total	12	294	1	6	5	89	7	153	14	328	1	5	2	93	

6 DISCUSSION (Figure 6)

Trenches 1 and 2 tip towards and evidenced the watercourse, but are liminal to the priory complex itself and peripheral to the development area as a whole. These indicated that a significant wetland area still exists to the north of the proposal area. Trench 2 yielded some prehistoric flint. This was recovered both from pits and from the top of (2/03), the edge of the watercourse. The pottery from Trenches 1 and 2 points to some Roman activity overlooking and along the course of the brook, which has been observed during the evaluation at Kassam Stadium and at other points along the brook. Trench 6 largely comprised a probable Roman ditch oriented east/west down the slope toward the waterlogged area of the streams' confluence.

These observations accord with a marked background noise of Roman activity on the site, which otherwise remains somewhat intangible. These trenches did not contain the ploughsoil observed on the east side of the site, which also contained a small

assemblage of residual Roman pot. The trenches were laid north, west and south of the slight headland overlooking the two brooks' confluence. Although the Roman pottery is nearly entirely residual, the quantity seems greater than one might expect of simple manuring considering the site's peripheral location. It is tempting to postulate the existence of a small habitation in the immediate vicinity. The presence of the probable Roman ploughsoil, into which all the medieval features are cut, on the east side of the site more than likely precludes activity there. It may well be that the headland provided such a focus for activity. Certainly, the Roman ditch to the south could well be a land division which also may have functioned as a drainage ditch.

The postholes observed in Trench 2 were undated. The two postholes [2/14] and [2/16] were located on the edge of the watercourse deposits and may be a structure associated with the wetland on the north side of the site. Prehistoric bridges and structures are well known from waterside sites, but equally, this could be connected with the Roman use of the site.

Trenches 3, 4, 5 and 8 all evidenced to a greater or lesser degree the proposed Roman ploughsoil. All the medieval features appear to have been cut through or laid over it. Trench 3 evidenced activity from after the 11th century through to the 13th century. The earlier pottery may well be residual – at least three sherds were from a tree throw – but the robber trenches observed are feasibly related to the mid 13th century period of rebuilding of the church, or other putative ancillary buildings, undertaken at this time.

At present it is impossible to set them in their full context as the remit of the evaluation did not permit extensive wall-chasing. Nonetheless, it is clear these robber-trenches suggest a further building or structural event horizon. The geophysical survey carried out by Roger Ainslie (Appendix 2) appears to concur with some of the excavation results, possibly showing the ditch at the north end of Trench 3, as well as further areas of low resistance extending to the north beyond the northern robber trench – here remains may well be present as wall bases.

The southern robber trench may well be a structural element for a staircase or for some other internal structure, such as a hoist, within the building. Templar barns were often of great size, and this may explain the distance of the building from the main body of the priory complex.

Similarly, Trench 4 points to an overall 13th century or later date for the activity recorded. The presence of earlier fabric types is indicative of an earlier date range rather than later for the observed structures. The projection of the lines of the wall [4/13] and the robber trench [4/04] to the east and south, respectively, permit the reconstruction of the angle of a building roughly on the same alignment as the remains recorded in Trenches 3, 5 and 8. It must be emphasised that the relative shortness of the observed remains can distort the proposed projections.

The presence of a well, possible floor surfaces and the heavily burnt wall against the pitched tile hearth indicate that this was an area of intensive activity within a building. It remains impossible given the sample size to unequivocally assert whether this was industrial or domestic. The paucity of slag and pottery leaves the question open. By contrast the robber trench [4/04] evidenced fine floor tiles in the top of the fill. These two-colour tiles showed, amongst other decoration, a bird, flower motifs and

Figure 6 Interpretative plan showing Pantin's reconstruction (1970) and geophysical survey

geometric designs. Such decorated tiles can be assumed to be of relatively high status.

The wall and hearth may well be the same remains (high resistance areas) identified by the geophysical survey in the northern two quadrants; the western area of low resistance may be related to the southern robber trench seen in Trench 3, presently identified as a staircase or internal hoist. The eastern area of low resistance may be the opposing robber trench for a former wall. If this is so, then the other high resistance areas may well also indicate further negative archaeology, with the areas of low resistance indicating positive.

Trench 5 revealed a northeast/southwest oriented robber trench. To the southwest of this robber trench geophysical survey revealed an alignment of high resistance areas. Furthermore, high resistance areas are visible south of the projected line of the robber trench. These may indicate further robbing out of walls. The former appears to form a right angle to a putative building, broadly on the same orientation as those observed in Trenches 3, 4 and 8, the latter is generally parallel to those observed in Trenches 8, and to the low resistance areas south and west of Trench 4. The pottery recovered from the linear dated from the 13th century, which ties into the overall dating range for the other observed robber trenches and features on this central area of the site. As such it raises the strong possibility of further structures located in the central area of the proposed redevelopment area.

Trench 8 yielded significant positive archaeology in the form of wall-remains. Two parallel east/west walls, the northernmost one with a return to the north, were excavated and recorded. These evidenced faced stone with rendered surfaces suggestive of an internal passage within a building. As such this may well represent a corridor along south side of an east/west range with rooms opening off to north. The southern wall appeared to end, as if it were a doorway. Trench 8 was across the southeastern grid square in which the geophysical survey identified possible remains. Although the results of the geophysical survey do not quite tie with those from the evaluation, it remains a strong possibility that further archaeological deposits and structures exist in the vicinity of Trench 8. The low resistance area showing as a closed square is suggestive of another building, which would lie just to the south of the wall [8/05]. These walls are broadly in line with Pantin's reconstruction of the priory complex (1970). Rubble overlying the south wall yielded pottery dating from the 13th century. A ditch also containing pottery dating from the 13th century was to the southwest sampled. This may well be the precinct ditch of the priory, although no bank was observed on the east side of the ditch cut.

Trench 7 comprised a large stony feature on the east side at the north end of the trench: although its full understanding remains unsure, it comprised a substantial quantity of demolition material. This may well be related to the dismantlement of the Priory, although no dating was recovered. To the south of the rubble was a broad watercourse, which had been observed during a watching brief by OAU for works along Grenoble Road in the 1990s.

7 CONCLUSIONS (Figure 6)

The evaluation carried out at the site of the former Priory of St Nicholas at Minchery Farm, Littlemore near Oxford yielded unexpected results. The quantity and quality of remains were far greater than the results of either previous work or the geophysical survey might have led one to expect.

The evaluation was located sufficiently far from the Northfield Brook for no data concerning the Pleistocene deposits to have been recovered.

Prehistoric and Roman remains were present on site although there no features which could be assuredly dated as prehistoric, and only a single dated Roman ditch. Nonetheless the ploughsoil seen on the east side of the site appeared to be Roman, or to have a significant quantity of residual Roman pottery within it. The headland overlooking the confluence of the two brooks, which lies between Trenches 2 & 3 may be the focus for any possible occupation activity. It remains a strong possibility that the medieval remains seal Roman deposits.

No evidence was found for Saxon activity on site.

The site yielded extensive data for medieval activity. Walls and robber trenches were recorded which point to a number of putative medieval buildings. The walls and robber trenches exposed during the evaluation appear to be spread over the whole of the eastern side of the site, that is the western plateau edge which overlooks the confluence of the Northfield or Littlemore Brook and the brook delimiting the west side of the proposed development area. Work was in part limited by the presence of a number of stands of trees, which may themselves conceal further remains. The archaeological features recorded seem to indicate an impressive complex of structures comprising corridored buildings (in Trench 8) as well as significant activity areas and a quantity of fine floor tiles in the robbed out wall trench of one of the putative buildings (in Trench 4). The results of the geophysical survey, when combined with the excavated archaeology, seem to indicate a large complex of buildings extending to the north of the priory.

Historical sources indicate that apparently substantial reconstruction works were carried out during the 13th century, when the priory church was rebuilt. No evidence was identified which could be associated specifically with this programme of works, although it is apparent that the remains uncovered indicate a complex of buildings of some importance. That the Templars were patrons of the priory from the 1240s until their suppression in the early 14th century, provides a possible interpretation of the remains observed. There is, as yet, no hard evidence for the remains on site to be part of a Templar complex. Nonetheless, the pottery provides a comparatively tight date-range not extending beyond the 13th century, shortly before the order was suppressed by the king. If the priory under the patronage of the Templars functioned as an alien house, then it may not have figured in the *Taxatio* of 1291.

Certainly, little indication of the remains recorded during this investigation was observed during the previous evaluation on land around the public house. Neither the structures nor material match that from the current evaluation. Indeed the quantity of medieval pottery recovered from that evaluation is quite limited, despite according broadly with the results from the current intervention.

Although WA Pantin's reconstruction of the priory layout is an exercise in speculation, the complex he describes is largely based on a building with good dating for 15th and 17th century works. It is based on certain assumptions concerning nunnery complexes from the late medieval period, but these were largely speaking regularized. The archaeological evidence recovered does not easily accord with the proposed form of the complex.

The evaluation nonetheless affirms the focus of activity having been to the west of 'The Priory' public house. The 13th century pottery indicates a broad *terminus post quem* with comparatively little activity having occurred in the late medieval and early post-medieval, beyond use as fields.

Nonetheless, the results of the evaluation suggest that the proposed redevelopment area has a high potential for extensive archaeological remains.

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APPENDIX 1 – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 1							
1/01	Layer	Top Soil	0.19	Tr.	Tr.	-	Modern
1/02	Layer	Sub Soil	0.26	Tr.	Tr.	-	Modern
1/03	Layer	Dark Grey-Black Peat	0.36	2.00	5.80	-	
1/04	Layer	Light Blue- Grey Clay (Natural)	0.10	2.00	7.70	-	
1/05	Layer	Light Yellow-Orange Sand	0.10	Tr.	Tr.	Pottery	Romano-British
1/06	Cut	Tree Thrown Pit	-	0.57	0.47		
1/07	Fill of [1/06]	Dark Orange-Brown Silty Clay	0.11	0.57	0.47	Pottery	Mid 16th C
1/08	Cut	Service Trench	-	1.10	1.80	-	
1/09	Fill of [1/08]	Yellowish Brown Silty Clay	-	1.10	1.80	-	
Trench 2							
2/01	Layer	Top Soil	0.26	Tr.	Tr.		Modern
2/02	Layer	Sub Soil	0.24	Tr.	Tr.	-	Modern
2/03	Layer	Mid Blue- Grey with Yellow Mottling	0.08	7.50	1.60	Pottery Animal Bone	Romano-British
2/04	Layer	Mid Yellowish Brown Silty Clay	0.04	4.00	1.60	-	
2/05	Layer	Mid Bluish-Brown with Dark Red Mottling	0.05	1.95	1.60	-	
2/06	Layer	Mid Blue/Grey Brown with Dark Red Mottling	0.06	6.00	1.60	Flint Flakes	
2/07	Layer	Mid Red Brown, Mottled White (Natural)	0.21	13.60	1.60	-	
2/08	Cut	Tree Throw Pit	0.39	0.70	1.20	Flint Flake	
2/09	Fill of [2/08]	Mid Cream Brown with Red & Orange Mottling	0.34	0.70	1.20	Flint Flake	
2/10	Cut	Tree Throw Pit	0.10	0.60	0.80	-	
2/11	Fill of [2/10]	Mid Orange Brown Sandy Loam	0.10	0.60	0.80	-	
2/12	Cut	Possible Post Hole	0.31	0.40	0.35	-	
2/13	Fill of [2/12]	Mid Blue/ Grey Sandy Silt Loam with Red Mottling	0.31	0.40	0.35	-	

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
2/14	Cut	Possible Post Hole	0.09	0.36	0.35	-	
2/15	Fill of [2/14]	Dark Brown Sandy Loam	0.09	0.36	0.35	-	
2/16	Cut	Possible Post Hole	0.18	0.38	0.55	-	
2/17	Fill of [2/16]	Dark Bluish Brown	0.18	0.38	0.55	-	
2/18	Layer	Blue/ Yellow Brown	0.15	1.50	1.60	-	
2/19	Fill of [2/08]	Mid Creamy White Sand	0.05	0.20	0.15	-	
Trench 3							
3/01	Layer	Top Soil	0.22	Tr.	Tr.	-	Modern
3/02	Layer	Sub Soil	0.40	Tr.	Tr.	-	Modern
3/03	Layer	Light Yellow/ Orange Sandy Silt (Natural)	0.05	Tr.	Tr.	-	
3/04	Cut	Linear Ditch	0.23	0.70	1.50	-	
3/05	Fill of [3/04]	Dark Grey/ Brown Silty Sand	0.23	0.70	1.50	-	
3/06	Cut	Tree Throw Pit	0.12	0.83	1.10	-	
3/07	Fill of [3/06]	Light Brown with Orange Mottling	0.12	0.83	1.10	Pottery CBM	Late 11th C
3/08	Cut	Robber Trench	0.44	1.10	4.60	-	
3/09	Fill of [3/08]	Mid Grey/ Brown Silty Sand	0.44	1.10	4.60	Pottery	Mid 11th C
3/10	Cut	Robber Trench	0.40	1.70	7.00		
3/11	Fill of [3/10]	Dark Brownish Grey Silty Sand	0.40	1.70	7.00	Pottery	13th C
3/12	Cut	Robber Trench	-	2.00	4.00		
3/13	Fill of [3/12]	Dark Brownish Grey Silty Sand	-	2.00	4.00	Pottery	13th C
3/14	Wall	Wall Foundations	-	1.00	0.95		
Trench 4							
04/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.14	1.50	Tr		
04/02	Layer	Subsoil	0.13	1.50	Tr		
04/03	Natural	Orange Clay	0.04	1.50	Tr		
04/04	Cut	Linear	0.42	2.0	0.67		
04//05	Fill [04/04]	Brownish Grey Sandy Clay	0.16	1.28	0.67		
04/06	Fill [04/04]	Light Orange Sandy Clay	0.08	0.38	0.67		
04/07	Fill [04/04]	Mid Orange Sandy Clay	0.11	1.60	0.67		
04/08	Fill [04/04]	Greyish Brown Sandy Clay	0.26	2.0	0.67	Pottery	13thC

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
04/09	Fill	Dark Reddish Brown Sandy Loam	0.08	2.0	0.40	Clay Pipe	
04/10	Hearth	Orange Tile	0.01-0.02	0.10	0.20	Pottery	M13thC
04/11	Fill	Mid- Dark Brown Sandy Loam	Unexcavated	0.77	0.77	Pottery	13thC
04/12	Fill	Mid Black Sandy Clay	0.07 Visible in Section	0.50	0.40	-	-
04/13	Wall	Corroded Limestone	-	1.80	1.0		-
04/14	Well	Limestone	-	1.70	1.70	-	-
04/15	Fill	Mid Brown Sandy Clay	Unexcavated	1.50	1.0	-	-
04/16	Fill	Greyish Brown Sandy Silt	Unexcavated	1.50	1.60	-	-
04/17	Fill	Mid Brown Sandy Silt	Unexcavated	1.50	3.70	-	-
04/18	Fill	Greyish Brown Sandy Silt	Unexcavated	1.50	2.10	-	-
4/19	Fill	Dark Bluish Black Sandy Loam	0.31	1.50	2.10	-	-
Trench 5							
05/01	Layer	Top soil	050	Tr	Tr	-	-
05/02	Layer	Subsoil	0.20	Tr	Tr	-	-
05/03	Layer	Greenish Yellow Gravel	0.30	Tr	Tr	Pottery	13thC
05/04	Fill [05/05]	Yellowish Brown Sandy Silt	3.00	3.60	3.00	Pottery	13thC
05/05	Cut	Robber Trench	0.43	1.96	3.00	-	-
05/06	Fill [05/05]	Yellowish Brown Sandy Silt	0.43	1.96	3.00		
05/07	Fill [05/05	Light Yellow Brown Sandy Silt	0.20	0.56	3.00	-	-
05/08	Natural	Yellowish Brown Silt	-	Tr	Tr		
Trench 6							
06/01	Layer	Top soil	0.30	1.60	Tr	-	-
06/02	Layer	Subsoil	0.18	1.60	Tr	-	-
06/03	Natural	Orangey Grey Clay	0.10	1.6	Tr		
06/04	Cut	Linear Feature	0.18	0.84	0.50	Pottery	-
06/05	Fill [06/04]	Light Greyish Brown Clay/Sand	0.13	0.84	0.50	Pottery	13thC
6/06	Cut	Shallow Ditch	0.17	0.86	0.24	-	-
6/07	Fill [06/06]	Dark Grey Clay	0.20	0.17	0.84	-	-
6/08	Cut	Shallow Ditch	0.09	0.66	0.25	-	-
06/09	Fill [06/08]	Dark Grey Clay	0.09	0.56	0.25	-	-
Trench 7							
07/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.38	1.70	30.70	-	-
07/02	Layer	Subsoil	0.25	1.70	30.70	-	-
07/03	Fill	Black Peat	0.80	-	2.00	-	-

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
07/04	Natural	Mid Greyish Blue Sandy Clay	0.04	1.70	30.70	-	-
07/05	Fill	Mid Bluish Sandy Loam	0.08 in Section	1.70	12.10	-	-
07/06	Fill [07/07]	Yellowish Red sandy Loam	0.20	0.64	7.20	-	-
07/07	Cut	Wall Foundation	0.20	0.64	7.20	-	-
07/08	Fill	Blueish Brown Clay	0.03	1.70	10.00	-	-
Trench 8							
08/01	Wall	Limestone	Unexcavated	0.55	0.20	-	-
08/02	Cut	Part of Wall	0.10	0.55	0.75	-	-
08/03	Wall	Limestone	N/A	0.70	2.00	-	-
08/04	Cut	Wall	0.16	0.70	2.00	-	-
08/05	Wall	Limestone	N/A	0.80	6.00	-	-
08/06	Cut	Wall	Unexcavated	0.90	6.00	-	-
08/07	Fill [8/08]	Dark Greyish Brown Silty sand	0.50	2.10	1.50	Pottery, Flint	13thC
08/08	Cut	Boundary Ditch	0.50	2.10	1.50	Pottery, Flint	-
08/09	Fill	Dark Greyish Brown	Unexcavated	1.50	5.00	Pottery	13thC
08/10	Cut	Wall	Unexcavated	1.50	4.50	-	-
08/11	Layer	Plough Soil	0.55	4.50	25.0	-	-
08/12	Layer	Stone	0.30	4.50	25.0	Pot, Bone	-
08/13	Natural	Sand	0.10		25.0	-	-
08/15	Fill [08/15]	Dark Greyish Brown Silty Sand	Unexcavated	0.50	1.00	-	-
08/16	Cut	Ditch	Unexcavated	0.50	1.00	-	-

APPENDIX 2 MINCHERY FARM, OXFORD GRADIOMETRY AND SOIL RESISTANCE SURVEYS

By Roger Ainslie
Edited by Gwilym Williams

Summary
A geophysical survey was carried out on 22nd and 24th September 2006, prior to the evaluation, as part of investigations to ascertain the extent and preservation of the remains of the priory at Minchery Farm, Littlemore near Oxford. The survey was carried out in cleared areas of the land proposed for redevelopment by Roger and Sally Ainslie and Alison Gledhill.
The magnetometry and resistivity surveys undertaken on the piece of overgrown land to the west of 'The Priory' public house at Minchery Farm produced mixed results. Ferrous debris was present over much of the site, which obscured the magnetometry results. The resistivity results were better but distortion may have occurred due to water absorption by trees on the piece of land.
Nonetheless there appeared to be a possible rectangular low resistance feature in the southeast corner of the survey area as well as possible ditches or agricultural features in another grid to the northwest.

Methodology
Whilst resistivity is the preferred methodology for such a location and expected remains; magnetometry was also carried out as it can reveal further details and is a fairly rapid process.
As with all geophysics, if the geophysics does not locate anything it does not mean that there is nothing there. On this site the amount of ferrous material on the surface obscured the magnetic signal, the trees and other vegetation prevented a large area being surveyed. The recent clearance of the survey area may not have been long enough for the soil moisture to lose the effect of the tree roots.

Location
A Trimble Pathfinder pro differential Global Positioning System running Pocket Fastmap was used to locate the OS grid references of the survey. Distances to fixed points were also measured and grids laid out using tape measures.

Magnetometry
A Bartington Grad 601/2 twin sensor gradiometer was used with a vertical separation between the sensors of 1 metre. It used the same 20m grids as were used for resistivity at 8 readings per metre with lines 1 metre apart. The lines walked were each set out with marked strings to maximise the accuracy of the survey – even so it has been necessary to de-stagger the data as this equipment tends to have a 0.5 metre stagger in its logging system. Most users of this type of equipment have this problem, which can fortunately be corrected in the data processing stage.

The lines were walked in an east-west direction in order to maximize the possibility of locating north south features such as the western range of monastic buildings.

Depth of responses – Magnetometery can detect large anomalies at a depth of 2m or more beneath the sensor, whilst small anomalies may only be detectable at a depth of

half a metre or so. This is why it is important to have a clear area without weeds or other obstructions, which require the height of the sensors above the ground surface to be increased. High responses near the surface such as iron debris or iron pipes can obscure lesser anomalies both beneath and horizontally close to them.

Resolution – The readings at 8 per metre along the lines should detect small anomalies however there is the possibility that minor features running parallel to the lines could be missed. This is why on large, open, sites it is best to have the grids at an angle to the expected alignment of the remains.

Data capture – This used the Bartington Grad 601 logger and the data was downloaded into ArcheoSurveyor for processing. It can be exported as a variety of file types.

Presentation – Greyscale, colour and trace plots are provided below.

Processing – Processing has been carried out using ArcheoSurveyor software.
The processes used were:
Processes: 7

1 Base Layer
2 Clip at 1 SD
3 Clip at 1 SD
4 Clip at 1 SD
5 Clip at 1 SD
6 Zero Mean Traverse: Grids: 08.asg Threshold: 2 SDs
7 De Stagger: Grids: 01.asg 02.asg 05.asg 07.asg 03.asg 04.asg 06.asg 08.asg Mode: Both Inc: -4

Resistivity

The resistivity survey used a TR Systems resistance meter with the mobile probes 0.5 metres apart and the fixed probes over 15 metres away in a twin probe array. It used the same 20m grids as were used for magnetometry. The area was surveyed at a 1m interval between readings and the southeastern grid was additionally surveyed with a half metre interval between readings in order to try to locate small features in that area.

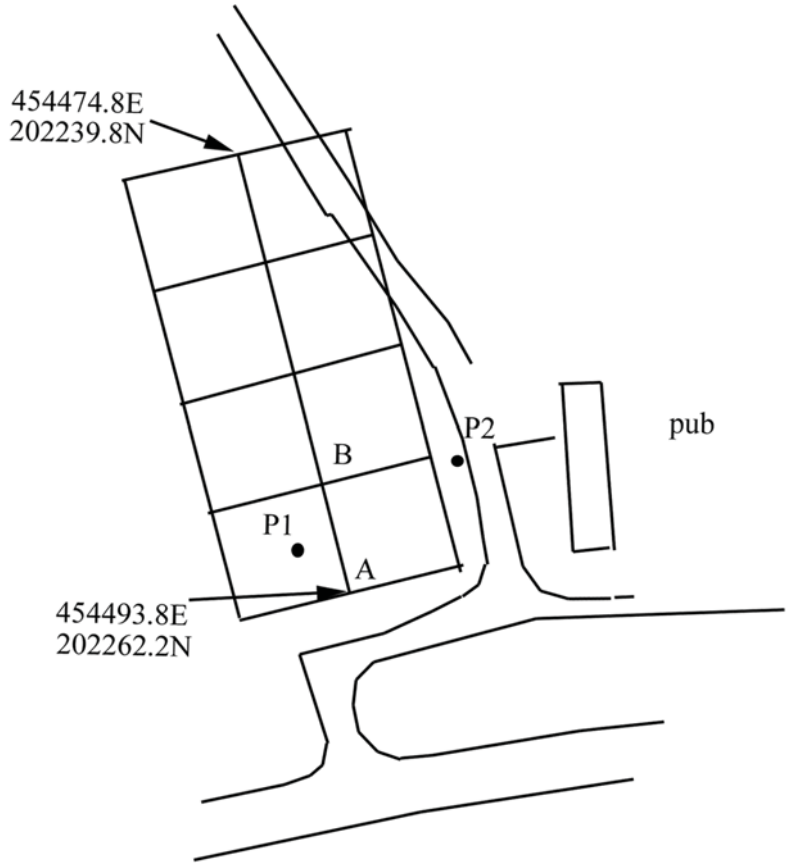
Depth of responses – This depends on soil type, dampness and array used. Here I would expect to have located anomalies half a metre deep and possibly up to a metre deep.
Resolution – The 1 metre sampling interval could miss features less than a metre wide but generally it is likely that the anomalies will not follow the same alignment as the survey and thus even small anomalies will be detected to some extent. This problem is reduced with the half metre sample interval as it has four times as many readings per grid.

Data Capture – The TR Systems logger was used and the data was downloaded into ArcheoSurveyor for processing. It can be exported as a variety of file types.

Presentation – Greyscale, colour and trace plots together with greyscale plots with scale bars are provided below.

Processing – The data has been processed in ArcheoSurveyor
Processes: 2
1 Base Layer
2 Clip from 22.81 to 74

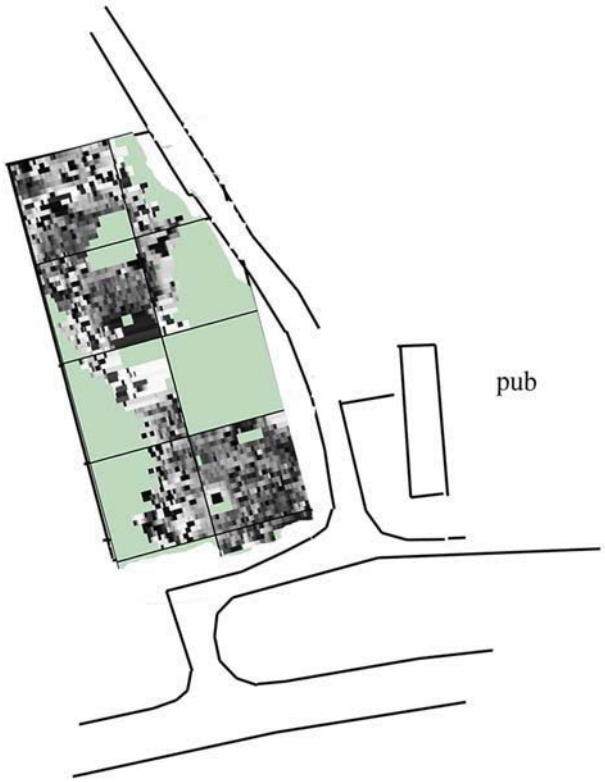
General location of survey area



Location details
Base line runs S-N - marked by small red pegs
Related to telegraph poles P1 and P2
Pole 1 to Pole 2 = 35.8m
P1 to A =11.00m P2 to A=30.00m
P1 to B = 16.8m P2 to B = 24.9m

All grid squares measured 20x20m

Magnetometry location

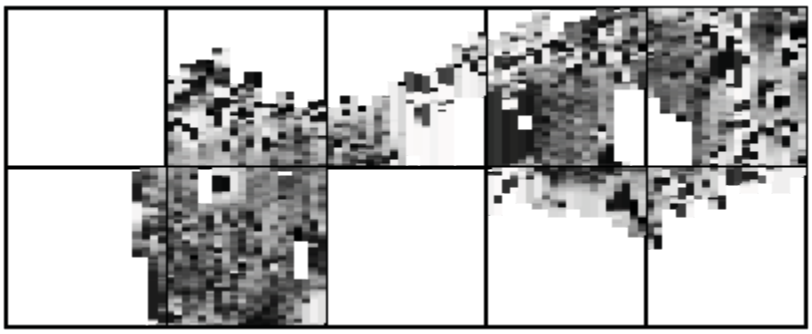


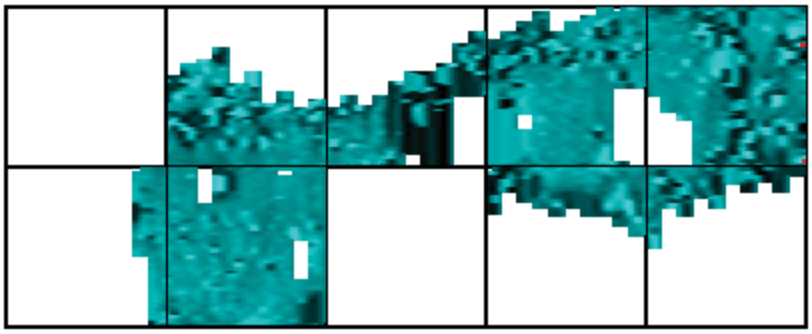
Resistivity location

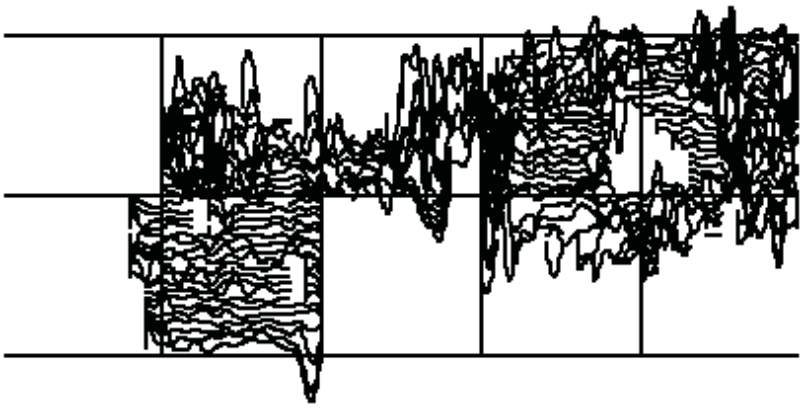
Magnetometry
Bartington Grad 601/2
Lines running E-W 1m apart with 8 readings per metre along lines
High responses are indicated by darker colour.

North to right
This shows very little as the area has been used for burning cars leaving bits of ferrous debris on the surface swamping any signal from archaeological deposits. This debris appears to be concentrated on the western side of the area.

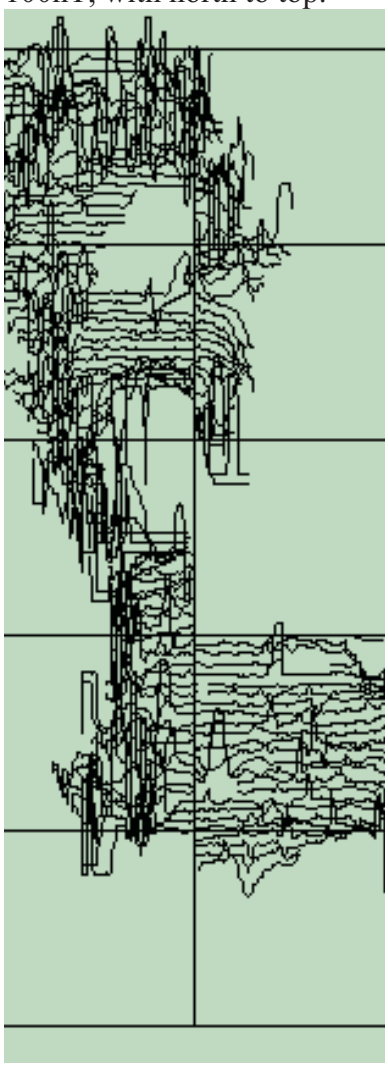
The trace plot here has been recalculated to show how the plot would look if the lines had been walked S-N rather than E-W.



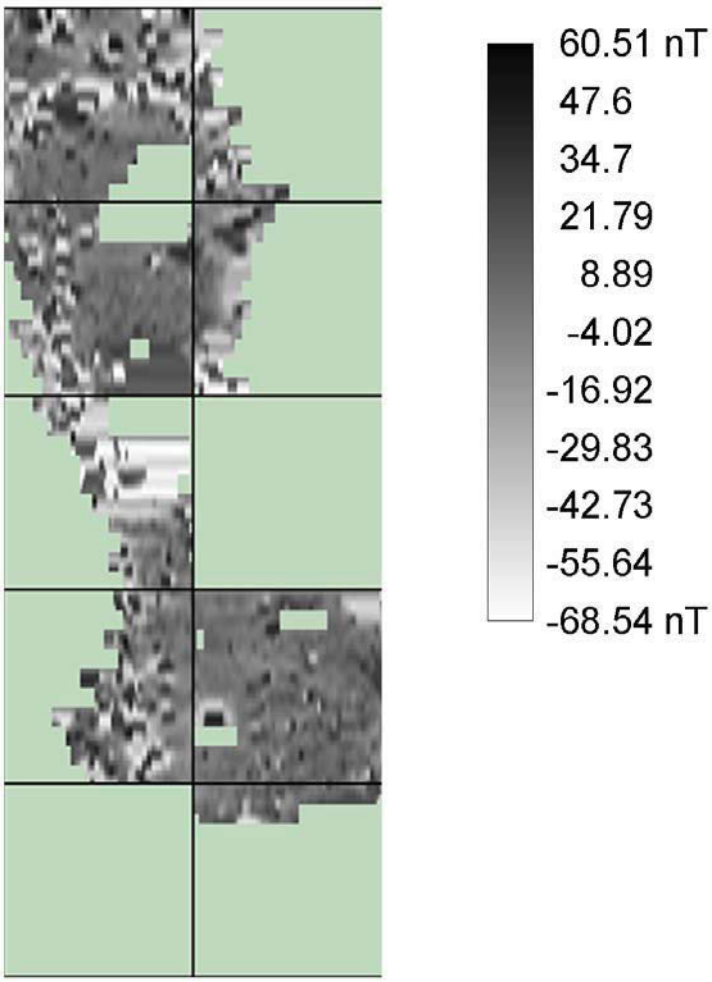




Trace plot clipped to +/- 100nT, with north to top.

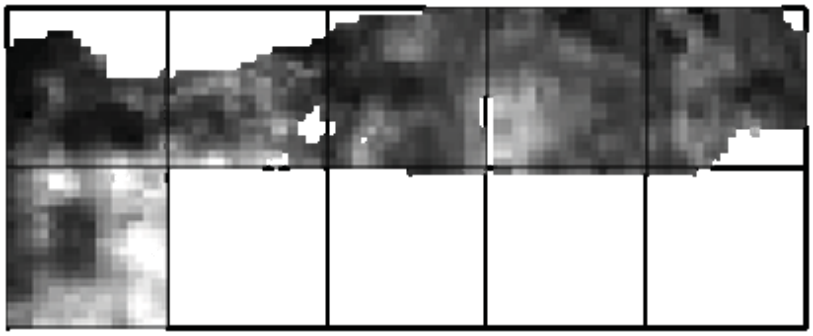


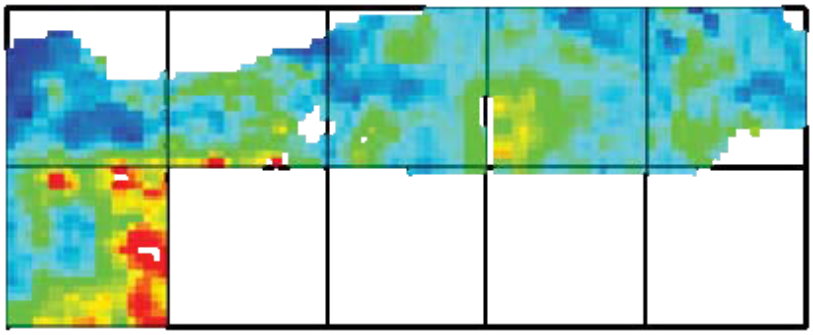
Magnetometry plot, north to top with scale bar

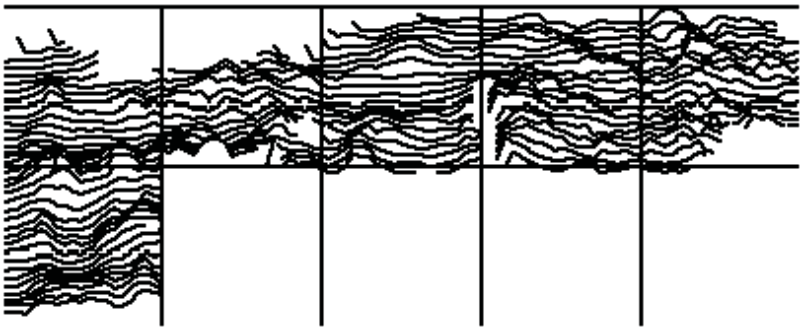


Resistivity

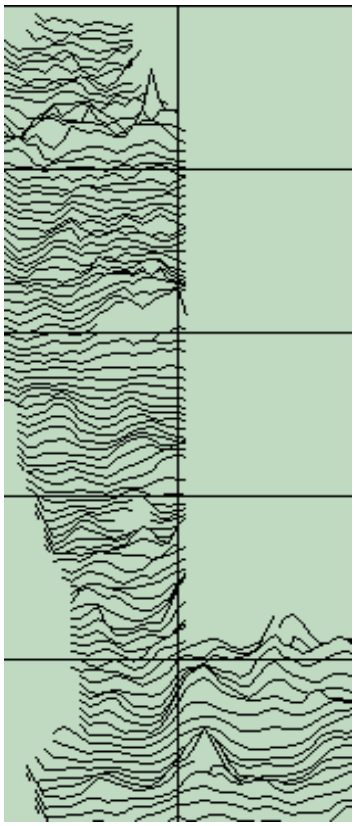
Survey conducted at 1m x 1m sample spacing with 0.5m mobile probe separation.
Low resistance = dark/blue. High = light/red.
North to right



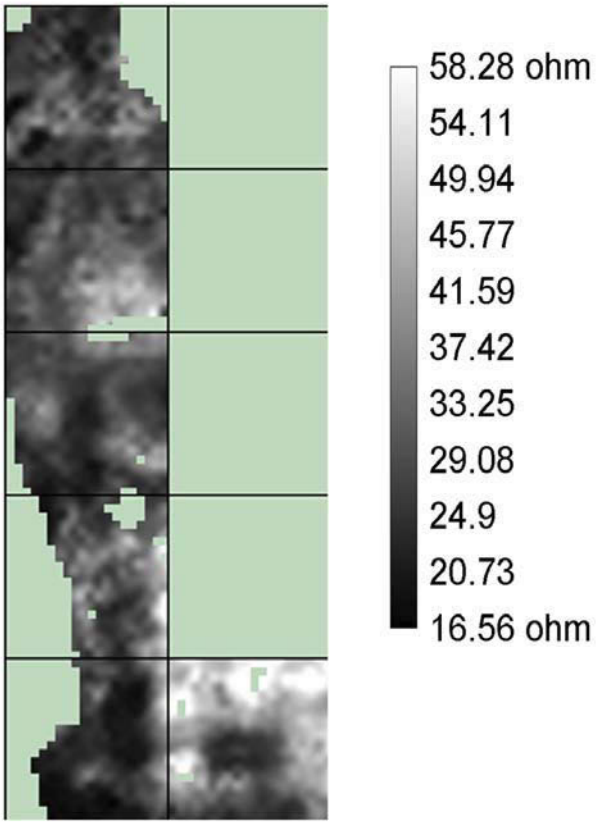




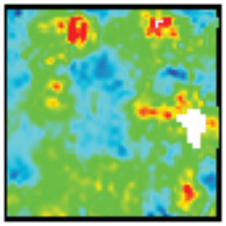
Trace plot of the resistivity survey with north to top.

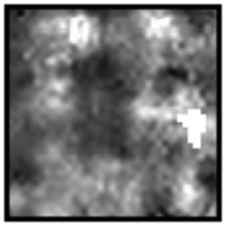


Resistivity plot with north to top and scale bar

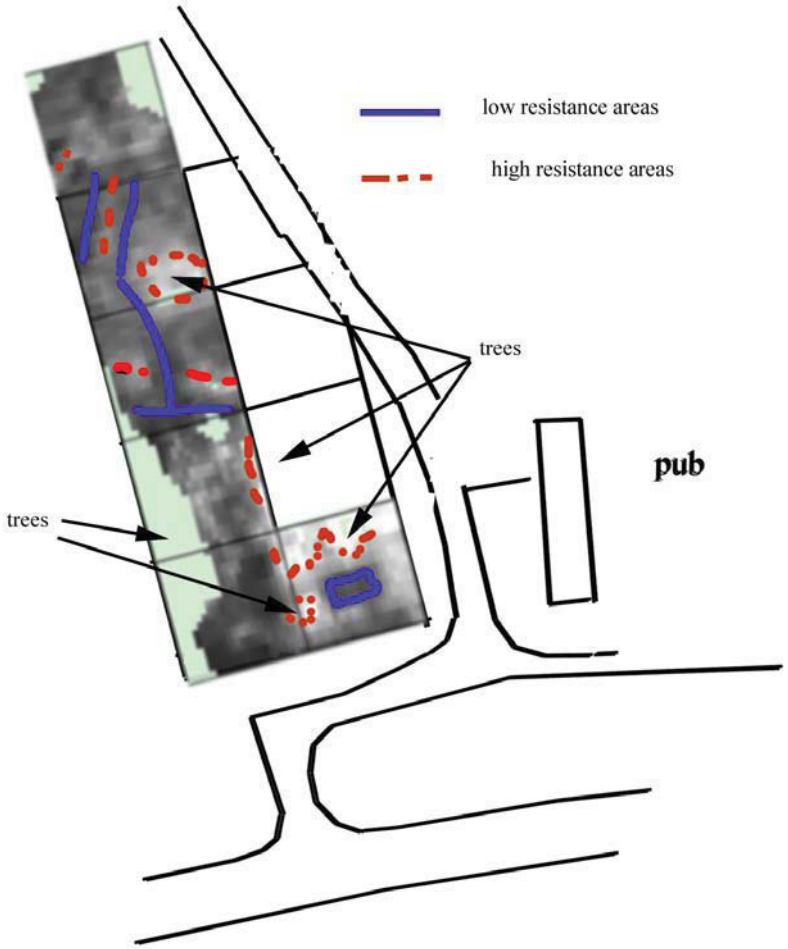


Survey of SE grid at 0.5 x 0.5 m sample spacing.
North to right.





Interpretation



CONCLUSIONS

The rectangular low resistance in the bottom right (SE) grid and the narrow high resistance areas around it looked the most promising. These are best seen in the high-density resistivity survey of the southeast grid. The high resistance areas on its north and west appear to be associated with trees and may be where their roots have taken water from the soil increasing its resistance. Rectangular low resistance areas can be pits or similar but occasionally they can be where an impervious floor layer has restricted the ability of rainwater to percolate away.
The grid one from the north has some linear anomalies in its NW corner which could be of agricultural origin or ditches. These are more visible on the trace plot with north at the top.