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Calke Abbey, Calke, Derbyshire:

an archaeological watching brief,
2005

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Calke Abbey, Calke, Derbyshire: an archaeological watching brief, 2005

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For
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CALKE ABBEY, CALKE, DERBYSHIRE: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, 2005

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Calke Abbey, Calke, Derbyshire (NGR SP 3680 2259) in September 2005, by Birmingham Archaeology, on behalf of the National Trust. The work was required by the National Trust as Calke Abbey is situated at the location of an Augustinian priory, founded in the twelfth century. The watching brief was carried out during the digging of trial pits to locate existing eighteenth century culverts providing drainage for the eighteenth century house at Calke Abbey. The trial pits were dug by hand and three culverts were uncovered. The culverts in one trial pit were sealed by a layer of sandstone rubble. One sherd of medieval pottery and one piece of dressed stone, possibly originally part of a medieval structure, were amongst the finds recovered. No other significant archaeological remains were found.

CALKE ABBEY, CALKE, DERBYSHIRE: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, 2005

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology on behalf of the National Trust at Calke Abbey, Calke, Derbyshire, during September 2005. The watching brief was carried out during the excavation of trial pits designed to locate existing eighteenth century culverts. This was prior to the construction of a drain to feed into the existing eighteenth century culverts which run under the front lawn. The work was required by the National Trust as Calke Abbey is situated at the location of an Augustinian priory, founded in the twelfth century, and it was possible that the excavation of the trial pits may have disturbed archaeological features and deposits.

The watching brief conformed to a brief prepared by the National Trust (Bell 2005) and the guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001).

1.2 Location and geology

The watching brief was carried out at the east lawn of Calke Abbey, Calke, Derbyshire (Figs 1 & 2; NGR SP 3680 2259, hereafter referred to as the site). The eighteenth century Calke Abbey house is located to the west of the site which is bounded by trees to the north, an ornamental pond to the east and a low stone wall to the south.

The site is located on glacial till overlying the solid geology of mudstone and sandstone. The site slopes gently towards the pond and is situated at approximately 90m AOD.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is situated at the location of an Augustinian priory, founded in the twelfth century. No above ground remains survive and its exact location and layout are still conjecture. Excavations in the 1980s revealed several burials and a cobbled surface associated with the priory. A geophysical survey was undertaken in October 2004 to locate further medieval remains that were thought to be under the east lawn (Carpenter 2004). The survey did not reveal any features that could be ascribed to the priory due to the level of later landscaping and the presence of post-medieval drainage features (Carpenter 2004).

The present house at Calke dates to the early eighteenth century, although previous houses have probably occupied the site since the dissolution, in the sixteenth century, when a large Elizabethan courtyard house was constructed. The only possible above ground evidence of this house is the sandstone arches visible in the present day courtyard. It is possible that some of the internal walls of the house are also of 16th century date. The Harpur family acquired the estate and house in 1622, to add to their existing holdings in the area. The house was rebuilt in the Baroque style in the early 18th century, and the landscaping of the grounds, was also undertaken at this time. The house was sold to the National Trust in 1985 and essential repairs were carried out. The interior remains largely untouched, and reflects the reclusive and eccentric nature of the Harpur family.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The watching brief is intended to provide a record of any archaeological deposits or features present beneath the modern ground surface and to help elucidate further the history and development of the site as a whole. The excavation of all trial pits, was monitored in order to record the location, extent, date, character, quality and significance of any archaeological remains encountered.

4 METHODOLOGY

Two trial pits were located to find existing eighteenth century culverts. All topsoil and modern overburden was removed by hand under direct archaeological supervision, down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon or the subsoil. Subsequent cleaning and excavation was also by hand.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned at a scale of 1:20, and sections were drawn through all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:20. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context and feature cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using monochrome and colour print and colour slide photography.

Recovered finds were cleaned, marked and remedial conservation work was undertaken as necessary. Treatment of all finds conformed to guidance contained within 'A strategy for the care and investigation of finds' published by English Heritage.

The full site archive includes all artefactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). Finds and the paper archive will be deposited with a suitable repository or museum, subject to permission from the landowner.

5 RESULTS (Fig. 3)

5.1 Trench 1

A trial pit measuring 1.20m x 1.03m was excavated to the east of the house in order to find an existing eighteenth century culvert (Plate 3). A culvert (1004) was located 0.39m below the present ground surface, running on a north-south alignment, and was of a rough mortar and sandstone rubble construction. The internal walls were also rubble built with brick and tile in places. The culvert was 0.80m wide and 0.50m deep. A fragment of wine bottle glass was

recovered from within the culvert 1004. The culvert was overlain by a 0.25m thick layer of mixed silty clay backfill (1002), which contained coal and degraded sandstone fragments. This was in turn sealed by a layer of topsoil (1001), 0.14m thick.

5.2 Trench 2

This pit was 1.12m x 1.14m, but was subsequently extended 4.0m to the north, at a width of 0.40m, and it terminated in a 1.0m x 1.0m trial pit (Plates 1, 2 & 4). A small brick-lined culvert (2004), was discovered on a east- west alignment at the most southerly end of the trench and this was capped by large sandstone blocks. A second larger culvert (2006) was uncovered at the northern end of the trench and was of similar construction to culvert 1004, in Trench 1. Culvert 2006 was 1.40m wide and 0.70m deep and was orientated northeast-southwest.

The culverts 2004 and 2006 were sealed by a layer of rubble (2003), 0.48m thick, which consisted of large and medium sized sandstone fragments that appeared unworked. One piece of worked stone was recovered from layer 2003. Layer 2003 was overlain by a mixed silty clay layer, (2002), being 0.48m thick. A piece of slate roof slate, a sherd of medieval pottery and a sherd of post-medieval pottery were recovered from context 2002. This was in turn sealed by a layer of topsoil (2001), 0.15m thick.

6 THE FINDS

by Erica Macey-Bracken

Two sherds of pottery were recovered from the site, along with a small piece of worked stone (2003), a fragment of roof slate (2002) and the base of a green glass wine bottle (1004). The assemblage was fragmentary, although the individual finds showed little sign of abrasion. The assemblage was quantified by count and weight, and examined macroscopically for the purposes of this assessment. The assemblage is stable and presents no long-term storage problems.

One sherd of medieval pottery and one sherd of post-medieval pottery (2002) was recovered from the site. The medieval sherd was from the base of a medieval whiteware jug with an external olive glaze. This sherd is of possible 14th century date (S. Rátkai, pers. comm.). The post-medieval sherd was a sherd of blue and white transfer-printed plate of mid to late 19th century date (S. Rátkai, pers. comm.).

The piece of worked stone (2003) from Trench 2 is a fine-grained, buff-coloured micaceous sandstone of Mesozoic age, and probably originated from central or southern England (Dr. R. Ixer, pers. comm.). The item is likely to have been from a window sill, as the groove for the glass is still visible, as is a hole that may have been used to put a bar across the window. The item has quarter-circle moulding on the edge, and may possibly be medieval (Dr. M. Hislop, pers. comm.). The small fragment of roof slate (2002) was also recovered from Trench 2. A nail hole, 9mm in diameter, is visible in the centre of the fragment, but no other diagnostic features have survived on this small fragment, which measures only 123mm in length and 49mm in width.

The green glass bottle base was recovered from inside the culvert (1004). This item is machine-made and is of 20th century date.

7 DISCUSSION

The trial pits revealed the location of the brick and stone built culverts providing drainage for the eighteenth century house. The redeposited sandstone fragments in the layer 2003 sealing the culverts may be associated with the construction of the eighteenth century house. The dressed sandstone window sill piece was recovered from this mixed context. It is possible the dressed sandstone piece was residual and was originally part of a medieval structure, perhaps part of the priory. There were no insitu structural remains associated with the Augustinian Priory recorded during the watching brief and no other features of archaeological significance were identified.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The watching brief was commissioned by the National Trust. The fieldwork was carried out by Kristina Krawiec and the project was managed by Laurence Jones. This report was written by Kristina Krawiec and edited by Laurence Jones. The illustrations were prepared by Bryony Ryder and the finds were reported on by Erica Macey- Bracken.

9 REFERENCES

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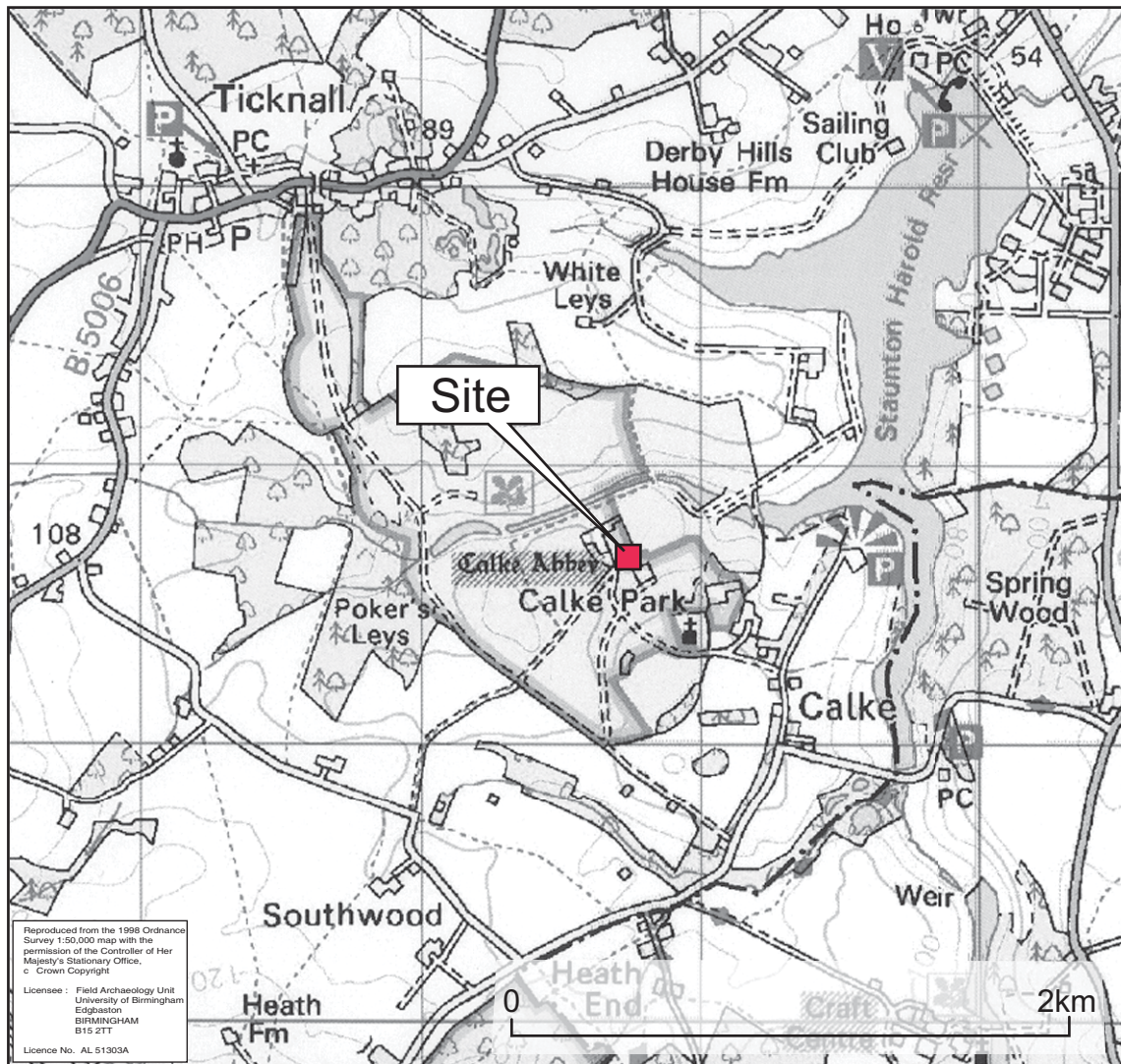


Fig.1

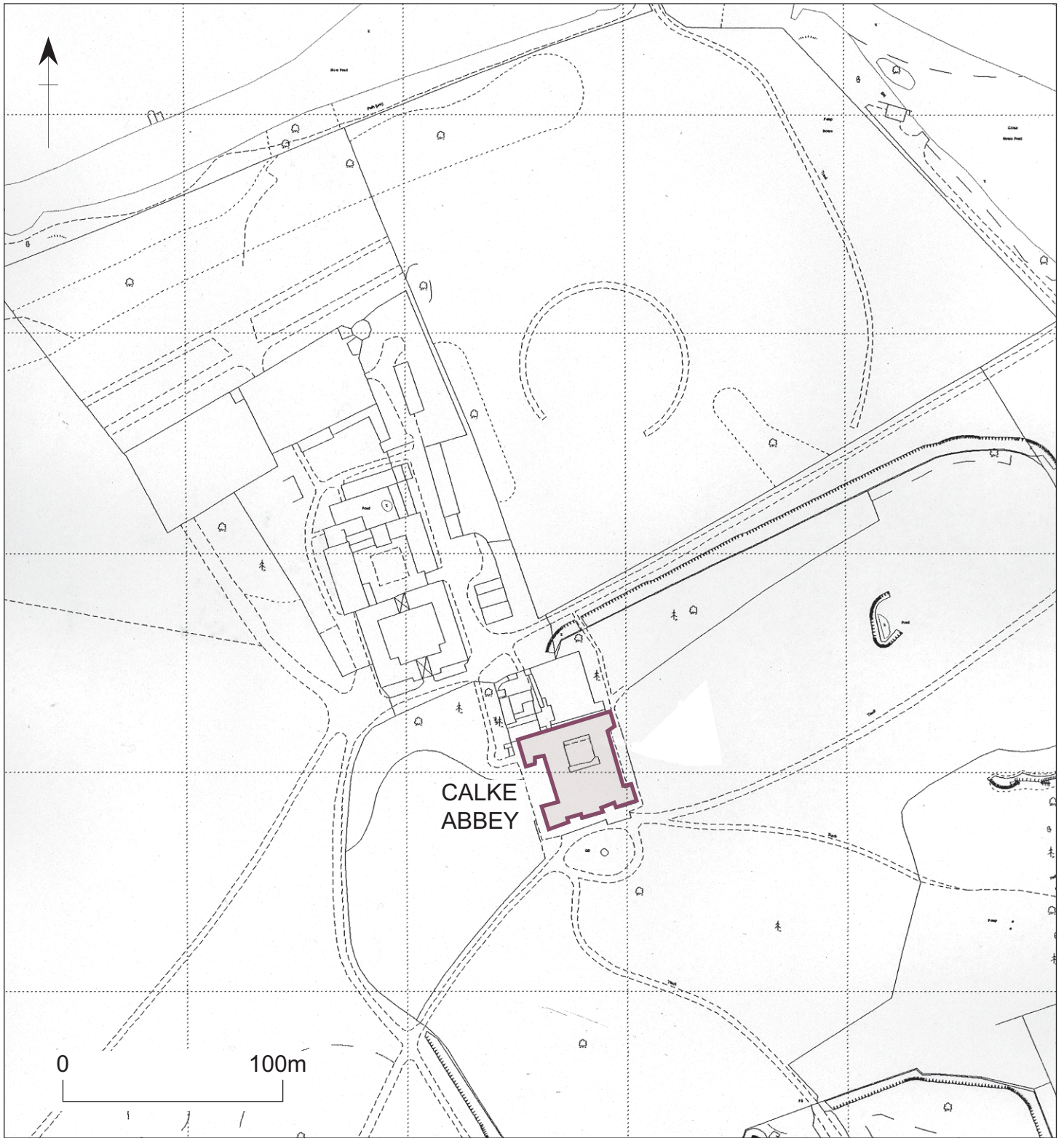


Fig.2

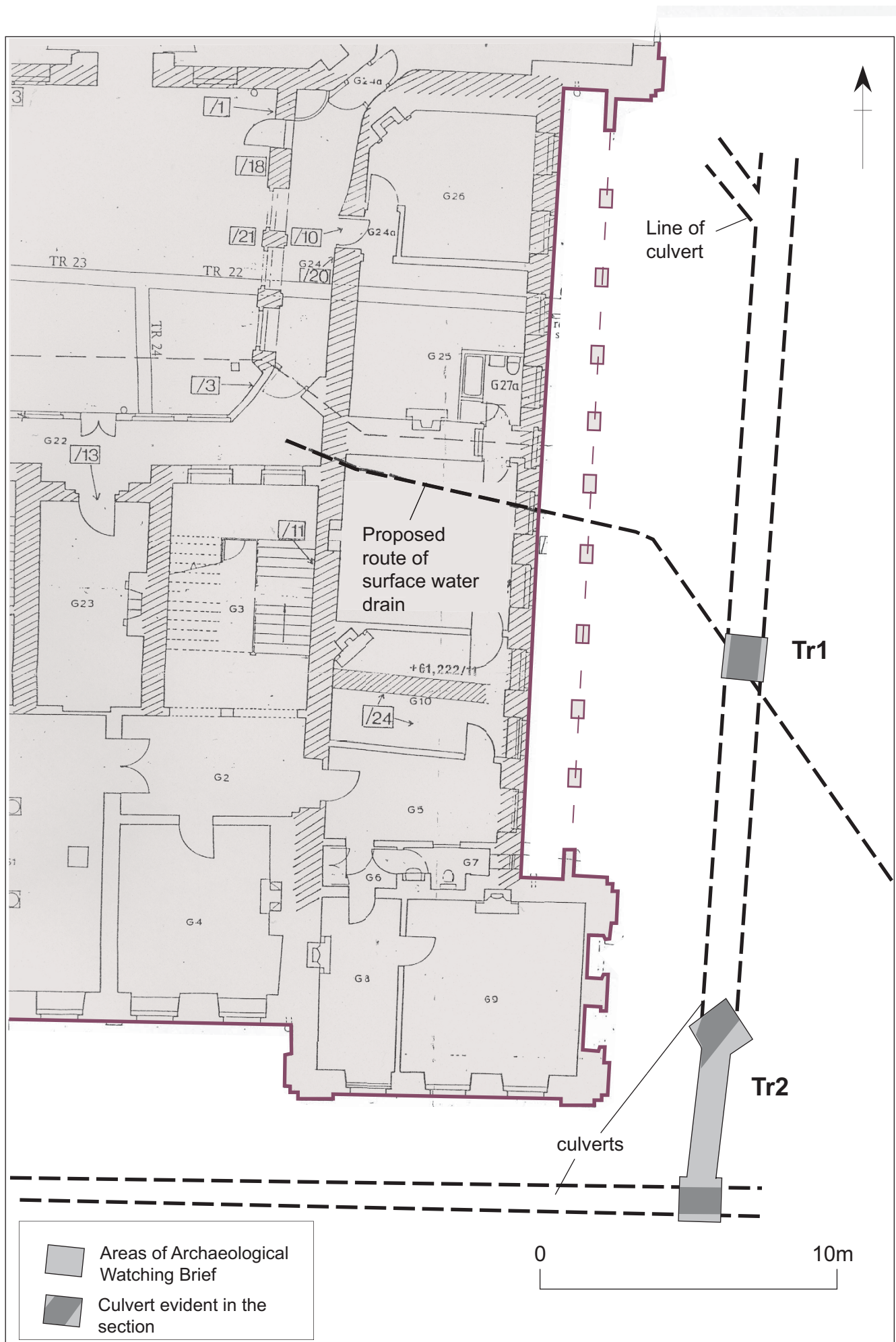


Fig.3



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4