

**BRIDPORT ARMS HOTEL, WEST BAY,
BRIDPORT, DORSET**
Archaeological Observations and Recording



Report No. 53150.1

May 2004

Bridport Arms Hotel, West Bay, Bridport, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording, April 2004

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SUMMARY

Archaeological observations and recording were carried out by Terrain Archaeology during redevelopment of the Bridport Arms Hotel, West Bay, Bridport (SY46299034). A layer of dark grey sandy clay soil, about 0.6 m thick, and containing 19th and 20th century artefacts, was found lying immediately on top of beach deposits.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by JH & RH Palmer Ltd, through their agents Malcolm Wright Partnership, to undertake archaeological observations and recording during alterations to the Bridport Arms Hotel in West Bay. This is in fulfilment of Condition 4 of the consent for Planning Application No. 1/W/2003/0436.

The proposed development is to demolish a number of existing modern extensions on the northern and southern sides at the rear of the hotel, then remove any fill in this area to provide a solid base for the new buildings.

The site lies on the southeast side of the harbour at West Bay behind the shingle of the beach at NGR SY46299034 (Figures 1 & 2, Plate 1). The topography slopes gently down to the north and is about 5.5 m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is mapped as alluvium overlying Bridport and Yeovil Sands.

The fieldwork was carried out on 7th April 2004 by Rod Brook.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the following for their help and cooperation during this project: Malcolm Wright (Malcolm Wright Partnership), Steve Wallis (Dorset County Council), and the groundwork contractors.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

West Bay, lying at the mouth of the River Brit, has served as the port for Bridport from at least the 13th century and probably since Saxon times. Numerous attempts at the repair and development of the port had been made from the 15th century onwards but the present harbour dates from the 1740s with a number of subsequent alterations and improvements with the present arrangement dating from the mid 1820s (Hannah 1986).

The Bridport Arms Hotel was the inn for West Bay and the present building incorporates a 17th century rubble building as its core but has been much enlarged in the 19th and 20th centuries (RCHME 1952). The earliest phase of the existing building possibly dates to the first half of the 17th century and may have been a farmhouse with a fold yard on the eastern side (Brebner 2003). There was a public house here from at least the early 19th century, possibly originally in the 18th century block at the north end of the main range of buildings. A stable block was built in the

northeast corner of the site in the mid 19th century and most of the rest of the site infilled with buildings in the 20th century (*ibid.*).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the archaeological observations was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

METHODS

The work was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct and *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*. There was no written Brief issued for this work but a specification was produced by Terrain Archaeology (Appendix 1).

The groundworks comprised the machine excavation of 13 test pits across the redevelopment area to determine the depth of fill which needed to be removed. These test pits were between 0.7–1.5 m by 0.75 m across and between 0.7–1.8 m deep. The number, location, size and depth of these test pits were determined by the contractors.

The observations of the test pits was intensive, as defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, with a suitably qualified archaeologist present during sensitive ground disturbance. All deposits exposed in the trenches were recorded using elements of Terrain Archaeology's recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. The position of the test pits was located on a plan provided by the client. All depths recorded were below existing ground surface.

On the basis of the results from the test pits, it was decided that no archaeological presence was required during the remaining ground works.

The records have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum. The archive will be deposited with the Dorset County Museum.

RESULTS

Introduction

Prior to the archaeological observations, the existing structures on the site had been demolished and the site levelled and cleared of debris (Plates 2–3). The area to be redeveloped was the eastern half of the site behind the hotel buildings on the frontage. This area was divided into two parts by a kitchen wing off the back of the hotel (Figure 3).

Northern area

This area was formerly the hotel garage, constructed in c. 1920 (Brebner 2003). A former stable block or barn of c. 1850 forms the eastern side of this area. Eight test pits (Test Pits 1–8) were dug around the periphery of this area (Figure 3). Of these, only four (Test Pits 1–3, 8) were fully excavated down to the top of the natural deposits. The remainder of the test pits were abandoned

because of the number of services encountered or because the loose character of the deposits made it difficult to continue excavating.

Test Pits 1–3 were all excavated along the western side of the area against the rear wall of the hotel (Figure 3). A similar stratigraphic sequence was exposed in all three trenches with a loose layer of dark grey gritty silt (101, 201, 301) containing abundant mortar, slate, glass, brick and tile pieces, between 0.4 m and 0.6 m thick (Figure 3). This is probably levelling material for the previous buildings over this area, mixed with some recent demolition debris. This layer was directly overlying sterile beach sand (102, 202, 302).

The footings of two 18th century additions to the original 17th century building were exposed in Test Pits 1–3. Test Pits 2 and 3 exposed massive roughly dressed stone block footings about 0.7 m deep, with a projecting lowest course visible in Test pit 3 (Plate 5). In Test Pit 1 the footings are of much less massive stone rubble (Plate 4).

Test Pits 6–8 were excavated alongside the wall of the mid 19th century stable block (Figure 3), but only Test Pit 8 was fully excavated. This test pit was within an area disturbed by the insertion of an underground fuel tank. The natural beach deposits (803) were encountered at a depth of 1.6 m. Above was a thick deposit of very dark brown gritty silt (601, 701, 801) with abundant modern glass bottles and pottery. The remains of a brick wall stub projecting 1.5 m out from the stable block wall, were exposed in the south section of the test pit (Figure 4). This wall survived 0.35 m high, about 0.75 m below ground level. This wall post-dates the mid 19th century stable block and may be associated with the fuel tank.

Southern area

This area formerly had a single storey extension constructed in the early 20th century. The limits to the site on the south and east are formed by the boundary wall to the fold yard of the original farm and may be 17th century in date (Brebner 2003). Five test pits (Test Pits 9–13) were dug in this area (Figure 3). Of these, only two (Test Pits 11, 13) were fully excavated down to the top of the natural deposits. The remainder of the test pits were abandoned because of the number of services encountered or because the loose character of the deposits made it difficult to continue excavating. Only part of the upper layer (901, 1001) of these test pits was excavated.

Test pit 13 was excavated against the possible 17th century fold yard wall in the eastern part of the site (Figure 3, Plate 7). The footings of this wall were at least 0.8 m deep and were similar in character to the wall above. Natural beach sands (1302) were encountered at a depth of 0.6 m and were sealed by a layer of compact grey sandy clay (1301). This may be the remains of a garden soil.

Test Pit 11 was in the centre of the area and natural beach sands (1103) were encountered at a depth of 0.65 m (Plate 8). Overlying these was a 0.1 m thick layer of compact yellow clay (1102). This was sealed beneath a layer of compact grey sandy clay soil (1101).

Finds

Pottery

Five sherds of pottery were retained from the observations. A single sherd of an earthenware dish of possible 18th century date was recovered from context 101 in Test Pit 1. Two sherds of a large white earthenware barrel-shaped jug and a blacking bottle of probable 19th century date were recovered from context 801 in Test Pit 8. A single sherd of blue and white printed industrial earthenware plate of probable late 19th century date was recovered from context 910 in Test pit 9.

Glass

A large quantity of glass bottles was encountered on the site but this was not systematically collected. Six larger fragments of bottles were retained. Two wine bottle bases and one finish from bottles made in a three part mould were recovered from context 901 in Test Pit 9. One base is embossed with 'POWELL & C^O. BRISTOL'. These bottles can be dated to a period after 1835 (Jones 1986). Three bottles were retained from context 101: the upper part of a 'codd' bottle embossed with 'J.C. & R.H. PALMER' just below the neck; the base of a wide diameter machine-made clear glass bottle embossed with '6096' and 'C. S & C^O L^D'; and the finish from an oval bottle or perhaps a case bottle.

CONCLUSIONS

The observations of the test pits revealed that the site was covered with a deposit of containing 19th and 20th century material which directly overlay natural beach deposits. No evidence of any earlier occupation or features was exposed.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 53150) will be deposited with Dorset County Museum, which has agreed in principle to accept the archive, subject to fulfilment of the Museum's requirements of the preparation of archaeological archives. A copy of the microfilmed archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record.

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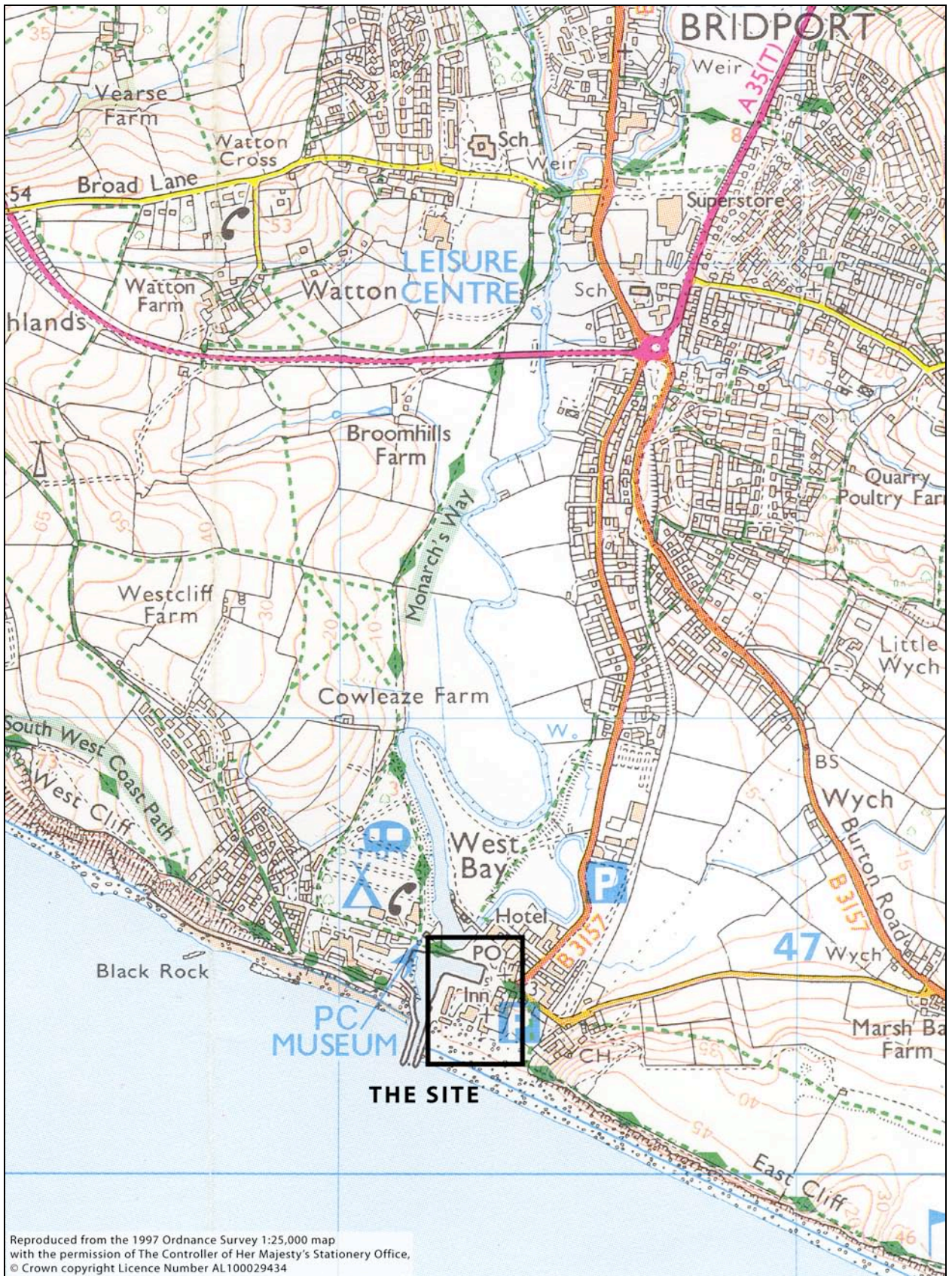


Figure 1: Location map

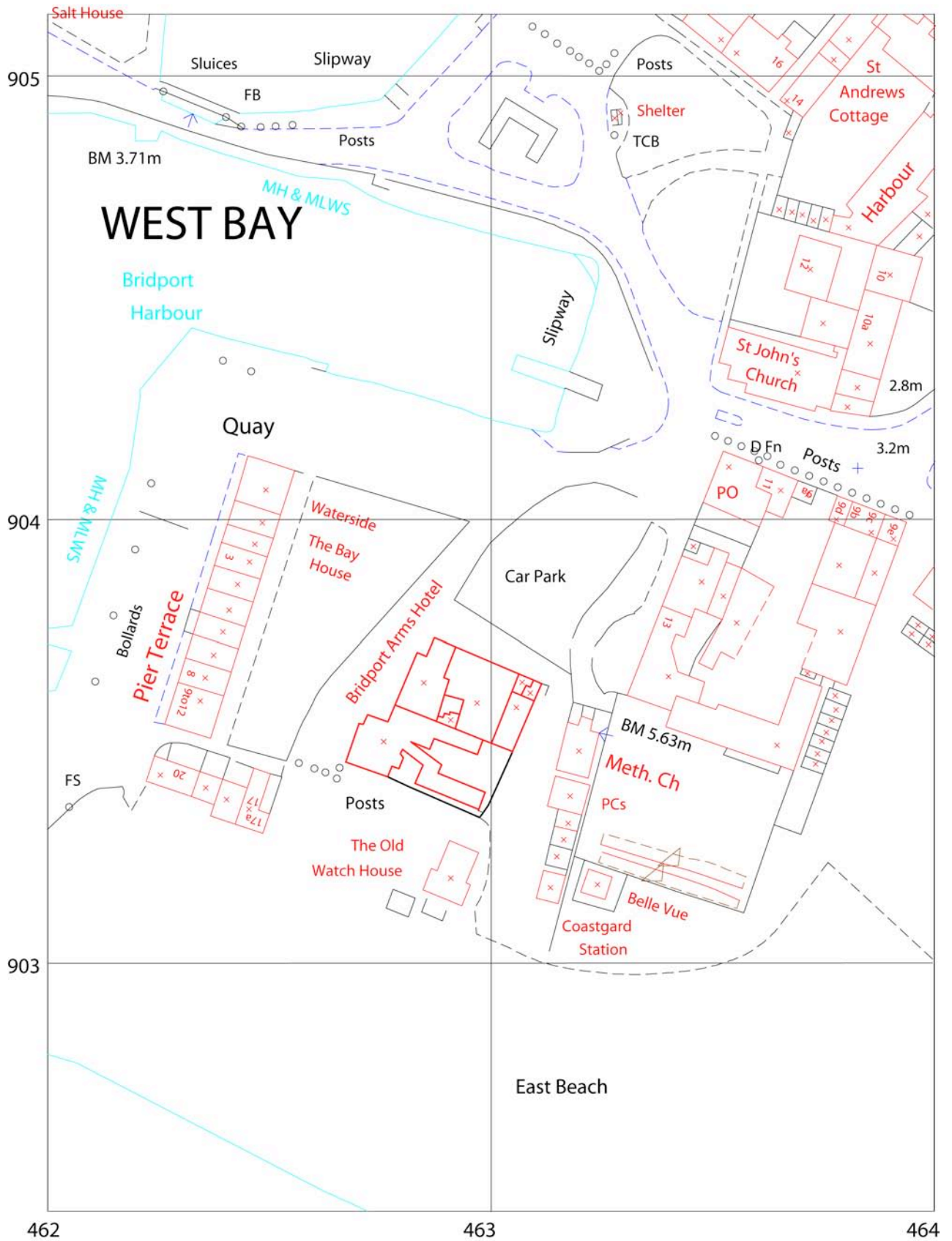


Figure 2: Location of the Bridport Arms Hotel (Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Superplan Data, © Crown copyright 2003. All Rights reserved)

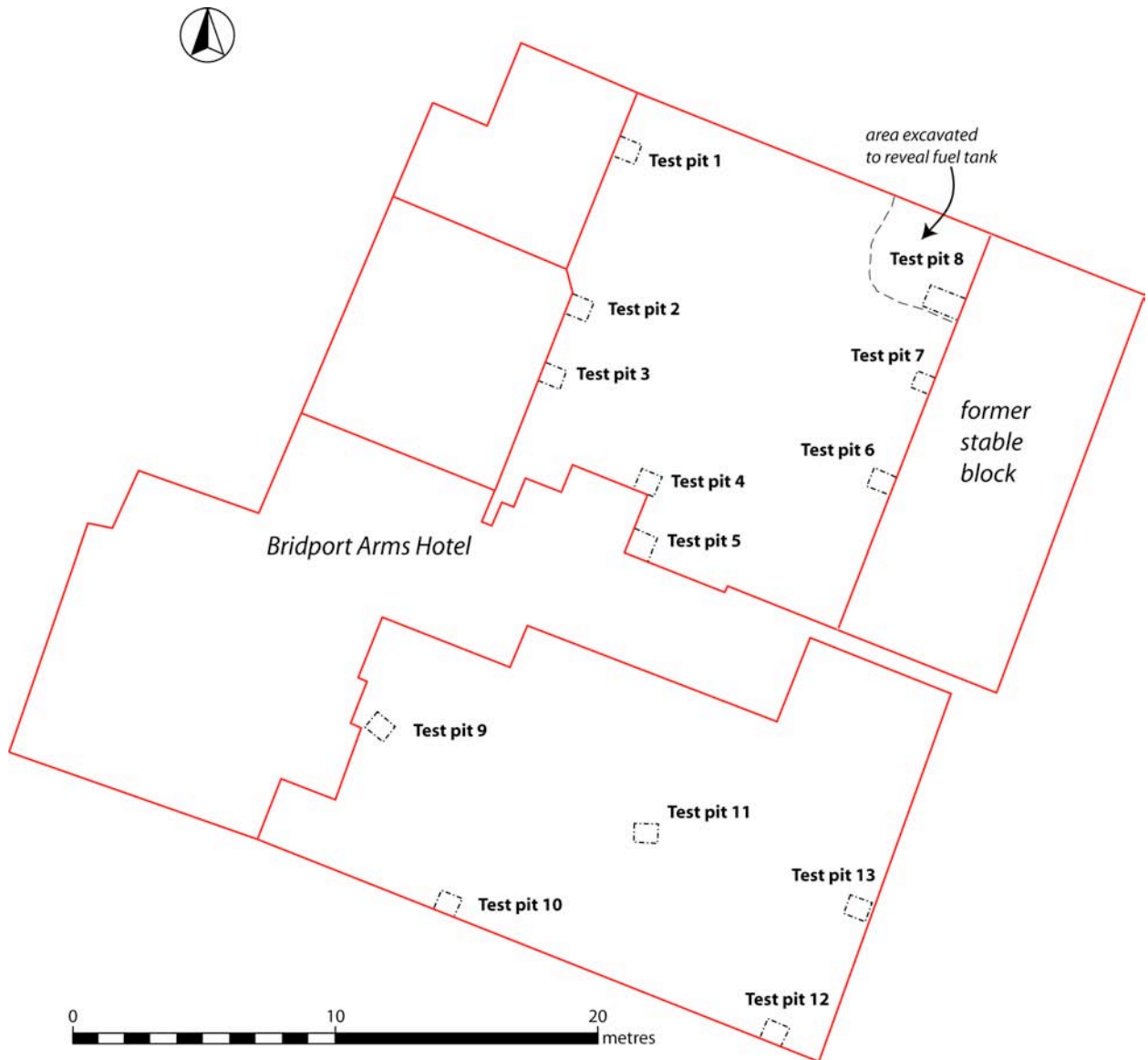


Figure 3: Plan of Test Pit locations.

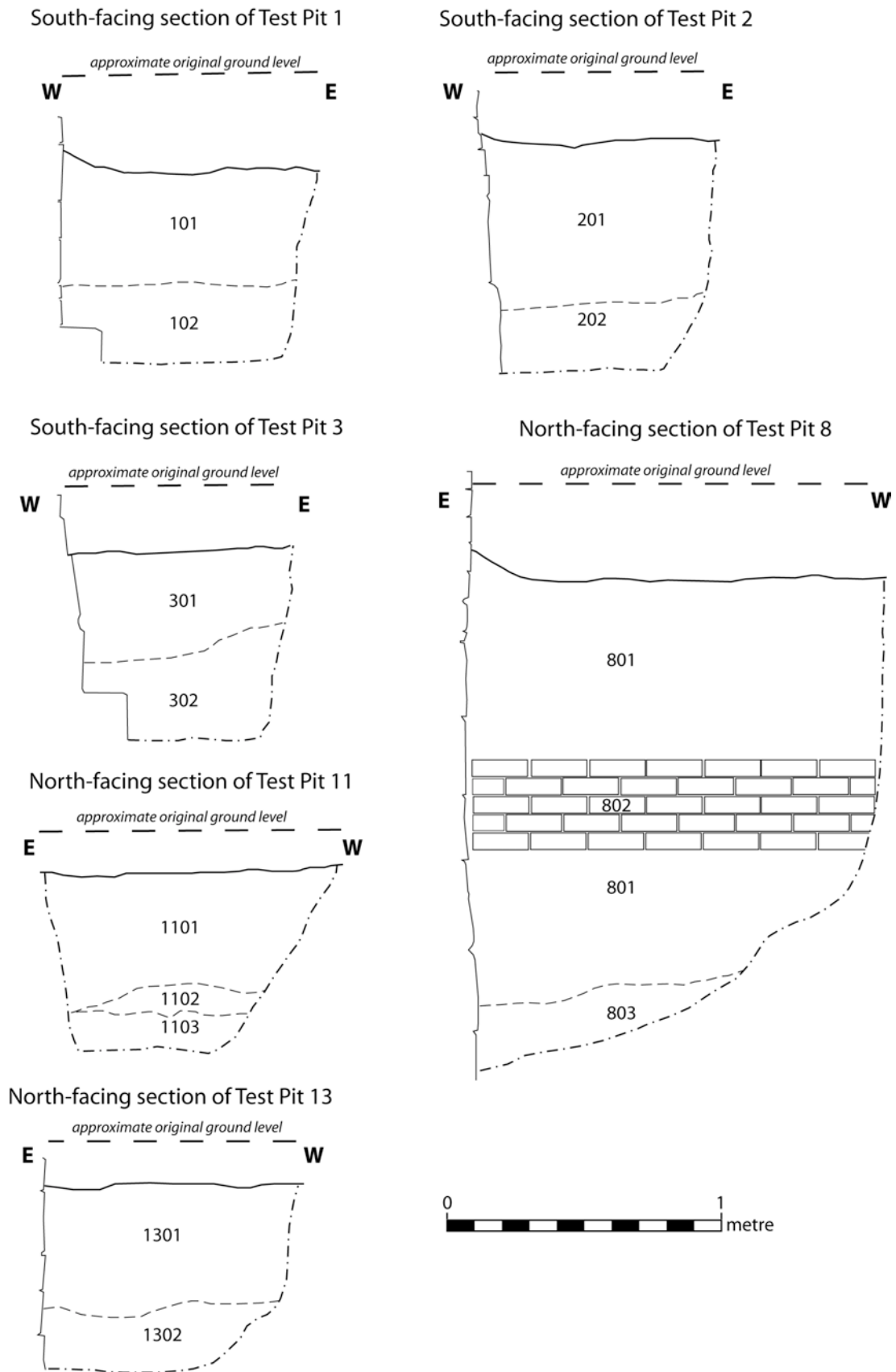


Figure 4: Sections



Plate 1: General view of the site from the south. The Bridport Arms is on the left and the southern area of the site is immediately behind the stone wall, with the northern area beyond the single-storey extension.



Plate 2: General view of former stable block and northern area of the site, looking east.



Plate 3: General view of the southern area of the site with the possible 17th century fold yard wall, looking southwest.



Plate 4: Test Pit 1, viewed from south.



Plate 5: Test Pits 2 and 3 showing stone footings to building.



Plate 6: Test Pit 8 with fuel tank in foreground, from north.



Plate 7: Test Pit 13 against possible 17th century fold yard wall, looking south.



Plate 8: Test Pit 11, viewed from north.

APPENDIX 1: WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION