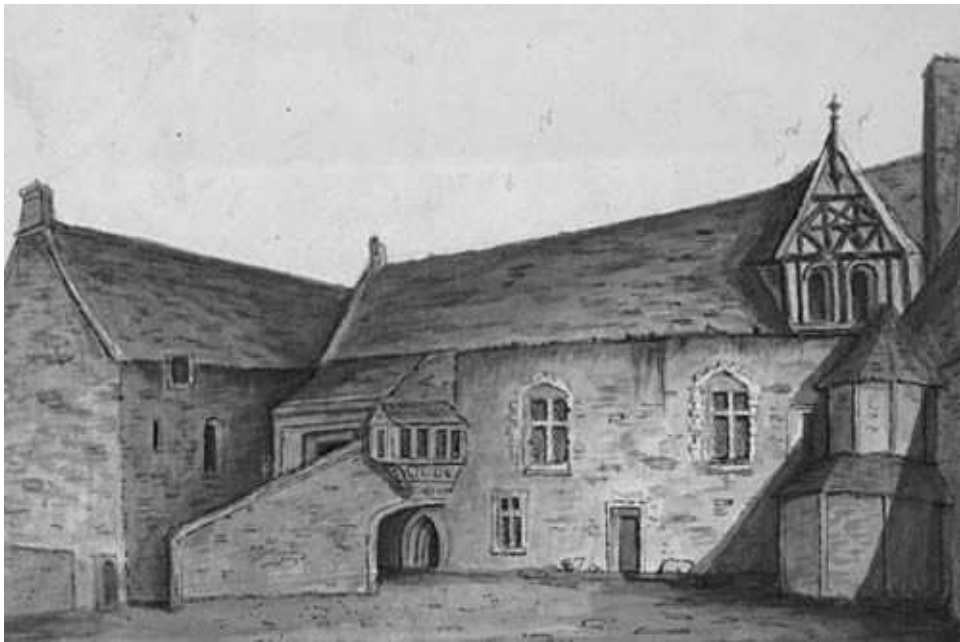


***An Archaeological Watching Brief at
The Music Hall and Vaughan's Mansion,
Shrewsbury, 2010-11***

by
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
THE MUSIC HALL AND VAUGHAN'S MANSION,
SHREWSBURY, 2010-11**

by
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A Report for
Shropshire Council Museums Service,
Shropshire Council

Archaeology Service

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SUMMARY

Between August 2009 and September 2011, the Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council carried out a watching brief on groundworks associated with the redevelopment of The Music Hall, Shrewsbury as a museum and art gallery, a Tourist Information Centre, and café. The Music Hall site incorporates structural remains of Vaughan's Mansion, a medieval stone-built Hall dating to c1300.

The 2009-10 watching brief monitored groundworks in the courtyards. It was seen that the ground level in the courtyards had been reduced in the modern periods down to the natural sandy subsoil. In places there was significant later 20th-century disturbance. A post-medieval or early modern pit cut into the natural sand was partially exposed in the central courtyard, and brick and sandstone walls, possibly belonging to outbuildings, were seen in the western yard.

The 2010-11 watching brief monitored groundworks within the building itself, principally inside the Music Hall block that occupied the site of the east wing of the former medieval Vaughan's Mansion. The remains of a number of red sandstone foundation walls were found within the Music Hall. These walls were likely to have been the remains of the former east wing of Vaughan's Mansion. A number of contractor's test pits and underpinning pits excavated against internal walls in the Music Hall showed that in places these were built up on red sandstone foundations. It was unclear whether these comprised re-used sandstone or whether they were the foundations of the earlier structure re-used, though the latter appeared to be the case.

No other significant deposits or features were seen in the course of the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In summer 2009 work commenced on the redevelopment of the Music Hall, Shrewsbury. The redevelopment was to facilitate the incorporation of the Shrewsbury Museums collection, art gallery, Tourist Information Centre, café and public toilets into the site. The redevelopment was envisaged as offering a connection between visitor information, museum collections and historic interpretation.

1.2 The Music Hall site lies within the historic medieval core of Shrewsbury. It occupies a site known to have been in existence since at least the 13th century. Encapsulated within the existing Music Hall complex of buildings are extensive well preserved structural remains of Vaughan's Mansion, a medieval stone built Hall dating to c. 1300 (Shropshire Council Historic Environment Record (HER) No 62426). The building is also a Grade II* Listed Building (no. 653-1/15/670).

1.3 In view of the archaeological potential of the site it was made a condition of planning permission that a programme of archaeological work be undertaken to accompany the groundworks associated with the development. A brief for the programme of archaeological work was produced by the Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire Council.

1.4 The Archaeology Service was commissioned by the Shropshire Council Museum Service to carry out this programme of archaeological work.

1.5 This programme of archaeological work did not include any recording of the standing buildings, including elements that were revealed during the re-development and repair works. A brief for that work was prepared separately by the Conservation Officer, Shropshire Council, and a separate contract let for the work.

1.6 The aim of the programme of archaeological work was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the groundworks associated with the development.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Music Hall and Vaughan's Mansion

2.1.1 The Music Hall is comprised of a complex of buildings including the remaining section of the medieval Vaughan's Mansion and the purpose built, public-funded Greek Revival style Public Rooms. Technically the Music Hall only relates to the main auditorium and the whole complex built in 1840 to the designs of Edward Haycock was originally the public rooms. Although the site was cleared of all buildings including two large timber-framed houses fronting the Square, the design still had to accommodate the remaining section of Vaughan's mansion, the line of Coffee House passage and the angled access through the first floor of the building between the Square and the yard used by the Salop Fire Office. The Music Hall's ground floor and all the floors facing the Square have been radically altered on all levels so although the original layout can be identified, it no longer exists. (HER No.10575)

2.1.2 The hall of the former Vaughan's Mansion is also incorporated in the Music Hall complex. Vaughan's mansion is one of four known 13th and 14th century stone hall houses surviving or recorded in Shrewsbury. Like the other three, it had a substantial stone undercroft, over which the hall was set, but there is no evidence of stone vaulting. The undercroft at Vaughan's Mansion was partly below ground level, as the building was set on a gradient, and appears to have been consisted of a single large space (about 152m²), with access from the exterior (from the courtyard to the north of the house). Vaughan's Mansion was constructed around 1300 for William Vaughan, one of the most important wool dealers of his time.

2.1.3 A large part of this former house was demolished in the mid 1790s and a further section in 1838 to make way for the Public Rooms section of the Music Hall. The surviving building is a medieval first-floor hall type building, terraced into the gradient between Market Street/The Square, and College Hill, known from the surviving remains of the hall (incorporated in the 19th-C Music Hall building), early descriptions, and early drawings. It was one of the largest halls of the medieval town. The principal accommodation, an open hall, survives. (HER No 62426)

2.2 Previous archaeological work

2.2.1 In 1997 a local archaeologist reported that he had been involved in an excavation at the back of the Music Hall some time previously, and had found two skeletons about 6 feet down (HER 60337). He also said that he had observed in section the cut for the Vaughan's Mansion undercroft (HER 62426) cutting down through earlier (i.e. pre-13thC) stratigraphy.

2.2.2 An archaeological and architectural analysis of the site was carried out in 2000 (Morriss, 2000). This comprised a desk-based assessment and architectural analysis. The analysis demonstrated that The Music Hall comprised of a complex of buildings including the remaining section of the medieval Vaughan's Mansion and the purpose-built Greek Revival style Public Rooms. The most unusual feature of the surviving section of the hall were the cross-mullioned windows which seemed to be much later in form than the suggested date of the hall, although their mouldings were medieval and structurally they appeared to be of the same date as the walls. Remaining sections of the building had begun to be used as a warehouse by the 18th century. The building was also damaged by fire in 1917. (HER 62426)

2.2.3 In 2006 an archaeological evaluation and building assessment was undertaken as part of a conservation management plan. This included the excavation of a series of trial trenches in the central and western courtyards of the complex (Matthews, 2006). The evaluation revealed evidence of a wall constructed in Tudor bricks and red sandstone blocks which may have been associated with the medieval hall but may also have been constructed from reclaimed material from the 19th century demolition of parts of the hall. The evaluation also revealed a slate lined pit, brick walls and a brick-built soakaway. These features were probably associated with the 19th century music hall. The southern wall of Vaughan's Mansion, where it was constructed from rough hewn sandstone blocks was exposed as part of the building assessment. A timber beam was revealed within the wall fronting College Hill, and areas of The Music Hall's 19th century brick walls were also seen. (HER 62426)

2.2.4 In 2009-10 the Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council carried out a watching brief on groundworks in the courtyards carried out as preparatory work for the redevelopment of the site for the new Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery. The results of this watching brief broadly confirmed those of the 2006 evaluation. It was seen that the ground level in the courtyards had been reduced in the modern periods down to the natural sandy subsoil. In places there was significant later 20th-century disturbance. In the central courtyard a post-medieval or early modern pit cut into the natural sand was partially exposed, and in the western courtyard the sandstone and brick foundation walls of what was probably a late 18th or early 19th century outbuilding were seen.

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 A watching brief was carried out on groundworks in the western yard and the central courtyard of the complex over a period of several months between August 2009 and January 2010 (Hannaford, 2010). The watching brief demonstrated that the western yard and central courtyard of The Music Hall complex have been subject to drastic and archaeologically unrecorded intervention in the 20th century. In particular, the area of the central courtyard has seen significant disturbance in the late 20th century which appears to have removed any archaeological deposits that might have survived across all but the northernmost edge of the courtyard. Even here the only feature that was seen to survive was a post-medieval pit, and the top of this feature had also been truncated and lay beneath a layer of late 20th century disturbed deposits. In the western courtyard, the ground level appears to have been reduced in the late 19th or early 20th century – the footings of an outbuilding and a pebble and cobble yard of this period survived immediately beneath the modern yard surface. The great archaeological potential of the site lies in the surviving elements of the medieval Vaughan's Mansion and the early 19th century Music Hall.

3.2 A number of test pits (Fig. 2; A-F, H-K, N, Y-Z) were excavated to examine the foundations of parts of the existing Music Hall structure and where necessary to incorporate extra underpinning. A section of wall was taken down and rebuilt on strengthened foundations (G). Two areas of floor were removed and reduced prior to a concrete raft being installed (L & M), and a pit was excavated for a lift shaft (O).

3.3 Pit Z This test pit was excavated against the west (outer) face of the west wall of the Music Hall block. The test pit was cut through heavily disturbed ground (Figure 3a & 3b; 2), but revealed that the brick wall of the Music Hall rested on sandstone footings (1). These footings were of red sandstone blocks bonded in light greyish brown mortar. The outer face had been heavily cut about, but it appeared that the footings may have been earlier than the brickwork above – certainly the mortar was of different type. The footings were built up from the natural sandy silt subsoil (9); no trace of a foundation cut or stratified deposits survived the modern disturbance against the west face of the wall. It is possible that this wall may have been associated with the stairs and porch that formerly stood against the northeast corner of Vaughan's Mansion (see cover illustration).

3.4 Pits A, B, & C Three test pits were dug against an internal east-west wall within the Music Hall block. The brick wall was seen to rest on red sandstone footings (10). At the western end of the wall (in pits A & B) these footings appeared to consist of un-coursed rubble, though the footings had been cut about by later disturbance, including drainage work. At the eastern end of the wall (pit C) the footings were of coursed stonework which stepped out to the south. The existing wall above floor level was of 19th century brick (with some 20th-century infilling); the sandstone footings at the east end certainly appeared to be of earlier construction, and may have been the remains of the north wall of the former east wing of Vaughan's Mansion.

3.5 Pit D A small test pit was excavated against the east wall of the Music Hall. Again, the brick superstructure rested on sandstone footings. The test pit was not sufficiently large or deep to determine whether these footings were earlier than the 19th-century brickwork or were re-using sandstone rubble. If earlier, then they may have represented the foundations of the east wall of the east wing of Vaughan's Mansion.

3.6 Area L, Pits E, G, I, & Y In the centre of the Music Hall (to the rear of the former Reception area), a small test pit (pit Y) was excavated by the contractors through an existing concrete floor. The floor level here was about 0.8m higher than that in the areas to the north and west. Immediately beneath the concrete floor (Figure 4a; 4) was another floor of 20th century quarry tiles (5). These lay on a deposit about 0.3m thick of brown sand (6) which lay above a further floor of late 19th- or early 20th-century quarry tiles (7). Beneath this, a further 0.3m depth of loose brown sand (8) with mortar, brick and stone fragments, was removed until the test-pit reached its required depth. Two further test-pits (E & I) were dug through the concrete floor to the north, and a section of modern wall was taken down and the area reduced for a new foundation (G) before the floor in the whole area (L) was reduced by 0.5m. The 0.15m thick concrete floor (Figure 4b; 11 & 18) was bedded on 0.15m of hardcore (12 & 19), beneath which lay a deposit of greyish brown sandy silt (13 & 20), which had been heavily cut about to the south and east by shallow service trenches for water and sewerage. No significant archaeological features or deposits were revealed here.

3.7 Pit F A shallow test-pit excavated against the inner face of the west wall of the music hall showed that the brick wall lay on sandstone footings, though again it was unclear if these were earlier than or contemporary with the brick wall they supported.

3.8 Pit J A further shallow test-pit excavated against the inner face of the west wall towards the front end of the Music Hall revealed brick foundations.

3.9 Pits H, K Two small test pits were excavated against the base of an internal wall (Fig. X; H & K). In pit H the internal brick wall was seen to be built up on a shallow sandstone footing; the footing deepened at the south end of the pit and in the adjoining pit (K) the sandstone footings (Figure 3c & 3d; 17) were more substantial and were bonded in buff gritty lime mortar.

3.10 Area M The existing floor in the area of what originally would have been the northeast corner of Vaughan's Mansion was reduced by about 0.5m. At the southern end of area M the removal of a section of wooden floor revealed a sequence of earlier floors and walls.

The western side of this area was bounded by the line of a former internal wall which had been removed to floor level. The above ground part of this wall was of 19th century brick - which had mostly been taken down at the time of the watching brief in this area, and continued in modern brick to the south of a former doorway. The foundations however comprised a substantial wall of red sandstone (Figure 5; 27) in a brown mortar. These foundations were bonded with another substantial sandstone foundation wall (25) running on an east-west alignment. This wall was 0.7m wide and up to two courses were exposed by the excavation. Wall 27 probably represented the remains of the foundations of the west wall of the east wing of Vaughan's Mansion. The north edge of wall 25 was set back c. 0.7m from the north face of the north wall of the standing part of Vaughan's Mansion. A stub wall (26) of sandstone projected 0.9m south from the east-west wall (25).

At a depth of 0.5m below the former floor level, the base of the excavated area in the angle between these walls came down to a deposit of compact greyish brown sandy silt (30). This was covered by a mortar surface (29) which butted against the south side of the sandstone wall 25 and the east side of wall 27. The mortar surface was covered with a deposit 0.25m thick of grey sand (24) with mortar flecks, on top of which was a deposit of dark grey sandy loam (23) 0.1m thick, in turn lying below the orange sand

bedding (22) for a floor (21) of late 19th to early 20th century date of tiles and concrete and stone slabs. This floor had been covered by the joists and floorboards of the wooden floor that had formed the existing surface in this part of the building.

To the north of wall 25 the ground level was also reduced by about 500mm. This involved the removal of the existing concrete floor (34) and hardcore (35) and about 0.2m of an underlying deposit of rubble in grey sand (31) and rubble in dark brown sandy silt (33). The stub of a wall (28) (corresponding to the stub 26 on the south side of 25) ran north from the north side of 25, though it had been cut through by a substantial brick-lined service trench. It did not continue beyond the area disturbed by the service trench. Here there were instead a series of brick walls (36-39) of 19th century date which had presumably originally supported a timber floor but now lay beneath the modern concrete floor (34). At the northern end of area M, where the concrete floor was again taken up, a pad of sandstone or possibly the end of a sandstone wall (32) was exposed, though this feature did not align with any of the walls at the southern end of area M.

3.11 Pit N In the southwest corner of Vaughan's Mansion an opening had been made some time in the past through the sandstone wall of the building to give access to storage areas between the modern College Hill frontage and the south side of Vaughan's Mansion. The concrete floor (Figure 4c; 40) in this opening in was lifted in May 2011 prior to excavations for a new foundation. The original sandstone south wall (42) of the Mansion lay immediately beneath the concrete. The wall was bonded in a buff to light grey mortar, with traces of plaster (43) on its north (inner) face.

3.12 Pit O In September 2011 the storage area on the south side (outside) of the south wall of Vaughan's Mansion was enlarged to create a pit for a lift shaft. The pit was approximately 3.5m wide by 5m long by 1.7m deep. On the south side of the pit, a wall was taken down to reveal the natural reddish brown silty sand (Figure 6; 47) lying immediately beneath the concrete floor (48). A sewer pipe had been cut into the natural here. On the south side of the pit, the lowest deposit revealed in the excavation was a reddish brown sandy silt (46) with rounded gravel, probably the natural subsoil. Above this was a mixed deposit up to 1m thick of compressed dark greyish brown sandy silty loam (45) containing sandstone, brick, and tile fragments and post-medieval (late 17th – 19th century) pottery and glass. This deposit butted against the outer face of the foundations of the south wall of Vaughan's Mansion. It was clearly a disturbed deposit, probably representing excavation here in the 19th century; whatever the reason for this excavation, it had removed any trace of earlier stratigraphy – including evidence for foundation cuts – associated with the wall. This mixed deposit lay beneath a layer of concrete and hardcore (44) and the modern concrete floor (48).

4 DISCUSSION

In many of the test pits excavated against the walls of the southern part of the Music Hall it was apparent that the 19th-century brick walls were built on red sandstone foundations. Whilst it was not always possible to be certain whether the sandstone was re-cycled, it appears probable that some at least of the walls of the southern part of the Music Hall may have been built up on the footings of the east wing of Vaughan's Mansion that was demolished in 1838. In particular, one of the internal walls in the southern part may have re-used part at least of the footings for the west wall of the Mansion's east wing. The west wall of the Music Hall, close to its junction with the remains of Vaughan's Mansion, may have incorporated part of the footings of a former external staircase in its foundations. And another internal wall may possibly have been built on the footings for the north end of the Mansion's east wing.

Through most of the Music Hall building, where the existing floors were taken up, the underlying deposits comprised made ground, from early 19th to 20th century date. The excavations for new floors in the main did not penetrate through these deposits. In the southeast corner, one area of an earlier surface (the mortar bedding for an earlier tile floor) did survive. This floor surface was associated with a substantial sandstone foundation wall which probably marked the remains of the east end of the north wall of the main hall of the Mansion.

It was clear from the watching brief that much of the concrete flooring was recent (i.e. no earlier than the last quarter of the 20th century), having been laid on blue plastic membrane. There is no record of any archaeological assessment, intervention, or recording associated with the laying of these floors.

The watching brief on the external works in 2009-10 has confirmed the poor survival of archaeological deposits associated with Vaughan's Mansion in the central and western courtyards. The 2010-11 watching brief on the groundworks within the Music Hall (the east wing of the former Mansion) indicated that archaeological features and deposits associated with the Mansion did survive here, though truncated and cut about by 19th century and modern building work. Although some damage was caused to these archaeological features and deposits by the current works, they were not destroyed or removed (in some cases they were left intact) and will survive beneath the new floors.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBA	Council for British Archaeology
HER	Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRO	Public Record Office
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
SCAS	Shropshire Council Archaeology Service
TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society

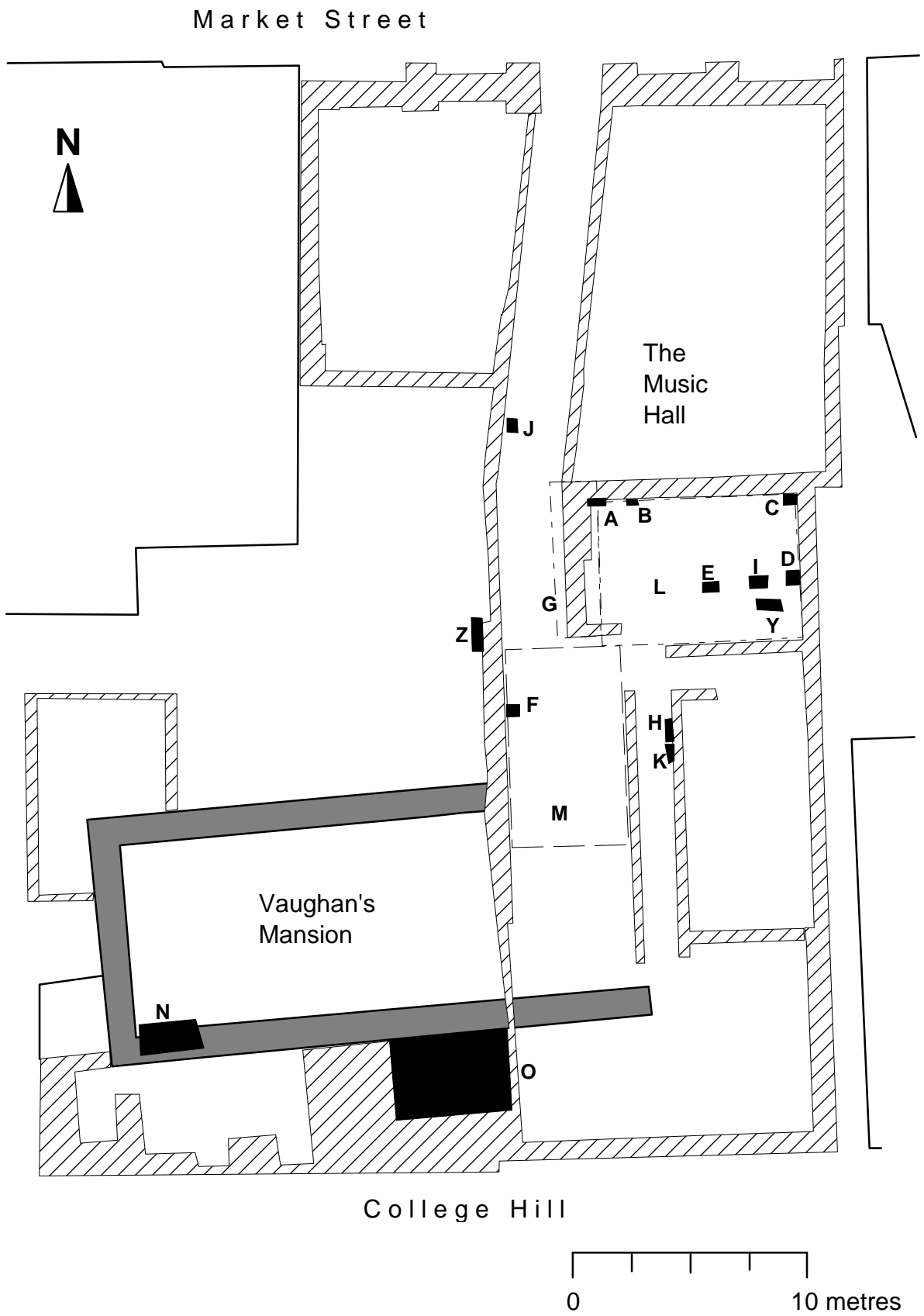


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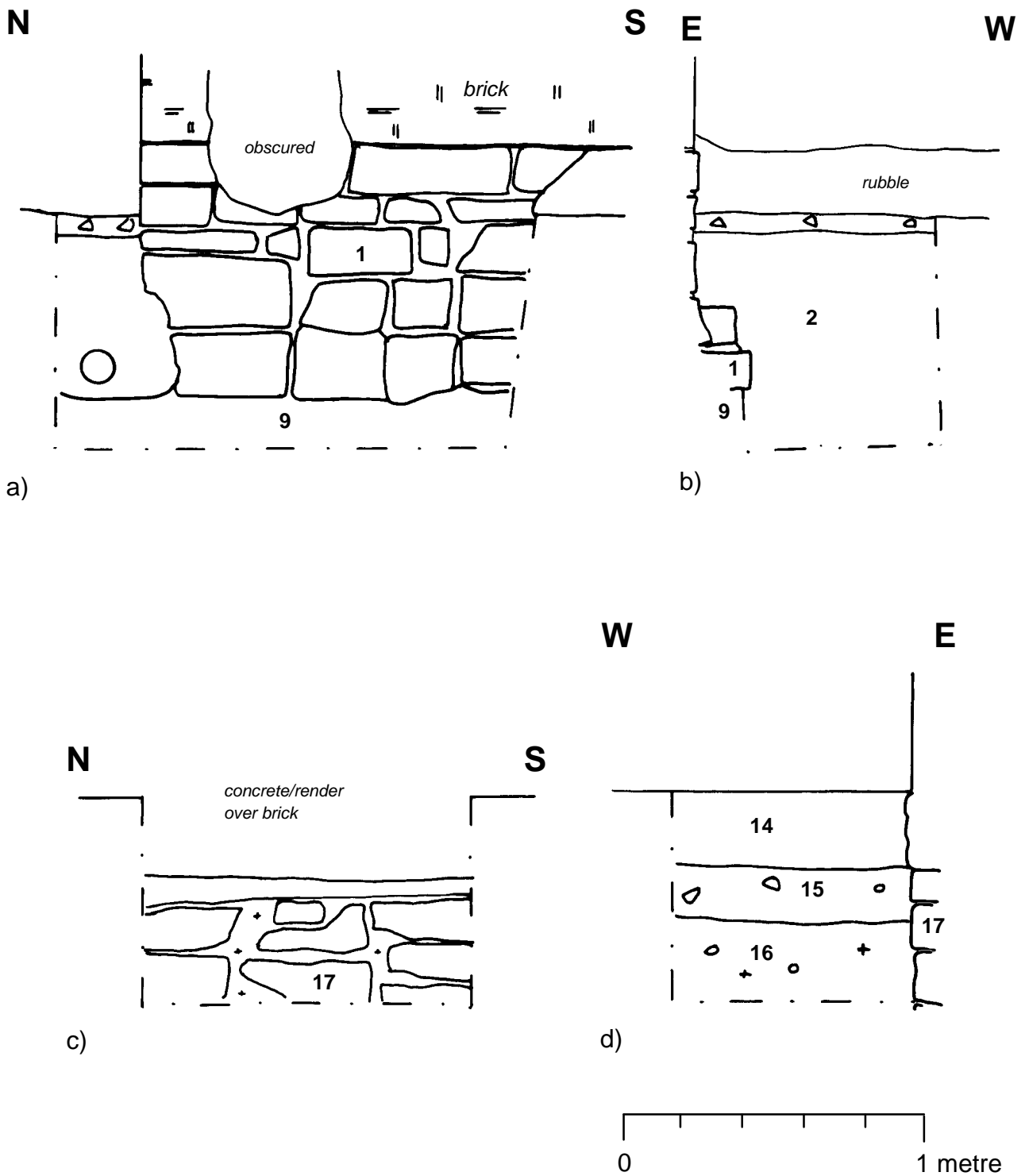


The Music Hall, Shrewsbury 2010
 Figure 1: Location of the study area

Archaeology Service
 Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates,
 Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY1 2AQ
 Scale: 1:7,500

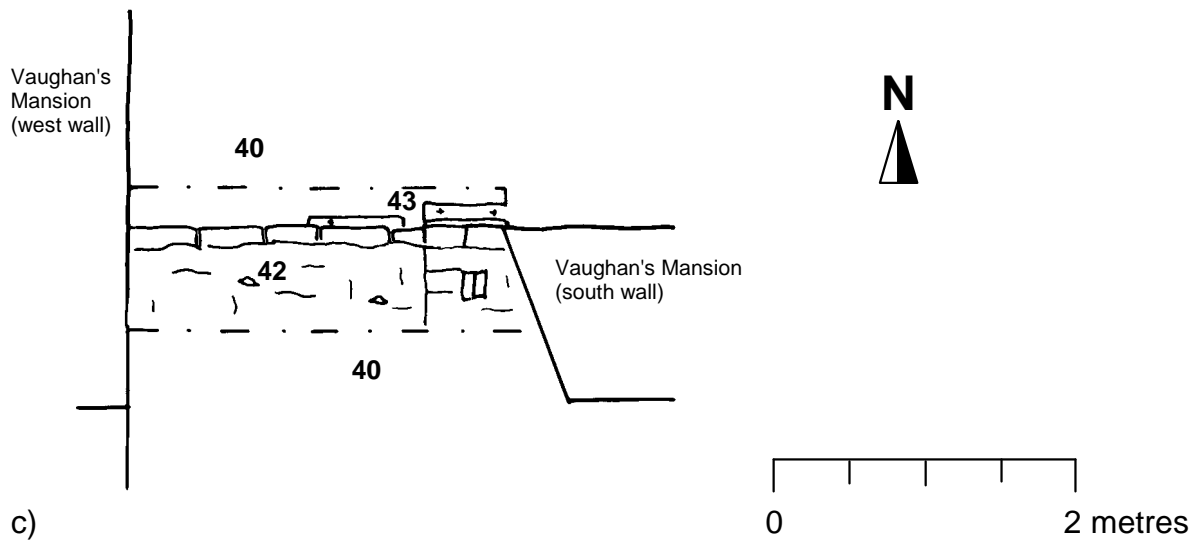
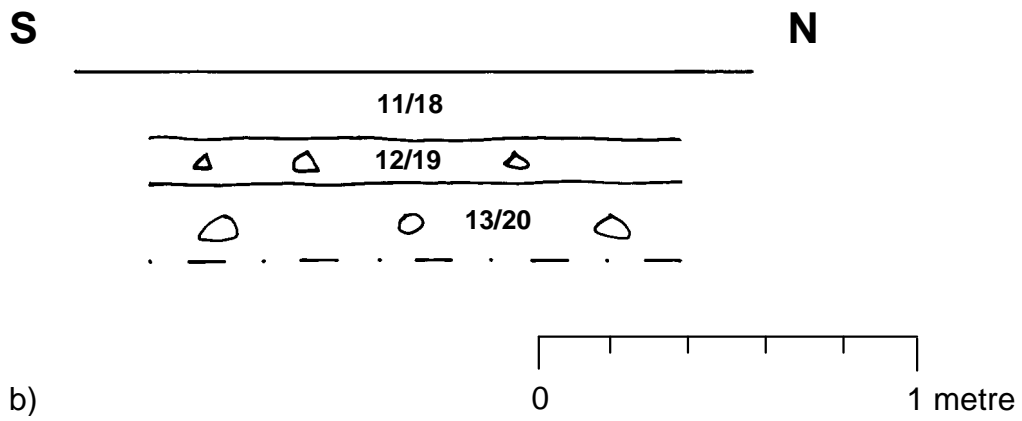
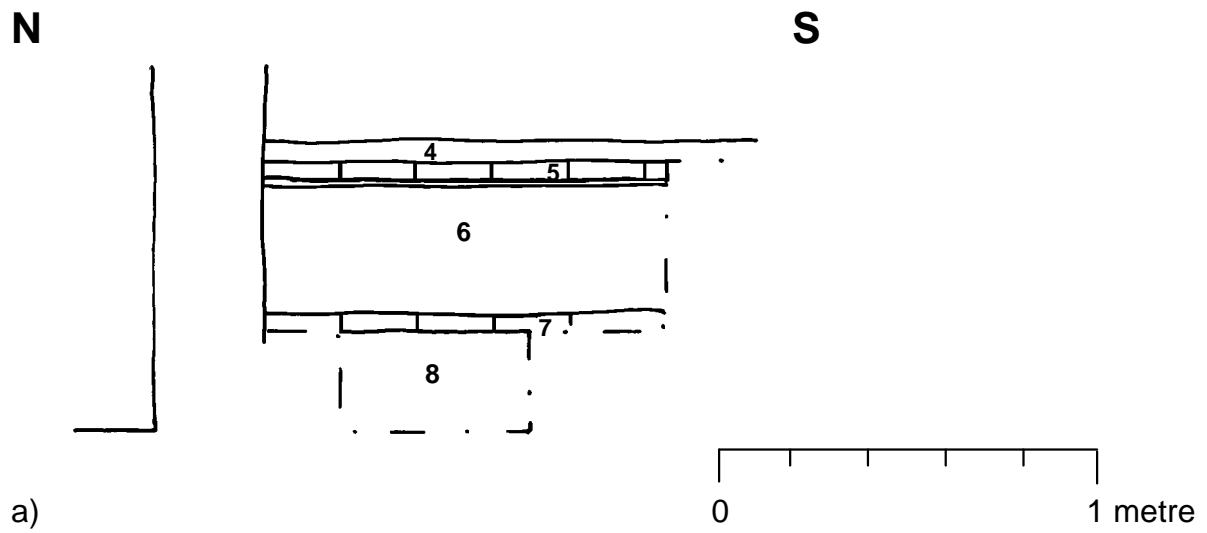


THE MUSIC HALL, SHREWSBURY, 2010
 Figure 2: Location of the groundworks; 1:250 scale



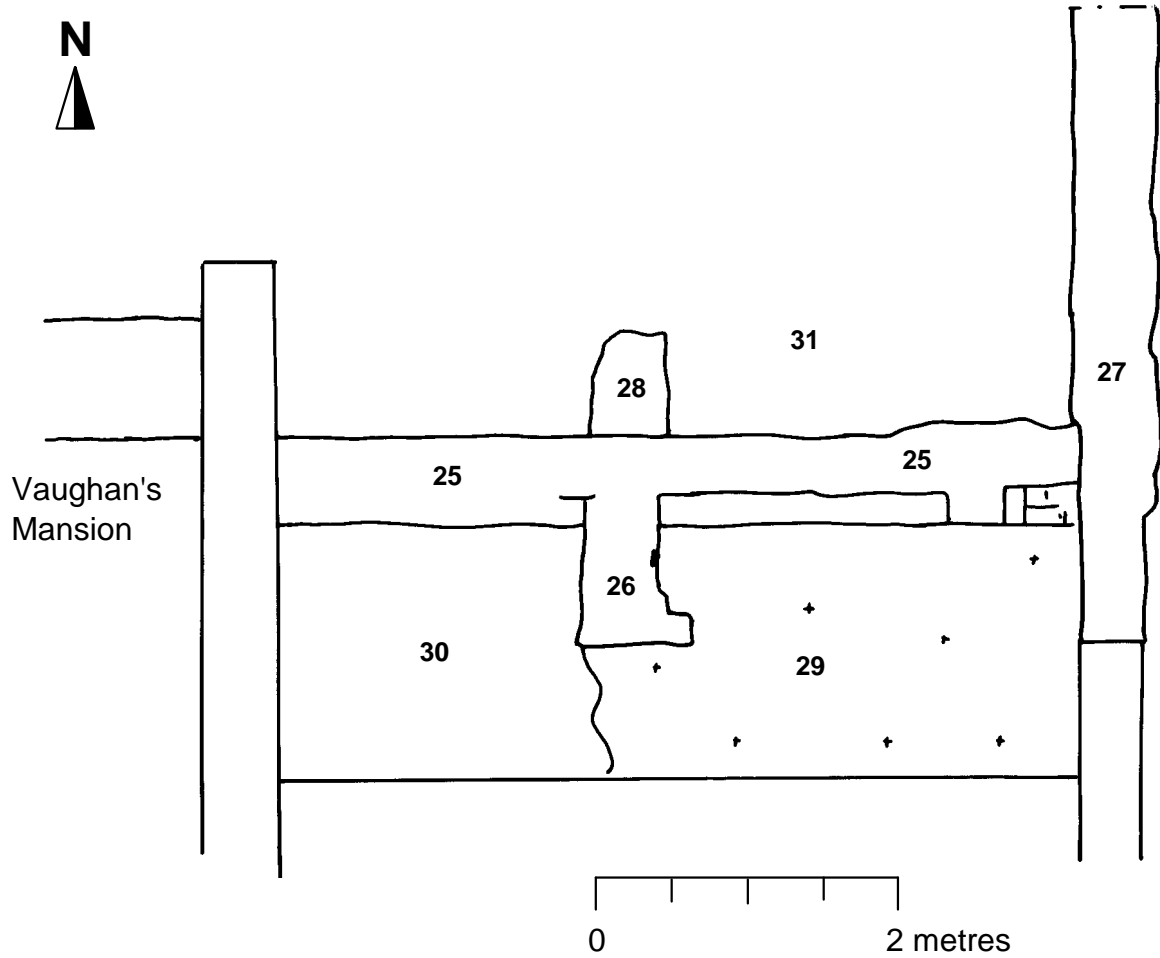
THE MUSIC HALL, SHREWSBURY, 2010

Figure 3: Sections through test pits: a) pit Z, west-facing elevation; b) pit Z, north-facing section, c) pit K, west-facing elevation; pit K, south-facing section; 1:20 scale

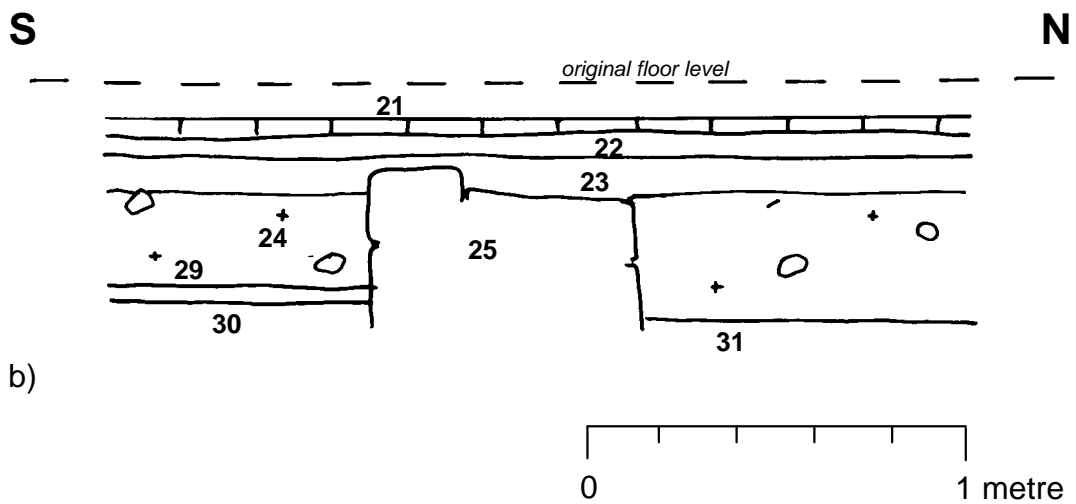


THE MUSIC HALL, SHREWSBURY, 2010

Figure 4: a) Test pit Y, west-facing section, 1:20 scale; b) areas G & L, east-facing section, 1:20 scale; c) pit N, plan view, 1:50 scale



a)



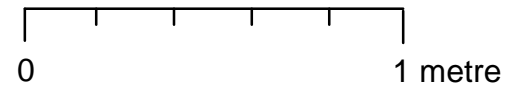
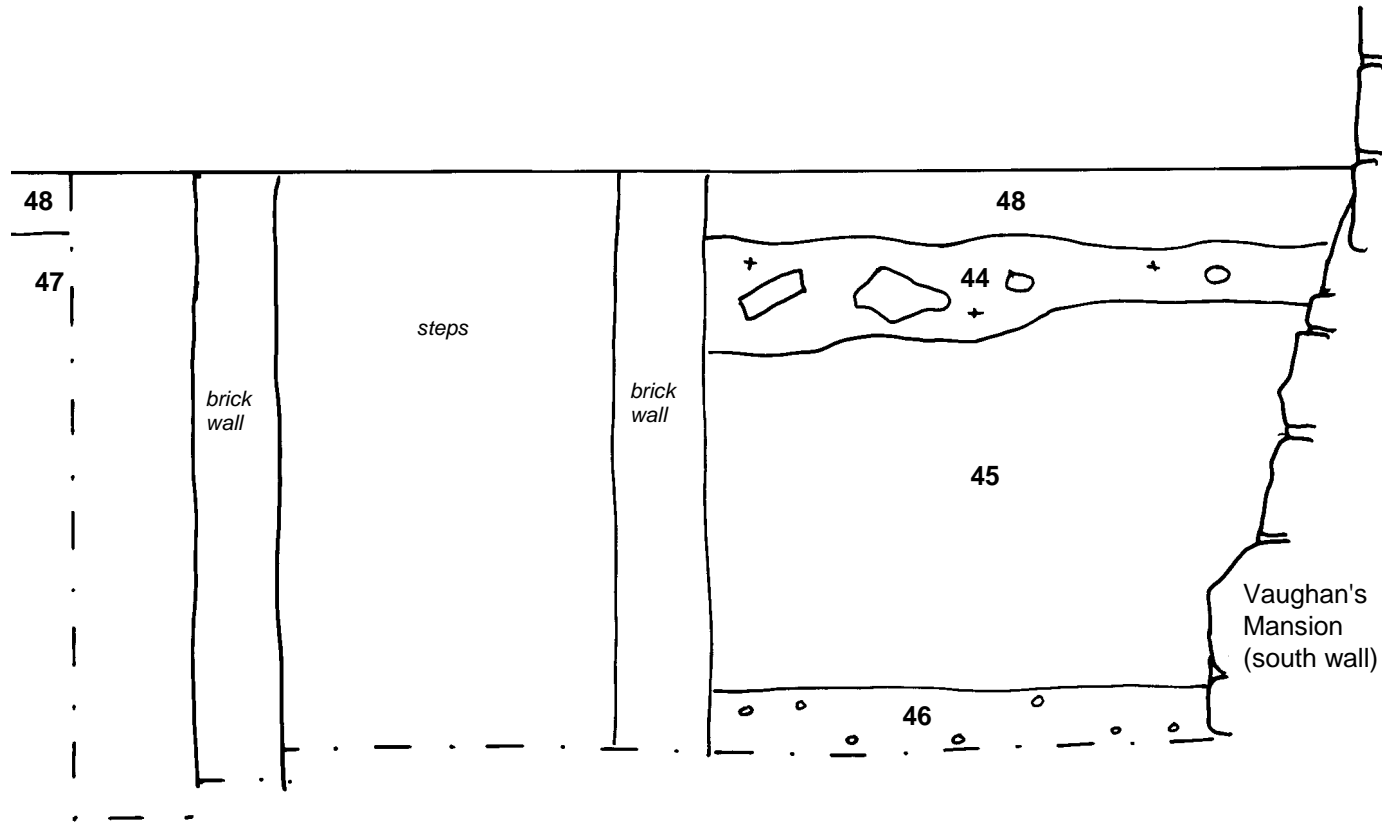
b)

THE MUSIC HALL, SHREWSBURY, 2010

Figure 5: Area M a) plan view, 1:50 scale; b) section across wall 25, 1:20 scale

S

N



THE MUSIC HALL, SHREWSBURY, 2010
Figure 6: Pit O, east-facing section across wall 25, 1:20 scale

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Photo 1: Test pit Z, looking southeast; scale 0.5m



Photo 2: Test pit B, looking north



Photo 3: Wall 25 in area M, looking northwest; scale 0.5m



Photo 4: Pit O, looking northwest, showing Vaughan's Mansion south wall foundations; scale 0.5m