



***A Watching Brief at
187 Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury,
Shropshire, 2010***

by
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Archaeology Service



Shropshire
Council

**A WATCHING BRIEF AT
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SHROPSHIRE, 2010**

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H R HANNAFORD MIFA

A Report for
Mr and Mrs Sambrook

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SUMMARY

In June 2010 the Archaeology Service carried out a watching brief on excavations for an extension to 187 Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury. The study area lay within the likely area of the former monastic cemetery of Shrewsbury Abbey and there was a possibility that archaeological remains, including human remains, might be encountered during the groundworks for the development. No significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the course of the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Abbey Foregate is a suburb on the eastern side of Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The suburb is separated from the historic town centre by the River Severn. The main approach to the town from the east runs through the suburb along Abbey Foregate road. 187 Abbey Foregate (the study area) lies on the south side of the street, 58m southeast of the Abbey Church, and lies within the former precinct of Shrewsbury Abbey (Figure 1).

1.2 The main part of the former abbey precinct is scheduled as an Ancient Monument (County No. Salop 359 "Shrewsbury Abbey (including pulpit)". 187 Abbey Foregate lies immediately outside the scheduled area. The property is also part of a Grade II Listed Building, Shrewsbury No. 653-1/16/53

1.3 In June 2010 work began to erect a single storey extension at the rear of 187 Abbey Foregate. The works involved the excavation of foundation trenches for the walls of the extension and drains and a soakaway for rainwater.

1.4 The study area lay within the likely area of the former monastic cemetery (see **1.3** above) and there was a possibility that archaeological remains, including human remains, might be encountered during the groundworks for the development.

1.5 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it was considered necessary that the groundworks associated with the development be accompanied by the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned by the owner to undertake the programme of archaeological work in accordance with a scheme of investigation approved by the Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire Council.

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.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Abbey Foregate is known to have been occupied since Saxon times, and the Domesday Book records a prosperous manor and parish here (Thorn & Thorn, 1986, 3b 1 and notes). Roger of Montgomery, the first Norman Earl of Shrewsbury, founded an abbey in Abbey Foregate in about 1083AD for the Benedictine Order. The abbey was dissolved in 1540, but the main claustral buildings survived until 1836. (Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 00983)

2.2 There have been a number of archaeological interventions and finds made within the former Abbey Precinct. An account of these is given in "Shrewsbury Abbey", a Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society monograph (Baker, 2002). In particular there have been a number of interventions in the immediate vicinity of 187 Abbey Foregate which have encountered human remains, suggesting that this area formed part of the medieval monastic cemetery (Baker, 2002, pp43-5). In July 1866 workmen excavating for the foundations of the new railway station on Abbey Foregate just to the southwest of the study area found c.30 skeletons 'buried without clothes or coffins, upright stones being placed between each body' (HER No 60362). In December 1878 excavations for a new sewer down Abbey Foregate found a grave 'rudely constructed' of 'flat pieces of freestone' at a depth of c.6 feet. It contained a skeleton and skull 'with teeth quite sound'. A few yards east of the entrance to the railway station 'about the site of the abbey cloisters' several more skeletons were found afterwards (HER No 60363). And in 1979 three skeletons were found at the rear of no.189 Abbey Foregate in a foundation trench for a new extension. Two were aligned E-W, heads to west, the other N-S, head to south. The trenches were 2.06m deep but the depth of the burials is not recorded. The trenches had cut through 1m of garden soil with quarry tiles etc, and at a depth of 1.65m was a plaster or mortar floor surface interpreted by A.T. as a former cellar floor (HER No. 60370).

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

The excavations for the foundation trench for the extension were carried out on 30th June 2010. The trenches were dug by hand to a width of 0.6m by 0.85m depth under archaeological supervision.

The earliest deposit reached by the excavations was a layer at least 0.25m thick of a dark greyish brown silty loam (Figures 3 & 4; 8 & 12), representing a buried garden soil, which produced some 18th-century pottery and clay tobacco pipe stem. This deposit was cut by a feature containing a dark greyish brown sandy silty loam (11) with brick and mortar fragments, likely to have been the fill of a possible rubbish pit. In the northeastern corner of the garden there was a further deposit 0.3m thick of very dark grey silty loam (9), also a buried garden soil. This soil layer contained some 17th-19th-century pottery, glass, and clay tobacco pipe stem. A dump of mortar (6) with a thin layer of mortar (7) extending to the south lay against the southern edge of this latter garden soil deposit. The mortar was thought at first to be a wall and floor surface, but when excavated it was seen to have been a building deposit, possibly associated with the construction of the present house.

The mortar lay beneath a deposit of reddish brown sandy clay (5) with pebbles and a further deposit of a clean reddish brown sandy clay (3), both possibly re-deposited natural. These in turn were sealed by a layer 0.3m thick of very dark grey sandy loam mottled with reddish brown clay (2), again representing a buried garden soil. This lay beneath the grey crushed stone chippings (1) of the hardcore of the present yard surface and the topsoil of the garden to the south (4).

No other significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the watching brief.

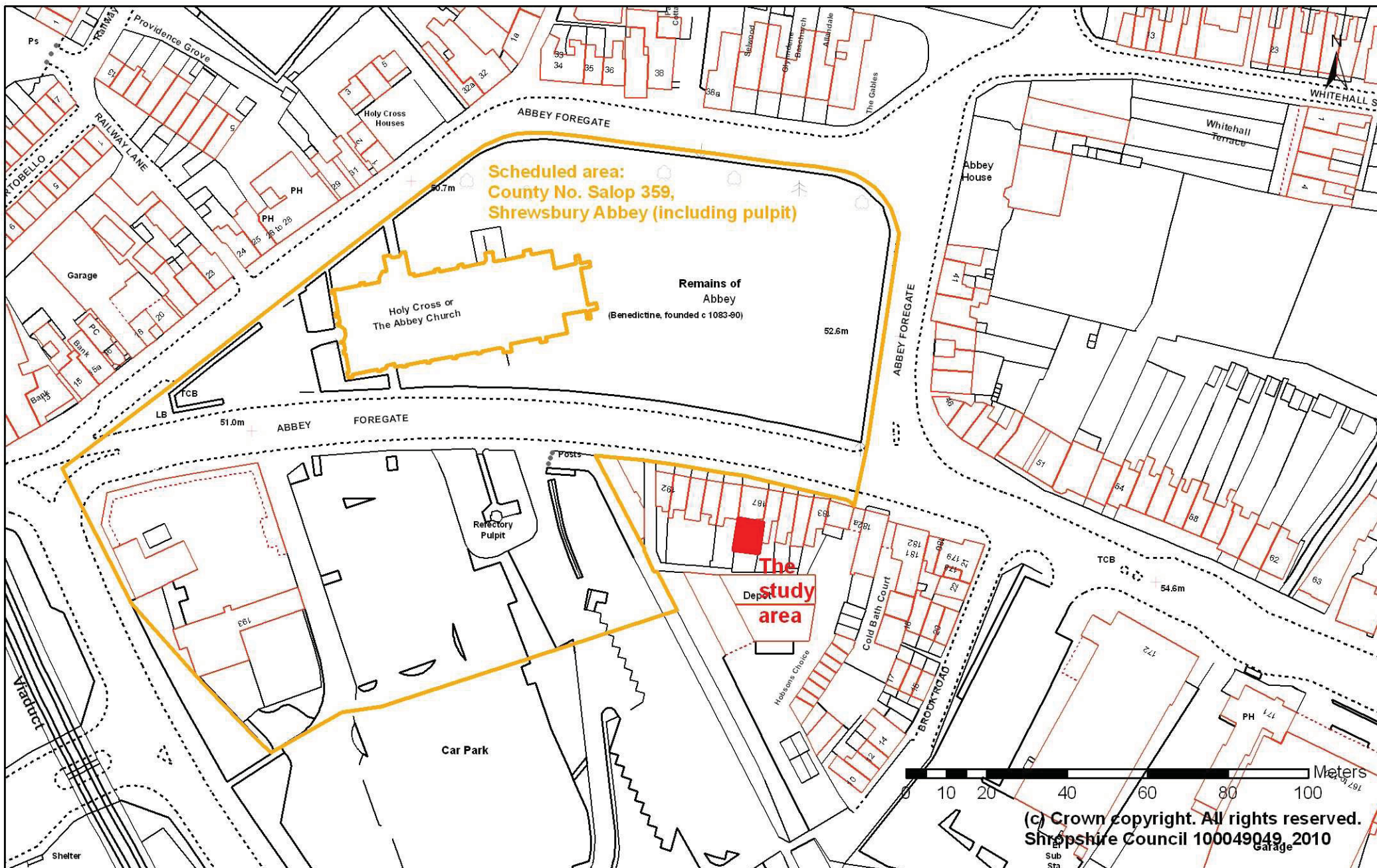
4 REFERENCES

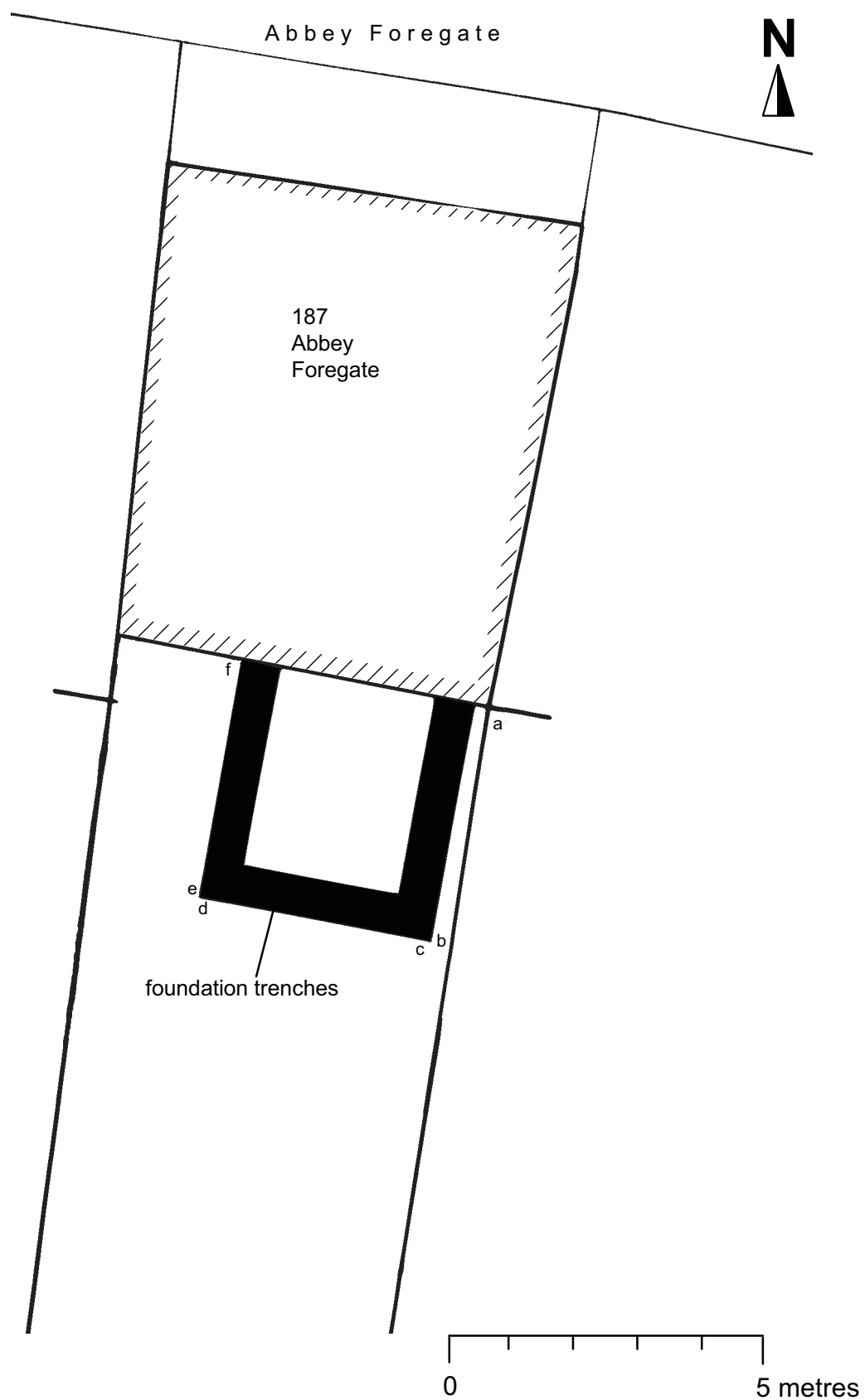
Baker, N (ed), 2002: *Shrewsbury Abbey*, Shrops Arch & Hist Soc Monograph Series No. 2

Shropshire Council HER Nos. 00983, 60362, 60363, 60370, & 62632

ABBREVIATIONS

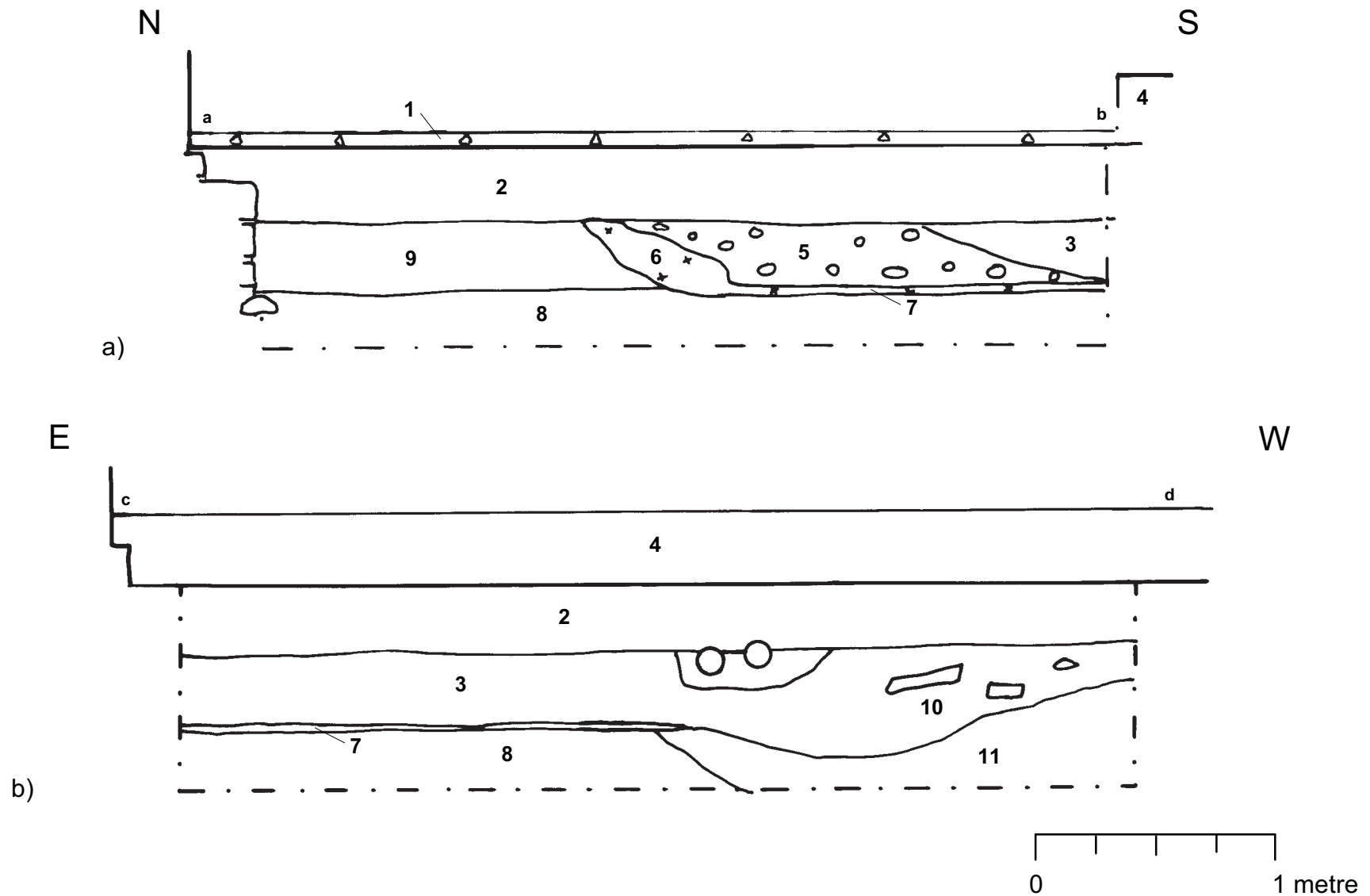
ASSC	Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
HER	Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRO	Public Record Office
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
SUERC	Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre
TAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society





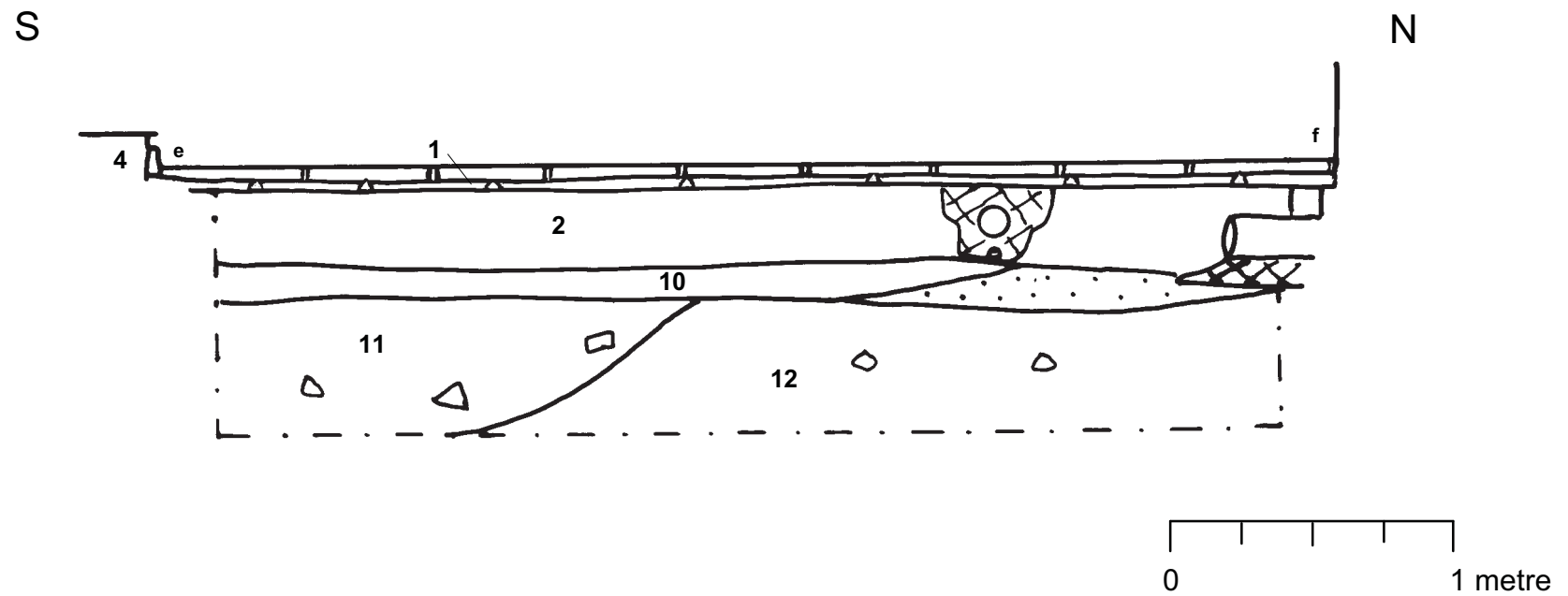
187 ABBEY FOREGATE, SHREWSBURY 2010

Figure 2: Plan view, showing the location of the foundation trenches and sections a-b, c-d, and e-f (Figures 3 & 4); scale 1:100



187 ABBEY FOREGATE, SHREWSBURY 2010

Figure 3: a) West-facing section (Figure 2 a-b), and b) north-facing section (Figure 2 c-d); scale 1:25



187 ABBEY FOREGATE, SHREWSBURY 2010
Figure 4: East-facing section (Figure 2 e-f); scale 1:25



Photo 1: The study area before the excavation of the foundations



Photo 2: The foundation trenches, looking northeast



Photo 3: The foundation trenches, looking southwest