



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT CALKE ABBEY  
HOVELS, DERBYSHIRE**

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

Report Number 2014/14    May 2014



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## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken on groundworks for the construction of a new catering facility, which will incorporate an existing structure known as 'Thehovels' as well as new build. Archaeological monitoring was carried out during the removal of topsoil and excavation of foundation trenches immediately to the east of Thehovels, and a small area of hand-excavation inside Thehovels.

The watching brief identified the stratigraphic sequence and examined the foundations of thehovels. No significant archaeological structures or deposits were impacted upon by the groundworks monitored.

## KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name	Calke Abbey watching brief
ArcHeritage Project No.	4096141
Report status	Final
Type of Project	Watching brief
Client	National Trust
NGR	SK 36694 22755
Planning application reference	South Derbyshire 9/2013/0858
OASIS Identifier	archerit1-179894
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Editor	Glyn Davies, Mark Stenton
Report Number and Date	2014/14 4/4/2014 4096141 Calke Abbey report V2.docx

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with the construction of a Secondary Catering Facility at Calke Abbey, Derbyshire. The watching brief formed the final stage of a phased programme of archaeological works, which included building recording (Sheppard 2013) and trial trenching (Binns 2013). The watching brief was undertaken to monitor the groundworks and to ensure that any archaeological structures, features or deposits impacted upon by development were recorded to the appropriate level of detail. Fieldwork was undertaken in line with industry best practice following the guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2009) and a WSI prepared by Rachael Hall (National Trust) in consultation with Steve Baker (Derbyshire County Council planning archaeologist). ArcHeritage were commissioned by the National Trust to undertake the watching brief.

## 2 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Calke Abbey is located 17km south of Derby, with the site for the Secondary Catering Facility centred at SK 36694 22755 (Figure 1), at approximately 97m aOD. The site for the Secondary Catering Facility is located on flat ground to the east of a building known as 'The Hovels' and a boundary wall; this area is currently used for car parking by staff and volunteers. An informal picnic area is located to the west of the boundary wall, with the Hovels forming the east and north sides of the area.

The site lies on a sandstone bedrock of the Millstone grit group, intersected by Morridge formation mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, with Ticknall limestone to the north-east (British Geological Survey, 2013).

## 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As noted above, this report details the results of the third stage of a programme of archaeological works that have been undertaken in conjunction with the development of the new Secondary Catering Facility. Details of the archaeological and historical background to the works are included in the preceding historic buildings report (Sheppard 2013) and evaluation and scoping report (Binns 2013). A brief summary of the historical and archaeological and background relevant to the watching brief is provided here.

Calke Abbey is located on the site of the original Augustinian Calke Priory, founded between 1114 and 1120 by Richard, Earl of Chester. The priory remained under the control of the crown after the dissolution of the monasteries until it was presented to John, Earl of Warwick, in 1547 (Derbyshire HER, 2013). The estate was sold to the Harpur family in 1622, who retained the estate until transfer of ownership to the National Trust in 1981.

The outbuildings and stables were built from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The chop house, waggon hovels and associated vernacular structures were added to the outbuilding complex in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (National Trust 1989). The complex, including the Hovels, is depicted on the 1901 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2).

During the trial trenching (Binns 2013), five trenches were investigated: two on the site of the new Secondary Catering Facility and three small trenches within the informal picnic area. These were located to investigate the potential for the preservation of archaeological remains, to examine former wall lines and to determine whether former floor surfaces were present in thehovels.

Trenches 1 and 2 were excavated in the Secondary Catering Facility area. Trench 1 revealed the continuation of the east wall of the Hovel, with associated 19<sup>th</sup>-century pottery, while Trench 2 contained two linear features possibly related to former ridge and furrow. A posthole and a pit cut by one of the furrows were also excavated. No dating evidence was recovered from any of these features.

Trenches 3 and 4 were located in the picnic area. These trenches provided evidence that remains of former walls survived below ground and that these aligned with extant fragments of walling. Trench 5, located in the northern wing of thehovels, investigated the potential for earlier surviving floor surfaces. This did not produce any evidence for the presence of former floor surfaces within the Hovel.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Aims**

The overall aim of the watching brief was to monitor the ongoing groundworks and to:

- identify and record any impact upon known archaeological features or deposits;
- identify and record any previously unidentified archaeological features or deposits;
- collect artefactual remains that can be used for dating and interpretive purposes.

### **4.2 Methodology**

The watching brief monitored the removal of topsoil and excavation of foundation trenches on the site of the new Secondary Catering Facility and within thehovels.

The monitored works on the site of the new Secondary Catering Facility (henceforth referred to as Area 1) consisted of the removal of topsoil over an area measuring approximately 20m (north-south) by 10m (east-west) (Plate 1), and subsequent excavation of a contiguous system of foundation trenches within this area. In addition, isolated pits were excavated in Area 1 adjacent to the external face of the main east wall of thehovels. All excavation works were monitored by a qualified and experienced archaeologist and the works were undertaken at an appropriate pace, to allow effective monitoring and subsequent recording of any exposed features or structures.

The monitored works inside thehovels (henceforth referred to as Area 2) consisted of a visual inspection of two hand-excavated trial pits located adjacent to the internal face of the main east wall of thehovels, and subsequent monitoring of hand excavation to a depth of 30cm below ground-level in the area surrounding the trial pits. The final phase of monitored excavations consisted of mechanical excavation beneath the shallow foundations of thehovels to connect the internal and external trial pits.

Archaeological monitoring was carried out between 7<sup>th</sup> March and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2014 by Richard Jackson and was managed by Dr. Glyn Davies of ArcHeritage.



**Plate 4:** Area 1 following topsoil strip, viewed facing north-west

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Area 1

The removal of topsoil by mechanical excavator in Area 1 did not expose any archaeological structures or deposits. Subsequent groundworks resulted in the excavation of a contiguous series of foundation trenches excavated to a depth of 0.7-0.9m below ground-level, and a typical width of 0.7-0.8m (Figure 3).

The results of the monitored foundation trenching revealed a simple geological sequence of mid-brown silty-clay subsoil overlying natural deposits of clay and intermittent outcropping of sandstone bedrock.

The only significant interruption to this background geological sequence was the discovery of modern lime slaking pits on the northern edge of Area 1 (Plate 2). Although such features can often be found in the archaeological record, the materials used for lining these pits (plywood and plastic) allow these particular examples to be ascribed a modern date with a high degree of certainty.

In addition to the contiguous foundation trenching, five individual foundation pits were excavated immediately adjacent to the east face of the external wall of the hovels. No significant archaeological structures or deposits were impacted upon by these excavations, although some possible evidence of earlier agricultural activity was seen in the disturbed top of the subsoil (Plate 3). This may relate to the possible ridge and furrow noted in the trial trenching (Binns 2013). The pits also demonstrated the very limited depth of the foundations for the Hovel.





**Plate 5:** Modern lime slaking pit, Area 1. Viewed facing north, 50cm scale



**Plate 6:** Disturbed subsoil, possibly related to former agricultural activities, pit 1, scale 0.5m

## 5.2 Area 2

The hand-excavated trial pits in Area 2 were excavated to a depth of 0.90m below ground-level. It was immediately apparent that the ground level inside the Hovel was approximately 0.2m higher than the external ground level in Area 1. The excavated ground comprised a very loose and dry deposit of silty clay, with approximately 10% small-grained rubble fragment inclusions and occasional lime mortar residues. This material lay directly on top of the natural sequence of deposits as impacted upon in Area 1, with mid-brown silty-clay subsoil overlying natural deposits of clay.

The ground-level in the immediate vicinity of the Area 2 trial pits was removed to a depth of 0.3m by hand (Plate 4). This excavation was closely monitored, but the deposit was shown to be largely homogenous, containing only occasional small clasts of rubble. No other structures or features of any archaeological significance were exposed as a result of the excavation.



**Plate 4:** Area 2 following excavation. Viewed facing north, 50cm scale

The final phase of monitored excavation in Area 2 entailed mechanical excavation of the remaining fill below the foundations of the Hovel wall, between the trial pits in Area 2 and the two northern foundation pits in Area 1. This demonstrated the shallow depth of the foundations of the Hovel, approximately 0.3 to 0.4m deep, and showed that they were constructed of stone blocks (Plate 5) similar to the lower half of the wall of the Hovel (Plate 1). No further features or structures of archaeological significance were impacted upon during this stage of works.



**Plate 5:** Area 2 trial pit, viewed facing east, 50cm scale

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief demonstrated that the groundworks undertaken did not impact on any significant archaeological features or deposits. The stratigraphic sequence, across the area subject to the watching brief, was confirmed as being topsoil, over subsoil, over natural clays and that there was no constructed floor surface within the Hovels. No artefacts were recovered during the watching brief.

The foundations of the Hovels were exposed; these were shallow and of similar construction to the wall above ground.

The uneven and disturbed top of the subsoil seen in one of the pits in area 1 may be related to former agricultural activity. The features 0045 and 0047 identified as 'possible furrows' during the trial trenching (Binns 2013) may be further evidence of former agricultural practices and represent the degraded remains of ridge and furrow surviving in Area 1. However, the proximity of these putative features to areas of modern disturbance makes this interpretation tentative.

Modern lime slaking pits were identified and dated through the plastic that had been used to line them. The southern extent of these modern lime slaking pits may relate to the 'modern pit' recognized during the evaluation as cut 0008 in Trench 1.

Overall, the watching brief found no evidence of any significant archaeological features, structures or deposits during the monitored works.

## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the support of the National Trust, in particular Rachael Hall (National Trust Archaeologist) and Charles Robinson (Project Manager), in undertaking this project. Thanks are also due to Steve Baker of Derbyshire County Council Archaeology Service, and to the groundworks contractor, Carmalor, for their assistance.

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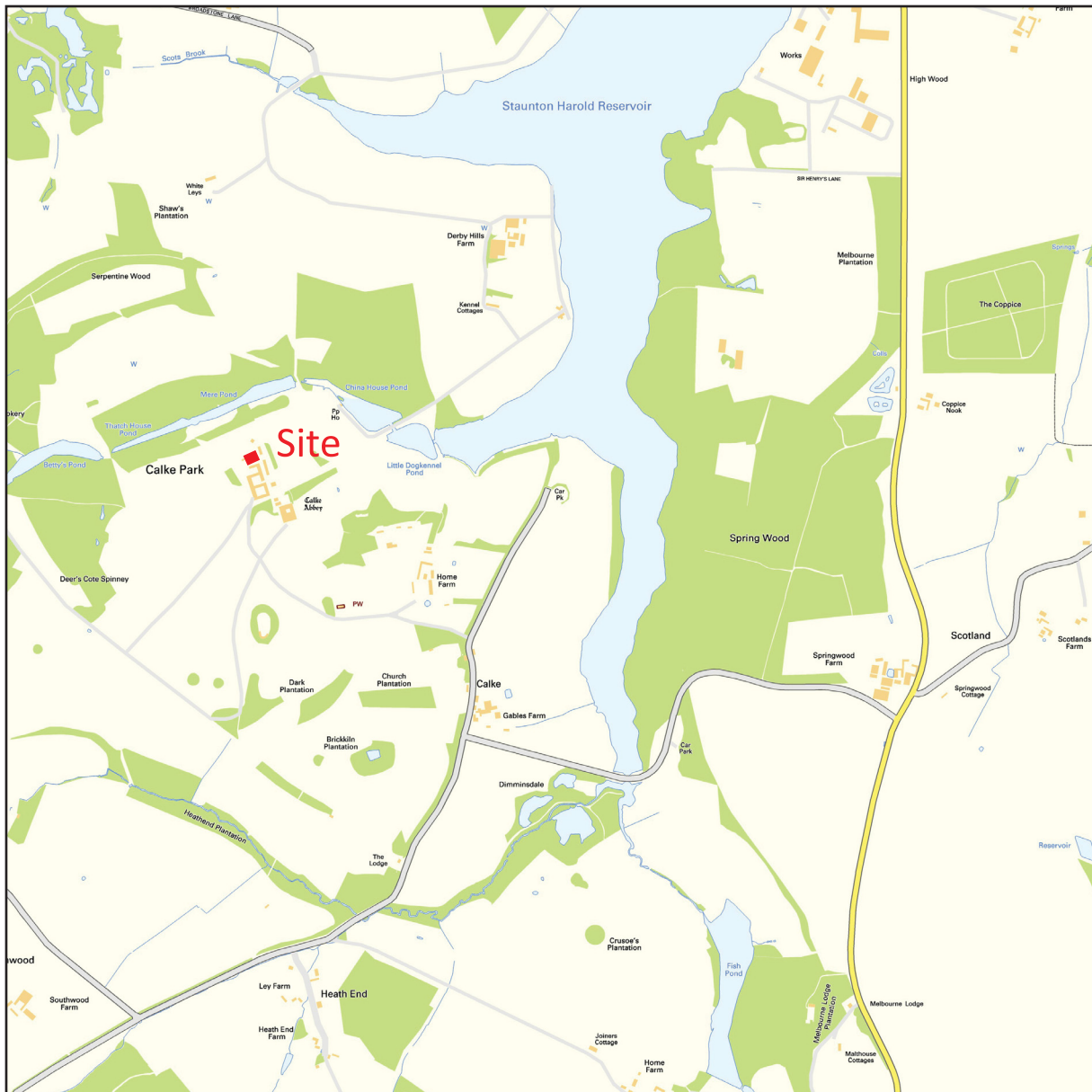
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## 9 FIGURES

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N324



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N321

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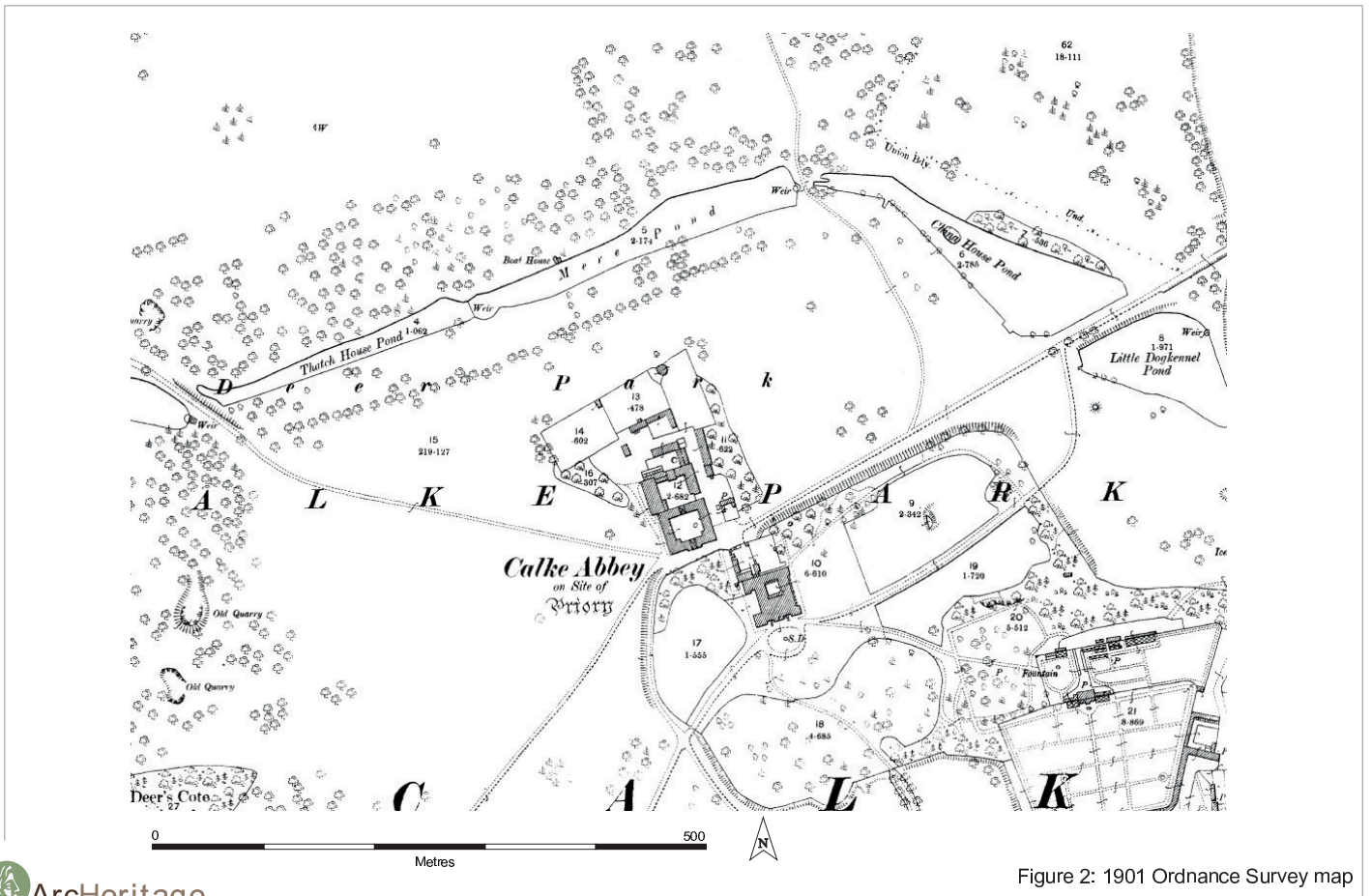


Figure 2: 1901 Ordnance Survey map

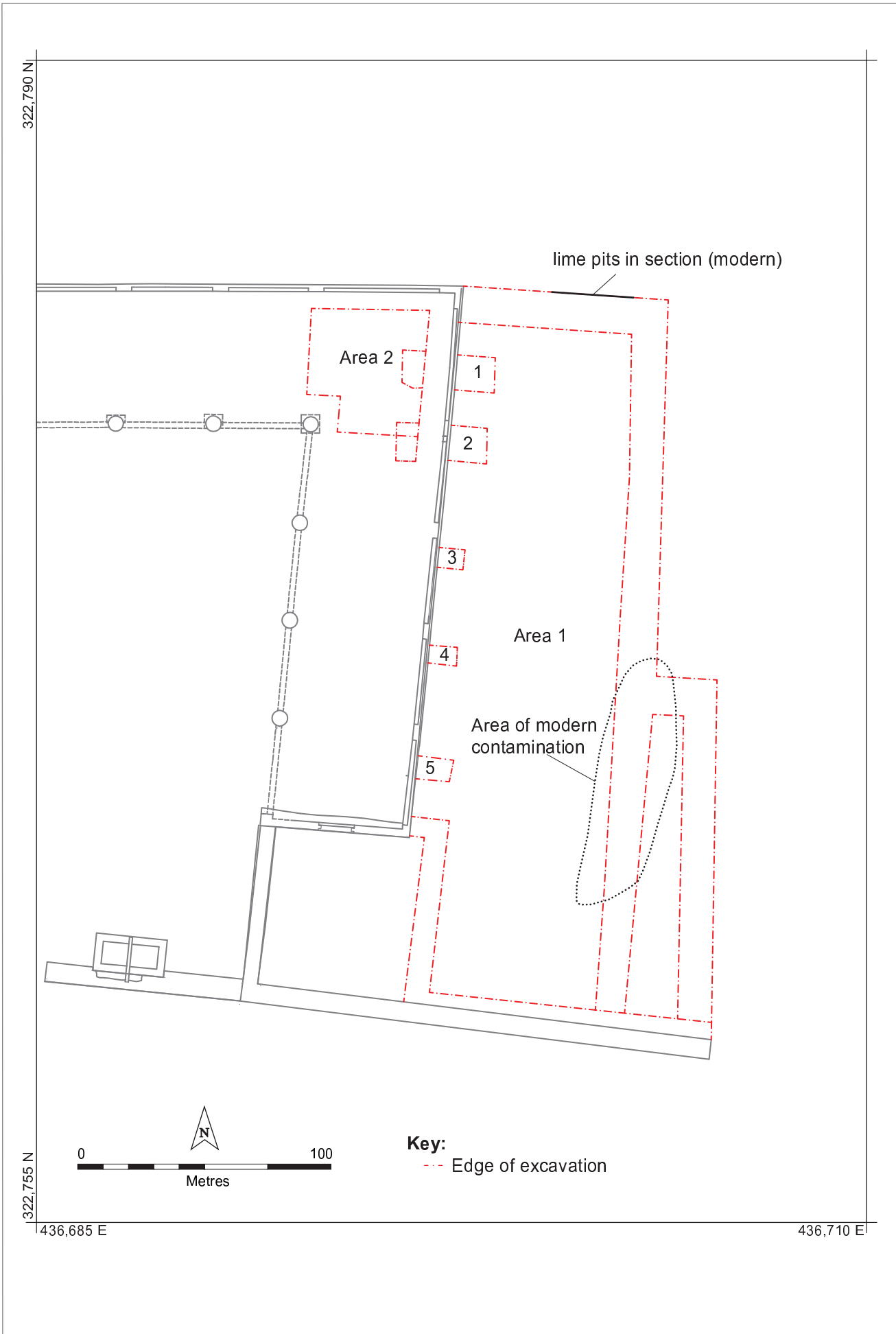


Figure 3: Plan of excavated areas



**APPENDIX 1 – INDEX TO ARCHIVE**

Item	Number of items
Photographic register	1
Drawing register	1
Original drawings	1
Digital photographs	37
Report	1

**Table 1: List of archive contents**



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