

**MILTON ABBEY SCHOOL,
MILTON ABBAS, NR
BLANDFORD FORUM,
DORSET**

**REPORT ON
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**

REPORT NO: R12105

MAY 2015



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

**MILTON ABBEY SCHOOL, MILTON ABBAS, NR BLANDFORD FORUM,
DORSET, DT11 0DZ
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

Issue 1: Issued for Approval

Local Planning Authority: North Dorset District Council

Planning Ref: 2/2014/1172/FUL

Site Code: MASD15

Central NGR: 379909 102341

Commissioning Client: CgMs Consulting

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DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report Ref R12105

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Project Code:			K3945
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Figure 2: Detailed Site Location Plan

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1 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the ground work for service trench associated with the installation of a biomass heating facility at Milton Abbey School, Milton Abbas, nr Blandford Forum, Dorset. This report details the results of the watching brief on the below ground excavations to the south of the school buildings. The watching brief took place between the 21st and 28th of April 2015.

The service trench, which ran approximately east to west, revealed considerable disturbance represented by modern services and deposits of modern or relatively recent building debris and brick, flint and chalk rubble. However near the west end of the trench a north-south aligned wall was found made of mortared flint and sandstone. Its build and fabric appears to suggest a late medieval date and may therefore represent a building forming part of medieval Milton Abbey. Two fragments of decorated floor tile of similar date were also found. The wall was left *in situ*.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) was appointed by CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground work for services associated with the installation of a heating facility at Milton Abbey School, Milton Abbas, nr Blandford Forum, Dorset (**Figures 1 & 2**), hereafter 'the site'. The watching brief was targeted on a section of new service trench excavated to the south of the school buildings and crossing a playing field.
- 2.1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with of Condition 6 of planning permission for the installation of a Biomass Plant Room within an existing workshop. Planning permission was granted by the Local Planning Authority North Dorset District Council (Planning reference 2/2014/1172/FUL) in December 2014. Condition 6 requirements are based on the advice of the Council's archaeological advisor Steve Wallis, Dorset County Archaeological Officer (CAO). The condition states:

'No development shall take place until the applicant or their successors in title have made arrangements for archaeological observation and recording to take place during any period of demolition and/or development. Details of those arrangements shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, at least one month before any work commences on the development site. The observations and recording shall be carried out as approved'.

- 2.1.3 Reason - To safeguard and/or record the archaeological interest on and around the site in accordance with North Dorset District Wide Local Plan (First Revision) Policies 1.1, 1.28, 1.29 and 1.30.
- 2.1.4 The required Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (PCA 2015) was submitted in March 2015 and approved in advance of the commencement of works on site in April 2015.
- 2.1.5 This report presents the results of the watching brief and has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs (IfA 2008) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (English Heritage, 2006).

2.2 Location, Topography and Geology

- 2.2.1 Milton Abbey School (NGR 379909 102341) (**Figure 1**) lies between Dorchester and Blandford Forum, and 1km west of the village of Milton Abbas, Dorset. The school occupies a historic setting, a Grade 1 former country house, a Grade 1 listed former Abbots Hall, a number of other Listed buildings and is set within a Grade II* registered park and garden.

2.2.2 The immediate topography reflects significant landscaping associated with the emparkment of the site in the 18th century and the later creation of school playing fields. The site lies within an undulating and wooded landscape at approximately 118m above OD.

2.2.3 The site lies on Bedrock Chalk and superficial deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>.

2.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.3.1 The site lies in an area rich in monuments, sites and findspots. Of principle relevance, the site contains the remains of a Benedictine Abbey, founded in the 10th century, of which the 15th century Abbots Hall and restored 13th century abbey church survive. Following its Dissolution, the Abbey passed into private hands and eventually, in 1752, to Joseph Damer. Damer commissioned a new house to be built and for the land around the former abbey to be remodelled by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to create a parkland. This entailed demolition of Middleton, a village that had developed to the south of the abbey, the site of which is a Scheduled Monument (the residents were moved to the planned settlement of Milton Abbas).

2.3.2 A number of the historic buildings that survive, and other structures, are listed (Milton, 2014). These include the Grade 1 listed Milton Abbey School, the Abbots Hall and Kitchen, the Abbey Church and the Chapel of St Catherine. Other listed structures include a Cross Base some 90m south-east of the abbey church, which has been identified as a Market Cross perhaps associated with the former village of Middleton and which stands within the Scheduled Monument. Along with the listed buildings, the parkland created by Brown is listed Grade II* on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

3 AIM

3.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

3.1.1 The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to monitor all ground work for the presence of archaeological resources and, if present and where necessary, to investigate and record the resources and determine, as may be possible, their character, including their date, nature and extent.

3.1.2 This report aims to provide an assessment of significant archaeological resources that were recovered and in order to address Condition 6 of planning permission. Otherwise, the report will aim to be sufficient to demonstrate to the Local Planning Authority that the watching brief was carried out in accordance with the WSI document and the Condition.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following summary is based on the site archive, comprising written, drawn and photographic records, along with a small quantity of artefacts. The archive is held at PCA's Winchester office under the site code **MASD15** and will ultimately be deposited with the Dorset County Archive, Dorchester. A table of contexts is provided in **Appendix 1** and site photographs in **Appendix 2**.

4.2 Service Trench

4.2.1 Mechanical excavation forming the length of the service trench crossing the playing field south of the school was monitored (**Figure 2, Plate 1**). It was excavated to a general depth of 1m below the ground surface and was 0.5m wide. The course of the trench followed the planned route. Arisings were heaped to the side and used to backfill the trench.

4.2.2 The trench revealed previous disturbance throughout of relatively modern date and including earlier service trenches and deposits of modern debris including brick rubble, sand, ceramic drain pipe, wood, modern glass and animal bone.

4.3 General sequence

4.3.1 Natural deposits were not seen with certainty at any point along the trench. However, a small area of possibly natural chalk was observed at the east end of the trench and elsewhere the base of the trench was characterised by a re-deposited clayey deposit, possibly dirtied natural clay

4.3.2 The sections of the trench revealed, beneath topsoil [001], deposits of mainly modern date consisting of building debris but also bands of possibly earlier flint and chalk rubble, oyster shell and charcoal [005] & [006]. Some fragments of apparently moulded chalk and sandstone were observed but not retained.

4.4 Wall

4.4.1 A wall was revealed by the service trench toward its western end (**Figures 2 & 3, Plate 2**). The wall [002] ran north-south, on an alignment similar to the existing historic school buildings lying just 6m to the north (Mansion House), and appeared to consist of two courses, together some 0.3m thick and 0.5m wide. The upper part of the wall fabric [002] was mainly mortared flint rubble and included one dressed sandstone block. The mortar was whitish-yellow and included charcoal. The lower part of the wall [003] consisted of larger, coarser flint bonded by a more sandy mortar. The two elements of the wall may represent separate phases of construction or distinguish a foundation course from higher fabric.

4.4.2 Below the wall was a coarse sandy layer (Context 004), thought to be associated with the wall, perhaps having served as a bedding layer. No foundation 'cut' could be discerned and the relationship between the wall and adjacent deposits was not clear, although it is assumed the adjacent deposits ran up against it, suggesting the area of the trench has been heavily disturbed. The date of the wall is unclear although it seems likely that it formed part of a building within Milton Abbey and may be assumed to be late Medieval. The wall was left in situ and the new pipework laid beneath it.

4.5 Finds

4.5.1 Two fragments of decorated floor tile were recovered from the arisings from the trench. One is a small fragment probably from the corner of a tile. It is grey-red in colour and has a green glaze with a pale inlay. It is possible that the tile originally showed a lion or griffin within a circle similar to one found in Winchester College (Norton, 1976). The other is red in colour and is nearly complete with just one side missing. It too has a green glaze with a pale inlay and shows a lattice design. Both are thought to date to the 13th- 14th Century and most likely derive from Milton Abbey.

4.6 Conclusion

4.6.1 The watching brief results appear to indicate that the area south of the school buildings and within the existing playing field into which the service trench was excavated has the potential to contain archaeological resources most likely to date from the late medieval period and related to the precinct of Milton Abbey. However, the service trench revealed disturbance from relatively modern and perhaps older events that may be associated with the post-dissolution transformation of the Abbey site.

5 REFERENCES

Milton, E, 2014, Heritage Statement: Workshop building to the east of Milton Abbey School, Milton Abbas, Dorset, DT11 0DZ. September 2014.

Norton, C., E., 1976, '*The Medieval Paving Tiles of Winchester College*', Proc. Hants Field Club and Arch Soc Vol **31**, pp 23-42.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank CgMs Consulting for commissioning the watching brief on behalf of Milton Abbey School. The assistance of Utilitywise on site is gratefully acknowledged.

The watching brief was conducted by Katherine Marshall and managed by Paul McCulloch for Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.

APPENDIX 1: SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 1: D10 General view of site, view to west



Plate 2: D21 Wall [002/3] View to west. Scale 0.5m.

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Type	Comments/description	Date
001	Layer	Topsoil	Modern
002	Structure	Main body of wall	Medieval
003	Structure	Lower part of wall	Medieval
004	Layer	Sandy layer below wall [002/3]	Medieval
005	Layer	Dump of oyster shell, flint and chalk rubble	Post-medieval?
006	Layer	Burning deposit.	1980's

APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-211633

Project details

Project name Milton Abbey School, Milton Abbas, Dorset

Short description of the project. A watching brief was maintained during excavation of a service trench on the south side of the school and through a playing field. The trench revealed mainly post-medieval and modern deposits and disturbance and a wall of possibly late-medieval date that may represent a building forming part of the medieval Milton Abbey.

Project dates Start: 21-04-2015 End: 28-04-2015

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes MASD15 - Sitecode

Any associated project reference codes 2/2014/1172/FUL - Planning Application No.

Type of project Recording project

Site status None

Current Land use Other 14 - Recreational usage

Monument type WALL Medieval

Significant Finds FLOOR TILE Medieval

Investigation type "Watching Brief"

Prompt Planning condition

Project location

Country England

Site location DORSET NORTH DORSET MILTON ABBAS Milton Abbey School

Postcode DT11 0DZ

Study area 0.10 Kilometres

Site coordinates ST 379909 102341 50.887706865 -2.88166861998 50 53 15 N 002 52 54 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 117.00m Max: 117.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation PCA

Project brief originator CgMs Consulting

Project design originator Paul McCulloch

Project director/manager Paul McCulloch

Project supervisor Katherine Marshall

Type of sponsor/funding body School

Name of sponsor/funding body Milton Abbey School

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Dorset Museum
Physical Archive ID MASD15
Physical Contents "Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient Dorset Museum
Digital Archive ID MASD15
Digital Contents "none"
Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient Dorset Museum
Paper Archive ID MASD15
Paper Contents "none"
Paper Media available "Context sheet","Correspondence","Drawing","Plan","Report","Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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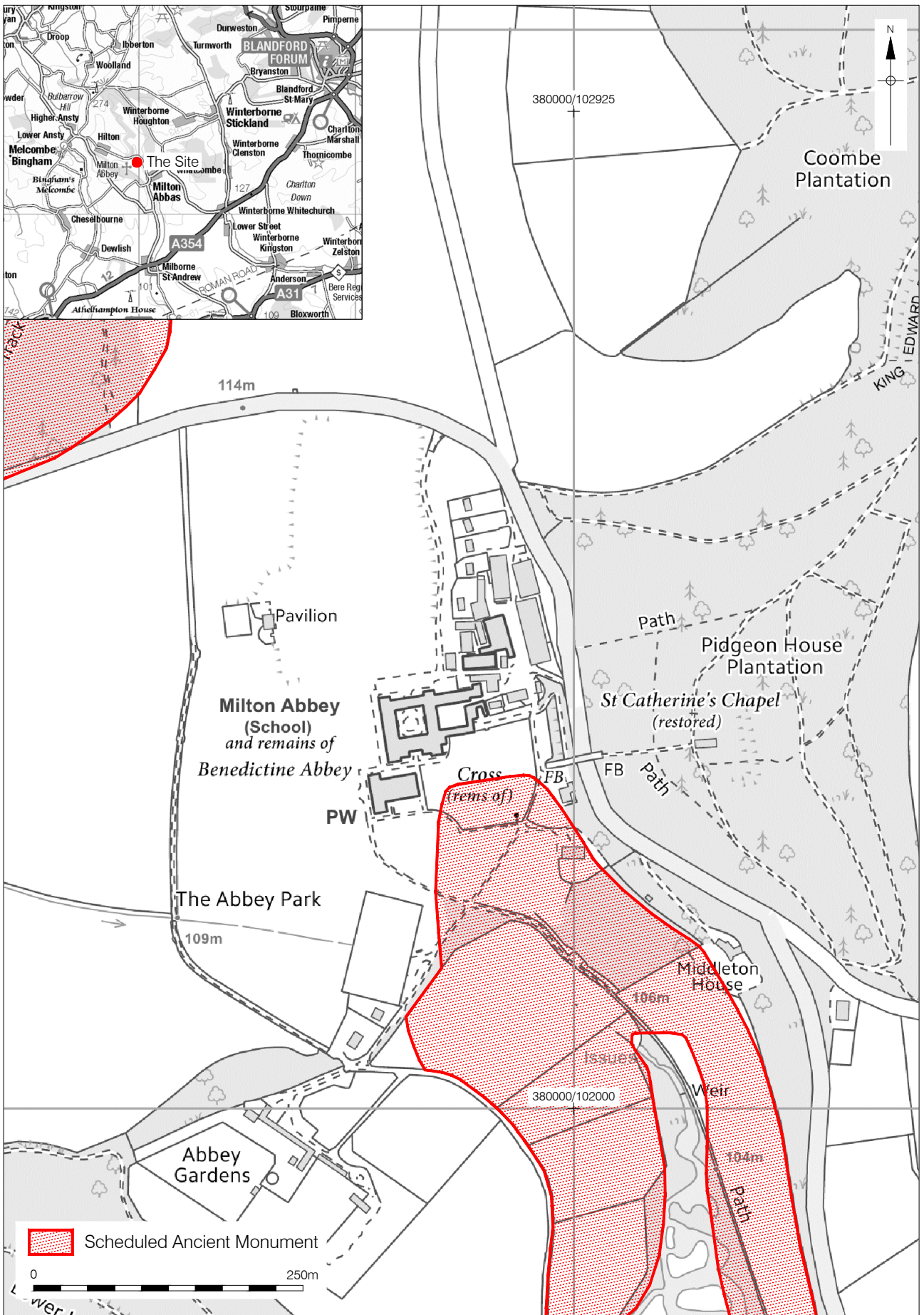
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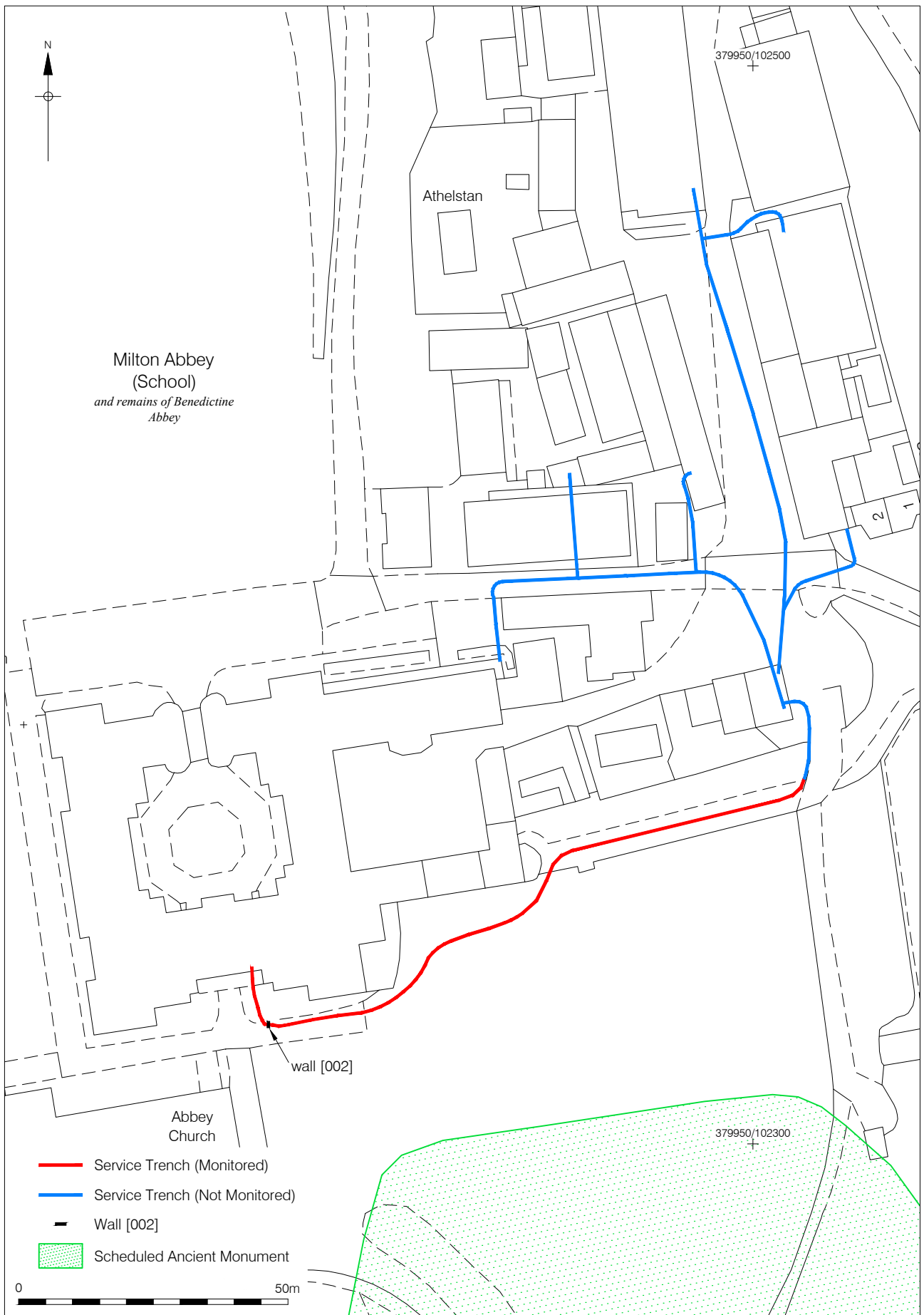


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19/05/15 JS

Figure 1
Site Location
1:250,000 and 1:5,000 at A4



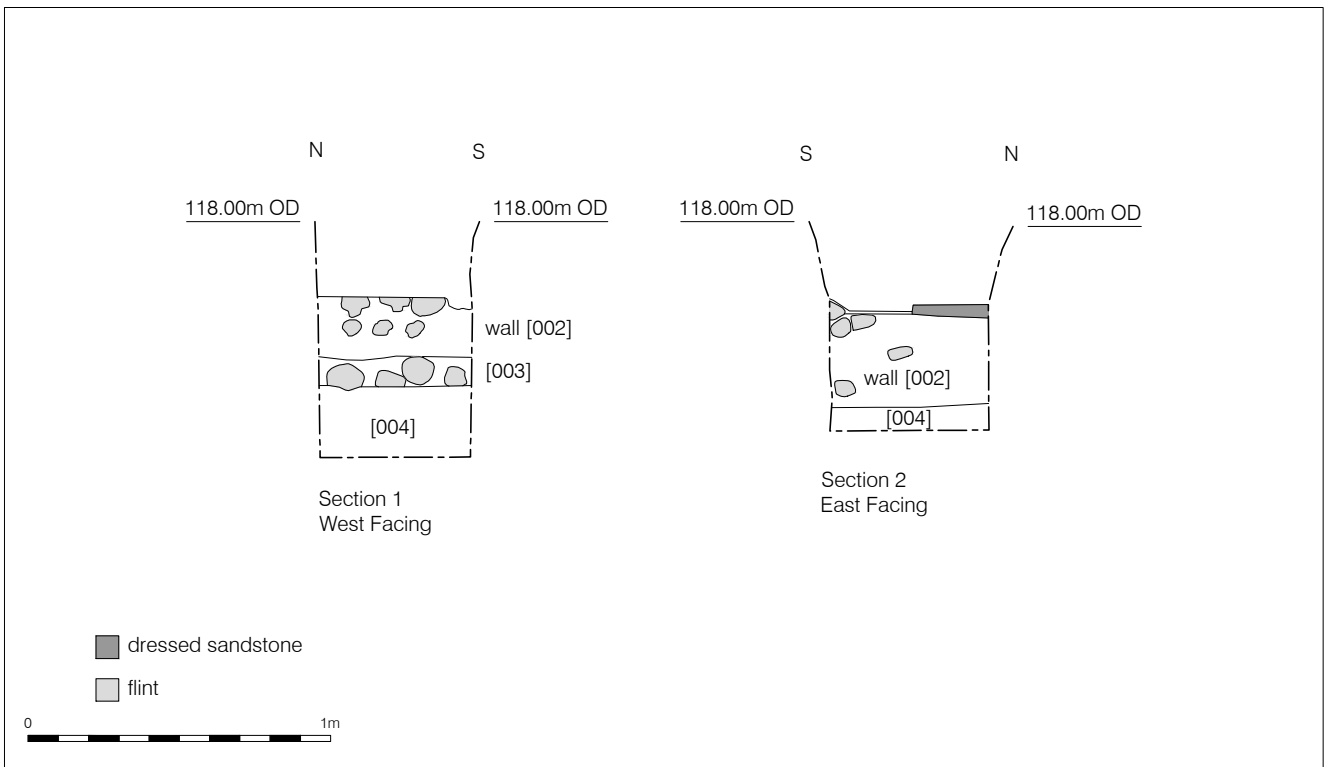
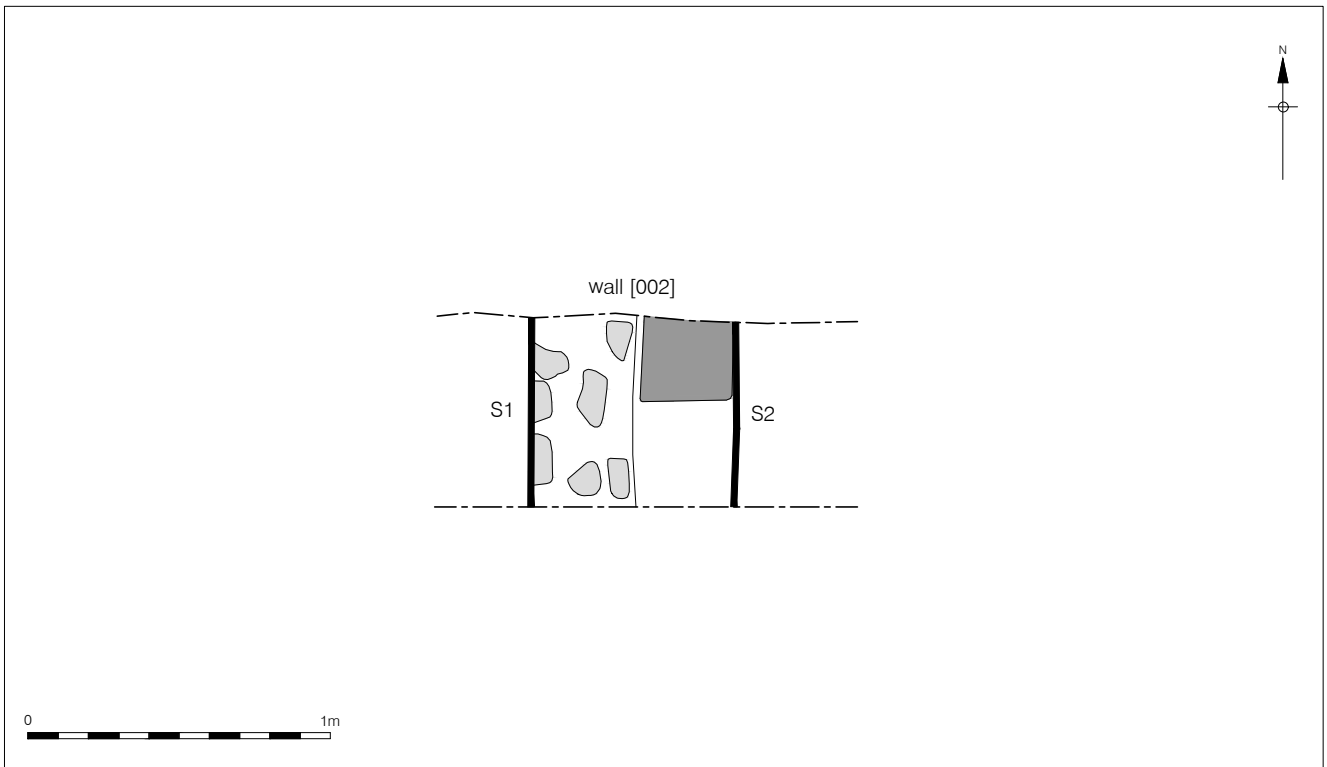
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Figure 2
Trench Location
1:1,000 at A4



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Figure 3
Wall [1002] Plan and Sections
1:25 at A4

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