

Richborough Castle, New toilet block

Excavation report

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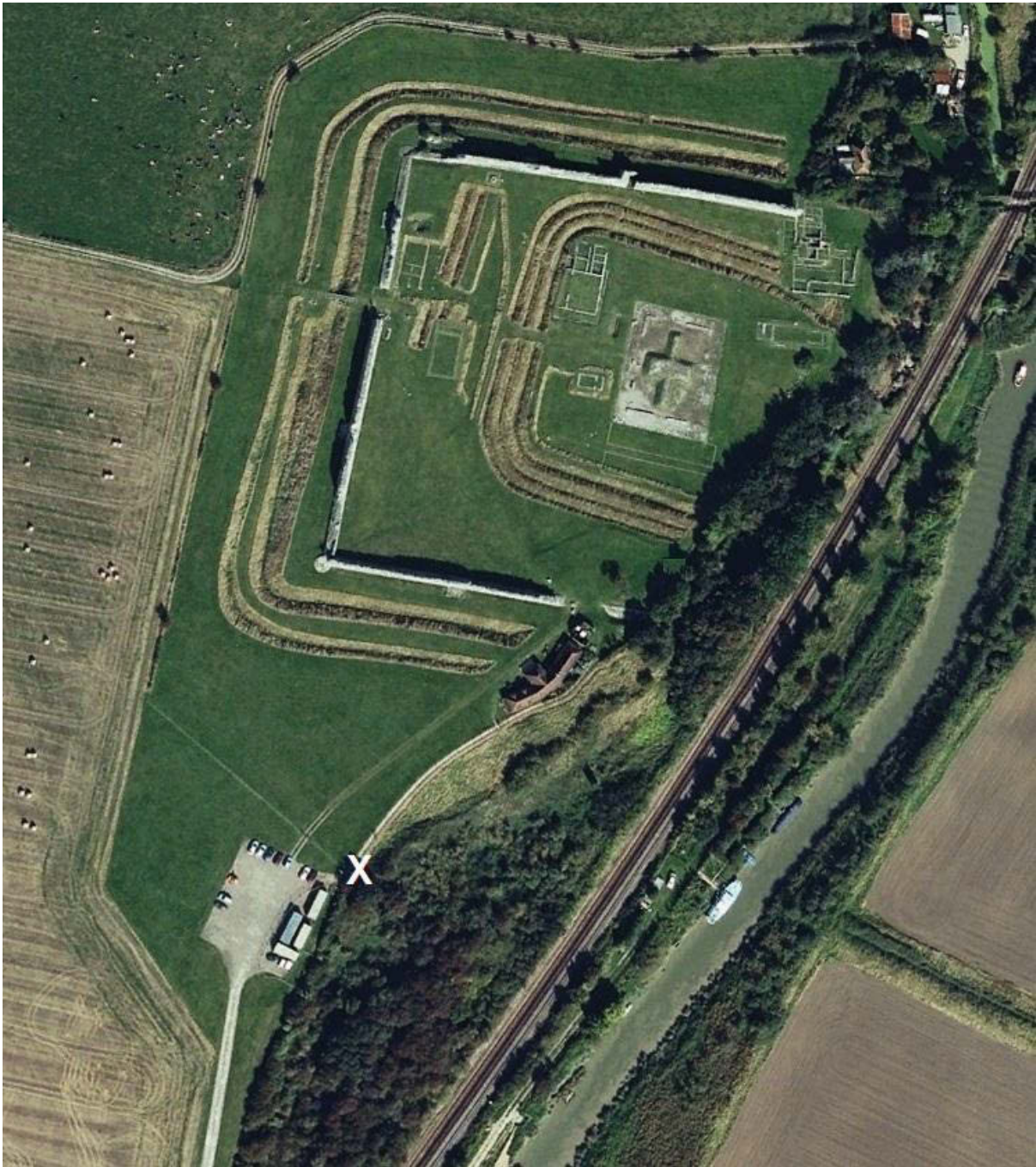
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Frontispiece Aerial view of Richborough Castle showing location of the 2014 excavation (X)
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Excavations at Richborough Castle, March 2014

1. Summary

1.1 In March 2014 the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) undertook excavations ahead of the construction of a new public toilet block at Richborough Castle, near Sandwich, Kent. The location, (NGR 632347 160017) fell outside the defences of the late Roman fort that occupies the site but lay within the area of the Roman civil settlement. The position of the new building was previously occupied by a mid-twentieth-century concrete garage, set on raised supports to compensate for sloping ground which here falls steeply away towards the River Stour.

1.2 The excavation provided an opportunity to examine another small area at this important Roman site but due to the relatively limited scale of the works and previous disturbance, the remains exposed are not easy to interpret. Traces of stratified Roman deposits, including a possible walking surface, were identified but no significant structural remains were revealed. A number of the recorded deposits appear to be of post-Roman date and some could represent spoil dumped from the 1930s excavations.

1.3 Finds recovered included seven Roman coins, a quantity of Roman pottery and brick/tile, two pieces of marble veneer derived from the late first-century triumphal arch, an iron knife and a possible piece of Roman scale armour.

2. Introduction

2.1 In 2014 the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) was engaged by English Heritage to undertake excavations on the site of a new public toilet block to be constructed at Richborough Castle (Planning Ref. DOV/14/00049). Richborough Castle (a late Roman Fort) and the surrounding Roman settlement is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Heritage List number 1014642).

2.2 Since the proposed excavation site lay within the Scheduled area, work for the new structure required Scheduled Monument Consent (Class 6). Accordingly, a formal method statement and specification for archaeological excavation was prepared on behalf of English Heritage (Parfitt 2014), using documents previously supplied (Porter 2014).

2.3 The location of the new toilet block falls outside the defences of the Roman fort itself but lies within the area of the Roman civil settlement of *Rutupiae* (Figs 1, 2 & 9; Frontispiece). The selected site (NGR 632347 160017), was previously occupied by a mid-twentieth-century concrete garage/store building, set on raised supports to compensate for the sloping ground here (Fig. 2; Plate I). This structure was probably built sometime during the 1960s.

2.4 A roughly rectangular area, measuring about 3.80m (N–S) by 5.20m (E–W) was excavated at the designated spot by a two man team under the supervision of the writer, over the course of six days, between 12 and 19 March, 2014 (Plate II; Figs 3–6). The area investigated was found to have been previously disturbed by the earlier building but some stratified deposits, including a possible rough laid surface (Context 11), were revealed (Table 5). Due to their very substantial nature, the concrete foundations associated with the previous garage building were left in place (Plates II and IV). It was eventually decided to re-use these for the base of the new structure, thus reducing the amount of excavation required.

3. General topographical and geological background

3.1 The Richborough site was originally located on an island consisting of a small hill of Palaeogene Lambeth Group and Thanet Formation sands, which measured just over 1 kilometre across. This rises above the general level of the marshlands that surround it on all sides, with the highest part of the island along the south-eastern side, overlooking the course of the tidal River Stour (Fig. 1). This is the area occupied by the extensive Roman site (Frontispiece; Fig. 9).

3.2 Richborough Hill, some 450 metres south of the Roman fort, is located at the southernmost point of the island and reaches an elevation of some 19 metres above OD. This represents the highest point on the island and it is probably significant that a Roman amphitheatre was constructed on this spot. The land between the amphitheatre and the fort drops by a few metres, creating a broad natural hollow. The investigated site lies above the northern side of this natural depression (Figs 1 & 9).

3.3 The excavation site was positioned on the upper edge of the steep cliff which defines this south-eastern side of Richborough island (Figs 2 & 9; Frontispiece). The ground surface in the area of the excavation lay between 15.65 and 14.55m above OD, with the land rapidly falling steeply away to about 5m OD, immediately to the east (see below for further comments on the formation of this slope).

4. Archaeological background (*summary based on Porter 2014, with additions*)

4.1 The archaeology of the Richborough site (Roman *Rutupiae*) has been extensively studied (see Cunliffe 1968). Although much is known, a number of significance research questions still require further investigation (Millett and Wilmott 2001; 2003).

4.2 It is widely believed that the Richborough site served as the bridgehead for the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43. At that time the area of the future settlement and fort would have been located on the eastern side of an island of higher ground surrounded by open water and marshland associated with the Wantsum Channel, which then separated the Isle of Thanet from mainland Kent (Hawkes in Cunliffe 1968; Fig. 1).

4.3 A line of two parallel ditches extending north–south across the Scheduled site were dug during the invasion period, effectively cutting off the headland and creating a defensive barrier against attack from the native Britons. These ditches pass a short distance to the west of the present excavation area, implying that the 2014 site falls within the bridgehead enclosure (Fig. 9).

4.4 Following the initial invasion phase, probably by *c.* AD 45, the double ditches had been infilled and an extensive supply depot, provided with timber granaries and other buildings, had been laid out on a gridded street system.

4.5 Sometime later in the first century, probably before AD 70, the character of the settlement changed from military supply depot to a civilian port and town. Geophysical survey has revealed a settlement covering at least 21 hectares (Martin 2001). The symbolic and geographical importance of Richborough was recognised in *c.* AD 85 when a huge triumphal arch was constructed, clad in white Italian marble. This monument marked the ceremonial entry point into Roman Britain from the Continent and the civilian settlement appears to have been planned around it. The road running westwards from the monument led towards Canterbury and on to London. The heyday of this settlement appears to have been during the second century AD. The southern boundary of the main Roman settlement site was marked by an amphitheatre, which occupied the highest point on the island.

4.6 Richborough's fortunes changed again during the third century AD. The centre of the site was radically altered to create a defensive fortification in c. AD 250. Triple ditches were dug around the monumental arch, which may have then served as a lookout post. This work would have entailed the destruction and clearance of a large part of the settlement's centre and it is likely that the site became increasingly military in character. The defensive capabilities of Richborough were greatly enhanced in c. AD 275 by the infilling of the triple ditch complex and the construction of a much larger stone fort, provided with a solid masonry wall, projecting bastions, defended gateways and deep surrounding ditches. The monumental arch was torn down and new structures were built within the fort. The deep foundations of the arch may then have served as the base for a headquarters building positioned at the centre of the new fort. This fort seems to have been occupied well into the fifth century AD and may have been one of the last military bases to remain garrisoned as Roman rule in Britain came to an end.

4.7 Current understanding of the history of the fort during the fifth and sixth centuries is poor. Archaeological evidence suggests a general decline in the earlier fifth century, with buildings falling into disrepair. Despite this, it is known from the historical record that Richborough's geographical location meant that its use post-dated the end of Roman rule. There is a tradition which maintains that St Augustine landed here in AD 597. Certainly, an Anglo-Saxon chapel dedicated to St Augustine once stood within the fort and this remained in use until the seventeenth century.

4.8 Recent excavation around the fallen east wall of the fort encountered a modest medieval dock, possibly of the fifteenth century, suggesting that the qualities of Richborough as a port, although declining due to the silting of the Wantsum, had not entirely disappeared at this date. One of the main purposes of this dock, however, may have been to allow stone taken from the old Roman structures to be loaded onto vessels, which were then sailed down the River Stour to the expanding medieval town and Cinque Port of Sandwich – a certain amount of Roman building material has been identified in medieval walls there.

4.9 By the time John Leland visited Richborough in 1540 the chapel was an isolated structure set within the ruined remains of the late Roman fort. A combination of antiquarian interest and legends of buried treasure beneath the foundations of the monumental arch resulted in numerous investigations of the area at the centre of the fort during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Between 1922 and 1938 the fort was the subject of an intensive campaign of more controlled excavation, supervised by J. P. Bushe-Fox for the Society of Antiquaries and the Office of Works. The modern presentation of the fort's interior is essentially the result of those excavations (Frontispiece).

4.10 *The nature of the south-eastern edge of Richborough island*

4.10.1 Amongst the research topics in need of further investigation at Richborough is the nature and origins of the steep, cliff-like slope marking the south-eastern side of the island. The subject has already attracted a considerable amount of debate. Is this steep slope an original feature of the Roman site or a later formation, perhaps caused by the scouring effect of the tidal Wantsum/River Stour that flows at its base? How extensive has any such erosion been; has a large part of the Roman site been previously swept away? In Roman times was the slope more gradual, gently running down from the town to the waterfront and harbour installations? To what extent did the construction of the Minster–Deal railway line in 1846–7 cut back and steepen the then existing slope?

4.10.2 Research led by Tony Wilmott in 2008 (Wilmott and Tibber 2009) and, to some extent, earlier work at the top of the slope undertaken in 1986 ahead of tree planting (Wilson 1986, 6), have specifically addressed such issues, but firm conclusions are still to be reached. Located on the edge of the cliff south of the fort, in an area where a marked embayment occurs in the face of the escarpment, the excavations in 2014 have again led to renewed consideration of such topographical issues, again without any firm

conclusions being reached.

4.11 *Archaeological potential of the new toilet site*

4.11.1 The location of the new toilet site, at the north-eastern corner of the present visitor car park, lies to the south of the Roman fort, well outside its defensive ditches but nevertheless, falls within an area of some archaeological potential (Fig. 9).

4.11.2 The public car park was originally constructed during the 1930s (Bushe-Fox 1949, 77). A certain amount of earthmoving was needed in order to create the level ground required and, before work began, Bushe Fox ensured that the entire area was thoroughly trenched in order to establish the nature and extent of any surviving Roman remains here. These investigations revealed the continuation of the Claudian military ditches and a subsequent metalled roadway, together with the western, flint cobble foundations of a large building, probably a house, much of which had been previously destroyed by the formation of the adjacent cliff (Bushe-Fox 1949, 78–9). The work also revealed Roman ovens and burials (Fig. 9).

4.11.3 Positioning the present excavation on plans of the earlier work shows that the new toilet site should fall within the footprint of the large Roman building noted above (Fig. 9). Much of this structure has already been lost and no further traces of it were identified in 2014 (see below).

5. Aims and objectives of the 2014 excavation

5.1 Given the significant location of the excavation and its potential to add to our overall understanding of Roman Richborough, specific aims and objectives for the work were carefully considered and formulated beforehand (Porter 2014; Parfitt 2014).

5.2 *Aims*

5.2.1 The excavation had two primary aims. Firstly, to provide a full record of the archaeological remains that might otherwise be disturbed or destroyed by the proposed development (preservation by record).

5.2.2 Secondly, to enable identification of any especially significant archaeological deposits or features, such that the construction of the toilet block would result in a level of unacceptable damage to the Roman monument. In the event, this was the case and changes to the design of the new toilet building were made accordingly (see below).

5.3 *Objectives*

5.3.1 The main objectives were, firstly, to characterise and record the archaeological resource within the footprint of the new toilet building. Secondly, to locate, record and date any archaeological remains encountered within the excavation area.

5.3.2 Information recovered during the excavation was used to inform decisions regarding the final design of the toilet block (and see above).

6. Methodology

6.1 All the fieldwork and subsequent reporting was conducted under the supervision of Keith Parfitt, BA, FSA, MifA. The Code of Conduct of the Institute for Archaeologists was followed at all times.

6.2 The required excavation was dug by hand, using a range of tools, including spade, mattock and trowel, as required. All spoil generated by the excavation was searched by metal-detector for coins and other metallic objects, with some useful results. Spoil was stacked adjacent to the northern side of the excavation.

6.3 Standard archaeological methods of single context planning and recording were employed. Details of the exposed stratification were recorded following the general conventions set out in Canterbury Archaeological Trust's *Site Recording Manual*. A single east–west baulk through the centre of the excavation was measured and drawn and served to best illustrate the general configuration of the layering present on the site (Fig. 8). Elsewhere, there had been significant disturbance of the stratification caused by burrowing animals and tree roots.

6.4 The fieldwork generated an archive that included twenty-five recorded contexts (Table 5), four field plans, one measured section, fifty-five OD levels, seventy-two digital photographs and a small collection of finds, including thirty registered small finds. All the field records have been checked and indexed.

6.5 The site archive and all artefacts recovered during the excavation presently remain with Canterbury Archaeological Trust (Dover Office) but will shortly be transferred to the English Heritage's regional curatorial store at Dover Castle.

7. The excavation (Figs 3–8)

The old garage foundations and other modern disturbances

7.1 The original design for the new toilet block required the excavation of a single pit, measuring about 3.00m (NE–SW) by 4.60m (NW–SE), to be taken to a maximum depth of 1.26m. With the demolition of the existing garage structure, it became apparent that there had been some significant disturbance of the ground here previously, most specifically through the insertion of three lateral sleeper walls which had supported the raised floor of the previous building (Fig. 3, Contexts 2, 5 & 20).

7.2 The two concrete sleeper walls that fell within the excavation area were removed by hand but their substantial foundations, consisting of reinforced concrete strips about 0.25m thick, proved too hard to extract without more substantial equipment. Accordingly, these foundations were left *in situ* and the archaeological excavation proceeded around them (Figs 3–8; Plates II and IV). Eventually, it was decided by the builders that these earlier foundations were substantial enough to serve as the base of the new toilet structure, thus reducing the quantity of archaeological deposits needing to be removed. Above the concrete foundations, the filling of the foundation trenches relating to the old garage (Fig. 8, Contexts 3 & 6) produced nine Roman pot-sherds derived from the earlier deposits through which the trenches had been cut, together with two pieces of modern chinaware.

7.3 The ground under the raised floor of the old garage building had provided a convenient refuge for burrowing animals, most probably rabbits, and in a number of localities within the excavation area the stratified deposits had been significantly disturbed by abandoned burrows. Further damage to the archaeological layering had been caused by the roots of adjacent trees and bushes. Despite these

limitations, some significant archaeological deposits and finds were recovered during the investigations (see below).

The excavated archaeological deposits

7.4 Leaving the concrete footings in place reduced the area of stratified deposits to be excavated and effectively confined archaeological investigation to two strips of ground, each just over 1 metre wide (designated here the East Area and the West Area; Figs 3–6; Plates II and IV). The natural geology was not exposed in either area. It became apparent that most of the stratified deposits sloped down at an angle of about 20 degrees (Fig. 8), reflecting their position at the top of the steep cliff that defines the south-eastern side of Richborough island (see above).

7.5 Despite the excavations taking place soon after one of the wettest east Kent winters recorded, the deposits exposed were very dry and compact, having been covered and protected from the weather by the earlier garage building for many years. The sloping configuration of the layering added further difficulty in positively following deposits across from one Area to the other, so that the results of the two excavations must be treated more or less independently from each other. Accordingly, they are reported separately below.

The East Area

7.6 As excavated, this area measured 3.10m (N–S) by 1.10m (E–W). It was taken to a depth of about 0.80m below existing ground level (Plate IV). A large modern pit (pre-dating the garage foundations) occupied much of the southern part of the area (F. 17, see below) and there were two significant patches of root and animal disturbance.

7.7 Undisturbed archaeological deposits were largely confined to the central portion of the excavation and consisted of a succession of five soil deposits, all dipping down to the east (Fig. 8; Contexts 8, 14, 15, 18 & 19). Earliest of these was Context 19, which consisted of a dark grey-brown sandy loam with occasional chalk specks, occasional carbon specks and a few small–medium sized flint pebbles (Fig. 6). Its full extent was not revealed but it was at least 0.20m thick (Fig. 8). It might possibly represent a continuation of Context 23 seen in the West Area (see below). The only find recovered from this layer was a single piece of Roman tile/brick.

7.8 Context 19 was sealed by Context 18 (Figs 6 & 8). This comprised mostly dark yellow sandy silt but included some pockets of grey-brown sandy silt. Occasional chalk specks, occasional carbon specks and a few small–medium flint pebbles occurred throughout this deposit. Again, its full extent was not revealed but it was at least 0.15m thick (Fig. 8). Finds recovered were a single very worn sherd of Dressel 20 *amphora*, a few pieces of Roman brick/tile and some animal bone (Table 3).

7.9 Contexts 18 and 19 were sealed by Context 15 (Fig. 5). This 0.10–0.26m thick deposit was traced across most of the East Area (Fig. 8), although it had been damaged by the modern pit, F. 17 and by root/animal disturbances. It consisted mainly of a compact dark brown sandy silt, containing moderate quantities of chalk specks and oyster shell fragments, and occasional small flint pebbles. It also incorporated a few small patches of yellow-green sand, apparently redeposited natural material. Finds recovered from this layer (Table 3) included ten sherds of pottery, animal bone, and occasional oyster shell fragments, together with several small finds. Amongst the small finds are a fourth-century coin (SF 9) and two fragments of marble veneer (SFs 15 & 16; Plate VII) derived from the triumphal arch located further to the north (see above). The pottery is a mixed group of mostly abraded Roman sherds. Several are late Roman in date but a single rim sherd of red earthenware appears to be post-medieval; there is also a

fragment of cream coloured roofing tile that seems to be late medieval or early post-medieval in date. These latter finds imply that this layer is of post-Roman date.

7.10 Context 15 was sealed by Context 14 (Fig. 4). This was a mixed layer of yellow-brown sand and grey-brown sandy silt containing chalk specks, small patches of a dark grey-brown sandy loam, occasional chalk specks, occasional carbon specks and a few small–medium flint pebbles. It was about 0.15m thick (Fig. 8) but there had been a considerable amount of root disturbance; it was cut by modern pit F. 17 at the southern end and a modern, angled post-hole, F. 25, a little further north. Finds recovered included six Roman pot-sherds, some animal bone and several pieces of tile. Most of the tile fragments are of Roman date but one is a piece of medieval peg-tile. The pottery is very worn and includes material ranging from the first to the fourth century AD but the peg-tile fragment again indicates a post-Roman date for this deposit.

7.11 Sealing Context 14 was Context 8 (Fig. 3). This substantial deposit, up to 0.40m thick, represented the highest stratified deposit located in the East Area. Its continuation could be traced into the West Area with some certainty. Here it ended against the tail of the earlier Context 13 (Fig. 8). In detail, it consisted of a dark grey-brown sandy loam with moderate amounts of chalk specks and small–medium flint pebbles (20–100mm across). A reasonable quantity of finds was contained within this layer (Table 3), including thirty-three sherds of pottery, some brick/tile, occasional mortar lumps, animal bone and marine shell. Small finds included three late third-century coins (SFs 4, 5 & 10; Table 1), an iron knife (SF 3; Plate V) and a small pottery disc (SF 1). The pot sherds recovered are mostly small and worn Roman pieces, ranging in date from the first to the fourth century AD but one wall sherd seems to be medieval. Two of the tile fragments are also medieval.

7.12 At the southern end of the East Area, cut in from the top of Context 8 was a substantial pit (F. 17). The full extent of this was not revealed but as seen in the excavation it was at least 1.30m (N–S) by 0.70m (E–W). Its continuation eastwards was suggested by modern fill deposits noted beyond the excavation, implying that it could have been a fairly extensive feature cut into the upper slope of the present cliff (Fig. 3).

7.13 In the excavation, the pit was up to 0.73m deep, with steeply sloping sides and a slightly undulating base. The filling (Context 16) comprised a single deposit of grey-brown sandy loam containing a quantity of broken modern window glass and occasional pieces of steel wire. A single residual Roman samian sherd was also recovered. The presence of this pit clearly demonstrates relatively recent activity on the bank prior to the construction of the garage building.

7.14 Also probably cutting Context 8 and certainly Context 14, was what appeared to be a substantial, sub-rectangular post-hole (F. 25), measuring 0.20 x 0.30m across (Fig. 4). Although the top of this had been truncated by the garage foundations, a relatively modern date was confirmed by the presence of partially decayed wood within it. The post had been deeply set into the steep bank at an angle of about 25 degrees from the horizontal (Fig. 8) and could represent a diagonal brace used to support an upright (but see below). No other associated features were identified.

7.15 Sealing the infilled pit, F. 17 and the top of Context 8, was a final soil deposit (Fig. 8, Context 1). This consisted of a thin layer of modern material that had accumulated under the previous garage building. It comprised a loose grey-brown loam, up to 0.10m thick, and contained leaf mould and very recent domestic debris including plastic. It produced a few residual pieces of Roman pottery (five sherds) and several fragments of Roman brick/tile.

The West Area

7.16 As excavated, this area measured about 3.00m (N–S) by 1.30m (E–W), with a narrow central east–west baulk being persevered throughout (Figs 3–6). Originally destined to be the area of deepest excavation, the early discovery of a stratified rubble deposit at a depth of around 0.30m below existing ground level (Context 11, see below), led to a decision to curtail any further excavation work here so as to preserve this deposit and all the earlier levels below (instruction from Roy Porter, EH Territory Properties Curator, 18.3.14). Thus, the full sequence of deposits, which were at least 0.60m in total thickness here, was not ascertained (Fig. 8; Plate IV; Table 5).

7.17 Traces of two earlier deposits below the rubble layer, Context 11 were exposed in the cut for the garage foundations along the eastern side (F. 4) and limited observation of these provides some additional detail concerning the stratified sequence in this area.

7.18 The earliest deposit seen was Context 23, noted in a very small area at the north end of the foundation trench. It consisted of a dark yellow coarse sandy silt with patches of mid-brown sandy loam and occasional small flint pebbles. No finds were recovered from this layer which was at least 0.10m thick. It was possibly dipping down to the east and conceivably may represent a continuation of Context 19 as recorded in the East Area (see above) but this cannot be certain.

7.19 Resting on top of Context 23 was a thin layer of oyster shell (Fig. 8, Context 12). This sloped very gently down to the south and was traced for a minimum of 2.60m in the west face of foundation trench F. 4, before disappearing below the level of the unexcavated concrete footing. In detail, the 0.10m thick deposit consisted of a grey-brown sandy loam containing frequent (degraded) oyster shell, with some small flint pebbles, some animal bone and fragments of Roman tile/brick. At the north end, the top of a small portion of this layer, around 0.30m across, was exposed. Three late Roman coins (SFs 7, 13 & 14) were recovered here (two by metal-detector) implying that the deposit, if fully excavated, would be rich in artefacts.

7.20 Sealing the top of the oyster deposit (12) was the rubble layer (Context 11). This extended across the full width of the West Area but was not excavated, since it had the appearance of being a rough walking surface, most appropriately left unexcavated and preserved *in situ* (Figs 6–8; Plates II–IV). The layer had been cut away along the eastern side by modern foundation trench F. 4 but it was not represented by any of the deposits recorded in the East Area (see above). This implies that the rubble deposit had never extended much further to the east, at least in recent times. Nevertheless, it clearly continued outside the limits of the excavation in other directions.

7.21 The layer consisted of a mid greyish-brown sandy loam which contained moderate quantities of large flint cobbles and small flint pebbles, together with some other stone, including *sepataria* (cementstone nodules derived from the London Clay; Pearson 2002, 207) and *oolite*, and a few fragments of Roman brick/tile (Fig. 7; Plate III). It was at least 0.10m thick (Fig. 8) and the general impression gained was that this layer could represent a rough surface, perhaps very casual yard metalling. It is not impossible that a flint cobble layer located some 4 metres to the north during the excavation of a new post-hole in 2013 represented the same deposit, if not a wall foundation (Parfitt 2013, context 3).

7.22 Cleaning of the top of the rubble layer produced a number of small iron objects, mostly nails (SFs 11, 17–26; Table 2), together with a damaged piece of copper-alloy sheet, perhaps a fragment of Roman scale armour (SF 12; Plate VI) and a large piece of Oxfordshire Parchment ware *mortarium* of late Roman date.

7.23 Context 11 was sealed by a general soil deposit (Context 13) which is likely to represent post-Roman topsoil. The layer was between 0.20 and 0.30m thick and appeared to be thinning out on the eastern side before being cut away by modern foundation trench F. 4 (Fig. 8). The deposit comprised a light grey-brown sandy loam containing occasional flint pebbles and some small fragments of *septaria*. It produced thirty-three sherds of Roman pottery, some Roman brick/tile, animal bone and marine shell (Table 3). The only small find was part of an iron nail (SF. 6). The pottery is a mixed collection of mostly small, abraded Roman sherds ranging in date from the first to the end of the fourth century, but the presence of a piece of medieval roof tile must imply a post-Roman date for this layer (see below).

7.24 As Context 13 thinned along the eastern side it could be seen to be overlain and replaced by the start of Context 8, which was the only deposit certainly traceable between the two excavation areas (see above). In the West Area Context 8 was 0.18m thick, confined to the eastern side of the excavation (Fig. 8). A thin layer of soil and modern refuse sealed Contexts 8 and 13. This material (Fig. 8, Context 1) had accumulated under the raised floor of the garage that formerly occupied the site (see above). It contained five sherds of residual Roman pottery.

8. Finds

8.1 The excavations produced a moderate quantity of artefacts, mostly Roman brick/tile, pottery and animal bone (Table 3), but also including seven Roman coins (Table 1), two fragments of marble veneer from the triumphal arch (Plate VII), and a number of other small finds (Table 2; Plates V & VI). This material has been processed and catalogued according to standard Canterbury Archaeological Trust procedures and has been entered into the IADB database. Brief notes on the finds are included below.

8.2 Coins

by David Holman

8.2.1 The 2014 work at Richborough produced a total of seven Roman coins (Table 1; SFs 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13 & 14). These are all of late third- or fourth-century date and join an assemblage of over 56,000 more coins recovered from the site during the excavations of the 1920s and 1930s (Reece 1968, 188). In 2014, all but one coin was recovered by metal-detector, four from the spoil-heap. Limited cleaning allows the following identifications to be made.

Context	SF	Coin Period	Emperor etc.	Description	Mint	Denomination	Date	Reference
8	5	13	Tetricus I	Rev : Fig. stg. 1.	*	Antoninianus	271-274	*
12	13	13	Tetricus II	Rev : [SPES PVBLI]CA	Cologne	Antoninianus	273-274	RIC 272
8	4	14	Carausius	Rev : Pax stg. 1., transverse sceptre (no mm.)	London	Antoninianus	286-293	*
8	10	14	Carausius	Rev : Fig. stg. 1.	*	Antoninianus	286-293	*
12	7	13 or 14	Uncertain	Details illegible.	*	Antoninianus	c.260-296	*
12	14	13 or 14	Uncertain	Details illegible.	*	Antoninianus	c.260-296	*
15	9	17	'House of Constantine'	[GLORIA EXERCITVS] (1) (copy)	*	AE4 copy	c.337-345	*

Table 1 Details of coins recovered from the 2014 excavation

8.2.2 Four coins came from Contexts 8 & 15, which are probably deposits of post-Roman date, but the three coins from Context 12 appeared to be well stratified in a Roman layer.

8.2.3 The coins recorded in 2014 follow a fairly standard late Roman distribution and comparing the present collection with the main assemblage from Richborough, there is little worthy of special note. The

discovery of three late third-century coins within the small area of Context 12 that was sampled suggests that more extensive excavation of this layer could be quite productive.

8.3 Other registered small finds

A total of thirty small finds was registered in all. The seven Roman coins recovered are described above (Table 1). Most of the remaining items (n=12) were small iron nails recovered from Context 11. Objects of more special interest are listed in Table 2 below. SF 3 was a large iron knife, presumably of Roman date (Plate V); SF12, a small crumpled copper alloy sheet pierced by several small holes (Plate VI) could represent a damaged piece of scale armour (*cf* Bushe Fox 1949, 143, plate L, 178).

SF No.	Context No.	Material	Description
1	8	ceramic	disc or counter made from a cut down pot sherd
2	8	copper alloy	disc headed nail or stud
3	8	iron	large knife
8	8	iron	small fitting (could be modern)
11	11	iron	disc
12	11	copper alloy	crumpled sheet – possible fragment of scale armour
15	15	white marble	fragment of veneer from the triumphal arch
16	15	white marble	fragment of veneer from the triumphal arch

Table 2 List of selected small finds from the 2014 excavation

8.4 Pottery

by Andrew Savage

8.4.1 The excavations produced a total of 101 pot sherds, recovered from ten different contexts (see Tables 3 & 4). The bulk of this material is of Roman date but much of it is certainly residual. There are four sherds of post-Roman date, including two pieces of chinaware.

Context	pottery	brick/tile	bone	shell
1	5	2	2	-
3	3	-	2	-
6	8 (2 china)	-	1	1
8	33 (1 medieval)	6 (2 medieval)	38	6
11	1	-	-	-
12	-	-	1	-
13	33	20 (2 medieval)	59	1
14	6	9 (1 medieval)	7	-
15	10 (1 post-medieval)	9 (1 medieval)	12	1
16	1	2	1	-
18	1	4	1	-
19	-	1	-	-
Total	101 (4 med/post-med.)	45 (6 medieval)	124	9

Table 3 Summary of bulk finds recovered from the 2014 excavation

8.4.2 Notable features of this assemblage include a consistent degree of wear – no context stands out as containing distinctly fresher material, and the fact that in very small context-groups there is generally a mix of earlier and later Roman pottery. Earlier types include south Gaulish samian, ‘Belgic’ grog-tempered and sand-and-shell tempered wares. Imported coarse wares of early to mid-Roman date include South Spanish and Gaulish *amphorae*. Several sherds of late Roman grog-tempered ware appear to

represent Malcolm Lyne's pale-gritted type (ML, *pers com*). Very late Roman activity is suggested particularly by the presence of South Midlands shell-tempered ware (in Contexts 3, 13 & 15), and a scatter of post-Roman sherds was identified (in Contexts 6, 8 & 15; Table 3).

8.4.3 The mix of dates and general condition of the pottery is not inconsistent with the view that much of this material is residual, contained within dumped spoil deposits (see below for further comment on this).

8.5 Ceramic building material

A small amount of Roman brick and tile was recovered (Table 3), together with a few fragments of burnt daub. The largest number of tile fragments came from Context 13. Half a dozen tile fragments, mostly from the East Area, are of medieval or early post-medieval date.

8.6 Animal bone and marine shell

A quantity of animal bone was recovered, together with a small amount of marine shell, mostly oyster. Context 12 in the West Area was left largely unexcavated but appeared to represent a thin dump layer composed almost entirely from degraded oyster shell. Associated coins indicate a late Roman date for this layer (see above).

9. Interpretation of the excavated deposits

9.1 The limited nature of the excavations undertaken on this sloping, somewhat disturbed site makes interpretation of the deposits exposed in 2014 less than straightforward. It would seem that the layers recorded in the West Area represent the top of a sequence of stratified Roman deposits that included a rough rubble layer (Fig. 8, Context 11), possibly a casual walking surface, of late Roman date (see above). These potentially significant deposits have been left, preserved *in situ* and will be better interpreted in any future, large scale excavations that may one day be undertaken in the area to the south of the fort.

9.2 The highest stratified soil deposit recorded in the West Area (Fig. 8, Context 13), overlying the Roman rubble layer (11), would seem to represent post-Roman topsoil sealing the earlier deposits. This layer could be seen to underlie Context 8, mostly present in the East Area and also of post-Roman date (Fig. 8, see below).

9.3 Apart from Context 8, the deposits examined in the East Area cannot be readily equated with those seen in the West Area. On the evidence of the later pottery and tile fragments they contained, however, Contexts 8, 14 and 15 would all seem to be of post-Roman date.

9.4 The somewhat mixed nature of Contexts 8, 14 and 15 could suggest that they are relatively recent dumps of spoil associated with the excavations of Bushe Fox. The decayed timber contained within F. 25, on site was considered to represent the remains of an angled post, deeply driven into the steep bank (see above). As a possible alternative interpretation, it might now be considered whether, rather than cutting Contexts 14, 15 and 18, this timber was actually contained within their make-up; if so, it would indicate that these three layers were in reality a single thick, mixed dump deposit of relatively recent date. Spoil from the 1930s excavations would then represent the most likely interpretation for these deposits. In this context it is interesting to note that the excavations further to the north in 1986 also identified significant areas of modern spoil dumping along the edge of the eastern cliff (Wilson 1986).

9.5 Equally, however, Contexts 8, 14, 15 and 18 might represent accumulated post-Roman hill-slope deposits slumping down the side of the steep embankment. The underlying Context 19, perhaps related to

Context 23 in the West Area, and could represent an undisturbed Roman deposit exposed on this slope (Fig. 8). Only more extensive excavations will provide further information concerning these layers.

10. Conclusions

10.1 The limited excavations undertaken at Richborough in 2014 have provided an opportunity to examine another area at this important Roman site. The work follows on from a previous programme of research excavation along the eastern slopes of the island led by Tony Wilmott in 2008 (Wilmott and Tibber 2009) and an earlier examination of the top of the slope undertaken in 1986 (Wilson 1986, 6).

10.2 Due to the relatively limited scale of the works, the remains exposed in 2014 are not easy to interpret. The excavations would seem to have succeeded in locating some stratified Roman deposits including a possible walking surface (see above, Context 11; Fig. 7; Plate III) but no significant structural remains were revealed. A number of the deposits exposed in the East Area would appear to be of post-Roman date.

10.3 Work in the 1930s, immediately to the north of the 2014 site, had identified a metalled road surface (see above) and the area most recently investigated should fall inside the footprint of a large Roman building also located by Bushe-Fox (1949, 78–9; Fig. 9). Unless the possible late Roman walking surface identified in the present West Area (Context 11) was in some way related, no new traces of either the road or the building were identified in 2014.

10.4 Although residual, a significant amount of the Roman pottery recovered from the excavations in 2014 appeared to be of first-century AD date. During work on the adjacent car park site in the 1930s Bushe Fox had similarly noted the presence of first-century sherds, as well as late Roman material. It would seem that there had been early Roman occupation in the immediate area (Bushe Fox 1949, 78–9).

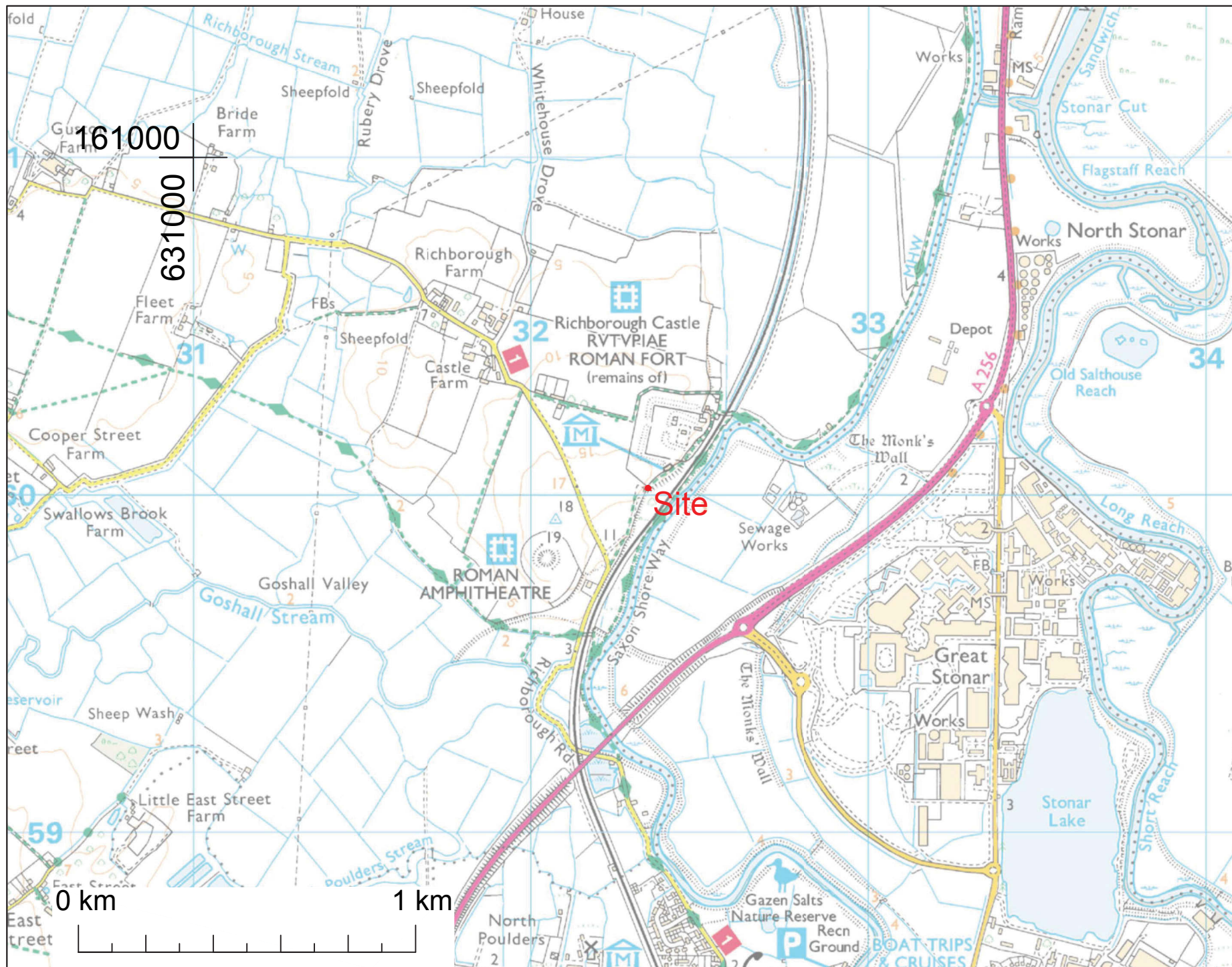
10.5 The discovery of no less than seven Roman coins within the limited area of the 2014 excavation once again confirms Richborough as being a remarkably prolific site for such finds, as was well established in previous investigations at the site (Reece 1968). Other 2014 finds of interest include two pieces of marble veneer derived from the late first-century triumphal arch (Plate VII). These are both plain but Bushe Fox discovered an inscribed fragment close-by in an unstratified context (Bushe Fox 1949, 46, 78, plate LXX).

10.6 Little further analysis of the records or artefacts recovered during the 2014 excavation seems warranted at present, although cleaning and positive identification of the possible piece of Roman scale armour would be worthwhile. The results from the present work will, hopefully, be able to make a small contribution to the proposed new English Heritage research volume concerning recent investigations at Richborough.

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Fig.1



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PROJECT CODE

RCT-EX-14

SITE ADDRESS

Richborough Castle
Richborough
Kent

DRAWN BY

P-SA

DATE

14/0714

REF/DRG NO.
L:/

SCALE(S)

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Fig.1 Map showing general location of the excavated site

Fig.2



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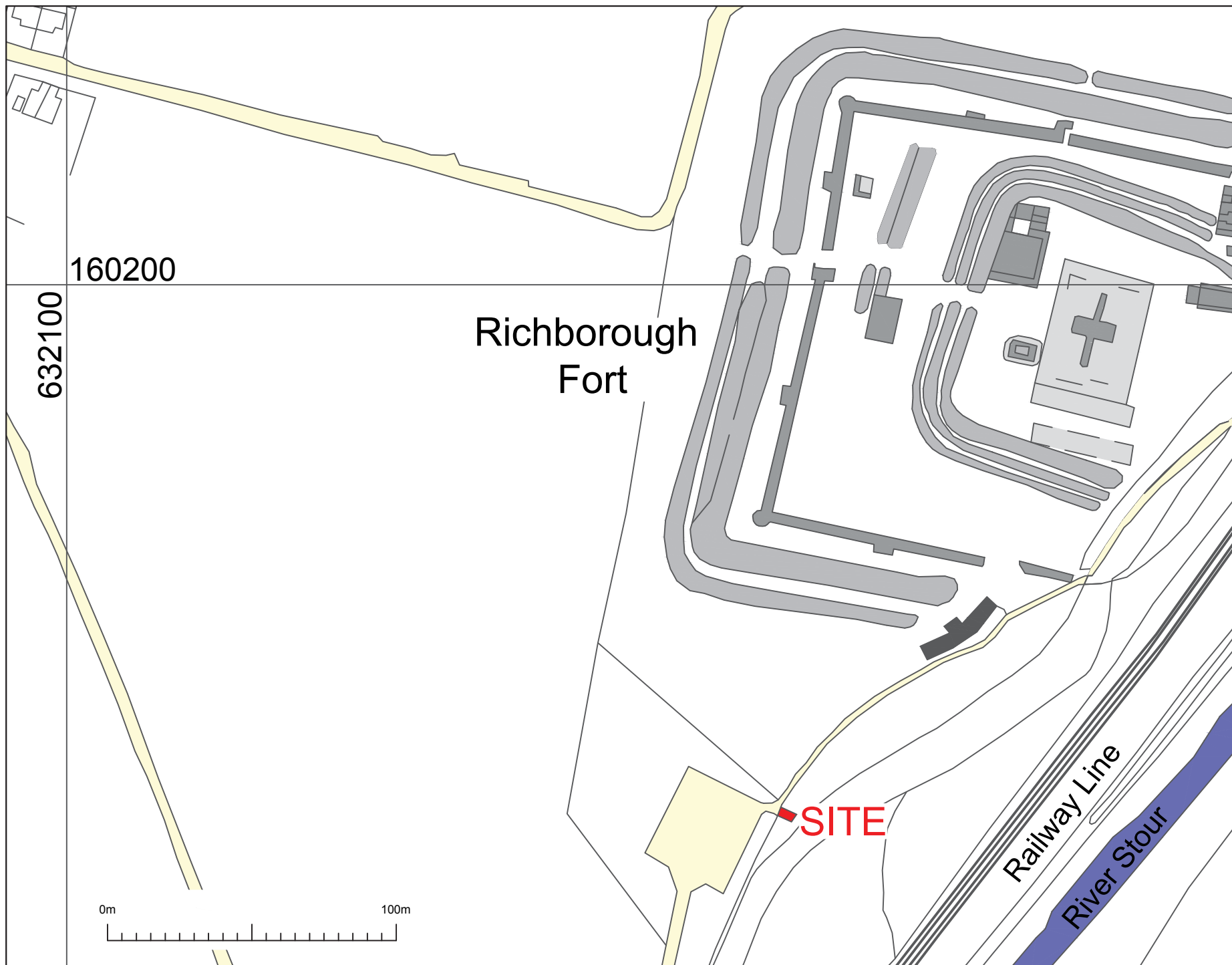
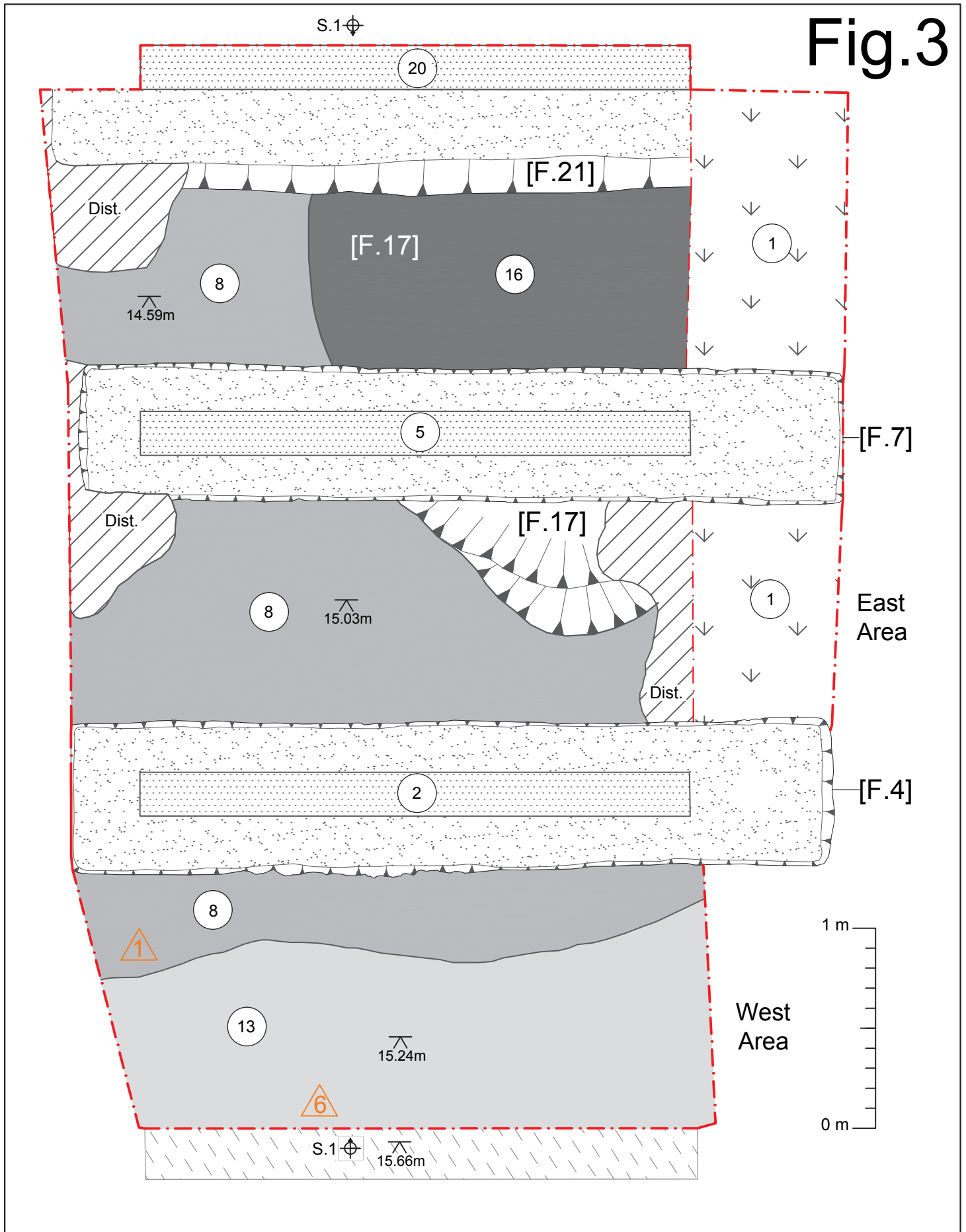



Fig.1 General plan of Richborough Roman Fort showing location of the excavated site

Fig.3



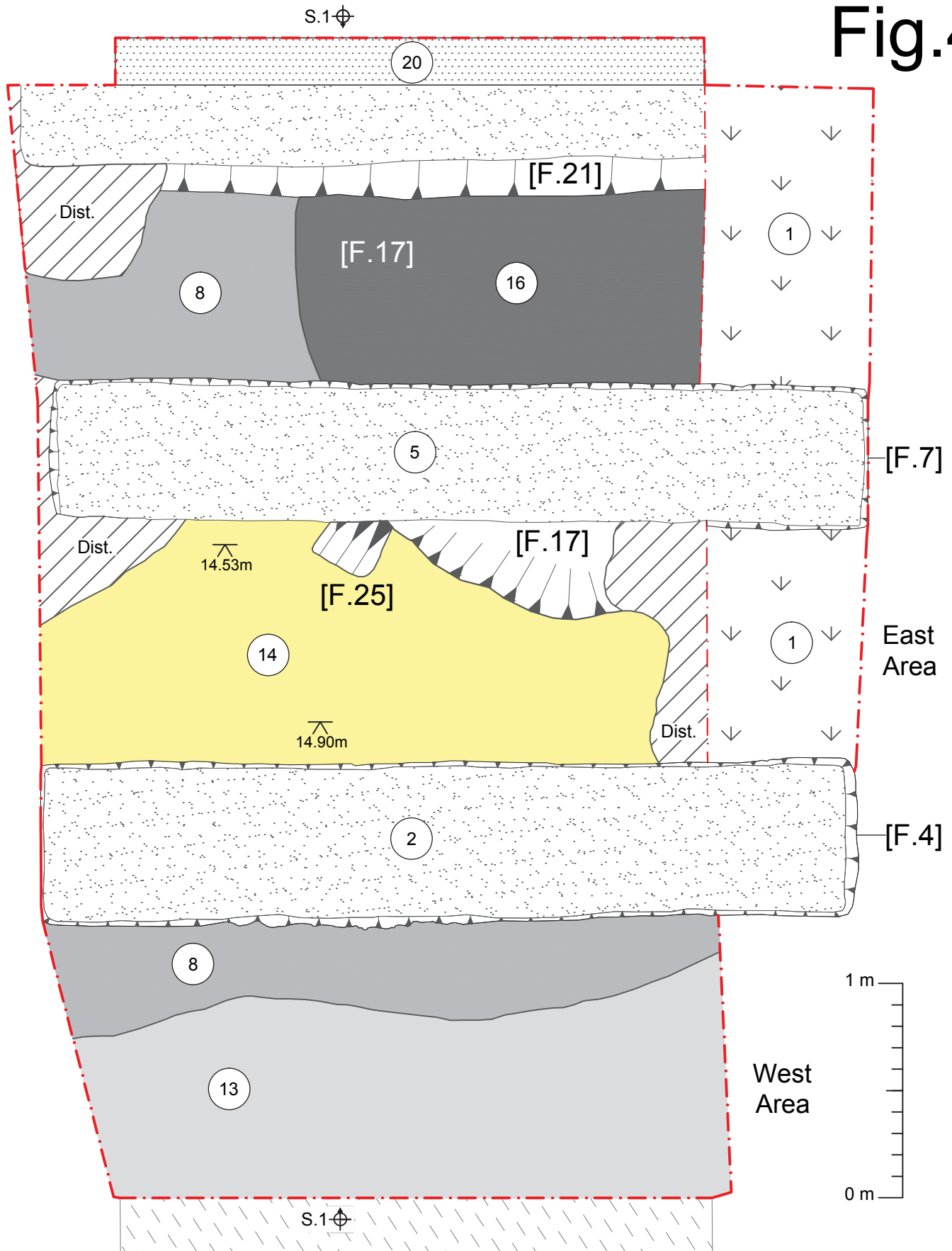
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Small Finds

Fig.3 Plan of excavation showing modern pit [F.17] and extent of contexts (8) & (13)

Fig.4

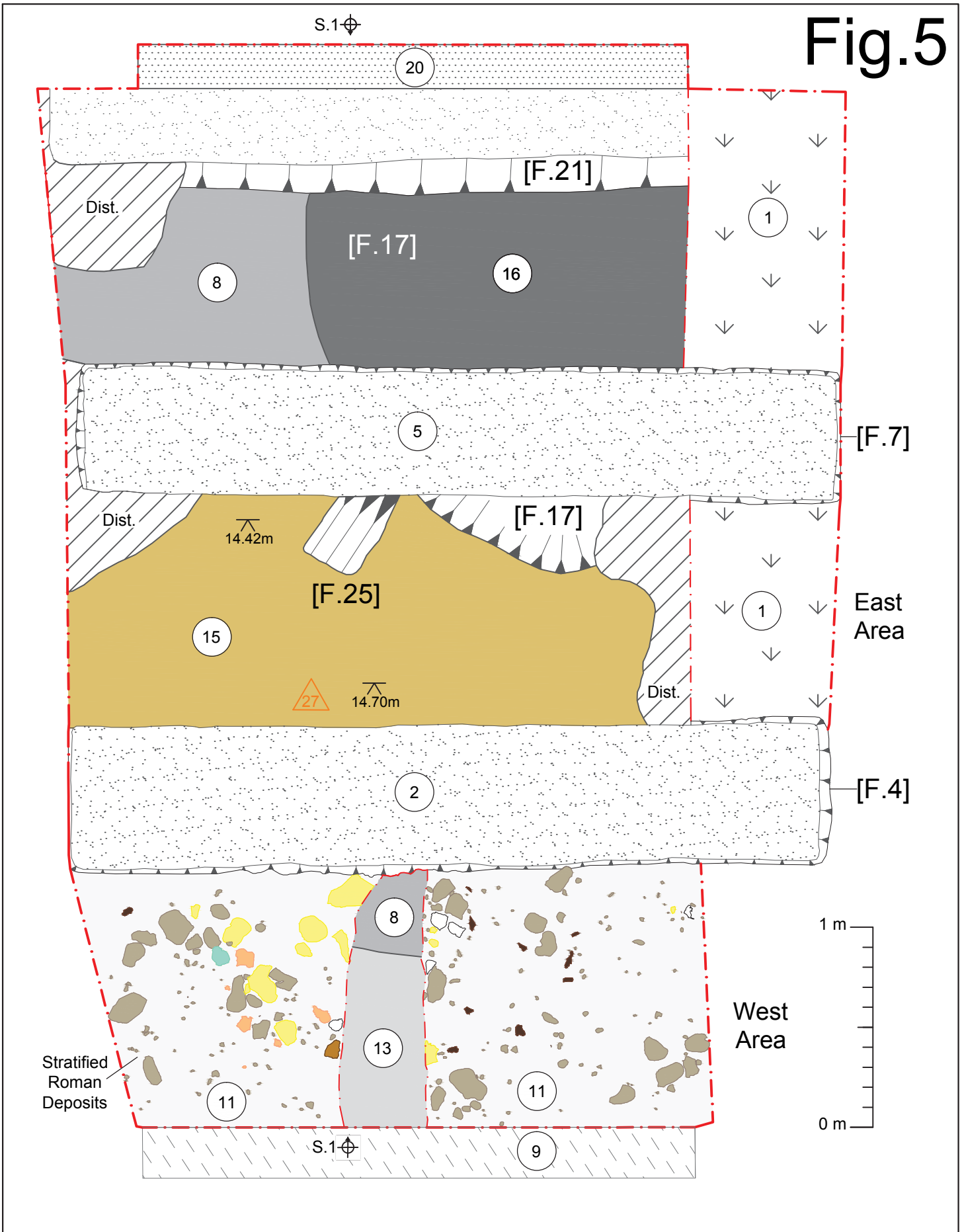


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Fig.4 Plan of excavation showing modern posthole [F.25] and extent of context (14)

Fig.5



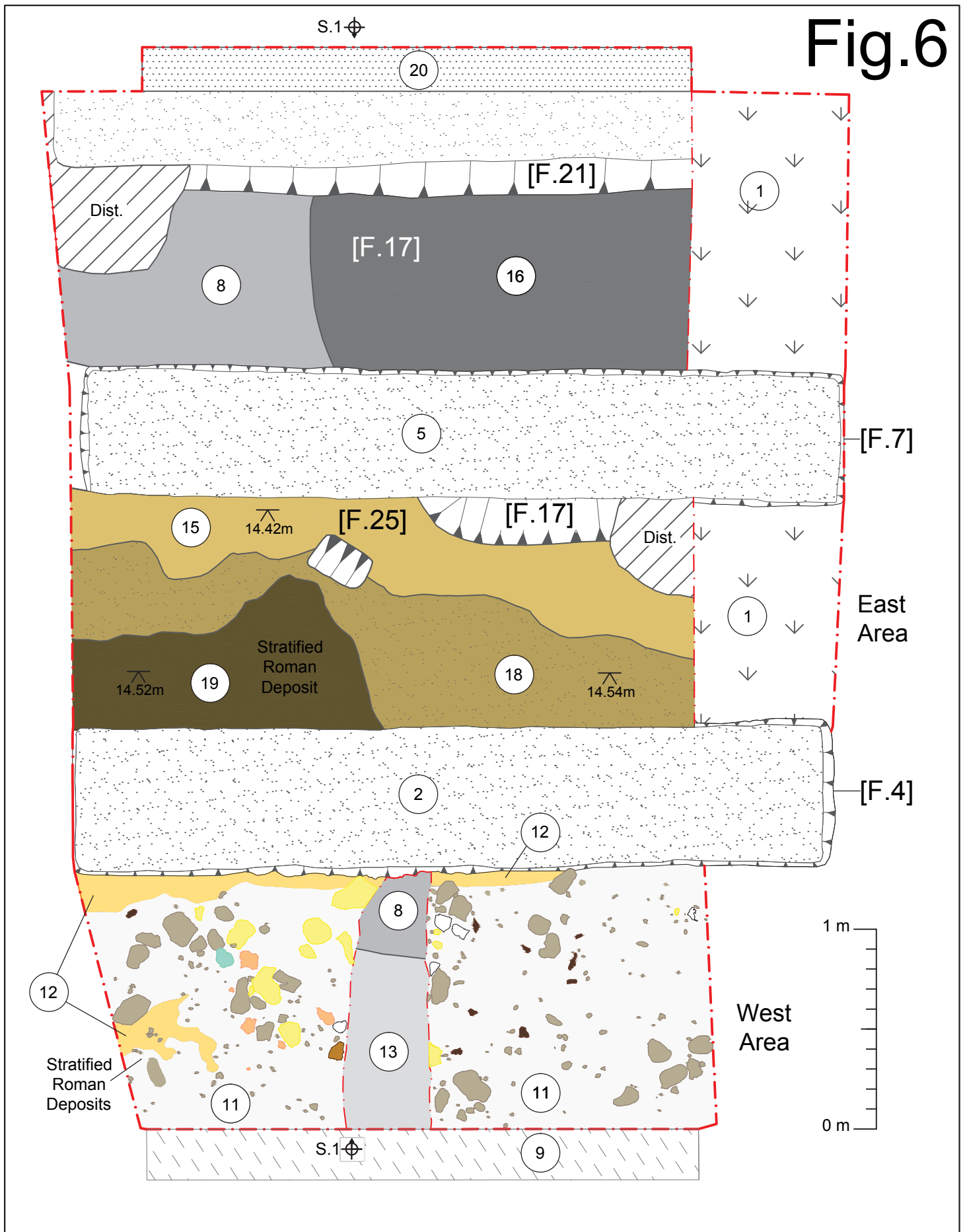
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	SITE ADDRESS Richborough Castle Richborough Kent	CHECKED K.P	REF/DRG NO.	

- Flint pebbles
- Septarian nodules
- Oolite
- Tile

- Quartz Pebble
- Bone (Animal)
- Pottery (Mortarium)
- Small Finds

Fig.5 Plan of excavation showing the extent of context (11) and (15)

Fig.6











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- Flint pebbles
- Septarian nodules
- Oolite
- Tile

- Quartz Pebble
- Bone (Animal)
- Pottery (Mortarium)
- Small Finds

Fig.6 Plan of excavation showing the extent of contexts (12), (18) and (19)

Fig.7

-  Flint pebbles
-  Septarian nodules
-  Oolite
-  Tile
-  Quartz Pebble
-  Bone (Animal)
-  Pottery (Mortarium)
-  Small Finds



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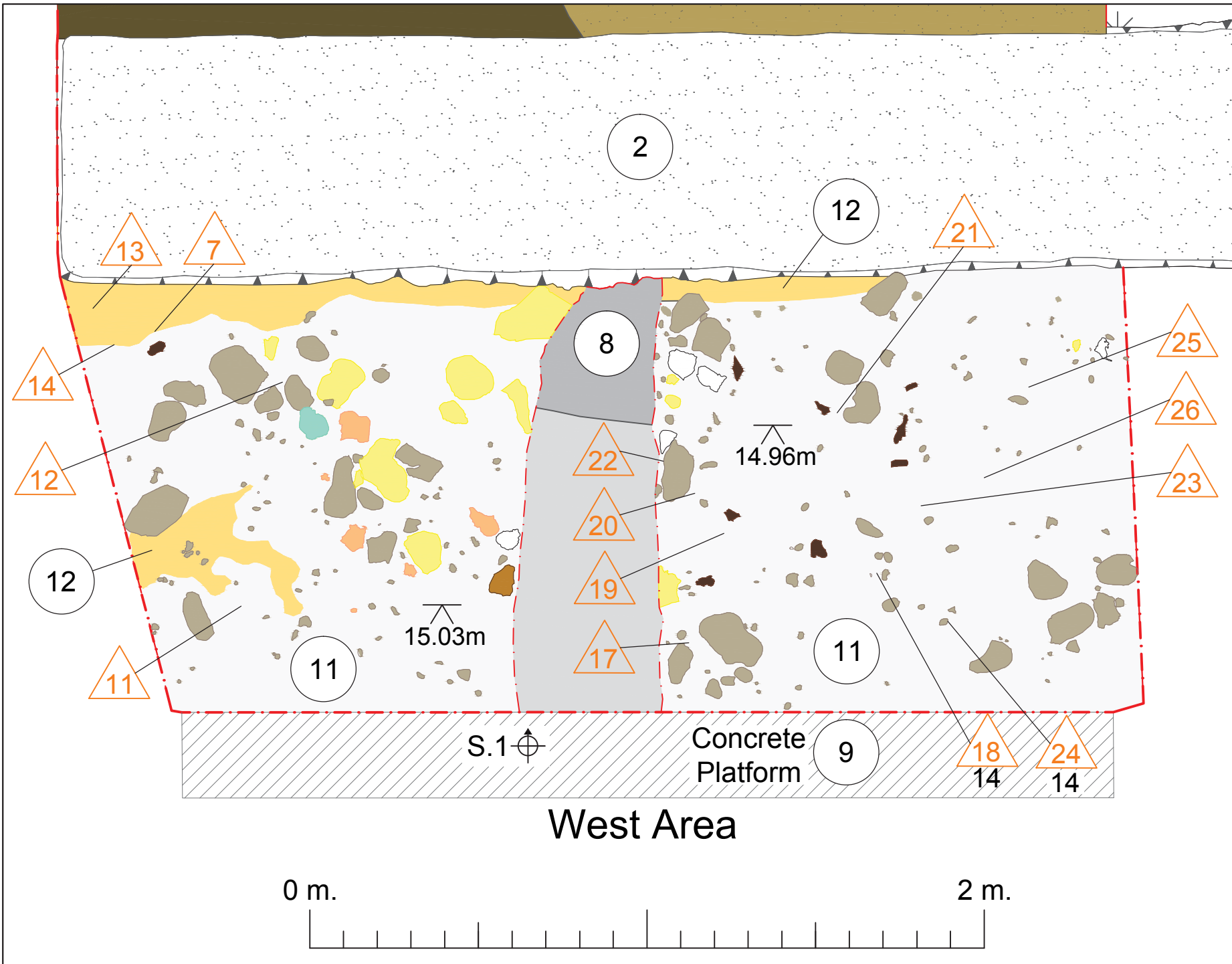


Fig.7 Detailed plan of rubble layer context (11) with associated small find positions

Section1

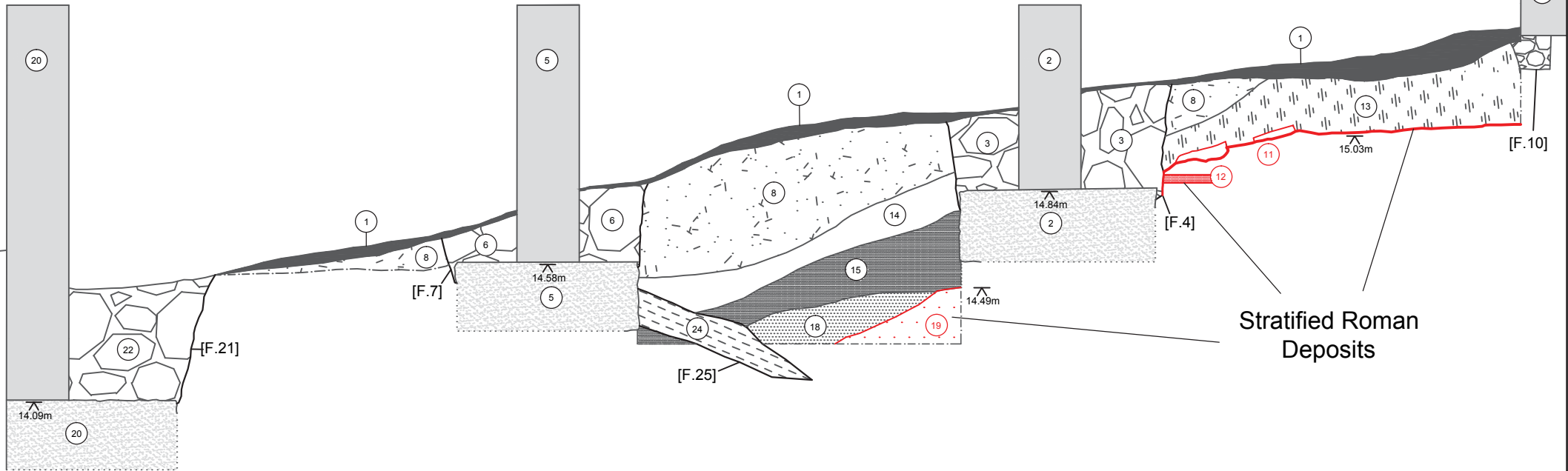
East

West

S.1

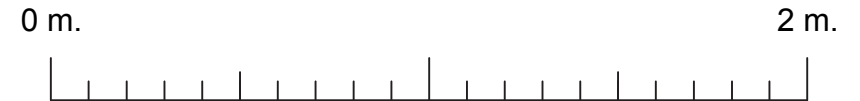
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West Area



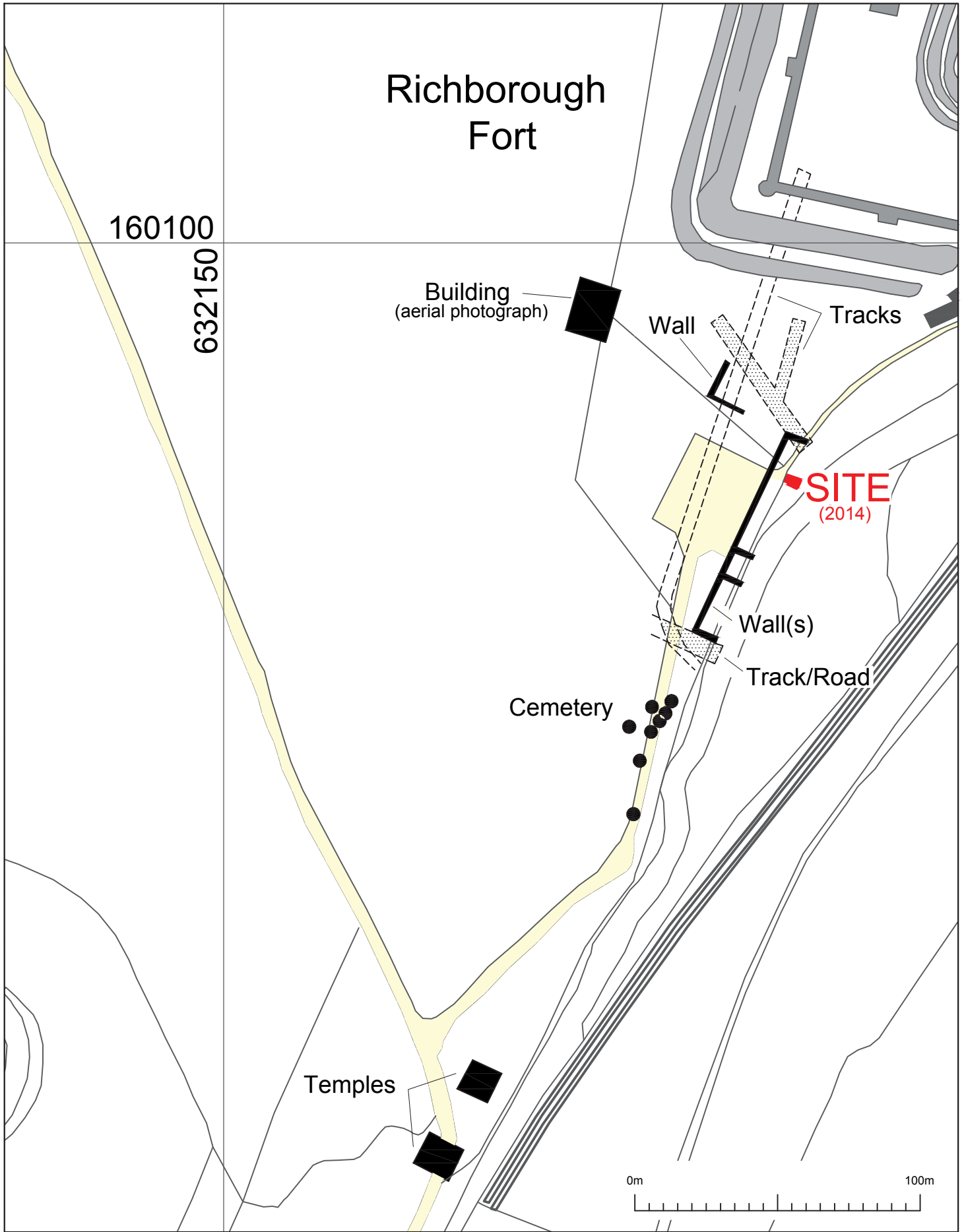
Stratified Roman Deposits

Fig.8



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Fig.8 Long section across excavated deposits



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Fig.9

Fig.9 Plan showing site location in relation to previous discoveries (Based on B. Fox)

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Plate I Foundations of the demolished garage building before excavations began, looking east. Scale, one metre (CAT Film No. 16898, 0132)



Plate II Excavations in progress, looking east. Note rubble surface (Context 11) in the foreground (CAT Film No. 16899, 0215)



Plate III Detail of the possible rubble surface, Context 11. Scale one metre (CAT Film No. 16898, 0166)



Plate IV Completed excavation, looking west. Scale, one metre (CAT Film 16899, 0222)



Plate V Iron knife from Context 8 (SF 3)



Plate VI Possible scale armour from Context 11 (SF 12)



Plate VII Marble fragments from Context 15 (SFs 15 & 16)

Context	Spot-date	BELGIC / ROMAN	Post ROM	TOTAL SHERDS	Comments
1	latest late C3-4/early C5th	5	0	5	The pottery comprises small worn sherds spanning the first to fourth centuries AD. Earliest is 1 x southern Gaulish samian of second half C1, latest is 1 x late Roman grog-tempered ware.
3	latest C4 - early C5th	3	0	3	All appear to be late Roman; 1 x reduced sandyware, 1 x late Roman grog-tempered ware (v. worn), 1 x Midlands shell-tempered ware (latter usually late C4/earlyC5th in Canterbury and generally commonest in later C4th deposits).
6	latest ?late C18-early C19th	6	2	8	Very mixed, generally small and worn, latest are 2 x 'china'/creamware, definitely post-medieval. The Roman is very mixed in date, ranging from C1 white ware to late Roman grog-tempered ware.
8	latest late Roman (late C3-4/early C5th) or medieval; see comments	32	1	33	Mostly small and worn sherds with the exception of a couple of <i>amphora</i> and <i>mortarium</i> sherds. Roman very mixed, spanning the first to fourth centuries AD and including one sherd of poss. Canterbury sandyware as well as south Gaulish samian, BB2 and Upchurch-type ware. There are 3 sherds of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware and at least 5 of late Roman grog-tempered ware. Note one sherd, probably medieval, is small and oxidised, probably from a jar.
11	MC3-4/early C5th	0	1	1	Base sherd from Oxfordshire Parchment <i>mortarium</i> .
13	latest C4/early C5th	33	0	33	Mostly small and worn sherds; the two largest and freshest sherds comprise one of a 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware bead-rim jar of C1st date and one of a late Roman grog-tempered bead-and-flange bowl. In terms of date the material is very mixed, including 'Belgic' grog-tempered and sand-and-shell tempered bead-rim jars, samian, and several late Roman fabrics: grog-tempered ware, shell-tempered ware (usually late C4/earlyC5 in Canterbury and generally commonest in later C4th deposits; possibly from same vessel as a sherd in Context 15, and a sherd of an Oxfordshire colour-coated ware bowl (type C44 or similar) which is very worn.

14	latest C4/early C5th	1	0	6	All sherds are very worn. There is one sherd of 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware but also two from late Roman Oxfordshire ware <i>mortaria</i> : one of type C100, the other of type WC7. These suggest a date of c.AD 300-400+
15	latest ?C17-C18th; see comments	9	1	10	All sherds are very worn, with the exception of one less worn sherd from a late Roman grog-tempered jar. Very mixed in terms of date, including samian and late Roman grog-tempered ware. One small fragment of late Roman shell-tempered ware (usually late C4/earlyC5 in Canterbury and generally commonest in later C4th deposits) might be from the same vessel as sherds in Context 13. Note: one small worn sherd appears to be post-medieval red earthenware.
16	second half C1st	1		1	Base sherd from a south Gaulish samian Drag.18/31 dish.
18	Prob. C1-2nd	1		1	Very worn sherd of probable Dressel 20 <i>amphora</i> , totally lacking its original surfaces.

Table 4 Details of the pottery recovered from the excavations

Context	Layer	Description
1	Disturbed recent soil	Loose grey-brown loam with roots, leaf mould, glass, wood, plastic, etc.
2	Modern wall foundation	Mortared concrete blocks on concrete base
3	Filling foundation trench, F. 4	Grey-brown loam with brick and mortar rubble, occ. tree roots
F. 4	Modern foundation trench	Shape: linear; Main Axis: N-S; Length: 3.82m; Width: 0.75m; Depth: 0.62m; Sides: very steep-vertical; Base: flat. Fill = 2, 3
5	Modern wall foundation	Mortared concrete blocks on concrete base
6	Filling foundation trench, F. 7	Grey-brown loam with brick and mortar rubble, occ. tree roots
F. 7	Modern foundation trench	Shape: linear; Main Axis: N-S; Length: 3.84m; Width: 0.68m; Depth: 0.52m; Sides: very steep-vertical; Base: flat. Fill = 5, 6
8	Layer	Dark grey-brown sandy loam with small pebbles and chalk specks
9	Modern wall foundation	Poured concrete on red brick rubble footing
F. 10	Modern foundation trench	Shape: linear; Main Axis: N-S; Length: 2.80m; Width: 0.05m; Depth: 0.10m; Sides: vertical; Base: flat? Fill = 9
11	Layer (not excavated)	Mid greyish-brown sandy loam with rubble - possible walking surface
12	Layer (not excavated)	Grey-brown sandy loam with frequent degraded oyster shell
13	Layer	Light grey-brown sandy loam with occ small pebbles and septaria fragments
14	Layer	Mixed yellow-brown sand and grey-brown sandy silt, occasional flint pebbles, chalk, carbon specks
15	Layer	Dark brown sandy silt and small patches of yellow-green sand, with occ. pebbles, chalk specks and oyster shell frags
16	Filling of modern pit, F. 17	Grey-brown sandy loam with moderate modern glass frags
F. 17	Modern pit	Shape: ?? Main Axis: N-S; Length: 1.30m (min.); Width: 0.70m (min.); Depth: 0.73m; Sides: steep-sloping; Base: flat-undulating. Fill = 16
18	Layer	Dark yellow sandy silt with small patches of grey-brown silty sand, with occ. pebbles, chalk and carbon specks
19	Layer	Dark grey-brown sandy loam with occ. pebbles, chalk and carbon specks
20	Modern wall	Mortared concrete blocks on concrete base
F. 21	Modern foundation trench	Shape: linear, Main Axis: N-S, Length: 3.20m (min.); Width: 0.75m (min.); Depth: 0.50m (min.); Sides: very steep-vertical. Base: not seen. Fill = 20, 22
22	Filling of modern foundation trench, F.21	Grey-brown loam with brick and mortar rubble, flint cobbles and tree roots
23	Layer (not excavated)	Dark yellow sandy silt with small patches of mid brown sandy loam, with occ. pebbles
24	Filling of post-hole, F.25	Decayed wood
F.25	Modern post-hole (?)	Shape: sub-rect; 0.30 x 0.20m; Depth: 0.50m (min.); Sides: straight; Base: pointed. Fill = 24

Table 5 List of excavated contexts