

Maison Dieu Ladywell, Dover

Archaeological Watching brief

Project Code: DMAD-WB-20

Client: Haverstock/Dover District Council

NGR: 63162 14175, centred

Report No: 2020/22

Archive No: 4361

OASIS ID: **x**

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February 2020

Document Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Version	Approved by	Position	Comment	Date
01	P Bennett	CAT Director		16/02/20
02	P Bennett	CAT Director		05/03/20

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Frontispiece Excavation of Test Pit 2 in the Kitchen Store, looking south-west

Archaeological observations at Dover Maison Dieu, January 2020

1. Summary

1.1 Archaeological observation of the excavation of five small engineer's test pits within the medieval Maison Dieu complex at Dover (NGR 63162 14175, centred) revealed no structural remains, deposits or finds relating to the medieval use of the site.

1.2 Most of the deposits exposed were of nineteenth-century date and are suggestive of significant damage occurring to any medieval and early post-medieval remains by subsequent building work.

1.3 There continues to be a possibility that some remains of archaeological significance yet survive on the site; the observed excavations were probably poorly positioned to locate such remains.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Maison Dieu building complex at Dover (NGR 63162 14175, centred) serves as the present town hall but also incorporates the remains of the medieval hospital of St Mary (Maison Dieu). This is designated as a Grade 1 Listed Building (No. 1069499) and is a Scheduled Monument (No. 1005192).

2.2 Plans for a major restoration programme for the building complex are now being prepared on behalf of the owners, Dover District Council, with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

2.3 A detailed Statement of Significance for the building complex was prepared by Rena Pitsilli-Graham in 2015. This concluded that 'It is very likely that archaeological evidence exists within the walls and the lower ground floor possibly of burials or architectural features from the medieval period of the building.'

2.4 In May 2019 Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) was commissioned by Haverstock Associates to undertake a more detailed desk-based assessment considering the potential for below-ground archaeology at the Maison Dieu site (Parfitt 2019a). Previous archaeological work undertaken by CAT and other researchers in the area helped inform that study.

2.5 The character and importance of the Maison Dieu requires that careful planning be undertaken before any alterations or significant additions are made. Accordingly, it was proposed that five initial engineering test pits were hand excavated at selected locations within the building in order to provide information on below-ground conditions. The information recovered will assist in developing the new plans in an appropriate way.

3. Historical background

(from Parfitt 2019a; see Pitsilli-Graham 2015 for further detailed information)

3.1 The hospital of St Mary at Dover was founded by Hubert de Burgh (c. AD 1160–1243), Earl of Kent, Constable of Dover, and Chief Justice of England, in the early decades of the thirteenth century. The exact foundation date continues to be debated. Patronage of the hospital later passed to King Henry III (1207–1272) and subsequent medieval kings. Once established, the hospital benefitted from a large revenue derived from the numerous manors, houses, mills, and other

property in its possession. In 1227, Henry III granted the hospital the title of the issues of the passage of the port of Dover.

3.2 It is clear that the hospital complex and its grounds eventually expanded to cover a considerable area which extended north-eastwards across the river. The principal buildings, however, were always focused adjacent to the London road, south-west of the river, next to the Lady Well.

3.3 An inventory of the contents of the Maison Dieu dated 23rd January 1534 lists the following apartments and structures associated with the hospital: the Church, the Vestry, the Great Chamber called the Hoostrye, and a little chamber within it, Sir Peers Chamber, the chamber over the water, and another little chamber in that, the Master's chamber, the Kitchen, the new Kitchen, the Infirmary, the Garner (store/granary), the Master's stables, the stables for the best cart horses, the second stable, the brewhouse, the bakehouse, and the barns (Walcott 1868, 274). From this list some impression may be gained as to the extent and complexity of the hospital site in its final medieval form, immediately prior to its formal dissolution some ten years later.

3.4 Surviving later than many religious establishments under Henry VIII, St Mary's hospital was formally dissolved in 1544 but was soon found a new use. For much of the period between 1544 and 1814, the site was occupied by the victualling department of the Royal Navy, who converted parts of the building into a brewhouse and bakehouse, and into store rooms for wheat flour and biscuits. Accordingly, the hospital buildings underwent numerous alterations during this period (Batcheller 1845, 87).

3.5 The origins of the idea for using the old hospital complex as a victualling office may well stem from the fact that the final two Masters of the Maison Dieu, John Clerk and then John Thompson, had also been in charge of major harbour works at Dover. With greatly reduced numbers of pilgrims then passing through Dover, presumably, the existing hospital buildings were able to serve as something of a works depot during these sixteenth-century harbour improvements, providing useful storage and workshop facilities. This, together with the fact the hospital complex was set within a secure walled enclosure, made the site a convenient choice, even if the developing harbour was some distance away.

3.6 In 1831, the hospital complex was purchased from the victualling board, who no longer had any use for it, by the Government Board of Ordnance. Under this body, the oldest, north-western part of the medieval building was demolished and many other changes made.

3.7 The medieval building complex saw further significant changes during the nineteenth century when it was extensively remodelled, following its purchase by Dover Corporation from the Board of Ordnance in 1834. William Batcheller records:

'The corporation purchased the premises of government in 1834, for the purpose of constructing a prison, town-hall, and sessions house. The town-hall occupies the whole space of the remaining section of the church [Stone Hall], a new entrance being made to it under the south-west window, and over a former entrance. Under the hall are the cells for the prisoners.' (Batcheller 1845, 87).

3.8 The new conversion work included the development of Mayoral offices, Council Chambers and Magistrates' Courts. A new gaol was built adjacent in 1836. In 1859 the surviving medieval complex was extensively and carefully restored by Ambrose Poynter and William Burges but the passing of the new *Prisons Act* in 1865 required massive rebuilding of the adjacent nineteenth-century prison. This work was completed in 1868 and included the construction of a new four storey cell block on

the north-west side of the Stone Hall, across the site of the original Pilgrim's Hall. Major damage to any previously surviving medieval remains is likely to have occurred in the process and several archaeological discoveries were made during the new building work (see below).

3.9 In 1877 the prison was closed. Its subsequent demolition allowed the Connaught Hall to be erected on the site in 1881. The new hall was designed by William Burges as a grand assembly room, in neo-Gothic style. This hall remains in regular use today.

4. Previous archaeological investigations at the Maison Dieu

(based on Parfitt 2019a)

4.1 The original medieval hospital is thought to have comprised a single principal building, known as the Pilgrims' Hall. This no longer survives, having been demolished by the Board of Ordnance in 1831 (see above, Batcheller 1845, 87). Its site now lies below the Connaught Hall. Other, subsequent, medieval buildings relating to the extended hospital complex are, however, still extant. These buildings are: the Chapel (later Sessions House, dated 1227), the Stone Hall (c. AD 1250–1350) and the fourteenth-century South-west Tower. Opportunities to directly examine the Maison Dieu site's buried archaeology have been, and will continue to be, rare. There follows a summary of the results of the known archaeological interventions/discoveries. It seems likely that further discoveries, casually made by various workmen over the years, have gone unrecorded.

4.2 Discoveries in 1867

4.2.1 The first prison at the Maison Dieu was constructed in 1836 but the Prison Act of 1865 required major works to be undertaken in order to bring the establishment up to current standards (detailed in Pitsilli-Graham 2015, 30). Work began in May 1867, with the contractor, Mr A. Matthews, being required to give all relics and items of interest found during the works to Dover Museum (Pitsilli-Graham 2015, 31). Clearly, the archaeological potential of the site had been fully recognised by the Corporation.

4.2.2 Interesting discoveries turned-up soon after work began. The *Dover Express* for 21 June 1867 provides the following account of these finds:

'The following is a more detailed description than we could give in our last of the stone slab discovered by the workmen on excavating the ground for the purpose of getting in the foundations of the new buildings on the north-west side of the Town Hall. It is a sepulchral slab of Purbeck or Petworth marble, which the workmen found lying face downwards. This slab measures 7 feet in length by 29 inches in width at the upper and 21 inches at the lower end. The edge is moulded with a bold hollow, and the whole surface has been polished, though now much eroded. It is sculptured at the upper part with a cross fleury, that is to say, a cross terminating in four fleur de lis, (much defaced) placed on a stem which extends the whole length of the slab, and is surmounted by a shield of the form known as the 'heater' shield, 39 inches in length by 24 in width the top. The shield is slightly convex, but has never been sculptured with any armorial bearings. There are no marks any inscription or date, but the character of the slab denotes that it is not later than the fourteenth century, and may possibly earlier. From the fact of its having found with the face downwards it must have been removed and turned over. It lay about eighteen inches below the surface.

On continuing the excavation, workmen came upon some solid blocks of chalk running parallel with and about eleven from the present wall of the Maison Dieu, about 3 feet 6 inches wide and from 18 to 24 inches deep. On the inner or southern side of this foundation

wall were two coffins, about 6 feet internal, constructed of chalk, were uncovered, the skeletons in each being perfect and hitherto undisturbed. Those coffins were without covers, and in two pieces, the upper rounded to receive head and shoulders, the other portion square. They were lying close to and in line with the foundation wall, the head of the one being about four inches from the foot of the other. From the wet condition of the soil, all trace of vestments had perished, and from the close contact of the skeletons with the coffins very little could have enveloped the bodies. The arms and hands were extended, and from the appearance of the teeth the bodies had been those of persons advanced in years.'

4.2.3 From the description of the find-spot 'on the north-west side of the Town Hall', it would seem that the area concerned lay under what is now the Connaught Hall, probably on the site of the original medieval hospital building demolished in 1831. Pitsilli-Graham (2015, 30) notes that there are two letters preserved in the Kent County Archives containing details of the same discovery. One contains a sketch of the decoration present on the 'sepulchral slab'.

4.2.4 These were important discoveries and would seem to represent the earliest record of excavated medieval finds at the Maison Dieu site.

4.3 *H.M. Office of Works repairs, 1925–29*

4.3.1 A programme of repair work to the medieval fabric of the building was undertaken by the Office of Works during the 1920s (Pitsilli-Graham 2015, 40). During the course of this work two medieval tomb recesses were relocated towards the north-eastern end of the south-east wall of the Stone Hall (Pitsilli-Graham 2015, 76; figs 8.13a & 8.13b). A brief note of this discovery was published in *Archaeologia Cantiana* for 1927:

'At Maison Dieu the Office of Works has finished the south side of the Hall and Tower. Near the east end of the Hall two fine arches were revealed, and in one of them a Purbeck stone coffin with skull and bones. It was found that a stone lid in the Dover Museum fitted the coffin.' (*Arch. Cant.*, 1927, xlvi).

Potentially, other such tombs recesses could exist, presently obscured by later masonry and plaster.

4.4 *Location of the Lady Well in the 1970s*

4.4.1 A remnant of the original Lady Well is said to have been unearthed during the mid-1970s (Bavington Jones 1907, revised ed. 1979–1981) but no further information concerning either the exact location or character of this discovery is presently known. The well lay on the north-western side of the building complex.

4.5 *Scissor lift shaft, 1992*

4.5.1 The excavation of a new lift shaft on the north-western side of the Maison Dieu complex, within the area of old Museum below the Connaught Hall, in 1992 revealed short sections of two separate medieval walls. Concrete and brick foundations around 2m deep relating to the subsequent construction of the Connaught Hall, together with a nineteenth-century brick-built cellar with a vaulted roof, had caused significant damage to these earlier remains.

4.5.2 One of medieval the walls (Wall 21), running parallel to Ladywell street and constructed of large greensand blocks, is likely to represent the original outer boundary wall surrounding the

medieval hospital complex on this side. The other wall (Wall 15), constructed of flint and set at a right angle to Wall 21, probably relates to a building butted onto the inside of the boundary wall. Wall 15 had been repaired during the early post-medieval period.

4.6 *Tower lift shaft, 1994*

4.6.1 An investigation within the base of the stone tower, ahead of the construction of a second new lift shaft, was undertaken by Archaeology South-East in 1994. Two medieval walls relating to the Maison Dieu complex were revealed (SEAS 1994; Kent HER ref. TR 34 SW 1789).

4.6.2 The earliest soil deposit exposed in the 1.80m deep excavated pit was a layer of dark grey clayey silt (context 91), which produced a few Roman pot sherds and a single Iron Age sherd.

4.6.3 Resting on the surface of the silt layer was a thin layer of compact, puddled chalk (context 76) which supported a layer of pebble metalling (context 72). Six pieces of Roman samian ware were contained within this metallated layer, leading the excavator to suggest that the metalling itself could be of Roman date. Certainly, pebble metalling, sometimes laid on a chalk bedding, is well-known in Roman Dover, although a medieval date sometime before the construction of the tower cannot be ruled out.

4.6.4 Following the construction of the tower, probably during the fourteenth century, a substantial new central spine wall was added within the structure, aligned north-west by south-east (wall 14). This subdivided the base of the tower into two chambers of unequal size. Later during the medieval period, a short cross-wall of mortared flint and chalk was added, abutting wall 14 and splitting the south-western chamber of the tower into two smaller rooms.

4.6.5 Within the north-eastern chamber, an extensive layer of coal dust up to 0.20m thick, containing glass and clay tobacco pipe fragments of probable seventeenth-century date, was taken to indicate the use of the area as a coal store, perhaps associated with a bakery which formed part of the Victualling Office complex.

4.6.6 Later still, another cross-wall (wall 16), of mortared stone and brick, was added into the north-east chamber.

4.6.7 The Board of Ordnance plan for 1830 confirms that medieval walls 14 and 15 were then still in existence but by 1834 cross-wall 15 would seem to have been removed, with the larger wall 14 probably following not long after. Wall 16 is not recorded on any plan and was perhaps of no great significance.

4.7 *East window, February 1994*

4.7.1 A watching brief was undertaken during renovation work at the Visitor Information Centre on the lower ground floor of the Maison Dieu complex, under the nineteenth-century Council Chamber, in 1994. This allowed the recording of the lower part of the original great east window of the medieval Stone Hall. Hidden beneath recent internal plaster, a section of the base and the splayed external south reveal of the window was exposed.

4.7.2 The base of the window was marked by a horizontal ragstone plinth which lay 2.73m above the modern concrete floor level. This floor level roughly corresponds with present-day ground level outside. The south reveal of the window was formed from large blocks of Caen stone and extended upwards for a distance of around 4 metres above the window base.

4.7.3 The Caen stone showed clear signs of weathering, confirming that this had been an outside face before being enclosed by the Victorian structure. At some date, the window had been blocked with flint (lower part) and brick (higher part), then plastered over (CAT Archives; *Arch Cant.* 1994, 460).

5. Aims and methodology

5.1 Aims

Given the archaeological/historical interest of the site (see above) and as a response to the excavation works necessary, an archaeological input in the form of a watching brief was required. The main aims of this watching brief were to:-

- a) record details of any medieval or early post-medieval structures or deposits exposed;
- b) recover any historical artefacts revealed;
- c) assess the extent of nineteenth-century damage to any earlier remains;
- d) provide advice and guidance to the ground workers and represent the views of Historic England on site;
- e) help safeguard the Ancient Monument from any accidental damage during the course of the works.

5.2 Methodology

5.2.1 The archaeological fieldwork entailed the close monitoring of all the excavation works undertaken (Frontispiece). The building contractor gave every assistance on site. All excavated deposits were inspected, with spoil from the excavations being continually searched by eye for the presence and collection of artefacts.

5.2.2 Given the relatively small volumes of soil generated, the slow speed at which it was produced and its mainly nineteenth-century date, the use of a metal-detector was deemed to be superfluous. Each pit was recorded by means of a scaled plan, section and photographs.

5.2.3 All excavated deposits were numbered and described on standard context sheets. The complete archive for the fieldwork consists of five measured plans, six sections, thirty-five recorded contexts and eighty-six digital photographs.

6. Information recorded in the test pits, 2020

6.1 Location 1 - *Gentlemen's lavatories on the south-west side of the complex (TP 1 & 3)*

This location lay within the gentlemen's lavatories on the south-western side of the building complex, adjacent to the High Street. Two separate test pits (TPs 1 & 3) were dug here. As far as can be determined from the present (incomplete) evidence, these test pits fell outside the area of the original medieval Pilgrims' Hall, just within the enclosing hospital boundary wall shown on early maps and plans.

6.2 Test Pit 1 (Figs 3, 4 & 9)

6.2.1 This was dug in the south cubicle of the gents' toilets under the south corner of the Connaught Hall (Fig. 3). The pit was roughly 0.80m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.65m below floor level all over, with a very narrow sondage, no more than 0.30m across, taken down to -1.60m in the

central sector (Fig. 4). The lowest deposit revealed in the sondage was a layer of cream-brown gritty clay containing numerous sub-rounded flints (some large) and small chalk pieces (Context 110). This deposit was at least 0.42m thick and continued below the water-table, which was encountered at – 1.55m below floor level (c. 5.26m aOD). This layer is probably best interpreted as valley-side colluvium rather than a riverine deposit and can probably be equated with the head deposit recorded by the Geological Survey as being the natural geology in this area.

6.2.2 Context 110 was overlain by another clay deposit, also seemingly natural (Context 109). In detail, this consisted of a light brown clay with frequent chalk grits and moderate quantities of rounded flints. The contact between this and the layer below was diffuse and not well defined in the narrow sondage. The top of this layer was level with concrete foundation 108 (see below).

6.2.3 The surviving top of clay layer 109 was cut by a substantial concrete foundation relating to the construction of the Connaught Hall (Context 108), although its original surface had probably been truncated during the Victorian construction works.

6.2.4 The full depth of the concrete could not be confirmed but it was at least 0.75m thick and cut into the water-table. The foundation itself supported a triple-stepped brick footing for the main wall of the building (Context 106), which at this point included a shallow projecting pier (Fig. 9).

6.2.5 A thin layer of bitumen (Context 105) had been incorporated into the construction of the wall. This appeared to represent a damp course. It was also noted that individual bricks used in the wall footings showed traces of lime-wash, implying that they had been re-used from some earlier structure, very probably the prison which formerly occupied the site.

6.2.6 The concrete foundation was sealed by a thin layer of trodden gritty soil (Context 107) which also abutted the lowest offset of the brick wall footing. This was followed by a thicker dump of ash and cinders containing some broken brick and decayed wood fragments (Context 104). No closely datable material was recovered from either of these layers. The ash dump was sealed by the modern concrete and tile flooring (Contexts 101, 102 & 103).

6.3 Test Pit 3 (Figs 3, 6 & 10)

6.3.1 This was also cut in the gents' toilets and lay some 1.90m north of Test Pit 1 (Fig. 3). It was rectangular in shape and measured about 0.58m (NE-SW) by 0.70m (NW-SE). It was taken to a depth of 0.85m and in the base revealed the concrete foundation (Context 307) of walls relating to the Connaught Hall above (Walls 305 & 307; Figs 6 & 10).

6.3.2 At a height of 0.50m above to the top of the foundation, the walls incorporated a thin horizontal layer of bitumen, similar to that seen in Test Pit 1. Again, this would appear to represent a damp course.

6.3.3 Also as seen in Test Pit 1, individual bricks exposed in the wall footings showed traces of lime-wash, implying that they had been re-used from some earlier structure.

6.3.4 The concrete foundation was sealed by modern dump material which also abutted the face of the wall footings. This consisted of two successive layers of ashy loam with cinders and broken brick (Contexts 304 & 306). No closely datable material was recovered from either layer. The dumps were sealed by the modern concrete and tile flooring (Contexts 301, 302 & 303).

6.4 Location 2 - Kitchen Store (TP 2)

This location falls close to the centre of the standing building complex, in the area of the present kitchen stores. A single pit was cut here (TP 2), set in the western corner of the kitchen store room (Frontispiece), adjacent to a brick-built dumb waiter shaft (disused). The pit fell within the probable site of the now lost Pilgrims' Hall. The nineteenth-century York Stone slab floor here was carefully lifted in order to examine the deposits below.

6.4.1 Test Pit 2 (Frontispiece, Figs 3 & 5)

This was dug close to the centre of the building complex, in the west corner of the Kitchen Store below the eastern corner of the Connaught Hall, about 1.50m north-west of the north-western wall of the extant Stone Hall (Frontispiece & Fig. 3). The pit measured about 0.45m (NE-SW) by 0.53m (NW-SE) and was excavated to a depth of 0.90m below floor level all over, with a small sondage, no more than 0.25m across, taken down to -1.60m in the east corner (Fig. 5). The store room floor level here stood at about 6.70m aOD.

6.4.2 The lowest deposit revealed in the sondage was a layer of clean chalk rubble (Context 208). This was at least 0.30m thick and continued below the water-table, which was encountered at -1.40m from floor level (5.30m aOD). The chalk deposit is probably to be interpreted as a deliberate dump of material intended to consolidate low-lying wet ground close to the river bank. The deposit produced no datable finds.

6.4.3 Rubble layer 208 was overlain by a mixed deposit of dark grey-brown organic clay and small chalk rubble, also seemingly deliberately dumped (Context 207). This layer was about 0.14m thick and the organic clay incorporated tufa pellets and occasional rounded flints. There seems little doubt that this material represents redeposited riverine sediment. Again, no datable finds were recovered.

6.4.4 Resting on dump layer 207 was a thin make-up deposit consisting of a 0.08m thick layer of cream-grey clay loam with abundant small chalk grits and occasional small brown flint pebbles (Context 206). This formed the bedding for an overlying layer of large flint beach cobbles (Context 205) which appeared to represent a deliberately laid surface about 0.17m thick. No finds were recovered.

6.4.5 Cutting in from the top of cobble layer 205 were the concrete foundations of the walls for the Connaught Hall (Context 204). The full depth of these foundations could not be positively confirmed but they were at least 0.70m thick and cut into the water-table. These concrete foundations supported triple-stepped brick footings for the main walls of the building (Context 204).

6.4.6 The concrete foundations (204) were sealed by dump material (Contexts 203) which also abutted the face of the wall footings. This deposit comprised a grey gritty loam with red and yellow brick rubble and it produced two small sherds of post-medieval pottery. The dump was sealed by the modern concrete and Yorkstone slab flooring (Contexts 201 & 202).

6.5 Location 3 - Small courtyard (TP 5 & 6)

6.5.1 A small, fully enclosed, paved yard lies immediately to the north-west of the thirteenth-century chapel within the Maison Dieu complex, across the area thought to have been occupied by the original medieval Pilgrims' Hall. The surface of the modern yard lies at about 6.23m aOD. Two test pits were excavated here, one (TP 6) lay immediately adjacent to the chapel wall, but no medieval remains were discovered.

6.6 Test Pit 5 (Figs 3, 7 & 11)

6.6.1 This was dug in the western corner of the courtyard, immediately outside the present-day Kitchens (Fig. 3). Its main purpose was to examine the foundation of the Kitchen wall (Context 503) and that of the adjacent wall (Context 504) forming the north-western side of the courtyard.

6.6.2 The excavated pit measured around 0.65m square at the top and was taken to a depth of about 0.64m below yard level, with a very narrow slot dug to -1.23m to establish the thickness of the concrete foundation associated with Wall 504 (see below).

6.6.3 It was soon confirmed that the wall of the Kitchen (503) had no formal foundation, having been built directly off the surface of the paved yard (Context 501, Figs 7 & 11). It abutted Wall 504 and was clearly a later addition, which had significantly reduced the original length of the courtyard. Wall 504 itself was of much more substantial construction and was undoubtedly part of the Burges plan.

6.6.4 It was impossible to determine what preceding deposits the foundation of Wall 504 had been cut through. As revealed in the narrow slot, there was merely a groundwater filled void adjacent to the edge of the foundation, the interpretation of which could not be determined from the limited area exposed. It did not appear to be a purposefully constructed drain or culvert.

6.6.5 The foundation for Wall 504 was of concrete at least 0.60m thick, supporting the familiar triple-stepped brick footing for the main wall. As seen in other test pits, the brickwork of the main wall at a point about 0.30m above the top of the stepped footing incorporated a thin layer of bitumen apparently serving as a damp course. Just above the level of the present courtyard surface, the brickwork was replaced by neatly squared ragstone ashlar in imitation of medieval walling (although in reality much finer than any such medieval stonework surviving in Dover).

6.6.6 Over the void, sealing the top of the concrete foundation and abutting the stepped footing of the main wall was a dump layer of grey gritty loam containing some brick, chalk and flint rubble (Context 505). This was 0.55m thick and produced a single sherd of post-medieval stoneware, not closely datable but most probably pre-nineteenth century. It is possible that this deposit was filling a broader foundation trench whose edge lay outside the excavation.

6.6.7 The soil and rubble dump layer 505 was sealed by a 0.10m thick layer of hard grey mortar (Context 502) which served as the bedding for the Yorkstone paving slabs of the current yard surface (here Context 501).

6.7 Test Pit 6 (Figs 3, 8 & 12)

6.7.1 This was dug on the south-eastern side of the courtyard, down the external face of a wall potentially incorporating medieval work, either as a section of the north-western wall of the thirteenth-century hospital chapel or more likely, part of the arcade between the northern and southern parts of the lost pilgrim's hall (Fig. 3). In the event, only nineteenth-century brick footings (Context 605) were revealed in the excavation, with no medieval fabric at all (Fig. 12). Above ground level, the entire exterior face of this wall has been cement rendered and where visible internally it comprises either modern plaster or brickwork. There is thus no clear evidence for the presence of any surviving medieval walling here. The external wall rendering, which in the exposed section, covered vertically set red tiles, seems to imply that in earlier times damp penetration had been a problem with this wall.

6.7.2 The excavated pit was around 0.50m square and was taken to a maximum depth of 0.63m, which was some distance below the base of the wall footing (Figs 8 & 12). The lowest deposit revealed was a layer of light grey chalky clay loam with frequent small and medium sized chalk lumps, some red brick rubble and small flint pebbles (Context 604). This layer was at least 0.22m thick and continued below the base of the excavation. It produced no datable finds although the brick fragments present appeared to be broadly of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century date. The deposit was clearly a deliberate dump or levelling layer and it extended under the brick wall footing, indicating an earlier date.

6.7.3 The exposed wall footing (Context 605) was 0.29m deep and consisted of three courses of somewhat roughly laid yellow and red bricks set in a hard grey mortar with lime specks. In terms of construction, this stood apart from the neatly prepared, stepped nineteenth-century brick wall footings seen in all the other test pits.

6.7.4 The footing rested directly on the surface of soil layer 604 with no obvious construction trench visible. Abutting the north-west face of the footing was a dump layer consisting of a grey gritty loam with crushed grey mortar, brick rubble and small ragstone fragments (Context 603). It is not impossible that this deposit was filling a broader foundation trench whose edge lay outside the excavation.

6.7.5 The soil and rubble dump layer 603 was sealed by a 0.09m thick layer of hard dark grey concrete (Context 602) which served as the bedding for the Yorkstone paving slabs of the current yard surface (here Context 601).

6.7.6 The absence of any visible medieval wall fabric in the excavated pit could suggest that nineteenth-century rebuilding or perhaps underpinning has been quite extensive in this area. The shallow depth and comparatively poor construction of the exposed wall footing stands in marked contrast to the other nineteenth-century foundations exposed. These were specifically associated with construction the Connaught Hall 1880–83 and this could well suggest that the present footing relates to earlier nineteenth-century work, perhaps undertaken 1834–67. Stratified medieval floors or other remains may yet survive below the lowest soil layer exposed (604).

7. Finds

7.1 Only a few finds were recovered during the watching brief. These consist of three pot-sherds, all of post-medieval date. The material has been processed following standard Canterbury Archaeological Trust procedures. It currently remains in the possession of the Trust (Dover Office) but will shortly be transferred to Dover Museum.

7.2 Pottery (not illustrated)

All three sherds of pottery recovered are of post-medieval date. Two came from Test Pit 2 (Context 203) and one from Test Pit 5 (Context 505). One sherd from Context 203 consists of a nineteenth-century chinaware rim with blue transfer printed floral decoration applied both internally and externally. The second piece from 203 is probably a little earlier and consists of a somewhat abraded wall sherd of white tin-glazed earthenware, with part of an applied raised blue flower or leaf on its internal surface; perhaps eighteenth century. The sherd from Context 505 is a wall sherd in mottled cream-brown stoneware, probably pre-nineteenth century in date.

8. Results and interpretation

8.1 The small test pits excavated in 2020 (Fig. 3) have provided some useful information concerning the nature of the below-ground deposits across the Maison Dieu complex. The size of the pits, however, was small and the lighting often poor so that any conclusions drawn from the recorded information must be treated with appropriate caution. The potential for misinterpreting archaeological remains only seen in small interventions is very well established.

8.2 Four of the excavated test pits (TPs 1, 2, 3 & 5), cut adjacent to walls relating to the Burges phase of rebuilding during the 1880s, revealed a number of consistent features in terms of the construction methods employed. On each occasion a broad concrete foundation up to 0.75m deep and cutting into the water table was found to support a substantial brick wall with a triple-stepped footing. Regularly incorporated into the wall, just above the highest offset, was a 1 to 2cm thick layer of bitumen apparently intended to serve as a damp course. Individual bricks used in the wall footings exposed in Test Pits 1 and 3 showed traces of lime-wash implying that they had been re-used from some earlier structure, very probably the prison which formerly occupied the site.

8.3 The brick wall foundation exposed in Test Pit 6 was also clearly of nineteenth-century date but its relatively shallow depth and less well-built construction sets it apart from the other foundations exposed. It most probably predates Burges's work.

8.4 Information regarding deposits pre-dating the nineteenth-century wall foundations is rather more limited. No medieval structural remains or stratified deposits were exposed at any point, even in Test Pit 6 where the base of the thirteenth-century chapel wall was anticipated (see above). The natural water-table was confirmed in Test Pits 1 and 2 at depths of -1.55m and -1.40m below floor level, respectively (5.26-5.30m aOD).

8.5 A few useful details concerning early deposits present on the site came from Test Pits 1, 2 and 6. In Test Pit 1 on the south-western side of the complex, a layer of clay and flints (Context 110) appears to represent natural colluvium derived from the slopes of the adjacent Priory Hill. The top of this deposit lay at a depth of -1.24m below floor level (5.58m aOD). An overlying deposit of light brown clay (Context 109) is likely to represent a subsequent layer of down-washed material, potentially containing early archaeological finds, although nothing was found in the excavated material. The undisturbed top of Context 109 lay at about 0.90m below floor level.

8.6 In Test Pit 2, dug close to the centre of the building complex, what appeared to be a sequence of stratified archaeological deposits was revealed, cut by 1880s foundations (Fig. 5). At a depth of 0.89m below present floor level a layer of large flint cobbles (Context 205) appeared to represent a laid metal surface (at 5.81m OD). This rested upon soil dump layers (Contexts 206 & 207) which sealed a thick deposit of clean chalk rubble (Context 208). This probably represents a deliberate dump of material intended to consolidate low-lying wet ground close to the river bank. None of these deposits produced any datable finds but the general feeling on site was that the cobble surface might be post-medieval, rather than medieval.

8.7 The absence of medieval walling in Test Pit 6 has already been noted above. What was apparent was that the nineteenth-century wall foundation exposed here rested on a levelling dump of soil and chalk rubble. This contained fragments red brick rubble probably of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century date, implying that this dump was of later post-medieval date. It was at least 0.22m thick and earlier stratified deposits could remain below.

9. General comments

9.1 All the test pits excavated were positioned for engineering, rather than archaeological, purposes. Any general conclusions inferred about archaeological remains on the site may therefore be biased accordingly. Based on the observed sections, it could be argued that during the Burges construction period a large area of the site had been reduced by between 0.60 and 0.90m below present floor level to allow the insertion of a network of concrete foundations from which the upper walls of the structure were built freestanding. The levels were then raised using appropriate soil and rubble infill to create the lower ground floors, generally standing at between 6.40 and 6.80m aOD. From the recorded information such a conclusion may seem valid but reference to the earlier archaeological work conducted during the excavation of the scissor lift pit in 1992 could indicate otherwise.

9.2 Records produced during the excavation of this lift pit (Parfitt 2019a, figs 15 & 16; see above) confirmed the general form of the 1880s construction, with offset brick footings set on a concrete foundation at least 0.60m thick. The available evidence suggested that the nineteenth-century foundations and lower walls had been set into individually cut trenches and that earlier stratified deposits survived to a higher level in between. At one point, the uppermost stratified deposit reached to within 0.30m of the present floor surface. The water-table was reached at -1.80m below floor level.

9.3 Overall, it remains entirely possible that significant archaeological deposits and structural remains yet survive in areas of the site which fell outside the small test pits excavated in 2020. Accordingly, it may be suggested that the present works do not constitute an entirely adequate archaeological evaluation of those parts of the site affected by the proposed new works. Further archaeological investigations in due course may therefore be considered prudent.

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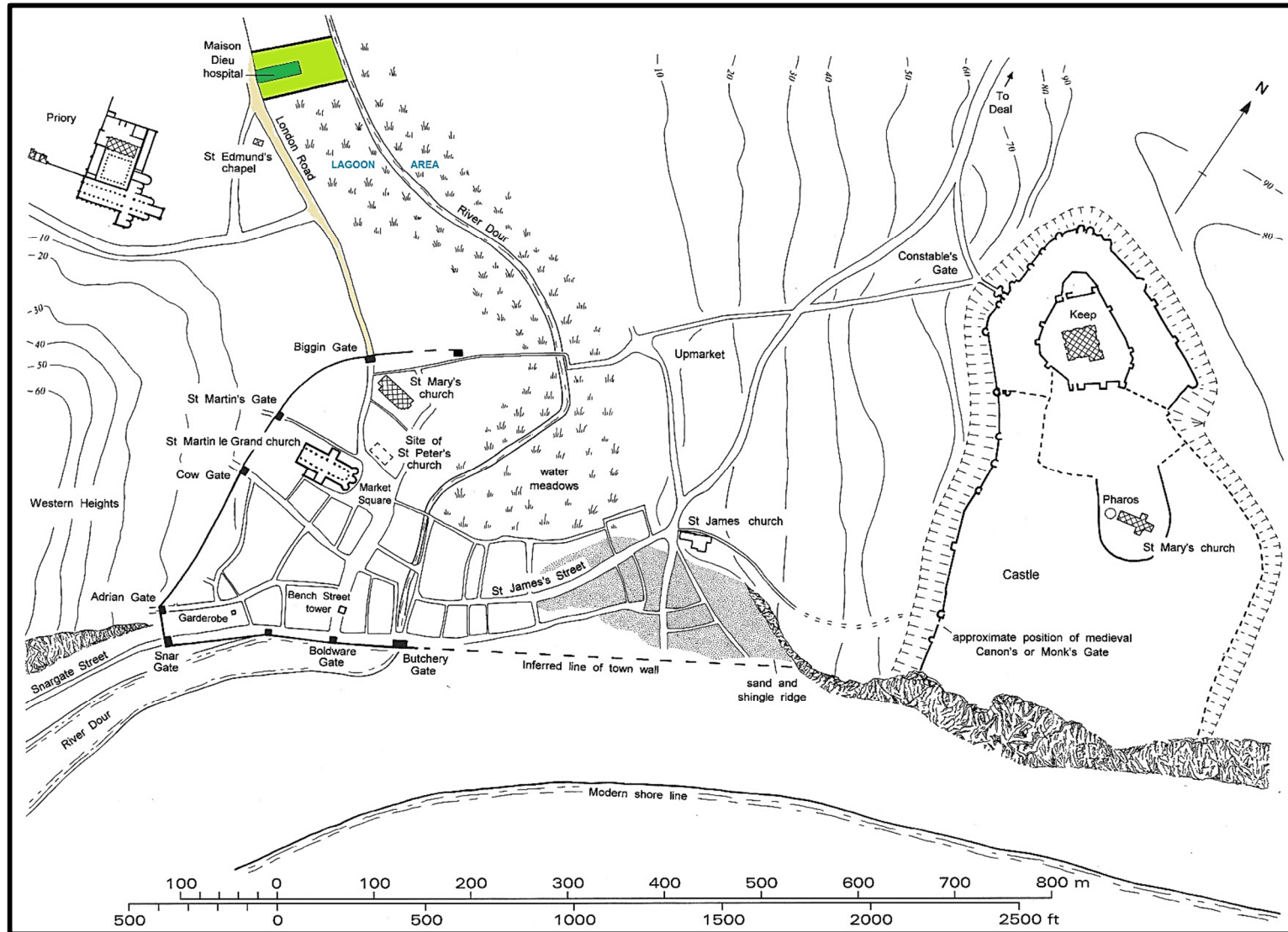


Fig. 1 Outline map of medieval Dover showing location of the Maison Dieu in relation to the walled town, Dover Priory and the castle

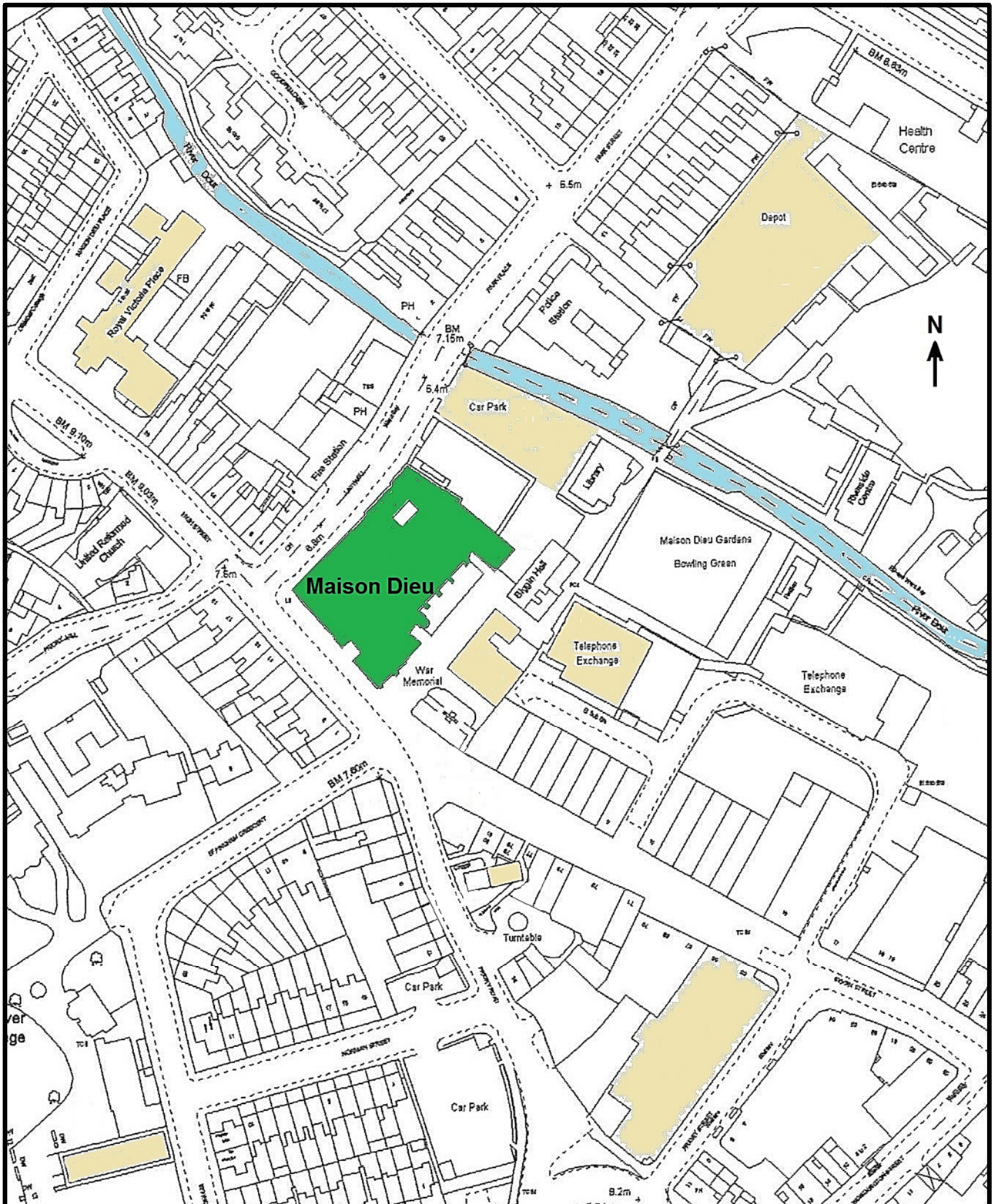
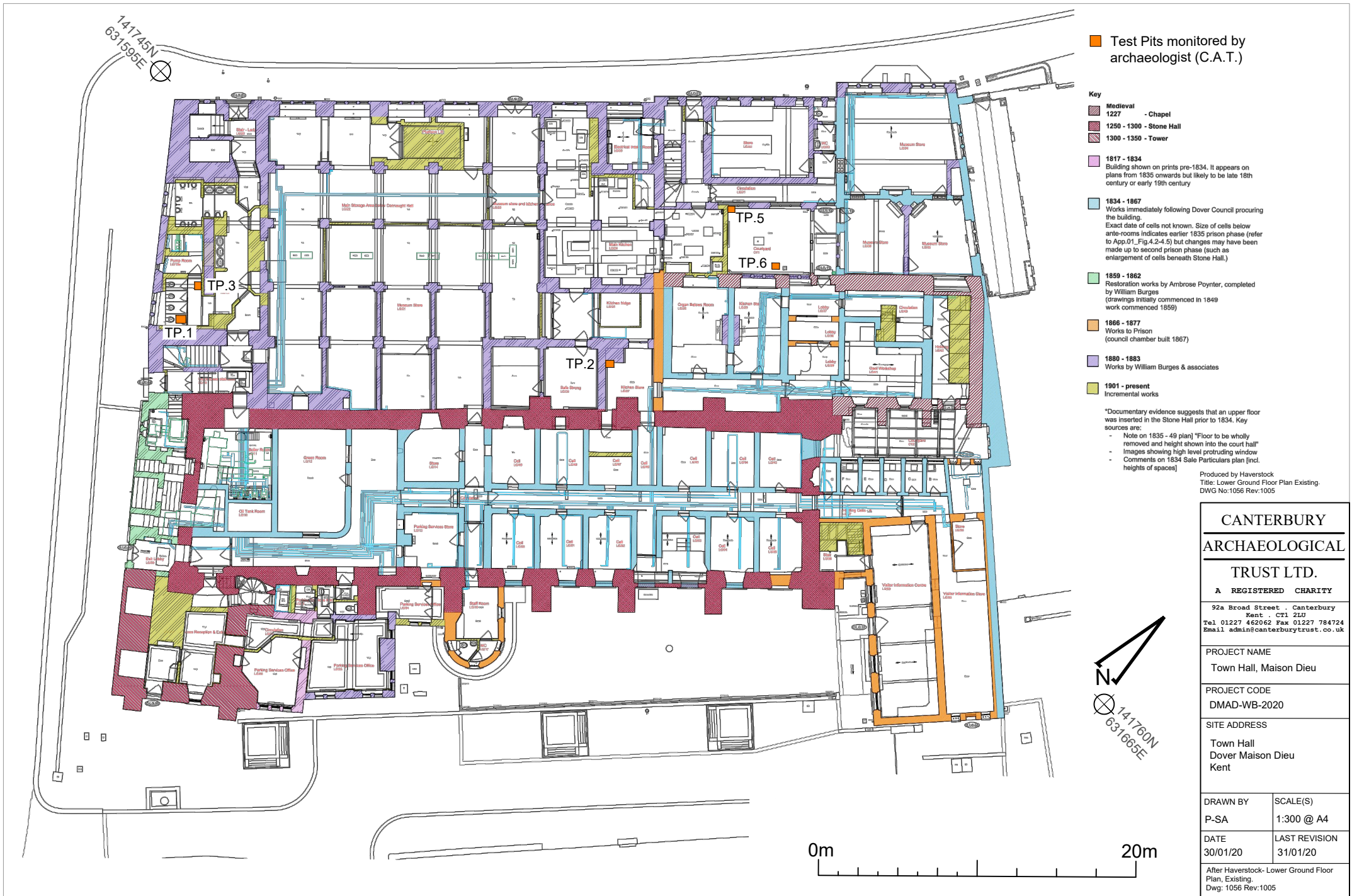


Fig. 2 Plan of the Maison Dieu area of Dover showing location of the building complex in relation to the River Dour and High Street (Based on Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, ©Crown Copyright Licence No. AL100021009)



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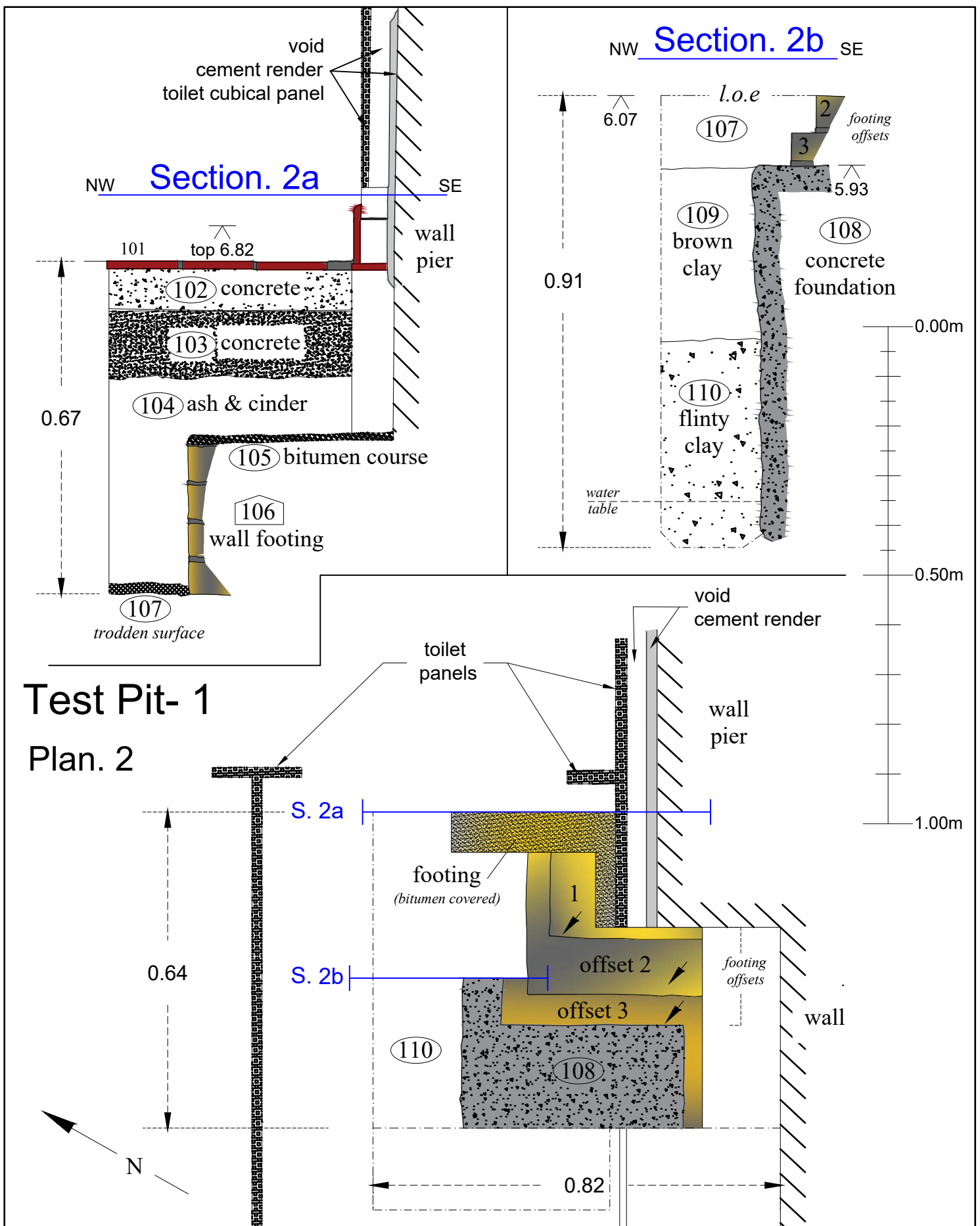
PROJECT CODE
DMAD-WB-2020

SITE ADDRESS
Town Hall
Dover Maison Dieu
Kent

DRAWN BY	SCALE(S)
P-SA	1:300 @ A4
DATE	LAST REVISION
30/01/20	31/01/20

After Haverstock- Lower Ground Floor Plan, Existing.
Dwg: 1056 Rev:1005

Fig. 3 Phase plan of the Maison Dieu complex showing location of the excavated Test Pits (based on a plan produced by Haverstock)



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	SITE ADDRESS Town Hall Dover Maison Dieu	CHECKED KP	

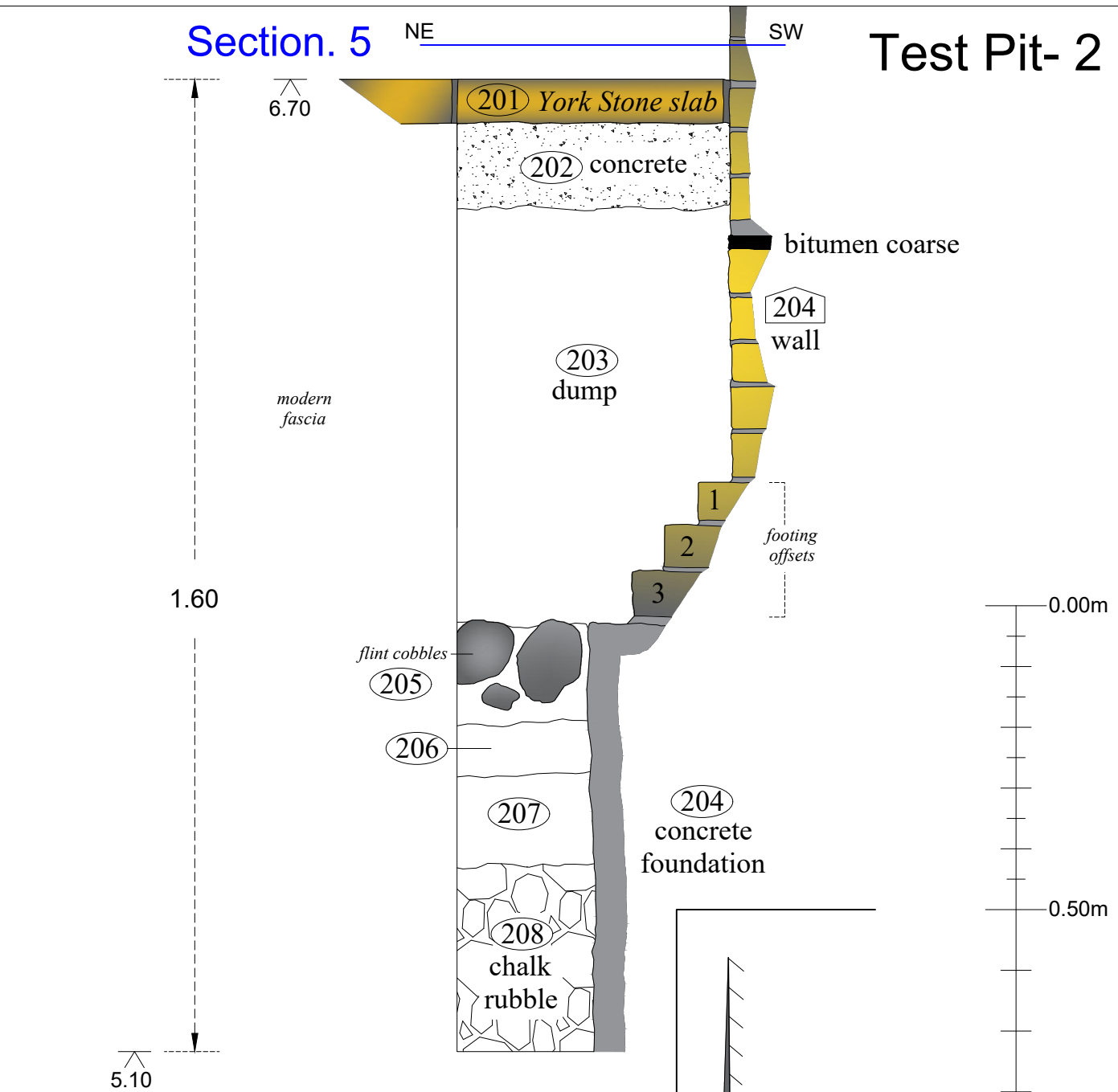
Fig. 4

Fig. 4 Plan and section through recorded deposits, Test Pit 1

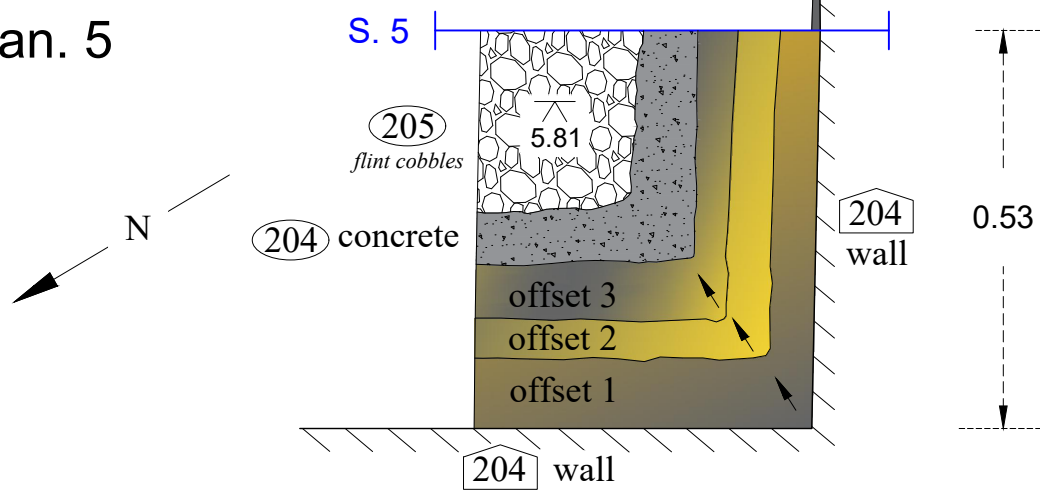
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Section. 5

Test Pit- 2



Plan. 5



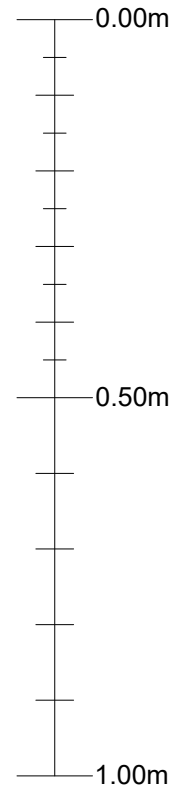
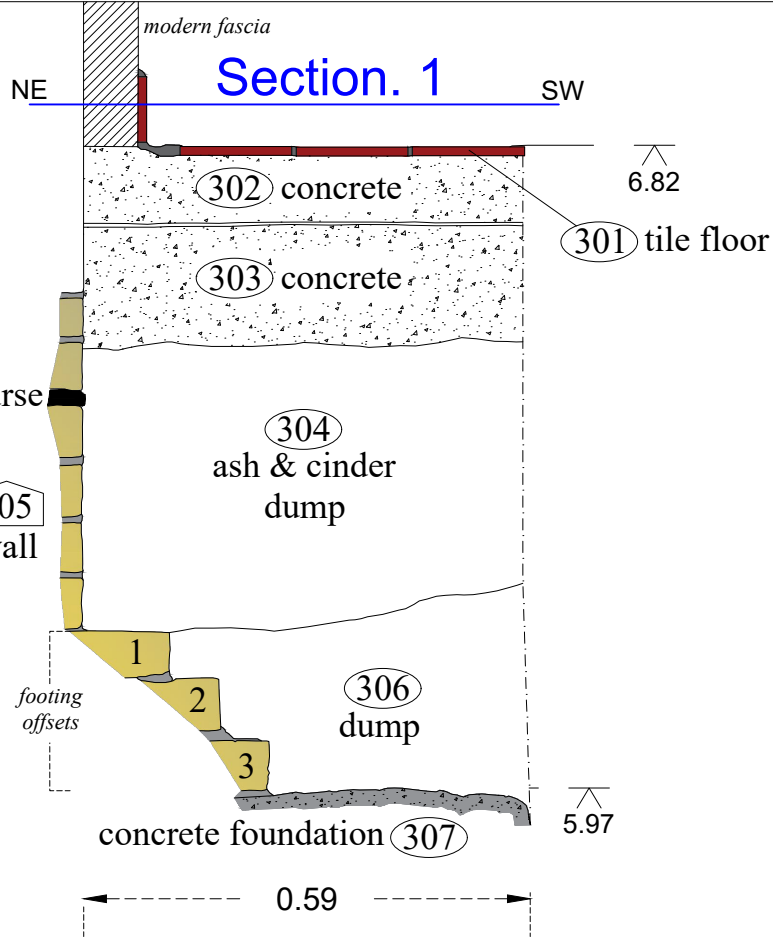
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Fig.5

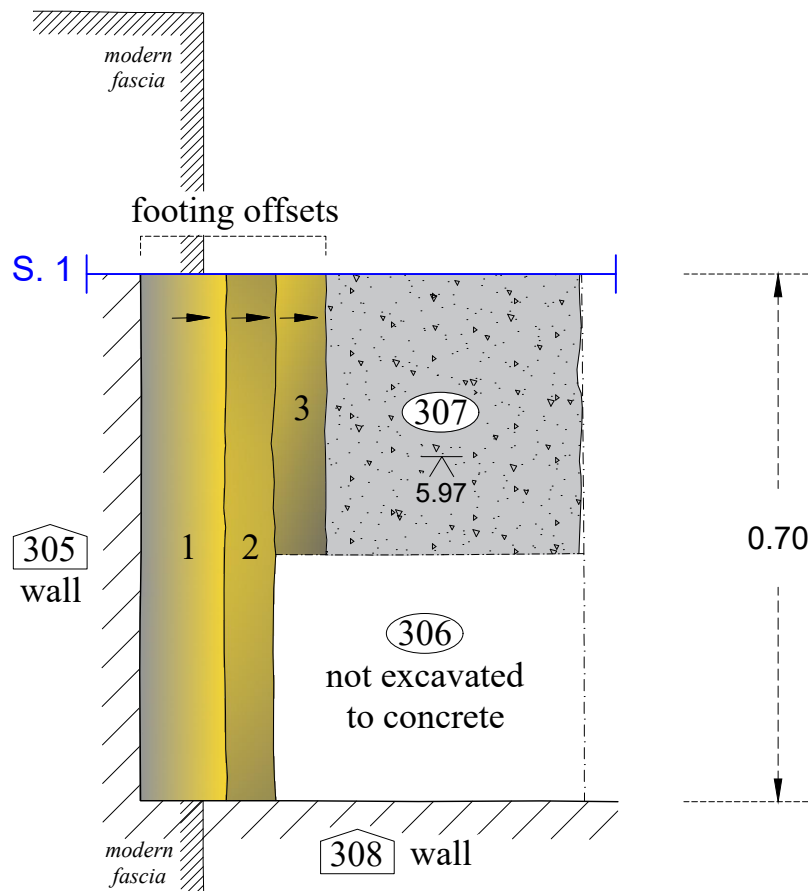
Fig. 5 Plan and section through recorded deposits, Test Pit 2

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Test Pit- 3



Plan. 1



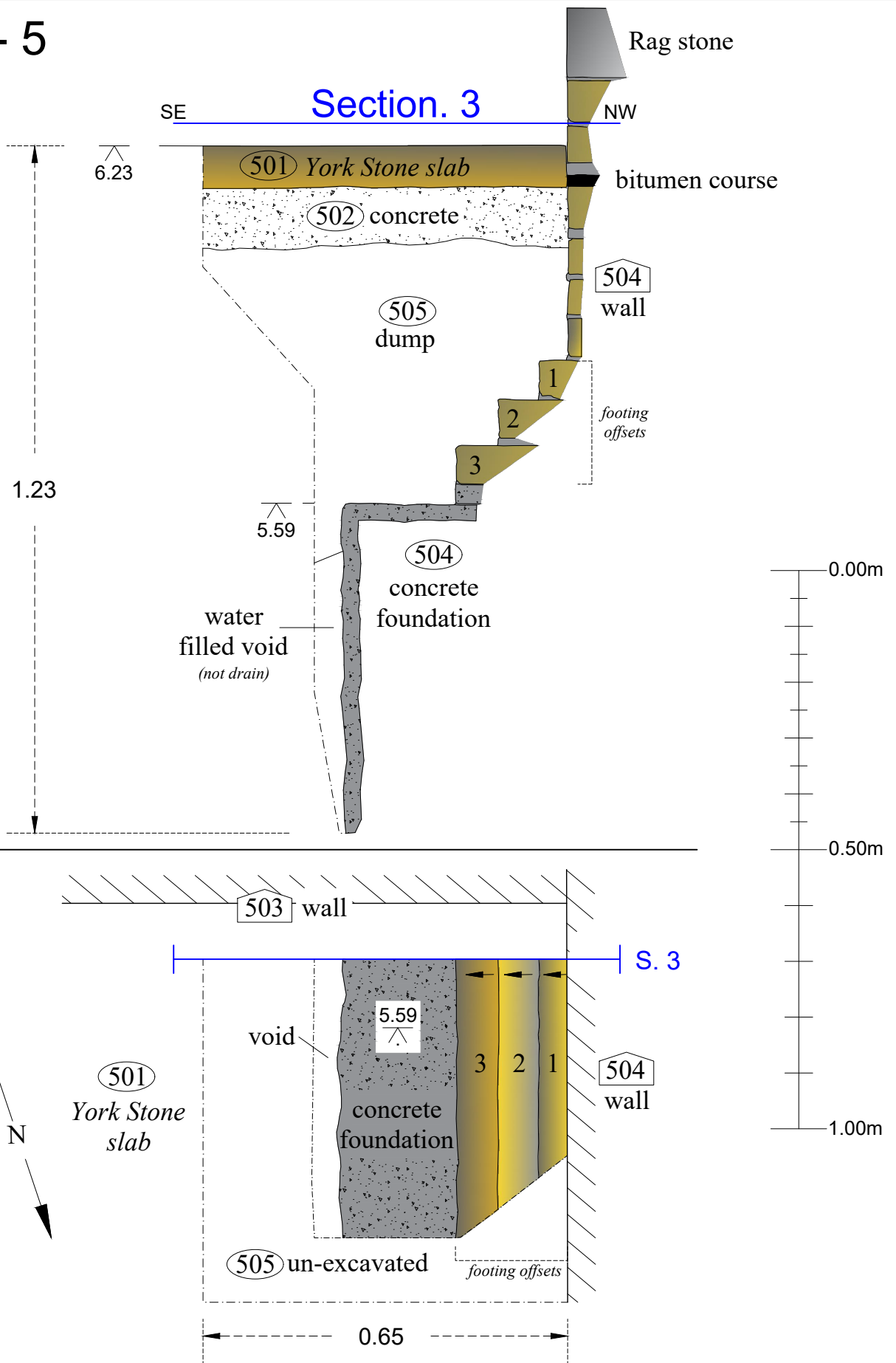
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Fig.6

Fig. 6 Plan and section through recorded deposits, Test Pit 3

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Test Pit- 5



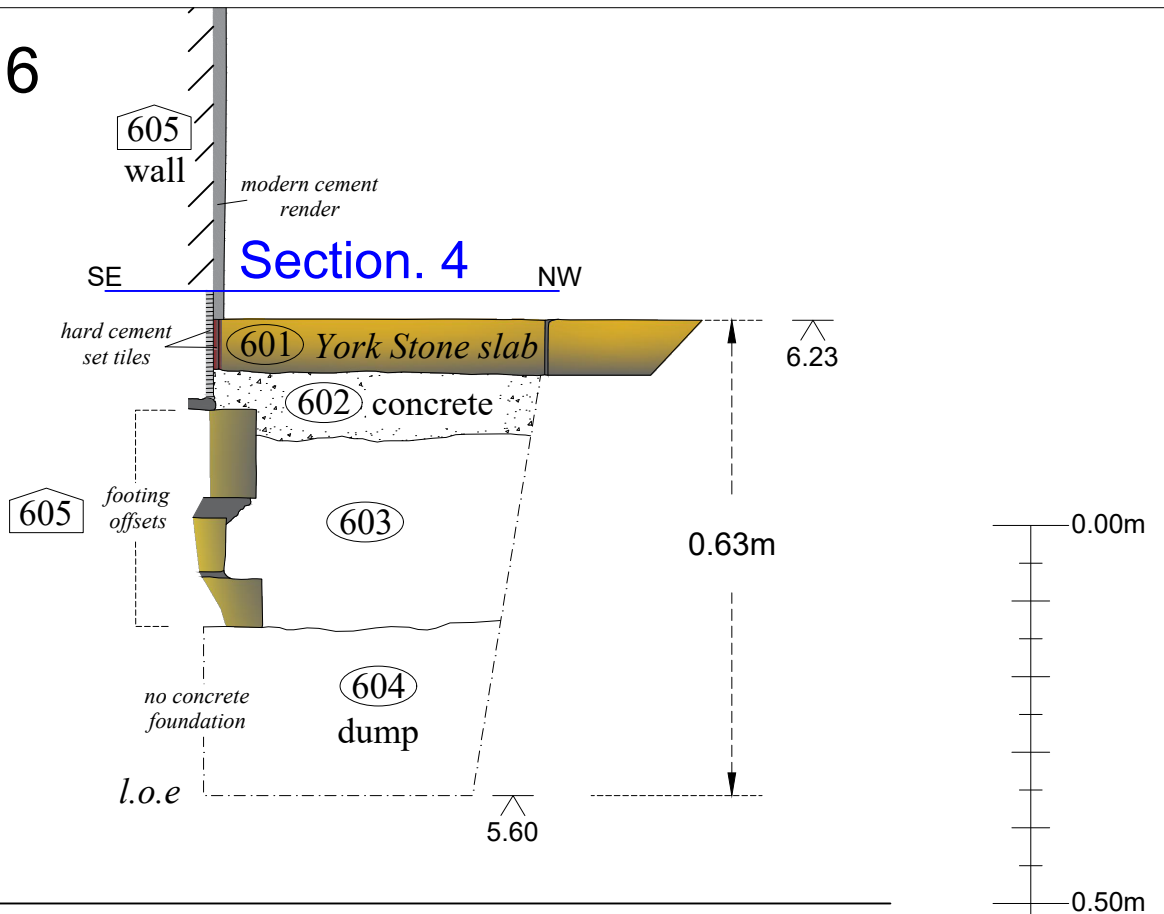
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Fig.7

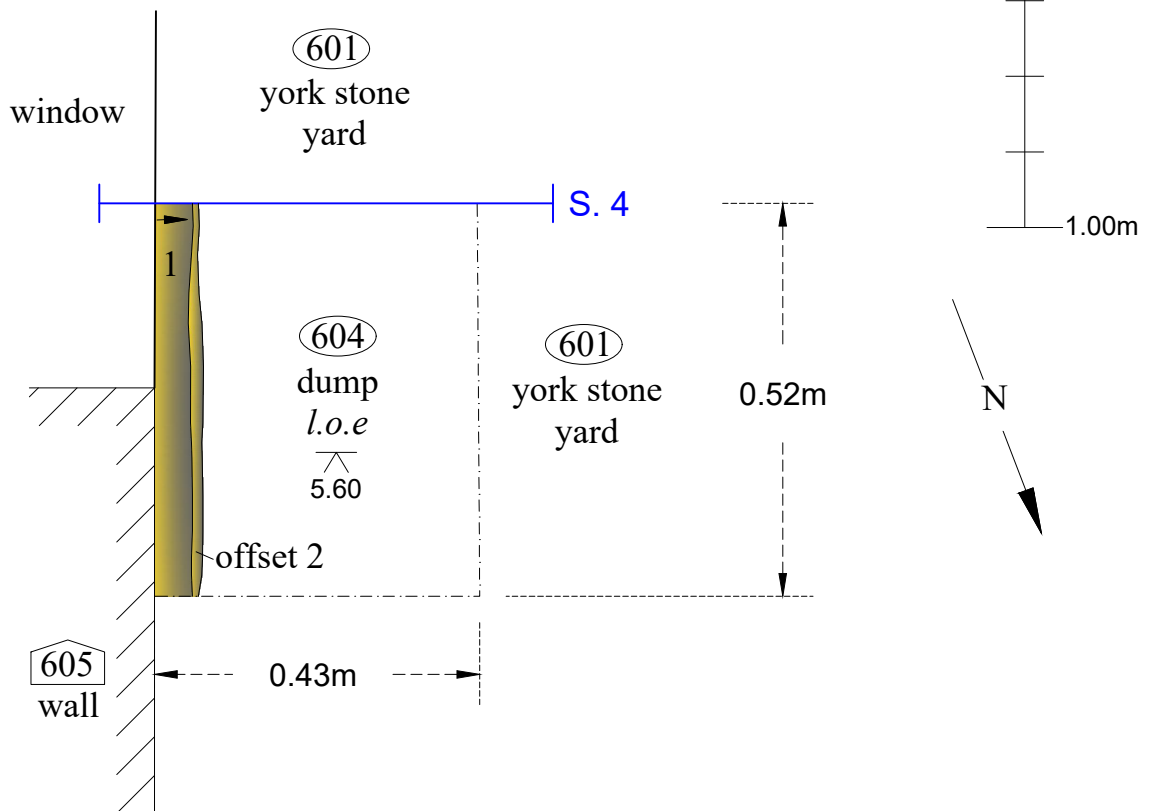
Fig. 7 Plan and section through recorded deposits, Test Pit 5

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Test Pit- 6



Plan. 4



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Fig.8

Fig. 8 Plan and section through recorded deposits, Test Pit 6

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Fig. 9 Test Pit 1 in Gents toilet. Stepped brick footing exposed, looking south-east. Scale, 50cm



Fig. 10 Test Pit 3 in Gents toilet. Stepped brick wall footing 305 with bitumen damp course, looking north-east. Scale, 50cm



Fig. 11 Test Pit 5 in courtyard. Stepped brick footing to north-west wall 504, looking west. Scale, 50cm



Fig. 12 Test Pit 6 in courtyard. Brick wall footing 605, resting on chalk dump layer 604, looking south-east. Scale, 50cm