

# Archaeological Monitoring at No.53, The Close, Norwich, Norfolk.



Prepared for Michael Johnson of National Grid Gas  
& The Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral

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**Archaeological Monitoring of Gas Pipe Work  
at No.53, The Close,  
Norwich, Norfolk.  
NR1 4EG**

<b>Location:</b>	The Cathedral Close, Norwich
<b>Grid Ref:</b>	TG 2361 0883
<b>NHES Event No:</b>	ENF129378
<b>Planning Ref:</b>	N/A
<b>Date of fieldwork:</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> of May 2012

## **1.0 Introduction**

Norvic Archaeology was commissioned by Michael Johnson of National Grid Gas, on behalf of the Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral, to undertake archaeological monitoring of gas pipe trench work at No.53, The Close, Norwich.

This work follows recent archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with extensive gas main replacement works at Norwich Cathedral Close (ENF126797). The overall scheme was undertaken to fulfil a requirement stipulated by the Norwich Cathedral Archaeologist, Roland Harris in accordance with his Brief for archaeological works, issued jointly with Ken Hamilton of the Norfolk Historic Environment Service in March 2011.

The aim of the monitoring work was to assess the presence/absence, date, nature, and extent of any buried archaeological remains and features. This report presents a brief description of the methodology followed and an archaeological interpretation of the results.

On completion of the project, the site archive will be offered for long term deposition with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

## **2.0 Summary of Results**

Cartographic evidence demonstrates that the general layout of the present range of buildings on the north side of the Lower Close has varied little since the 1700s. The range of buildings which includes No.53 dates from the 15th century onwards and are known to incorporate 13<sup>th</sup> century arcading (to the rear of No. 55), which may relate to a medieval granary.

No. 53 is notable in that it is a much later 19<sup>th</sup> century rebuild, necessitated by the collapse of the original house. A trench located against the front wall of the property encountered demolition make-up deposits of building rubble rich in flint and mortar lumps, which presumably relates to this event.

Three trenches located at the front boundary of the property and the footpath revealed late 19<sup>th</sup>-century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century cobbled surfaces buried below a variety of make-up layers, including crushed mortar, sands and cinder waste.

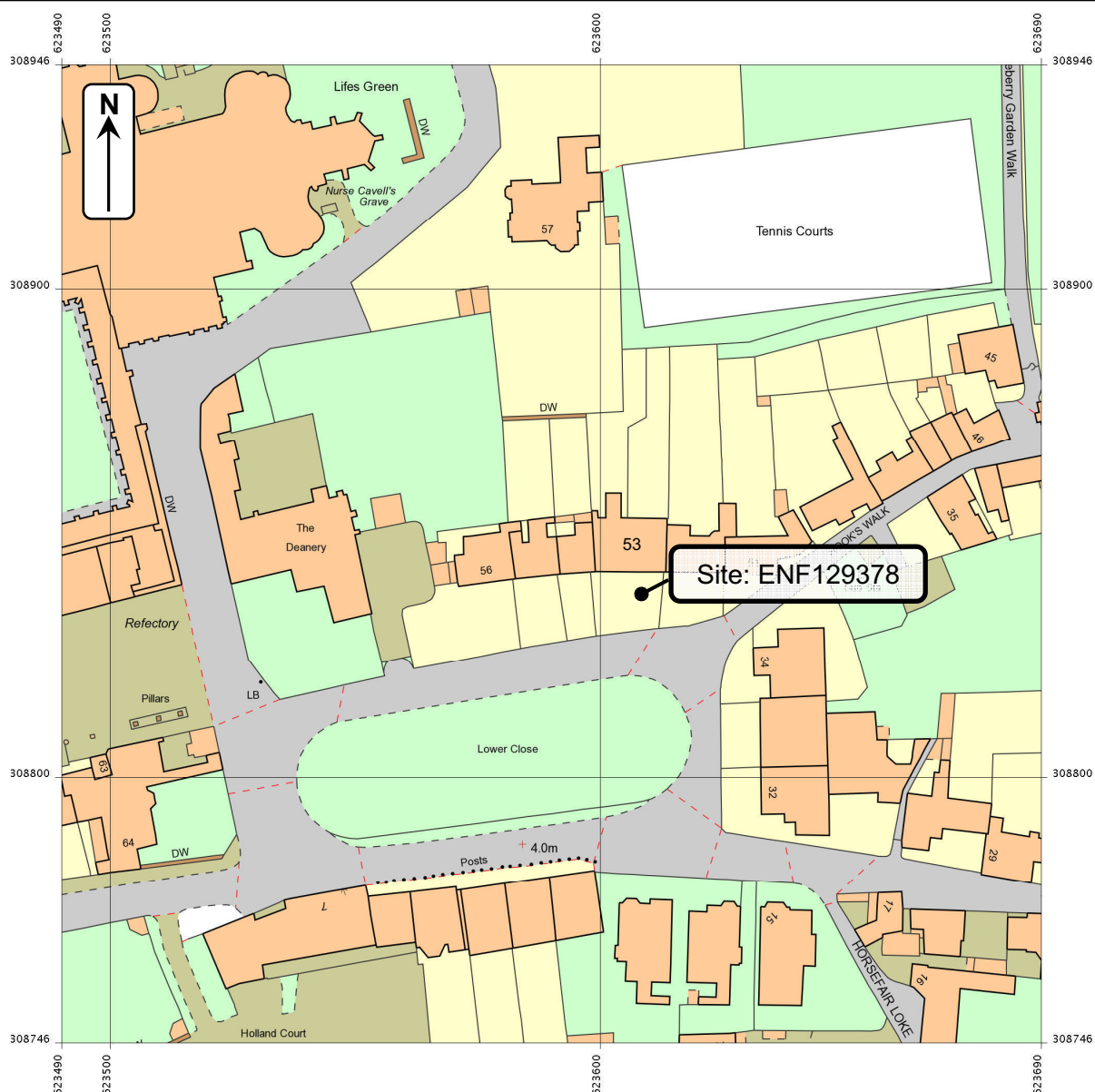
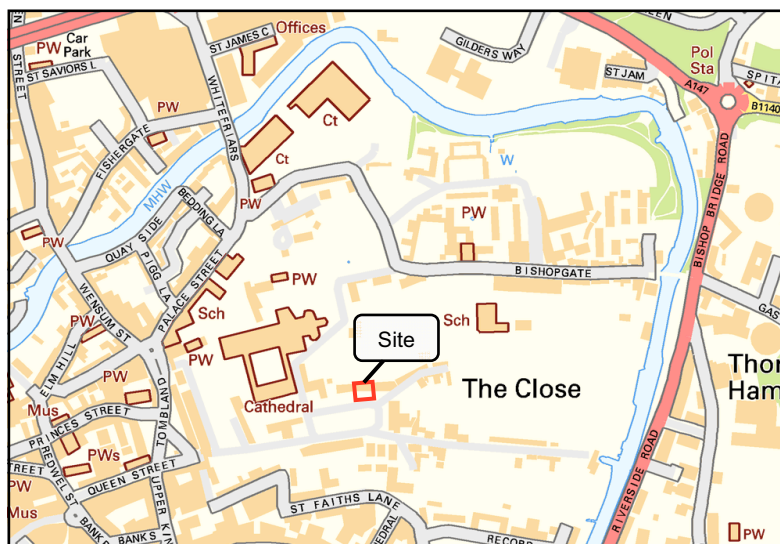
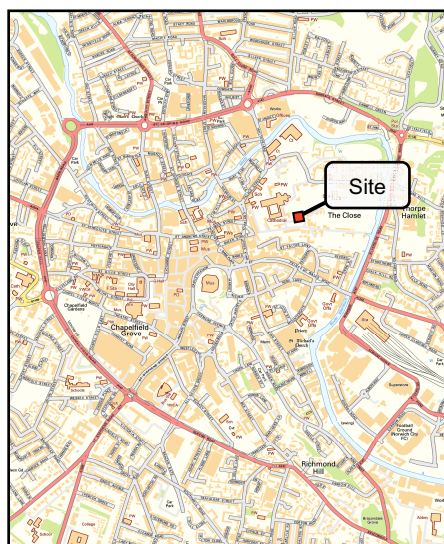


Figure 2. General Site Location



### **3.0 Geology and Topography**

The site lies in the centre of Norwich, within a bend of the River Wensum within the precinct of the medieval cathedral. Norwich Cathedral is situated within a broad curve of the river and occupies a position on gently rising ground to the western edge of the flood plain.

Topographically the site is located on sloping ground between the higher ground to the west and the river to the east. No.53 The Close is located on the northern side of the Lower Close Green at c. 5m OD.

The underlying geology consists of alluvial sands (BGS 1991) above Cretaceous Upper Chalk with silts and peats known to occupy the immediate flood plain (BGS 1985).

### **4.0 Brief Archaeological and Historical Background**

#### ***No. 53, The Close (Figure 1 & 2)***

No. 53, The Close is part of a range of buildings located in the northern side of the Lower Close. Together with Nos. 51 to 55 it is part of a range of Grade II\* Listed Buildings (English Heritage Building ID 22896) recorded on the Norfolk Historic Environment Record as NHER No. 26073.

The buildings date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, with later rebuilding, additions and alterations. They are two to three storeys, of flint with brick dressings exhibiting various internal and external post-medieval details. No. 53 is notable in that it is a much later 19<sup>th</sup> century rebuild following collapse of the original house, although retaining many features including an off-centre 'Tudor style' door with three-light casement above, a central sundial and two dormers.

The whole range is thought to have formed part of a much altered former medieval granary and Granarian's house set back from the modern street line. The rear of No. 55 has been recorded as showing the only possible surviving remnants of the granary in the form of some 13<sup>th</sup> century arcading.

A brief cartographic review shows that the current arrangement of buildings and boundary walls has changed only in minor details since the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey plan of 1885. A former gate is shown in the southeast corner of the front garden along with an internal pathway, along with a simplified garden layout.

Earlier plans of the city show the Lower Close represented in much less detail and cruder form. Cleer's plan of 1696 shows only that the northern range of buildings on the Lower Close was already established with similar frontages also depicted on Hoyle's plan of 1720 with Kirkall's plan of 1723 showing a possible open break in the frontage, although other clearer plans of a similar period, such as Corbridge's Plan of 1727 and Kings plan of 1766 show a well-developed range of buildings.

Hochstetter's plan of 1789 shows a relatively detailed plan of the Lower Close which closely resembles the 1885 layout, although with less property divisions to the range of buildings.



Figure 2.

Hochstetter's 1789  
Plan (extract) right

OS 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Plan of  
1885 (extract) below

[No.53 marked by arrows]



***Extracted from an Archaeological Assessment ahead of Norwich Cathedral Close gas main by Dr Roland B Harris March 2011:***

The Lower Close is the successor to the lower part of the inner court of the priory, being that part of the inner court that was devoted to the provisioning of the priory. Although archaeological evidence (see below) suggests that there was at least one service building in the central area in the 12th century, it is unclear whether there were buildings ranged around the edge of this area at this date. With the demolition of the service building (and perhaps others) in the central area by c.1200, however, this is likely: the earliest architectural evidence for buildings around the edge of the Lower Close Green dates from the mid-13th century (54 to 55 The Close).

The later medieval Lower Close Green, known previously as the Brewery Green, had service buildings ranged along its north, east, and part of the south sides: from east of the Deanery clockwise, comprising the steward's house, the wheat granary, the malt granary, the bakehouse, the brewhouse and, on the south side, the stables. To the west of the stables, and approximating to 10-12 The Close, was the pre-Conquest church of St Mary in the Marsh, which survived as an institution until shortly before 1564, and physically into the 18th century – the recorded northern boundary of the churchyard extended c.5m into the present roadway on the south side of the Lower Close.

In the 17th century the former upper inner court became a focus for substantial houses. Today the central area remains open, although the detail of the landscaping and its planting largely derives from the 20th century.

There have been several archaeological investigations in the Lower Close Green and its surrounding road.

• ***NHER 52967 - Cathedral IT link cable trench, Lower Close in September 2009*** (Hodges, 2009)

A cable trench measuring 400mm wide was dug extending from the front of 12 The Close to a point just south-west of the entrance to Prior's Hall: the trench was c.720mm deep in the roadway areas and c.520mm deep where it crossed the grass of the Lower Close Green. Throughout the trench, post-medieval and modern make-up deposits were encountered, although three walls were exposed. The wall at the southern edge of the Lower Close Green, north of the boundary of 11 and 12 The Close, was aligned SW-NE, was apparently of ashlar blocks and was tentatively identified as a possible boundary wall, of post-medieval date. In the roadway to the north-west of the Lower Close Green, another post-medieval wall was also aligned SW-NE, and was constructed of red brick and lime mortar. A more substantial flint-rubble wall, measuring c.1.14m wide was revealed adjacent to the south-west corner of the Deanery garden. This was aligned east-west and, given its common alignment with the monastic infirmary and its eastern chapel, it is possible that it represents survival of the medieval monastic buildings: it appears, perhaps, to be too far south to be the chapel wall although the traditional location of this (as shown, for example, on Whittingham's (1938) is by no means certain. An L-shaped building was built south of the Deanery in 1623 and was demolished in 1784: it has been suggested that this lay north of the excavated wall, but maps of 1779 and 1783 suggest that its south wall was aligned to the excavated wall (which follows the line of the south wall of the garden today), and that the present 'chamfered' south-west corner of the garden was only created following demolition of this house.

• ***NHER 45440 & 49102 - Archaeological watching brief during repairs to sewers from August 2006 to August 2007*** (Wallis, 2008)

A watching brief was undertaken during excavation to replace the main sewer from in front of 15 The Close to, and through, the Ethelbert Gate (Trench 1: 215m long, 1.6m wide and 2.2m deep). Successive post-medieval (possibly 16th-century) road surfaces were identified in Trench 1 immediately outside 12, The Close at depths of 350mm and 650mm, below which was an earlier surface at a depth of 900mm. There was no evidence for a medieval or early post-medieval precursor to the present east-west road linking the Upper Close and Lower Close, and the upper road surfaces near 12 The Close probably relate to the NE-SW aligned road of 16th-century date identified in the 1976 excavations on the Lower Close Green (see below).

• ***NHER 300 - Archaeological excavation of the Lower Close Green*** (Atkins & Evans, 1976)

Two parallel trenches (a shallow trial Trench A at 1.5m x 28m and, 1.5m to the east, Trench B at 3m x 12m, excavated to natural sand and gravel at a depth of c.3.7m). The deep

stratigraphy of the site showed that the ground level was raised c.2.7m between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The site appeared to lay outside the urban area in the Late Saxon period, and at this time saw significant build-up (presumably a deliberate raising of ground level to address drainage problems), which was followed by cutting of gullies in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century: these were roughly parallel with the present roads on the north and south sides of Lower Close. The only evidence for actual activity on the site was a post-hole building, possibly of two rooms, which was dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and, on the basis of a concentration of ironworking slag, was probably a smithy. Later medieval accumulation of soils included wheel ruts and trackways (again, roughly parallel to the road in front of 12 The Close), reaching a level c.1.9m below the present surface. Make-up layers of 16<sup>th</sup>-century date (to c.1m below the present ground level) were associated with three successive road surfaces, one of which preserved cobbles: these roughly followed the earlier alignment of tracks. 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-century build-up was in the order of c.300-650mm. Although a small assemblage of over 300 animal bones was discovered, there was no evidence of human bone: this is significant given the documentary record that in 1782 material from the cloister graveyard was moved to the Lower Close Green (apparently then nicknamed 'Skeleton Square' (Gilchrist 2005, 97).

NB: many of the depths of deposits in the report by Atkins & Evans do not appear to correspond with the published section, nor do the orientations of many features given in the text correspond with the plans: the graphical evidence has been treated here as most reliable.

• **NHER 1894 - *Observations during excavation for a drain in front of 8, The Close in April 1937***

Excavation before the front door revealed:

- 1) 14ins flint wall with medieval brick bonders running eastwards in line with front wall of No. 7.
- 2) Some original plaster remaining on the south face [of this wall]. This plaster covered by a later coating.
- 3) Black earth 3ft below ground found under the ?lowest floor of this building. Contains; [unidentified] pot rim with thumb marks. (On this black earth); flint rubble filling, finished with white lime floor. On this floor [unidentified] bones found. Above white lime floor, a second flint-rubble filling finished with a second floor of red colour from brick dust mixed with it. This floor is 1ft 6ins below ground.

If correctly dated, the east-west wall observed in 1937 could represent the north churchyard wall of St Mary in the Marsh, although the stepping-in of the north-west corner of the churchyard here, and its apparent extent c.2.5m further north, suggests that the wall may derive from a building against the exterior of the churchyard. Certainly the plastered south face suggests a building, although, just possibly, this could be part of the Gascoin and Lines tenements established on this site by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, following closure of the church before 1564 (Gilchrist 2005).

• ***Gas Pipe Replacement Works (ENF 126797)***

Trenches in the immediate vicinity of the monitored work carried out as part of the Gas Pipe Replacement Scheme initiated in 2011 are summarised here, based upon the results presented in nps archaeology report 2795 (Hickling 2012):

**Trench O:** Maximum depth of 0.9m. A small area of undisturbed stratigraphy was recorded which included a 'dark grey sand with frequent mortar and brick flecks' at the deepest level, overlain by a thin but compact layer of 'black ashy sand with frequent charcoal'. Over this was another thin layer of crushed mortar below the uppermost



deposits of stony sandy-loam mixed with fragments of building rubble. The thin mortar layer was interpreted as a buried floor surface for a former building.

**Trench P:** Max. depth of 0.95m. Service trench backfill deposits only.

**Trench Q:** Max depth of 0.85m. Service trench backfill deposits only.

**Trench R:** Max depth of 0.86m. Service trench backfill deposits only.

**Trench S:** Max. depth of 0.82m. Deepest deposit recorded was a 'dark brown silty sand, below a thin layer of compacted mortar debris, again suggested to be part of a former floor surface. This was buried below a thin layer of dark brown silty sand followed by a thicker layer of sandy mortar with moderate occurrences of gravel and fragments of building debris. The upper deposit was a sandy-loam similar to that encountered by Trench O.

**Trench T:** Max. depth of 0.85m deep. Service trench backfill deposits only.

**Trench U:** Max. depth of 0.57m deep. Only a 'modern garden soil' was recorded.

**Trench V:** Max. depth of 0.32m. Garden soil was encountered below modern paving.

**Trench W:** Max. depth c. 0.3m (ascertained from image with scale). Only a garden soil was encountered.

## 5.0 Methodology (Figure 3)

The objective of the archaeological monitoring was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the groundworks associated with the replacement of an existing gas pipe serving No.53, The Close.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector (Minelab XTerra 705). All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using Norvic Archaeology *pro forma* sheets. The trench location, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and digital images were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

All levels were tied to an OS Benchmark of 5.09m located on the north facing wall of No.7 The Close.

Site conditions were fair, with the work taking place in overcast, showery weather.

## 6.0 Results (Appendix 1a, Figures 3 to 6)

### *Trench NVC1*

This trench was located in the same general position as '*nps archaeology Trench U*'. It measured c. 1m by 0.9m and reached a maximum depth of c. 0.9m.

Several modern service runs were encountered alongside the recent plastic gas pipe - including an electric cable and a salt-glazed foul pipe at c. 0.4m below ground level. The edge of a cast iron pipe was also revealed at c. 0.8m below ground level, presumably part of the Victorian services.

A loose deposit of coarse demolition waste consisting of large sandy-mortar lumps and building flints (02) was recorded at a depth of c. 0.5m, sealed below a well-mixed garden soil (01). The demolition waste included a few fragments of mortar debris with smooth surfaces from internal walls along with a few examples of post-medieval brick in dark reddish orange, very sandy fabrics 50mm thickness by 120mm wide.

The southern face of a brick soakway (03) rendered with cement was partly exposed by the south facing section of the trench.

#### *Trench NVC2*

This trench measured c. 1.1m by 0.5m and reached a maximum depth of c. 0.7m.

The deepest observed deposit was a rubble and soil make-up (09). Above this was a former cobbled surface (07) set on a bedding layer of slightly ferrous sand (08). The buried surface was sealed below a thin layer of sand followed by a layer of crushed mortar debris with occasional fragments of late post-medieval roof tile. Above this was a 0.3m deep garden soil (04).

The footings of the current boundary wall were partly revealed during the works. Below the modern flint work were several courses of early-post medieval to post-medieval brick (mid orange estuarine clays with calcareous inclusions) set above random coursed flints with occasional clunch, bonded with a hard white chalky mortar.

#### *Trenches NVC3 & NVC4 (Sections 4 & 5)*

- NVC3 measured c. 0.3m by 1m and reached a maximum depth of c. 0.65m
- NVC4 measured c. 1.10m by 0.95m and reached a maximum depth of 0.85m (located in the same general position as 'nps archaeology Trench R')

The deepest undisturbed deposits encountered by both of these trenches was a cobbled surface (18), similar to that described for Trench NVC2 on the northern side of the boundary wall. The cobbles appeared to overlay a slightly sticky mid-brown silty-sand and soil mix with occasional chalk flecks and fragments of post-medieval brick. Overlaying the cobble surface was a layer of black cinder waste with thin traces of crushed red brick above it (17). Above this, in trench NVC4, was a layer of crushed mortar debris (14) similar to that identified on the northern side of the boundary wall. Although the same mortar waste deposit was recorded in trench NVC3, two further make-up layers preceded it in the form of a dark brown sand (16) and a compacted layer of chalk waste (15).

The uppermost deposits in trench NVC4 consisted of a 0.4m deep well mixed mid-brown silty-sand with frequent crushed mortar (19) below the modern make-up of broken asphalt and aggregate (11). Similar deposits were present in NVC3, although a service trench backfilled with a mix of soils (13) of uncertain function truncated earlier deposits.

## **7.0 Finds Analysis**

### **• Pottery**

A single body sherd (weighing 11g) of salt-glazed 'orange peel' type Frechen Stoneware of late 17<sup>th</sup> century date was collected from the garden soil (01). This fragment may be from a bellarmine jug or drinking mug; such imported stoneware's are a common post-medieval find on Norwich sites.

### **• Lead**

A single fragment of melted and puddled lead weighing 15g was also collected from the garden soils. It is possible that the piece may represent very minor residual waste from lead working, molten residue from a house fire or simply the burning of rubbish.

## 8.0 Conclusions

Although small trenches excavated to similar depths had been monitored previously at the locations of this work they failed to identify the presence of *in situ* deposits predating the modern garden soils and disturbance relating to service trenching.

This opportunity to revisit the site following the need to upgrade the gas pipe serving No.53 has demonstrated that buried cobbled surfaces are present which may relate to the Victorian pathways and roadway depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS plan of 1885. Above the cobbles were various make-up spreads of recycled waste materials used as aggregate, including soils, sands, chalks, crushed mortar (demolition/construction waste) and cinders. Similar late post-medieval make-up deposits of demolition debris and cobbled surfaces were recorded in the southern area of the Lower Close during monitoring works along the roadway for a new sewer pipe during 2006 to 2007 (NHER 45440 & 49102).

Similar make-up deposits were also recorded by *nps archaeology* in Trenches O & P c. 15m to the west, although the spread of crushed mortar debris was suggested to be representative of a floor surface for a building rather than simply a make-up layer associated with a late post-medieval roadway.

Cartographic evidence demonstrates that the general layout of the present range of buildings on the north side of the Lower Close has varied little since the 1700s. The range of buildings which includes No.53, date from the 15th century onwards and are known to incorporate 13<sup>th</sup> century arcading (to the rear of No. 55), which may relate to a medieval granary.

No. 53 is notable in that it is a much later 19<sup>th</sup> century rebuild, necessitated by the collapse of the original house. A make-up deposit of building rubble rich in flint and mortar lumps was recorded against the current house, which presumably relates to this event.

## 9.0 Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the Gas Team for their assistance and cooperation on site. All stages of the monitoring and post-excavation analysis work were carried out by the author.

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## ***Appendix 1a: Context Summary***

Context	Category	Fill of	Brief Physical Description	Interpretation	Period
01	Deposit	-	Dark-grey sand-loam, freq. chalk & mortar lumps, freq. cbm flecks, mod. stones. .c. 0.5m deep	Garden Soil	<i>Modern</i>
02	Deposit	-	Loose demolition debris of mortar lumps (up to 150mm) with large building flint fragments and cobbles (upto 200mm) with occasional brick frags. NB: occasional voids. >0.4m deep	Demolition Make-up	<i>Late C19<sup>th</sup></i>
03	Masonry	-	A late post-med. brick built square soakaway	Soakaway	<i>Late C19<sup>th</sup> +</i>
04	Deposit	-	Dark-brownish-grey sandy-loam – active soil. Occ. stones, occ. cbm flecks. c. 0.3m deep	Garden Soil	<i>Modern</i>
05	Deposit	-	Friable, pale yellowish-white crushed mortar, occ. flints, rare cbm (tile frags) c. 0.10m thick	Make-up	<i>Late C19<sup>th</sup> +</i>
06	Deposit	-	Thin layer of soft, orange gritty-sand .c. 0.03m thick	Make-up	<i>Late C19<sup>th</sup> +</i>
07	Deposit	-	Layer of smooth sub-rounded flint cobbles (up to c. 60mm max.)	Surface	<i>C19<sup>th</sup></i>
08	Deposit	-	Soft, dark orange 'gritty' sand, mod. small stones. C. 0.09m deep	Bedding layer	<i>C19<sup>th</sup></i>
09	Deposit	-	Mix of mid grey sandy-loam and occ. post-medieval fragments of mortar , flint and brick	Make-up	<i>Post-medieval</i>
10	Masonry	-	Post-medieval brick coursing above irregular mix of clunch and flint bonded with hard, white chalky mortar	Wall (footings)	<i>Late Post-medieval</i>
11	Deposit	-	Lenses of soils and sands with modern elements of broken asphalt and layers of stony aggregate up to 0.22m deep	Make-up	<i>Modern</i>
12	Cut	-	Service trench c. 0.4m wide, > 0.24m deep	Service Trench	<i>Modern</i>
13	Deposit	12	Mixed soil and rubble backfill	Fill	<i>Modern</i>
14	Deposit	-	Friable, pale yellowish-white crushed mortar, occ. flints up to c 0.09m thick	Make-up	<i>Late C19<sup>th</sup> +</i>
15	Deposit	-	Hard, white chalk (compacted waste) c. 0.03m thick	Make-up	<i>Late C19<sup>th</sup> +</i>
16	Deposit	-	Soft, dark brown sand, rare cbm flecks c. 0.05m deep	Make-up	<i>Late C19<sup>th</sup> +</i>
17	Deposit	-	Friable, black cinder waste (plus traces of crushed red brick above), up to 0.07m thick	Make-up	<i>Late C19<sup>th</sup> +</i>
18	Deposit	-	Layer of smooth sub-rounded flint cobbles (up to c. 60mm max.)	Surface	<i>C19<sup>th</sup></i>
19	Deposit	-	'sticky'/friable mid-brown silty-sand/sandy loam mix, occ. p.med cbm frags. occ. chalk flecks	Make-up	<i>C19<sup>th</sup></i>

***Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table***

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Road	1
	Path	1

***Appendix 2a: Finds by Context***

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Comment
01	Pottery	1	11	Frechen Stoneware
01	Lead	1	15	Melted/puddled

***Appendix 2b: NHER finds summary table***

Period	Material	Quantity
Unknown	Lead	1
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Pottery	1



Plate 2: NVC3, Looking North

Plate 3: NVC2, Looking East

Plate 4: NVC2, Looking South

Plate 5: NVC4 (showing cobbles),  
Looking North

*NB: All scales shown are  
1m or 0.5m*



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



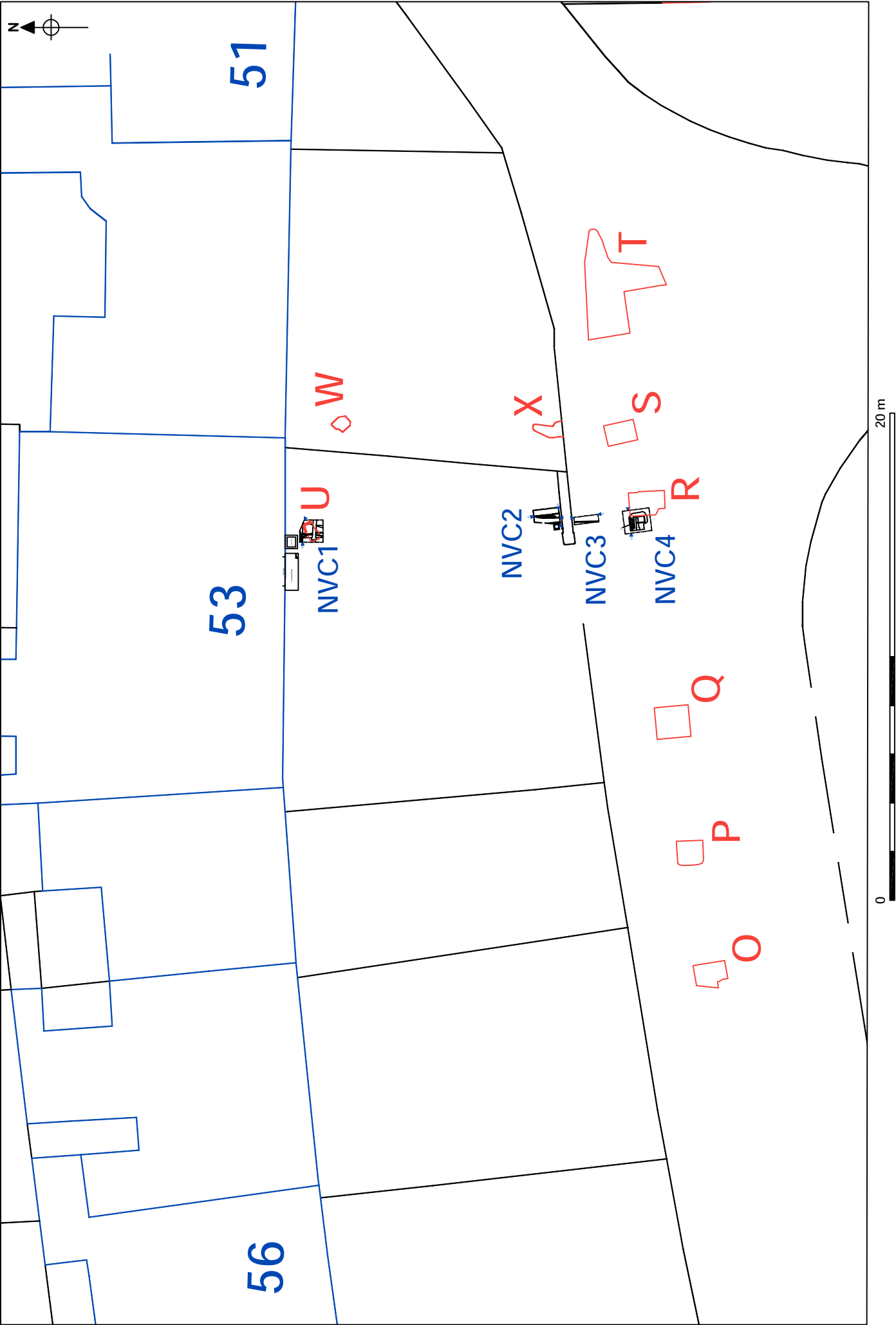


Figure 3. Trench plan. Scale 1:200

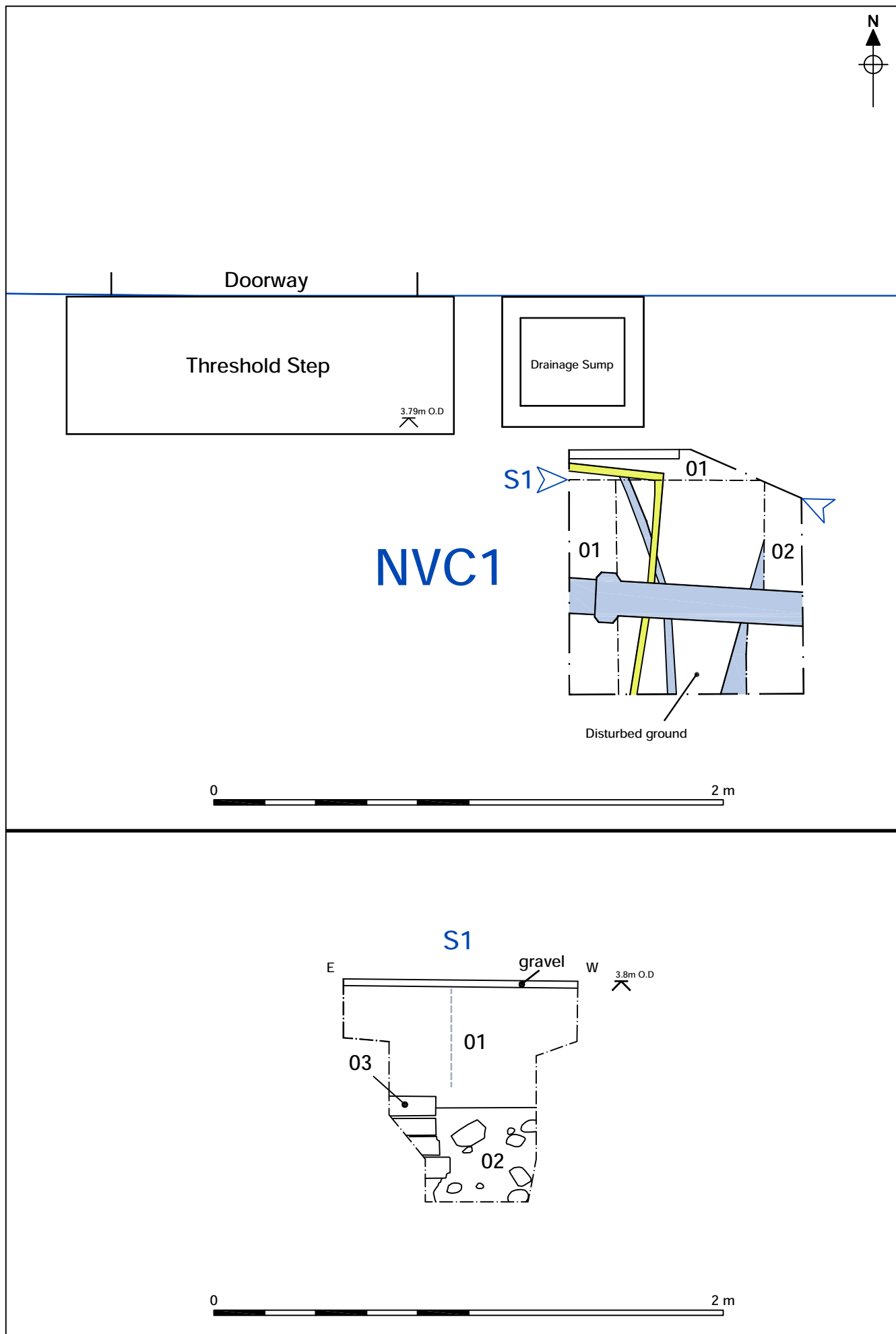


Figure 4. Trench NVC1 - Plan and Section. Scale 1:20

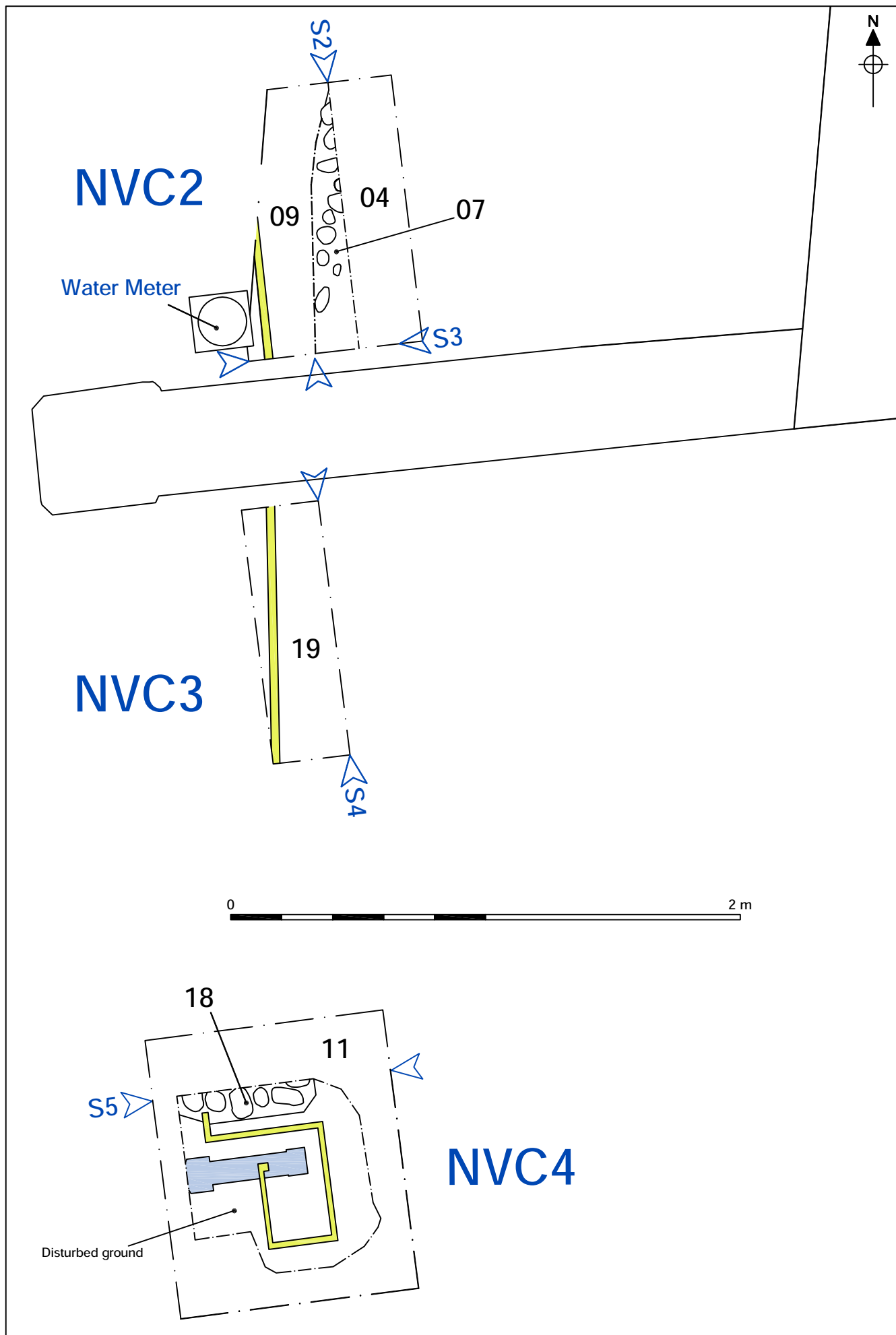
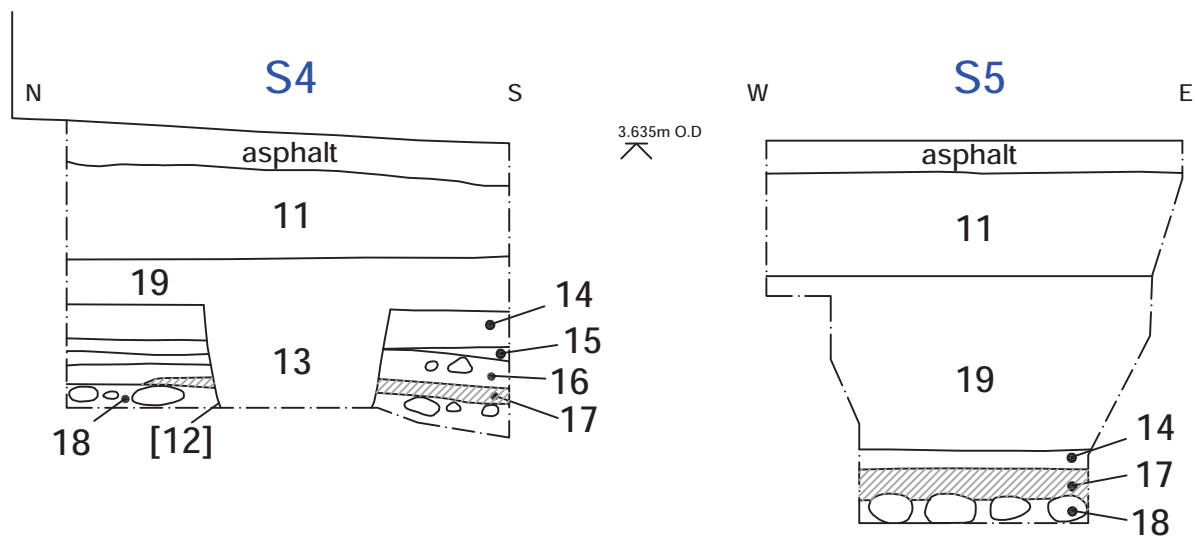
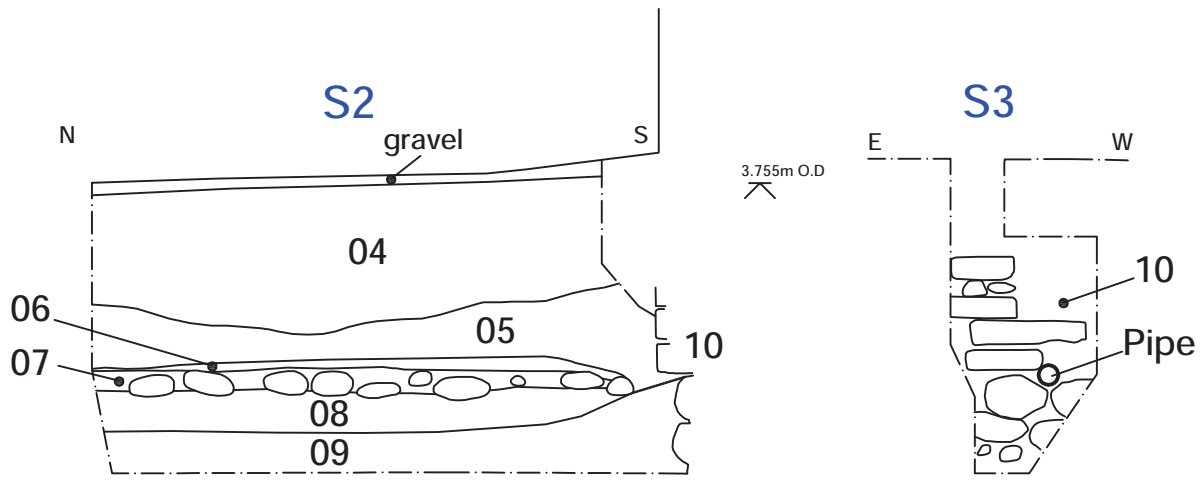


Figure 5. Trenches NVC2 to NVC4. Scale 1:20



0 2 m

Figure 6. NVC2 to NVC4 Sections. Scale 1:20