



# Archaeological Recording at Beauvale Priory Nottinghamshire July 2015

Scheduled Monument: 1002920

Report No. 15/164

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Illustrators: James Ladocha & Carol Simmonds



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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>Oasis No: molanort1-223506</b>	
Project title	Archaeological Recording at Beauvale Priory, Nottinghamshire, July 2015		
MOLA Northampton were commissioned by Bruce Bradley of Peart Bradley Architects, acting on behalf of Tony and Ann Whyte, to undertake archaeological recording at Beauvale Priory, Nottinghamshire. The works focussed on two areas of excavation by the Thoroton Society in 1908. Area A was located in the range of chapels to the south of the church and Area B was immediately to the east of the south-eastern monk's cell (number 14). Both areas had not been fully backfilled after the 1908 excavations. The aim was to expose sufficient masonry to enable the conservation and presentation of the two areas as part of the wider scheme of conservation of the site funded by a Historic England grant. The removal of the backfill soils in Area A revealed well preserved walls of the church and the later chapel. In Area B the walls were less well preserved having been robbed for building stone.			
Project type	Excavation		
Site Status	Scheduled Monument 1002920		
Previous work	Excavation		
Current land use	Grass		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Medieval Carthusian priory		
Significant finds	-		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Nottinghamshire		
Site address	Beauvale Priory, Beauvale Abbey Farm, New Road, Moorgreen		
Post code	NG16 2AA		
OS co-ordinates	SK 4295 4905		
Area (sq m/ha)	40 sq m		
Height aOD	117m-120m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator			
Project Design originator	Glyn Coppack		
Director/Supervisor	Carol Simmonds		
Project Managers	Anthony Maull		
Sponsor or funding body	Mr and Mrs Tony Whyte		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	July 2015		
End date	September 2015 (report)		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
Physical	MOLA code: BEP15	-	
Paper		Site records	
Digital		Survey data, report, photographs	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report		
Title	Archaeological Recording at Beauvale Priory, Nottinghamshire, July 2015		
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# Archaeological Recording at Beauvale Priory, Nottinghamshire July 2015

## Abstract

*MOLA Northampton were commissioned by Bruce Bradley of Peart Bradley Architects, acting on behalf of Tony and Ann Whyte, to undertake archaeological recording at Beauvale Priory, Nottinghamshire. The works focussed on two areas of excavation by the Thoroton Society in 1908. Area A was located in the range of chapels to the south of the church and Area B was immediately to the east of the south-eastern monk's cell (number 14). Both areas had not been fully backfilled after the 1908 excavations. The aim was to expose sufficient masonry to enable the conservation and presentation of the two areas as part of the wider scheme of conservation of the site funded by a Historic England grant. The removal of the backfill soils in Area A revealed well preserved walls of the church and the later chapel. In Area B the walls were less well preserved having been robbed for building stone.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Bruce Bradley of Peart Bradley Architects, acting on behalf of Tony and Ann Whyte, to undertake archaeological recording at Beauvale Priory (Fig 1; NGR SK 4295 4905). The scheme of archaeological works and the monitoring was undertaken by Glyn Coppack.

Beauvale Priory was one of only nine Carthusian monasteries successfully established in medieval England. It is a Scheduled Monument (number 1002920), the ruins of the church and adjoining prior's cell are Listed Grade II\*, the farmhouse and the gatehouse range and the precinct wall are all Listed Grade II.

From 2009 the site has been the subject of a major conservation project funded by English Heritage (now Historic England) and Nottinghamshire County Council under the English Heritage Buildings at Risk Programme. The final phase of conservation works is now at the planning stage, and Historic England has requested the inclusion of two areas of unconserved historic fabric exposed by excavation in 1908 and never fully backfilled. The work is part of a continuing Historic England Buildings at Risk conservation project and so Scheduled Monument Consent for this work was covered by the grant and the project.

## 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Topography and geology

Beauvale Priory lies in a shallow valley to the west of Nottingham. Its southern boundary is defined by New Road, an unlisted road that joins the B600 at Moorgreen. To the west and east lie open pasture fields and farmland and to north lies woodland. It is situated on the south-facing slope of a small valley with a spring at the head of the valley to the north-east, from which rises a small stream that flows down the valley to the south-west. Currently the site of the Priory is under pasture and forms part of a working farm, Beauvale Abbey Farm. It lies at an average height of 120m aOD and the underlying bedrock geology comprises mudstones, siltstones and sandstones of the Pennine Middle Coal Measures.

### 2.2 Archaeological background

The historical and archaeological background is detailed in the project brief (Coppack 2015). Its findings are summarised here along with information from the geophysical surveys (GSB 1995a and b), the results of the Thoroton Society excavations in 1908 (de Boulay Hill and Gill 1908) and a survey of the Carthusian houses in Britain (Coppack and Aston 2002).

The Carthusian Order of hermit monks was introduced to England by Henry II in 1178/79 at Witham in Somerset. Competition from existing monasteries discouraged development in the late 12th century, and the appearance of the friars in the first half of the 13th century prevented the spread of the Carthusians in England. In 1343 Sir Nicolas de Cantilupe established a charterhouse in his deer park at Beauvale with a founding community of monks from Hinton, Somerset. It was to be the first of seven successful mature Carthusian houses.

The priory was suppressed c1538-39 and was granted to Sir John Hussey who was later executed in the aftermath of the Lincolnshire Rising. In 1541 it was granted to Sir John's son Sir William Hussey. The church and prior's cell were converted to a small house. In the 17th century a farmhouse was constructed to the south of the Prior's House. The surviving remains comprise the Prior's House, and parts of the church wall. The layout of the rest of the priory is visible as extensive and well preserved earthworks which were surveyed by the Royal Commission (RCHME 1991; Fig 2). Since 2005 the site has been gradually conserved with part of the gatehouse converted into a tea room. The medieval fishpond has also been reinstated following an archaeological survey (Carlyle 2009).

#### ***Layout of the priory***

Excavations were carried out in 1908 by the Thoroton Society of Nottingham under the leadership of Revd de Boulay Hill and Harry Gill. The work identified much of the layout of the central buildings of the monastery within the precinct wall (Figs 3 & 4). The later earth resistance survey of the site (GSB 1995a and 1995b) further elucidated the layout and also identified buildings outside of the precinct wall.

The inner court of the priory would have been enclosed by a precinct wall although only the eastern side is now present. At the south-east corner of the precinct is the gatehouse to the inner court. The central buildings within the court comprised the church, the cells, Prior's House and ancillary buildings of the cloister arranged around the square Great Cloister. On the northern, western and southern sides were 14 individual cells each with a small house and a garden. The Prior of the house resided in a building on the eastern side of the cloister. The church at the north-east of the Great Cloister, was a small rectangular building of at least two phases. It is thought that the monks' refectory and the kitchen were also in the east range (Coppack 2015).

South of the church, and on a different alignment is a range of buildings which encloses the east side of the Little Cloister. The northern two rooms of this range, against the south wall of the church, comprise a pair of chapels, both with doors to the Little Cloister alley. The excavations by de Boulay Hill and Gill indicated that in at least two of the corners of the northern chapel were the remains of vaulting shafts supporting a vaulted ceiling (de Boulay Hill and Gill 1908). This, together with the thickness of the chapel walls, suggested that the northern chapel was two storeys high. Photographs taken during the excavation also show a staircase in this range although this is absent on the plan produced by the Thoroton Society (Fig 3). A tiled floor was thought to have been relaid on a number of occasions perhaps as a result of interments.

### **3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGIES**

#### **3.1 Aims**

The requirement was to expose undisturbed structural remains and associated archaeological deposits in order that the exposed masonry can be understood and conserved (Coppack 2015).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

Two areas (A and B) excavated by the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire in 1908 (Figs 2-4) were never fully backfilled and prior to the archaeological recording were covered in scrub with visible walls and collapsed masonry. Historic England had asked that these areas be cleared of loose rubble stonework and modern debris to reveal surviving medieval structures and associated archaeological deposits before conservation.

Vegetation including long grass and nettles as well as topsoil were removed to expose the extent of loose masonry rubble. Following this the rubble was removed to allow for the recording of the extent and condition of the walls (Fig 5, a to d). Across both areas the average depth of removed soil/rubble was c0.20m.

The exposed masonry and any archaeological features exposed were recorded in plan and elevation at a scale of 1:20 and were recorded photographically with a metric scale. Each feature was given a unique record number and described on MOLA proforma sheets. The recording procedures are detailed in the MOLA Northampton *Archaeological fieldwork manual* (MOLA 2014).

Area A (Figs 6-9), measured 6m west to east and 4m north to south and encompassed the eastern end of the south wall of the church and the excavated remains of the northernmost of a pair of chapels.

Area B (Figs 10-12), measuring 10m west to east and 5m north to south, was located at the southern end of the east cloister range.

During the archaeological recording and with the consent of the owner, MOLA arranged for the flight of a Small Unmanned Aircraft (SUA) to fly over the principal buildings of the priory (see front cover). Photographs from the SUA and additional photographs of both trenches on the ground were used to produce a 3D model of the site.

## 4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

### 4.1 Area A, the church and chapel

The clearance of Area A identified three clear structural phases (Figs 6-7). These comprise the south wall of the church [105]; a later chapel [106] accessed from the west via the Little Cloister and from the Church and a subsequent phase of blocking [107] of the doorway between the Little Cloister and the Chapel. A layer of rubble and mortar (108) covering the church wall is post-suppression in date.

Within Area A the southern wall of the church [105] was up to 1.2m high and 1.4m wide (Figs 6, 7, 8, Sections 6 & 7 and Fig 9 a & b). The wall was constructed on a roughly dressed stone footing c0.15m high. It comprised a rubble sandstone core and dressed stone on the north and south faces. It was thought that the church had at least two phases of building although this could not be confirmed during this phase of works.

The northernmost chapel was rectangular, although its full size was not determined in this phase of works. It is recorded as being '11ft. 6in. wide' (de Boulay Hill and Gill 1908) or 3.53m wide. The southern and eastern walls lay outside of the trench. The western wall [106] was substantial, being 1.34m thick and with a surviving height of 1.30m (Figs 6, 7 and 8, Sections 6 & 7). The western side of the wall was not fully exposed to depth and there was no obvious footing level on the eastern side of the wall. The wall was of massed wall construction with the outward facing sides of the stonework dressed and a rubble and mortar core. The blocks were of varying size but of a similar height (90mm). The chapel wall abutted the church wall and was not keyed in (Fig 8, Section 7). In the north-western corner and inserted into the church wall was the lower portion of a vaulting shaft with a square sub-base and round shaft, 0.28m high.

When it was in use, the chapel had two clear entrances, the first linking the church and the chapel and the second entrance connected it with the Little Cloister. The doorway between the church and the chapel is recorded as being '3ft. 6in. wide' (de Boulay Hill and Gill 1908) or 1.06m. During the 2015 recording works only a portion of the western side (Figs 6, 7 and 8, Section 6) was uncovered so the full dimensions and form could not be determined.

The western doorway (Figs 6 & 7) was 1.22m wide with shaped tapered door jambs. At a later date this doorway fell out of use and was blocked [107] with masonry comprising a rubble core and roughly dressed outward faces (Fig 8, Section 10). The blocking wall had at least five surviving courses and was 0.54m thick and at least 0.7m high.

Within the chapel and bounded by walls [105] and [106] was the remains of a surface (104) found during 1908 excavations. This comprised a pale yellow-white/pinkish-white mortar with some decorated and plain floor tiles *in situ* (Figs 6, 7 & 9 a-c). The exposed area measured 3.30m east to west by 2.0m north to south and the surface was at a height of 119.3m aOD. Once it had been recorded the surface was covered over with lightly compacted topsoil.

Covering the church wall [105] was a layer (108) (Figs 6, 7, 8, Section 7 and Fig 9a & b), 0.50m thick, of friable of yellow-white sandy mortar with frequent fragments of sandstone. No artefactual material was recovered from this although in order for the full width of the door between the chapel and church to have been noted by de Boulay Hill and Gill this layer would not have been present. It is therefore likely that it related to the first stage of backfilling of the trench.

After the 1908 excavation the trench was partially backfilled with a layer of loose dark yellow-brown sandy loam (103). The outline of the trench was clearly visible as a rectangular depression measuring 10.8m north to south by 7.4m east to west. Both the chapel and church walls were overlain with loose masonry blocks and the occasional 20th century brick (100, 101 and 102). These deposits were recorded and photographed prior to removal (Fig 5a & b).

#### **4.2 Area B, the east cloister range**

Area B (Figs 10-13) recorded the eastern wall [206] of cell 14 as well as the southern wall [208] and [207] of a building on the southern side of the Little Cloister. There was no obvious physical relationship. The walls, particularly the southern end of [206] and the southern face of [207], had been heavily and systematically robbed. Ascertaining standing remains and surfaces to the south of wall [207] was not possible as the ground level had been reduced to enable a flat platform for the 20th century farm buildings to the south.

The eastern wall of cell 14, [206], lay within the excavation area and extended northwards beyond it as a very low earthwork bank. Within the trench there was a 5.0m length of wall, which was 0.96m wide and at least 0.70m high. The wall was better preserved at its northern end as the southern end had been heavily robbed (Figs 10, 12, Sections 11 and 12 and Fig 13b). It was of massed wall construction with a rubble and mortar core and roughly dressed faces. The dressed stonework was narrow rectangular blocks of variable size.

The remains of the southern wall [207] of a small building with return walls at the east [212] and west [211] ends was present in Area B (Figs 10 & 11). This contrasts with the 1908 plan (Fig 3) where a straight length of wall is recorded. Wall [207], aligned east to west, was 4.80m long and 1.74m high and 0.84m thick. The wall was constructed on a roughly dressed stone footing (Fig 12, Section 2) and the superstructure comprised a rubble and mortar core encased in roughly-dressed sandstone blocks of varying sizes. Although the lower five courses were generally even the upper portion of the stonework was much rougher with uneven courses of roughly-dressed stones and tile fragments. The eastern return [212] appeared to extend beyond the northern limit of the trench. It was at least 1.44m long, 1.03m thick and at least 0.40m high. There were at least two courses (visible at the southern end) of dressed sandstone blocks with a rubble core. The western arm [211] was 1.70m long, 0.66m thick and at least 1.1m high (Fig 12, Section 1). The wall appeared to terminate at the northern end although it is unclear whether this forms the door jamb of a doorway or other feature such as a window. There were 10 visible courses of rectangular roughly dressed blocks of sandstone of varying sizes with the occasional fragment of tile. The bonding material for walls [207], [211] and [212] was a loose, crumbly yellow-white sandy mortar.

Between walls [206] and the western arm of [207] was a short length of wall [208], 1.18m long, 0.76m wide and at least 0.48m high (Figs 10, 11 and 12, Section 13). There were four visible courses of dressed masonry with a rubble and mortar core.

Any structures to the south of walls [207] and [208] appear to have been accessed through two possible entrances. The westernmost entrance was defined by a gap, 0.80m wide between walls [206] and [208]. This was blocked by a single width of masonry [209] with a dressed south face (Figs 10, 11 and 12, Section 14). The easternmost entrance was defined by two courses of masonry steps [210] at the side of wall [212]. Between walls [208] and [211] was a gap which was 0.80m wide. It is unclear whether this was a doorway or another feature.

The excavation of the trench uncovered the upper horizon of rubble layers (203), (204) and (205) probably associated with the initial backfill of the 1908 excavations (Fig 10). With the exception of a sondage exposing the western face of wall [211] (Figs 10 and 11) these deposits remained unexcavated. The final sequence of accumulated soils (201) and (202) is likely to be more recent.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The archaeological recording of two of the 1908 excavations succeeded in elucidating the plan and the sequence of a small portion of the priory (Fig 14). For the southern wall of the church and northernmost chapel (Area A) the sequence and descriptions of the 1908 excavations were broadly correct although it was clear that the eastern range of the Little Cloister post-dated the church. In addition the chapel wall was not keyed in; rather it abutted up against the southern wall of the church.

The east cloister range (Area B) is more complex than the 1908 plan would suggest although later robbing of the walls and the reduction in ground level in this area has meant that the structural history of this part of the building has been lost. It was thought that '*the 1908 excavation determined that the south wall of the west range ([207]) extends some 8 m to the east of the range before it returns to the south*' (Coppack 2015). Although this seems to be the case, it would appear that the southern wall was more complex and that there are more rooms/buildings in this area than was thought.

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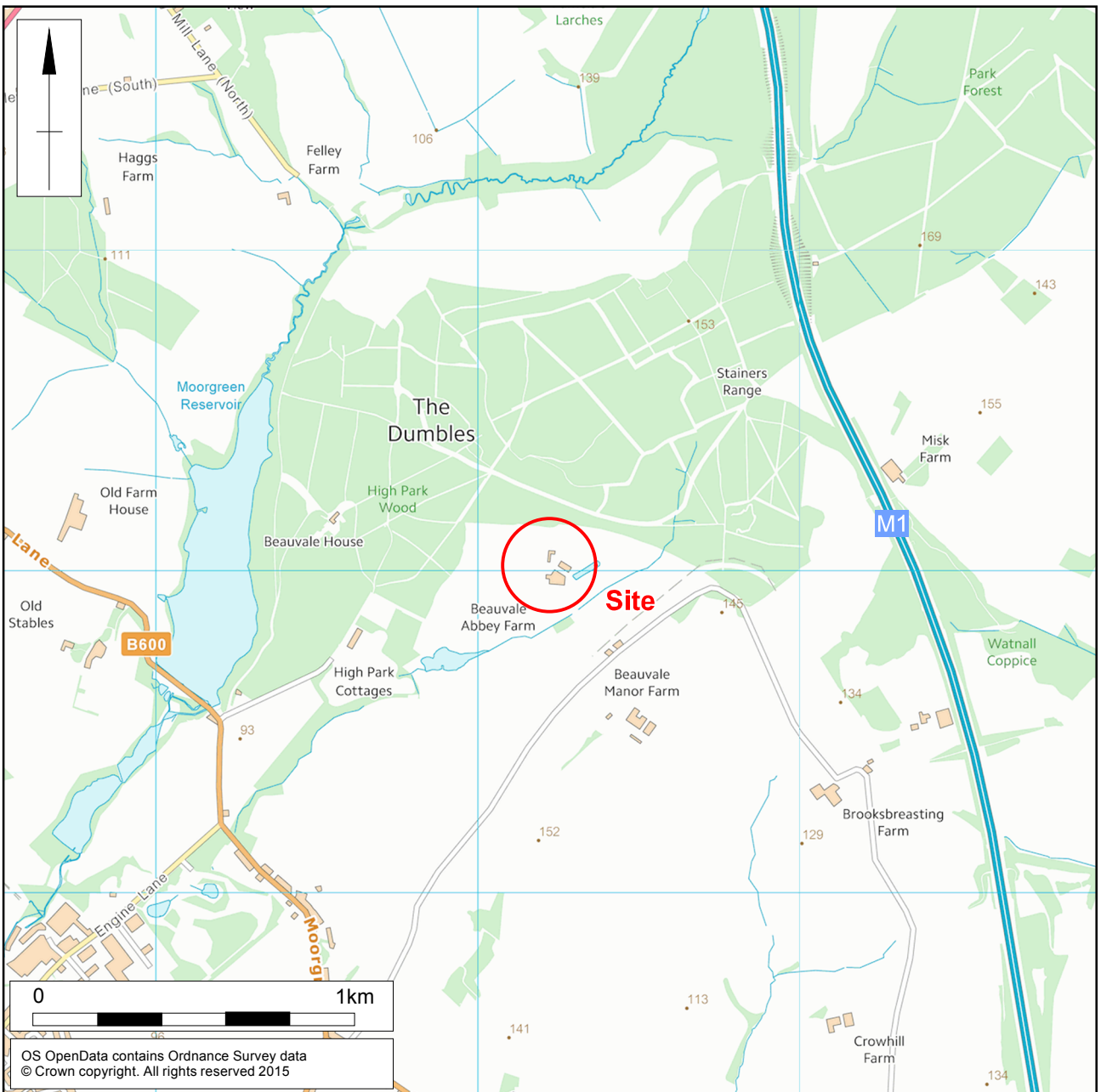
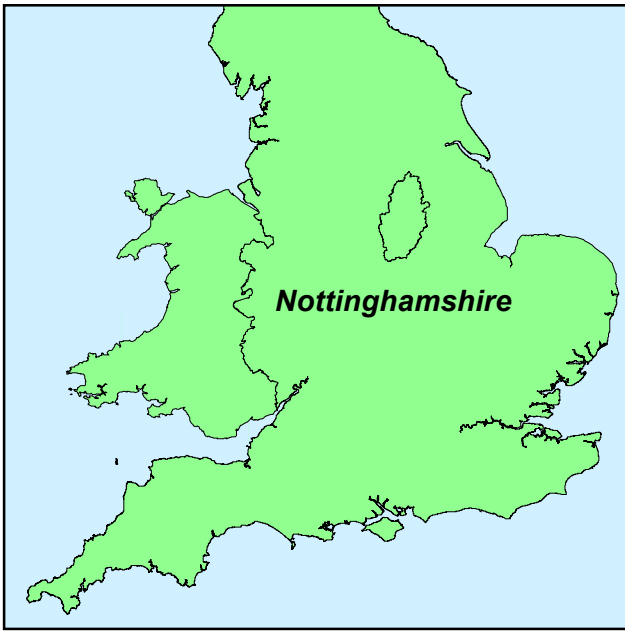
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MOLA 2014 *Archaeological fieldwork manual*, MOLA Northampton

RCHME, 1991 *Beauvale Priory, Nottinghamshire Archaeological Survey Report*, Royal Commission Historic Monuments England/English Heritage

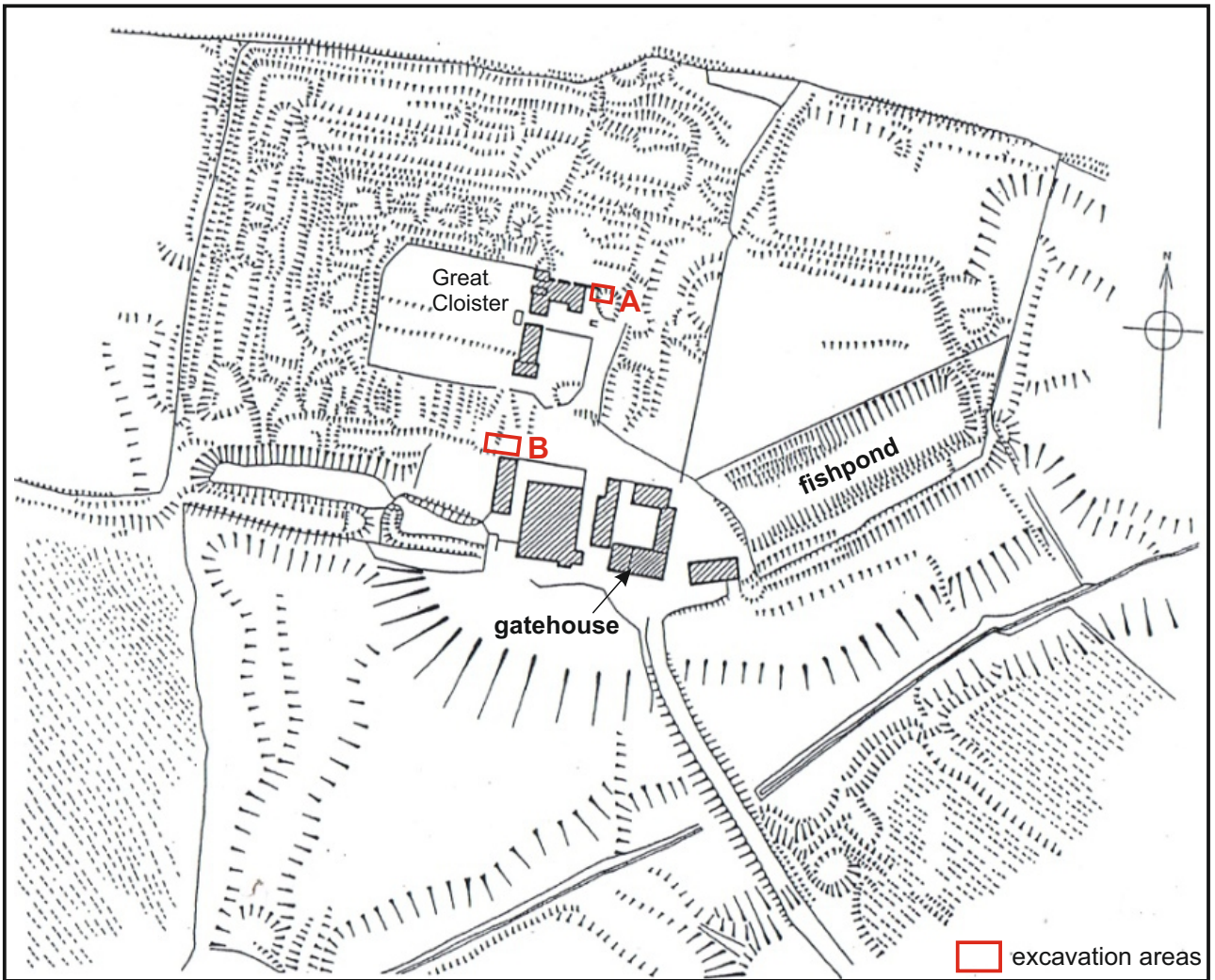
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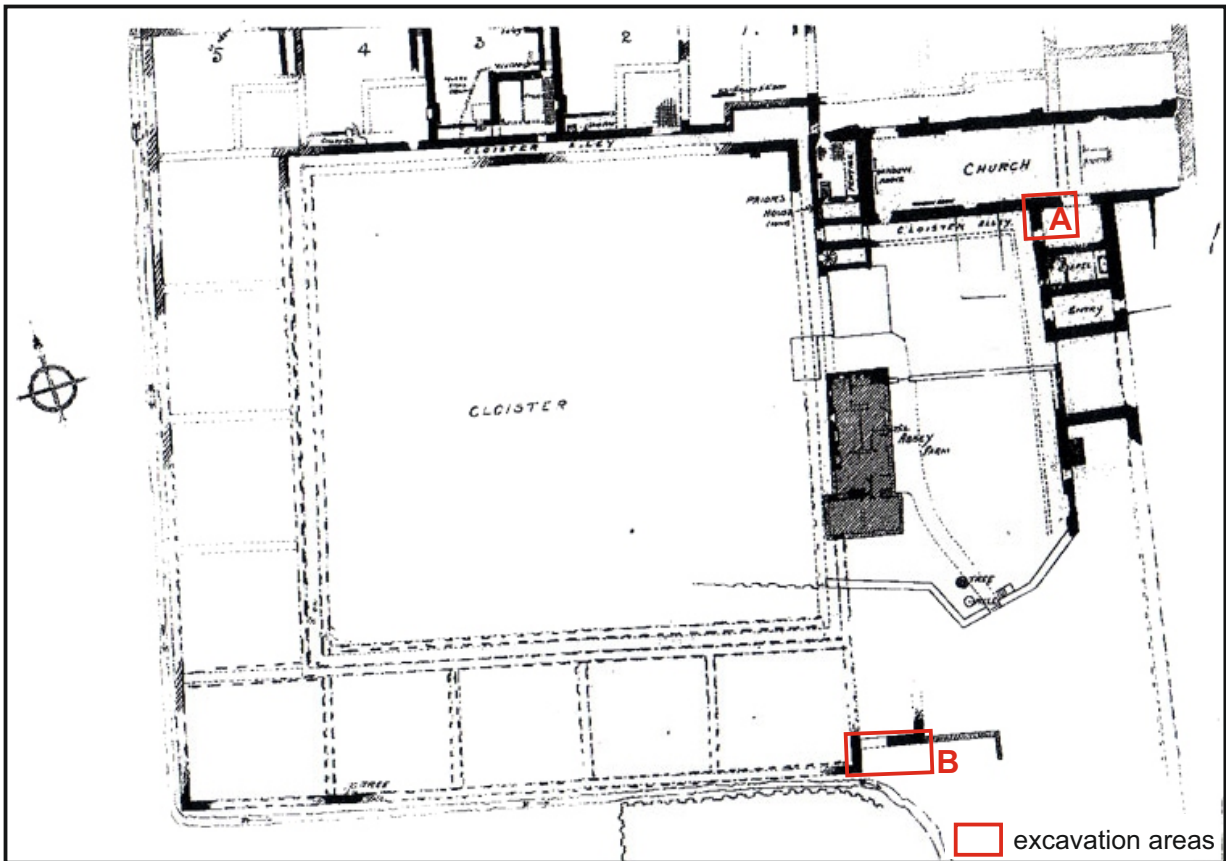
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Site location Fig 1

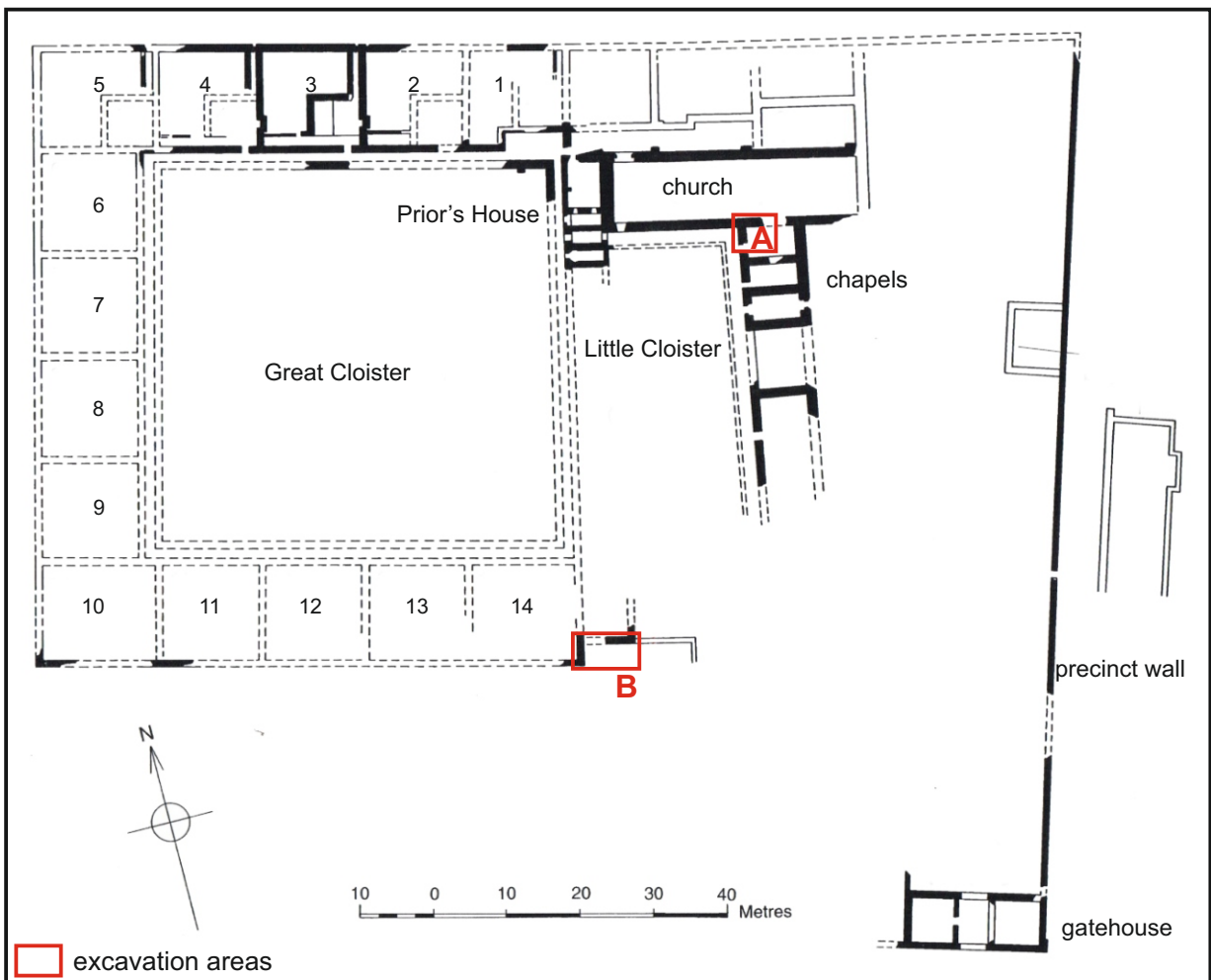




The Royal Commission survey Fig 2



The layout of the priory defined by the Thoroton Society Fig 3



The layout of the priory Fig4



(a) Area A, prior to archaeological works, looking north-west



(b) Area A, after clearance of surface rubble, looking west



(c) Area B, prior to archaeological works, looking west

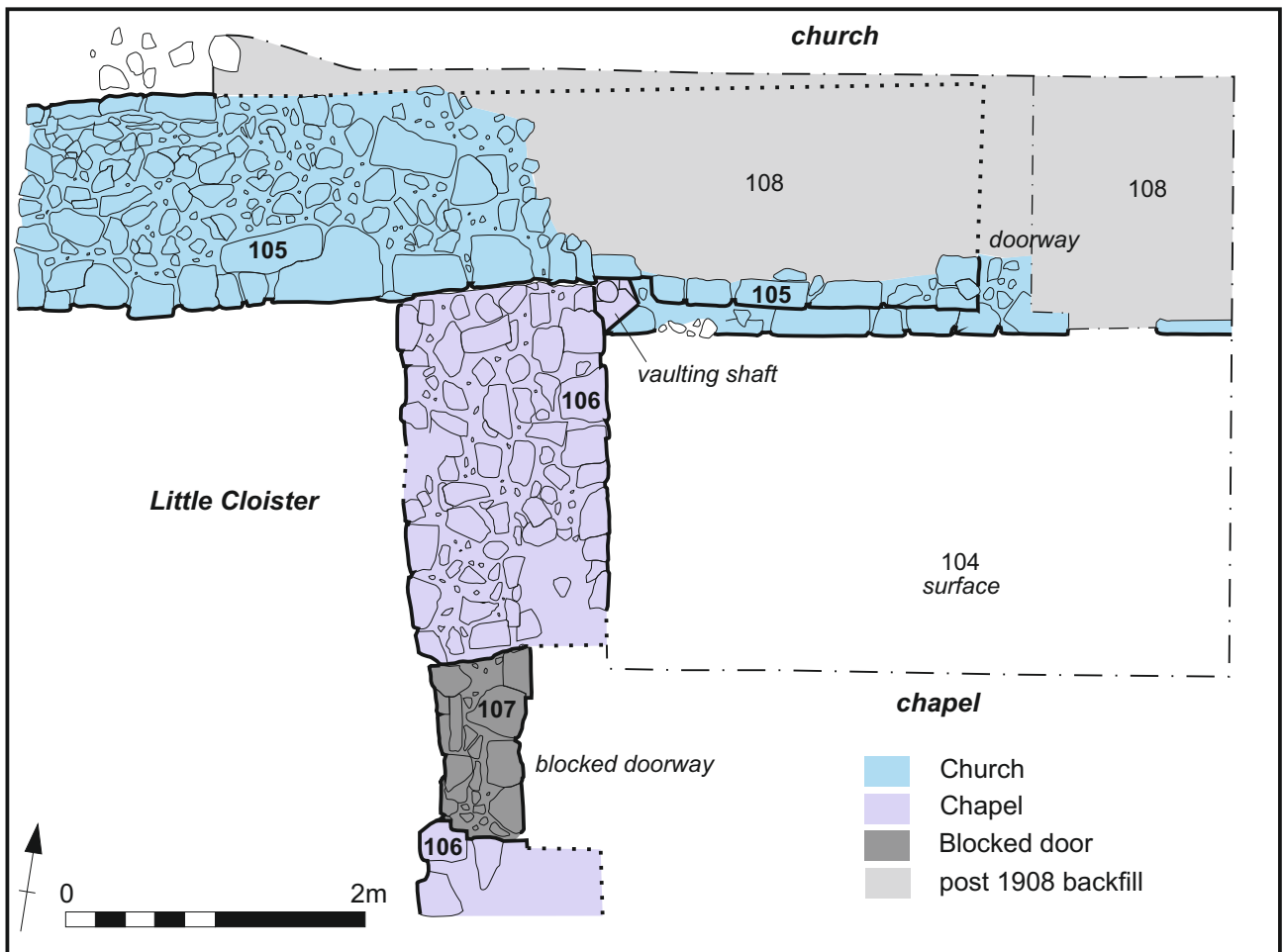


(d) Area B, after clearance of surface rubble, looking south-east



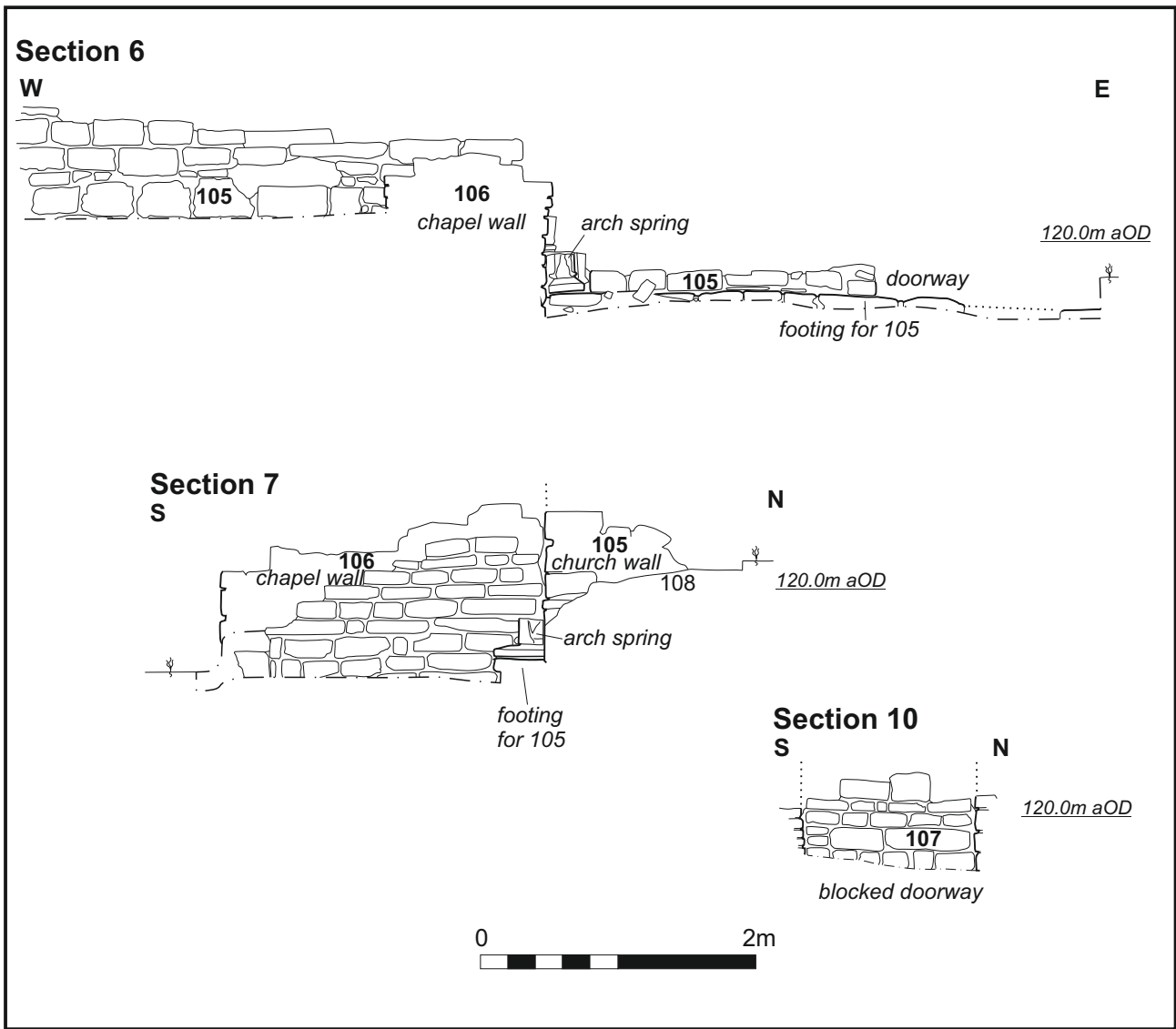


The recorded walls in Area A Fig 6



Scale 1:50

Phased interpretation of Area A Fig 7



Scale 1:50

Area A, sections 6, 7 and 10 Fig 8





(a) General view of Area A, looking north



(b) The chapel wall abutting the church, looking west



(c) The remains of the surface 104, looking north



(d) The vaulting shaft, looking north

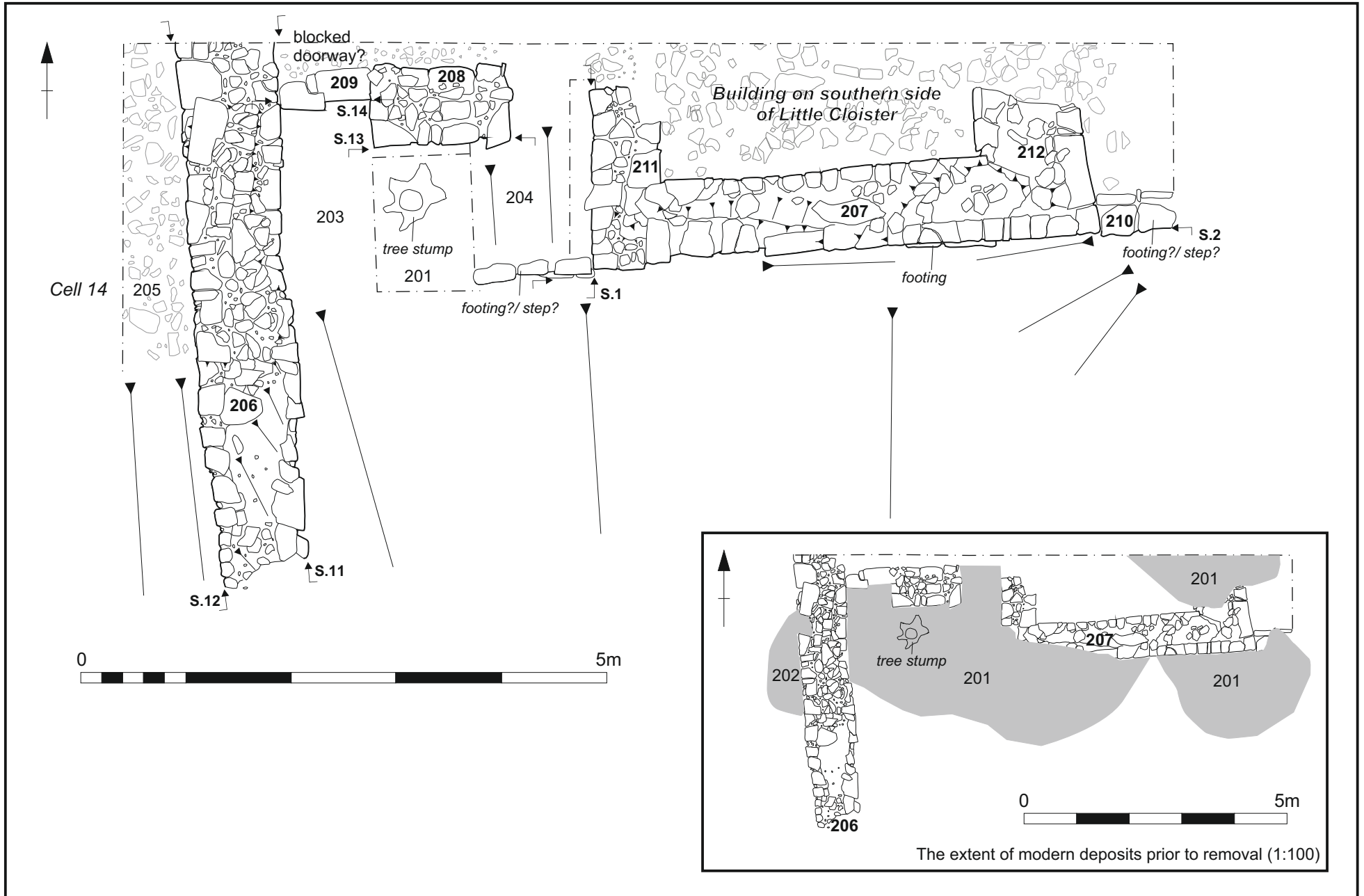


(e) The blocked doorway 107, looking west



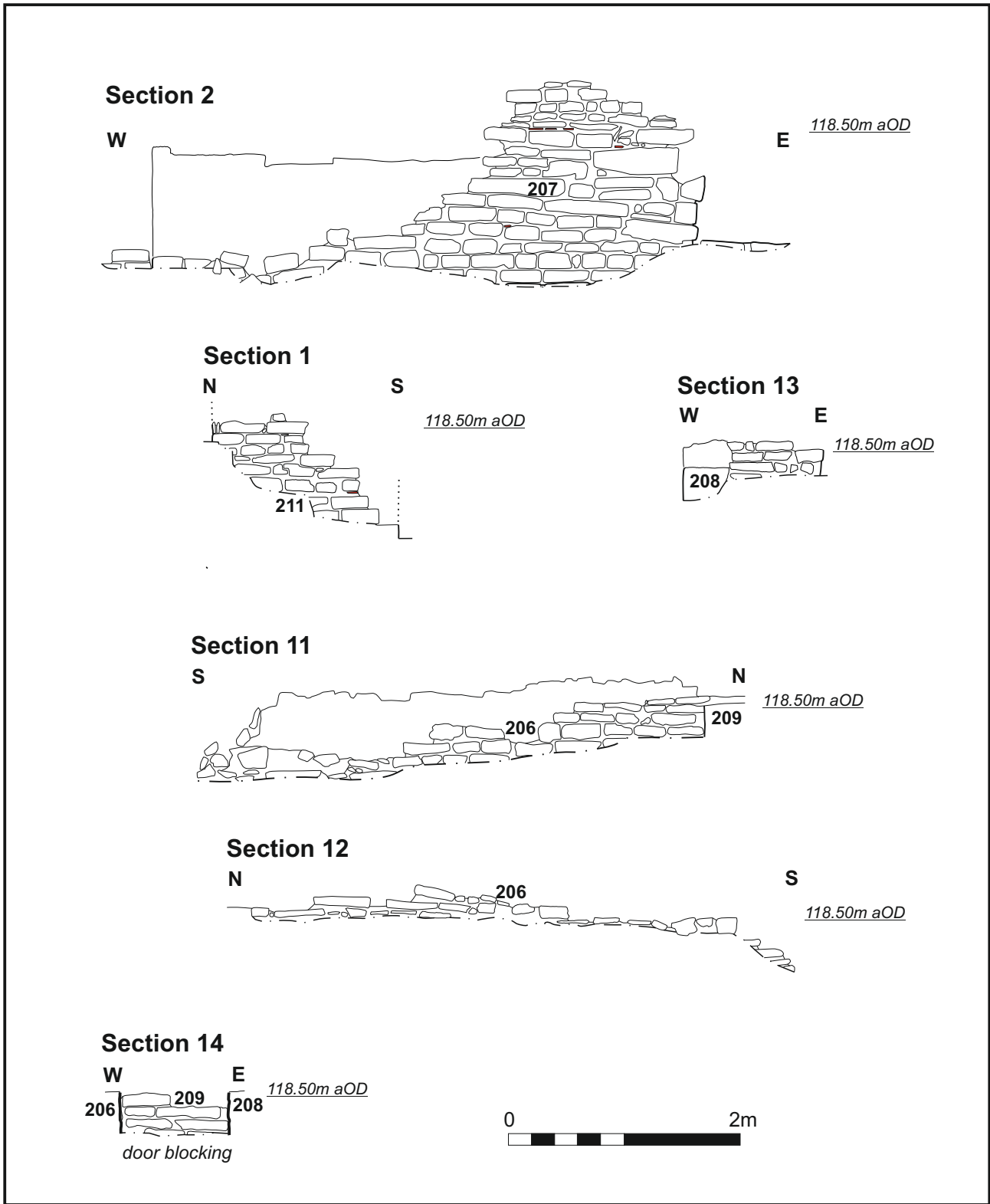
Scale 1:50

The walls in Area B Fig 10









Scale 1:50

Area B, Sections 1, 2, 11- 14 Fig 12



(a) The exposed walls in Area B, looking west



(b) The robbed remains of wall 206, looking north



(c) Wall 207, looking north



(d) Walls 207 and 208, looking north

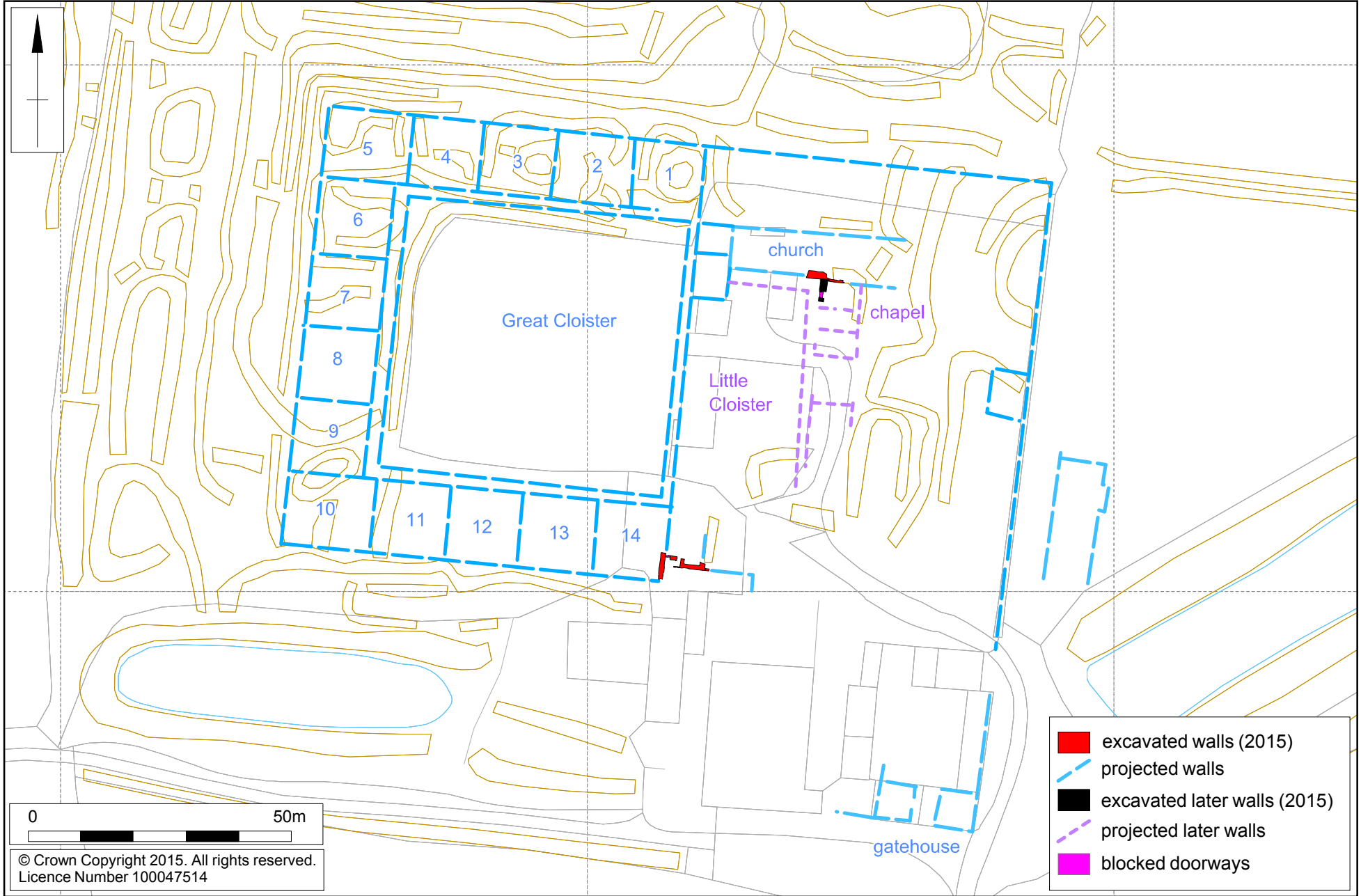


(e) Blocked doorway 209, looking west



Scale 1:1,000 (A4)

The adjusted layout of the priory Fig 14





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