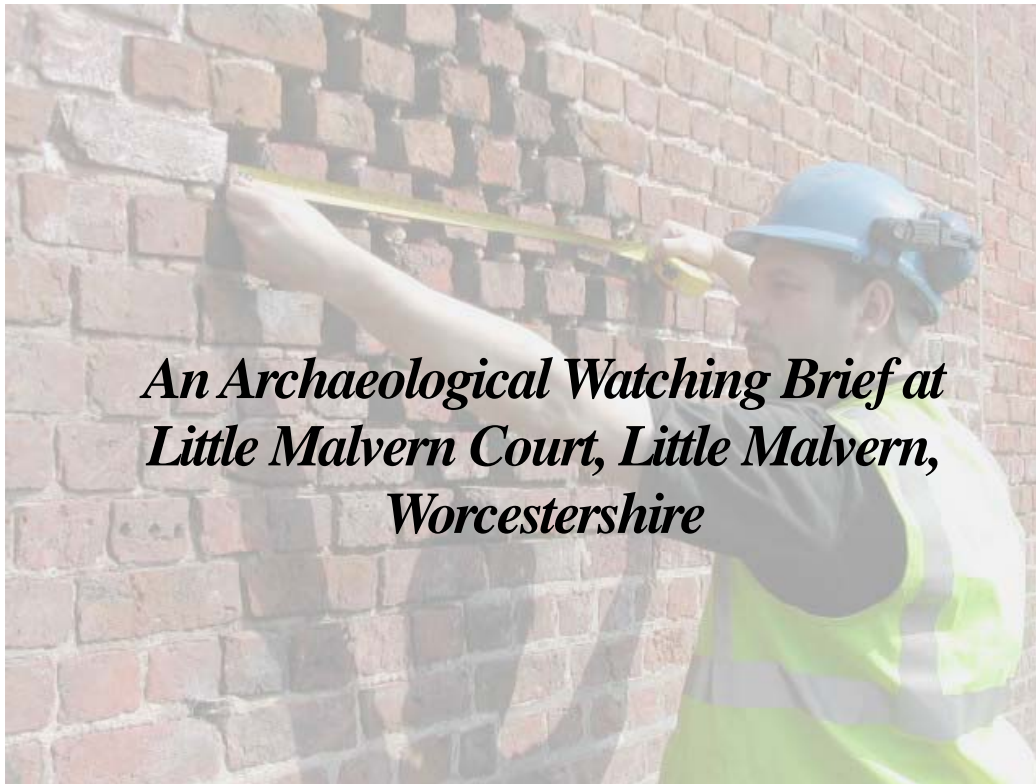


Mercian Archaeology

-taking the past into the future

*An Archaeological Watching Brief
at Little Malvern Court,
Little Malvern, Worcestershire*



*An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Little Malvern Court, Little Malvern,
Worcestershire*

A Report for Mrs T.M.Berrington

November 2005
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Project: PJ 150

WSM 34497

***Mercian Archaeology** undertake archaeological projects across much of the West Midlands and the Welsh Marches. **We specialise in Historic Building Recording and Analysis.** We also undertake archaeological watching-briefs, evaluation and excavation, desk-based assessment, historic landscape assessment and osteological analysis. We now also carry out historic reconstruction and can produce illustrations for publication, website or interpretative panels.*

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1. Project Background

1.1. Location of the Site

Little Malvern Priory and Court lie off the A4104 road to Upton upon Severn, on the eastern slope of the Malvern Hills (NGR SO 7704240356). The site stands at 125 metres AOD (Above Ordnance Datum), with the wooded hills to the west rising to 270 metres AOD at Wynds Point. The terrain slopes down to the wide flood plain of the River Severn to the east (Figure 1). The courthouse is at the western end of the remains of the priory, with modern stonework demarcating the outline of the position of the demolished nave on the western side of the standing tower. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 218) and is listed on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (WSM 00719).

1.2. Project Details

An application for Scheduled Ancient Monument consent was presented to English Heritage by David Duckham of David Duckham and Robert Tolley, Chartered Architects of Worcester, to run underground ducting across the site, designed to house oil pipe and electric power cable (Ref: 1076.AM, 13th June 2005). The consent was given subject to the groundworks within the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument being monitored under an archaeological watching brief, for which a proposal and specification of works was written (Mercian Archaeology 2005).

1.3. Reasons for the Watching Brief

The archaeological watching brief has been suggested as the appropriate response to the threat posed to the archaeological site by the development process. This would involve the excavation of service trenches from the existing oil tank to the courthouse.

A watching brief is defined as:

A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be in a specified area on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (IFA 1999).

A watching brief at the site was proposed in order that a record of any archaeological remains or deposits encountered during excavations associated with the development may be made and placed into context using our current archaeological knowledge of the site.

2. Methods and Process

2.1. Project Specification

- The project fieldwork conforms to the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (IFA 1999).
- The archive conforms to the standards and guidelines established by the Archaeological Data Service.
- The project conforms to the requirements for Scheduled Ancient Monuments consent as indicated by English Heritage (HSD/9/2/7389), for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology (2005).
- Mercian Archaeology adhere to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the Mercian Archaeology Service Manual (Williams 2003)

2.2. Aims of the Project

The watching brief aimed to:

- Use the results of the archaeological work to produce a report highlighting: -
 1. The survival and location of any archaeological deposits.
 2. Make an analysis and interpretation of all identified natural and cultural deposits
- Based on the above, establish the significance, survival, condition and period of the archaeological remains and place them within context at local, regional or national level where relevant.

3. The Background

3.1. A Brief Archaeological Overview

Little Malvern parish lies at the southern end of the Malvern Hills, with its western boundary along the Shire Ditch, which runs along the ridge of the hills, also forming the boundary between Worcestershire and Herefordshire. Parts of the ditch date from the prehistory with the line being used for later medieval land division. The northern parish boundary (modern) follows the course of the Merle Brook, with boundaries to the east and south across Hook Common and along the route adopted by the Worcestershire Way, parts of which are likely to be on the line of a much older track. The area enclosed within the boundaries encompasses around 720 acres (VCH III).

The Benedictine priory was founded at Little Malvern around 1125 (Bateman 1996), although the earliest remains within the upstanding fabric of the priory church of St Giles apparently dates from the late 12th century, with major rebuilding taking place from the 15th century. At the dissolution of the monasteries in 1537 the church was partially demolished (VCH III), seemingly along with most of the ancillary monastic buildings. There is, however, an alternative story regarding the founding of the priory and said to have been by two brothers, Jocelin and Edred in 1171 (British History Online).

The church was originally cruciform in plan, with a central tower, north and south transepts, quire to the east with flanking chapels and a nave to the west. The above ground fabric of the nave no longer stands and the transepts and chapels are ruinous. However, the remainder of the church is still in use today. It is likely that the majority of the demolition of the church took place during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530's, although the exact date of suppression is unclear. The last prior, John Bristowe, appears in a pension list for 1536-7, suggesting the monastery was suppressed by 1538 (British History Online). At this time the priory of Little Malvern held lands widely across Britain and Ireland.

The courthouse, which probably encompasses much of the prior's house (VCH III), has remains dating from the 14th century within its fabric. An undercroft, open hall and series of monks cells date from this period (WSM 00720). The building and surrounding grounds and courtyard have been much altered over the following six centuries and the fabric we see today dates from the late 14th century to the late 1960's.

3.2. The Cartography

The scope of the project did not warrant in-depth investigation into the layout of the site from cartographic sources. However, readily available maps were consulted in order that any remains located during the fieldwork may be differentiated from known modern features.

Only the 6” to 1 mile 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of the area was available at Worcester Records Office (WRO) at the time of the documentary work. This did not show enough detail to be of use.

The detailed 1:2500 edition Ordnance Survey map of 1927 shows that the grounds to the north of the courthouse have since been landscaped, with paths in a different alignment and that there have been outbuildings (the garage and boiler house) added within the north-east external courtyard (Figure 2).

Cartographic Sources Used

Source	Reference Number
Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 6” (1885) Worcestershire Sheet XLVI.SE	Worcester Records Office
Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Worcestershire Sheet XLVI.16 (1927)	Worcester Records Office

Sources Consulted of Little Use

Source	Reference Number
Letters and Correspondence, Little Malvern Court (1953-4)	WRO BA 8008/95 vi
Estate Sale Particulars	WRO BA 9526/58
Estate Accounts Book	WRO BA 1575

Other sources used are referenced within the report.

3.4. The Fieldwork Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken between 12th September and 7th October 2005.

The site photography was carried out using digital format. A 1-metre scale was used where possible.

Proforma Record Forms were used to record the site stratigraphy in tandem with site notes to produce the final record contained within this report.

The methodology adopted and the favourable working conditions meant that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

4. The Watching Brief

The watching brief was carried out in three phases in readily separable areas of the scheduled monument, these are shown as Area 1, 2 and 3 in Figure 3. The archaeological work followed the progress of the ground workers as they excavated 0.40 metre wide trenches across the site designed to take the ducting. The trenches were excavated to a depth of between 0.35 and 0.50 metres. Natural undisturbed parent material was not observed in any of the monitored areas.

Area 1: North of the Position of the Site of the Nave

The watching brief in this area focused on an excavated pipe-run along the boundary wall between the graveyard to the north-east and the court. The trench was excavated through a garden border containing mature shrubs and trees; consequently roots heavily truncated the area. The excavated trench in this area was limited to around 0.35 metres wide and similar depth. At this level, the concrete strip foundation for the boundary wall was encountered. The evidence indicated that the section of wall running north-west to south-east (closest to the nave), was a later rebuild (or new build), the foundation material being modern concrete. The section to the north, which runs north-east to south-west extended below the level of the modern concrete foundations and the graveyard on the other side is up to around 0.70 metres lower, indicating the level of build up on the court side during landscaping and terracing.

The material excavated was all of one context [100], a dark humic garden soil with rare charcoal flecks and abundant small sub-angular stones. Finds from this context included medieval roof tile and post-medieval ceramics. At the southern end of this length of trench, towards the nave, the excavation was deeper as the ducting to be contained in the trench was to be 'tunnelled' beneath the kerbstones that formed the garden border. The layer below could be seen in this area [101]; this was not excavated, but a sherd of medieval floor-tile and post-medieval ceramics were retrieved from the visible surface. The context was a greyish-brown silty layer with a small percentage of clay, containing small to medium fragments of Malvern stone, probably representing a demolition layer, the large stones having been removed for use elsewhere.

Area 2: Across the Site of the Nave

The excavated trench cut through the site of the former nave in a north to south direction. The location of the north and south walls of the nave have been laid out in stone setts at ground level, giving the impression to the casual observer of the scale and dimension of this part of the church. The tarmac surface [200] was cut with a road cutter before the duct-run was excavated by hand to a maximum depth of 0.45 metres. The excavation was completely within made-up ground, which had also been disturbed by service trenches. A 0.20 metre layer of medium hardcore [201] lay below the tarmac, this consisted of crushed brick and small angular stone chippings in a sandy-silt matrix. This lay over another make-up layer [202] of yellowish-brown sandy silt containing abundant small angular fragments of Malvern stone, fragmentary brick, tile and mortar, coal, glass and deposits of tarmac from later pipe trenches,

which had cut through the deposits. A gas pipe was noted running east to west through the trench and an electricity cable running north-west to south-east.

The ducting trench was tunnelled below the kerbstones on the northern side (line of the north wall of the nave) and the line of the south wall of the nave on the opposite side, both of which are demarcated by stone sets at ground level. On the northern side a rough stone block [203] was encountered 0.30 metres below the present ground level. This was not on the line of the former wall of the nave and may have represented a fallen stone from the demolished wall. The size of the excavated trench and constraints of the tunnelling process meant that this could not be resolved. The stone was covered by a dry dark garden soil with abundant small roots [205], this sloped down to the south over the stone and up on the other side of the kerb. The soil represents the Victorian shrubbery border, before the re-landscaping and terracing of the mid to late-20th century. On the opposite southern side, stone was encountered [204] on the line of the southern nave wall. Unfortunately, this had been punched through during the laying of a gas main, which coincidentally was on the line of the new ducting trench. The stone may have been part of the remnant wall of the church nave as the evidence suggests that any foundations would be below this depth.

Area 1: South of the Site of the Nave

The stone courtyard flags [300] on the line of the ducting trench route were lifted and the concrete screed below [301] broken with a Kango hammer, before being removed. The material below was excavated to a maximum depth (from the stone flagged surface) of 0.45 metres, which was all made up ground. The deposit was loose greyish-brown sandy silt with a high proportion of brick, tile and mortar rubble and small stone fragments. The deposit had been disturbed by the 2 ½” gas main, which ran down the centre of the trench. Finds from this area included both medieval and post-medieval tile and pottery (see below).

5. The Artefacts by Laura Griffin

Artefactual Analysis

5.1. Aims

The brief required an assessment of the quantity, range and potential of artefacts from the excavation.

The aims of the finds assessment were: -

- To identify, sort, spot date, and quantify all artefacts
- To describe the range of artefacts present
- To preliminarily assess the significance of the artefacts

This report covers artefacts of post-medieval and modern date.

5.2. Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved artefacts were examined and identified, quantified and dated to period. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 2000 database.

Pottery fabrics are referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

5.3. Results of analysis

The assemblage retrieved from the site consisted of 20 sherds of pottery, six fragments of floor tile, five of roof tile, two pieces of stone building material and three clay pipe stem fragments. Finds came from five stratified contexts and the ground surface and displayed moderate levels of abrasion. The group could be dated from the 13th century to late 18th century.

All artefacts have been quantified and dated according to material type (see Appendix 1: Table 1) and a table is also included to show the quantification of pottery by fabric type (see Appendix 1: Table 2). Diagnostic pottery sherds could be identified as being of a particular form type and dated accordingly. Remaining undiagnostic fragments were datable by fabric type to the general period or production span. Although small, in general the assemblage displayed a standard range of material for a site of this type and date.

5.4. Discussion

The discussion below is a summary of the artefacts and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

5.4.1. Medieval

A single sherd of pottery (context 301), six fragments of floor tile (contexts 100, 101, 201 and 202) and five pieces of roof tile (unstratified and contexts 202 and 301) could be identified as dating to this period. In addition, the two pieces of stone building material (context 202) are also thought to be of medieval date.

The sherd of pottery was identified as coming from the base of a locally produced jug of oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric 69), dating to between the 14th-15th centuries. The sherd displayed a copper-rich, speckled green glaze on the external surface and had thumbled decoration around the join between the vessel base and wall.

The roofing tile consisted of four fragments of flat tile and one of ridge tile, all of which were of the local fabric. All fragments displayed characteristics commonly associated with tiles of the Malvernian industry, including unsanded bases and in the case of the ridge tile, a thin speckled green glaze along the apex of the upper surface. The two unstratified fragments of

flat tile appear to have been burnt, having distinctive dark grey surfaces and a bright orange core. The Malvernian tile industry was a long-lived one and therefore some of the above tiles may have been produced in the early post-medieval period. However, it is not possible to identify if this is the case from the tiles themselves and the high levels of stratigraphic disturbance also prevents more accurate dating using terminus post quem dates.

The floor tile consisted of five fragments of plain and one decorated tile, all of which are thought to date to the 15th century. The fabric of the tiles is reminiscent of that of the roof tile above and all appear to have been well made in the mould and have trimmed, unsanded bases, characteristic of the Malvern Chase tiling industry (Vince 1984). The undecorated examples were of varying thickness ranging from 16mm-24mm. Four displayed a green speckled glaze similar to that commonly seen on the Malvernian pottery and ridge tile of this period. The remaining fragment was yellow, with the glaze highly abraded to reveal the slip of white clay below.

The decorated tile was thicker than the above examples at 26mm. The decoration consisted of a thin skim of white clay inlay but unfortunately, the fragment was too small to enable a specific design to be identified. As in the case of the roof tile, two fragments appear to have been burnt (context 100 and 101).

The stone building material was also burnt and consisted of a large, flat piece of sandstone with a broken nail/stake hole and a small fragment of oolitic limestone, also displaying a broken nail hole.

5.4.2. Post-medieval

Material attributed to this period ranged in date from the 16th – late 18th centuries and consisted of 19 sherds of pottery and three clay pipe stems.

Pottery of this period was of a narrow range of domestic forms, primarily dishes, bowls, cups and jars. The local pottery industry was represented by two rim sherds of oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric 69; context 202) dating between the 16th and early 17th centuries. These sherds were from two flared bowls and displayed a thin greenish brown internal glaze, characteristic of the later Malvernian wares.

Post-medieval red sandy ware (fabric 78) was largest fabric group of this period, being represented by nine sherds dating between the mid 17th and 18th centuries. Identifiable forms consisted of two jars (contexts 100 and 202), two bowls (contexts 100 and 201), one cup handle (context 301) and part of the body of a 'tyg' with a double looped handle (context 301). The remaining sherds appeared to come from either large jars or bowls (unstratified and context 100). All were decorated with a lustrous dark brown iron glaze, characteristic of the ware type. In addition, one of the bowl sherds (context 101) appeared to have been burnt post-depositionally.

Other sherds of similar date consisted of two pieces of slip decorated post-medieval buff ware (fabric 91; context 100 and 201). Both appear to have come from large press-moulded dish forms, possibly used as baking plates, which could be dated between the mid 17th and 18th centuries.

Remaining sherds were all small fragments and could be dated to 18th century. These included three sherds from a decorated pearlware cup or rice bowl (fabric 85; context 100), the rim of a white stoneware plate (fabric 81.2; context 201), the rim of a creamware plate (fabric 84;

context 301) and the base from a small jar or cup made of distinctive Agate ware (fabric 89; unstratified).

In addition, three clay pipe stems were also retrieved. (context 201, 202 and 301) All were fragmentary but two displayed spurs, one of which was stamped but this was unfortunately illegible (context 301).

5.5. Significance

In general, the finds from this site indicate a high degree of post-depositional disturbance with all contexts containing artefacts of varying date. A number of finds from the ground surface and the upper levels of stratigraphy in trenches 1 and 2, also display evidence of burning.

6. Discussion of the Physical and Documentary Evidence

The watching brief determined that the excavated ducting trenches did not disturb any archaeological deposits, although a demolition layer was seen on the northern side of the site, which likely dated to the time of the dissolution. Stone was encountered on both the north and south of the nave, which is likely to have been from the nave walls, although due to the 'keyhole' nature of the excavated trenches, little could be determined regarding the true nature of the stone, i.e. whether it was in-situ wall or discarded rubble.

There appeared to be two distinct phases of deposit on the site relating to building works and terracing. A photograph of the hall, south range and courtyard of Little Malvern Court, taken in 1947 (WRO 8008/260 iii), shows the courtyard to have been raised since that time and evidence on the ground today indicates that there is around 50 centimetres of made up-ground across the area. It is likely that the courtyard was raised at the same time that the eastern elevation of the courthouse (great hall) was modified and rebuilt. There is reference to major restoration work taking place between 1964 and 1967 by Mr Thomas Berrington (Bryer 1993, 98).

The second layer of make up [201] appears to relate to the laying of the tarmac drive and this may have been in the 1980's, a period of repair is recorded for 1982-3 (Bryer 1996, 98).

Earlier archaeological watching briefs on the site concluded that there were surviving deposits of medieval and post-medieval date on the site, with dressed stone walls located belonging to the eastern cloisters, close to the brewhouse on the eastern side of the court (WSM 30133; de

Rouffignac 1991) and further wall footings to the south of the garden terrace near the brewhouse (WSM 24401; Bateman 1996). A watching brief on a section of garden wall at the court identified structural remains said to be of 'sandstone in a hard pebbly mortar' (Roberts 1983), although the actual location of the remains is unclear (WSM 30126).

The artefactual assemblage highlights the fact that the area had been disturbed and truncated over the past century or so.

The natural slope of land is to the east, suggests that deposits and wall coursing on the west of the site and the western side of individual buildings would be likely better preserved than those to the east, as levelling for the primary build and later terracing would have cut into the slope.

7. Conclusion

The results of the archaeological watching brief demonstrate that the excavations for the new services did not disturb or destroy significant archaeological deposits or remains. A layer containing demolition rubble from the church was noted on the northern side of the site below the Victorian herbaceous border, this is likely to date from the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530's. Stone was also noted on the line of the southern wall of the former nave of the church and close to the line of the north wall, which probably represent the disturbed remains of the nave walls. The area between the walls and to the south have been made up to a level platform, with a stone flagged external courtyard laid out and a tarmac vehicular drive across the line of the nave. Documentary evidence suggests that this happened during the late 1960's during major redevelopment work at the courthouse.

8. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mrs T.M.Berrington and the staff of Little Malvern Court. Thanks are also due to David Duckham of David Duckham and Robert Tolley, Chartered Architects; Miss A.R.Middleton of English Heritage, David O'Donnell and Spencer Southall of Castle Construction, Laura Griffin for analysis of the artefactual assemblage, Emma Hancox of Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment Record for carrying out the HER search and the staff of Worcester Records Office.

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Appendix 1: Tables

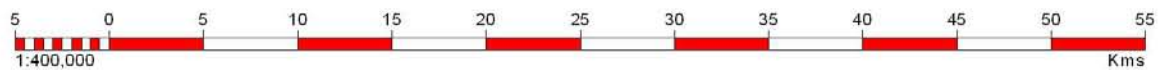
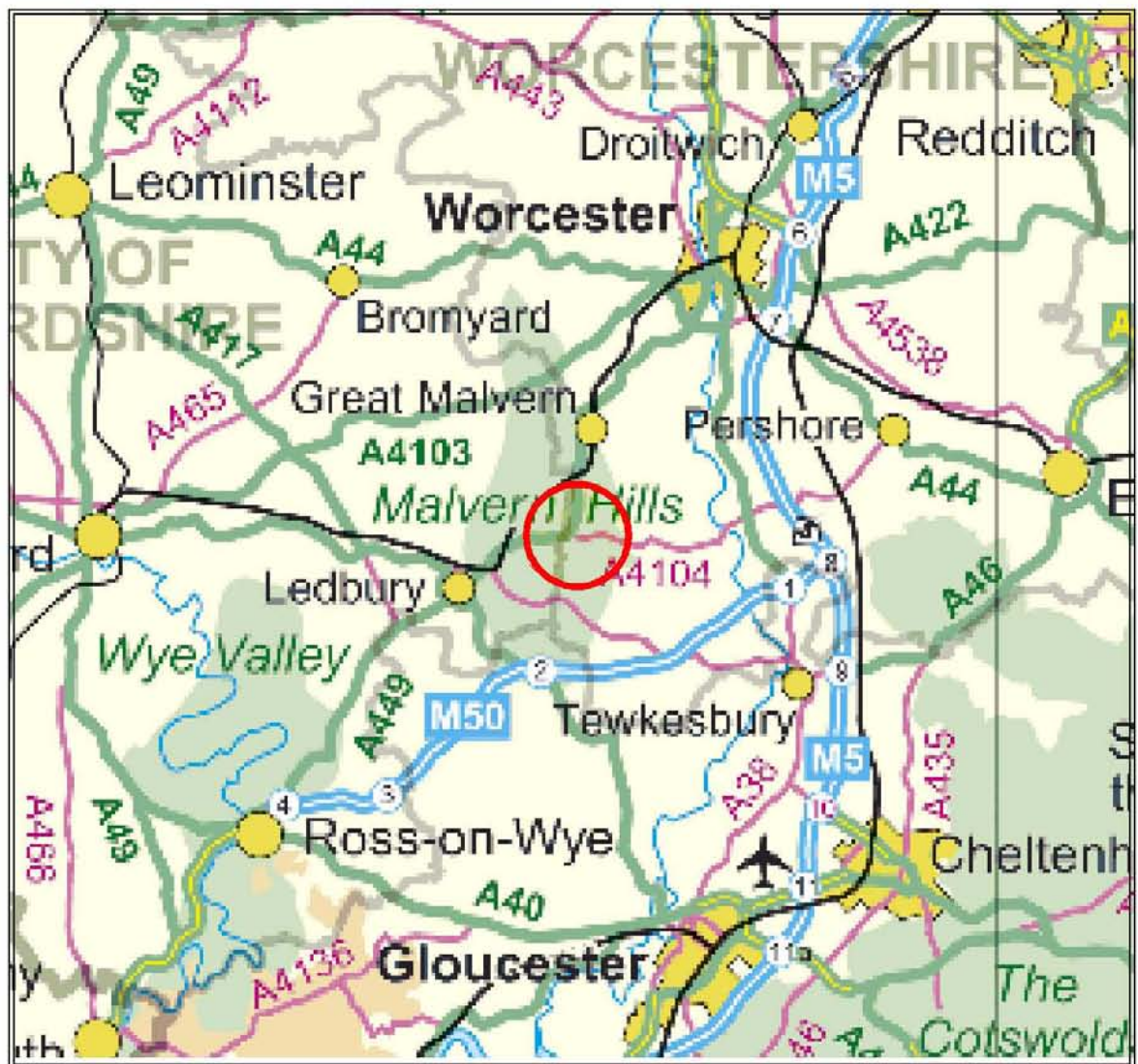
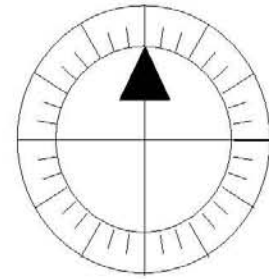
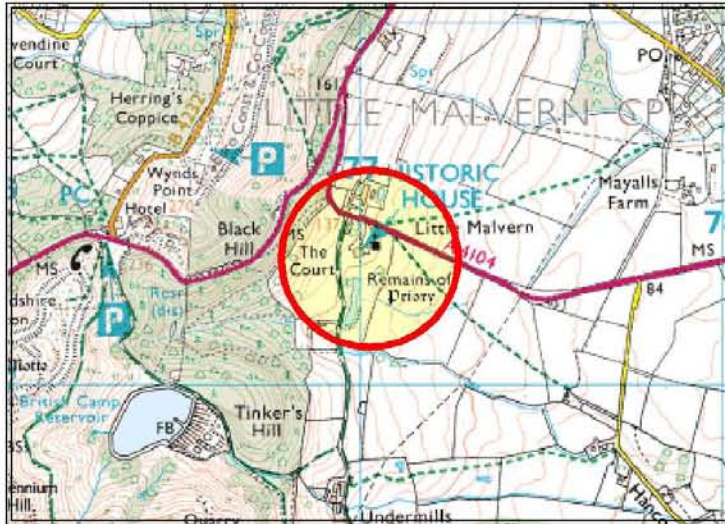
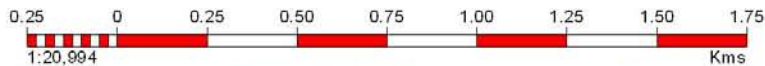
Material	Total	Total weight (g)
Medieval pottery	1	24
Post medieval pottery	16	502
Modern pottery	3	4
Ceramic floor tile	6	238
Ceramic roof tile	5	274
Stone building material	2	966
Clay pipe stem	3	14

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Fabric number	Fabric name	Total	Weight (g)
89	Agate ware	1	6
69	Oxidised glazed Malvernian ware	3	54
78	Post-medieval red sandy ware	9	436
81.2	White stoneware	1	4
84	Creamware	1	6
85	Modern stone china	3	4
91	Post-medieval buff ware	2	20

Table2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

Figure 1: Location of the Site

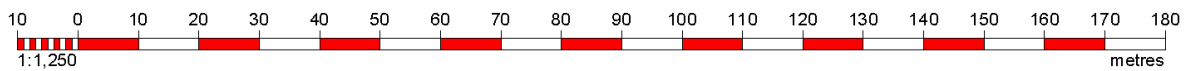
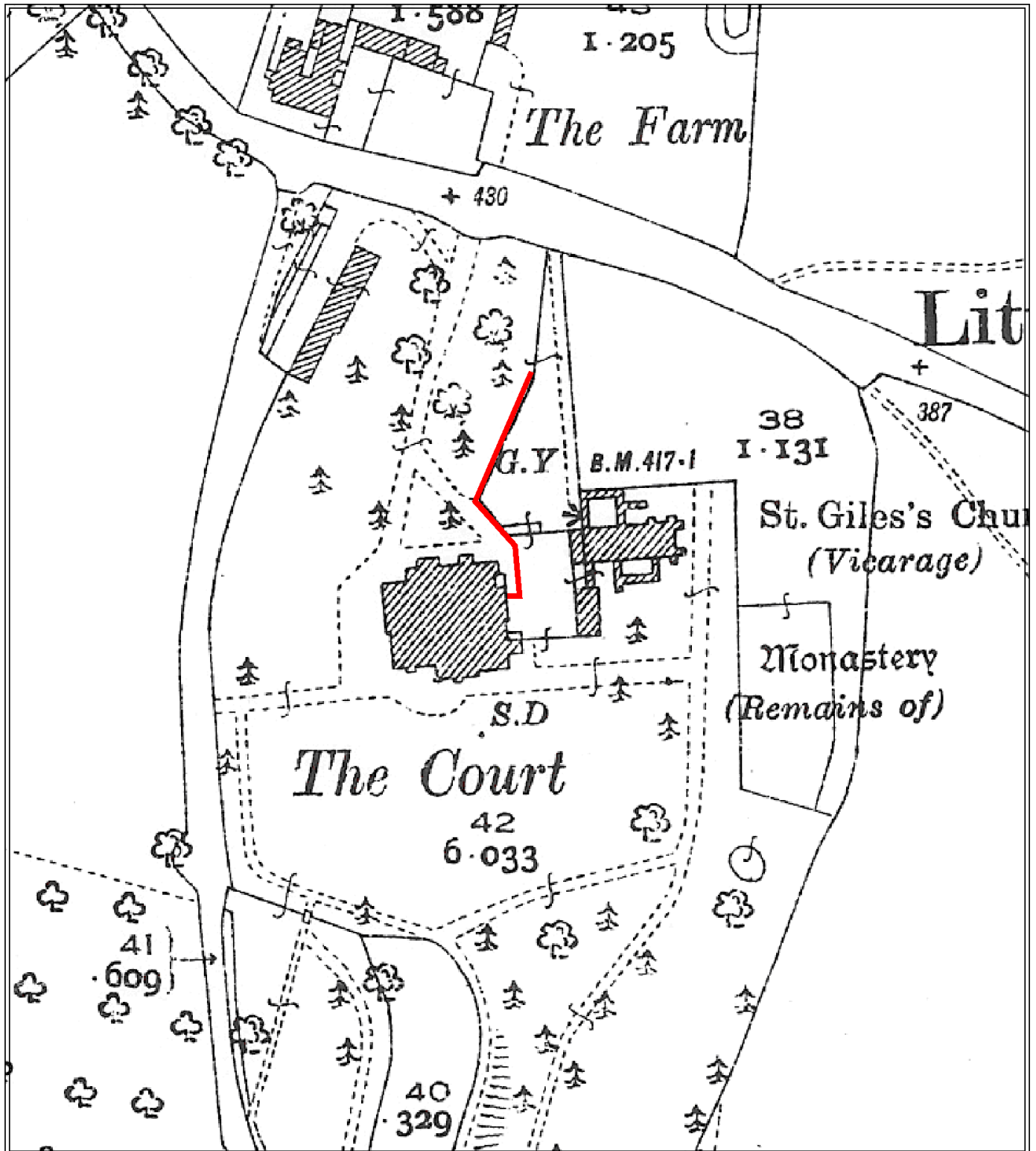


Location of the Site at Little Malvern Court

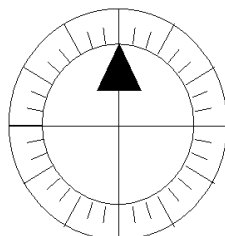
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Figure 2: Revised Ordnance Survey (1927)



The 1927 Ordnance Survey map with the ducting trench highlighted



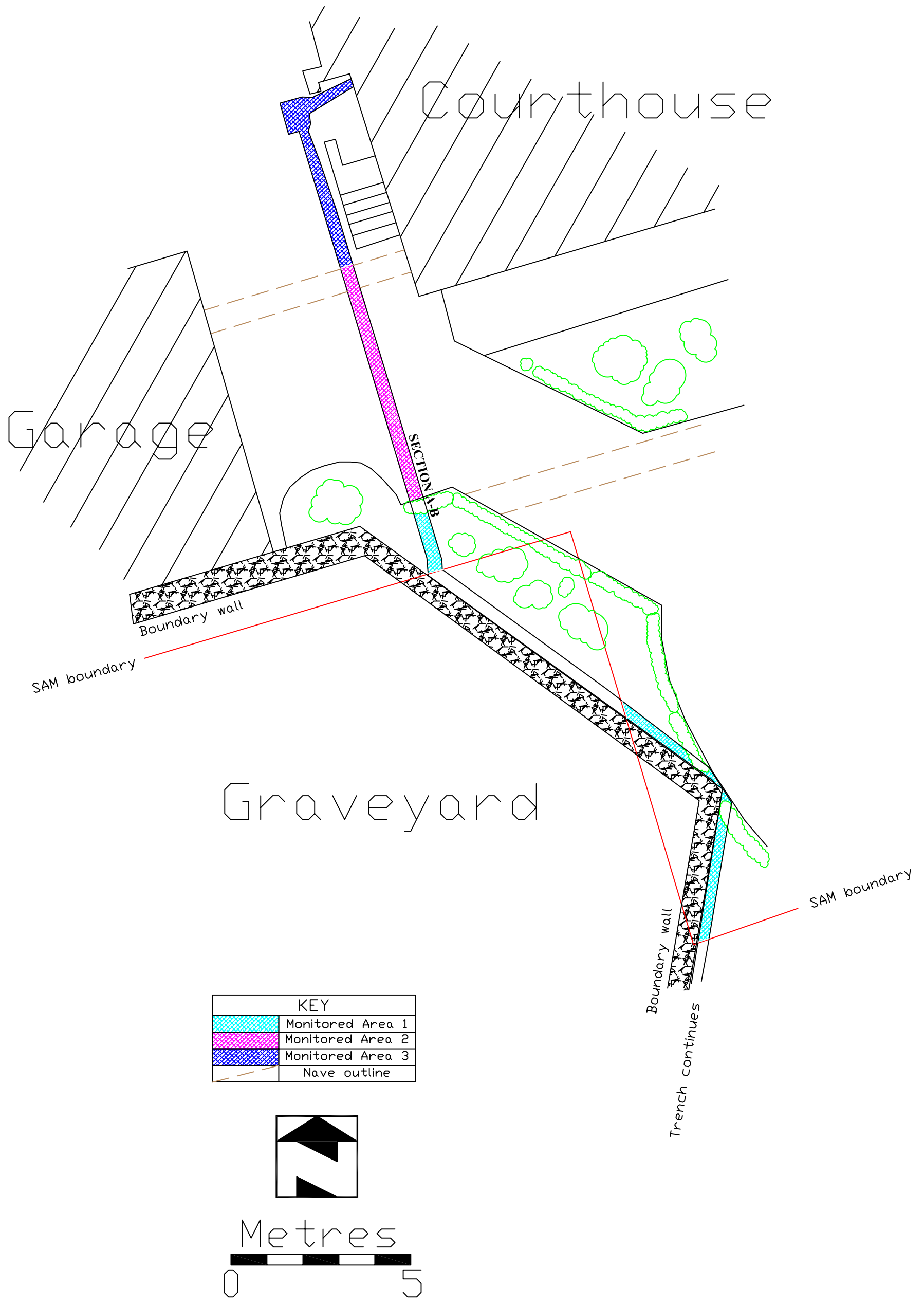


Figure 3: Monitored Area (see text)

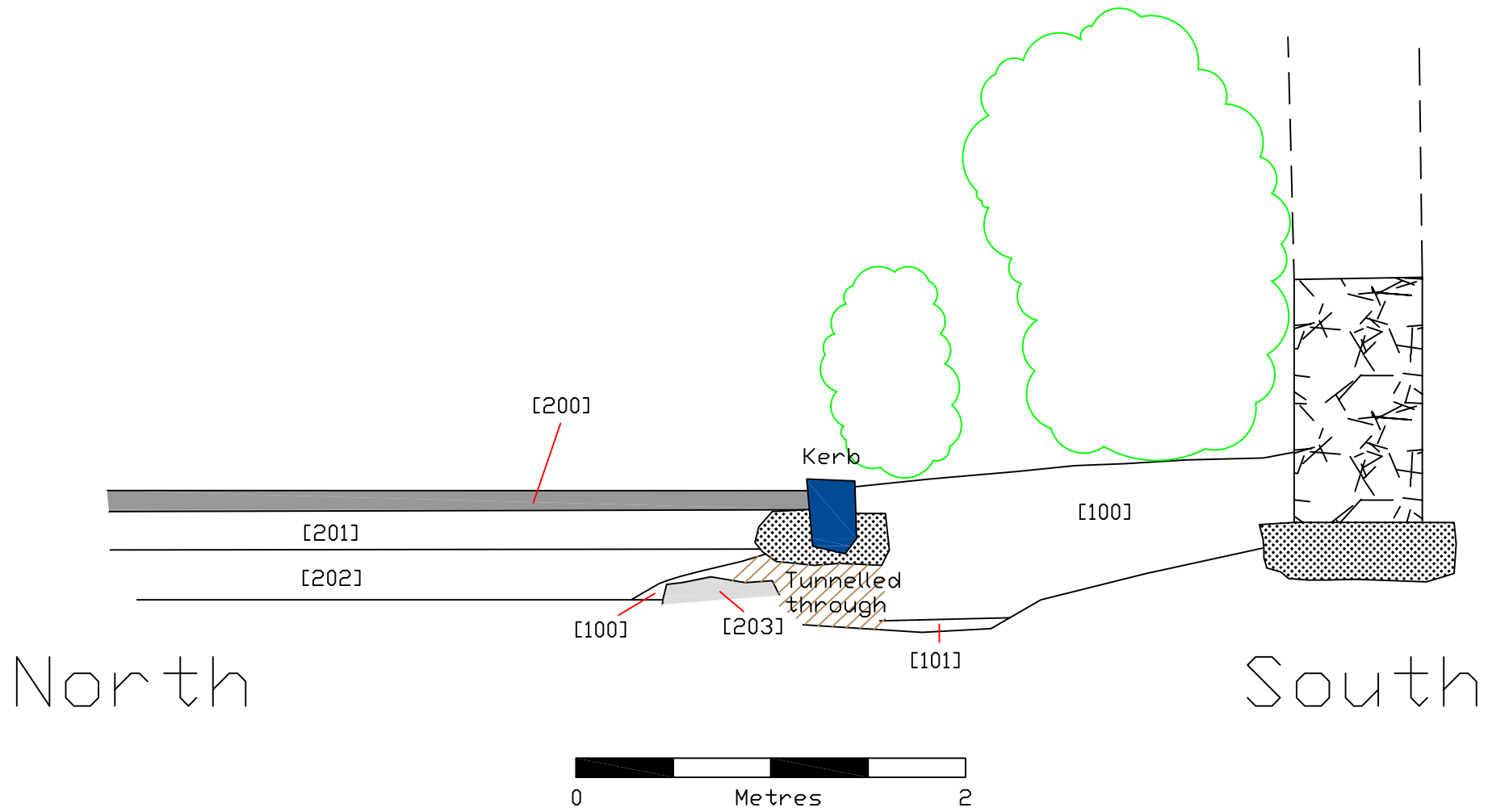


Figure 4: Section A-B (see Figure 3)



The excavated ducting trench to the south of the former nave wall, now demarcated by modern stone at the edge of the external courtyard. The material below the flags is a make-up layer associated with the levelling of the courtyard in the 1960's (scale 1 metre)

Plate 2



Stone [203] in the base of monitored area 2, looking west

Plate 3



Stone [204] in the base of monitored area 2, on the line of the south nave wall (looking south). The stone can just be seen where the ducting trench is tunnelled under the modern wall that marks the line of the south wall of the former nave of the church