

CROWLE COURT, BREDICOT LANE,  
CROWLE,  
WORCESTERSHIRE -  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

WSM 449594



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# **Crowle Court, Bredicot Lane, Crowle, Worcestershire - archaeological evaluation**

**WSM 449594**  
**Mike Napthan MIFA**  
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## **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Mike Napthan Archaeology in support of an intended Planning Application for extensions to the late Victorian farm house on the site of the medieval monastic manor at Crowle Court, Crowle, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9209 5590).*

*The site presently consists of both buried and above ground remains of the 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Century manor house of the Priors of Worcester, together with its former manorial barn (which however lies outside the present property boundary). The above ground remains consist of extensive earthworks of a moat completed in 1533, banked enclosures, a further earthen bank to the south west of the house and the fragmentary remains of one bay of the original manor house. The single storey ruin of this structure incorporates the remnants of a fine encaustic tile pavement (now concealed beneath block paving). The below ground remains on the site are little understood despite several small scale archaeological interventions in recent years. A recent documentary assessment of the site (November 2010) was prepared by Mike Napthan Archaeology.*

*The field evaluation was preceded by a separately commissioned geophysical survey undertaken by Stratascan, (Austrums, 2011; WSM 44960) and that survey indicated that the planned developments lay just outside the detectable historic footprint of the former manor house. The evaluation consisted of the excavation of three small trenches placed so as to coincide with intended future foundation trenches. Overburden was stripped mechanically, but the bulk of the excavation was undertaken by hand.*

*Deposits to the west of the existing farm house were found to have been dramatically truncated in recent times, possibly at the time of construction of the house in the late 1880s, but more probably in the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century when it would appear that a level lawn area was terraced into the slightly sloping natural topography. In this area only disturbed very clayey topsoil with late 19<sup>th</sup> C brick, machine made roof tile and modern window glass were encountered. A glazed ceramic foul waste pipe appears to have been laid on the surface of the underlying natural deposits prior to redeposition of the clayey topsoil. As there was no discernible drain cut the pipe and terracing may have been contemporary. The underlying natural deposits here were a yellowish and very cohesive clay containing weathered fragments of soft Lias.*

*The largest excavated trench lay to the north-west of the present farmhouse, between the farmhouse and the upstanding ruin of the former manor house. This area has a marked short but steep slope between the higher level on which the former manor-house stood and the lower levelled area around the Victorian house.. Towards the north-east corner of the trench there was a spread of thin crushed Lias slabs and crushed roofing tile immediately below the modern turf/topsoil horizon. Small quantities of later post medieval pottery were found amongst the demolition debris, but no identifiable tile fragments or worked stone. Beneath the demolition spread there was a thin spread of former topsoil containing mortar flecking. At the northern end of the trench this overlay a very thin spread of greenish grey clay with occasional Lias fragments, possibly the residual trace of a clay bedding for a former yard surface. Beneath these deposits there was a disturbed horizon of brownish red marl, probably the natural subsoil. This overlay the natural yellowish clay and Lias brash horizon. Geophysical anomalies in this area appear to be accounted for by the shallow spread of demolition debris immediately below the turf line.*

*The third trench lay to the east of the Victorian house in an area previously disturbed by a 1990s extension and associated service trenching. Only the eastern-most trench section was entirely free from recent disturbance. In this section the modern gravel path overlay a spread of builders sand, probably marking the construction of the adjacent extension. The sand sealed a roughly cobbled path or driveway consisting of principally Lias in a black ashy matrix. This surface also included some blue Victorian pavioir brick and fragments of machine made tile, and therefore probably relates to the 1880s house or later. The cobbled surface overlay a mixed clayey soil containing abundant Lias and tile fragments, occasional 19<sup>th</sup> C brick and frequent mortar flecking. This deposit appears to be of circa 1860s date, incorporating demolition debris from the former manor house. One small fragment of carved stone and a large fragment of a stamped nibbed roof tile were the only items of interest recovered from this horizon. The demolition horizon sealed a layer of greenish grey clay containing only occasional charcoal flecks. This clay horizon may possibly derive from the original excavation of the moat. It overlay a horizon of weathered reddish brown marl, containing only very occasional charcoal flecks. This deposit is interpreted as the natural subsoil. The solid natural deposits beneath consisted of a yellowish cohesive clay containing weathered Lias brash.*

*Whilst none of the excavated trenches encountered in situ structural remains, sufficient demolition debris was encountered in two of the excavated trenches to confirm the reported demolition of the former manor house in the 1860s. The presence of this demolition horizon marks the level below which structural remains of the manor (and associated deposits) may survive. In both cases the only “man-made” deposits found to survive beneath the demolition deposits appeared to be a spread of greenish grey clay, a redeposited natural material, possibly derived from the excavation or enlargement of the moat. The underlying marl showed some indication of possible past cultivation or root action, but contained no artefacts and is unlikely to have been a true cultivation soil.*

*Taken in conjunction with the geophysical report the present investigation strongly indicates that there is every possibility of extensive well preserved below ground evidence of the former manor house to the north and east of the intended development areas. However, the present proposals will impinge only on areas previously truncated by past development, and there is only a very slight probability of archaeologically significant features or deposits occurring within the footprint of the intended extensions.*

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Mike Napthan Archaeology in March 2011 at Crowle Court, Worcestershire. The project is being undertaken on behalf of the landowners Mr and Mrs Towe (the Clients) and has been commissioned through their architect Stephen Cox of Gould Singleton Architects following a Brief dated December 3rd 2010 by Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service and recommendations by English Heritage as part of pre application consultation. The site lies within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM Here and Worcs 30049). No planning application or application for SAM consent has yet been submitted. The intended development is to be the extension of the existing building to both sides and to the rear. The building was previously extended to the east in 2003-4. The area to the rear is presently mainly occupied by a patio, and the sides of the building by gravelled surfaces.
- 1.2 The site location is at Bredicot Lane, which leads into the village of Crowle up a steep rise from the south-west (NGR SO 9209 5590) The site is immediately adjacent to the parish church, and to the south there are the converted remains of the former farm buildings including the Crowle tithe barn, now under separate ownership. The site is part of a former monastic manorial complex dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier.
- 1.3 This report represents the findings of the evaluation undertaken between 7<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March 2011. The trenches were backfilled on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

## 2 Methodology

- 2.1 A documentary assessment of the site was compiled by Mike Napthan Archaeology in November 2010,

And the majority of the historical background given in the present report is repeated from that document (Napthan 2010). Subsequently a copy of Dr Pat Hughes 1997 report "*Crowle Barn and its surroundings*" has been obtained, and this contains some very useful additional material which has been used to amend and expand the previous historical summary by courtesy of Dr Hughes.

- 2.2 Prior to excavation of the trenches a separately commissioned geophysical survey was undertaken by Stratascan (Job ref: J2843; Austrums R, 2011, WSM 44959). The results of the survey indicated that the majority of the surviving buried remains of the former manorial buildings lay to the north and east of the present farmhouse (Fig 1). All of the available area within the moat was surveyed, but results in the south-western corner were devoid of any significant responses, suggesting that this area had been comprehensively stripped of structural remains. The character of responses within the former manor house building footprint indicates the possible survival of patches of flooring, fairly extensive survival of former wall lines (as residual foundations or possibly robber trenches) and an extensive rubble spread relating to the demolished building. There are areas indicated from radar survey to be possible surviving surfaces, but the excavated evidence has indicated that the surface to the SE of the house is of 19<sup>th</sup> C or later date, and some of the "surface" NW of the house may be simply trampled rubble spread. The radar survey adds significantly to the understanding of the resistance data, and confirms that the remains are at a very shallow depth. Radar survey of the moat was less successful due to technical issues, but appears to have defined the former edges of the moat in part.
- 2.2 The three excavated trenches consisted of a total of 10m<sup>2</sup>. The trenches in gravelled areas (Trenches 2 and 3) were mechanically stripped to the top of archaeologically significant horizons. Trench 1 was manually stripped of turf then mechanically stripped to the top of potentially archaeologically significant horizons. Trench cleaning and further excavation was completed using hand tools only. Trench sections were drawn at 1:10 and trench plans at 1:20. Levels were derived from a convenient fixed point recorded on the recently completed topographical survey of the site, the values being in metres above Ordnance Datum. Site photographs (in digital formats) were taken prior to and during the excavation and on completion of the re-instatement. The photo archive is appended to the present report on DVD.
- 2.3 The artefactual assemblage was very small, reflecting both the small scale of the intervention and also a relative paucity of artefacts in the excavated deposits. Non diagnostic building materials (unworked stone and small undiagnostic fragments of brick and tile etc were not retained). The retained artefacts are listed, quantified and identified where possible in Appendix 1. The assemblage was too small for any meaningful quantitative analysis. No dated or undated deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.

### 3 Historical background

- 3.1 Crowle is first mentioned in a charter granting land (five mansae) to Eaberht, Bishop of Worcester AD 822-46, from Beortulf, King of Mercia, (VCH 1913, 320). Eaberht subsequently bestowed the estate to the Priory of Worcester. Some doubt remains as to the validity of this charter as it includes an anachronistic reference to the boundaries of Goding's land, Beortulf and Goding not being contemporaries (VCH 1913, 320). At this time Crowle was spelt *Crohwell* from Old English *croh*, meaning saffron (crocus), and possibly means 'place where the crocuses grew' (Mawer and Stenton 1927). Nash, however, derived the name as clay field "from the Saxon *croh*, clay and *leah*, a field" (Nash, 1781, Vol I, 279) Other 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> C spellings were "Croh Lea" and "Croelai". Habbington recounts that "*at the tyme when the Danes weare possessed of our country, a village named Crohley beeing a demeane for the mayntenance of the Mounckes, was thus severed from the Monastery, althoughe by the bounty of God restored agayne to the Churche's servyse; for Simund a certain Dane by bloud ...beeing seysed of an other Crohley neyboringe vnto thys.... greedeley coveted the Lordship of our bordering village...which...he afflicted it with so many damages and impleadinges that he made it almost destitute of inhabitants, unto whom...Ogelwinus Prior of the Monastery [of Worcester] granted for terme of hys lyfe...uppon condition that hee showlde in expeditions by land and sea .....searve the Monastery and paye ...rent to the Prior*" (Habbington, Amphlett ed. 1895, 534)
- 3.2 Noake writing in 1851 reported "*Between two and three hundred years ago, a skeleton in a stone coffin lined with lead, with an earthen pitcher, was dug up in a field in this parish, and these were supposed to be the last remains of Simund the Dane*", the story of the stone coffin in fact derives from Nash who

quotes Dr Thomas as his source “*Dr Thomas imagines that this person was Simund the Dane. The stone of which the coffin was made so nearly resembled what is produced out of Burford quarry in Oxfordshire that a friend of Mr Habbington...did not hesitate to affirm it was hewn from thence*” (Nash, 1781, Vol I, 282) Nash describes the findspot as a field adjoining Huddington, but this coffin (which is of a 12<sup>th</sup>C tapering form with circular recess for the head) is now preserved on the southern side of the church adjacent to the present site (WSM43977). The church itself is of 12<sup>th</sup> Century origins (WSM 26826) though almost entirely rebuilt in 1880-1.

- 3.3 At Domesday the manor was held from the priory by Roger de Lacy – *The church of Worcester held one berewic in Crohlea. There were five hides which paid taxes. Roger de Laci held it and Odo held it under him. In demesne were two carucates, and seven villans, and three bordars, with four carucates: four men servants, and one maid servant, and a mill of two shillings, and a salt-pan in Wich of three shillings. There were sixteen acres of meadow; a wood half a mile in length, and one quarentine in breadth, which was in the forest. Simund had held it. It belonged to the demesne. He rendered every service and geld to the bishop, and could neither alienate himself nor his land. It had been worth four pounds; at the time of the survey it was worth seventy shillings. As to the other part of Crowle, it was written Croelai, and belonged to Osbern Fitz Richard...Urso held it of him....There were five hides which paid taxes. In demesne was one caracate and a half, and three bordars, and three cottagers with half a caracate; and there might have been three caracutes more. There were three servants, and a burgess who paid two shillings, and two salt pans of six shillings. Half a lewa of wood in which were a hundred swine. It had been worth sixty shillings and was then worth forty* (Nash, 1781, Vol I, 279-30).
- 3.4 Both Habbington and Nash relate that one Hugh Tirel or Tirell held five hides of land in *Crouley* of Hugh de Lacey, and Hugh de Lacey held it of the Bishop. By 28 Edward I Richard Tirell held on knight's fee in *Croelai* of the Bishop's manor of Northwick. The Syward family succeeded the Tirells. In 1336 the Prior and Convent of Worcester appealed to the bishop that the manor of *Crowle-Syward* was originally granted to their monastery for the support of the monks. The later Crowle Court Estate lay to the south and west of the village and was bounded in 1808 by Crowle Brook (Somerton 1997, Figures 6 and 7) – this almost certainly reflects the size of the monastic estate. After a legal dispute the property was returned to the Priory in 1336. In return for a fee of half a mark yearly the bishop transferred all his rights in the manor back to the Prior and Convent (Nash, 1781, Vol I, 230). It has been suggested that the Court then became a place of monastic retreat (Wainwright and Stone, 2000), and it appears from Dr Hughes researches that the manor was probably run by a steward on behalf of the Priors in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1346 the Prior was paying the “Knight's fee” due to the crown, whereas previously the fee had been paid by the lay tenants. Some improvements to the property occurred around this time, possibly including the circular dovecote built in the north-east corner of the foldyard (Hughes, 1997, 3). The dovecote was certainly in position before 1440 as it needed repairs in that year (Hughes, 1997, 4). In 1515 Prior Wednesbury leased the manor to John Gyse and the conditions of the tenancy included provision for Gyse to be responsible for transportation of the Priors baggage and furniture to Crowle from Worcester or Battenhall “*whenever it shall please us and our successors to come to the site of our manor*”, and to provide fuel on such occasions as well as feeding and stabling the Priory Cellarer and his entourage on such occasions. In return the Prior was to provide building materials (including stone and tiles) for repairs to the house, dovecote and other buildings (Hughes, 1997, 4-5) In 28 Henry VIII (1536) the new Prior and Convent covenanted that the previous Prior William More “*should enjoy Crowle Farm with the plate linen and furniture*”. He was also granted lodgings in the Priory, the keep of two geldings, sufficient fuel at both places, a monk to wait on him and say mass, fifty pounds a year, one thousand marks as a lump sum and payment of his outstanding debts amounting to one hundred pounds (Nash, 1781, Vol I, 230). A lease of the farm yard and farm lands in 1539 reserved to the Prior for life “*all manner of howses and byldings within the circuit of the moot ether with the said mott the duffhowse, stable and dogge canell withowght the said mott with free ingress and egress to the same at all tymes*”, the remainder of the farmyard remained to the use of the new tenant Thomas Welby (Hughes, 1997, 5). Welby occupied the manor including the manor house and appurtenances from Prior More's death in 1552 to 1558 when the property was re-let to Roger Holland (the Dean's brother) and Roger Folliot, the Chapter Clerk of the cathedral with “*reservation of the house in tyme of plage for Dean and Chapter, for scholem[aster] and scholars [of the cathedral school]*” (Hughes, 1997, 7). The manor had passed after the Dissolution to the Dean and Chapter, who were still holding Courts Leet and Court Baron here when Nash wrote in 1779, and these would have been held at Crowle Court, hence the present name of the property.

- 3.5 The Victoria County History (paraphrasing Noake) indicates a 13<sup>th</sup> C date for the original structure “rebuilt on the old foundation shortly before Prior Moore’s time” (VCH III 1913, 329). Prior Moore’s sixteenth century diary refers to the manor house, tithe barn, stables, kennel, dovecote and a gatehouse. He also did extensive building work on the house, which he described as “*in decay*” (Appendix 1), which tends to contradict the suggestion that it was entirely rebuilt shortly before his time. The manor house was of stone and timber and included a lord’s chamber, a second chamber with a study, a guest chamber and a parlour with a lower chamber next to it. Also mentioned in the 1530s were a great hall with a dais, a dormitory for five people, four other chambers and a kitchen (Somerton 1996, 27, 55). The moat was completed in 1533, the event being duly noted by Prior More “*the Mott of Crowle was perfect made and fyneshed upon Seynt Luke’s yeven in ye yere of our Lord mccccxxxij by William More Prior of Worcester, which mott cost in ye houle charges – Li viij xix s. iij d. ...the lecteth of ye mott at Crowle on the church side (yestsyde) 111yds, west side – 82 yds vicarage side (northe) 91yds, southe side 74 yds the depnes of ye mott conteyneth x yards*” (Fegan ed, 1913). The details of construction works given by Prior More make Crowle Court one of the better documented late medieval manor houses, there being detailed accounts for all of the building trades and a separate inventory of the contents of the house in 1532 (Fegan, ed 1914, Appendix 416-417). The adjacent tithe barn pre-dated Prior More and from dendrological evidence was probably constructed 1354-56 and its roof replaced 1589-90 (Hillam, 1996; WSM 30313).
- 3.6 The manor was let in 1566 to Thomas Cox or Cocks and appears to have been subsequently occupied by his son (also Thomas Cocks). Cocks junior was part of a family with considerable estates across the county. His father was known also as “Sir Thomas Cocks of Cleeve” (Gloucs) (Nash, 1781, 281) and manuscript note by Sir Thomas Phillips in our office copy of Nash). Cocks junior was probably born at the house (certainly in Crowle) in 1563 and was the householder by 1606 when a Thomas Cox [sic] of Crowle was indicted for obstructing the highway (this cannot have been his father who died in 1601 - Somerton, 1997, 72). Thomas Cocks junior died 12<sup>th</sup> May 1638 (Inscription on tombstone in the old Crowle Church recorded by Noake, 1851), it was his son Sir John Cocks (1602-75) who held the property in 1649 (Cave & Wilson (eds), 1924; Appendix 3). Following the seizure of power by Parliamentary forces after the 1<sup>st</sup> Civil War Crowle Court was sold by the Parliamentary Commissioners to Major Richard Salwey (1615-1685) in 1650. The 1649 Parliamentary Survey of the looted lands gives a further detailed account of the property including the “*fair farmhouse, with barns stables, outhouses, dovehouse, foldyard, orchard and garden*”. The 1650 “sale” was a redistribution of sequestered Royalist assets to the supporters Parliamentary cause, Salwey being a member of Barebone’s Parliament, nominated for Worcester. Salwey fell out of favour and was expelled from Parliament in January 1660 and imprisoned in the Tower of London (Magazine article by Stephen K. Roberts; History Today, Vol. 53, May 2003).
- 3.7 The sequestered property was only returned to the Dean and Chapter in 1692 following the Restoration. After it was sold in 1650 Crowle Court continued to be used as a farm and gentleman’s residence, leased in 1661 by one John Okey. A slightly later 17<sup>th</sup> Century manuscript by Thomas Dineley the Worcestershire antiquarian (d.1695) mentions the presence of stained glass at this period – “*in ye mannour house, lately ...purchased by John Jones esq, one of his majesties physitians, are seen painted in a window of ye hall ye arms of ye aforementioned last prior thus by the name of More*” quoted by Noake, who goes on to relate that “*Most of the painted glass alluded to by Mr Dineley and Nash has now disappeared ...and the rest is so mutilated and misplaced as to be scarcely distinguishable*” (Noake, 1851, 267-268). John Jones was appointed apothecary and performer to the Royal Household Mar 21<sup>st</sup> 1660, and still held the position of King’s Apothecary in Aug 1673 when it was decided that he should not have a nomination for the Mastership of the Society of Apothecaries. He presented a picture of Charles I to the Society in 1676 (British Journal of Ophthalmology, 7, 1923, p235 note). In 1699 there was a dispute about the “oake lops” traditionally allowed to the incumbent from Thrift Wood, part of the Court Estate. John Jones, objected to providing John Matthews with the faggots from Thrift Wood, claiming in defence that he had never done so before and therefore no precedent had been set. The matter went to a Diocesan Court and the dispute settled in favour of the incumbent (Somerton, 1998). Dr Hughes indicates that neither John Jones or his son (also John) lived at Crowle and were absentee landlords (Hughes 1997, 9) but the dispute regarding the faggots suggests that they took a very close interest in the estate, perhaps running it through a resident steward or manager. The Dean and Chapter manorial records show that in 1717 it was leased to Edward Gibson, who was the Bishop of Lincoln, and that he re-let the manor to John Oakey. During the 1740’s and 1750’s it was re-leased to Edward Gibson

who was by now translated to London. When he died in 1752 the lease was granted to the widow, Mrs Elizabeth Bettersworth, of Dr John Bettersworth who had been a friend of Gibson's. Upon Elizabeth's death in 1759 the lease was transferred to her son Thomas. The annual rent was still £4, the same as it was when rented by Thomas Cocks in the early 1600's (Somerton, 1998, 16-17) Somerton's descent of the manor is in several places contradicted by Dr Hughes research – according to Somerton in 1766 the long association of the Smith family with Crowle Court commenced when the Dean and Chapter leased the manor to John Smith. However Dr Hughes indicates that John Smith was in fact a descendant of John Jones, and John Jones the younger settled the estate on John Smith shortly before 1781. A manuscript "Survey of the Parish of Crowle" is dated by WRO to "circa 1750", but appears to be later as John Smith is listed as the occupant of "Court house, offices, yards and gardens 3a0r24p, also Court Orchard 5a2r1p, and House Close 4a1r33p. His total holdings in the Court Farm amounted to 193a0r2p together with lands in the common fields the farm was 231a2r22p, a substantial holding for this period (WRO BA9400/4 ref 850 Crowle). The family tree of the Smiths of Crowle is given in Somerton, 2000 Appendix 4, but confusingly no John Smith appears, only the Christian names William and Robert appearing in alternate generations. The apportionment of lands at the time of the 1806-8 Inclosures reveals the holding to have been 218a0r12p, then in the hands of William Smith (1770-1865). This latter William was allegedly responsible for the demolition of the old Crowle Court circa 1863, and the event may have been linked to the death of his grandson and heir Robert in that year (Robert's father having predeceased him). Robert had been listed as the Farmer at Crowle Court in Billing's Directory 1855, and as farmer, Crowle in Cassey's Directory of 1860, and it is clear that he was running the farm for his father who was then very elderly. He purchased the Crowle Court estate in March 1862 for £4532 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (see plan Fig 9). The old Crowle Court was, according to VCH, destroyed about 1864, several later commentators suggest that it was destroyed by fire, but no contemporary source for this assertion has been found. The Census returns for 1861 indicate that it was already empty at this date, and it is probable that the building was disused prior to its destruction. On Robert's decease in 1863 there was no further direct descendant to carry on the farm, and the estate was in the hands of Trustees. The trustees apparently had the house demolished, possibly to raise money from the salvable materials. The farm was presumably then run by a bailiff living elsewhere as no one is listed as resident at Crowle Court until 1879 when Alexander Meek farm bailiff to Samuel Wilson was listed at Crowle Court (Littlebury's 1879). Interestingly there appears to have been at this period no house at Crowle Court, so Meek presumably lived nearby rather than on site.

- 3.8 Writing in 1851 Noake described the house at some length: *The farm-house to which he [Prior More]retired is still in existence (occupied by Mr. Smith) near the church at Crowle, and a curious specimen it is of the ancient moated manorial house. The foundation of this house is said to have been laid in the year 1260, and the oldest portions of the masonry are of a Gothic date, long prior to the Reformation, at the time of which event the greatest part of the house was probably rebuilt (for the accommodation of the Prior) in the form in which its remains are now seen, namely, a half-timbered structure of considerable size, enclosing with its two wings a large courtyard. The chapel may still be seen, with its little galleries opening from rooms above, and its beams supported by wooden figures of a male and female (like the classical Caryatides) very rudely carved. There are also remains of a magnificent dining-hall, with its carved corbel-heads to support the roof. Encaustic tiles are in great abundance throughout the house; and the ancient kitchen, with its enormous fire-place, is yet among the entities. The moat round the house is complete, and there is a grange or tithe-barn within a few yards of it.* (Noake, 1851, 263-70). The latest known plan of the manor-house site to show the building was drawn up in December 1860 for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (now Church Commission) – Dean and Chapter Worcester Estates document 7647. This plan is possibly derived from the Enclosures plan of circa 1800 as it repeats the same land parcel numbers, but must be assumed to be a reasonable representation of the footprint of the manor house in the 1860s. Both plans are reproduced here as Fig 9 for comparison with the geophysical plot on Fig 1.
- 3.9 Noake (1868) recorded that a portion of the house remained and was used as a cider house. The moat was partially infilled in the late nineteenth century but survives as an earthwork on the north and east sides, and partially on the western side. The property does not appear on the Census for 1881. The present house is also not shown on the 1884 Ordnance Survey, but the well to the rear is marked. The present house does not appear on mapping until the 1904 revision of the Ordnance Survey, where it appears in the form that survived until the 1980s. The stable block appears to be of similar vintage, but partially rebuilt. The earliest traced occupants of the present house were the Mitchell family in 1891 (Appendix 4). Samuel Mitchell probably was responsible for construction of the present house (between 1884 and

1891) and appears in Directory Listings up to 1896, when he was replaced by Thomas Gwilt, first recorded as present in 1900. The Gwilt family occupied the house and farmed the property until at least 1962, Thomas being succeeded by his wife Ann briefly in 1905 then James his son until the 1940s when Trades Directories ceased coverage of smaller villages and the more recent history of the house is not easily traced. Dr Hughes report on the site includes a copy of Auction Sale Particulars dated August 1962, the sale being on behalf of the Trustees of the late James Gwilt, though the house apparently stayed in the family after this date. A gravestone in the adjacent churchyard commemorates John Henry Gwilt 1915-1982 "late of Crowle Court".

## 5 Site Description

### 5.1 Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 7)

Trench 1 lay in an area of gravel with stepping stones along the western side of the farmhouse. The gravel (context 101) overlay a woven plastic tarpaulin membrane context (102). The membrane was presumably laid to limit weed growth and probably dates to the late 1990s. Context (103) was a mixed dark grey-brown slightly silty sandy loamy clay with occasional gravel, rare 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> C brick fragments, and a single sherd of modern window glass. Context (103) directly sealed a glazed ceramic drain pipe (106) with slight fall to the south. As there was no visible cut through (103) it would appear that layer (103) was laid down over the pipe, which is likely to be of early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century date. Pipe (106) was aligned broadly north-south, and was in current use at the time of recording. It sat in a shallow groove [107] cut into the underlying yellowish tan very cohesive clay (108) with frequent fragments of decayed Lias (undisturbed natural). Solid natural was encountered at 64.68mAOD. There was a further cut feature in this trench, a steep sided foundation trench cut [105]. This was the cut for the present farmhouse foundation, filled with a red brick foundation (with a double stepped half-brick offset at the toe) and context (104) - slightly silty tan brown clay, occasional brick fragments. Documentary and cartographic sources indicate that the fills of [105] must date to between circa 1884 and 1891.

### 5.2 Trench 2 (Figs 4,5 and 7)

This trench was 3m by 2m, and lay to the north-west of the farm house. The uppermost layer was a compact combination of turf and mortary grey sandy clay topsoil (Context 201). The depth of this horizon was variable between 60-125mm. A small fragment of worked oolitic limestone, probably part of an architectural feature was recovered from this horizon (Fig 4). In the south-western half of the trench context (201) overlay context (208) a dark grey sandy clay topsoil with extensive mortar flecking and occasional small mortar fragments. The north-eastern half of the trench was at a slightly higher level, and in this area context (201) overlay context (202) consisting of abundant crushed tile and moderate mortar, with occasional Lias fragments. The relationship between (208) and (202) appeared to indicate that context (202) was later. Context (202) also overlay context (203) consisting of Lias, tile and mortar flecks in grey brown clay loam and (204) Mid brown slightly loamy marl, moderate mortar / charcoal flecks, moderate gravel. All these deposits appear to relate to the demolition of the manor house and subsequent clearing and levelling of the house in the 1860s. These deposits generally overlay a widespread deposit of soft but cohesive red brown marl, (context (205)) containing occasional charcoal flecks and occasional gravel. At the northern end of the trench there was, however, a thin layer of greenish grey clay (209) over (205). This horizon contained a small number of Lias fragments and appeared to be the residue of a deposit of clay, possibly laid down as bedding or preparation for a hard yard surface subsequently removed. The natural deposits in this trench were Lias brash fragments in a yellowish tan clay, with red marl patches (possibly the result of root action), context (207).

### 5.3 Trench 3 (Figs 6 and 8)

The uppermost deposits in this area consisted of a layer of gravel surfacing (301) laid over a thin bed of orangey builder's sand (302) Context (302) had been cut by a very narrow north-south plastic water-pipe trench, containing a blue plastic water pipe. The pipe was at a very shallow depth (circa 100mm) and therefore presumably very prone to freezing. Beneath context (302) was a very thin layer of dark grey ashy material apparently mainly coal ash and clinkers (303), this sealed a surface of Lias cobbles and blue brick paviour in black ashy matrix, context (304). Context (304) also included machine made tile. Beneath (304) there was a layer (305) containing rubble, apparently demolition debris from the former manor house – it consisted of a very mixed brown clay loam with frequent mortar and brick/tile flecks, charcoal flecks, Lias fragments, occasional white china. A fragment of stamped flat tile was also recovered from this layer (Fig 8). The stamp was approximately 15.5mm in diameter, consisting of three



semicircular indents arranged to form a “T” shape. A similar tile stamp has been found in Worcester, and four examples were recovered from Period 10 deposits of the Deansway excavations. A similar tile stamp is illustrated in the Deansway report (Dulwood and Edwards, 2004, 358, Figure 207, 3). Layer (305) overlay a grey to greenish grey clay (306) with yellowish mottles, rare charcoal flecks, very occasional Lias fragments and rare tile flecks. Below this there was a reddish brown possibly cultivated marl with occasional tan flecks and very rare charcoal flecks – context (307). The base of the latter layer blended into context (308) a soft reddish brown marl - probably disturbed natural subsoil. The underlying solid natural in this trench proved to be a yellowish clay containing moderate quantities of Lias brash. Solid natural was encountered at 64.35m AOD

## 6 Discussion

- 6.1 The results of the Stratascan survey appear to firmly locate the main body of the former manor house as lying immediately to the east of the standing ruin, and extending to the inner edge of the eastern arm of the moat. There are some indications that there may have been a further range of buildings extending to the south of the main range along the edge of the eastern moat. Evidence for the area to the south of the standing ruin is inconclusive, though there are hints that some wall foundations may extend into this area. Strong signals to the north and north-west of the standing ruin possibly reflect a surfaced pathway, other surfacing appears to survive in places within the former manor house footprint. The identified wall lines appear to correlate quite well with the building footprint known from historic mapping (Fig 9). Other features indicated by the geophysics appear to relate mainly to the spread of demolition debris, and some may be related to the known service runs.
- 6.2 The results of the trenching have indicated that the area around the present farmhouse has been extensively disturbed by both service trenching and landscaping. No archaeologically significant deposits were seen in the trenches, however useful depositional sequences were recovered from Trenches 2 and 3. Trench 2 lay just on the edge of an area returning moderately strong signals in the geophysical survey. In the event the signal was proven to reflect a dense spread of stone and tile fragments immediately beneath the turf line. The trench was located on an area of sloping lawn, and it would appear from the excavated deposits that the area had been graded down deliberately to merge the higher ground to the north with the low level flat lawn and pathways around the house. The excavated deposits were found to reflect the sloping topography, the archaeological strata and topsoil tapering out towards the south. Towards the north-east corner of the trench there was a spread of thin crushed Lias slabs and crushed roofing tile immediately below the modern turf/topsoil horizon. This shallow spread of rubble/demolition debris appears to represent the demolition of the adjacent former manor house in the 1860s. The crushed nature of the material suggests a trampled spread of debris, but might also be a deliberate “working surface”. The material did not extend to the south-western half of the trench, but this is probably due to the terracing down of the area to the south-west. Small quantities of later post medieval pottery were found amongst the demolition debris, but no identifiable tile fragments or worked stone. Beneath the demolition spread there was a thin spread of former topsoil containing mortar flecking
- 6.3 The precise date at which the southern part of the area enclosed by the moat was terraced down is uncertain – it would appear from the present Trench 1 results that the terracing of the area to the west of the house occurred in the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century or later, though some reduction of the area immediately around the farmhouse footprint probably occurred at the time of construction (between circa 1884 and 1891).
- 6.3 To the east of the present house deposits within the area of the proposed extension appeared to be heavily disturbed by a combination of service and foundation trenching, however the eastern side of the trench was less disturbed and retained a legible sequence of deposits principally of 1860s and later date, but sealing a general “spread” of greenish grey clay (306) which appeared to be material deliberately laid down to either raise the area within the moat or simply to dispose of uprisings from excavation of the moat. The moat seems to have been in existence by 1515 (Hughes, 1997, 4) but was not completed and “perfett made and fynniched” until 1533 – so it is not presently possible to certainly date this clay layer except to say that it most probably is 1533 or earlier, and any features or deposits sealed by it would relate to the medieval and earlier occupation of the site. Within the present investigation no features or deposits (other than natural subsoil) were found that pre-dated the layer (306). As the residual clay layer (209) held a similar stratigraphic position in Trench 2 it is possible that the redeposited greenish grey

clay was spread across the whole of the southern half of the “island” within the moat to level up the slightly sloping natural stratigraphy. The upper surface of the underlying reddish brown marl subsoil possibly represents the natural topography of the area.

- 6.4 Overall surprisingly little evidence of the former monastic manor was recovered from the excavated areas. There appears to be a sharp demarcation in the potential for archaeological survival between the higher northern part of the “island” and the lower level area around the existing farmhouse. It would appear that only very deeply cut features may potentially survive within the intended development area, and no sign of these was seen in the evaluation trenches. Within the paved area north of the house there is, however, a well which from cartographic evidence appears to pre-date the present building. This well possibly had origins within the manorial complex, but the shaft is presently not available for inspection, being sealed by a modern capping. Planned works to create an Orangery around the existing well may expose sufficient of the fabric to determine the well’s origins. Whilst there are some geophysical responses recorded around the area of the well these appear to relate, at least in part, to modern service runs.
- 6.5 The artefactual evidence recovered was sufficient only to confirm the relatively recent origins of almost all of the excavated man-made deposits. Only the stamped tile (Fig 8) and a small fragment of carved stone (Fig 4) hints at the quality of the demolished buildings known from documentary evidence, the remainder of the recovered building fabric is compatible with known post medieval use of the site as a farmstead. The stamped nibbed tile is comparable with Fig 207 item 3 in the 2004 Deansway report, but the stamp here is better formed to present a more convincing “T” shape. Whilst not discussed in the Deansway report the stamps “3” and “4” seem to be related in intent, as both form a “T” impression by slightly different means. The Crowle stamp seems to lie between the two examples illustrated in the 2004 report, though the illustrations in that report make it difficult to determine whether the “T” of stamp “4” is negative or positive. If the “T” is positive within a round impression it may have been achieved with a similar stamp to the Crowle example, albeit punched with greater force. The Deansway examples were dated to Period 10 (later 15<sup>th</sup> to late 16<sup>th</sup> C) – Dalwood and Edwards, 2004. Bone fragments (undiagnostic) were observed only in modern contexts, and no metalwork was seen in the excavated material. The ceramic assemblage was entirely of post-medieval date, and almost entirely of mid 19<sup>th</sup> C and later date, throwing no light on the historical occupation of the site.
- 6.6 Overall the likely impact of the proposed development appears to be minimal, as very little of archaeological significance appears to survive in the immediate vicinity of the present building footprint. Other than the known well there appears to be little potential for structural remains of archaeological significance to remain within the intended building footprint. Outside these areas there appears (from the geophysical evidence) to be a strong probability of archaeologically significant remains surviving to the north and east of the present farmhouse and every effort should be made to route any required service trenches as close as possible to the present farmhouse building footprint, and re-using existing service runs wherever possible.
- 6.7 The present project has clarified the nature of buried deposits in the intended development area, and together with the recent geophysical survey has greatly enhanced the understanding of the archaeological resources within the moated area. With the benefit of these recent observations it may be possible to re-evaluate and re-interpret the results of the previous poorly reported archaeological interventions within the Crowle Court complex.

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## **Appendix 1: The Artefacts**

*Nb unworked Lias stone was present in most contexts, but not retained as naturally occurring on site.*

### **Trench 1**

(Modern window glass recovered from context 103 but not retained)

### **Trench 2**

(201) 1 frag L19<sup>th</sup> C clear bottle glass 12g

(201) 1 frag 20<sup>th</sup> C White china ?saucer with blue rim 10g

(201) 1 frag carved oolitic limestone, possibly from architectural feature, slight trace of limewash (see text and Fig 5) 44g

(202) 2 frags medium sized animal bone 29g

(202) 5 frags flat ceramic roofing tile (no diagnostic features- sampled only) Probably 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> C 300g

(202) 1 frag green glazed ceramic tile – probably roof tile as unworn glaze, but only glazed face present so could be undecorated and unused floor tile 61g

(203) 2 sherds black glazed tyg (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> C) 13g

(203) 2 frags post medieval bottle glass (?L17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> C) 29g

(203) 1 sherd Staffordshire slipware dish (trailed and combed decoration) (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> C) 59g

(203) 1 sherd white china (18<sup>th</sup>- L 19<sup>th</sup> C) 4g

### **Trench 3**

(304) 2 sherds flat ceramic roof tile (?15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> C) 424g

(304) 1 sherd flat ceramic roof tile 314g

(304) 1 sherd red engineering brick (late 19<sup>th</sup>-mid 20<sup>th</sup> C) 80g

(304) 1 sherd white china (18<sup>th</sup> –late 19<sup>th</sup> C) 8g

(304) 1 sherd white china egg cup (late 19<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> C) 29g

(305) 1 large frag nibbed and stamped ceramic flat roofing tile – width 7”/180mm (see text and Fig 8 )  
1,295g

(305) 1 sherd flat ceramic tile (no diagnostic features- sampled only) Probably 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> C 210g

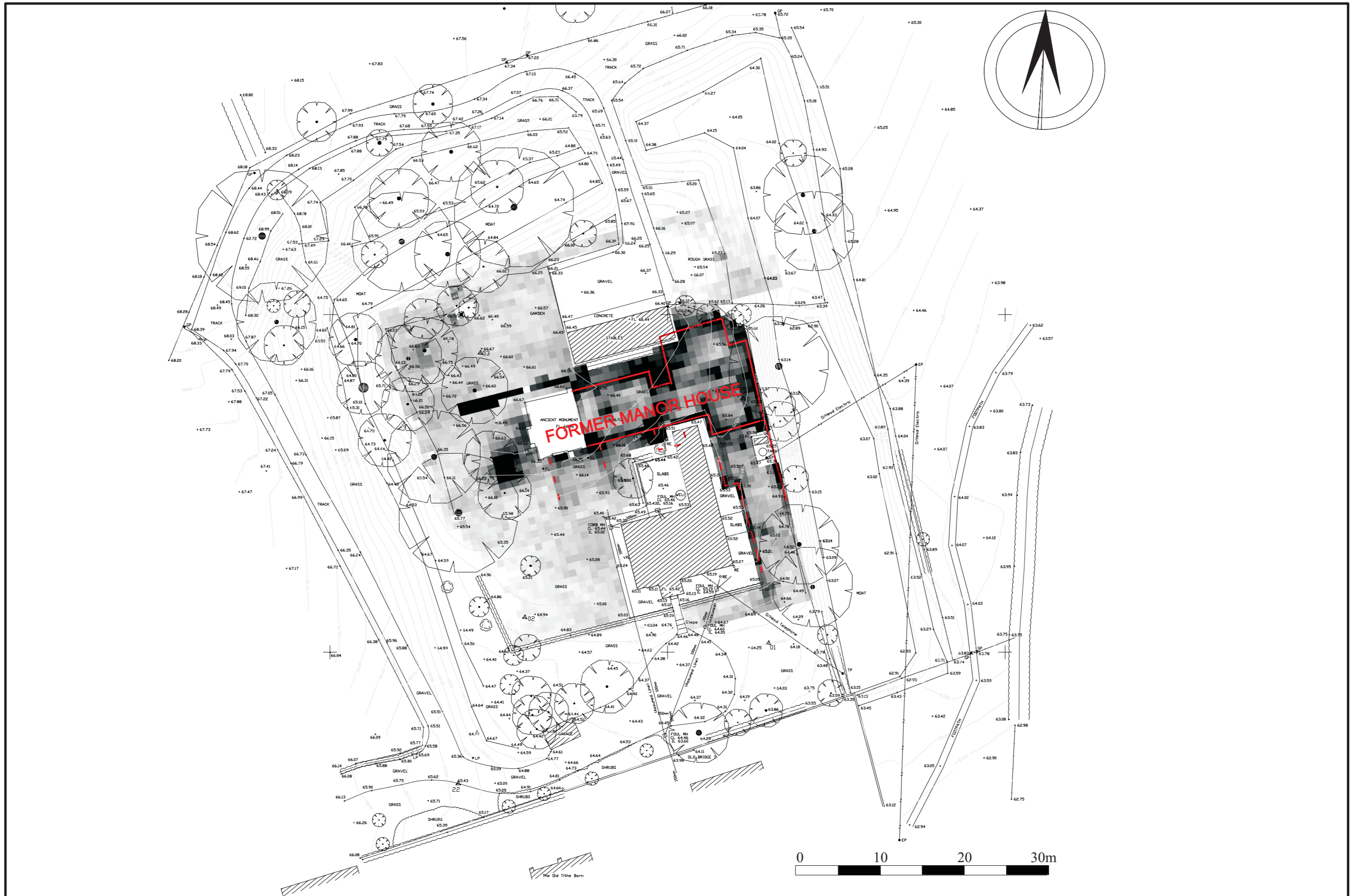


Figure 1: Crowle Court - topographic site plan overlaid on Stratascan preliminary geophysics data to indicate approximate extent of structural remains of former manor house

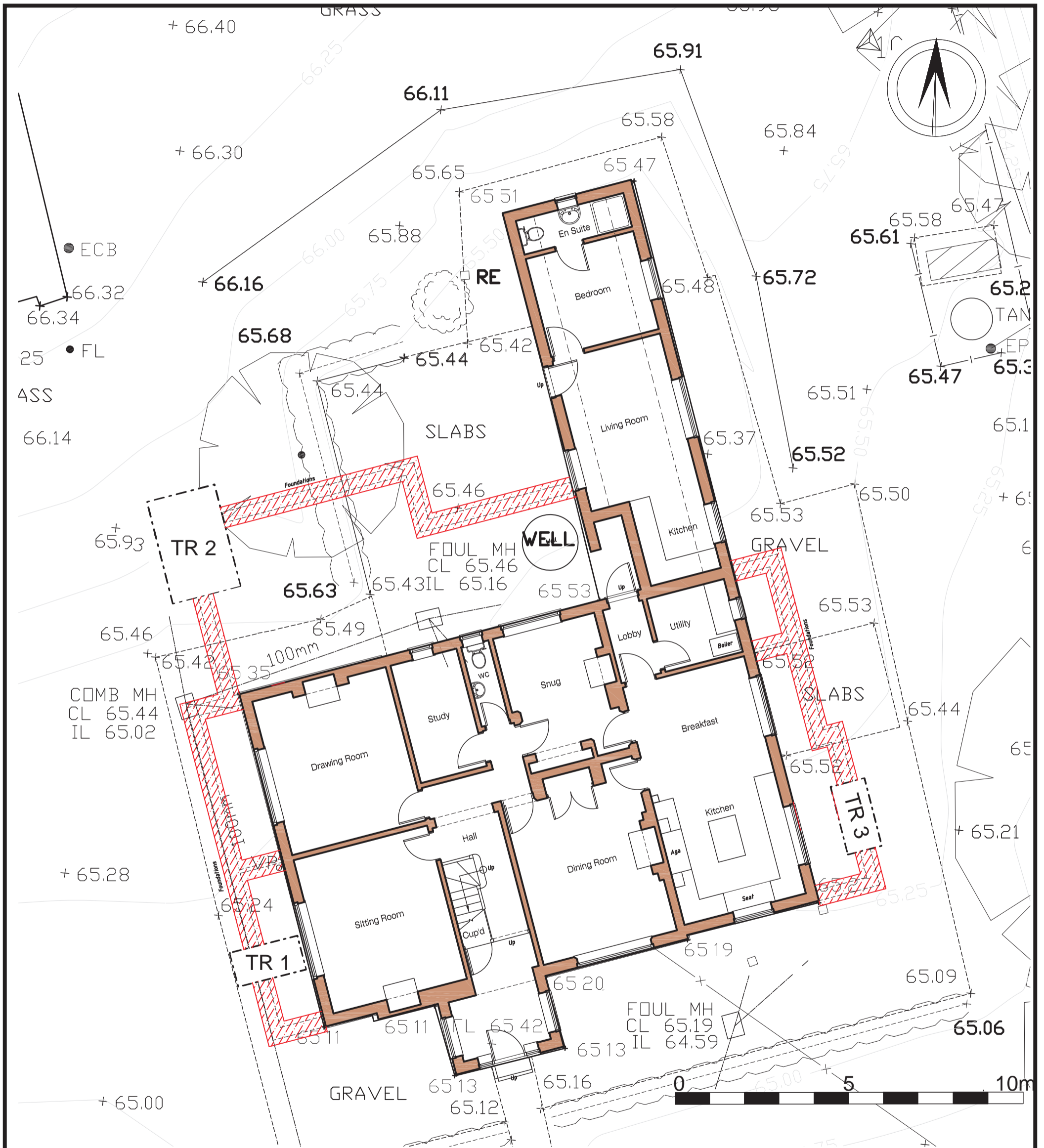


Figure 2: Trench locations overlaid on plan of proposed extensions (proposed foundations shown in red hatching)

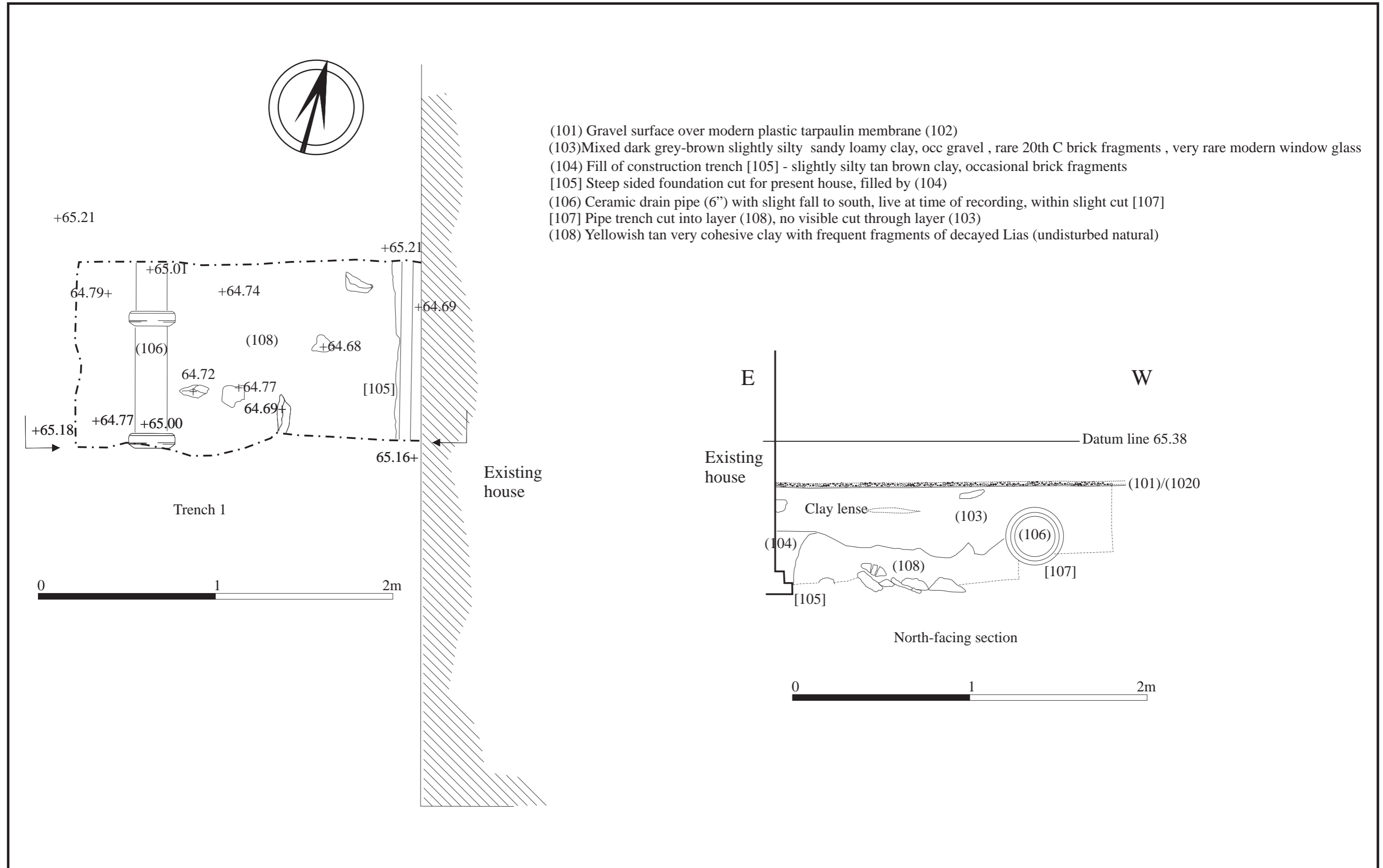


Figure 3: Trench 1 detail plan and north-facing section

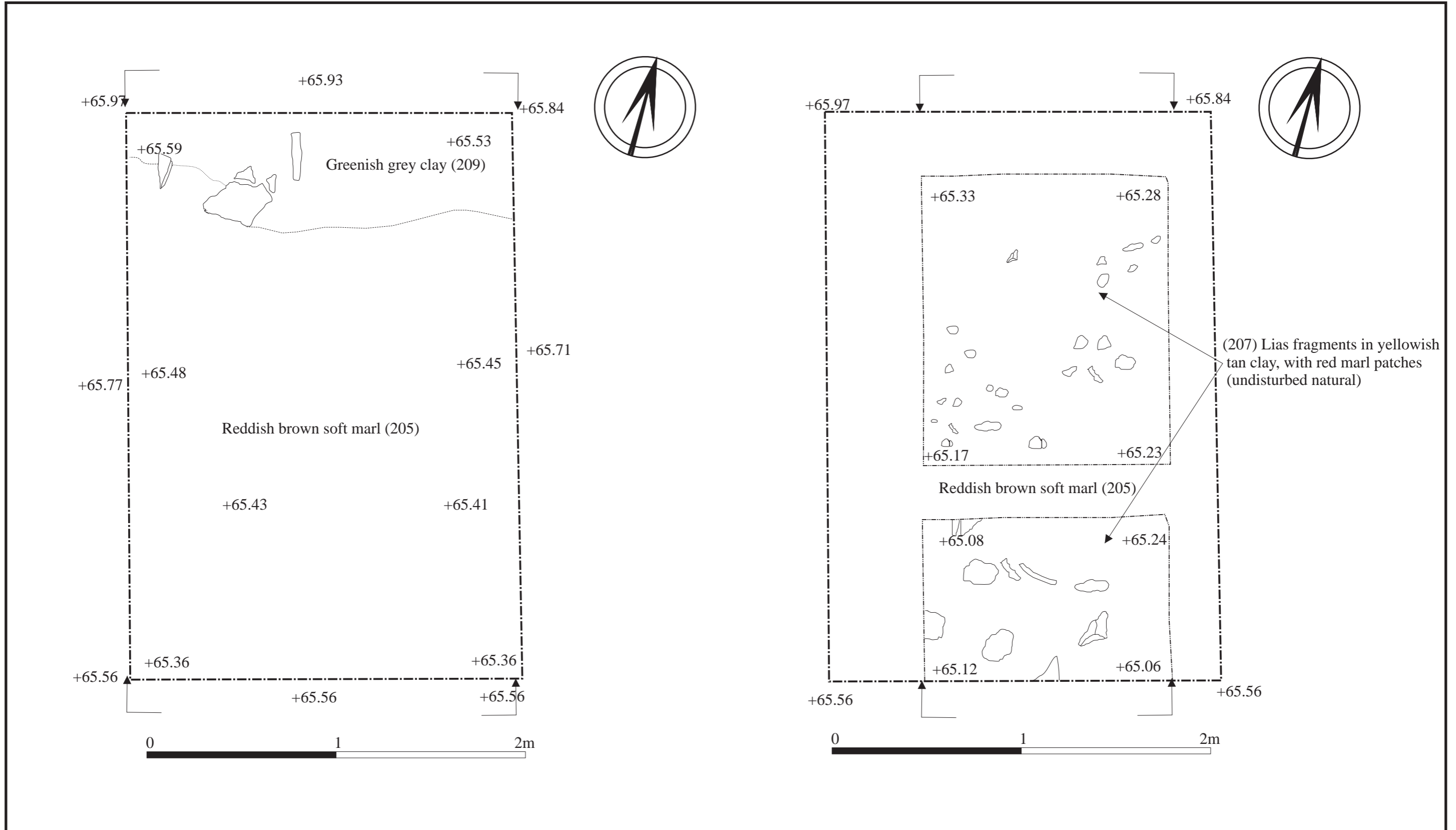


Figure 4: Trench 2 plans - left after initial removal of 19th C and later horizons, right after partial removal of reddish brown soft marl. Arrows indicate drawn section lines - see Fig 5.



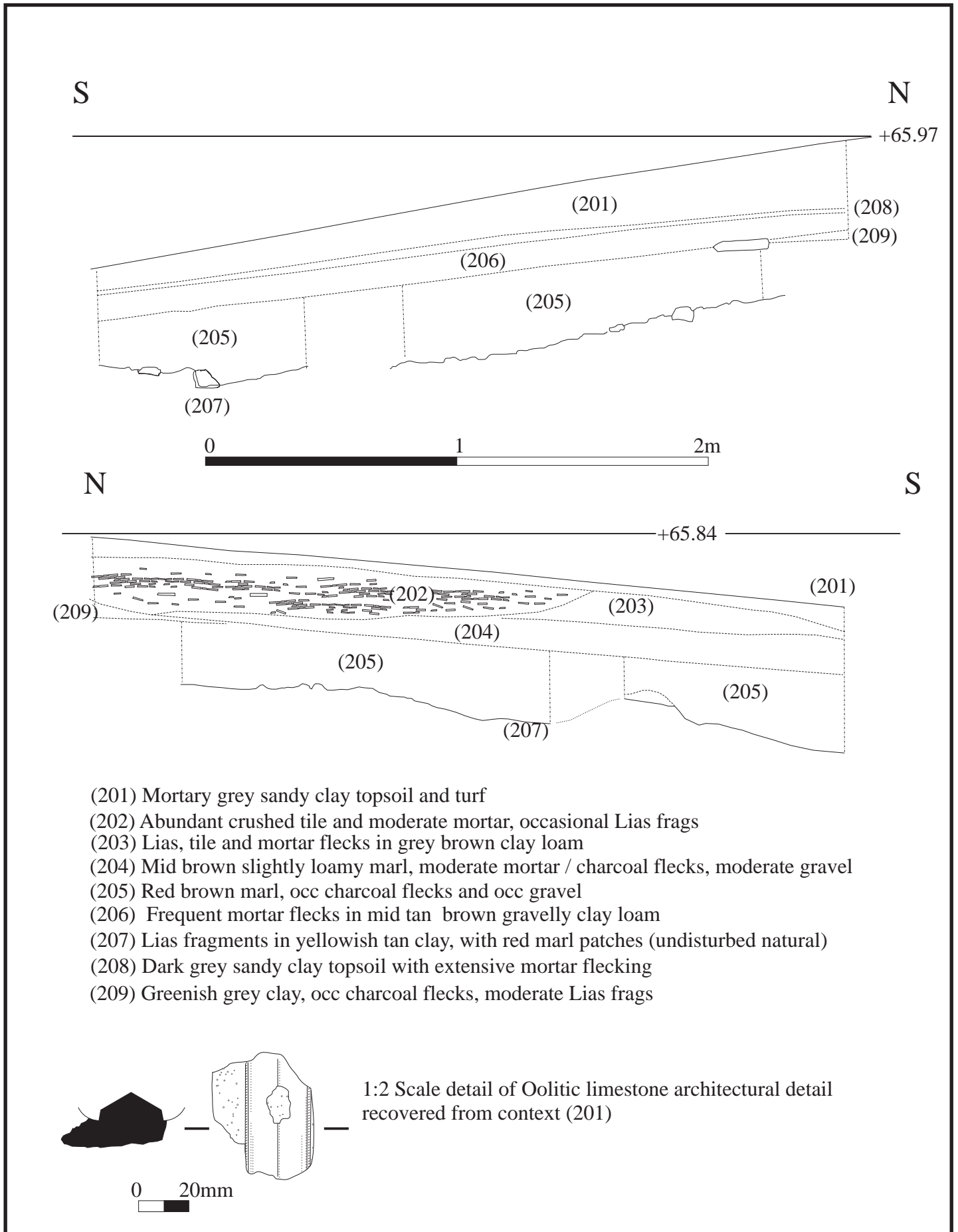


Figure 5: Trench 2 cumulative sections - uppermost is east facing section and lower is west facing section

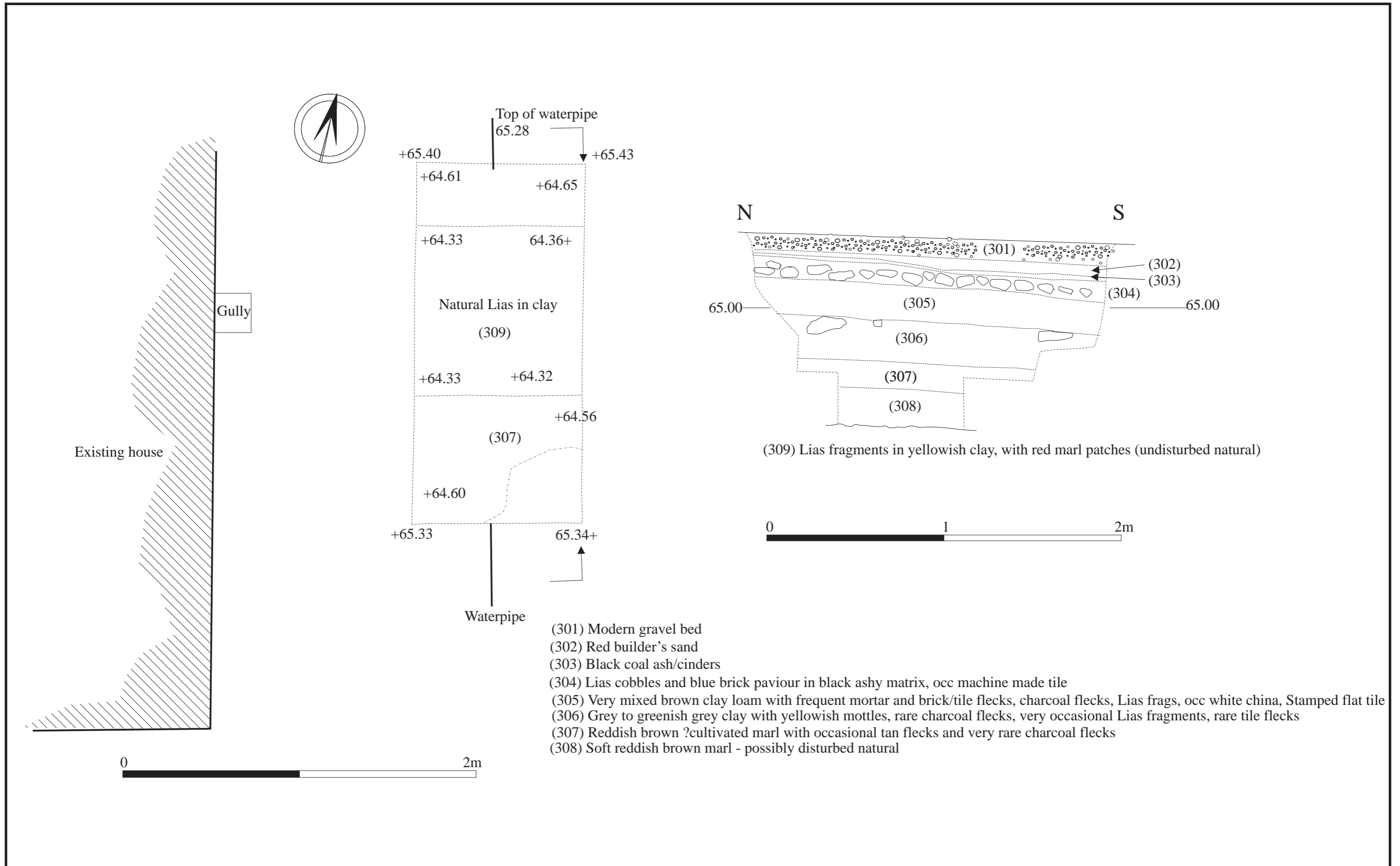


Figure 6: Trench 3 - detail plan and west-facing section



Trench 2 viewed from S,  
upstanding ruin of manor house  
in background

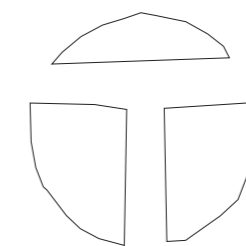


Trench 1 viewed from SW



West facing section of Trench 2 showing horizon of demolition debris  
immediately beneath turf line, and overlying a layer of reddish brown disturbed marl, probably the  
natural subsoil

Figure 7: Trenches 1 and 2 - photographs of completed excavations



Detail of stamp x2 scale  
(original 15.5mm dia)

Figure 8: Trench 3, and detail of stamped medieval roof tile - similar examples from Deansway, Worcester date to the late15th-late16th C.



Crowle Enclosure map, circa 1800 (Source - Worcester Cathedral Library "D class - Map 2")



Crowle Court Estate December 1860 - (Source- Ecclesiastical Commissioners Archive, "Dean and Chapter Worcester Estates No 7647") - note that the plan of the farmyard has changed, with a new range of buildings constructed closer to the monastic barn.

Figure 9: Historic mapping showing the buildings at Crowle Court in circa 1800 and in December 1860 (both plans copied by courtesy of Dr Pat Hughes).