

NAU Archaeology

Report No. 1783

An Archaeological Evaluation at land adjacent to St Mary's Church, South Walsham, Norfolk

NHER 51318 WLS

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NAU ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT CHECKLIST		
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Contents

<i>Summary</i>	1
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Geology and Topography	1
3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background	2
4.0 Methodology	2
5.0 Results	3
5.1 Trench 1	3
5.2 Trench 2.....	3
6.0 The Finds	3
6.1 Pottery	4
6.2 Ceramic Building Material	4
6.3 Faunal remains	4
7.0 Conclusions	4
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	4
<i>Bibliography</i>	5
Appendix 1a: Context Summary	5
Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table	5
Appendix 2a: Finds by Context.....	5
Appendix 2b: NHER Finds Summary Table	5
Appendix 3: Pottery	5
Appendix 4: Faunal Remains	6

Figures

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Trench location

Fig. 3 Plan of Trench 1 and section 1

Fig. 4 Plan of Trench 2 and section 2

Plates

Pl. 1 St Mary's Church

Pl. 2 Trench 1

Pl. 3 Trench 1

Pl. 4 Current Building

Pl. 5 Trench 2

Location: Land adjacent to St Mary's Church, South Walsham
District: Broadland
Grid Ref.: TG 36517 13322
HER No.: 51318 WLS
Dates of Fieldwork: 27th February 2008

Summary

Two evaluation trenches were excavated by NAU Archaeology to the east and west of an existing building in South Walsham, prior to its renovation. The building stands on land north of, and adjacent to, St Mary's Church. The evaluation was required to ascertain whether or not the programme of building work was likely to disturb human remains or other significant archaeological deposits. The fieldwork took place on a single day, 27 February 2008. Two intercutting post-medieval pits and an undated shallow ditch were recorded. No human remains were found.

1.0 Introduction

Two trenches were excavated in order to evaluate 0.49ha plot of land directly north of, and adjacent to, St Mary's Church, South Walsham (Fig. 1). Both trenches measured 5m by 1.8m and were placed to evaluate locations most likely to be impacted by the future renovation work (Fig. 2).

The report and fieldwork were commissioned by Mr Nicholas Phelan.

The archaeological programme was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Broadland District Council and in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref: BAU1783/DW) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (Ken Hamilton, 21/01/08).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

The higher ground lying between, and to the north of, the wetlands comprises the Rich Loam District of Norfolk, with exceptionally fertile soils formed in wind-blown loess overlying a variety of glacial deposits. The most widespread upland soil is a well-drained brown earth with about 0.5m of almost stone-free loam over sand and gravel. Downslope, the loam thickens to 1m or more. These thick loams hold water and nutrients well but are also well-drained and tractable, making them amongst the most productive soils in the country. In consequence, this area was one of the most densely settled regions in all

medieval England (Ashwin and Davison 2005, 8–9; Wade-Martins 1994, 18–19).

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Both churches in South Walsham date to the medieval period and stand in the same churchyard. St Mary's church is the earlier foundation with parts dating to the 12th/13th centuries. St Laurence's church, now partially ruined, was originally constructed around 1500. It was repaired in 1832, having been mostly destroyed by a fire in 1827, but by 1946 it had fallen into disuse. The tower eventually collapsing in 1971. A heap of rubble close by still requires archaeological attention.

By the later Middle Ages there were at least twelve villages in the county in which two parish churches stood in the same churchyard, and in a number of other places churches were built so close together that their churchyards practically joined (Williamson 1993, 158–9). Shared and adjacent churchyards are known from other counties in eastern England, but nowhere in these numbers.

Other development work north of the churchyard has previously revealed human remains, indicating that the churchyard originally extended further to the north than at present. It is possible, therefore, that the southern end of the evaluated plot partly overlies the former churchyard. For this reason, the main concern of the evaluation was to determine whether the course of intended building work had the potential to disturb *in situ* human remains.

4.0 Methodology

The Brief required that two 5m-long trenches be excavated, each being placed in a location to be impacted by the development work. The first trench was located to the west of the current building, where it was to be extended. The second trench was located within an area that was to be landscaped for an access route.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

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

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

The temporary benchmark used during the course of this work was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark with a value of 8.55m, located on the side of St Mary's church.

No environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.

5.0 Results

Two trenches were excavated. The results are presented below.

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located to the east of the current building (Fig. 2), in an area that was to be landscaped. The combined depth of topsoil and subsoil was 0.58m (Fig. 3). The natural was a light-yellow sand with rare small sub-rounded flint inclusions.

The trench contained two intercutting post-medieval pits, [1] and [3]. Pit [1] was 2m wide, 0.94m deep and was filled by deposit [2]. Deposit [2] was a mid-greyish-brown, friable silty sand, with rare small sub-rounded flint inclusions. It contained a single body sherd of 15th–16th-century pottery. Pit [1] cut, and was therefore later than, pit [3] (Fig. 3).

Pit [3] was truncated to the south by pit [1] and extended beyond the limits of the trench to the north. It had an observed width of 1.8m and a depth of 1.2m. Pit [3] was filled by a primary deposit [4] and a secondary deposit [7]. Deposit [4] was a naturally accumulated mid-greyish-brown silty sand, with rare small sub-rounded flint inclusions, and contained a single Pancheon rim-sherd dating from 15th–16th centuries. Deposit [7] was a mid-greyish-brown friable silty sand, with moderate small sub-rounded flint inclusions.

Finally, a fairly modern flint gravel was observed in section, sealing both pits. This layer was stratigraphically directly beneath the topsoil, but was later than the subsoil.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located directly west of the current building (Fig. 2). The combined depth of topsoil and subsoil was 1.03m, significantly deeper than in Trench 1 (Fig. 4). The natural was a light-yellow sand with rare small sub-rounded flint inclusions.

The trench contained only a shallow linear feature [5]. This small ditch or gully was 0.9m wide, 0.2m deep and was filled by deposit [6] (Fig. 4). Deposit [6] was a naturally accumulated mid- to dark brown friable silty sand, with rare small sub-rounded flint inclusions of 2–3cm diameter. This context contained two pieces of cattle bone, a vertebrae and a horn, with a combined weight of 211g, but remained undated. The fact that linear feature [5] was cut from beneath the subsoil, unlike pits [1] and [3] in Trench 1, may suggest an earlier date for this feature.

6.0 The Finds

The finds and environmental material from the site are presented in tabular form with basic quantitative information in Appendix 2a: Finds by Context. In addition to this summary, more detailed information on specific finds and environmental categories is included in separate reports below. Supporting tables for these contributions are included in the Appendices.

6.1 Pottery

The site produced two fragments of late medieval transitional ware pottery weighing 59g. The assemblage was quantified (counted and weighed) by form and fabric (see Appendix 3). Identification of the fabrics was based on the typology of Norwich ceramics established by Jennings (Jennings 1981).

The two sherds are of 15th- to late 16th-century date and consist of a single body sherd and the rim fragment of a Pancheon or large wide-rimmed bowl.

6.2 Ceramic Building Material

The site produced four pieces of late post-medieval brick weighing 60g. The fragments are of a well mixed, medium, sandy fabric with coarse inclusions of chalk, quartz and crushed flint. The assemblage was quantified (counted and weighed) by form and fabric. The fabrics were identified by eye and the main inclusions noted. Fabric descriptions and dates are based on the provisional type series established by Sue Anderson, formerly of the Suffolk Archaeological Unit.

6.3 Faunal remains

By Julie Curl

Two contexts produced six pieces of faunal remains weighing 280g. Cattle were identified in both fills, with a juvenile chopped femur in deposit [4] and an adult vertebrae and horncore in deposit [6]. The remaining butchered fragments in deposit [4] are likely to be from cattle. The cattle horncore is from a Longhorn-type breed and has a part of the skull still attached. There are no obvious butchering marks on this horncore to suggest that it resulted from hornworking. The bone is in good condition, although fragmentary due to butchering and wear and appears to be from butchering and food waste.

7.0 Conclusions

The evaluation was required to ascertain whether or not the programme of building work was likely to disturb human remains or other significant archaeological deposits. Two intercutting post-medieval pits and an undated shallow ditch were recorded. No human remains were found.

The results of the evaluation indicate that it is unlikely the adjacent churchyard extended as far north as the location of the intended extension to the building, with little evidence that other remains of archaeological significance are present.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by the author and Jonathan Cousins. Lucy Talbot processed the finds. Julie Curl examined the faunal remains. David Dobson prepared the illustrations. The report was edited by Richard Hoggett.

Bibliography

Ashwin, T. and Davison, A.	2005	<i>An Historical Atlas of Norfolk</i> (3rd edition). Chichester: Phillimore & Co.
Department of the Environment	1990	<i>Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning</i> . London: HMSO.
Wade-Martins, P.	1994	<i>An Historical Atlas of Norfolk</i> (2nd edition). Norwich: Norfolk Museums Service.
Williamson, T.	1993	<i>Origins of Norfolk</i> . Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Cut	Pit	Medieval/Post-medieval
2	Fill	Within [1]	Medieval/Post-medieval
3	Cut	Pit?	Medieval/Post-medieval
4	Fill	Within [3]	Medieval/Post-medieval
5	Cut	Linear	Undated
6	Fill	Within [5]	Undated
7	Layer	Topsoil	Modern
8	Layer	Subsoil	Undated

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Unknown	Linear	1
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Pit	2

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
2	Pottery	1	9	Medieval/Post-medieval
2	Ceramic Building Material	4	60	Post medieval
4	Pottery	1	50	Medieval/Post-medieval
4	Animal bone	–	69	Undiagnostic
6	Animal bone	–	211	Undiagnostic

Appendix 2b: NHER Finds Summary Table

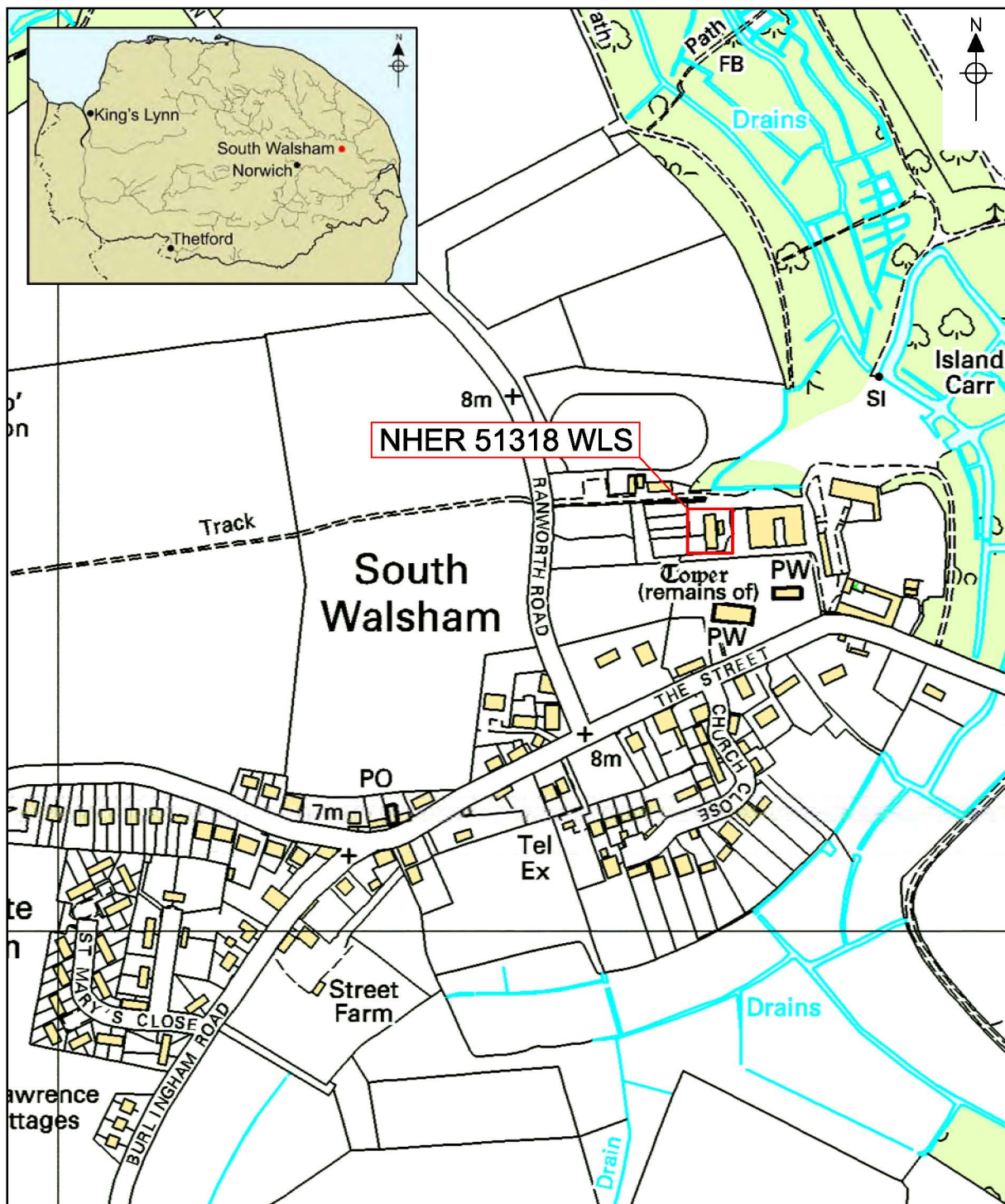
Period	Material	Quantity
Unknown	Animal bone	2
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Ceramic Building Material	4
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Pottery	2

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Weight (g)	Object Date
2	LMT	Body sherd	1	9	15th–L.16th century
4	LMT	Pantheon rim	1	50	15th–L.16th century
TOTAL			2	59	

Appendix 4: Faunal Remains

Ctxt	Qty	Total wgt (g)	Spp.	Spp. qty	Comments
4	4	69	Cattle	1	Juvenile femur; chopped.
			Mammal	3	Fragments of large mammal bone, ?cattle; butchered.
6	2	211	Cattle	12	Vertebrae and horn of Longhorn type



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0 500 m

Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

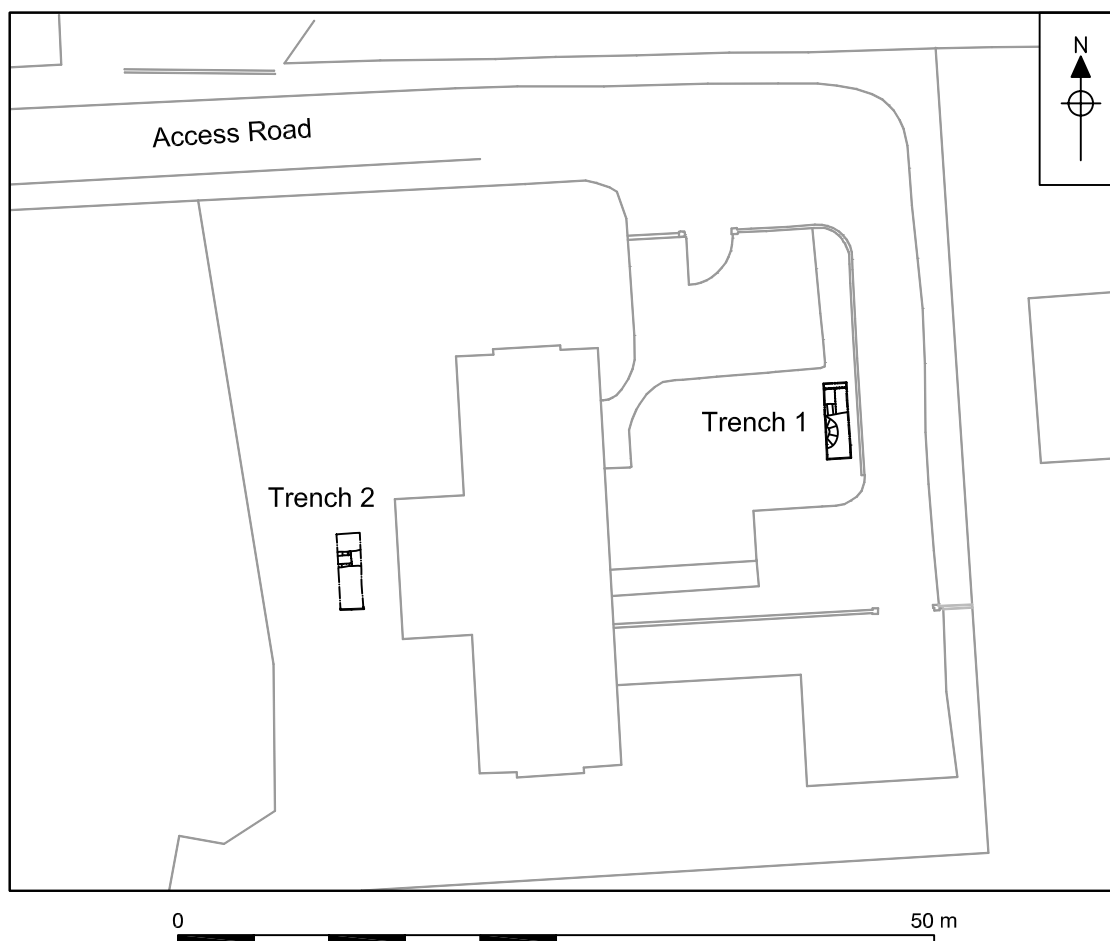


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:500

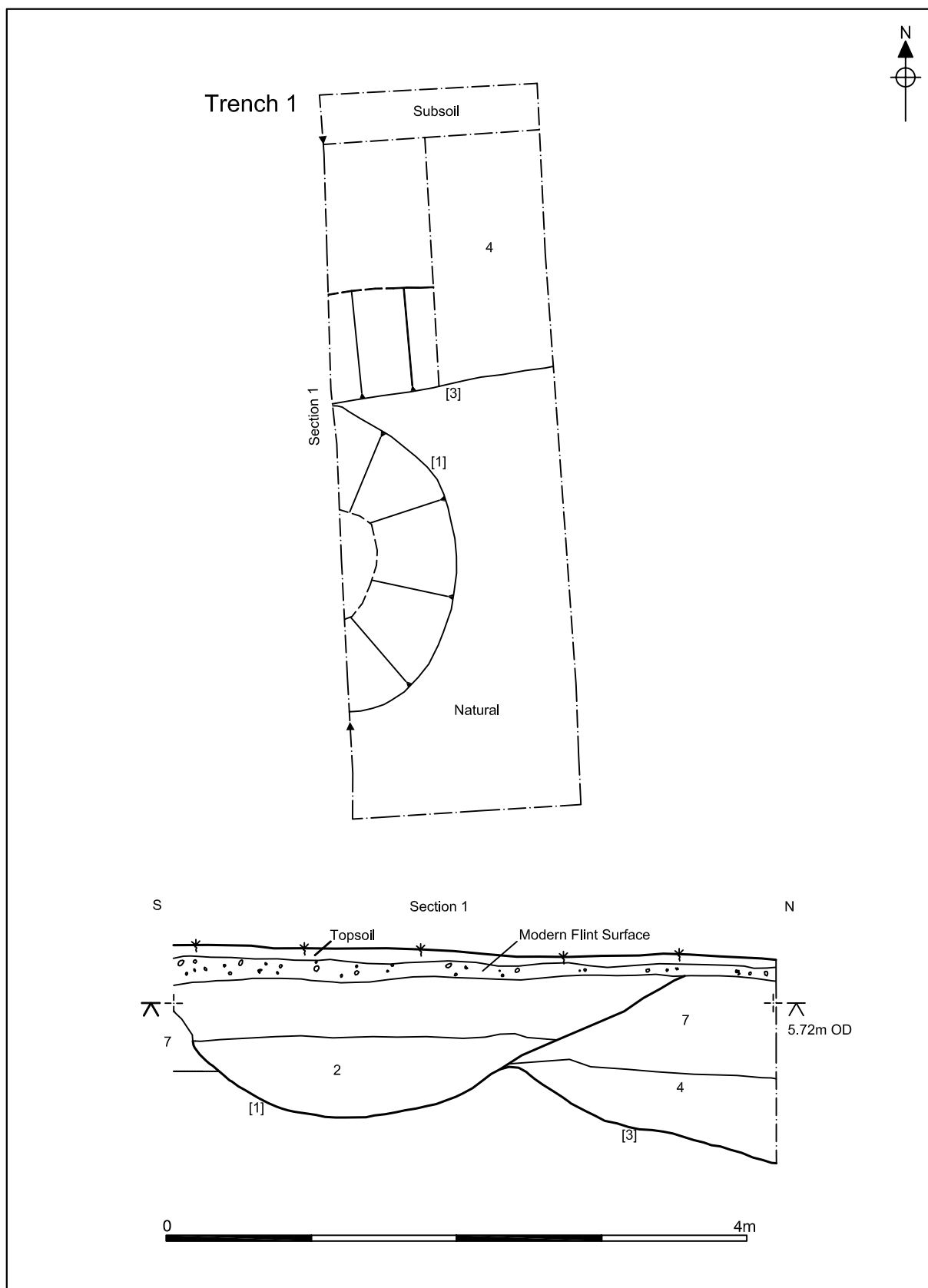


Figure 3. Plan of Trench 1 and section 1. Scale 1:40

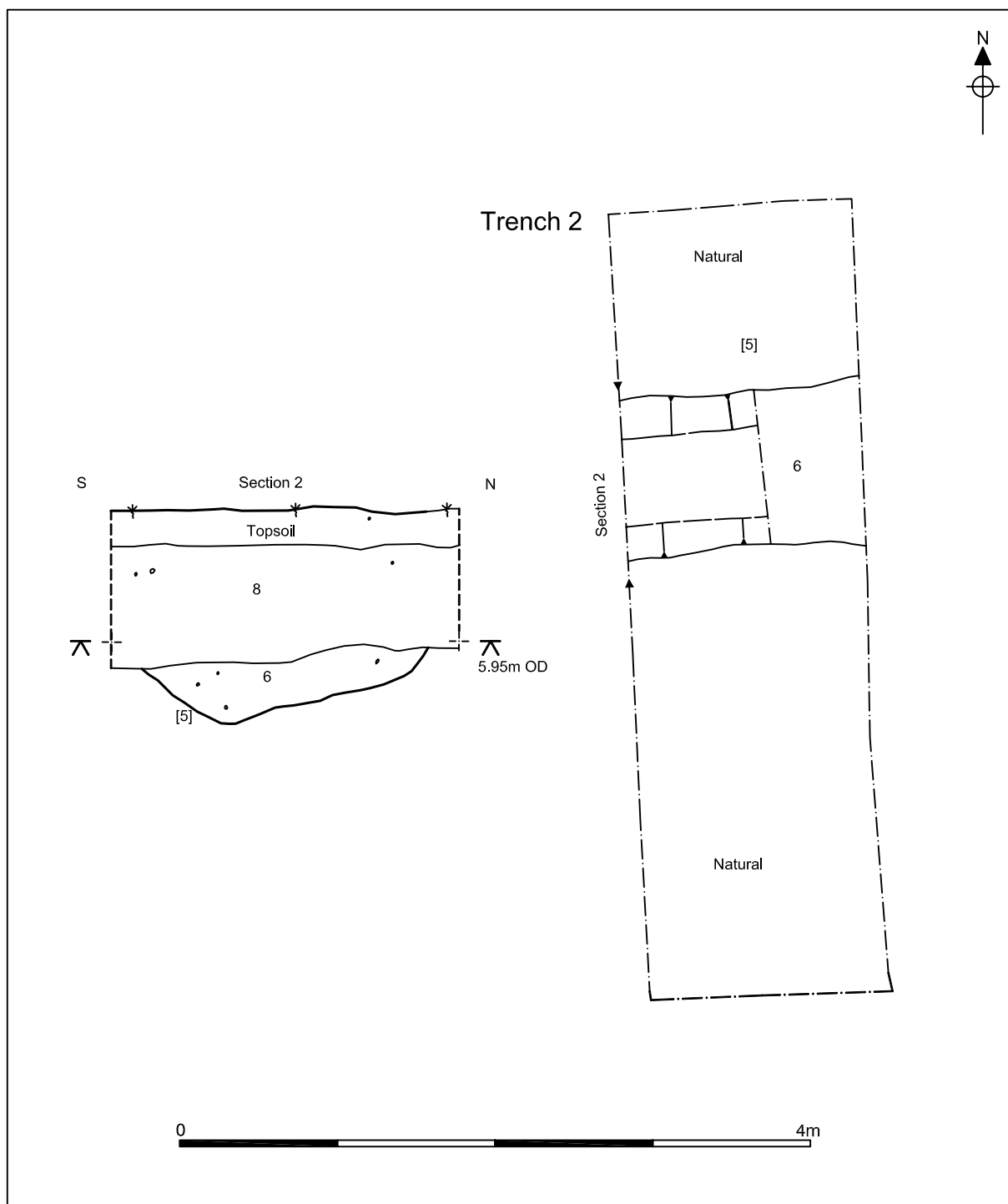


Figure 4. Plan of Trench 2 and section 2. Scale 1:40



Plate 1. St Mary's Church



Plate 2. Trench 1



Plate 3. Trench 1



Plate 4. Current building



Plate 5. Trench 2