

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 833

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Abbey Farmhouse, Weybourne, Norfolk**

6278 WEY

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July 2003

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Local Authority No.076759

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Location: Abbey Farmhouse (former Priory of The Blessed Virgin and All Saints), Weybourne
Grid Ref: TG 1115 4309
HER No.: 6278
SAM No.: Norfolk 21390
Date of Fieldwork: 27th to 28th May 2003

Summary

Two evaluation trenches were excavated within the surviving structure of the former priory at Weybourne, presently incorporated within a farmhouse and its associated buildings. This was done to remove rubble from these two locations, date these deposits and record underlying archaeological layers.

Trench 1 was located in the 'dark entry' and revealed elements of a possible medieval floor below modern deposits of rubble from the priory buildings.

Trench 2 was located in the west cloister range that had been re-used as a cellar in the post-medieval period, it contained a post-medieval floor below modern deposits of rubble from the priory buildings.

1.0 Introduction

This work was undertaken for Paul Bancroft (Architects) of Holt and their clients.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: AH 28.2.03) and a Project Design prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: JB 1560 March 2003).

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 results of this work will provide information to be used in determination of the Listed Building application by English Heritage.

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

Fig. 1

The site lies in a shallow valley, just west of a mill leat that served the priory mill. The natural subsoil is probably Boulder Clay, but was not reached in the present work. The site lies at about 12m OD on the slope running down to the valley to the west.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The Augustinian priory of Weybourne was founded around 1190, establishing itself around an existing parish church, with the conventual buildings on the north side. (A church for the parish was built in the later medieval period, linked to the existing church, now solely for the use of the priory). The house was never very big and was clearly a small affair at the Dissolution, with few priors in residence (Fairweather 1930; VCH ii, 1906 405). The standing remains of the priory were reused in the 17th century for a farmhouse and this was added to in the early 19th century. Remains of the priory survive within the later farmhouse and around the gardens of the later house. The farmhouse then, incorporates parts of the priory buildings.

4.0 Methodology

Fig. 2

This work concerned examining the infill of two structures within the former priory buildings, the dark entry and the west walk of the cloister range.

The objective of this evaluation was to establish the sequence of infilling of the two structures and define any earlier floor surfaces.

The Brief required that a trench be dug within each of the two structures, down to the level at which earlier levels survived.

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

A level was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark of 12.31m OD on the south-west corner of the parish church. A temporary bench mark with a value of 12.72m OD was established within the farmhouse for use during this project.

5.0 Results

Trench 1

Figs 2, 3 & 4

Trench 1 was excavated inside the 'dark entry', at its south end and against the west wall of the passage; the passage was filled to an unknown depth with flint rubble derived from the priory buildings. The trench was approximately 1.5m².

Excavation removed three layers of rubble, ([1] to [3]), exposing a mid grey-brown peaty loam soil ([4]). This in turn was removed to expose a compact surface of brown clay chalk with mortar fragments ([8]). This surface bore the remains of a brick-tile floor [5], set on a thin bedding of sand. Two other small features were seen to cut [8], and probably underlay floor [5]. These were a shallow pit [6] and a stakehole [7], possibly settings for posts or stakes used in the construction of the dark entry.

It should be noted that the west wall of the passage ([9]) was seen to rest upon surface [8], therefore it is likely that this deposit ([8]) formed part of a make-up deposit or 'raft' upon which the whole building stood. At this point in the wall, there had once been a doorway, since blocked, but visible on the west face of the wall.

No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 2

Figs 2, 5 & 6

Trench 2 was situated in the remains of a sunken room or cellar in the farmhouse, within the west range of the former cloister. This room lay open to the sky, and was also filled with rubble. The floor of the cellar could not be seen, although shelved alcoves within the south and east walls hinted at the probable floor level.

A trench 1.5m square was excavated by hand in the south-east corner of the room, against the shelved alcoves.

Removal of the rubble ([10]), which contained recent debris, revealed a compact surface of chalk and mortar ([14]), extending into the two alcoves. The alcove in the east wall was defined at its base by a single course of bricks ([20]), at the same surface height as the slight remains of a pavement floor ([21]). At the north edge of the excavation, at the same level as the bricks and pavement floor, the beginnings of a possible floor of brick and tile ([12]) was recorded.

The bricks and pavements were probably all part of the same floor, above surface [14].

At a slightly lower level and cutting surface [14], were the remains of a drain or duct, composed of two lines of pantiles ([13] and [18]) set into the mortar floor [14] but also mortared over. This probably ran out below the main wall [11]. (A column of bricks [17] was bonded into the main wall [11]).

A patch of grey silt [19] within the floor surface [14] may indicate some shallow cut feature; this was not certain; it may be the result of erosion or wear.

To investigate the character of floor [14], a small cutting was dug to a depth of 0.25m, exposing a deposit of chalk ([16]). The floor was 0.17m thick and composed of small rounded pebbles within a sandy matrix, clearly put down as the base for the floor surface. This lay upon banded red clay and chalk ([15]), which in turn lay on deposit [16]. The origins of deposits [15] and [16] could not be determined in such a small hole, although it is likely that they represent a make-up deposit.

No artefacts were recovered.

6.0 Conclusions

Excavation of Trench 1 showed that the rubble was a modern deposit (although derived from priory material) and lies over a soil and the remains of a floor and general construction raft. Removal of the rest of the rubble would probably expose more of the floor and associated construction features.

Excavation of Trench 2 demonstrated that the rubble recorded there was also a modern deposit (with recent wrappers right at the base of the rubble layer) but sits on the remains of a pavement floor and drain of post-medieval date (as indicated by the use of pantiles).

The alcoves and shelving suggest a use as a cold store or pantry.

Removal of the rubble will probably expose the latest floors in the dark entry and the post-medieval cellared room.

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

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Mike Pert of Paul Bancroft (Architects) and their clients for information and advice. The work was carried out by the author and Danny Voisey (NAU). The report was illustrated, formatted and produced by Maggie Foottit and edited by Alice Lyons.

Bibliography

Fairweather, FH., 1930 'The Augustinian Priory of Weybourne, Norfolk'
Norfolk Archaeol. 24, 201-30
VCH ii (1906) *Victoria County History: Norfolk*

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Trench	Category	Description
1	1	Deposit	Rubble
2	1	Deposit	Rubble
3	1	Deposit	Rubble
4	1	Deposit	Soil
5	1	Deposit	Remains of tile/brick floor
6	1	Cut	Cut for pit
7	1	Cut	Cut for stakehole
8	1	Deposit	Make-up deposit/raft
9	1	Masonry	Masonry wall
10	2	Deposit	Modern flint rubble.
11	2	Masonry	Masonry wall
12	2	Masonry	Brick/tile floor?
13	2	Masonry	Pantile drain
14	2	Deposit	Chalk/mortar floor/make-up
15	2	Deposit	Red clay-chalk deposit
16	2	Deposit	Chalk
17	2	Masonry	Column of bricks
18	2	Masonry	Pantile drain
19	2	Deposit	Patch of grey silt
20	2	Masonry	Brick
21	2	Masonry	Remains of pavement floor

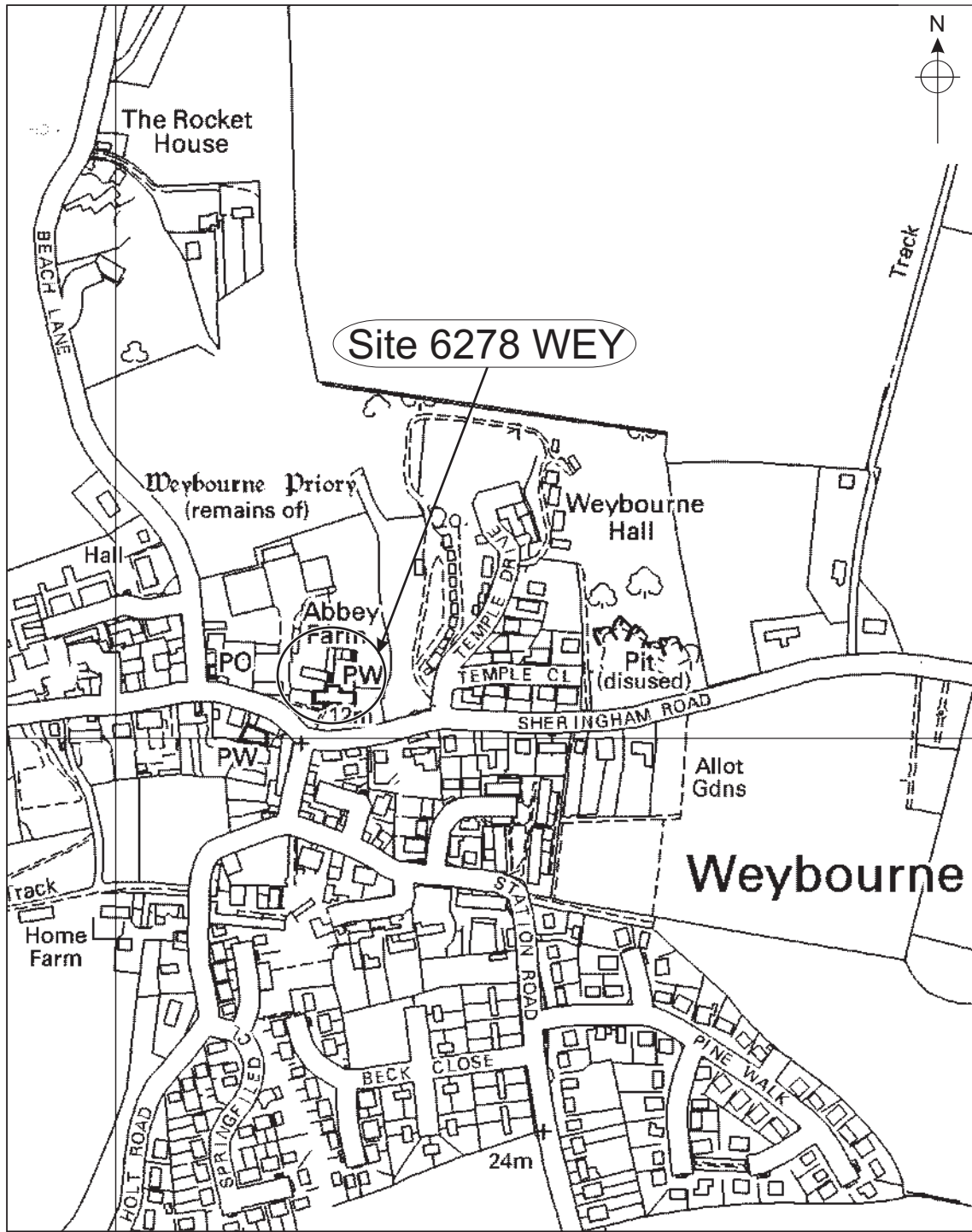


Figure 1. Site Location. Scale 1:5000

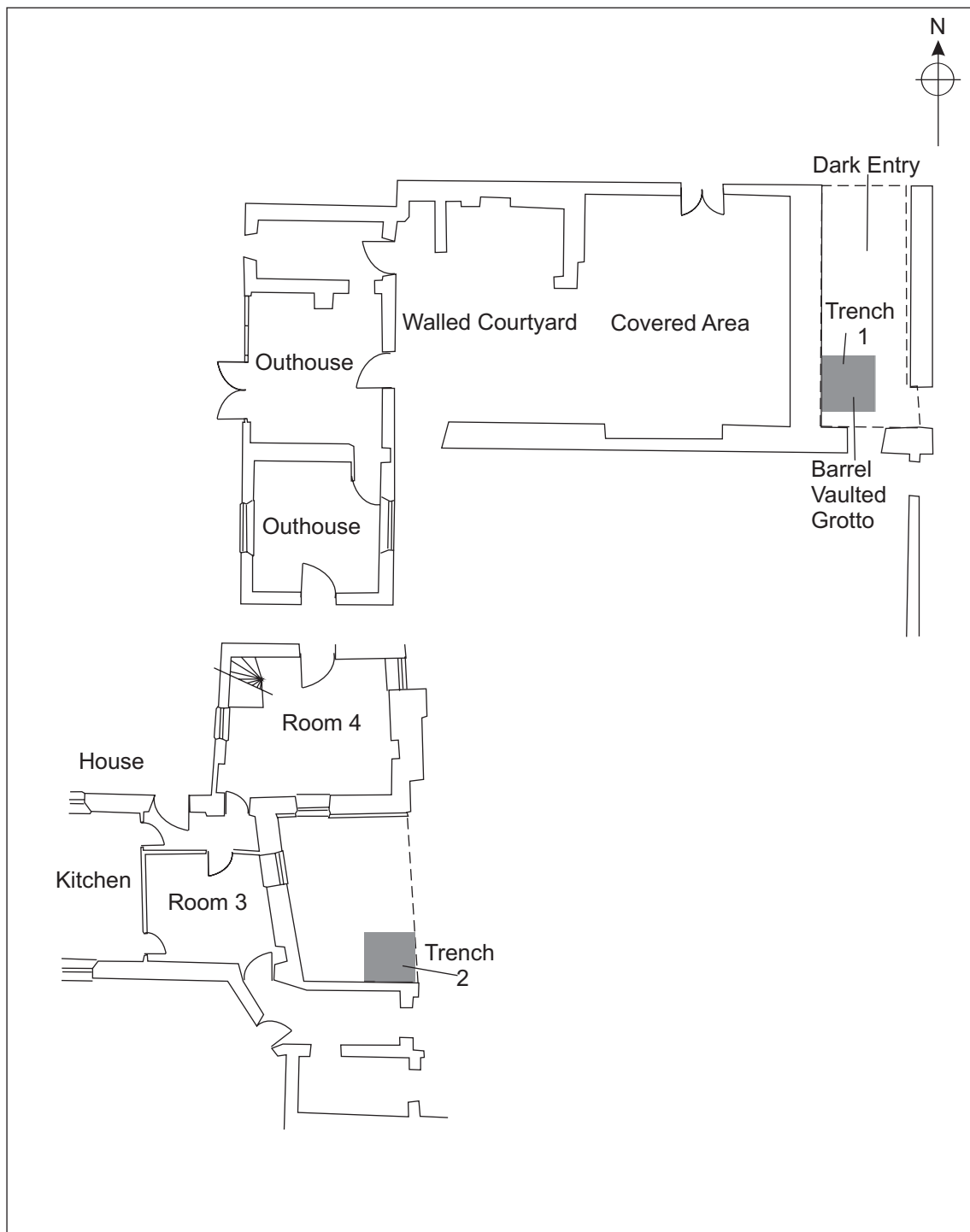


Figure 2. Location of Trenches 1 and 2. Scale 1:200

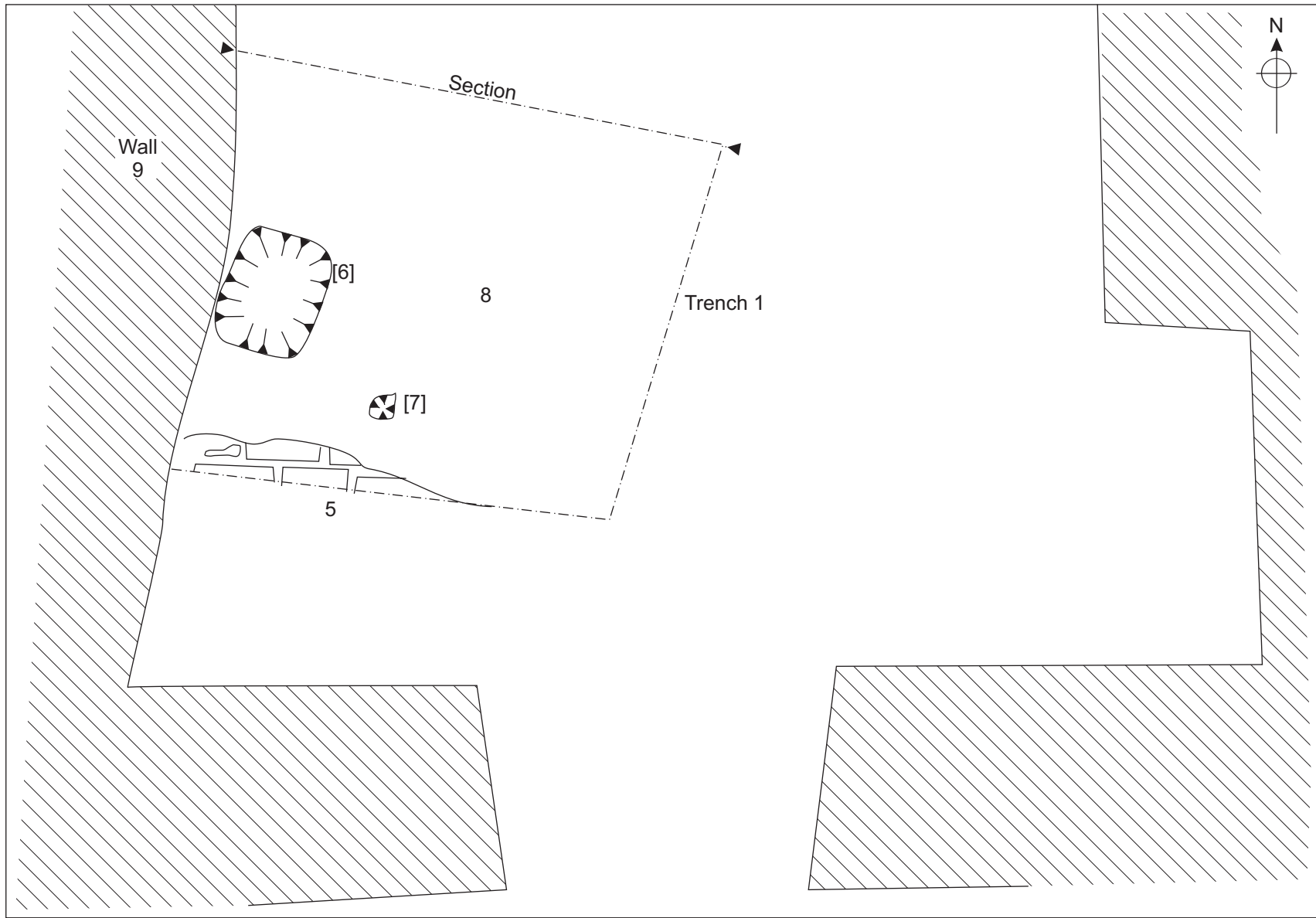
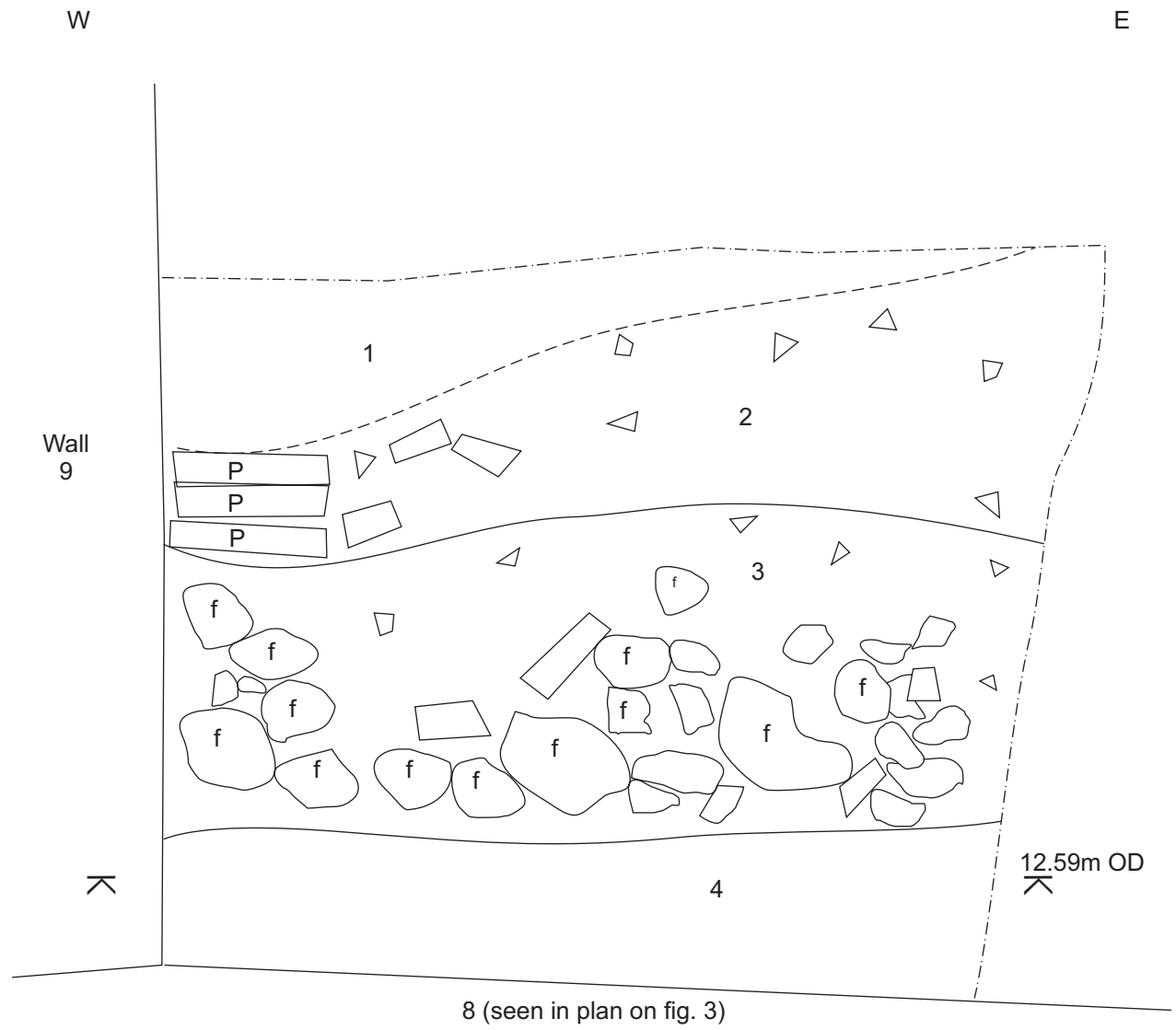


Figure 3. Trench 1 Plan. Scale 1:20





- Key
-  Flint
 -  Pavement Tile



Figure 4. Trench 1 Section. Scale 1:10

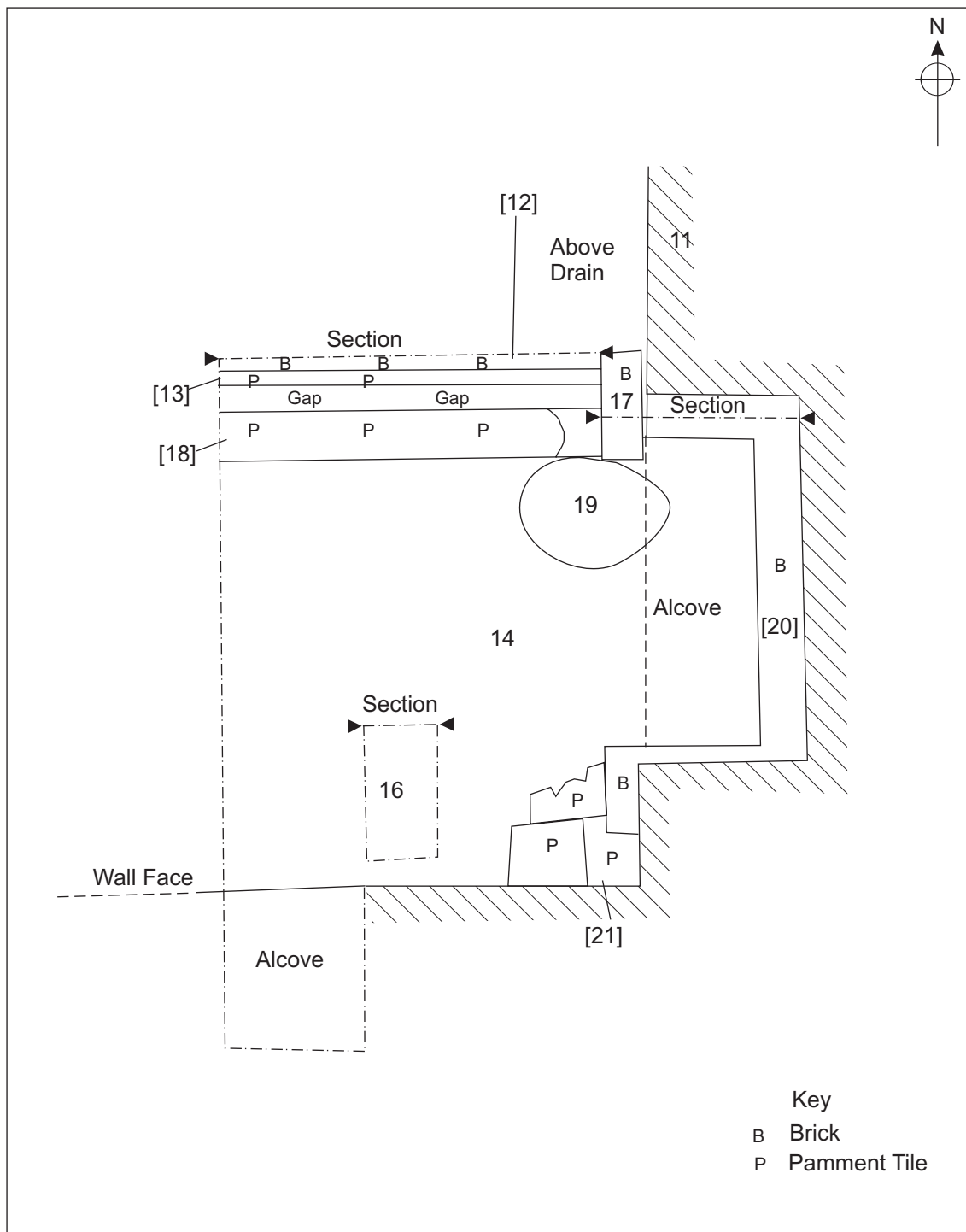


Figure 5. Trench 2 Plan. Scale 1:20

W

E

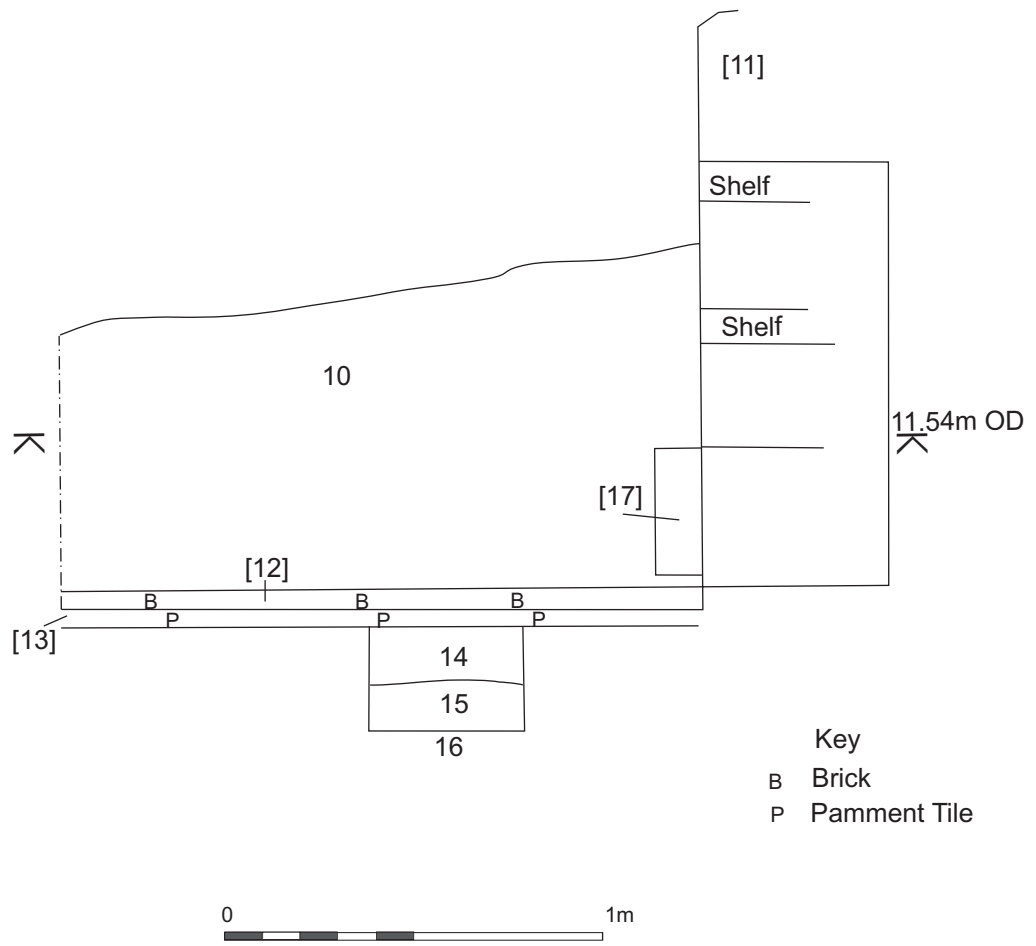


Figure 6. Trench 2 Composite Section. Scale 1:20