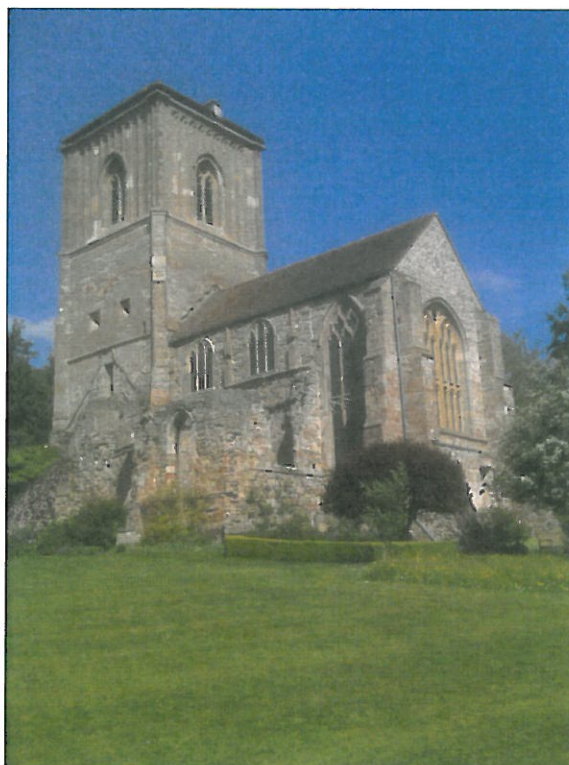


Archaeological Investigations Ltd

Little Malvern Court WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological test pits



July 2009

Hereford Archaeology Series 833

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS LTD

Managing director: A Boucher BSc MIFA

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Little Malvern Court
Archaeological test pits

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For: The Trustees of the Late T M Berington's Estate

Cover picture:
View of Little Malvern Priory Church

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1 Summary

Site name: Little Malvern Court

Grid reference: NGR SO 7704240356

Archaeological Investigations Ltd. was commissioned by S. T. Walker & Duckham Architects of Worcester on behalf of the Trustees of the Late T. M. Berington's Estate to undertake the excavation of three test pits on the site at Little Malvern Court, Little Malvern, Worcestershire, in response to an application to insert underground ducting across the site. The site, with the exception of the existing house, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 218). The test pits were excavated to a depth of 0.95m (pits 1 & 2) and 0.75m (Pit 3). The only deposits present were made up ground and natural deposits. A single disarticulated human bone was encountered in Pit 3 and medieval roof tile was present in the otherwise post-medieval levelling deposits in pits 1 and 2. No clear evidence of stratified priory deposits was encountered in the test pits but possible disturbance found in Pit 2 was on the projected line of a wall shown in Fig. 2

2 Introduction

2.1 Client

Archaeological Investigations Ltd. was commissioned through S. T. Walker & Duckham Architects of Worcester on behalf of the Trustees of the Late T. M. Berington's Estate to undertake the excavation of three test pits on the site at Little Malvern Court in Worcestershire.

2.2 Location

Little Malvern Court lies on the eastern side of the Malvern Hills south of the A4104 to Upton on Severn.

2.3 Topography and geology

The site lies at approximately 125mOD on a slope down to the flood plain of the River Severn to the east. The site contains the remains of a 12th century Benedictine priory, 14th century Priors' hall and Victorian manor. With the exception of the standing remains of the house and church the entire remainder of the area of the site is scheduled (Worcester County Monument 218).

The area of the site affected by the proposals lies within the former nave, and a paved area to its south. No historic features survive above ground within this area. Comparison of the levels here with the original medieval levels would imply that the ground lies approximately 400-500mm higher. Therefore *in situ* medieval remains, with the possible exception of structural elements of the priory, would only be encountered below this depth.

The underlying geology is Mercia Mudstone.

2.4 Reason for the project

It is proposed that the boilers to the court be moved from their existing location beneath the house to the rear of an adjacent garage. In order to facilitate this a slab will need to be cast on which the boilers will stand, a man hole will need to be excavated to receive incoming services, and a service trench will be needed to take fuel and water to the

boilers, and hot water back to the house. Due to the need for insulation of the water pipes then these will require a trench to be excavated that is 950mm deep and 300mm wide. Other services will be laid in a trench above this but at a shallower depth of 510mm although this trench will be 225mm wider than the original 300mm cut.

There is a preferred route for the service run (A) which will pass under paving slabs within the garage, through the threshold of a side door and beneath more paving slabs in the paved area to the south of the garage.

It has been suggested that the features most likely to be encountered during trenching at the proposed depths are burials and walls. Given the original ground level being below that at present then the walls may be faced, although this will depend on whether a south aisle was present or not as otherwise there would have been an arcade and therefore no walls present between the arch bases.

2.5 Dates of fieldwork

Fieldwork took place on 23rd and 24th July 2009.

3 Aims and objectives

3.1 Significance

The project was thought likely to produce results that are of national archaeological importance.

3.2 Aims

The aim of the project was to enable archaeological features to be identified in the areas affected by the proposals.

The verbal brief for the work was to establish worst case/best case and a halfway house between these. These are summarised below. A worst case scenario would have involved the discovery of a density or uniformity of archaeological remains that had they been known about before hand would have precluded undertaking the work. These could include *in situ* decorative medieval tiled floor pavements, bulk deposits containing vulnerable material such as decorated wall plaster, or a high density of inhumation burials.

The best case would be that with the exception of the walls of the nave (which might reasonably be expected to survive) the ground has already been disturbed to the depth of the proposed excavations for the project and that no *in situ* remains will be encountered. This was indeed the case on an earlier occasion, but the trench was much shallower that time.

The discovery of disarticulated human remains – there is a strong probability that these will be discovered. There is also a likelihood of the discovery of intact burials (one was recorded during a 1969 excavation. The preservation of tiled pavements seems unlikely in the light of the evidence. Many trenches observed around the site contain broken fragments of floor tile; so many pavements appear to have been broken up. During the 1969 work a burial was discovered – but there is no record of a floor covering it and in one trench south of the nave there is a clear indication that nothing was present within the trench. The only other obstacle is likely to be the presence of walls of part of the priory.

3.3 Objectives

Objectives of the project were to

- Excavate three trenches
- Establish the presence, absence and significance of the archaeology
- Report on findings and to deposit the archive.

4 Method

4.3.1 Fieldwork

Three test pits were dug, two on the proposed lines of the service trenches and a third in the likely position of the man hole in front of the boiler. It was necessary to adjust the positions of the pits slightly from those originally proposed in order to coincide with the paving slabs. The pits were excavated by hand, by archaeologists. In the cases of Test Pits 1 & 2 excavation ceased at 0.95m, being the maximum depth proposed for the service trenches. Trench 3 encountered the upper surface of what appeared to be the upper surface of Mercian Mudstone at 0.75m.

4.3.2 Recording

The trenches were recorded in plan at a scale of 1:20. Trench plans were produced at either 1:50 or 1:100 depending on the complexity of the archaeology.

Trench sections were produced at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20.

Photographs were taken of the trenches using 35mm monochrome and colour film. 7mmp digital photographs were also taken.

A system of context records was kept and numbered independently by trench. Recording was in accordance with Archaeological Investigations Ltd.'s site manual.

Registers were kept for all context records, photographs, drawings, small finds and samples.

Trench positions were tied into the OS grid using measurements from existing buildings.

4.3.3 Sampling

All deposits encountered during the test pitting were of post-medieval or modern date, or were thought to be naturally derived. therefore no samples were taken at this stage of the work.

5 Historical and archaeological background

Knowledge of the below ground archaeology within this area is limited. There are however a number of pieces of information worthy of note:

Observations to the south of the area of interest in 1997 (Cotswold Archaeology 97439) identified footings of buildings and features of late medieval/post dissolution date. There were fragments of floor tile within some of the deposits studied.

A watching brief undertaken in 2005 (Mercian Archaeology PJ150) only investigated deposits to a depth of 500mm. It identified some stones – possibly associated with the nave wall. To the north of the nave a fragment of medieval floor tile was found in the

surface of a silt deposit. Otherwise within the trench there was only a topsoil-like deposit emphasising the made up nature of this part of the site in relation to original medieval levels.

Excavations were undertaken in 1960's which identified foundations of the nave and cloister (Cotswold Report 1.3.7). Unfortunately there is no reference associated with this statement. However, a document was provided by David Duckham – project architect – entitled Record of old foundations excavated in 1969 on a drawing by Bellamy and Harker (the then site Architects). This identifies a wall (possibly the north wall of the nave) and to its south what is described as “body” possibly referring to a burial. Also just south of the line of the south wall of the nave are two other features shown at right angles to the trench, one of these falls onto the projected continuation of the south nave wall line. Two features are marked in a similar fashion to these at the east end of the east-west trench. They do not appear to continue the whole length of the trench from the note and a small trench to the east of the end of this trench is recorded as “nil” probably meaning no discoveries were made there.

6 Fieldwork results

6.1 Test Pit 1 (Fig. 3)

Test pit 1 was situated in the existing car port, in the position proposed for the boiler. The following deposits were present

Context	Thickness	Description/interpretation
100	0.15m	Slab and concrete comprising the existing surface in TP1
101	0.4m+	Mixed dark grey brown silt containing frequent fragments of glass, stone and mortar
102	0.10m	Clean silty pale brown silty sand with frequent stone, possibly weathered bedrock
103	0.10m+	Pale brown stone; possibly bedrock in TP1
104	0.4	Concrete structure in n-w corner of TP1. Possible service etc. immediately beneath 100

6.2 Test Pit 2 (Fig. 3)

Context	Thickness	Description/interpretation
200	0.09m	Slab and concrete comprising the existing surface in TP2
201	0.11m	Grey brown topsoil
202	0.04m	Layer of broken subangular and angular stone
203		
204	0.65m	Pale brown sandy silt; possibly weathered natural deposit
205	?	Grey stony silt; possible weathered natural but possibly fill of feature
206	?	Possible cut, or may be natural boundary separating deposits 204 and 205

6.3 Test Pit 3 (Fig. 3)

Context	Thickness	Description/interpretation
300	0.15m	Slab and concrete comprising the existing surface in TP3
301	0.4m+	Possible existing service trench (cut and fill) containing building rubble, fragments of electrical flex. Not fully excavated.
302	0.6m	Dark grey brown silt clay with mortar, black flecks and building rubble. Made up ground
303	0.1m	Paler brown silt clay with frequent roof tile and very frequent blobs of lime mortar. Made up ground?
304	0.08m+	Clean bright brown stony silt. Possible natural deposit in TP3

7 Finds

7.1 Test Pit 1

The most significant find from this pit was a single fragment of human bone (adult femur), identified at the base of deposit 101. There was no evidence for the remainder of the burial and the bone was reburied in the pit. Deposit 101 in which it was observed included remains of a large number of 'onion' bottles of late 17th or early 18th century date and post-medieval pottery including Westerwald stoneware decorated with painted cobalt decoration and therefore dating to later than the middle of the 17th century.

7.2 Test pit 2

Finds from Test Pit 2 consisted mainly of medieval roof tile, together with a single fragment of floor tile probably of local manufacture and fragments of a stained glass window.

7.3 Test Pit 3

The finds present in the levelling deposit 302 were of modern or post—medieval date with the exception of a number of fragments of medieval roof tile including two with glaze. Pottery from this deposit dated to the 18th century, One of the unglazed tile fragments had a nib for attachment. No further diagnostic evidence was present. A single sherd of Malvernian oxidised glazed ware (Worcester fabric 69) was present in layer 303.

8 Discussion

The outcome of the test pitting would seem to suggest the 'best case' scenario described in Section 3.2.

No evidence for undisturbed priory deposits was encountered in any of the test pits. There was no evidence for either floor levels or masonry, though a single disarticulated human bone in Test Pit 1 strongly suggested that burials are present in the immediate area.

There was some difference in the deposits inside and outside the area of the nave with layer 101 containing a great density of post medieval glass, not encountered in either test pit 2 or 3.

11 Bibliography

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
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| Cotswold Archaeological Trust, 1997 | Little Malvern Court, Near Malvern, Hereford and Worcester, C A T Report No 97439 |
| Mercian Archaeology, 2005 | An Archaeological Watching Brief at Little Malvern Court, Little Malvern, Worcestershire |



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Area of investigations

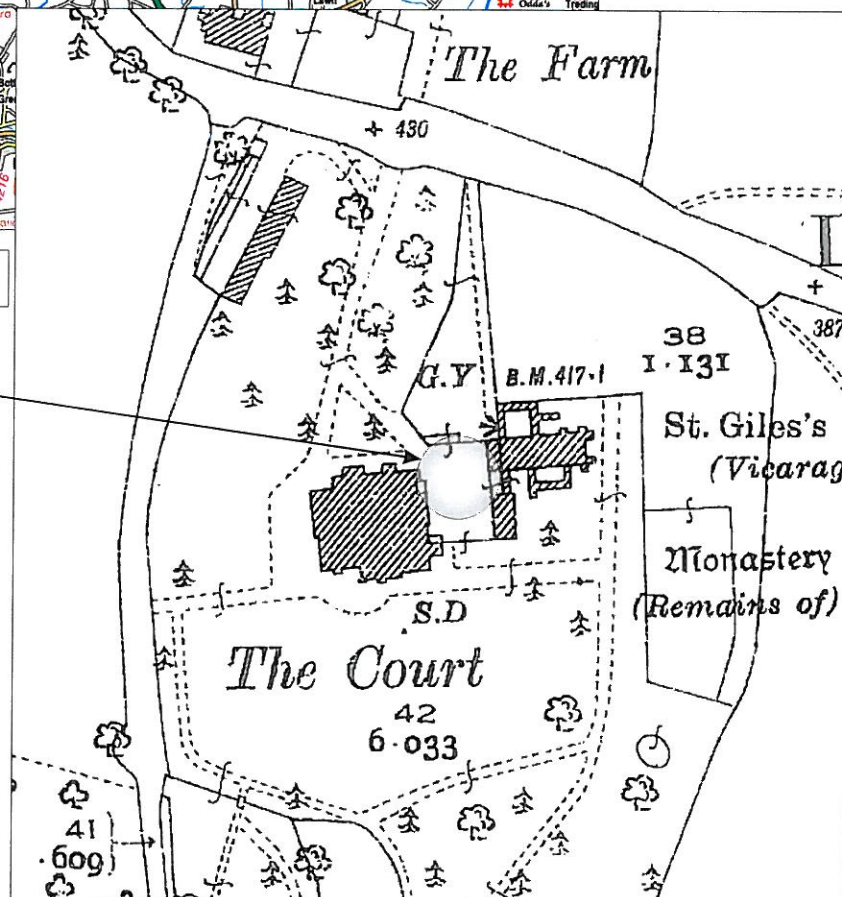


Figure 1 Site location plan

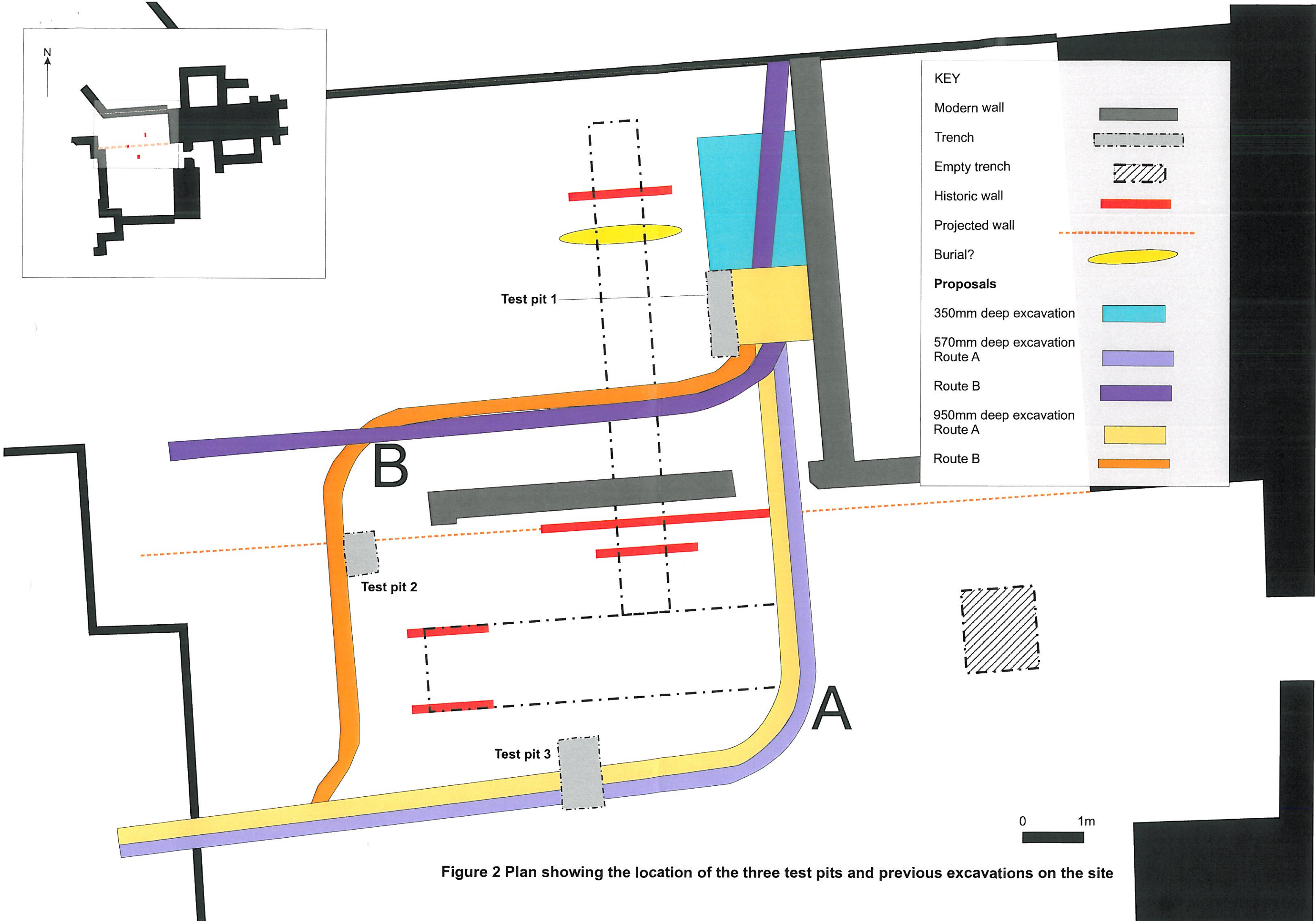
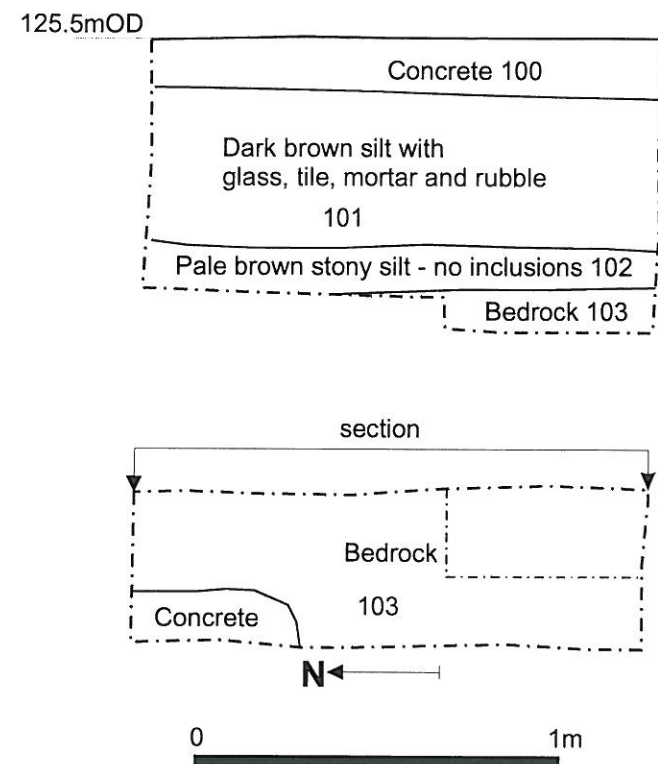


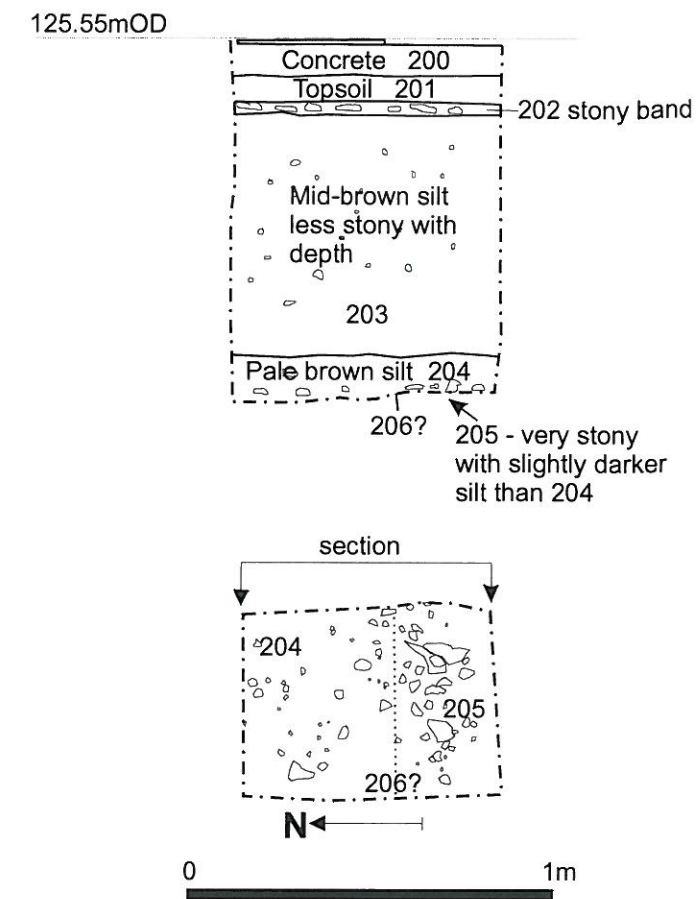
Figure 2 Plan showing the location of the three test pits and previous excavations on the site

Test pit 1 - West facing section and plan



Test pit 1 looking north

Test pit 2 - West facing section and plan

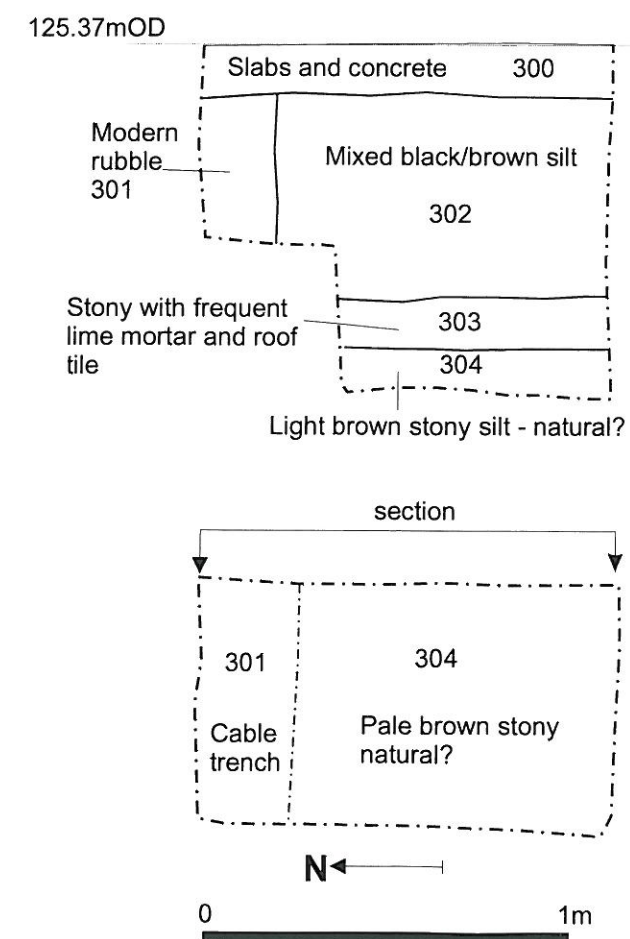


Test pit 2 looking east



Test pit 2 plan view

Test pit 3 - West facing section and plan



Test pit 3 looking east



Test pit 3 looking north

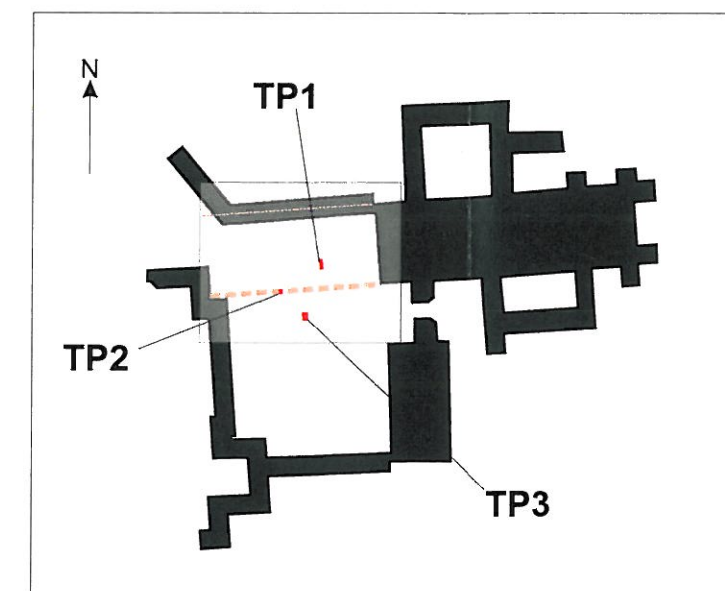


Figure 3 Plans and sections of the test pits