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## SUMMARY

During February and March 2003 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during the replacement and installation of new external lighting at Malmesbury Abbey, Malmesbury, Wiltshire (NGR: ST 9334 8733). The archaeological works comprised the monitoring of the excavation of cable trenches.

An unmarked brick-lined grave of 19<sup>th</sup> century date and part of a modern/late post-medieval brick wall, were present during the course of the watching brief.

No other archaeological features were present.

## **GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

### *Archaeology*

For the purpose of this project archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### *Natural*

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

### *NGR*

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

### *OD*

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

### *OS*

Ordnance Survey

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In February and March 2003, Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording within the grounds of Malmesbury Abbey, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, NGR: ST 9334 8733 (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by Malmesbury Parish Council and agreed in consultation with English Heritage.
- 1.2 The project involved the observation of groundworks associated with the excavation of cable trenches for the installation of new external lighting. The groundworks were carried out under close archaeological supervision. The works were undertaken in accordance with a specification prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2001), following the recommendations of a desk-based assessment compiled by Foundations Archaeology (2000). The project was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994, revised 2001) and *Archaeological Guidance Paper 4: Archaeological Watching Briefs: (guidelines)* issued by English Heritage (London Region).
- 1.3 This document presents the findings of the archaeological monitoring.

## **2 PROJECT BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The works covered by this project were excavated as part of an application to replace and install new external lighting in the grounds of Malmesbury Abbey, Malmesbury. It was necessary to acquire Scheduled Monument Consent for some of the works, as the abbey is a recognised site of national importance (County Monument Number 19043).
- 2.2 Following the recommendations of a desk-based assessment compiled by Foundations Archaeology (2000), it was decided that a watching brief should be undertaken during the groundworks associated with the excavation of new cable trenches and the concrete plinths for the light fittings. In the area adjacent to the porch (see Figure 2) the ground had not been utilised as a burial area and so had the highest potential for survival of intact archaeological deposits. Similarly, the garden area to the north of the abbey (see Figure 2) was also had a high potential, as the trenches would be positioned within the area of the former cloisters.
- 2.3 The study area lies on an outcrop of Cornbrash rising above the surrounding clays of the Oxford and Kellaways beds.

### **3 AIMS**

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological monitoring were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains.
- 3.2 These aims were to be achieved by the pursuit of the objectives as stated in the Project Design (Foundations Archaeology 2001):
- i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
  - ii) to attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on site;
  - iii) where possible to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The cable trenches were excavated by hand to a width of 0.30m and totalled 205m in length, except for approximately 6m of trench where it was necessary to use a mechanical mole to tunnel under the existing footpaths (Figure 2). Each trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.45m below the existing ground surface. The holes excavated for the streetlights along the pathway were 0.30m<sup>2</sup> and were excavated to a depth of 0.50m. The pits excavated for the floodlight plinths were 0.80m<sup>2</sup> and were excavated to a depth of 0.50m. A second plinth was excavated at the junction of Trenches 2 and 4, as the first plinth was incorrectly positioned. All groundworks were subject to archaeological supervision.
- 4.2 For convenience, trenches were numbered from one to seven, dependent upon the orientation across the site (Figure 2) and the information from the excavated holes for the concrete plinths have been included in their relevant trenches.
- 4.3 Spoil tips were scanned for unstratified finds across the entire study area.
- 4.4 All disarticulated human bone encountered during the watching brief was replaced within the excavated areas before backfilling.

## 5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The stratigraphic sequence identified within the trenches consisted of a mid yellow-brown clay silt subsoil up to 0.30m thick, which contained occasional limestone fragments. This was in turn overlain by a layer of black brown sand/silt/clay topsoil and turf between 0.15m and 0.21m thick. The stratigraphy was consistent across the site, except in Trench 5 and the junction between Trench 2 and 4. In Trench 5 the subsoil was a mid brown-yellow silty clay with gravels. This gradually became more silty further from the abbey, until at 5m from the abbey, it became consistent with the rest of the subsoil across the site. At the junction of Trench 2 and 4 the excavated plinth holes contained a thin makeup layer of dark brown clay silt, up to 0.11m thick, with modern inclusions of ceramic building material and glass.
- 5.2 Within Trench 2 was an unmarked crypt grave [203] of 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The grave was orientated east-west, was lined by wire-cut brick walls (204) and capped with a large limestone slab (205).
- 5.3 The plinth hole at the north end of Trench 2 contained the corner of a modern/late post-medieval brick wall [206]. The bricks (207), were bonded with concrete (208). The wall was one brick width wide, the full depth was not revealed within the hole, but contained at least four courses and had an overall depth of over 0.33m.
- 5.4 Quantities of artefactual evidence were recovered during the groundworks from the subsoil of all of seven trenches, all of which were of late post-medieval/modern date. These consisted of 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century pottery sherds, brick and tile fragments, nails, glass, clay pipe fragments, oyster shells, disarticulated human bone and animal bone. In addition, Trenches 1-4 in the cemetery area to the south of the abbey also contained metal objects such as buttons and coffin handles. The subsoil of Trench 6 to the east of the abbey contained frequent blocks of masonry debris throughout its length, the blocks did not appear to be *in situ* and were randomly scattered throughout the trench.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Two archaeological features were identified during the course of the groundworks.
- 6.2 The first feature consisted of an unmarked, brick-lined crypt grave, capped with a limestone slab. The component bricks of the grave can be dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The headstone was most probably removed during a reworking phase of the graveyard.

- 6.3 Within the plinth cut at the northern end of Trench 2 was a modern/late post-medieval brick wall. The corner of the wall was present within the cut, so the wall must have been orientated east and south of this point. The wall was located near to the edge of the pathway but was not contemporary in construction. No other archaeological features were present within the area of the watching brief.
- 6.4 Artefactual evidence comprised of finds from the subsoil across the abbey grounds. These included 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century pottery, brick and tile fragments, metal objects such as iron coffin nails, buttons and coffin handles, glass, clay pipe fragments and oyster shells as well as animal bone and disarticulated human bone. The building rubble present throughout Trench 6 was most likely to have derived from the abbey itself, the northeastern corner of the abbey, which overlooks Trench 6 was in a state of disrepair and had partly collapsed. The masonry used for the abbey was the same stone material present within this trench.
- 6.5 The archaeological monitoring has, therefore, identified an unmarked brick-lined grave dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a modern/late post-medieval brick wall and a quantity of modern/late post-medieval artefactual material. The watching brief results have identified no further archaeological features, within the parameters of the study area.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

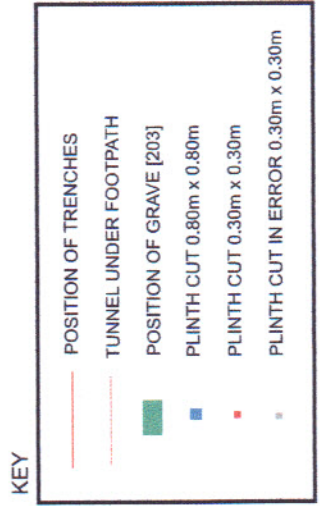
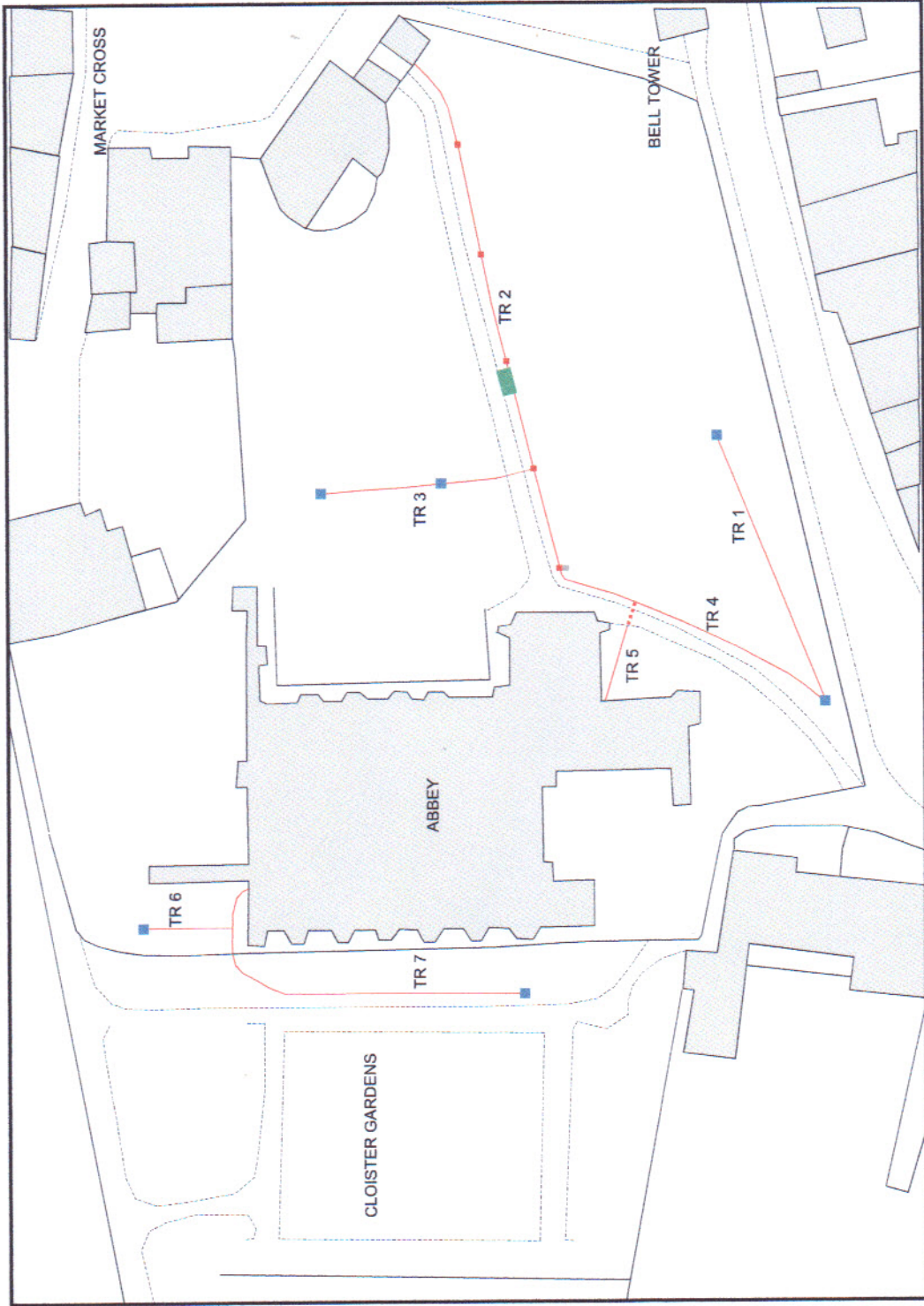
Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Mike Langtree, Roy Canham of Wiltshire County Council and the Malmesbury Abbey PCC, English Heritage and the staff of Beard Construction for their help in the smooth running of this project.



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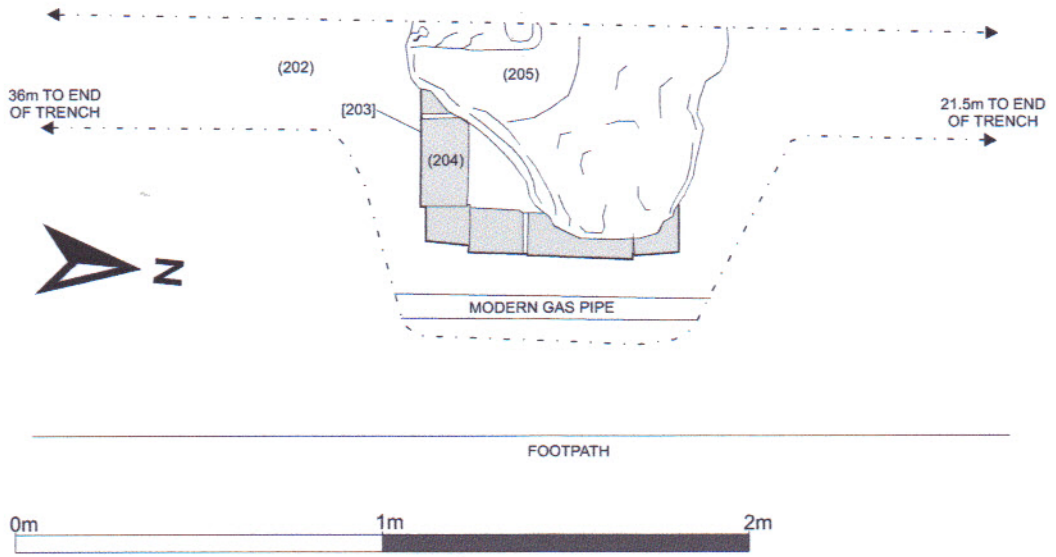
FIGURE 1: Site Location



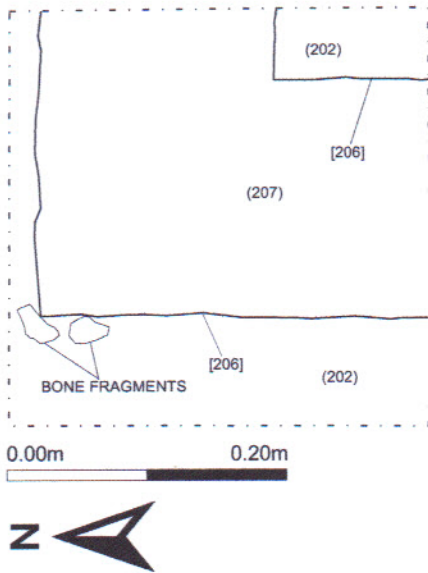


**FIGURE 2: Trench Location Plan**

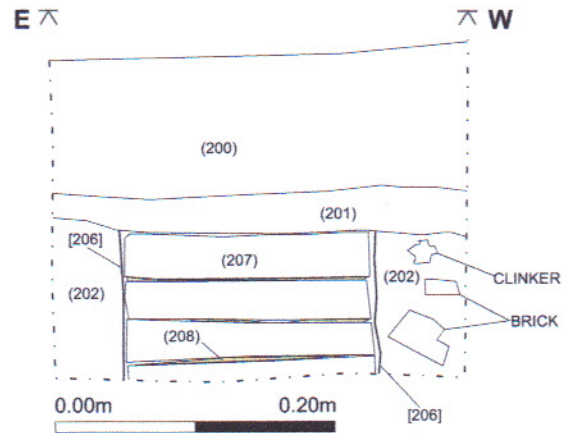
**PLAN OF GRAVE [203]**



**PLAN OF PLINTH CUT**



**NORTH FACING SECTION [206]**



**FIGURE 3: Plans and Sections**