



CCTV Works, Witley Court
Worcestershire
(NGR SO 775 658)

Archaeological watching brief



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Cover picture: the Poseidon fountain in the garden of Witley Court

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**CCTV Works, Witley Court,
Worcestershire
An archaeological watching brief/evaluation**

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1 Summary

Witley Court is a ruined multi-period manor house with extensive landscaped gardens in the stewardship of English Heritage. The site is located in grounds set back off the A4133 near the village of Great Witley, Worcestershire, and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (WCM 152).

To satisfy requirements of the Inspector of for Ancient Monuments for Witley Court, English Heritage commissioned Archaeological Investigations Ltd to conduct a watching brief during the excavation of three cable runs for installation of closed circuit television (CCTV).

The work was carried out during April 2008 and recorded roads, tracks and paths as well as multiple layers of made ground and buried soil horizons that relate to the remodelling of the landscape in the late 18th and early 19th centuries by John Nash and John Nesfield. Older occupation at the site was represented by finds; an architectural stone was recovered that may relate to an earlier phase of the house and a small flint, possibly a fragment from a Mesolithic microlith that was recovered on-top of undisturbed natural gravel.

No significant archaeological structures or features were recorded and the limited nature of the excavations meant that damage to archaeological deposits was minimal.

2 Introduction

Witley Court is in Worcestershire, near the village of Little Witley (see Figure 2). To satisfy requirements of the Inspector of for Ancient Monuments for Witley Court, English Heritage commissioned Archaeological Investigations Ltd was to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of service trenches for CCTV cables.

The court and all the formal gardens are in the guardianship of the Secretary of State for National Heritage and are managed by English Heritage. As the work affected Scheduled Ancient Monument WCM152 consent was required under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

The work was carried out in April 2008.

3 Geology

The underlying solid geology consists of ancient pre-Cambrian metamorphic rocks below Devonian and Downtonian Palaeozoic Lower Old Red sandstone.

The topography is a low undulating plain basin, landscaped with good drainage.

4 Archaeological and historical background – by Andy Boucher

Edited from earlier texts by RK Morriss (1990) and P Hughes and T Hoverd (1996).

In the following three sections different elements of the site's past are laid out. The first looks at the historic ownership of the site, the second the development of buildings, and the third the gardens and surrounding landscape. Combined these assist in assessing the historical significance of surviving elements within the garden landscape and the likely historical significance of remains that can be identified as lying beneath the current ground levels.

4.1 Historic ownership

Witley Court is a ruined multi-period mansion with elements dating back to the 13th century, once one of the largest private houses in the country and fitting its description as '*a palace, regal in size and grandeur...a supremely splendid shell*' (Pevsner, 1968, 171; 173). Its immediate pre-fire appearance owed much to a radical re-facing and extension in the 1850's but the building has a very long history.

There is a reference to *Witlege* in the Domesday Survey of 1086, and by the 13th century the manor appears to have been in the hands of the Cooksey family (Walker, 1990, 7). There was a medieval manor house, on the site in the late-13th or early-14th century, as was recently confirmed by the survey and re-assessment of part of the extensive cellars. A substantially intact stone-built two-bay section under the central part of the house, formerly vaulted, was tentatively identified as the undercroft of a long-demolished solar block presumably once attached to a medieval great hall (Morriss, 1990).

In 1498, Robert Russell of Strensham, a member of one of the county's most important families, came into the Cooksey estates (Walker, 1990, 7). Although there is a reference to Great Witley Park in the late-16th century, the first reference to the Court does not occur until the first half of the 17th century when it was the home of Sir William Russell. High Sheriff and Governor of Worcester, he spent much of his wealth in support of the Crown (Gibbons, 1990, 15). Sir William gave his son, Thomas, Witley Court in 1654 but in the following year Thomas sold the 'imposing residence' to Thomas Foley, the iron master, and then High Sheriff of the county (*ibid.*).

According to one authority (Thomas Harral in his book *Picturesque Views of the Severn* 1824), Foley, despite his wealth, was content ‘with the situation of the old house, repaired it, and made many additions’ (*ibid.*). Thomas Foley bought several other large estates in the region before he died in 1677. He was succeeded in turn by his son, Thomas, who died in 1701 and is credited with the building of ‘the fair new-built house’ mentioned in Camden’s *Britannia* of 1695 (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, V, 535; Gibbons, 1990, 15). His son, another Thomas, was one of the infamous Tory peers created by Queen Anne to retain that party’s majority in the Lords after the turbulent sitting of 1711/12 (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 535). The new Baron Foley of Kidderminster died in 1733.

The second Baron died unmarried and the title became extinct. He was succeeded by yet another Thomas Foley. He was the great, great grandson of the first Thomas Foley through his son, Paul, who had been given the manor of Stoke Edith, Herefordshire. This Thomas was also an MP and in 1776, the year before he died, was the second Foley to be elevated to the peerage - again as Baron Foley of Kidderminster (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 535).

Towards the end of his life, he began to suffer financial problems, mainly because of the activities of his two eldest sons. It was said that ‘His children, by a system of extravagance wherein no one good was done, no one worthy act performed, no one good consequence derived, tore a noble fortune to pieces’ (Royal Register Vol IV, quoted in Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 536).

His eldest son and heir, Thomas Foley, was a Privy Councillor, Joint Post-Master General - and a notorious gambler; it was he that started the families’ gradual decline (Walker, 1990, 10). He died in 1793 and his son, another Thomas, in 1833 (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 536). Shortly after inheriting the title and lands, the next Baron - another Thomas of course - saddled with the debts of his grandfather and a huge house, sold the Witley estates in 1837 for £890,000 (Walker, 1990, 10). He died, in Paris, in 1869 (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 536).

The new owners of Witley were the trustees of William Ward, a minor, who became the first Earl of Dudley in 1860. Until he came of age in 1846 the house was let. Between 1843-46 the tenant was Queen Adelaide, widow of William IV (*ibid.*).

When Lord Dudley took possession of the estate he began an ambitious programme of works on both house and gardens and entertained on a lavish scale. His son, another William, inherited in 1885 and for the rest of the century and into the Edwardian era Witley Court was one of the most fashionable private houses in the country, patronised by the rich and the royal. After the tragic death of Lady Ward in 1920 and the general downturn in the post-war economy, the family decided to sell Witley. It was bought by Sir Herbert Smith - but was damaged by fire in 1937. The damage was by no means terminal, and the west wing, chapel, and link block escaped completely. However, the house was allowed to deteriorate due to the activities of vandals and demolition contractors.

A Building Preservation Order was made in 1964 and in 1972, with no obvious improvements in view; the Department of the Environment took the unusual step of taking the ruins into compulsory guardianship. Since 1984 it has been in the care of the Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission - English Heritage.

4.2 Development of the buildings

Witley Court is a multi-period mansion with elements dating back to the medieval period, notably an undercroft beneath the main hall range that probably dates to the 13th century.¹ The main house is a large brick-built half-H shaped pile probably dating to the mid-17th century. The house may have been built by Sir William Russell, whose family had owned Witley since 1498. Sir William, a staunch Royalist, was Governor of Worcester during the Civil War.

In the second quarter of the 18th century the house was modernised, with flanking pavilions attached by curving screen walls to the ends of the long north wings in the fashionable Palladian manner. One, at least, of these pavilions contained stabling - a common enough

feature of such a design. In the same period the medieval church was demolished and replaced by the present one, attributed to James Gibb, and built next to the house. At the end of the century, and in the early part of the next, considerable alterations were again made. These included the demolition of the Palladian pavilions and the creation of a new service and stable area to the west of the main house.

This work is generally attributed to John Nash (see Figure 14). The two fine porticos attached to the north and south elevations of the main hall block are almost certainly by him, and there is a water colour of one of them in the RIBA collection.ⁱⁱ The brickwork of the house was stuccoed and the roof lines altered. An observer in 1814 described Witley as ‘an immense white house’ and commented on its ‘unsettled state’ - implying that building works were still ongoing.ⁱⁱⁱ An illustration of 1837 shows the wings of the house with pitched roofs and overhanging eaves and the two former stair towers topped with similarly treated hips.^{iv} The overall impression is reminiscent of Nash's small Italianate Villa style (*cf* Cronkhill, Shropshire). The archaeological evidence obtained from the west wing suggests that this illustration could be reasonably accurate.

Lord Foley is known to have been one of Nash's debtors, and both were part of the Prince Regent's spendthrift clique. Foley acquired the nickname ‘Lord Balloon’ and was apparently a notorious gambler.^v That Nash worked at Witley in the early years of the 19th century seems to be beyond reasonable doubt, but the full extent of that work is less clear.^{vi}

Financial problems led to the Foleys selling Witley in 1837 to the trustees of William Humble, 11th Baron Ward, and between 1843 and 1846 it was let to Adelaide, widow of William IV.^{vii} Ward then moved into the house and began planning a major modernisation scheme using Samuel Daukes as his architect. Daukes’ work in the late 1850s and early 1860s included encasing the main house in Bath stone, radically remodelling the interiors, adding a quadrant block to the south-west linking the house with a new conservatory and other garden buildings, and remodelling the existing service areas including the stable block. All this was carried out in a rather overbearing and bland Italianate manner - more akin to Thomas Cubitt’s Osborne House than Nash’s earlier and subtler style.

Ward was created Earl of Dudley in 1860. For over half a century Witley Court was one of the largest private houses in the country and one of its most fashionable - visited by aristocracy and royalty. By 1920 even the massive Dudley fortunes were waning and the house was sold to Sir Herbert Smith. In 1937 a fire gutted part of the house and Smith was unwilling or unable to repair it. In 1938 the house and grounds were sold by auction - but this time for architectural salvage. For the next half century it was stripped of all its finery and most of the easily transportable building materials. It became, in the words of Pevsner, ‘a palace, regal in size and grandeur....a supremely splendid shell.’^{viii} Finally, to prevent any more losses, the Court was taken into compulsory guardianship by the Department of the Environment in 1972. They began a programme of consolidation and repair that, since its creation in 1984, has been continued by English Heritage.

4.3 The landscape and gardens

Topographically the site lies on a north facing slope the aspect and surrounding landscape having been altered to suit the designs and aspirations of the house’s various owners over the past four centuries at least. Nash’s early 19th century designs placed the house within a landscape that might be described as planned, but natural in appearance replacing the earlier terracing enclosed by formal walls and gates. However, when Lord Ward came into his inheritance in 1846 he was determined to remodel Witley on a grand scale with Samuel Whitfield Daukes as architect.

The alterations and extensions to the gardens had to be on the same ambitious scale as the works to the building and Ward found the finest landscape garden designer of the period - William Andrews Nesfield. Nesfield laid out his ‘monster work’ at Witley during the 1850s. It was designed to reflect the grandeur of the house and the wealth of one of the richest men in Europe. The creation of the palace demanded a formality to the area surrounding it that the

house had not seen before. This involved the construction of parterres - for which Nesfield's engineering and draughtsmanship skills were ideal. The whole of Nesfield's formal garden was enclosed with a balustrade that included two classical temples. It had, as a centrepiece, the gilded gun-metal of the 'Golden Gates' on a rise in the ground beyond the Poseidon fountain, providing a grand entry from the gardens into the 800 acre Deer Park.

When, in 1664, a marriage settlement was drawn up between Thomas Foley and Elizabeth Ashe of Halstead, in Kent, it referred to 'All that Park or impaled ground called Witley Park'.^{ix} The park had, at that time, been in existence for well over a hundred years and, from an early date had been gradually encroaching on the surrounding fields. The glebe, the Rector's own land, had long since been swallowed up. A glebe terrier for 1585 described how certain land, apparently close to the rectory and the church, was 'now conteyned and lyeth within Witley Pke and in recompence of some part the rest the parson occupieth other land'.^x Comparison with later documents suggests that the land, which was incorporated into the park, lay just north of the house and included part of the field called, in the 17th century, the Bowling Green.^{xi} The pre-18th century church lay slightly to the west of the present building and the rectory lay nearby. In 1674 the rectory was described in a diocesan survey thus:

'The mansion house is an old decaying house; one bay of it leans dangerously, but it is tollerably covered and keepes dry. The minister tells us that the Chancellor hath been acquainted with the designs of Thomas Foley, esqr., to build the house in another place and lay £10 per annum to it, for this house stands in a very inconvenient place and hath no land near it but a fold: the barning in sorry order.'^{xii}

It is likely that this house is the timber-framed house that appears with the foldyard and the 'barning' in the 17th-century painting of the south front of Witley Court.^{xiii} The buildings in the foreground of this painting have given rise to persistent rumours that there is a 'lost village' in the park at Witley. In fact, careful perusal of the only available copy of the painting suggests only one domestic building on the site, the 'rectory'; the other buildings are agricultural. More light is shed on this area by an agreement made between the Rector, John White, and Thomas Foley, in 1704.^{xiv} In this document Thomas Foley finally regularised the situation concerning the glebe land, exchanging it for a compact group of fields round the new rectory, but he also gained the 'liberty' to clear certain unwanted farm buildings, the property of the church, and use the materials.^{xv} These were the 'Oxhouse barn' and two bays of a building at the east end of the 'Old Hall barn'. It seems from this description that the Rector's barns were part of a farm complex belonging to the Court and that, if the painting is correct, these buildings lay in the area to the west and south of the present gardens. As might be expected, they are not shown on the estate map, drawn by Charles Price for Thomas Foley in 1732 (see Figure 3) although a field, shaped like the foldyard complex in the painting, is depicted to the south of the church and west of the house.^{xvi} The rectory was rebuilt in 1683 on or near its present site.

The 1704 agreement did not only affect the area, previously mentioned, which was already enclosed in the park, but also other plots apparently abutting the Worcester road. It is therefore probable that Foley was already looking to extend the park northwards and this transaction paved the way for the eventual acquisition of the Hillhampton land. Even so, according to the 1732 map, the park at that date was considerably smaller than the present park; the area immediately south of the house was taken up with small enclosed fields and scattered cottages and the woodland was confined to a single 500 yard strip on the western edge of the estate. Access to the house was either along a tree-lined avenue somewhat south of the present drive to the Worcester Lodge or by means of a track on the line of the existing drive from the Stourport Lodge, which, at the Hundred Pool, diverged from the modern access to wind across a meadow to the front of the house. The site of the present front pools was covered with trees and bounded to the north by the stream.

There is a reference to the bowling green meadow in the 1664 deed incorporated in the 1802 abstract of title for the Foley estates. It was then described as 'all that close meadow or

pasture taken forth of the said park'. It can be located on the tithe map as the area lying in front of, and to the west of the house, within the curve of the pools. It was presumably used as a bowling green in the early-17th century, when such features were fashionable, but by 1732 a driveway wound across it to the house. Part of it had become the kitchen garden by 1793.^{xvii}

The land beyond the stream to the north was part of Hillhampton Manor and in 1718 it was bought by the third Thomas Foley from Allen Cliffe.^{xviii} This allowed the landscaping of the area to the north of the house, the creation of the front pools and the introduction of a grand entrance, carried across the pools by a causeway and bridge, directly from the main road to the front courtyard of the house.

The line of this causeway was reasonably accurately established during monitoring of the draining of the lake in 2007 and matches fairly closely the engraving in Nash's *History of Worcestershire*.^{xix} The existing driveway, which joins the main Worcester road opposite the Stourport road junction, is the remnant of the drive leading to this causeway; it now bears round to the left, but once continued to the main entrance to the house.

A letter written by Bishop Hough who had visited Witley a year after Price's map was made could be taken to imply that the bridge and avenue were built by 1732/3. In it he declared that his Lordship had made 'a spacious avenue to his house, resembling that at Blenheim'.^{xx} The main avenue at Blenheim crossed a deep, flooded valley, similar to but larger, than that at Witley, by means of a causeway and a highly ornamental bridge designed by Vanbrugh.

A survey of 1793/4 (see Figure 4) sheds further light on what was happening in the area around and north of the house. It lists a garden, little garden, meadow, paddock and barn, Warford Pool and two other pools, all apparently outside the deer park. It also includes the 'Wilderness and pool'. Missing from the survey is the Washing Pool (see below) and the mill, one of the corn-mills owned by the Foleys in 1664, which was sited east of the front pool on Taylor's 1772 map, in the area that became the Wilderness.^{xxi} It is interesting to find that this phase, which post-dated the pools and causeway, pre-dated the change in the access route, for the two roads at this time are from the Worcester road 'at Piper's', and from the Martley road. This confirms the evidence from GS Repton's sketchbook of 1803-5 and from the engraving by W Angus published in 1810, that the central causeway across the pools continued in use throughout the 18th century and into the first decade of the 19th.^{xxii}

During this period considerable alterations were being made to the house itself. The south front shown in Figure 12 was redesigned sometime after 1805 by John Nash, and other alterations to the rest of the house, including the removal of the stable blocks and courtyard railings. These last works took place sometime between the 1810 engraving and 1817, when Prattinton scribbled a tiny sketch plan of the house, showing north and south porticoes and one of the stable blocks, implying that work was still underway.^{xxiii} Laird writing in 1814 described the south front as only having a portico and found the house still in some disorder (as mentioned above).^{xxiv}

As part of this remodelling the causeway and bridge were demolished and the present access roads were constructed. They appear on Greenwood's map of Worcestershire, published in 1822 (see Figure 6) and can be seen on a number of early-19th-century engravings and water-colours.

Other changes had been taking place to the south of the house. By 1772, and probably considerably earlier, the park had been extended, sweeping away the fields and cottages shown by Price, so that the new boundary passed to the east of the house.

It is likely that the water supply for the Court came initially from the Washing Pool and its companion pool (see Figure 7). By 1837 the Court had two inside water closets to augment the more primitive privies. These were probably part of the Nash remodelling since one lay behind the conservatory designed by him. The kitchen block, part of the new offices and stables built during the 1820s had water piped to cisterns in the adjoining roof.^{xxv} By the end of the century the domestic water supply was piped from Home Farm to the west of the Court, through New Wood and the walled gardens to tanks at various points in the house.

Water for the fountains, however, came from the Hundred Pool by an elaborate system of pumps and pipes. The engine house housed a massive beam engine driven by steam from two huge coal-fired boilers.^{xxvi} This pumped water from the Hundred Pool, through the Park, to the top of the hill and into the reservoir, (a distance of approximately 1.5 km.). The water was then gravity fed to the fountains through huge iron pipes and, according to one source, pumped back to the reservoir.^{xxvii} When fully operational the fountains required up to ten thousand gallons of water over very short periods. With this huge requirement a supplementary source was available from the Washing Pool which lies between the reservoir and the Court.

As regards waste disposal it would seem that during its early phases the Court used a simple cess pit; (such a structure may be apparent under the floor of what is now the West Wing). The early 19th century Court certainly had a system of sewers, but details have not been established.^{xxviii} The 1905 map (see Figure 10) shows a circular settling tank, approximately 15m to the south-west of the walled garden, presumably to accommodate waste from the Court and/or the houses within the walled garden. No trace of this structure survives today, but it may have been part of a system installed in the 1880s and plotted on a plan in Dudley Record Office.^{xxix} This shows that a main sewer, constructed under the house, heads in the direction of this tank. Once the sewage plant on the east of the A443 had been constructed, sometime before 1920, this earlier tank fell into disuse and disappeared from later maps.

During the first half of the 20th century a sewer was put through part of the estate leading from the houses within the walled garden and was joined by a spur sewer leading directly from the Court to the main sewer. This then went round the Front Pool, through the Wilderness and across the Worcester road near the eastern Lodge, into the woods opposite the Lodge and into a larger settling tank.

To the west of the present Court gardens, and cut into the low embankment now covered by scrub and a small coniferous plantation, is a small quarry. The surviving face forms a right-angle cut into a band of Old Red Sandstone and extends to a height of approximately 3m above the present ground surface. Due to its sheltered position, tooling marks can still be seen over much of the exposed face. The origins of this quarry are uncertain, but it may have been re-used in the 1850s during Dawkes' rebuilding.

During drainage works carried out in the 1970s, the agricultural engineers carrying out the works encountered what they described as 'very substantial brick footings' to the south-west of the Court near to the area that was once a cricket pitch. The nature and purpose of these footings is unknown as nothing appears on any of the maps consulted and there are no references to buildings in this area^{xxx}.

In 1997 a major scheme of excavation work was undertaken by Nottingham University around the entire perimeter of the ha-ha. Thus many of the archaeological deposits will have been removed from the ha-ha ditch at that time. Trenches were also excavated to the east of Area A where substantial bricks foundations were interpreted as former stable blocks shown on the Young's map of 1793 (author's personal observation: see Figure 5).

As far as the author is aware none of the excavation work undertaken by the Oxford Archaeology Unit lies within or near the three areas for proposed new installations.

Previous archaeological work undertaken at Witley Court		
The medieval undercroft	HAS 87	October 1990
Assessment	HAS 92	November 1990
The west wing	HAS 172	April 1993
The south west wing	HAS 214	September 1994
Landscape survey	HAS 215	July 1994
The link block	HAS 232	January 1995
Assessment of the architectural stone	HAS 235	January 1995
Recording the loose architectural stone	HAS 255	September 1995
The Stables and western guesthouse	HAS 269	January 1996
The proposed roofs of 1837	HAS 271	February 1996
Landscape survey	HAS 275	February 1996
The Boat House	HAS 316	May 1997
The east wing bathroom	HAS 350	February 1998
The vets room	HAS 354	March 1998
The Boat House update	HAS 413	May 1999
The Coach House building survey	HAS 496	April 2001
East basements building survey	HAS 506	November 2001
The stair tower building survey	HAS 507	November 2001
Stair tower and south-west wing, archival report	HAS 605	October 2003
Radar survey and trial pits, evaluation	HAS 702	February 2006

Table 1 Previous archaeological work carried out by Archaeological Investigations Ltd

5 Aims and objectives

The project was identified as likely to produce results that of national archaeological importance. Three areas are to be disturbed by grounds works and were identified as areas A, B and C. The archaeological potential of the three areas and the potential impact of the archaeological resource had been previously identified (Boucher, 2008).

The main aims of fieldwork stage of the project were to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of any archaeological deposits encountered.

The main objectives were to:

- identify the date and nature of any features observed during the ground-works
- assess the nature, extent, preservation and future potential of any archaeological deposits encountered
- produce a record of any features observed.

6 Methodology

Three trenches in areas A – C were hand dug by contractors employed by English Heritage. The turf was removed and each trench excavated to a depth of 0.60m. All trenches were observed and recorded in accordance with Archaeological Investigations Ltd *Site recording manual* (2005) and in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IFA, 2001).

7 Results

Three trenches were positioned to the north; south-east and south-west of the main standing building (see Figure 17). They were hand excavated by contractors employed by English Heritage.

Area A – north drive

A cable run was excavated linking the custodian's hut to a new column at the north end of the drive to the main entrance of the court. The trench ran north from the custodian's hut before turning east and north east across the drive to column A. The trench was approximately 32m long, 0.37m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.60m.

Two sections of the trench were examined in detail (see Figure 18). The main section was orientated northeast to southwest across the drive and cut through modern concrete and its associated make-up. Below the make-up of the concrete drive was rubble layer 312. The rubble was made up from mixed brick, mortar and sandstone and covered a possible earlier surface (314). This earlier surface was only partially exposed in northern part of the section but probably extended to the south. It was constructed of very compact water washed pebbles that were either laid or cut into a re-deposited silty sand soil (313). The northern extent of the surface was visible in section and was near vertical. There was no evidence for drains associated with the road but only the very top of it was exposed.

Although 313 extended north, it was cut by a large ditch (315) that follows the line of the current fence. The ditch was either a boundary or the scar of a grubbed-out hedge that was replaced by the current fence.

To the north of the drive and orientated east west was the second area of the trench observed in detail. Below the topsoil were horizons similar to those recorded below the drive.

Area B – east of ha-ha and south of garden

A cable run was excavated to a new column along the outside of the ha-ha on the east edge of the southern garden (see Figure 19). The trench was orientated northeast to southwest and was approximately 21.5m long, 0.37m wide and 0.60m deep.

The southern extent of the trench cut through the construction trench of steps leading to the pump room of the Poseidon fountain. To the north of the construction trench six contexts were recorded in section. Below the turf and topsoil the subsoil was cut by a possible path or track (207). The path or track was modern and probably orientated east west. It was constructed of Type 1 scalplings (crushed grey stones).

Below the subsoil was a re-deposit of clay that made-ground over a former horizon of topsoil (204). The older topsoil was probably imported to the site during one of the many landscape changes as it covered a mixed rubble and sandstone layer (206) that was not bottomed in the trench.

Area C – south west corner of stable block

A cable run was excavated to a new column to the southwest corner of the stable range. The trench was orientated east west and approximately 56m long, 0.37m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.60m.

To the south west of the stable block and below the topsoil was surface 111 (see Figure 21). The surface was made of large densely packed sandstone cobbles in a matrix of crushed broken brick and earth bedded on a thin skim of mortar. The entire width of the path was exposed in the trench and was 5.40m wide and cut into clean subsoil 102 to a depth of 0.30 – 0.35m. Below the surface were two land drains positioned one each side. The drains (110 and 112) were of red clay and would have drained excess water from the surface. The surface was substantial and probably severed as a large track or road leading to and from the stables. To the west of the surface was a north south garden wall (see Figure 20) that followed the same orientation as the surface.

West of the garden wall the trench cut through 2 surfaces 108 and 104 and their associated foundation layers. The surfaces were off red gravel laid on a layer of mixed soot and coal waste and of compact gravel and stone. Below both surfaces was mixed brick, mortar and stone with pottery and glazed ceramic building material (CBM). Path 108 was 10m wide and 104 6m wide and both cut into subsoil 102 to a depth of 0.40m. An architectural stone fragment was recovered from within 108.

Where the subsoil was undisturbed it was 0.30m deep and covered natural red sand and gravel 103. A small worked flint (SF 1) was recovered from the surface of the natural gravel at a depth of 0.60m below ground level.

8 Discussion

Area A

The approach to the house has changed many times but by 1817 they were established in their present location. The extensive remodelling of the landscape by Nesfield possibly raised and levelled the drive while balustrades overlooking the front pool were constructed.

The re-deposited layers in the trench probably relate to the Nesfield's redesign. Although the actual drive surface was not observed (it has either eroded or been replaced by the modern concrete surface) layer 312 was probably levelling associated with it.

A compact gravel surface was buried by layer 312 and was probably an earlier drive surface, possibly laid by Nash in the early 19th century (314).

Area B

By 1732 this area was enclosed within the boundary wall of the garden and by 1793 a possible path led from south east corner of the garden to a walled enclosure/courtyard with buildings. These may have been the buildings recorded in observations during the excavations of service runs. By 1817 there are no standing buildings in the area.

The path recorded in the current trench is probably modern. The lower brick and rubble layer 206 may be related to the demolition of the buildings shown in 1793. Topsoil was imported to cover the rubble and may have been covered with turf. A second phase of landscaping is probably represented by clay 204.

Area C

At the start of the 18th century this area was open ground. By 1793 the area may have been enclosed by a wall to form the south garden.

By 1817 the stable is presents with road or large track leading to it. The three tracks recorded in the trench (see Figure 20 and Figure 21) were all fairly similar in width and make-up but the most substantial was track 111. This was constructed of large sandstone cobbles and was the only track to have a drainage system; two drains of red clay either side of the track. It would have been substantial enough to support the weight of carriages and horses.

9 Conclusions

The extensive alterations to the landscape around Witley Court were reflected in the stratigraphy recorded in all three trenches. The deposits recorded during the work included roads, tracks and paths and multiple layers of made ground and buried soil horizons that probably relate to the remodelling of the landscape by John Nash in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and by John Nesfield from 1846 onwards. Older occupation at the site was represented by finds. An architectural stone was recovered that may relate to the medieval manor and a small flint micro-lithe was recovered on-top of undisturbed natural sand and gravel.

The limited nature of the excavations meant that the damage to the archaeological deposits was minimal.

10 Site archive

The site archive consists of the following:

- 1 Primary paper records and site drawings
- 2 A inter-relational Microsoft Access© database
- 3 Digital photographs
- 4 A paper copy of this report (a digital copy of the report of this report will also be submitted to the Archaeological data Service [ADS] for on-line storage).

The archive, including all retained artefacts and ecofacts will be deposited in accordance with the requirements of English Heritage.

Appendix 1: context records

A total of 36 contexts were recorded from the watching brief. These were almost exclusively related to the various stages of landscape alterations that have taken place at Witley Court.

area	context	category	type	description	interpretation
C	101	layer	topsoil	Dark brown-black topsoil and turf.	Recently laid turf.
C	102	layer	subsoil	Red when first exposed but darkens after exposure. Sandy clay with brick, tile and occasional modern pottery inclusions. Disturbed by tracks 104 and 108 and cut by land drains 106, 107 and sewage pipe 105.	The gardener thinks its made ground but the deposit appears quit homogenous.
C	103	layer	sand	Red sand and sandstone with clay. Sandstone and mortar fragments within. Reliable and mostly undisturbed.	Only present in east end of Area C.
C	104	linear	track	Compact pebbles/cobbles and stone over thin layer of dark soil on a foundation of crushed red brick.	Possible two surfaces with the upper cobbles being modern and the lower brick (possibly Tudor) may relate to track shown on 1817 map.
C	105	fill	ceramic drain	7.5 inch pipe with 6 inch bore and 2ft sections with collars. Glaze mid brown.	Probably a water drain from building that no longer stands. In the area of the tea rooms.
C	106	linear	drain	Red clay land drain below track 104.	Probably drainage for track 104. This drain is the same as drain 107.
C	107	linear	drain	see 106	
C	108	linear	track	Layers forming track to the east of ceramic drain 105. Layers were of gravel, ash, brick stone and mortar rubble. Inclusions of pottery, brick, cbm and glazed porcelain.	A substantial surface/ hard standing area
C	109	linear	drain	Red ceramic horse-shoe drain, unglazed. No obvious cut but disturbance around the drain. Sealed below surface 108.	Sections of drain are 0.31m.
C	110	linear	drain	see 106	
C	111	layer	track	Road, path or track comprised of large, dense cobbles in a matrix of crushed and broken brick and earth. Bedded on a thin skim of mortar.	Surface - substantial compared to 104 and 108.
C	112	linear	drain	Field drain east of 111.	
B	201	layer	topsoil	Topsoil and turf (same as 101).	
B	202	fill	fill	Light mid-grey stone and grit that was compact.	Compact fill of a cut for steps that led to the pump room of the fountain. Backfill also contained an electric cable (that this trench followed).
B	203	cut	?	Cut not seen within trench.	
B	204	layer		Red brown compact sandy clay. Cut by cable trench but	General layer below topsoil.

				otherwise undisturbed.	
B	205	layer		Dark brown sandy silt that was compact and clean - no evidence of any inclusions. To the north of the pump room steps.	Buried soil horizon.
B	206	layer		Rubble layer below buried horizon 205.	Made ground probably associated with the working days of the estate.
B	207	layer		Mid grey stone and grit. Same material as 202.	Surface or track north of concrete steps.
B	208	layer		Dark brown sandy clay of firm compaction. Occasional charcoal flecks.	Possibly cut by 2007.
B	209	structure	steps	Rectangular concrete steps that lead to the pump room of the fountain.	Joins up to an extensive brick tunnel that accommodates the pipe work of the fountain.
A	301	layer	topsoil	see 101	
A	302	layer	garden soil	Thin layer of black mulch and compost.	
A	303	fill	type 1 scalping s	Dark grey stones.	Fill of service trench.
A	304	cut	linear	Service trench containing blue/black plastic duct.	Service trench.
A	305	service	duct		
A	306	layer		Red brown sandy clay with occasional mortar.	
A	307	layer	topsoil	Mid brown clayey silt with turf.	Turf horizon.
A	308	layer		Mid-light red brown sandy silt with moderate sandstone inclusions and occasional brick, tile and glass.	Dumped material.
A	309	layer		Mid-red brown sand containing some silt. Inclusions of brick and tile fragments. Base not encountered.	Earlier phase of make-up to 308.
A	310	layer	concrete drive	Concrete.	Part of road surface.
A	311	layer		Mid grey sand matrix with abundant gravel.	Blinding for concrete slab.
A	312	layer		Red brown sand matrix with abundant rubble.	Although this contained more rubble it may be the same as deposit as 308. If it is the same this may be a 19th century landscape phase with its upper-surface reduced to create the current landscape. There was no evidence of this earlier surface.
A	313	layer		Mid brown homogenous silty sand identical to 309.	Possibly made ground associated with landscaping by Nash.
A	314	surface	gravel	Water-washed stones lying on 313.	A compact surface, possibly drive laid by Nash?
A	315	cut		Steep sided, base not observed.	A cut pre-dating the road surface and respecting the existing fence line but later that the latest phase of landscaping. Boundary ditch replaced by the later fence.
A	316	fill		Coarse rubble in mid - dark silt with some grit.	Backfill of ditch 315.

Table 2 Recorded contexts from all three trenches

Appendix 2: pottery and ceramic building material

All pottery and CBM retrieved from the excavation has been quantified in-house.

context	ware type	diagnostic type: rims	diagnostic type: base	total	weight	comments	spot date
101	cream ware	-	1	3	50g	1 med sherd, green glazed	post med
108	cream ware, post med	-	-	28	400 g	material from bathroom unit, post med pot, transfer pattern	post med
102	Stamford ware, salt glazed	1	-	11	250 g	stamford ware jug, salt glazed Bellamine	post med
206		1	-	1	50 g	unglazed pot	post med
204	Cream ware	1	-	2	100 g	white glazed - chamber pot	post med

Table 3 Quantification of pottery

context	type	comment	quantity	diagnostic
108	CBM	Glazed building material	5	white tiles, light blue tiles (bath room)
102	Slate	Small frags of roof slate, no holes for nail	5	roof slates
102	CBM	Tiles, not glazed	11	floor & roof tiles not glazed
102	Mortar	Large lumps of mortar	6	lump of mortar
102	Marble	Small frag	1	marble from fireplace?
108	Stone	NOT RETAINED	1	Architectural stone
206	CBM	Unglazed tiles	3	floor tiles (unglazed), brick
206	Mortar	Small & large lumps of mortar	3	
204	CBM + mortar	Small frags CBM & mortar	4	small frags unglazed roof tiles & mortar
201	Stone		1	architectural stone
308	CBM	bricks, tiles, drain	11	roof tiles, floor tiles and frag of drain, not glazed
Area C	111	tiles, glazed & unglazed	9	white glazed tiles, unglazed cbm, roof tile, drain fragments

Table 4 Quantification of CBM

No further work is recommended to the pottery and CBM assemblages.

Appendix 3: architectural stone

A single fragment of architectural stone was recovered from Area C.

The stone is of local red sandstone with dimensions of 0.145m x 0.145m x 0.60m. It is oval/circular in shape and flanged on the inner side. The outside edge of the oval/circular is finished smooth and the base has tool marks and retains mortar. The type of stone is different from any used on the current building and may be a surround from a window/door or simply a garden feature.

If it belonged to a window or door the type of material suggests it would have been from one of the earlier phases of the house.

Appendix 4: worked stone – by Andy Boucher

One small flint artifact was recovered from the site and presented for assessment. It was recorded as having been recovered from context 103/102 in Area C of the site. It was inspected under a x10 magnifying glass and the following description produced. The length is always recorded as proximal – distal with the width perpendicular to this. The sides of the flint are recorded with the proximal end towards you and ventral face up. The left and right edges are therefore always the same regardless of whether it is the dorsal or ventral face being described.

A small flake with fine retouch: L=6mm x W=1mm x Th=1mm

The retouch is on the proximal right edge in the form of 4 (possibly 5) 2mm long by 1mm wide scars – all parallel. Much of the length of the retouched edge has a flat face 0.5mm in height.

The flint is a translucent pale brown and is well preserved with little sign of having been transported far.

This is clearly a man made artifact. The vertical face adjacent to the area of retouch can be taken to indicate that either the retouch was formed prior to the removal of a flake against this edge or some kind of punch was used in the striking of the retouch (which is very uniform). The location of the retouch on the proximal edge is fairly unusual and might suggest that this is a spall that has broken off a slightly larger implement either through accidental or use damage.

Given the above it is difficult to say with any certainty what the artifact was. It currently has a scalene triangular plan – but is a little too small for most microliths. However, the most plausible explanation for the fine retouch along the edge might be that it derived from a microlith.

In conclusion it is likely, on the balance of probabilities, that the artifact is evidence for Mesolithic activity in the area.

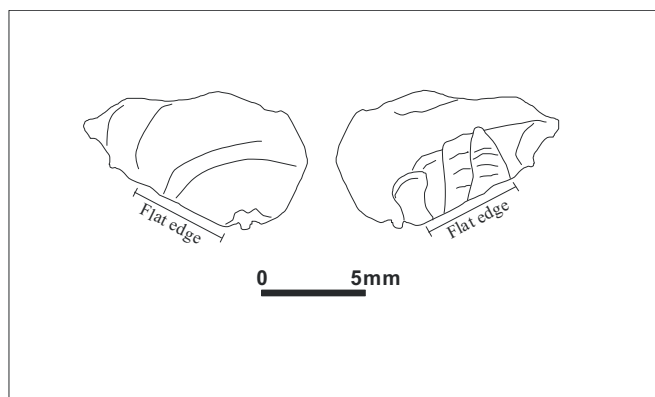


Figure 1 the flint spall from a Mesolithic microlith

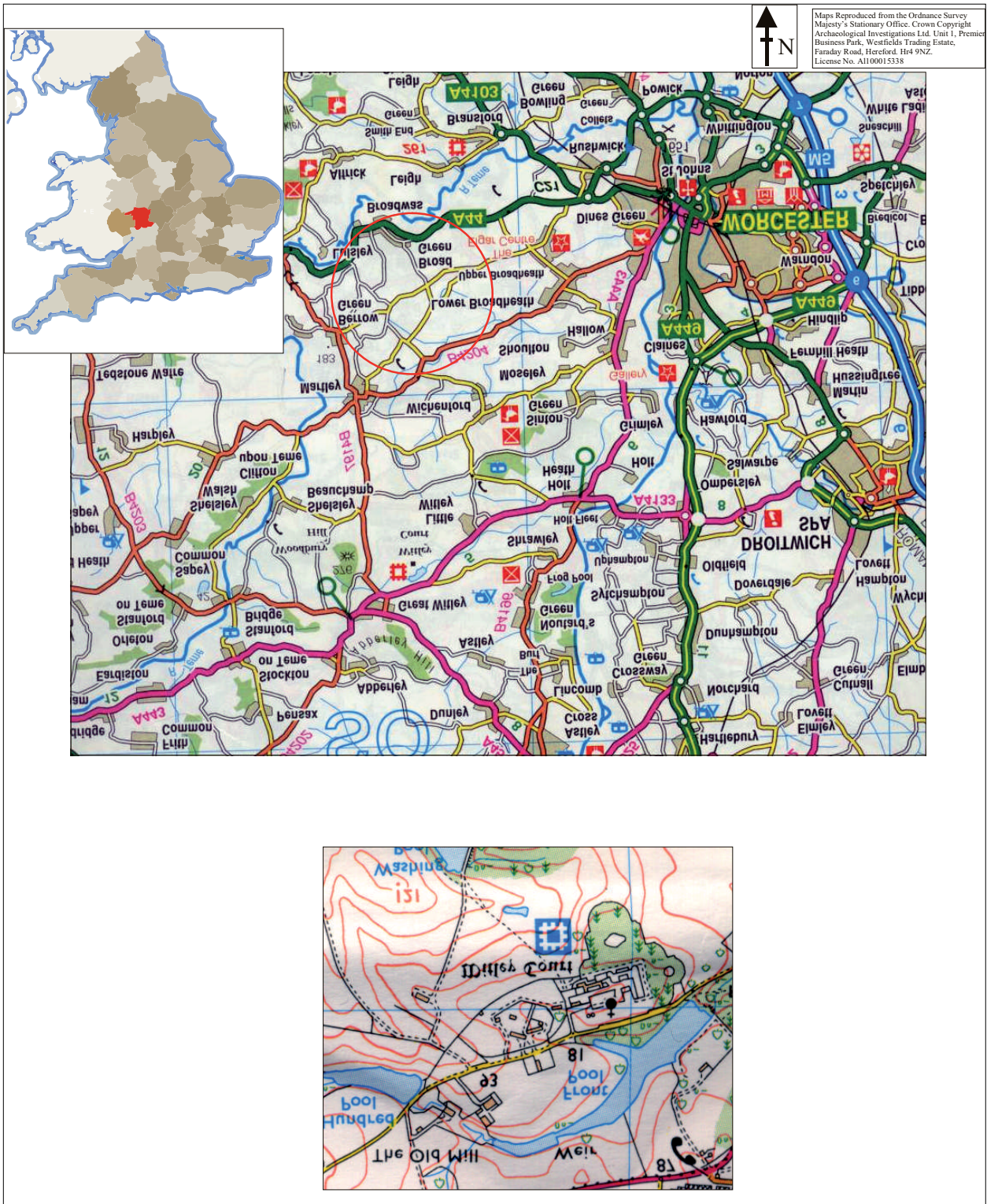


Figure 2 Worcestershire in the UK and Witley Court north west of Worcester. Witley Court lies



Figure 3 Map of Witley Court manor by C Price (1732)

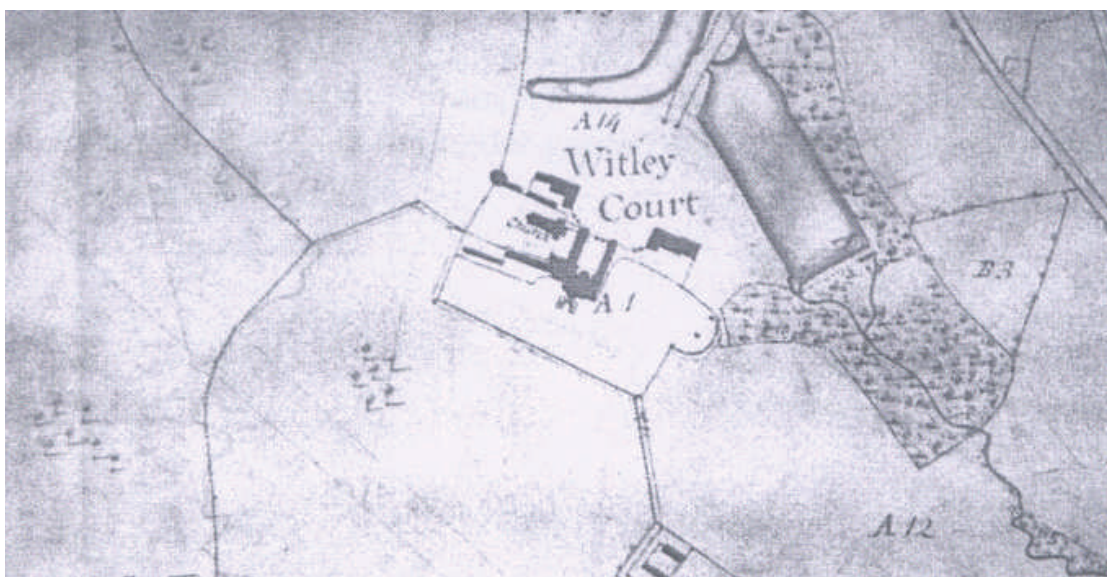


Figure 4 G Young's estate map of 1793

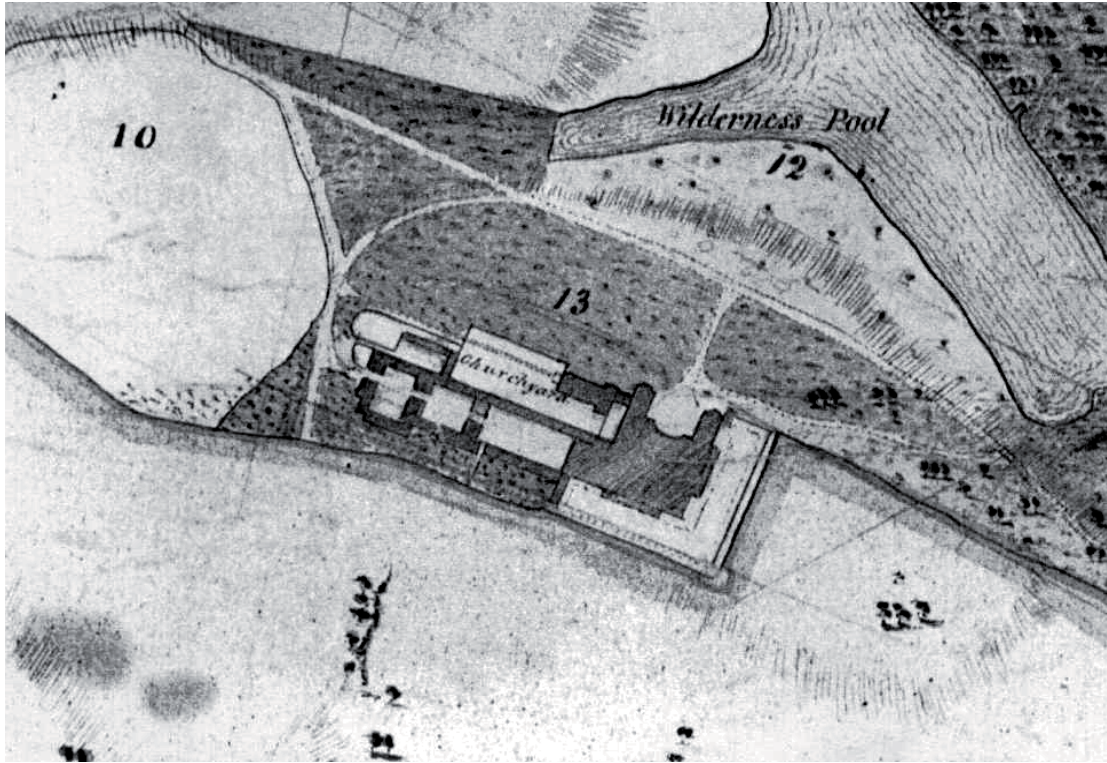


Figure 5 Detail of the 1817 Estate map (BRO ESBM/70)



Figure 6 C Greenwood's map of 1822 (1 inch to 1 mile)

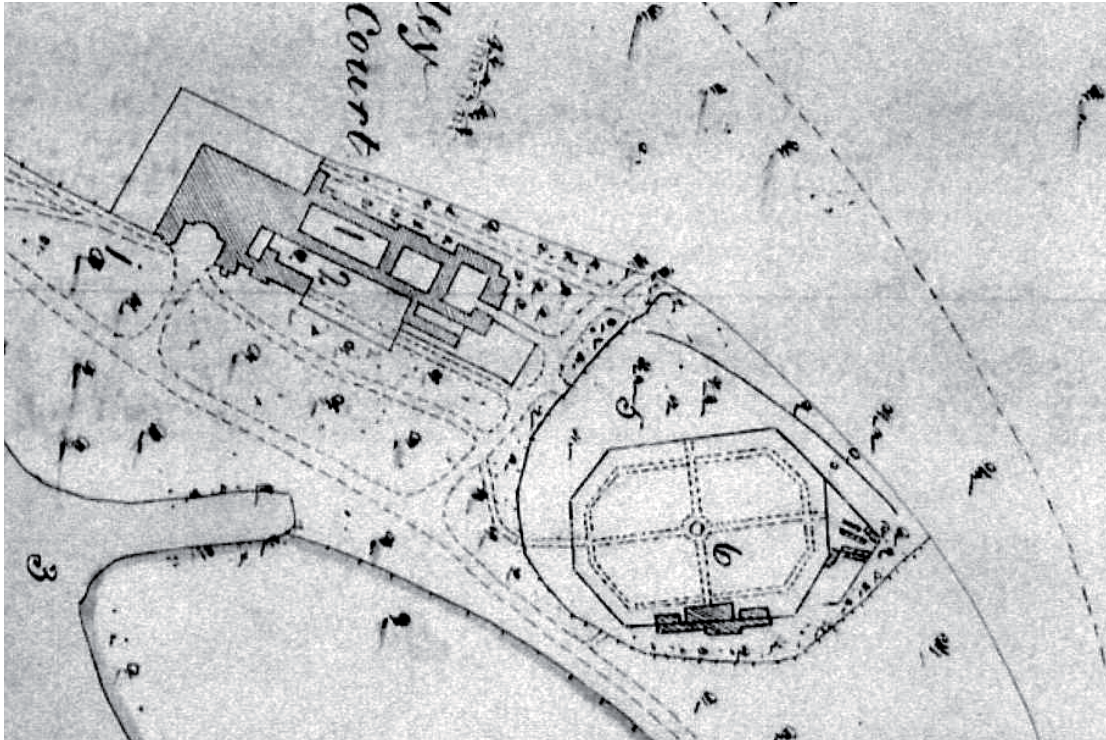


Figure 7 Detail of the 1837 estate map (SRO D260/M/F/5/19/11)



Figure 8 Detail of the 1833 OS map (6inch to 1 mile)

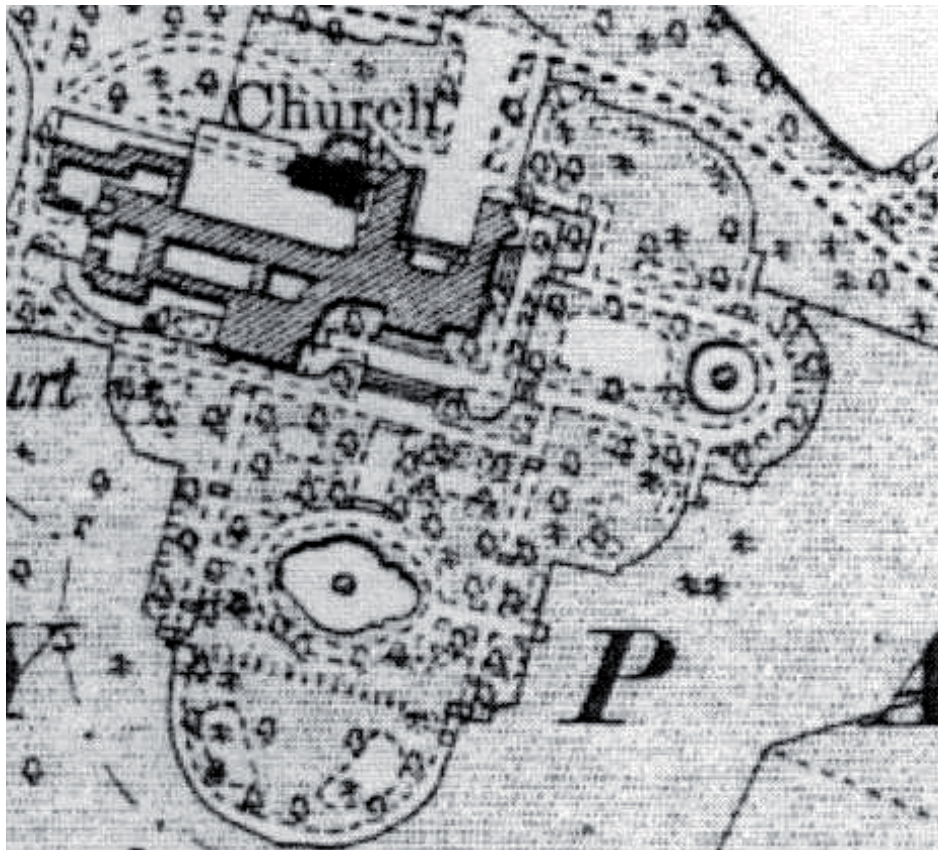


Figure 9 Detail of the 1903 OS map (6 inch to 1 mile)

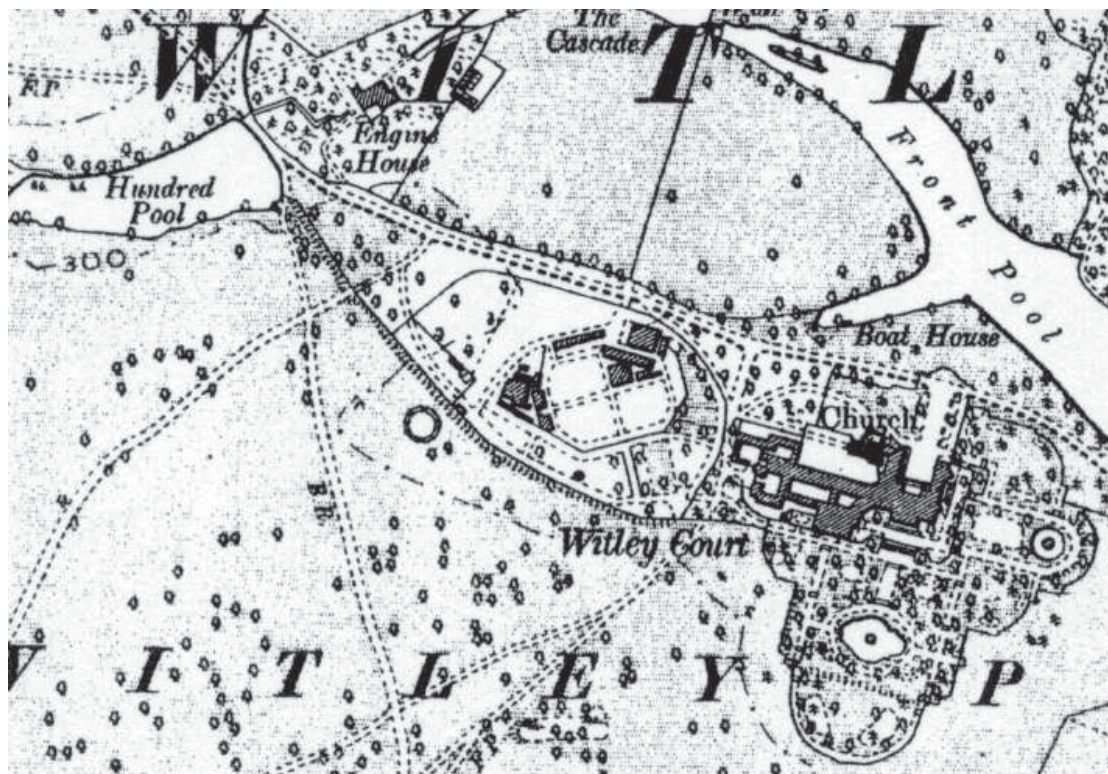


Figure 10 Detail of the 1905 OS map (6 inch to 1 mile)

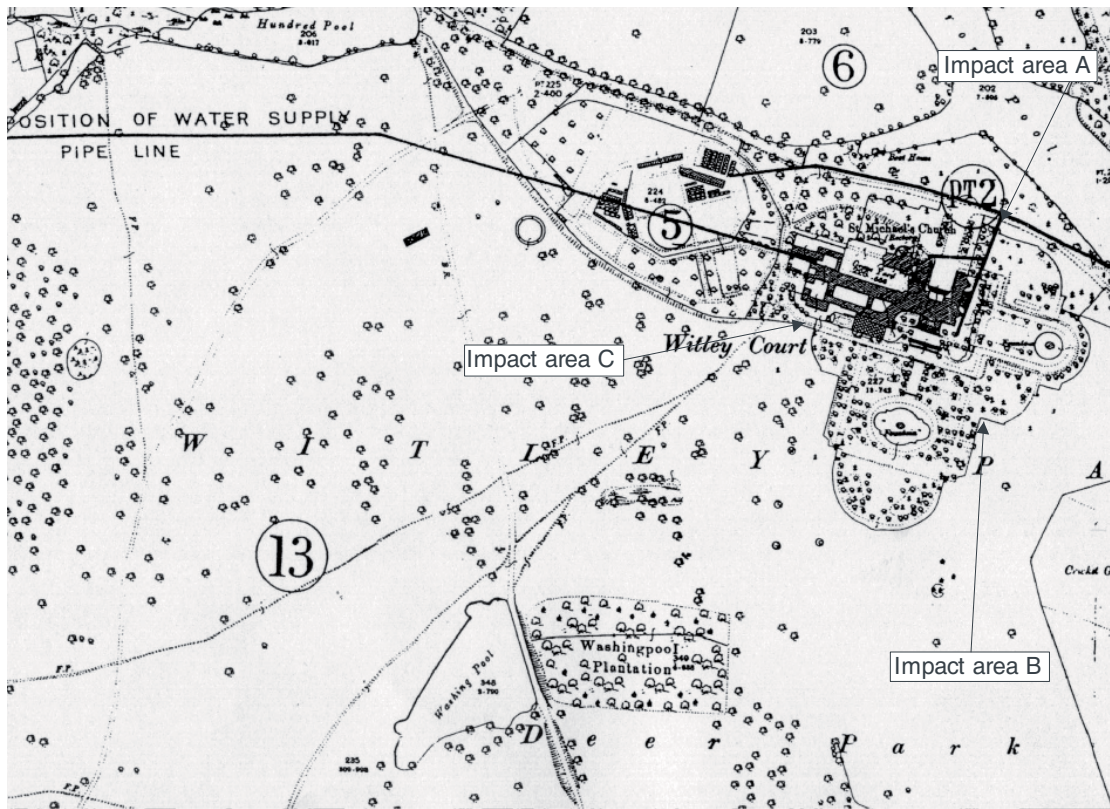


Figure 11 Detail of the 1938 OS map (6 inch to 1 mile)



Figure 12 c1700 painting in great Witley Church



Figure 13 1804/5 sketch by GS Repton showing the north front (L1/2 in RIBA collection)



Figure 14 1781 engraving by JT Nash (History of Worcester)



Figure 15 watercolour by J Woods showing the north façade (1843)

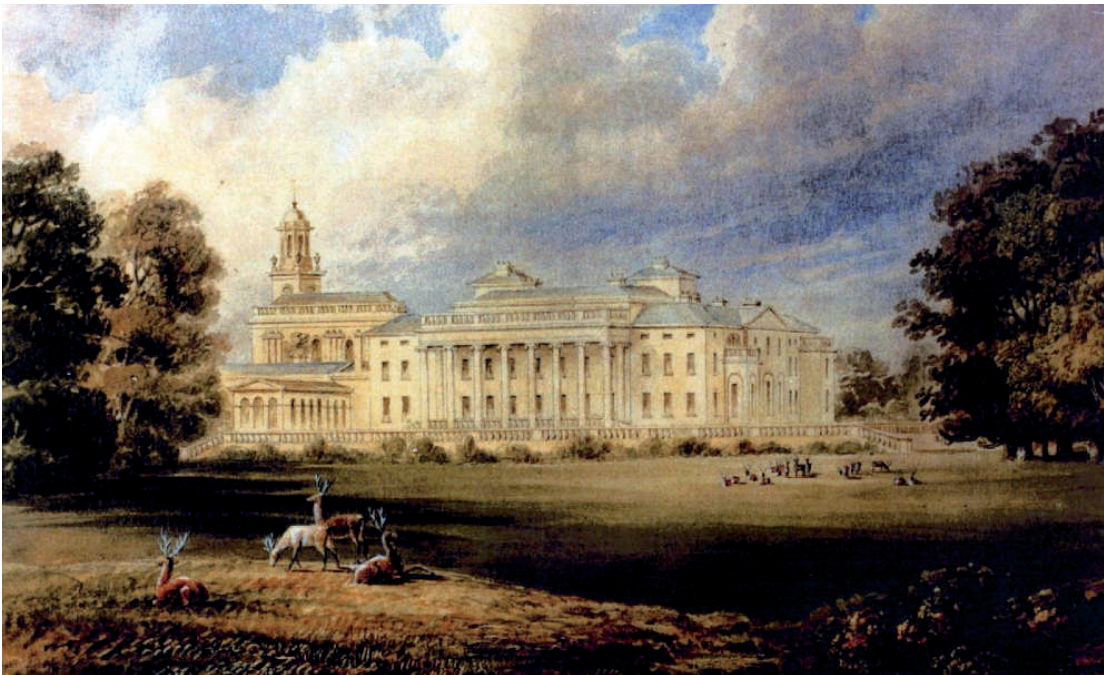


Figure 16 watercolour by J Woods showing the south and east façades (1843)

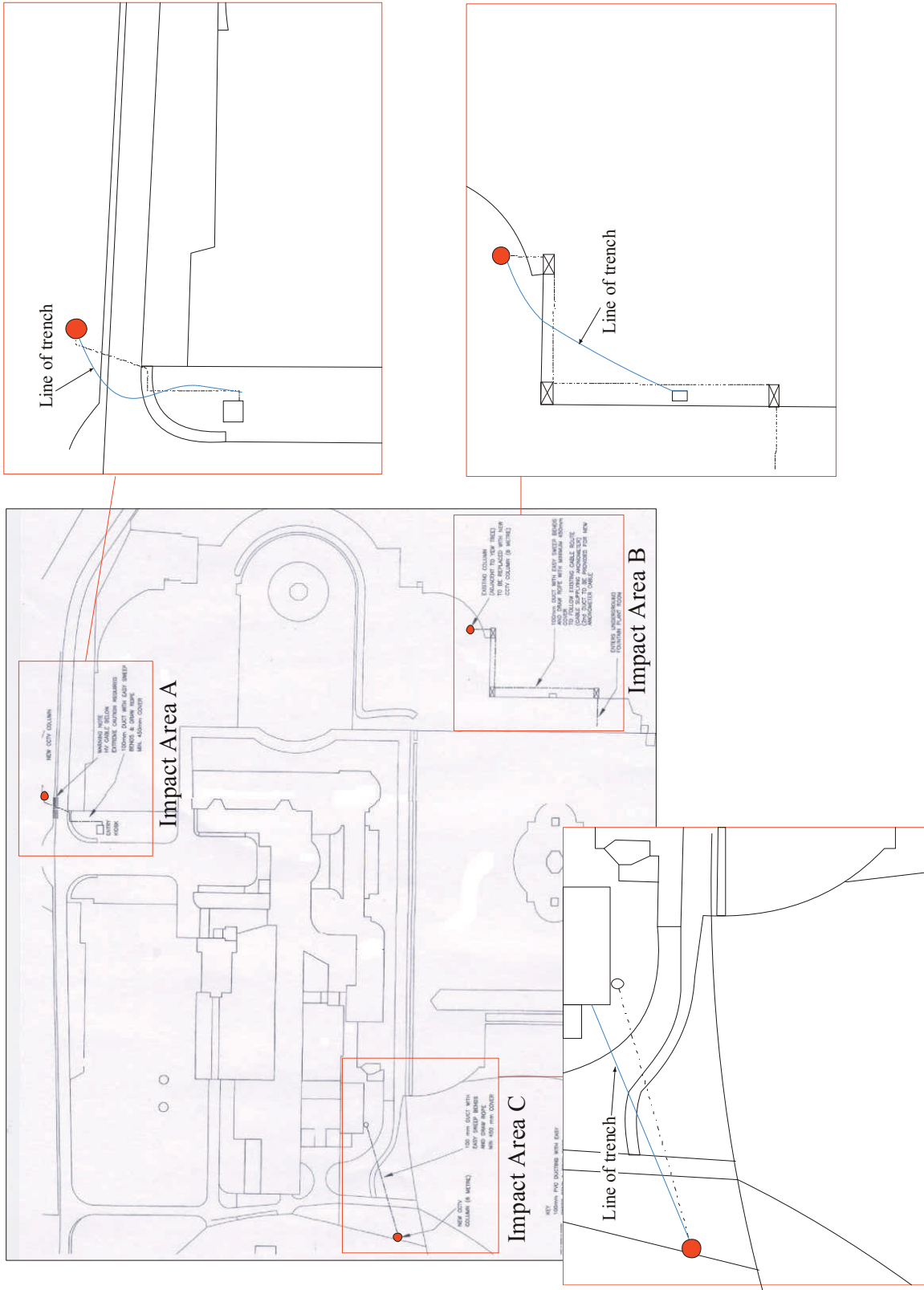
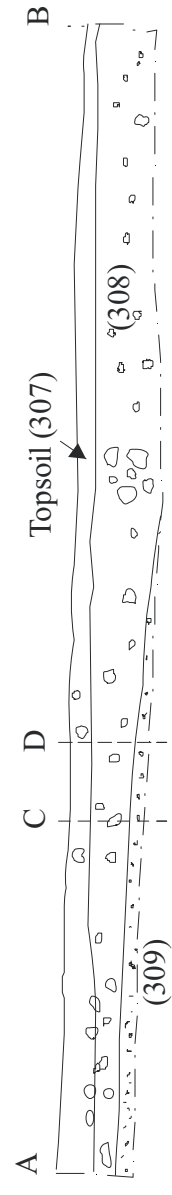
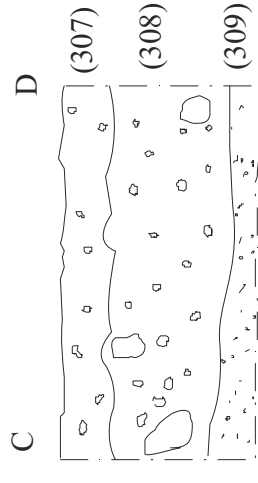


Figure 17 Trench location plan showing Areas A, B and C

North facing section (DRG 10)
1:50 Scale



North facing section (DRG 11)
1:20 Scale



West facing section (DRG 12)
1:20 Scale

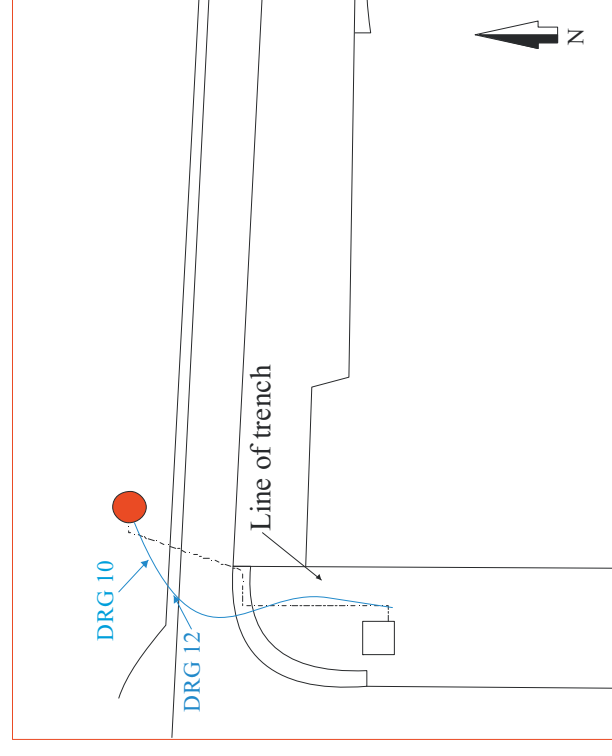
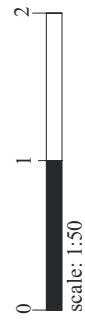
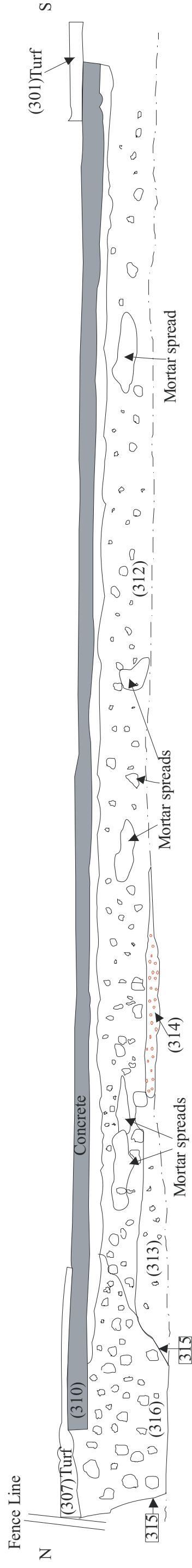
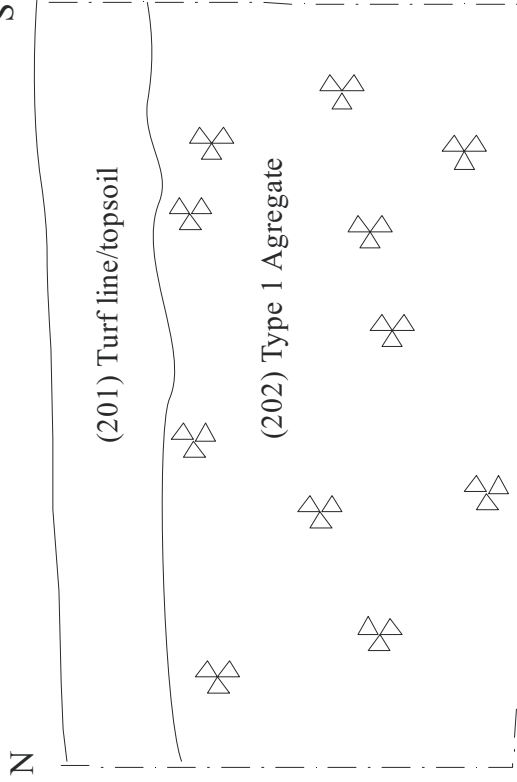
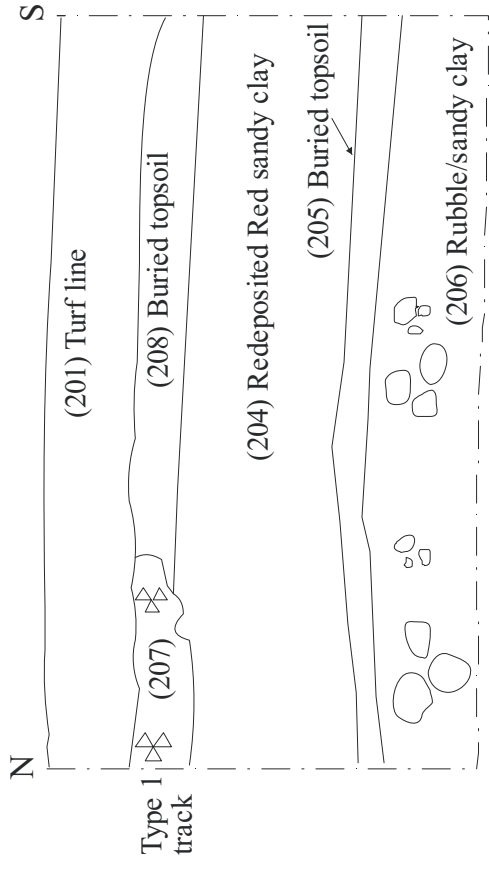


Figure 18 Sections in Area A

Area B
West facing section (DRG 7)
1:10 Scale



Area B
West facing section (DRG 8)
1:10 Scale



scale: 1:10

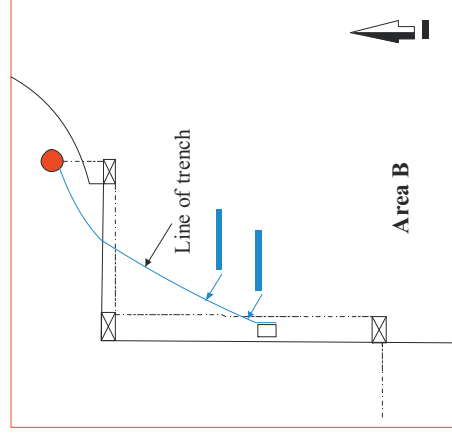


Figure 19 Sections in Area B

Area C
scale: 1:100

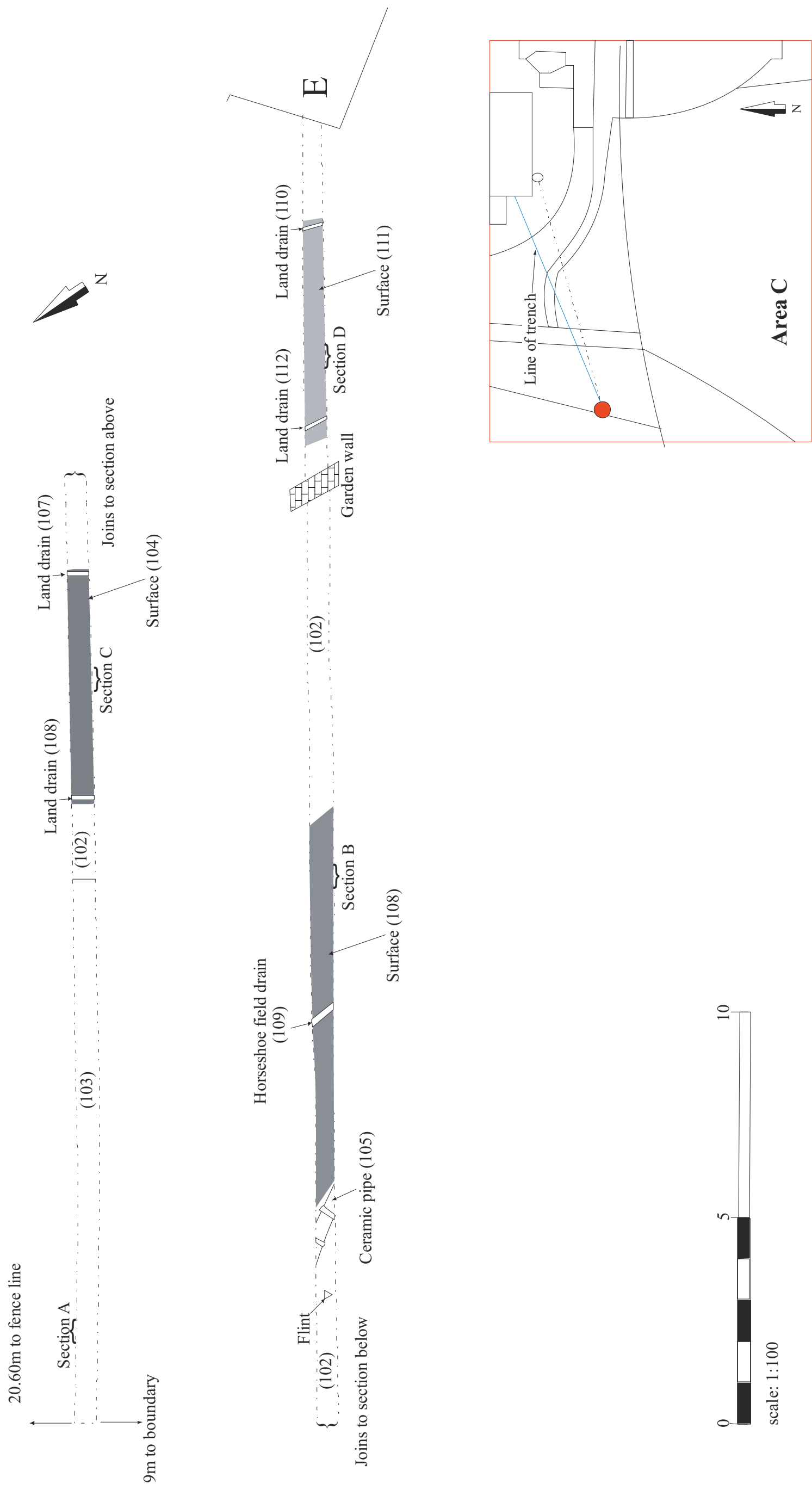
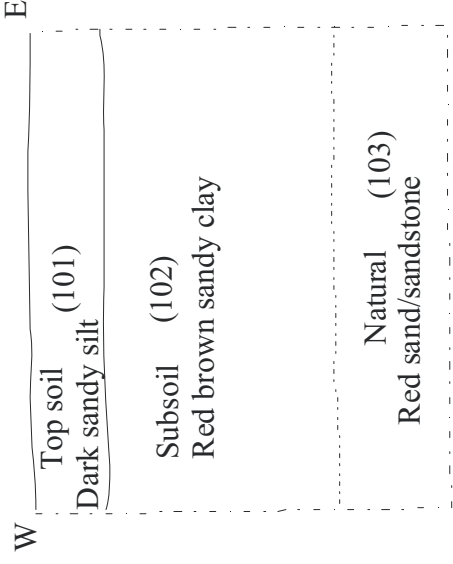
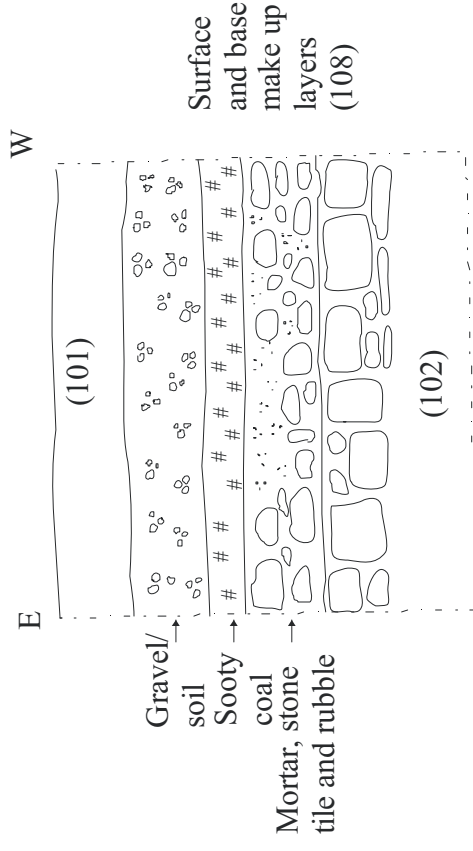


Figure 20 Detailed plan of tracks in Area C

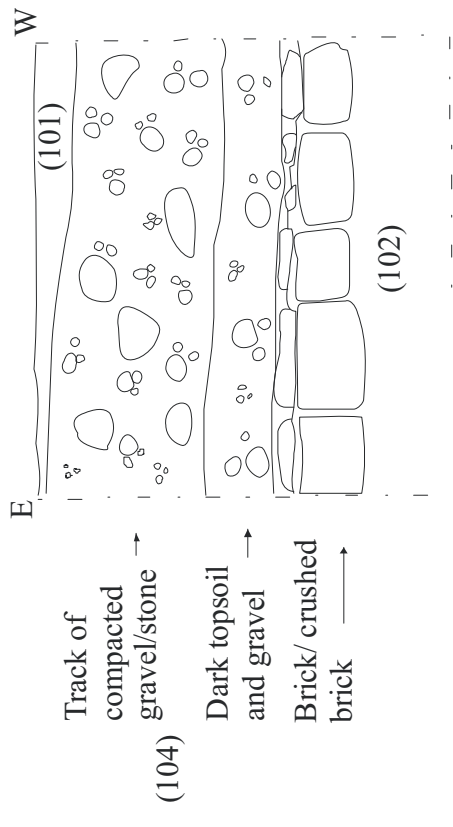
Section A: South facing (DRG 2)
1:10 Scale



Section B: North facing (DRG 3)
1:10 Scale



Section C: North facing (DRG 4)
1:10 Scale



Section D: North facing (DRG 5)
1:10 Scale

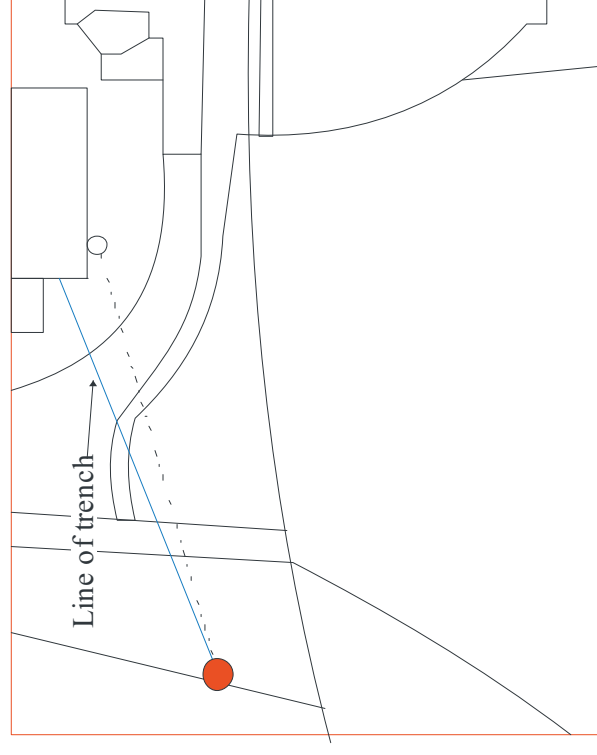
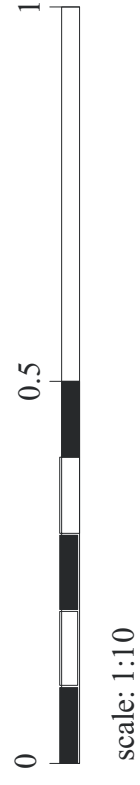
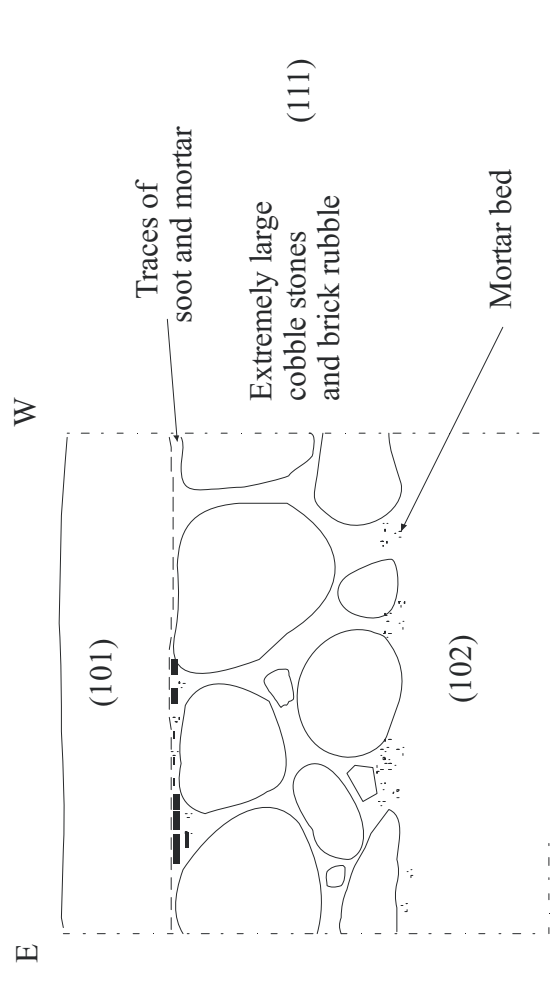


Figure 21 Sections in Area C

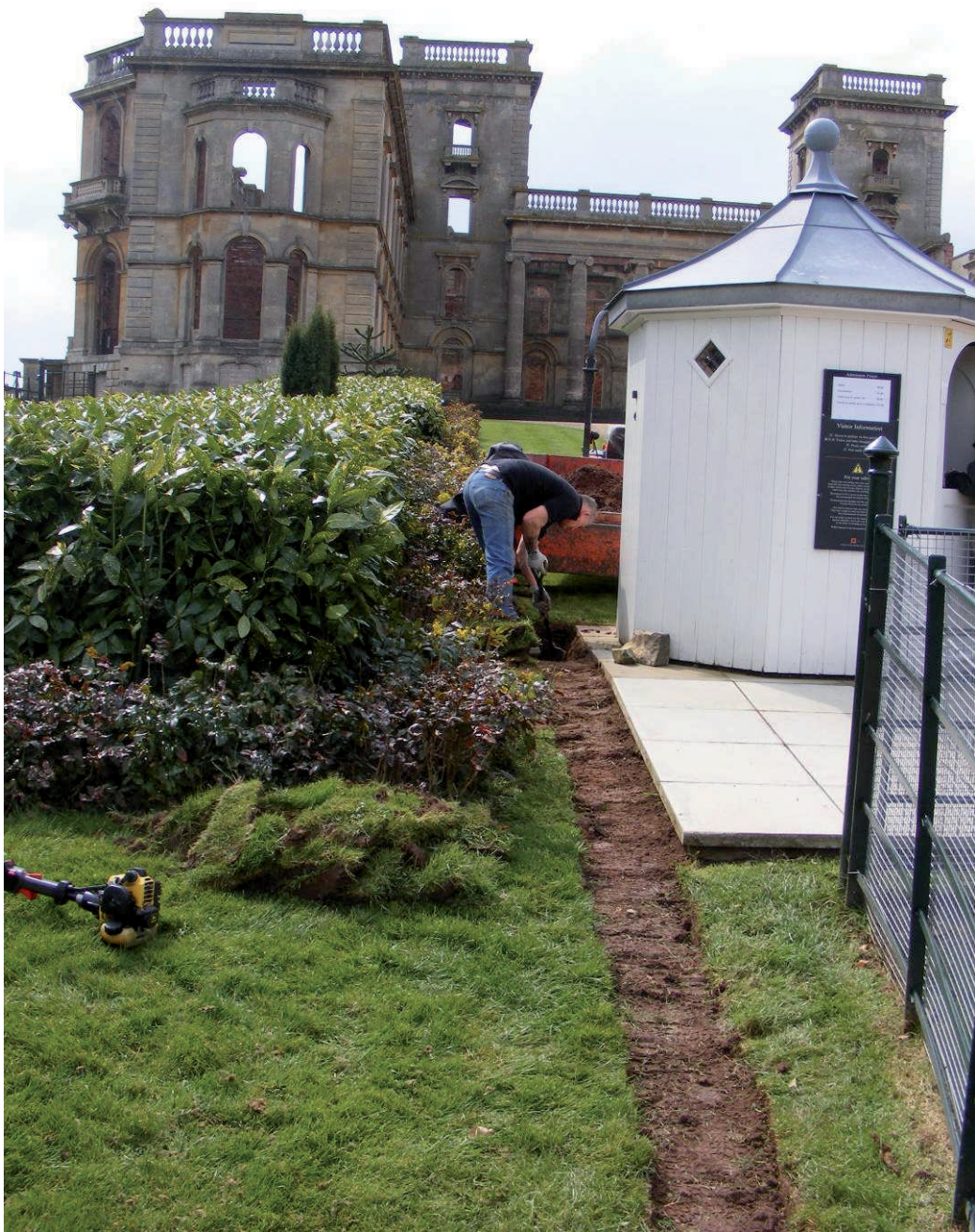


Plate 1 Area A facing south toward the main entrance to the court



Plate 2 Area B facing north



Plate 3 Area C facing north east toward the stable block

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