

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING
ON THE SITE OF A FORMER GARAGE,
BROAD STREET, WRINGTON,
SOMERSET**

prepared for Summerfield Developments Ltd

**by
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Exeter Archaeology

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared for Summerfield Developments Ltd, and presents the results of archaeological recording undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) in August 2009 on the site of a former garage and associated land to the north of Broad Street Wrington, Somerset ST 468 628. It represents archaeological work required under a condition attached to the grant of planning permission to construct nine bungalows.

1.1 Brief background

The proposed development lies within the medieval market town of Wrington. A substantial Roman villa lies directly under the parish church, elements of which were recorded in a watching brief in 1993. The first documentary mention of Wrington is in AD 904 and it was owned throughout the medieval period by Glastonbury Abbey. The village has a large market place, which formerly possessed both a market cross and market house. During the post-medieval period, Wrington remained a substantial village.

2. PROJECT SPECIFICATION

Specifications for archaeological recording were supplied by the North Somerset County Archaeologist (NSCA). The principal requirements were:

- watching brief to be maintained on all groundworks associated with the development, with particular attention to any Roman remains existing in the vicinity of the nearby Roman villa, medieval tenements extending back from the market place, and the known 19th-century smithy (OS map 1903);
- reporting and archiving as appropriate.

3. METHOD

Excavations associated with the development, including area reductions and foundation trenches, were carried out using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. Where appropriate, machining was conducted under the supervision of the attending archaeologist.

Machining continued until either formation level or archaeological deposits were reached. Where archaeological deposits were exposed, areas were cleaned back by hand and deposits excavated and recorded before machining continued.

Standard EA recording procedures were employed. Stratigraphic information was recorded on pro-forma single context record sheets; a drawn record was compiled in plan and section at scales of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate and a photographic record was prepared in black and white film and digital (colour) format.

4. RESULTS

The sequence of deposits encountered during area reductions for the access road, building footprints and the excavation of footing trenches divided the site into two areas within each of which the sequence was broadly consistent. Across the northwest half of site the typical deposit sequence comprised natural subsoil encountered at an approximate depth of 400mm below 19th/20th-century topsoil. Numerous 19th-century drains crossed this area of site. Across the southeast half of site the typical sequence of deposits consisted of natural subsoil encountered at a depth of approximately 800mm, below a sequence of up to three layers of waterlogged silt and sandy silt (109, 110 & 116) encountered from a depth of 400mm, in turn sealed by modern overburden.

The approximate extent of waterlogged layers is shown on Figure 2. These layers consisted of a thin primary layer of pale grey brown sandy silt with frequent mud stone fragments (109) directly overlying natural subsoil, overlain by up to 150mm of pale grey silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and small stones (110), sealed by 300mm of very dark grey silty clay containing fragments of preserved wood, charcoal flecks and rare limestone fragments (116). Each of these layers was preserved in a waterlogged state by naturally occurring spring water. They appear to represent the infill of a large natural pond. An assemblage of 13th/14th-century pottery was recovered from layer 116.

The principal archaeological feature on the site was a single-cell building of probable 16th- to 17th-century date (described below), the footings of which were cut through pond fills 109, 110 & 116. An approximate NE-SW aligned boundary wall (118) divided the site in half and closely abutted the western wall of the building. This wall appeared to post-date the adjacent building having been deliberately constructed to envelope its southwest corner (Fig. 3). It consisted of a roughly coursed, mud-bonded, red sandstone footing below a single surviving course of lime mortar-bonded irregular red sandstone slabs.

Several drains were positioned around the building. These consisted of two intercutting earth-cut ditches (113 & 130) which appeared to predate the building and wall 118; a stone-lined drain extending along the outside of the eastern wall of the building and contemporary with it (134, described below) and finally a poorly constructed stone gully positioned to the north of the building and postdating the demolition of the structure. Ditch 130 was aligned approximately east-west, measured 700mm wide, 240mm deep and was exposed to a length of 4.5m. It contained a single mid grey brown silty clay fill (131). Ditch 113 was aligned approximately NE-SE, measured 1m wide, 460mm deep and was exposed to a length of 4.25m. It contained a single dark grey silty clay fill.

4.1 The building (figs. 2 & 3)

A simple rectangular structure of irregular roughly coursed, mud-bonded, red sandstone rubble, measuring 9.4m x 5.9m. The walls (107, 120, 122 & 124) measured 700-900mm wide and survived to a total height, on average, of 500mm. At the northern end of wall 120 the masonry had been thickened during construction, possibly to add extra support to an internal feature. In the northeast corner was a hearth of similar construction (126) measuring 1.75m wide and 1.30m deep. It was

keyed into the western wall of the building (124) and was most probably part of the primary construction. The original form of this feature is unknown, as it appears to have been remodelled at a later date. The base of an inserted oven or furnace survived above the original hearth and consisted of sandstone slabs with two parallel rows of hand-made bricks loosely bonded with a lean ashy mortar (128).

The western wall of the building (120) exhibited a possible breach, 1.5m wide, approximately 3.75m from its northern end, later infilled with very roughly coursed sandstone rubble (159). A small, partially damaged, wall stub (162) and three adjacent stone slabs (161) all abutting the inside face of the western wall (120) at this point are suggestive of a former threshold in this position.

Stone rubble packing (105 & 129) pressed into soft pond fill 116 along the inside of wall 120 and the outside of the southern wall (107) possibly represent attempts to consolidate the soft ground around the walls which may have left the structure at risk of subsidence. The possible movement of this part of the building as a result of the soft ground beneath it may also explain the tight abutment of later boundary wall 118 to the west side of the building.

Outside the building on its east side drain 134 extended along wall 124 and was flanked on its eastern side by an area of pitched rubble levelling (160). Drain 134 contained a single dark grey brown, silty clay fill (135). Abundant 19th-century sherds were recovered from the fill (discarded).

To the south of the building a layer of stony material (132) overlay layer 116 and sealed the fills of ditches 113 and 130. This layer possibly represented makeup for an external surface. A similar dark rubble layer (108) overlying layer 116 to the north of the building appears to represent the same. An assemblage of 17th-century pottery was recovered from both contexts 132 and 108.

A spread of mixed compacted demolition material (106, not shown) overlay the remains of the structure and was in turn sealed by modern overburden resulting largely from the recent demolition of the former garage building.

5. THE FINDS

The finds assemblage comprised a large quantity of 18th/19th century pottery (discarded) from the infill of later drains and demolition layers overlying the 17th-century building, smaller quantities of 17th-century sherds contemporary with the construction of the building and 13th-15th-century sherds from the earlier soils. In addition to the pottery were a small number of glass fragments.

Context (group no.)	Date	Medieval pottery		Post Medieval pottery		Clay Pipe		Glass		Iron slag	
		Qty	Wgt	Qty	Wgt	Qty	Wgt	Qty	Wgt	Qty	Wgt
100	After 1850							1	10		
105	C14th	1	68								
108	Late C17th			27	902	4	47				
111 (116)	C13th-C14th	24	184								
114	C17th			22	818	1	6	1	5		
115 (116)	C13th-C14th	19	257								
128	C19th									1	2110
129	C16th-C17th	1	18	6	150						
131	C15th	3	27								
132	C17th			22	750	1	7	1	14		
133	C17th			11	502	1	16				
154	C17th			10	284	1	<1	1	4		
157	C15th	1	24								
Totals		64	578	105	3406	8	76	4	33	1	2110

Table 1: Quantification of finds by context and category. Weights are in grams.

The medieval pottery

The medieval pottery consisted largely of local coarse wares dating from the Late 13th/14th century, with a minor constituent of Bristol Redcliffe ware. This assemblage was recovered from contexts 111 & 115 (group no. 116) representing a wide spread accumulation of waterlogged soil within a probable former pond. A smaller number of later medieval 14th/15th-century sherds were recovered from two ditches (130 & 158) cut into this soil.

Post-medieval pottery

The post medieval pottery consisted principally of South Somerset coarsewares with a smaller constituent of East Somerset Coarseware and North Devon gravel tempered ware. A single sherd of Montelupo tin-glazed pottery was recovered (132; Plate 5). This is an unusual vessel outside English ports and its form is associated with feasting and displaying expensive exotic fruits. The post-medieval pottery was associated with the infilling of ditches 113 & 154 and external makeup layers 108 & 132 contemporary with the primary construction of the building.

Glass

Two fragments of 17th-century *façon de Venise* beaker glass (100 & 114) and a single base from a mould-blown beaker of 16th/17th century (154).

Smithing hearth bottom

A large lump of accumulated iron slag incorporating elements of lime flux. Broadly concavo-convex in profile, weighing 2.11Kg.

6. DISCUSSION

The southern half of the site is situated in an area occupied by a former pond until about the end of the 14th century. Layers of silty clay overlying natural subsoil in this area have remained waterlogged. Apparent attempts to drain the area are suggested by the presence of several small ditches predating the construction of the building,

containing naturally silted fill from which was recovered pottery dating from the 15th to 17th centuries. The building itself is a single-cell structure of 16th- to 17th-century construction. The problem of waterlogging appears to have persisted throughout the life of the building, which features a drain along its eastern side that appears to have been maintained into the 19th century.

The building may have been a house or cottage with a single ground floor room. Houses of this period are more typically two or three-roomed 'cross passage' houses, examples of which survive, in part, fossilised within extant buildings across North Somerset (Rippon 2006). Rippon's survey highlights three examples of single-roomed houses comparable to the Wrington building. Two of these had been substantially altered and extended in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, one -Appletree Cottage Puxton (Rippon 2006, pp170)- remained relatively unchanged until the late 20th century and is perhaps the closest comparison to the Wrington building, which appears to feature no substantial structural additions. Several minor alterations to the building are evident. In particular, the possible blocking of the original doorway on the west wall as a result of the construction of a substantial boundary wall extending along the western side of the building and the adaptation of the fireplace in the 18th or 19th century to serve as a furnace.

The building is positioned away from the road, to the rear of properties on Broad Street. It is possible that instead of a cottage it was a free-standing outbuilding belonging to a larger property and served as a kitchen, brew-house or other working area. This interpretation is perhaps supported by the arrangement of features along the northern wall. The solid masonry block (126) in the northeast corner may have originally supported a coffer or vat for brewing. Alternatively the thickened masonry at the northern end of the west wall (120) is suggestive of the whole end of the building having been arched over with a large fireplace to the left (the hearth not surviving) and an oven to the right. The lack of surviving floor surfaces, which may have given insight into the building's use, hinders further interpretation. In addition to the structural features, some high status objects are represented in the finds assemblage (plate 5) including two glass beakers and a sherd of Montelupo tin-glazed pottery. These items are perhaps too grand to have been owned by the occupants of a small cottage, supporting the conclusion that the building may have been associated with a larger, wealthy, house.

There is some evidence to suggest that the building described here is the smithy reportedly operating on the site during the 19th century, shown on the 1903 OS Epoch 2 map of Wrington (reference and information provided by the NSCA). Firstly the possible furnace base construction in the north east corner of the room and secondly, the smithing hearth bottom recovered from immediately next to the brick furnace base. This iron slag lump would have been potentially just one of many removed and discarded during the working life of the smithy.

7. ARCHIVE

A fully integrated project archive has been compiled and will be deposited at the North Somerset Museum, under museum accession number WESTM:2009.40. A report of the evaluation (including a pdf version of this document) will be submitted

to the on-line database OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS), under exeterar1-82425.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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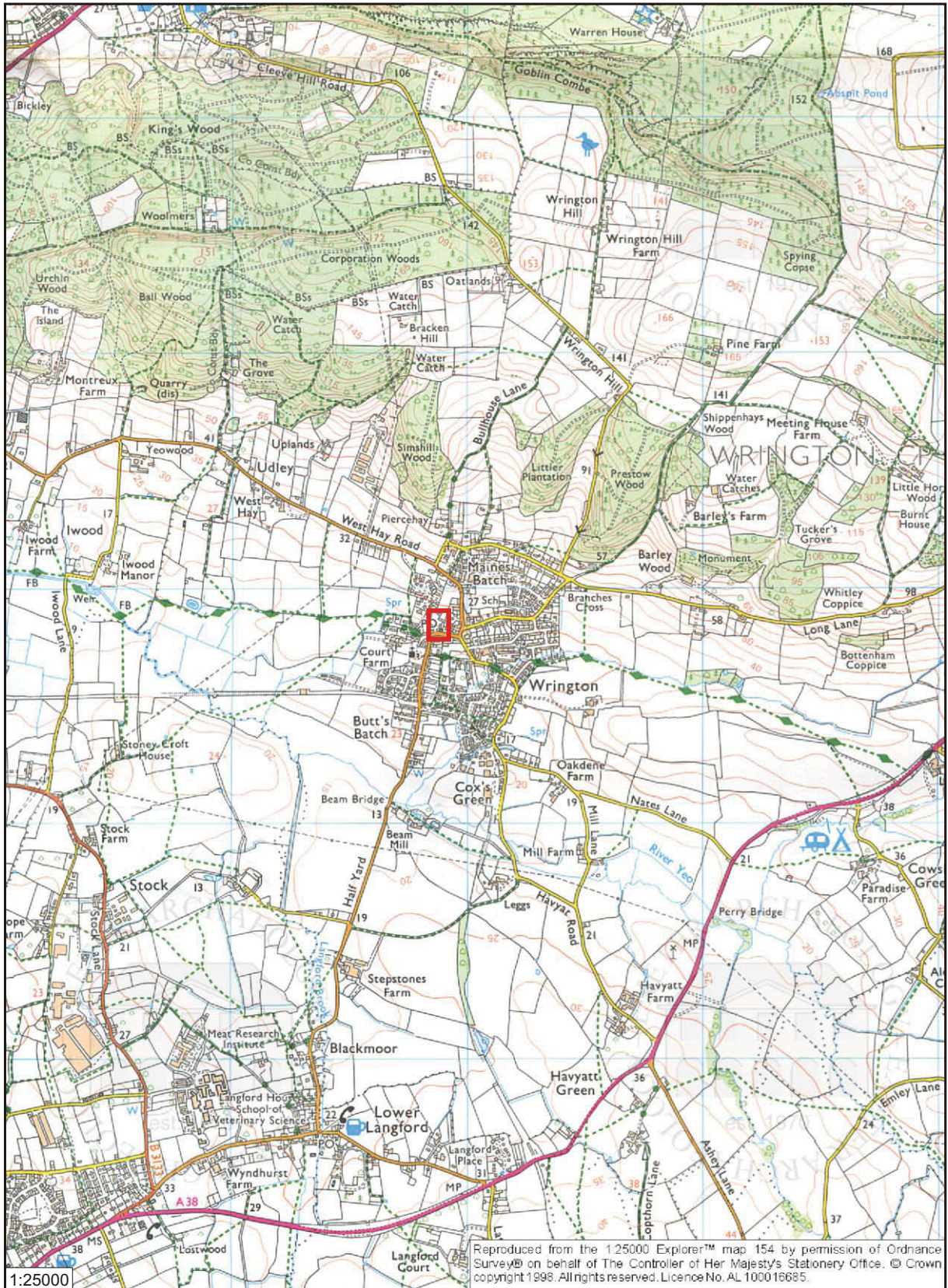


Fig. 1 Location of site.

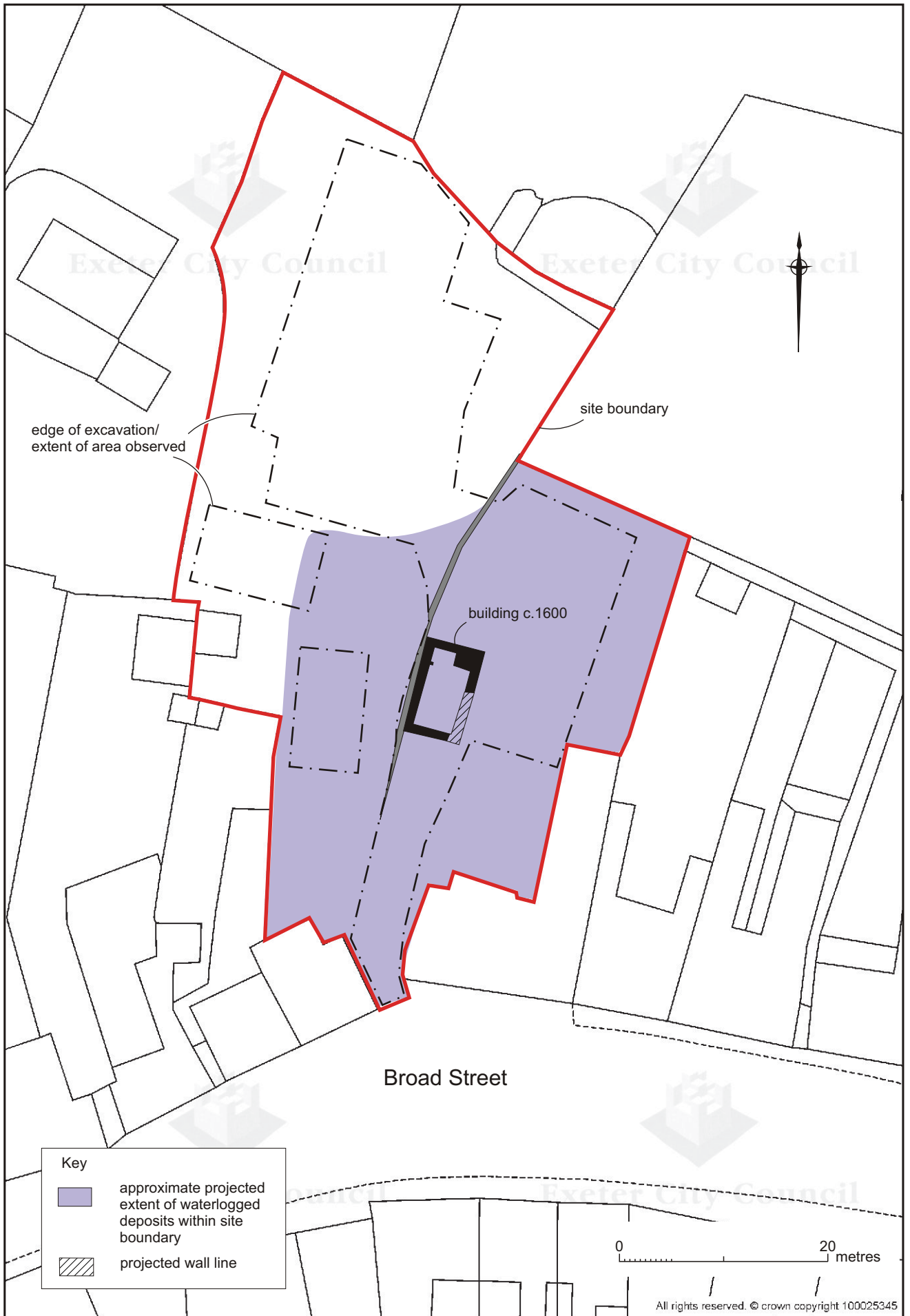


Fig. 2 Site plan showing position of building and extent of waterlogged soil

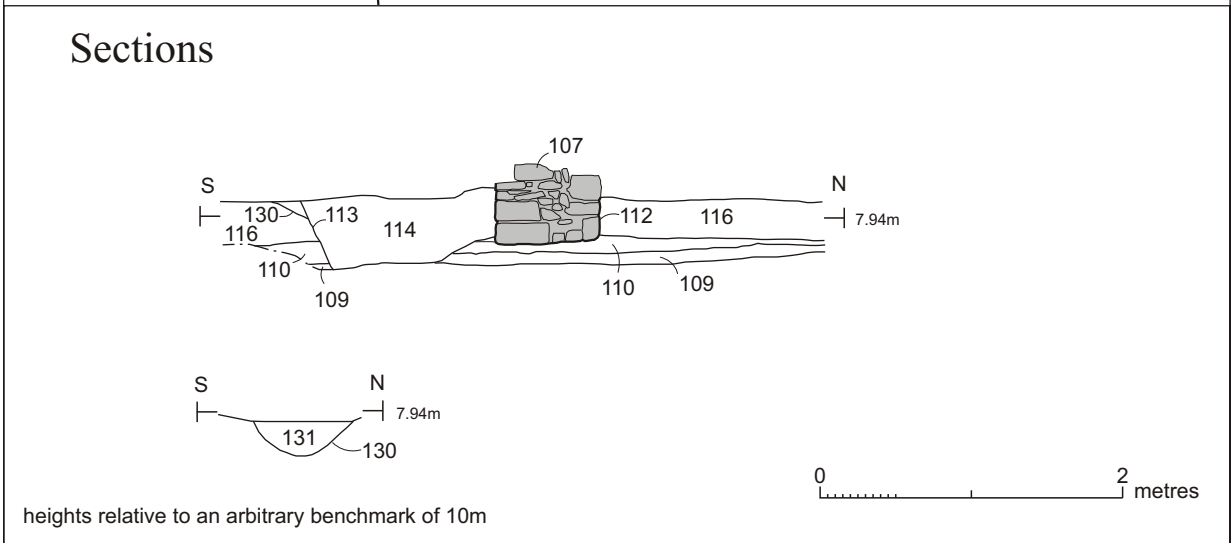
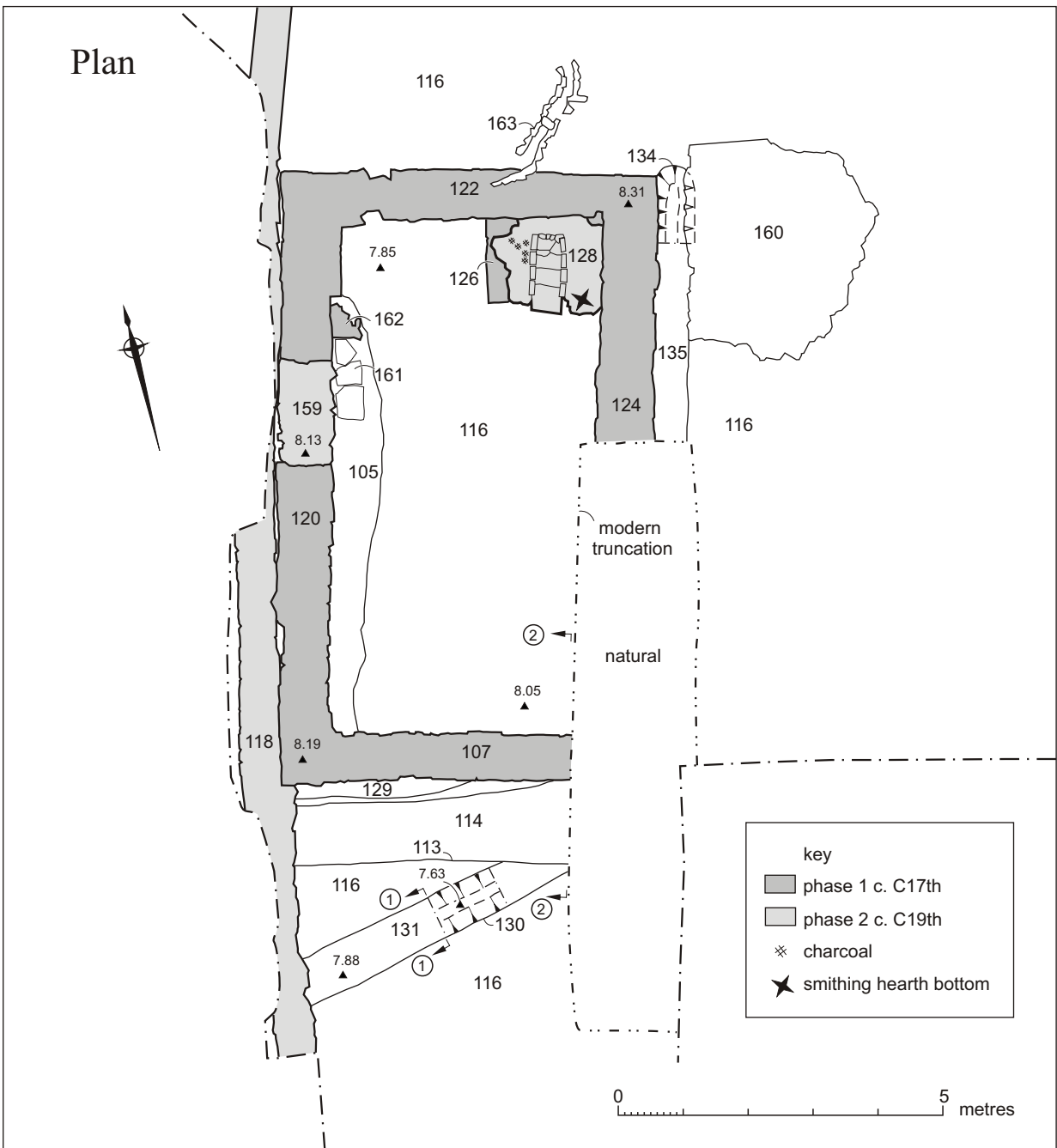


Fig. 3 Plan of building and sections.



Plate 1 General site shot before excavation. Looking east.



Plate 2 Building fully exposed. Earlier drainage ditches (113 and 130) in foreground. Looking northeast.



Plate 3 Detail of stone packing (105). Looking south.



Plate 4 Detail of inserted brick furnace base (128). Looking north.

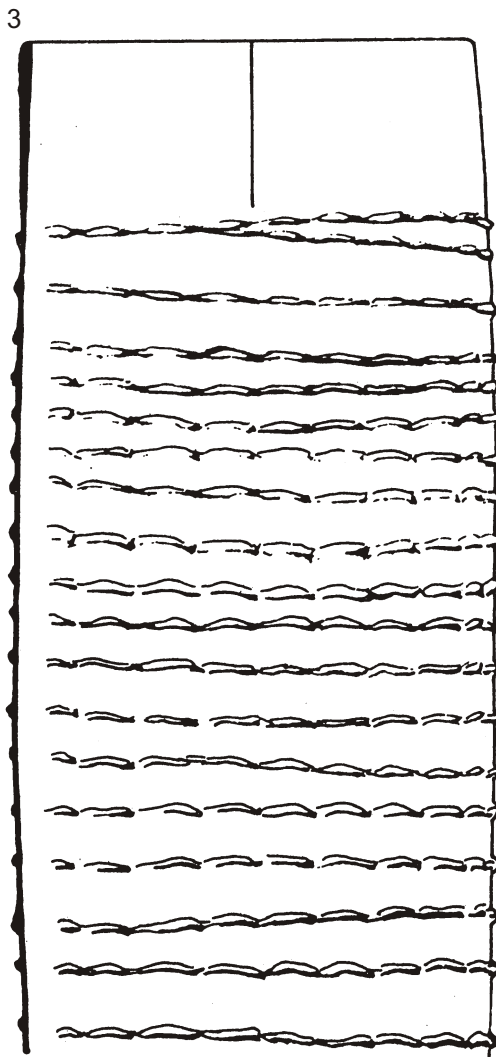


Plate 5 1–2. Rim and base fragments from a Netherlandish or English tall beaker decorated with a 'chequered spiral trail' in *façon de Venise* style, c. 1600 [contexts 114, 154]. 3. Drawing showing an example of this kind of vessel from Exeter. 4. Base of a Netherlandish or English beaker in *façon de Venise* style, c. 1600, with fine applied threads and an applied notched foot [100]. 5a–b. Interior and exterior of a rim sherd from a polychrome *tazza* from Montelupo, Tuscany, c. 1580–1640 [132]. Scale 1:1