

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at the site of a New
Visitor Centre, Battle Abbey,
Battle, East Sussex**

TQ 7480 1570

(Planning Reference: RR/2005/1541/C1)



Project No. 2237

**by
Paul Riccoboni BA**

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the construction of a new visitor centre and public toilets in the grounds of Battle Abbey (Planning Reference: RR/2005/1541/C1), adjacent to the gate house (TQ 7480 1570). A total of 37 separate site visits were made by supervisory staff from Archaeology South-East. The ground reduction comprised of an area formerly occupied by temporary buildings, public toilets and a World War II Canadian Dugout. The made ground/overburden on this area reached depths of up to 2m. These made ground deposits were nearly all dated to the post-medieval period. However, deposit [124], noted in section directly above the natural clay, contained only 12th century tile.

The outer precinct wall of the Abbey and the remains of a possible buttress were located in an area of ground reduction during the construction of a new pathway. These were well preserved and constructed of sandstone blocks. In the area formerly occupied by pre-fabricated and temporary structures a gully dated to the late medieval/ early post-medieval period, was seen cutting into the natural geology beneath modern made ground deposits. Two possible medieval/early post-medieval walls were seen in a service trench excavated along Park Lane (Trench E). Of particular interest was a well recorded during ground reduction at the northern edge of the site boundary, next to Park Lane. This well was structured with sandstone bricks and was probably constructed during the 15th or 16th century AD.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeology South-East (a division of the Institute of Archaeology, UCL Centre for Applied Archaeology) was commissioned by English Heritage (Paula Malpeli) to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Battle Abbey, Battle, East Sussex (NGR TQ 7480 1570) (Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The study area lies partly within and partially outside the former historic precinct of the Battle Abbey, although is wholly within the boundaries of the Abbey, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The study area lies to the west of the gatehouse, in an area previously occupied by paths, hedges, grass and trees as well as a block of toilets (accessed from Park Lane) and the former ticket office. The British Geological Survey 1:50000 map (Sheet 320/321 *Hastings & Dungeness*) records the underlying geology at the site as Tunbridge Wells Sand.
- 1.3 The medieval precinct wall was located in an archaeological evaluation conducted prior to development by Archaeology South - East (Stevens 2004). Work within the Abbey is covered by Scheduled Monument Consent under the Ancient Monuments (Class Consent) Order 1994 (Class 6).
- 1.4 A Method Statement was produced by Archaeology South-East for the archaeological watching brief to be implemented at the site. The stated aim of the work was to:
- monitor the excavation of new groundworks in order to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the groundworks are recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.*
- 1.5 The on-site work was undertaken by Paul Riccoboni (Senior Archaeologist), Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist), Alice Thorne (Archaeologist), Clive Meaton (Archaeologist), Luke Barber (Archaeological Consultant), Jon Sygrave (Senior Archaeologist), Andrew Margetts (Assistant Archaeologist) and Greg Priestly-Bell (Senior Archaeologist) intermittently between the 9th January and 13th September 2006. The project was managed by Neil Griffin (Project Manager) and by Louise Rayner (Post-Excavation Manager)

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The history and archaeological background of Battle Abbey are covered elsewhere (Hare 1985) to which reference should be made for further details. In summary, the Benedictine Abbey of St. Martin was founded by William I on the site of his victory over Harold in 1066. The Abbey began construction after 1070 and the Abbey church was consecrated in 1094. It became one of the most powerful monastic houses in the kingdom until it was dissolved in 1538.
- 2.2 The site was sold to Henry VIII's Master of the Horse, Sir Anthony Browne, who demolished large parts of the church and cloisters and adapted the west range as a house. The Abbey passed through several hands until acquired by the State in 1976. The west range was leased to Battle Abbey School after the First World War.
- 2.3 An archaeological watching brief carried out to the immediate south of the gatehouse in 1997 showed the presence of a hard surface made up of ironstone and weathered Wealden sandstone (previously seen inside the gatehouse during work in 1987). A path of probable 13th century date was also identified. Evidence of a stone building and '*drain-like feature*' was uncovered close to the south-west corner of the gatehouse (Beresford 1987).
- 2.4 During the 2004 evaluation of the proposed visitor centre site, two of the trenches showed considerable modern truncation but a third contained the robbed out alignment of the precinct wall, a substantial stone built wall, (possibly part of a stone building first discovered in 1997) and two possible medieval floor surfaces (Stevens 2004).
- 2.5 In addition, Archaeology South-East have recently conducted an evaluation to the rear of the Buckley's Yesterdays World, located to the west of the gatehouse (Riccoboni 2006). Post-medieval deposits exceeding depths of 1.2m were discovered and a 19th century wall was also recorded.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 The objective of the watching brief was to observe, excavate and record archaeological remains or significant environmental deposits revealed during the ground works associated with the construction of the new visitor centre.

3.2 Ground reduction of previous split level terrace (Fig 3)

3.2.1 The ground reduction to formation level was firstly excavated using a breaker to remove any hardstanding. Secondly, where possible, a toothless ditching bucket was used ensure no significant damage was caused to the archaeological features.

3.2.2 The overburden was removed and the natural Weald Clay was exposed at different levels across the slope. The ground reduction reached a depth where archaeological deposits became visible. Where deposits or features were encountered they were archaeologically excavated and recorded in accordance with the brief and method statement.

3.2.3 Once satisfied that all necessary archaeological excavations had been completed (in all or parts of an area) the construction programme was able to continue work in those areas released.

3.3 Service trenches (Fig 3)

3.3.1 The service trenches (when excavated) were also monitored by a professional archaeologist during excavation. A toothless bucket was fitted to machinery whenever possible.

3.3.2 Where possible, machine excavation was stopped at the upper surface of any encountered archaeological deposits. Excavation by hand was then carried out and features were fully recorded as far as possible given health and safety requirements.

3.3.3 Particular note was taken of the depth of the service trenches. Sections were drawn of the trenches at regular intervals. Where it was not possible to get into the trench(es) for health and safety reasons, recording was limited to that which could be carried out from the surface.

3.4 Fence post holes (Fig 3)

3.4.1 Ten post holes were excavated by hand. The excavated holes were monitored at all times by a qualified archaeologist. Particular attention was made to the depth below ground level and the position of the holes.

3.4.2 A trench was also excavated to depths of c. 1.2m in advance of the construction of a fence.

3.5 Signpost holes (Fig 2)

3.5.1 A total of twenty-two new signpost holes that required archaeological supervision were excavated by hand within the Abbey grounds. The excavated holes were monitored at all times by a qualified archaeologist. Particular attention was made to the depth below ground level and the position of the holes.

3.6 General (Fig 3)

3.6.1 Modern features and features of 19th century date were recorded cursorily or not at all, unless of unusual intrinsic significance (other than as far as necessary to indicate their effect on features of archaeological interest). All other features were cleaned, planned, excavated and recorded. A palaeoenvironmental sampling strategy was set out in the specification brief prepared before the commencement of work (Griffin 2005). No deposits suitable for palaeoenvironmental sampling were encountered.

3.6.2 All features were photographed in monochrome and colour transparency. Features were also recorded using the standard context sheets used by UCLFAU. Soil colour was recorded using visual inspection and not by reference to the Munsel Colour chart.

3.6.3 The removal of overburden was scanned visually for any archaeological artefacts. Visibility varied from moderate to poor as difficulty was experienced with smearing of the trench sections by the machine bucket. These sections were cleaned as far as possible to commensurate with Health & Safety requirements.

3.6.4 Levels were taken from an Ordnance Datum (values given on a Site Survey supplied to Archaeology South-East by English Heritage). The values on the plan were calculated from the Ordnance Survey Bench Mark located on the exterior of the gatehouse (value 83.83m OD).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Ground reduction over the split level terrace (Fig 3; Fig 8 Section 5)

- 4.1.1 Ground reduction took place on the previous split level terrace. The following stratigraphy was encountered (latest to earliest). Context [100] was a dark brownish black, silty loam, which had a soft and friable consistency. It was c. 200-400mm thick and was a dark organic topsoil forming the previous ground surface. Context [101] was c. 1.4m in thickness. This deposit was a mixed yellowish brown colour. It had a silty clay texture and a loose consistency. A high percentage of crushed building material and general demolition waste was seen in this deposit. Directly beneath [101] was context [103]. This was a mid brownish grey colour and had a sandy silt consistency. This deposit contained very occasional burnt clay and chalk fragments. It is suggested that this deposit may have been the same as context [117]. Context [102] was directly beneath [103]. This deposit was mid blue grey colour with brownish orange mottling. It was only exposed when tree bowls were grubbed out at the base of the slope. This deposit was interpreted as the natural Wealden Clay (Fig 8, Section 5).
- 4.1.2 A feature was recorded cut into [103]. This was a shallow, sub-elliptical shaped feature [104]. This feature was interpreted as a possible post hole. It had steep sides and a flat base. This feature was filled by [105], a mid greyish brown coloured, silty clay of a loose consistency. Shell and tile were recovered from this fill, but could not be dated. This feature is not located on the plan as it was of recent origin, cut into the top of [103].
- 4.1.3 A linear feature [108] was also recorded cut into the natural clay [102]. This feature was interpreted as a gully and was orientated NE-SW (Fig 5). It had concave sides and a flattish base (77.85m AOD). It was partly truncated by [101]. This gully was filled by [109], a mid brownish grey clay silt with sandstone lumps (<100mm; 1-2%) and charcoal flecks (1%) throughout.
- 4.1.4 A large ditch was recorded on an approximate east-west alignment [110]. This ditch had a minimum width of 5m and a minimum depth of 2.8m. It was probably V-shaped in profile, but was not fully excavated. This ditch was filled by [111], which contained a wide range of mixed finds, including, flint nodules (1%), chalk (1%), sandstone (1%) and crushed building material (5%). This feature was interpreted as a Second World War Canadian entrenchment.
- 4.1.5 In the north-east corner of the lower level of the previous terrace a stone-built well was encountered [112] (Fig 5 & 7). The well was located directly beneath the concrete pavement and [101]. This well

was constructed of sandstone blocks of a yellowish brown colour. The well was likely to have been constructed in the 15th-16th century (see Finds section). The blocks were roughly rectangular and were concave forming a total diameter of 1.40m. The stone blocks had a smooth finish and were rounded at the corners. The structure was constructed with regular coursing and a friable, sandy lime mortar of an orange yellow colour. It contained crushed chalk fragments between the blocks. The depth of the well reached a minimum of 3.2m from surface level.

- 4.1.6 A construction cut for the well was recorded [113]. This was located beneath [100] (described above 4.1.1) on its western side and [118] on its eastern side (Fig 7, Section 1). Context [101] was the uppermost deposit on the eastern side of the well. This deposit is described above in 4.1.1. Directly beneath [101] was [119]. This was a light-mid yellowish grey with some darker grey brown deposit mottling throughout. It had a silty clay texture and a firm consistency. This deposit contained some tile fragments (dating to the 15th-16th Century) and small angular sandstone fragments (<20-50mm). It was interpreted as a deposit of relatively recent origin. Beneath [119] was [118]. This deposit was a mid brownish grey colour and had a silty clay texture. It contained some large sandstone blocks throughout, similar to those used in the construction of the well. This deposit was interpreted as a possible floor or previous ground surface leading up to the well.
- 4.1.7 Cut [113] was at least 3.2m in depth (from the surface). Its total depth was not reached. This construction trench, cut through [116], [115], [117], [124] and [102]. It contained three fills: [123], [125] and [114]. These fills are described below, (latest to earliest).
- 4.1.8 Around the stones on the western side of the well was [123]. This was a mid brownish black grey, silty clay of a firm consistency and was c. 800mm in thickness. It contained very occasional burnt clay flecks, charcoal smears and sandstone fragments. This fill was interpreted as packing used to fill the gap between the cut [113] and the well stones [112].
- 4.1.9 Directly beneath [123] was [125], a c. 400mm thick off white coloured fill with occasional orange brown mottling. It contained very occasional charcoal flecks and burnt clay smears. This fill was also interpreted as in-filling around the stones of the well. In turn, beneath [125] was [114]. This was a mid greyish brown coloured fill with occasional grey and orange mottling. It was of a silty clay texture and firm consistency. This fill contained very small rounded pebbles, charcoal fragments (2%), occasional iron stone fragments and manganese staining. Tile dating to the 15th-17th century was recovered from this deposit. Earlier 12th-13th century finds were also recovered. However, these are considered to be residual.

- 4.1.10 On the western side of the well, [113] truncates four layers of overburden. These layers/deposits are described as follows (latest to earliest). Context [116] was directly beneath topsoil [100]. This was a c. 400mm thick deposit of a light yellowish grey silty clay. It contained occasional small sandstone pebbles & small angular stones. Also occasional chalk flecks and oyster shell flecks. Tile dating to the late 13th-15th century was recovered from layer [116]. Directly beneath this layer was [115]. This was a c. 150mm thick deposit of a mid grey, silty clay. It contained rare charcoal flecking, sandstone fragments and oyster shell. Context [117] was a c. 250mm thick deposit of a mid brownish/black grey silty clay. It had a firm consistency and contained rare charcoal flecks, burnt clay flecks and chalk fragments throughout. Tile dating to the Late 13th to 15th century was recovered from this layer. Context [124] was a c. 100-150mm thick layer. It had a mid-dark purple grey colour and a plastic consistency. This deposit was immediately above the natural clay [102]. Tile dating to 12th century was retrieved from this layer.
- 4.1.11 In the west facing section (Fig 7; Section 1) another cut feature was recorded. Cut [120] was c. 800mm in depth and was seen cutting through [119] and [118]. This feature had one undulating side visible in this section. It was filled by [121]. This was a dark blackish grey coloured silty clay. It contained moderate sandstone fragments and gravel (occasional chalk flecks and tile fragments). Contained within fill [121] was a possible structural feature [122]. This had a maximum width of 380mm and a depth of 170mm. It was constructed of sandstone blocks which were a roughly rectangular shape, but were poorly finished. This possible structural deposit consisted primarily of two large sandstone blocks. Another two smaller sandstone blocks were positioned above these. These blocks were probably the remains of the foundation wall footing of the previous visitors centre (1930's?). A recently laid concrete foundation trench was directly above it. This concrete cut through [119], which was the fill of [126]. The full extent of this cut is unknown, but it is at least c. 2.5m in length. This feature was interpreted as possible post-medieval terracing.

4.2 Fence Posts (Fig 3)

- 4.2.1 A series of ten post holes were excavated c. 300mm in width by c. 300mm in length and c. 600mm in depth. Only one deposit was encountered, which was a loose dark brown silty loam topsoil which contained occasional brick fragments and pieces of local sandstone [100]. No finds were recovered.
- 4.2.2 A trench (Fig 3; Fig 4; Trench G) was excavated in advance of the construction of a fence. The trench was c. 15m in length and 1.2m in depth. The stratigraphy comprised of c. 700mm of [100] (described in

4.1.1) and 500mm of [101] (described in 4.1.2). Both of these contexts were modern in origin.

4.3 Signpost holes (Fig 2)

4.3.1 A series of twenty-two post holes were excavated c. 200mm in diameter and c.500mm in depth. In the majority only one deposit was encountered, which was a loose dark brown silty loam topsoil which contained occasional brick fragments and pieces of local sandstone (Context [001]). No finds were recovered from the post holes where only top-soil was encountered, however within a small number multiple contexts and artefacts were found; these are dealt with below.

Signpost 1

4.3.2 This signpost hole was dug to a depth of c.400 mm. The posthole was dug through topsoil that contained frequent inclusions of sandstone fragments (<100mm). The sign post had to be cut down by 100mm due to larger sandstone blocks at the posthole base.

Signpost 14

4.3.3 This signpost hole was dug to a depth of c.500 mm. The first 100mm comprised topsoil [14/001]. Below this was 400mm of mid yellow brown silty sand [14/002] with frequent inclusions of building materials. A pottery sherd of post-medieval date and 16th – 18th century CBM was retrieved from the posthole.

Signpost 15

4.3.4 This signpost hole was dug to a depth of c.500 mm. The post hole was dug through topsoil [15/001] that contained frequent inclusions of building material.

Signpost 23

4.3.5 This signpost hole was dug to a depth of c.500 mm. The first 100mm comprised topsoil [23/001]. Below this was 400mm of mid whitish yellow silty sand [23/002] with frequent inclusions of building materials. Context [23/002] probably relates to a demolition layer or made ground.

Signpost 27

4.3.6 This signpost hole was dug to a depth of c.500 mm. The post hole was dug through topsoil [27/001] that contained frequent inclusions of building material. Late 15th – 16th century tile and a dressed sandstone block were retrieved from the posthole.

4.4 Grubbing out of a tree bowl (Fig 3)

4.4.1 At the base of the slope a deep tree root was removed. At the base of the hole created by the roots of the tree only modern finds were

observed. One complete bottle was retained. The tree roots did not extend beyond context [100].

4.5 Service trenches (Fig 3)

- 4.5.1 A service trench was monitored whilst being hand excavated in a small plot at the eastern end of the site (Fig 3; Service Trench C). The excavations reached a total depth of c. 450mm beneath the current ground level. Only one deposit was recorded [107]. This was a dark brown, silty loam of a loose consistency. It contained flint cobbles (<80mm), irregular flint nodules (<100mm), crushed building material (5%) and concrete and tarmac lumps. The deposit had rooting throughout, overlain in places by yellow silty sand which contained approximately 50% of gravel. Deposit [107] was clearly made ground of recent origin.
- 4.5.2 A service trench was excavated across the entrance to the visitor car park (Fig 3; Service Trench A). This excavation only reached a depth of c. 300mm and was entirely within made ground, laid down during the construction of the car park. No archaeological features or finds were recovered from this area. A similar trench was excavated across the other entrance to the car park (which had permanent barriers). This trench (Fig 3; Service Trench D) was excavated entirely within made ground to a maximum depth of c. 300mm.
- 4.5.3 A cable trench was excavated to a maximum depth of c. 450mm from the ground surface (Fig 3; Service Trench B). It was c. 500mm wide and was excavated entirely within [100] (described in 4.4.1). Some intact bottles were kept and these date to the early to mid 20th century.
- 4.5.4 A service trench was excavated alongside the new visitor centre towards the eastern end of the trench in Park Lane (Fig 3; Trench E; Fig 4; Fig 8 Sections 7-9). This was c. 490mm in width and c. 350mm in depth, c. 40m in length. A cut feature was noted in this trench [129], which was beneath the following stratigraphy (latest to earliest). Context [1] was a c. 100mm thick deposit of tarmac and road surfaces. Directly beneath this was [2], a c.110mm thick deposit of a concrete road base. Context [131] (Fig 8, Section 7) was a 210mm thick, light grey silt sand, with occasional crushed building materials <100mm (1%) and charcoal flecks (<1%). The natural light grey/yellow clean silty sand geology [132] was seen beneath [131].
- 4.5.5 Cut [129] was noted located 11.9m from the eastern end of Trench E (Fig 4). It was only visible in the south facing section. This feature was interpreted as a possible pit. This cut was 150mm in width and 350mm in depth. This feature had convex sides and a flattish base. It cut through both [131] and [132]. It was filled by [130]. This was a mid dark

greyish brown sandy silt with occasional flint nodules and tile fragments (<30mm) of an early post-medieval date.

- 4.5.6 A gas pipe was seen running down the centre of the line of the trench, which continued for 4 metres from the eastern end of the trench. It then traversed northwards towards the Pilgrim's restaurant. More services were also seen crossing the trench to the east.
- 4.5.7 To the west of the gas pipe the stratigraphy was much less disturbed by modern intrusions. The trench was excavated to the required depth of 750mm in this area. The stratigraphy to the west of the gas pipe (5.5m from the east end of the trench) was as follows (latest to earliest). Context [1] was the current tarmac road surface and was c. 100mm in thickness. Directly beneath this was [5], a c. 40mm thick asphalt road base. In turn, beneath [5] was [6]. This was a c. 60mm thick deposit of aggregate (flint pebbles in a sandy soil) road base. Context [7] was a light-mid grey, silty sand with occasional flint nodules (<10-50mm). This was interpreted as possible earlier topsoil. Context [8] was an 80mm thick deposit very similar to [7] except with more notable iron staining, which was possibly a basal horizon to [7]. Context [9] was beneath [8], and was a c. 140mm thick, light grey silt sand, with occasional crushed building materials <100mm (1%) and charcoal flecks (<1%). The natural light grey/yellow clean silty sand geology was seen beneath [9].
- 4.5.8 Another feature was recorded 14.8m from the east end of Trench E. This feature [134] was c. 350mm in width and c. 400mm in depth. Cut [134] was a near vertical sided, flat bottomed cut (Fig 4; Fig 8, Section 8). It appeared to cut [131] and [132] and was filled by [133], a dark brownish grey, sandy silt, which contained occasional flint pebbles (<40mm) and tile. This feature was probably a modern pit. There was difficulty in ascertaining the relationship of this feature with the surrounding layers as a water pipe crosses the trench at this point.
- 4.5.9 Cut [136] was recorded approximately 15m from the east end of Trench E. This feature was located beneath 350mm of overburden. This consisted of 70mm of road tarmac [1], 150mm of mixed silty road base [5], and c. 100mm of mixed topsoil, of a dark brown colour and silty clay consistency [6]. Cut [136] was shallow and had sloping sides to the east, which were steeper sloping to the west (Fig 4; Fig 8, Section 9). It was filled by [135], a dark grey sandy silt containing 16th century peg tile, charcoal flecks and mortar (<200mm). This fill was probably associated with the dissolution. An electricity cable cut through this deposit.
- 4.5.10 A stone wall footing [137] was observed sealed by [135]. This wall was constructed from sandstone blocks (<470 x 350 x 170mm), that were roughly hewn (Fig 4; Fig 8, Section 3). However, this wall footing was only observed in the north side of the service trench. The construction

cut [138], which was recorded in section, had convex sides and was at least 370mm in thickness.

4.5.11 A pit was seen cut through [131] (described above 4.4.4) and recorded in section only [139] (Fig 4; Fig 8, Section 4 & 6). It was steep sided, but the base was not observed. Cut [139] was filled by [140]. This was a dark brownish grey, sand silt which contained occasional crushed building material (<20mm), charcoal flecks (<20mm) and flint nodules (<400mm). Context [140] butted up against wall [141]. This wall was constructed of sandstone blocks (<250mm), which were roughly hewn. Context [142] was directly beneath wall footing [141]. This deposit was mainly constructed of sandstone rubble and was interpreted as a possible collapse deposit associated with the wall.

4.5.12 Service Trench F (Fig 3) was hand excavated to a length of c. 5m and was 350mm wide and 300mm deep. The excavations were entirely within the modern made ground deposit [100] described in 4.1.1.

4.5.13 Trench F (Fig 3 & 4) was, at its western end, near the terrace cut for the new building. The area to the east of the terrace contained the dark humic topsoil [150]. It was a maximum of 400mm in places, but in most areas 250-300mm thick. Beneath [150], was a light greyish brown firm sandy silt [151] which contained stone and crushed building material (CBM). This deposit was interpreted as a former soil/subsoil, which may have been a dissolution accumulation.

4.5.14 Truncating [151] was [152] (Fig 3; Fig 8, Section 10). This was a steep-sided cut, running N-S across the E-W orientated service Trench H. The total extent of this feature was not established. It was in excess of c. 800mm and over 4m wide. This cut was filled by [153] which contained World War II finds throughout.

4.6 Wall footing trenches on top terrace level (Fig 3)

4.6.1 The wall footing trenches on top of the terrace level were excavated to a width of c. 600mm and to a maximum depth of 2.3m. The stratigraphy was the same as previously detailed in 4.1.1. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

4.6.2 Wall footing trenches were intermittently monitored on the middle and lower terraces, but at this stage the ground reduction had already taken place to formation level. The area had been inspected for archaeological remains at this stage. All of the wall footing trenches were cut into the already exposed natural geology.

4.7 Ground reduction for new pathway (Fig 3; Pathway Strip 1)

- 4.7.1 The excavations in advance of the construction of a new footpath were not deep enough to impact on any archaeological deposits during the initial ground works. The excavations were entirely within [100] and rarely exceeded c. 50mm in depth from the surface. Two tile fragments were recovered, but were modern in date.
- 4.7.2 However, the excavations became more substantial when the pathway was extended to lead up to the new visitor centre. In an area close to the Abbey gatehouse the possible remains of the precinct wall and a buttress were uncovered. Only a small portion of the precinct wall [1000] was recorded (Fig 6), although it was thought to continue further to the east. It was at least 660mm thick at its southern edge. The south edge had a very sharp face and the northern edge was ragged (but may have lost a facing stone). The wall was constructed of local sandstone (<230mm) set in a buff sandy mortar. This wall is not in line with the still upstanding section of precinct wall near the gatehouse, but could be part of the same wall assuming it deviates from course to the south.
- 4.7.4 The possible buttress [1001] was rectangular in shape and had faced east and north sides (Fig 6). The west side of the wall was not visible (beneath a section). It was constructed of sandstone blocks (<750mm across) set in a buff sandy mortar. The larger blocks that were well dressed were placed on the exterior and the smaller more irregular blocks/rubble made up the centre. The buttress looked to continue further to the west but had probably been robbed out. This could not be fully determined due to the size of the excavations. Before the monitoring archaeologist arrived on site c. 300mm/one course of sandstone blocks were machined away. Two plastic ducts were laid during this initial ground reduction.
- 4.7.5 To the south of buttress [1001] was deposit [1002]. This was a light/mid orange brown colour and of a sandy loam texture, but compact consistency. It contained sandstone flecks (<20-70mm: 5%) throughout and occasional tile and chalk flecks. This was a medieval layer.
- 4.7.6 On the northern side of the buttress [1001] was [1003]. This was a light/mid orange brown deposit which had a sandy loam texture. It was firm/compact and contained irregular shaped sandstone pieces throughout (< 20-70mm: 15-20%). This context was more disturbed than [1002], as it contained hollows filled with patches of darker topsoil. It is assumed that this deposit was also medieval in origin.
- 4.8 Ground reductions for a second new pathway (Fig 3; Pathway Strip 2)**
- 4.8.1 Ground reduction took place adjacent and to the south of the new visitor centre in order to construct a second pathway. Excavations

reached a maximum of 1.2 metres below ground level at a gradient of 1:25 for a length of approximately 24 metres. The deposits encountered consisted firstly of c.200mm of dark brownish black, silty loam, which had a soft and friable consistency [200]. This was dark organic topsoil forming the previous ground surface. Directly beneath [200] was dark blackish brown silty sand [201] this ranged in thickness to a maximum of 800mm at the most northerly and deepest limit of the pathways excavation. Context [201] contained frequent inclusions of modern building materials, occasional fragments of sandstone (<300mm) and a large number of 20th century finds that were often burnt and fragmentary. This layer seems to consist of made ground or dumped deposit of modern origin. Beneath [201], [202] was encountered; a mid grey brown silty clay which reached a maximum thickness of c.200mm and contained occasional charcoal flecks. This deposit was interpreted as an intact sub-soil. The mid yellow brown natural ground [203] was only revealed in the first c.3m of the pathway strip.

4.9 Miscellaneous (Fig 3)

- 4.9.1 Another small trench was also excavated during the construction of a temporary barrier at another entrance to the car park (Fig 3; Trench A). This did not reveal any archaeological remains or deposits and was excavated entirely within the modern deposits laid down during the construction of the car park.

5. THE FINDS Luke Barber

5.1 The archaeological work recovered a small assemblage of artefacts. These are summarised in Table 1.

Context	Pot	Wt	CBM	Wt	Glass	Wt	Metal	Wt	Bone	Wt	Shell	Wt	Stone	Wt	Other	Wt
MD find							1	174								
[100]			6	572	15	1178										
[101]	5	1162					1	248								
[101]	7	916	1	54			1	6								
[103]	3	72	1	8	1	?										
[105]			8	192					1	2	5	72				
[107]	5	130														
[109]			1	320												
[111]	1	90													2	58
[112]			2	258												
[114]	1	22	2	34												
[116]			1	32					1	18						
[117]			2	86												
[119]			2	228												
[124]			4	514												
[151]			6	1039			1	105					3	677		
[153]a	1	118			2	318	3	17								
[153]b															4	584
[153]c	5	152														
Tr 2 U/S	22	628	4	260	13	2366	2	194	3	280						
Tr 3 U/S					9	1442										
Tr 4 U/S					2	1114										
Tr 4 [4]													2	17444		
Tr 4 [7]			17	1344												
Tr 4 [10]			2	1120												
Tr 4 [14]			1	90												
[1001]													1	52		
14/002	1	88	2	74												
27/002			4	1710												

Table 1: Quantification of finds assemblage (ct & wt (g))

5.2 The watching brief recovered a relatively small assemblage of pottery. The earliest sherd, context [114], consists of a sand-and flint-tempered base sherd from a cooking pot of mid 12th- to mid 13th-century date. Although fresh, the presence of later peg tile in this context suggests the pot is residual. Two residual sherds from fine sand-tempered green glazed jugs, probably from the Rye kilns, were also recovered from [101]. These are likely to be of later 13th- to 14th- century date. A single residual sherd of oxidized hard-fired earthenware of 16th-century date was also recovered from context [101]. The majority of the

pottery from the site relates to the later 19th to mid 20th centuries. Material of this date was recovered from [101], [103], [107], [111], [153a] and [14/002]. This late post-medieval assemblage includes various English unglazed earthenwares (flower pots), glazed red earthenwares (bowls/jars/handled bowls), stonewares (ginger beer bottles, inks etc), transfer-printed and plain 'china' (table wares) and porcelain (tea wares). Within this assemblage are three complete stoneware bottles, including a Nottingham ink (stamped LOVATT & LOVATT and measuring 137mm tall, 62mm diameter), a London ginger beer (stamped DOULTON, LAMBETH and measuring 165mm tall, 66mm diameter) and an unmarked blue stoneware pear-shaped jar (135mm tall, diameter 85mm). Context [200] produced a plain white china desk inkwell of later 19th- century date, but most of the material is from the mid 20th century. Context [153]c produced a plate 'G VI R WEDGWOOD & Co Ltd TUNSTALL 1942' printed on its base.

- 5.3 A large proportion of the finds assemblage consists of ceramic building material, most notably tile. The earliest consists of several conjoining fragments from a medieval 'tegula' tile in a sand-and flint-tempered fabric with patchy clear (firing brown) glaze on its upper surface. These tiles have been found at the abbey before and are dated to the 12th century (Streeten 1985). Contexts [116] and [117] produced a few fragments of probable peg tile in medium-fired sand tempered fabrics which are likely to be of the late 13th to 14th/early 15th centuries. These tiles, averaging 15–16mm thick, are much heavier than the later types. The majority of the tile from the site is in high-fired sparse sand tempered fabrics with notable iron oxide inclusions (contexts [100], [101], [105], [112], [114], [119], [151], [14/002] and [27/002]). These are difficult to date with certainty but are most likely to fit within a 15th to 16th-century date range though some could be a little later (it is likely most relate to demolition relating to the Dissolution). An example from context [112] had clearly been re-used in wall construction due to the presence of all-over mortar on both upper and lower faces. Two peg tile fragments from [105] are hard-fired and are probably of 18th- to 19th- century date and further examples, including a ridge tile, were recovered from Context [151]. Context [109] produced a single tile of odd type, measuring some 22mm thick with knife trimming on both faces. The piece, which may be of late medieval/early post-medieval date, is medium fired, tempered with sparse fine sand and has white clay streaks/occasional quartz inclusions to 2mm: its form is uncertain. The topsoil, [105], [151] and [27/002] produced fragments of brick: the topsoil producing one piece of 18th- to 19th-century date and one of late 19th- to 20th-century manufacture. Contexts [105] and [151] produced six brick fragments similar to the 19th/20th-century examples from the topsoil though only one dimension was measurable (60mm high from [151]). The example from [27/002] is likely to be the earliest recovered. It consists of a low-fired yellow brick in a fine/medium sand tempered fabric with signs of adhering buff sandy lime mortar in addition to burning on the surviving end (header). The dimensions of

the brick are 165+ x 122 x 48mm and it is of probable later 15th- to 16th- century date.

- 5.4 The metalwork assemblage from the site is quite small. The earliest piece consists of a lead holdfast used to fit a hinge, bolt or window bar into masonry. This item is probably of medieval date. Context [105] produced a badly corroded general purpose nail while [101] and [111] produced two items associated with the Second World War: a British blue enameled military water bottle and an undated, but fired, .303 cartridge case. Context [151] produced a later 19th- to early 20th- century iron and copper-alloy servant's bell pull. Context [153a] contained an unfired .303 blank round (Headstamp 1942 VIII Z), a later 19th- to mid 20th- century brass naval button (17mm di) and a 34mm diameter copper-alloy ring. Context [200] also produced a small assemblage of metalwork including another .303 bullet and a hollow silver parasol/stick handle with repousse foliage decoration of probable later 19th- or early 20th- century date.
- 5.5 Context [100] produced a small assemblage of clear, green and cobalt blue bottles in a variety of forms. Though most are small vessels there is a complete seamed wine bottle in green glass with no basal kick. The wine bottle, which still has remains of the cork inside, is likely to be of 20th-century date. The other bottles have both cork and external screw secured tops and an early/mid 20th-century date is also likely for these. Context [103] also produced a complete bottle: an 80mm tall (46mm diameter) mould-blown bottle in aqua glass with cork secured top. This is of probable late 19th- to mid 20th-century date. Two complete clear glass bottles were recovered from [153a]. These consist of a small Shippam's paste jar and a 196mm tall 'DADDIE'S SAUCE' bottle. Both are of 20th- century date.
- 5.6 Context [153b] produced a number of pieces of fuel ash slag/clinker (this was a sample only) which may have originated from a coal-fueled boiler and, due to their stratigraphic position, must be of mid 20th- century date. A few pieces of stone were recovered from [151]. These are probably all medieval but are residual in this context. The material includes Hastings Beds sandstone, a coarse slate (possibly from NW England or the continent) and Eastbourne Upper Greensand.
- 5.7 Contexts [105] and [116] produced small, though well preserved, pieces of animal bone. The former also produced four well-preserved lower valves from oysters.
- 5.8 The current assemblage is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The watching brief demonstrated that archaeological deposits survive across the development site and within the Scheduled Area of Battle Abbey.
- 6.2 The finds assemblage was limited. There were finds of early post-medieval tile from the overburden layers encountered during the reduction of the previous split level terrace. The earliest of these deposits was [124] which contained only 12th century tile.
- 6.3 It is difficult to draw any solid conclusions from the limited available evidence, however it does appear that the gully recorded in the area of ground reduction [108] was probably late medieval or early post-medieval in date.
- 6.4 The original natural ground surface was located across the main development area formerly occupied by a split level terrace (lowest point 77.85m AOD). Medieval and post medieval layers were seen directly above feature [108] (see Fig 7: Section 1). However, the medieval and post-medieval landscaping over the ridge at this time means the pre-monastic ground levels and topography was difficult to establish. Further damage to this area was created during WWII when the position was used as a Canadian 'dug out' (which likely created the split level terrace). This altered any pre-monastic ground levels and any pre-monastic archaeological features.
- 6.5 The two walls, [137] and [141], in the service trench along the centre of Park Lane were probably of post-medieval date. However, the original function of these walls is unknown due to small nature of the excavations.
- 6.6 Similarly, the well [112] which was recorded in the lower area of the terrace reduction, was of probable 15th or 16th century date. This well was of fine construction and reached a depth of a least 3.5m from the previous ground surface.
- 6.7 The large ditch that was recorded in the area of ground reduction was most certainly associated with the Canadian entrenchments excavated during World War II. This entrenchment was most probably associated with the other Canadian war positions located during the archaeological evaluation (Stevens 2004).
- 6.8 The methodology employed for this site is considered to have been appropriate. The confidence rating is high that archaeological potential has been successfully recorded to the expected archaeological standards.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1** The input of Paul Roberts of English Heritage is gratefully acknowledged, as is the co-operation of the staff of Battle Abbey.

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Archaeology South-East
Battle Abbey Visitor Centre Watching Brief

Project details	
Project name	Battle Abbey Visitor Centre
Short description of the project	A archaeological watching brief was maintained during the construction of a new visitor centre and public toilets in the grounds of Battle Abbey (Planning Reference:RR/2005/1541/C1), adjacent to the gate house (TQ 7480 1570). 37 separate site visits were made by supervisory staff from Archaeology South East. The ground reduction comprised of an area formerly occupied by temporary buildings, public toilets and a Second World War Canadian Dugout. The made ground/overburden on this area reached depths of up to 2m. These made ground deposits were nearly all dated to the post medieval period. However, deposit 124, noted in section directly above the natural clay, contained only 12th Century tile. The outer precinct wall of the Abbey and the remains of a possible buttress was located in an area of ground reduction during the construction of a new pathway. These were well preserved and constructed of sandstone. One gully dated to the late medieval/ early post medieval period, was seen cutting into the natural geology beneath the modern made ground deposits. One possible medieval/early post medieval wall was seen in a service trench excavated along Park Lane. A Post medieval well was recorded during ground reduction at the northern edge of the site boundary, next to Park Lane. This well was constructed of sandstone bricks and may have had medieval origin, but was likely of 16th or 17th Century date.
Project dates	Start: 09-01-2006 End: 13-09-2006
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	RR/2005/1541/C1 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	BVC 06 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Monument type	WALL Medieval
Monument type	GULLY Medieval
Monument type	BUTTRESS Medieval

Archaeology South-East
Battle Abbey Visitor Centre Watching Brief

Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	TILE Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Open-area excavation','Watching Brief'
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX HASTINGS HASTINGS Battle Abbey Visitor Centre
Postcode	TN33
Study area	50.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 7480 1570 50.9136599340 0.486896902815 50 54 49 N 000 29 12 E Point
Height OD	Min: 77.85m Max: 79.85m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South East
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Paul Riccoboni
Type of sponsor/funding body	English Heritage
Name of sponsor/funding body	English Heritage

Archaeology South-East
Battle Abbey Visitor Centre Watching Brief

Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	Hastings Museum
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	Hastings Museum
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Hastings Museum
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Diary','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey',
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at the site of a New Visitor Centre, Battle Abbey, Battle, East Sussex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Riccoboni, P.
Date	2007
Issuer or publisher	Archaeology South East
Place of issue or publication	Ditchling
Description	Hard bound copy
Entered by	Paul Riccoboni (riccoboni_2000@yahoo.co.uk)
Entered on	31 May 2007

Archaeology South-East
Battle Abbey Visitor Centre Watching Brief

SMR Summary Sheet

Site Code	BVC 04					
Identification Name and Address	Battle Abbey Visitor Centre					
County, District &/or Borough	Rother District, East Sussex					
Full 12 Fig. OS Grid Refs.	TQ 7480 1570					
Archaeology South-East Proj. No.	2237					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban ✓	Deep Urban	Other <i>Scheduled Ancient Monument</i>		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB.9 th Jan 06- 13 th Sep 06	Other		
Sponsor/Client	English Heritage					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin/Louise Rayner					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens/Paul Riccoboni/Alice Thorne/Clive Meaton					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED ✓	PM ✓	Other		

100 Word Summary.

A archaeological watching brief was maintained during the construction of a new visitor centre and public toilets in the grounds of Battle Abbey (Planning Reference:RR/2005/1541/C1), adjacent to the gate house (TQ 7480 1570). 37 separate site visits were made by supervisory staff from Archaeology South East. The ground reduction comprised of an area formerly occupied by temporary buildings, public toilets and a Second World War Canadian Dugout. The made ground/overburden on this area reached depths of up to 2m. These made ground deposits were nearly all dated to the post medieval period. However, deposit 124, noted in section directly above the natural clay, contained only 12th Century tile.

The outer precinct wall of the Abbey and the remains of a possible buttress were located in an area of ground reduction during the construction of a new pathway. These were well preserved and constructed of sandstone blocks. In the area formerly occupied by pre-fabricated and temporary structures a gully dated to the late medieval/ early post medieval period, was seen cutting into the natural geology beneath modern made ground deposits. Two possible medieval/early post medieval walls were seen in a service trench excavated along Park Lane (Trench E).

Of particular interest was a likely Post medieval well recorded during ground reduction at the northern edge of the site boundary, next to Park Lane. This well was constructed of sandstone bricks and may have had medieval origin, but was likely of 16th or 17th Century date.

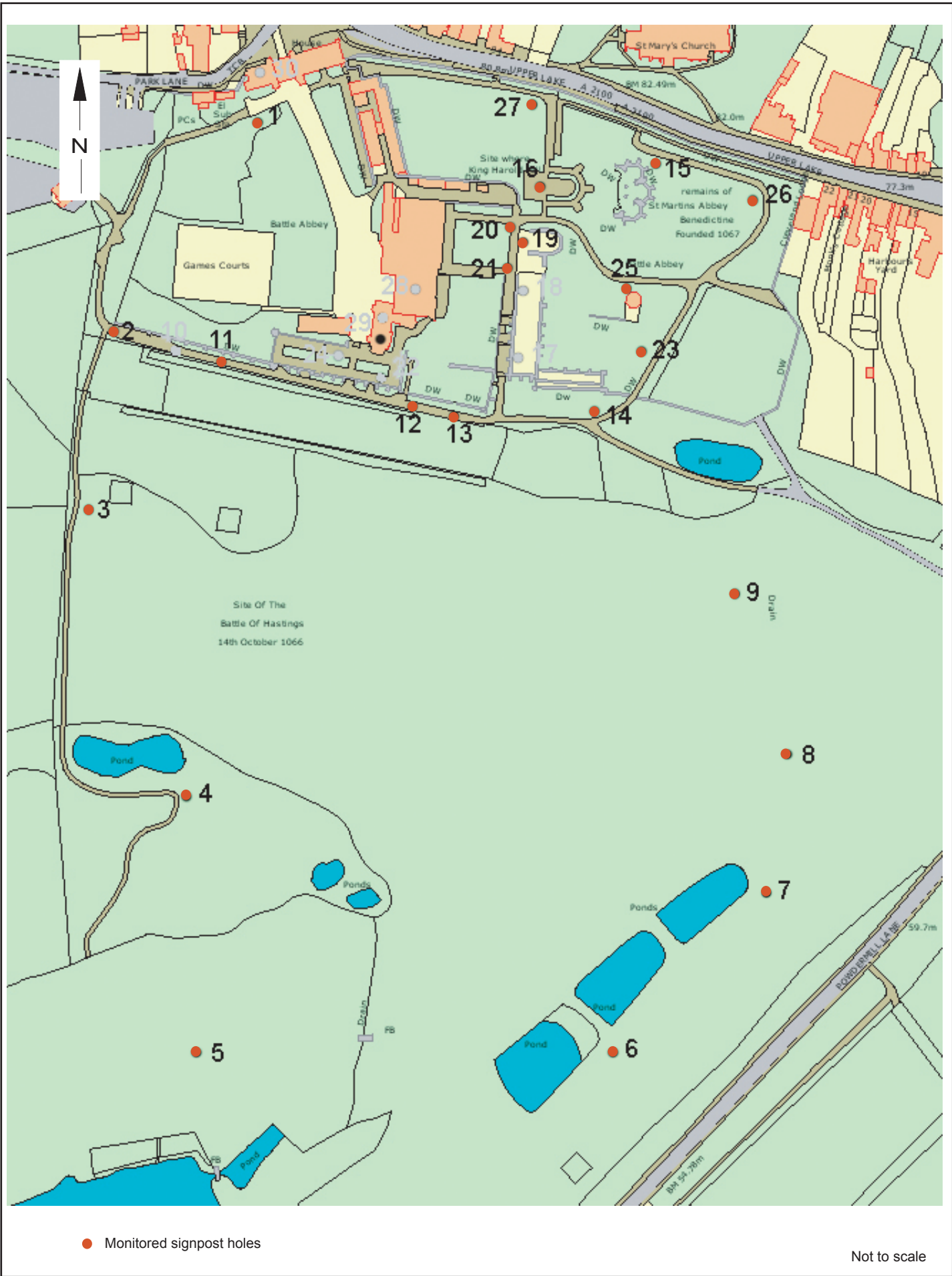
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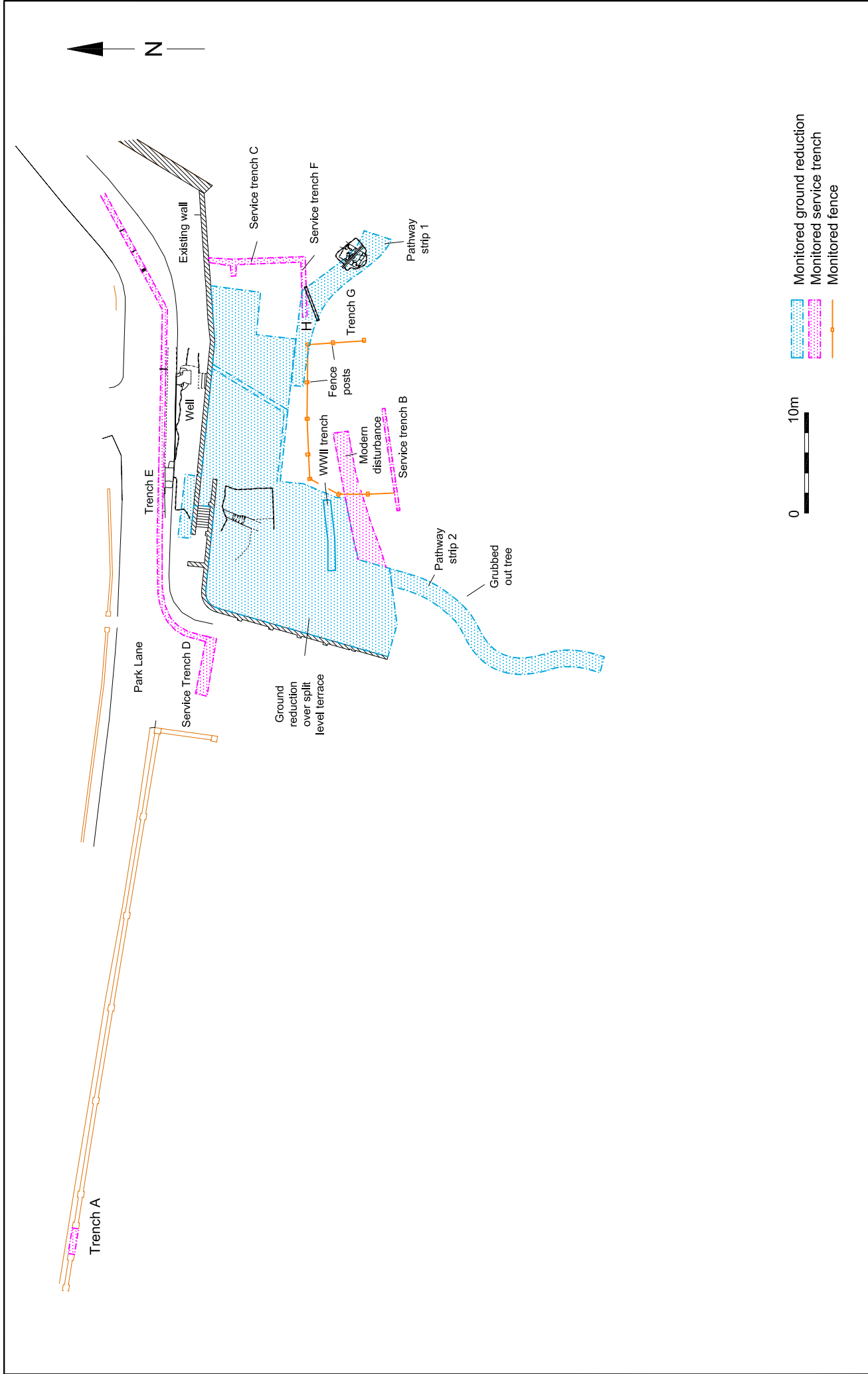
73 74 75 76

© Archaeology South-East		Battle Abbey Visitor Centre	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 2237	April 2008	Site Location Plan	
Report Ref: 2007243	Drawn by: JR		

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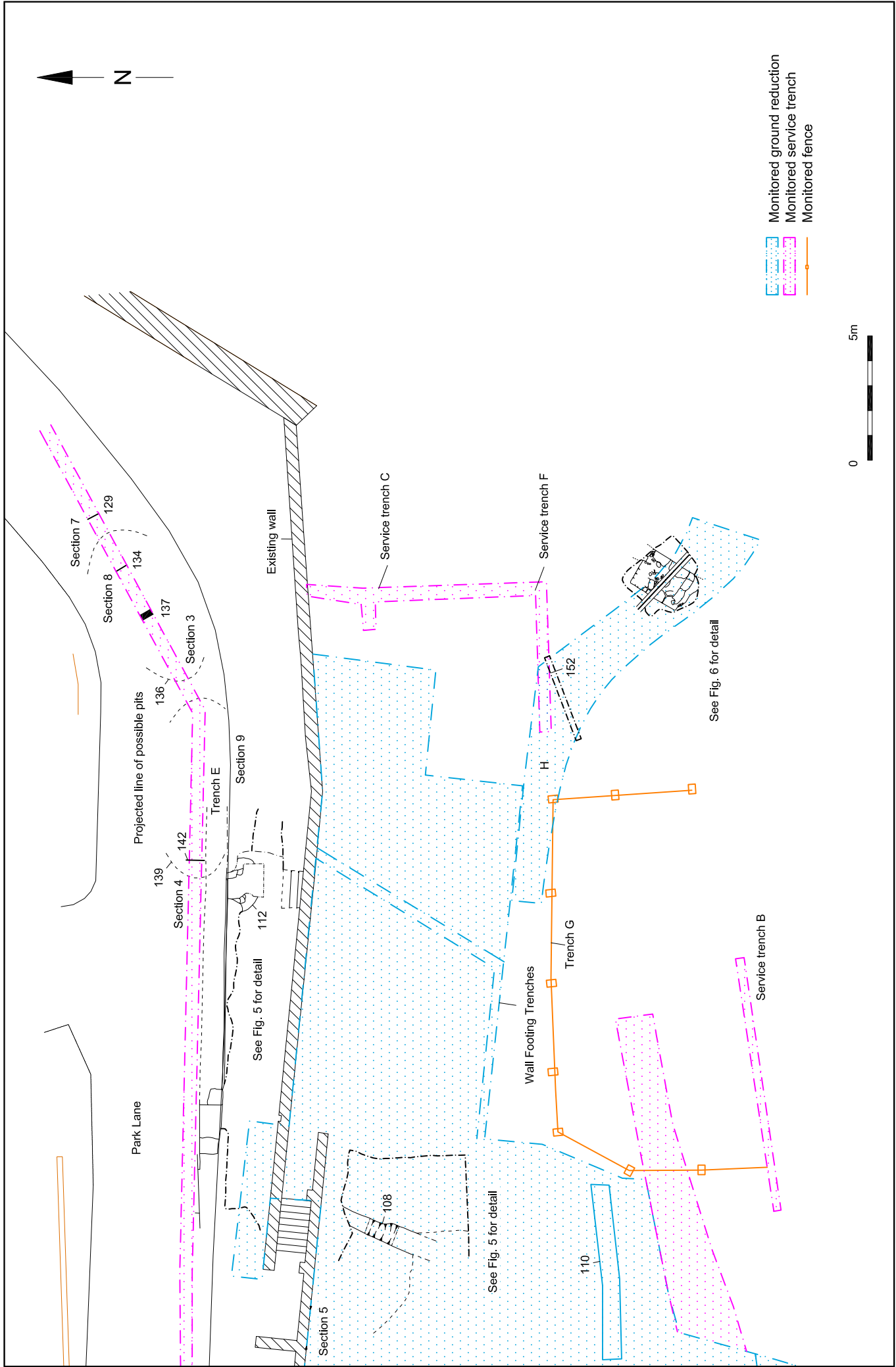


© Archaeology South-East		Battle Abbey Visitor Centre	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 2237	April 2008	Location of monitored signpost holes	
Report Ref: 2007243	Drawn by: JR		



© Archaeology South-East		Battle Abbey Visitor Centre	
Project Ref: 2237	April 2008	Plan of monitored areas showing location of well and gully	
Report Ref: 2007243	Drawn by: JR		

Fig. 3

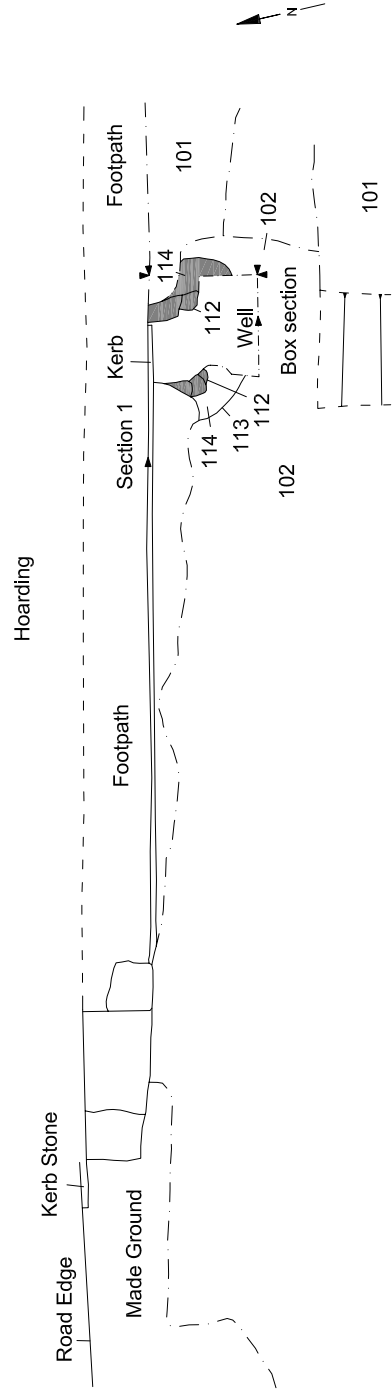


© **Archaeology South-East** Battle Abbey Visitor Centre
 Detailed plan showing location of medieval wall/buttress and location of other features

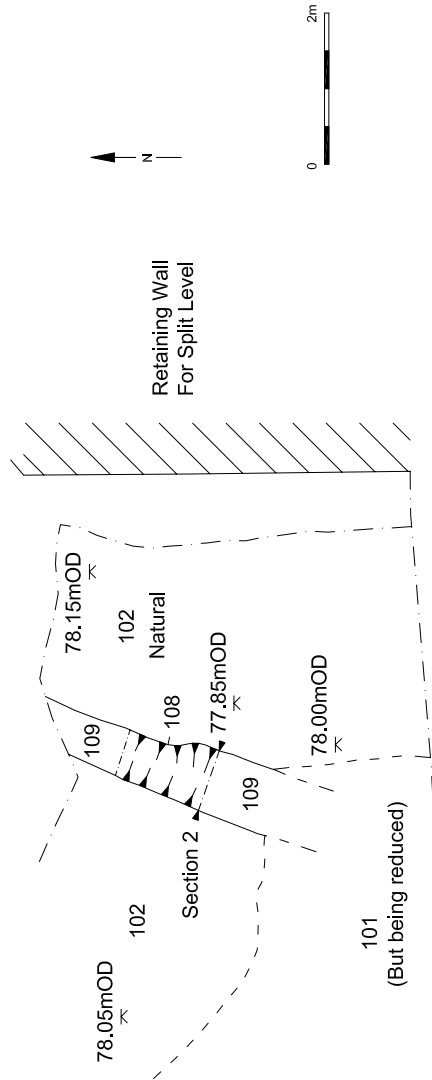
Fig. 4

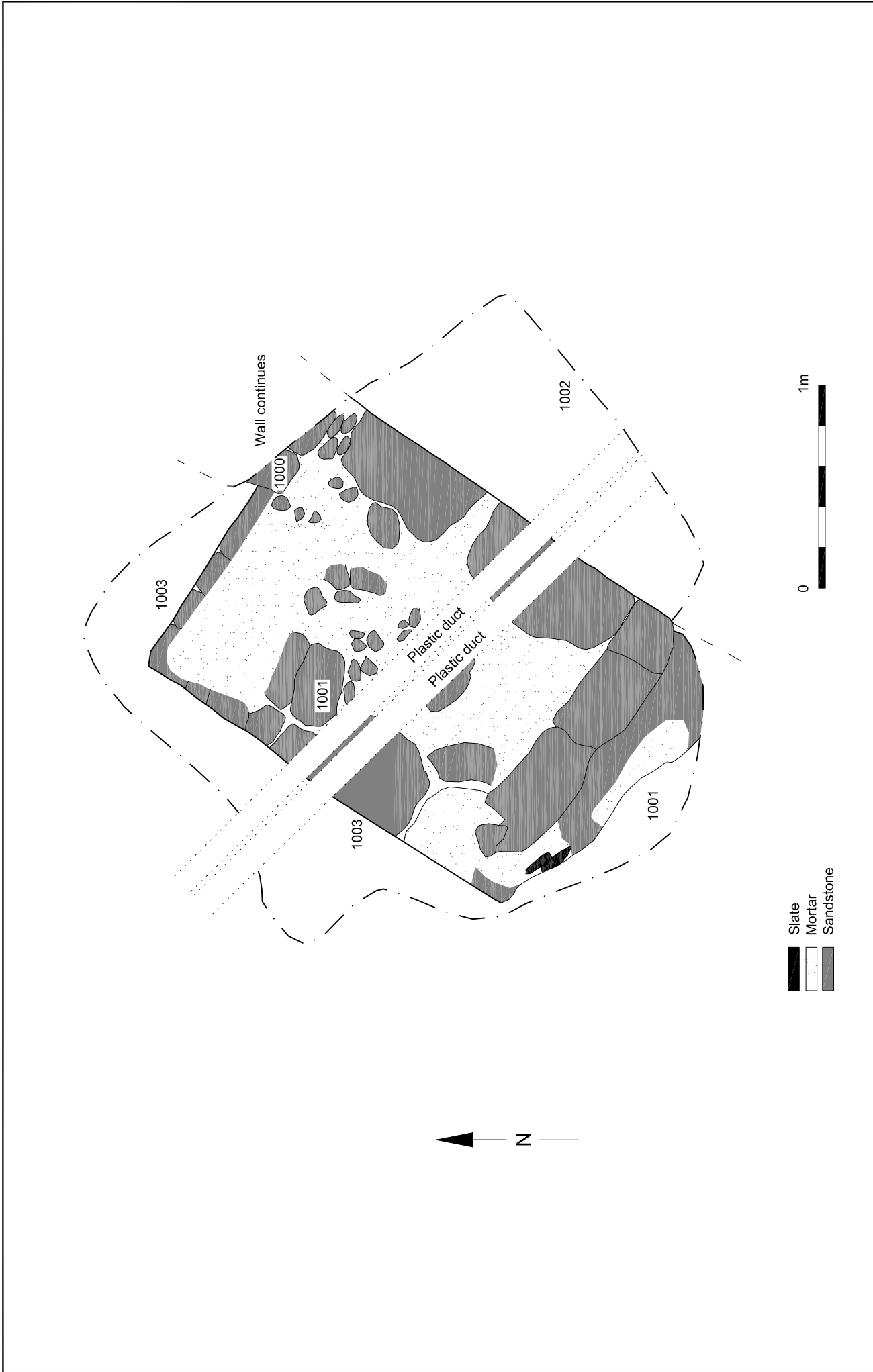
Project Ref: 2237
 Report Ref: 2007243
 April 2008
 Drawn by: JR

Plan of well location



Plan of area excavated over split level terrace





© Archaeology South-East		Battle Abbey Visitor Centre	
Project Ref: 2237	April 2008	Detailed plan of wall/buttress	
Report Ref: 2007243	Drawn by: MT		

Fig. 6

Section 1

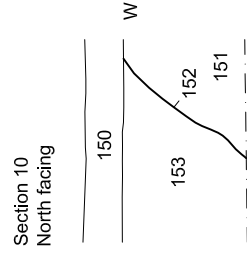
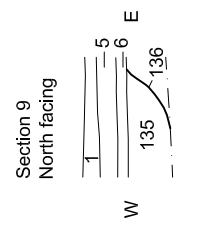
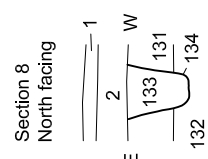
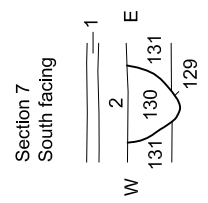
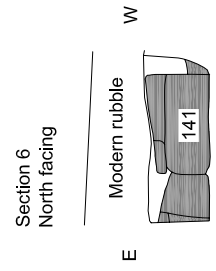
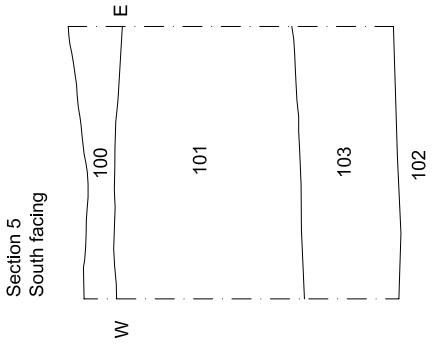
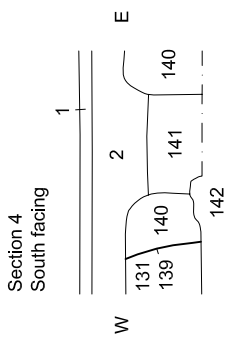
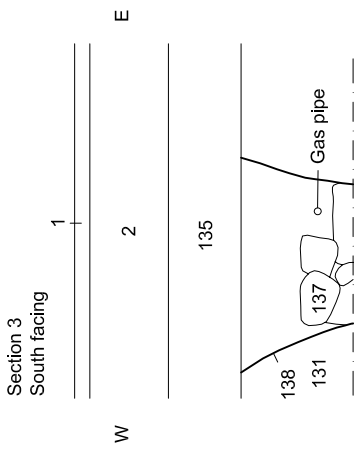
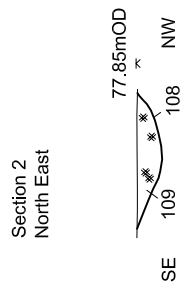
South Facing Section

West Facing Section

North Facing Section



Slot excavated to total of 3.20m from top of well. Base of feature not reached.



* Charcoal
Sandstone

Fig. 8