

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Service Chamber and Cable Trench  
at  
Prittlewell Priory (Scheduled Monument)  
Southend-on-Sea  
Essex**

**NGR: 587715 187382**

**Scheduled Monument List Entry No: 1018452**

**Site code: SOPP17  
ASE Project No: 170549  
ASE Report No: 2017435**



**November 2017**

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**ASE Project No: 170549  
Site Code: SOPP17**

**ASE Report No: 2017435  
OASIS id: 300205**

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<b>Date of Issue:</b>	<b>November 2017</b>	
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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring during the excavation of a cable duct to the east of Prittlewell Priory in Priory Park, Southend. The park is the site of the medieval Priory of St Mary's and is a Scheduled Monument (List No. 1018452) and two Listed Buildings are also present, Prittlewell Priory itself (List No. 1112719) and the Old Crowstone (List No. 1168708).*

*The cable duct trench was 0.3m wide and 0.4m-0.45m deep. It ran for 20m along an asphalt track to link into existing ducting. An inspection chamber was excavated at the junction of the two, excavated to a depth of 0.5m. The strata recorded were of post-medieval/modern date comprising made and/or disturbed ground. Natural deposits were not reached.*

*The remains of a flint rubble and mortar wall were identified at the very base of the inspection chamber and left in situ. On the basis of its construction, the wall is possibly medieval in date. It is situated towards the western end of the planned location of the priory church and may perhaps be part of it.*

*No other archaeological remains were identified.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, was commissioned by Southend Borough Council (SBC) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks at Prittlewell Priory, Southend-on-Sea, Essex. The area of groundworks is centred at NGR 587715 187382, and its location is shown on Figure 1.

1.1.2 Prittlewell Priory, situated within Priory Park and on the Prittle Brook, contains a number of designated heritage assets (Fig. 1), including a Scheduled Monument (List No. 1018452) and two Listed Buildings, Prittlewell Priory itself (List No. 1112719) and the Old Crowstone (List No. 1168708). Accordingly, prior consent in the form of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC)<sup>1</sup> was obtained by SBC for these works.

1.1.3 Historic England (Debbie Priddy, Inspector of Ancient Monuments), who manage the consent regime on behalf of the Department of Culture Media and Sport, indicated that:

*The duct to the visitors' centre is negligible and the area was disturbed/monitored in connection with the construction of the building. The chamber and run in the area of the workshops should be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief (e-mail dated 23/05/2017).*

1.1.4 The archaeological watching brief, as required by Historic England, was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2017). All works were carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists standard and guidance (CIfA 2014).

### **1.2 Location, topography and Geology**

1.2.1 Prittlewell Priory is located within Priory Park, an area of parkland, gardens and sports pitches within Southend (Fig. 1). Running through the park is the Prittle Brook, a tributary of the river Roach. The surviving remains of the Priory stand to the west of the Brook and have been incorporated into a later house, now a museum.

1.2.2 The area of the monitored groundworks was situated to the north-east of the extant priory buildings and immediately east of the site of the priory church (Fig. 2). The cable route ran south-south-west from the corner of modern workshop buildings to a new inspection chamber. Here the route linked into existing Southend Borough Council CCTV cable ducting, which had been installed in the park in 2011. The route ran across a relatively level tarmac track at between 14.3m AOD to 14.49m AOD.

1.2.3 The underlying geology is identified by the British Geological Survey (BGS) as London Clay Formation. Glaciofluvial deposits formed of sand and gravel

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<sup>1</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/scheduled-monuments-guide-for-owners-and-occupiers/>  
(Accessed Nov. 2016)

overly this (BGS 2017). These superficial deposits were formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

- 1.3.1 Following an application for works at Prittlewell Priory, which involved the installation of new cable ducts 0.30m below ground level, the submission of a Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) Application and discussion with Debbie Priddy (Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments), a decision was made to implement archaeological monitoring during groundworks.

### **1.4 Scope of Report**

- 1.4.1 This document describes and assesses the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out prior to groundworks associated the installation of new cable ducts at Prittlewell Priory on 02 August 2017. The watching brief was carried out by Ellen Heppell and managed by Ron Humphrey.

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## 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The following is a summary of the most pertinent information relating to Prittlewell Priory and its immediate environs. This is based on published material, grey literature and a copy of archived Historic Environment Record (HER) data, dated to 2015. The Southend Historic Environment Record (SHER) is held by Southend Museums, SBC. At the time of writing, the SHER was not available for searches.

### 2.2 Prehistoric to 11th Century

2.2.1 Finds of Iron Age, Roman and Saxon date have all been found in and around Priory Park and indeed along the Prittle Brook Valley. On the slope to the east of the Prittle Brook is the site of a Roman and Anglo-Saxon cemetery first discovered in the 1920s (Pollitt 1923). One Roman burial was contained within a lead coffin and many of the Saxon graves, dating to the 7th century, contained weapons and jewellery (Tyler 1988). Further graves, including the elaborate grave of a wealthy Saxon male (the 'Prittlewell Prince'), were excavated in 2003 (Blair 2007).

### 2.3 The Priory of St Mary's

2.3.1 Priory Park is the site of the Cluniac Priory of St Mary's, founded in the early 12th century. The below-ground remains are designated as a Scheduled Monument (List No. 1018452). The refectory (*frater*) and Prior's chamber/cellars of the priory survive as standing buildings and are a Grade 1 Listed building (List No. 1112719). Elements of the cloister and church walls also survive.

2.3.2 The Priory was founded as a 'Lesser' house of Lewes Priory in the late 11th or early 12th centuries, endowed by Robert FitzSwein (Helliwell 1958). The first monastic buildings on the site were probably constructed in timber and later replaced in stone. Whilst the priory was a lesser house, it would have included all the principle elements of a Cluniac foundation. The main structures set around the cloister garth comprised the Priory church to the north, the dormitory (*dorter*) range to the east, the cellarer's range, with prior's chamber above, to the west and the refectory to the south (Fig. 2). Ancillary buildings and fishponds were located down the slope to the east.

2.3.3 The extant refectory is situated on the southern side of the cloister and its north wall is of 12th-century date with the remainder of later date but built upon the old foundations (RCHME 1923). The adjoining western range (Prior's chambers and cellarer's range) is of likely 15th-century date and has been altered and restored in subsequent centuries.

2.3.4 The priory church was located to the north of the cloister garth. Excavations in the early 20th century (1917-22) aimed to trace footprints of the buildings. These excavations were, however, limited and no copy of excavation reports is known to survive. Two plans of the site, published soon after these investigations (e.g. Fig. 3A), show slightly differing detail to the layouts, but, broadly speaking, the church is located to the north of the cloister, immediately to the west of the southern end of the cable duct route. Its plan was further elucidated during excavations in the late 1950s (Fig. 3B). The report of these works notes that the "church east of the nave transept junction was quite unknown" but proved to extend further east than anticipated and had an apsidal end (Helliwell 1958). The arcade of the nave was identified "at the foot of the brick wall" and beyond the brick wall the curvature of the apsidal wall extended "below the metalled road" (Helliwell 1958).

## 2.4 Post-Suppression to 1917

2.4.1 The Priory of St Mary's was suppressed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, being dissolved by the Act of Parliament in 1536. The prior received a pension of £20 yearly, and an inventory of the goods in the various chambers and buildings valued them at £110 18s. 0d. Cattle worth £38 14s. 0d., corn worth £27 17s. 2d. and 196¼ ounces of plate, valued at £37 11s. 2d, were also recorded. The site of the priory with the manor of Prior's Hall, in Prittlewell, was granted on 28 May, 1537, to Sir Thomas Audley, the Lord Chancellor and sold in 1537 to Lord Riche. It remained in private hands until 1917.

2.4.2 The church and east ranges were demolished following the suppression and the remainder of the buildings turned into a private residence. These were remodelled through the centuries and extensive 18th-century or modern additions were made on the west side.

2.4.3 By the late 19th century, historic mapping shows the building had extended to the rear of the western and refectory ranges, into the area of the cloister. To the north of these, the site of the priory church was used as kitchen gardens and a number of glasshouses were present. To the west of the cloister was a series of buildings, presumably stables and other working buildings, arranged around a courtyard.

## 2.5 Priory Park

2.5.1 In 1917, the Priory and accompanying grounds was purchased by Mr R. A. Jones and passed to Southend Borough Council. The restoration of the buildings and removal of 'accretions' attached to them was undertaken under the architect Phillip Johnston FSA FBRIA (Helliwell 1958). The buildings opened for use as a museum in 1921. It is during this period that the first phases of archaeological excavation were undertaken.

2.5.2 The area of the church, which had been a kitchen garden, was gradually utilised as a storage area for the parks department. In the 1950s, funding was obtained to improve this area, which was situated between the cloister gardens and the Old World gardens. At this time, piecemeal excavations were undertaken that further elucidated the layout of the church (Helliwell 1958). Further investigations were undertaken in the 1960s (Macleod 1966). By the



1970s, the outbuildings to the east of the cloister had been cleared and replaced by gardens.

2.5.3 In 2001, geophysical survey was undertaken within Priory Park by GSB Prospection Ltd, as part of a wider research and management programme carried out by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council. The remains of a number of possible former Priory structures were indicated to the south and west of the existing buildings (GSB Prospection 2001).

2.5.7 In 2007, two archaeological trial trenches were excavated to the west of the extant priory buildings on the site of a new visitors centre (Ennis 2008). This identified two sherds of Roman pottery, a gully, tentatively dated to the 13th- to 14th-century, and a possible pit and a background scatter of residual medieval material was noted in later features and deposits. A line of four rectilinear pits may represent one side of a former timber structure, perhaps a stable or cart lodge. Brick and roof tile suggest that this structure dates to the post-medieval period. Post-medieval deposits in the southern evaluation trench probably represent the dumping of rubbish. Monitoring of the excavation of service trenches linking to this new building identified traces of wall, probably pre-dating the dissolution (Crowe 2012).

2.5.4 The excavation of CCTV cable duct trenches around the site was monitored in 2010 (Ennis 2010; Fig. 2). This was excavated to a depth of 0.4m-0.5m below the present surface level (BPSL). The 2017 duct trench links in to this existing ducting. No archaeological remains were identified in the vicinity of the workshops where the two link.

## **2.6 Research aims and objectives**

2.6.1 The general aims of the watching brief (ASE 2017) were:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the new chamber and duct in the area of the workshops;
- To define, insofar as possible, the date, character, form and function of any archaeological features observed during groundworks;
- To determine the survival, extent and minimum depth below modern ground level of any such remains; and
- To determine, insofar as possible, the significance of any archaeological remains.

2.6.2 Site specific research goals were:

- To contribute to the development of a plan of the Priory to better elucidate it's form;
- To consider the chronological development of the Priory and subsequent activity.

### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 The methodology specified for the archaeological work can be found in full in the WSI (ASE 2017). What follows is a brief summary of this and a discussion of any changes made during the watching brief.
- 3.1.2 The excavation of c.19m of cable duct trench was undertaken by the groundworks contractor's mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket, under archaeological supervision (Fig. 2). The duct trench was 0.3m wide and 0.4m-0.45m deep. The inspection chamber was situated at the southern end of the trench, overlying the existing ducting (see Fig. 3). This chamber was 2m long by 0.8m wide and 0.5m deep.
- 3.1.3 Standard ASE recording methodologies were employed, based on a single-context recording system. Archaeological features were hand-drawn on archival-standard drawing film. An overall plan of the monitored area was produced using a GPS in order to locate accurately the archaeological features. A photographic record was produced, consisting of digital images.
- 3.1.4 No archaeological finds, other than late material (such as post-medieval/modern brick), were observed during the monitoring. This material was located in recent 'made-ground' layers (discussed in more detail below) and, as such, was not retained for further study.
- 3.1.5 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were recorded during the monitoring works.

#### 3.2 Site Archive

- 3.2.1 The site archive is currently temporarily stored at the ASE Essex office and permission will be sought from the landowner to deposit the paper archive with the Southend Museum, Southend-on-Sea Borough.
- 3.2.2 The contents of the site archive are quantified below, in Tables 1 and 2.

Context sheets	6
Section sheets	0
Plans sheets	0
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	17
Context register	0
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	1
Trench Record forms	0

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

Bulk finds (quantity e.g. 1 bag, 1 box, 0.5 box 0.5 of a box )	0 bags
Registered finds (number of)	0
Flots and environmental remains from bulk samples	0
Palaeoenvironmental specialists sample samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides)	0
Waterlogged wood	0
Wet sieved environmental remains from bulk samples	0

Table 2: Quantification of artefact and environmental samples

## 4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1 The cable duct trench ran along an asphalt trackway/roadway. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.4-0.45m deep. No archaeological features were identified within the trench and natural (undisturbed) geological deposits were not encountered.
- 4.2 The following deposit sequence was identified in the cable trench and manhole (described from top to bottom):
- Context [01] – Asphalt (Tarmac). Up to 0.1m thick.
  - Context [02] – Modern disturbance. Duct trench excavated in 2010. Pipe at 0.3m BPSL in the inspection chamber. Base of cut at 0.38m.
  - Context [03] – Hoggin (sorted gravels in orange sand). Up to 1.5m thick.
  - Context [04] – Made-ground. Silty clay, dark brownish grey with frequent pieces of broken brick and tile.
  - Context [05] – Disturbed Ground. Grey brown sandy clay with frequent patches of sorted gravels and orange sand. Greater than 0.2m thick.
  - Context [06] – Wall. At base of inspection chamber.
- 4.3 Context [06] comprised the upper surface of a wall or wall foundation, 0.8m wide (Fig. 4). This feature was located at the very base of the inspection chamber cut and, as such, was left *in situ*. It was below the level of the 2010 ducting, which limited access to the feature and explains why it has not been previously recorded. The upper surface exposed comprised flint rubble in a loose yellowish grey sandy mortar. It was orientated roughly north to south and no clear curvature was visible on the exposed section. This feature may be a wall foundation or the surviving base of a wall, the upper parts of which have been demolished.
- 4.4 The date of wall [06] is unknown and there is no clear correlation between the feature and the historic plans of the site. The construction materials would perhaps suggest a medieval date is possible as the excavated walls of the church are of flint rubble and mortar.
- 4.5 The location would appear to broadly correlate with that of a wall on the 1923 plan (Fig. 3A), although the alignment is slightly different. This could result, however, from the differences in scale of the plans. There is no accompanying key to this plan and thus its phase is unknown. An alternative explanation is that [06] is part of the apsidal chancel of the church, as illustrated on the 1958 excavation plan (Fig. 3B). Again, the correlation of the two is imprecise and as such, the two cannot be definitively correlated. Excavated parts of this wall (labelled 7 on the historic plan) are described as being in “fist sized flints in a liberal brown cockleshell mortar” (Helliwell 1958).

## 5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence

5.1.1 A deposit sequence of asphalt and made/disturbed ground was recorded along the length of the cable trench; these deposits relate to the construction and maintenance of the access road, which has been established since the 1920s/1930s. The modern deposits overlie the remains of a wall [06] (Fig. 4), which is perhaps most likely to be of medieval date, although no direct correlation with existing site plans has been possible.

### 5.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts

5.2.1 The survival of wall [06] suggests that archaeological structural deposits survive below the asphalt track. This bears out the conclusions of the previous excavation works (e.g. Helliwell 1958), which had established that, whilst previous impacts on the archaeological remains had taken place, they were limited in scale and localised.

### 5.3 Impact on archaeological remains

5.3.1 The archaeological monitoring established that the excavation of the duct trenches was relatively shallow and only extended to the base of the made ground deposits in the inspection chamber pit. Archaeological remains, [06], were only identified in the base of the latter and were left *in situ*. Accordingly, the works resulted in minimal impacts on archaeological remains.

### 5.4 Consideration of research aims

5.4.1 The monitoring works established that there were archaeological remains within the inspection chamber and thus that it is possible that remains may survive elsewhere below the track and associated made-ground. The archaeological remains located during this monitoring were at 0.5m BPSL.

5.4.2 The remains of the wall [06] cannot be definitively dated, but their construction is similar to that of other elements of the medieval priory buildings that have been excavated on the site previously. Therefore, it is possible they are of a similar medieval date. Given the constrained size of the works, an interpretation of the wall in relation to the known plan of the priory is uncertain.

### 5.5 Conclusions

5.5.1 The archaeological monitoring at Prittlewell Priory identified a single wall of possible medieval date at the base of the trench (0.5m BPSL). This wall has been preserved *in situ*. No other archaeological remains were recorded along the length of the trench, as the groundworks did not extend below made and/or disturbed ground deposits.

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Other:

British Geological Survey (accessed 02/08/2017)

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ASE would like to thank Southend-on-Sea Borough Council for commissioning the work and Debbie Priddy (Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments) for her guidance and monitoring throughout the project. The excavation and survey was undertaken by Ellen Heppell. Andy Lewsey and Ellen Heppell produced the figures for this report, Ron Humphrey project managed the excavations and Mark Atkinson managed the post-excavation process.

## Appendix 1: HER Summary

<b>Site name/Address:</b> Prittlewell Priory Cable Ducts, Southend-on-Sea	
<b>Parish:</b> Prittlewell	<b>District:</b> Southend-on-Sea
<b>NGR:</b> 587715 187382	<b>Site Code:</b> SOPP17
<b>Type of Work:</b> Watching Brief	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> E. Heppell. Archaeology South-East
<b>Date of Work:</b> 02 August 2017	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> c.6sq m
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b> Southend	<b>Funding source:</b> SBC
<b>Further Seasons Anticipated?:</b> No	<b>Related HER No's:</b> List No. 1002139
<b>Final Report:</b> EAH Summary only	<b>OASIS No:</b> 300205
<b>Periods Represented:</b> Medieval and modern	
<b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b>	
<p><i>A programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the excavation of cable ducts to the east of Prittlewell Priory in Priory Park, Southend. The park is the site of the medieval Priory of St Mary's and is a Scheduled Monument (List No. 1018452) and two Listed Buildings are also present, Prittlewell Priory itself (List No. 1112719) and the Old Crowstone (List No. 1168708).</i></p> <p><i>The cable duct trench was 0.3m wide and 0.4m-0.45m deep. It ran for 20m along an asphalt track to link into existing ducting. An inspection chamber was excavated at the junction of the two, to a depth of 0.5m. The strata recorded were of post-medieval/modern date comprising made and/or disturbed ground. Natural deposits were not reached.</i></p> <p><i>The remains of a flint rubble and mortar wall were identified at the very base of the inspection chamber and left in situ. The wall is possibly, on the basis of its construction, medieval in date. It is situated towards the western end of the planned location of the priory church and may perhaps be part of it.</i></p> <p><i>No other archaeological remains were identified.</i></p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports:</b>	
Ennis, T. 2010, <i>Prittlewell Priory CCTV</i> , Unpublished archive notes. ECC FAU proj. 2278	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> E. Heppell	<b>Date of Summary:</b> 02 Nov 2017



**Appendix 2: OASIS Form**

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-300025**

**Project details**

Project name Service Chamber and Cable Trench. Prittlewell Priory

Short description of the project Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the excavation of cable ducts to the east of the remains of Prittlewell Priory The remains of a flint rubble and mortar wall were identified at the very base of the inspection chamber and left *in situ*. The wall is possibly medieval in date. It is situated towards the western end of the planned location of the priory church and may perhaps be part of it.

Project dates Start: 02-08-2017 End: 30-11-2017

Previous/future work Yes / Not known

Any associated project reference codes 1018452 – SM No.  
170549 – Contractor’s No.  
SOPP17 – Site Code

Type of project Recording project

Site status Scheduled Monument (SM)

Current Land use Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings

Monument type WALL Medieval

Significant Finds NONE None

Investigation type "Watching Brief"

Prompt Scheduled Monument Consent

**Project location**

Country England

Site location ESSEX SOUTHEND ON SEA SOUTHEND ON SEA Prittlewell Priory

Postcode SS2 6NB

Study area 0.02 Kilometres

Site coordinates TQ 87715 87382 51.553504600424 0.707995457607 51 33 12 N  
000 42 28 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 14m Max: 14.6m

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation Archaeology South-East

Project brief originator Historic England

Project design originator ASE

Project director/manager Ron Humphrey

Project supervisor E Heppell

Type of sponsor/funding body Client

Name of Southend Borough Council

sponsor/funding body

**Project archives**

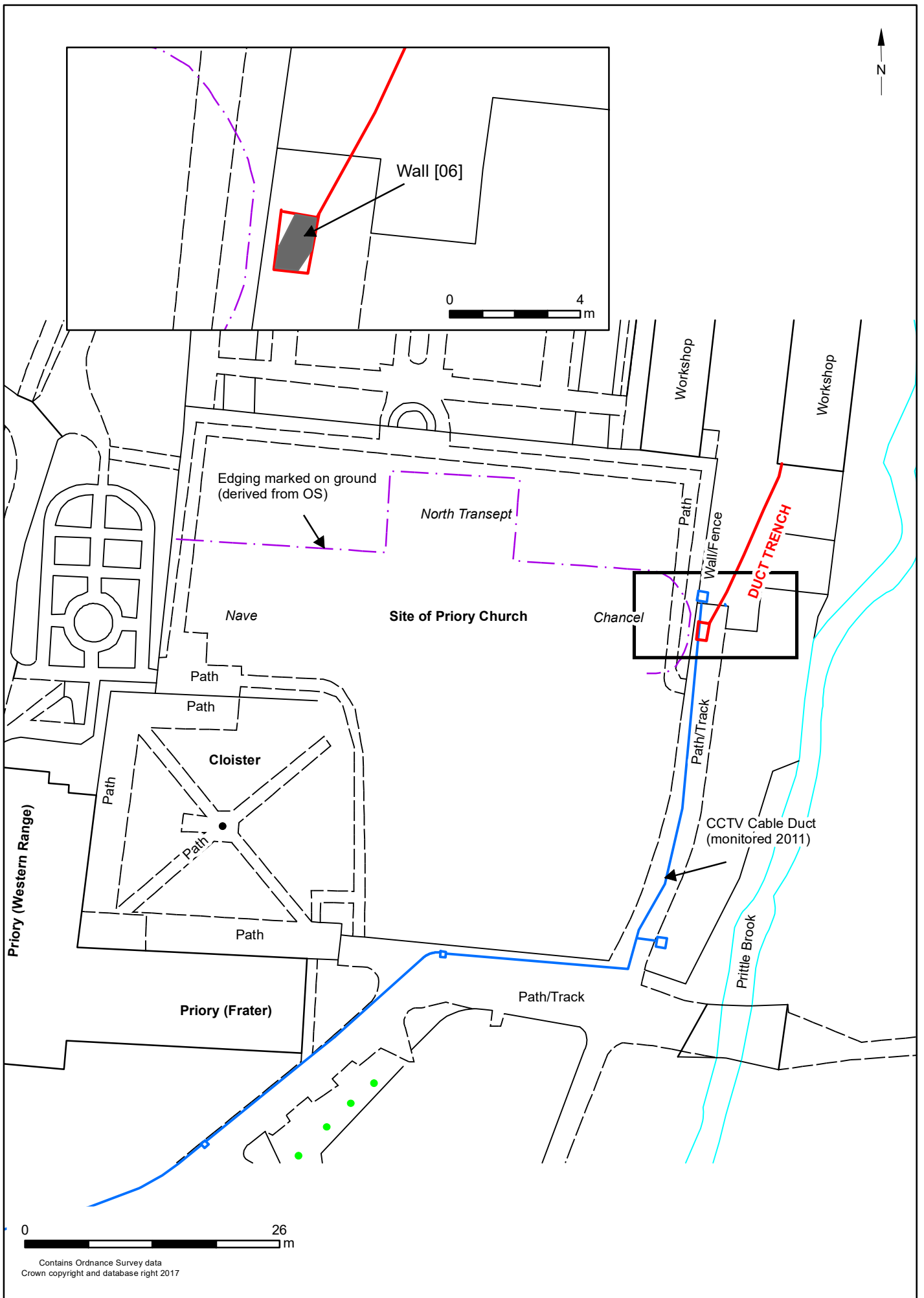
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Southend Museum
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Southend Museum
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Drawing", "Notebook - Excavation", "Research", "General Notes", "Report"

**Project bibliography**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Service Chamber and Trench at Prittlewell Priory (Scheduled Monument) Southend-on-Sea, Essex. Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Heppell, E.
Other bibliographic details	Rep. No. 2017435
Date	2017
Issuer or publisher	ASE
Place of issue or publication	Witham
Description	A4 typescript and accompanying illustrations
Entered by	Ellen Heppell (e.heppell@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	3 November 2017

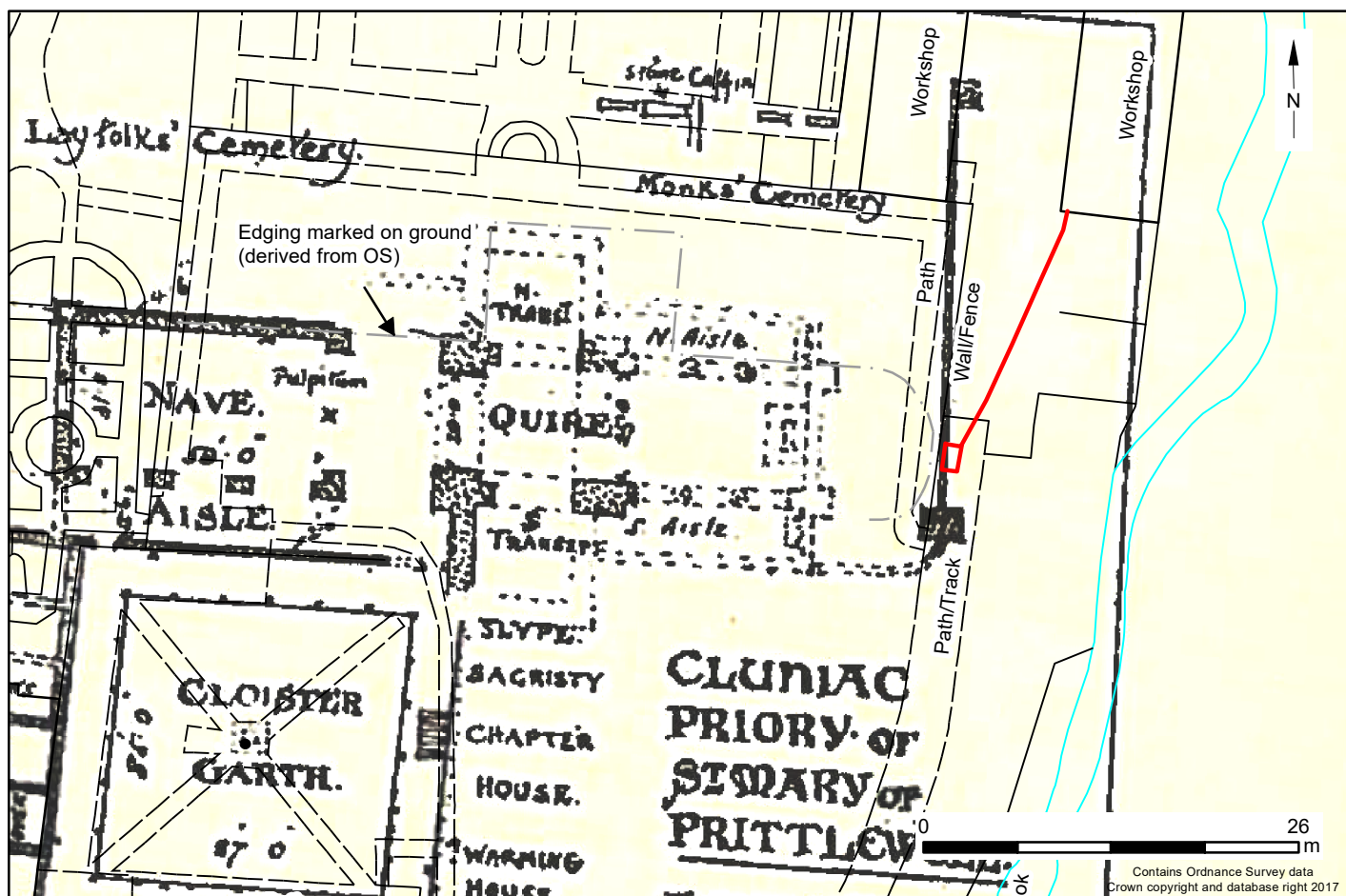


© Archaeology South-East		Prittlewell Priory, Southend-on-Sea.	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 170549	July 2017	Site location and Designated Assets	
Report No: 2017435	Drawn by: EMH		

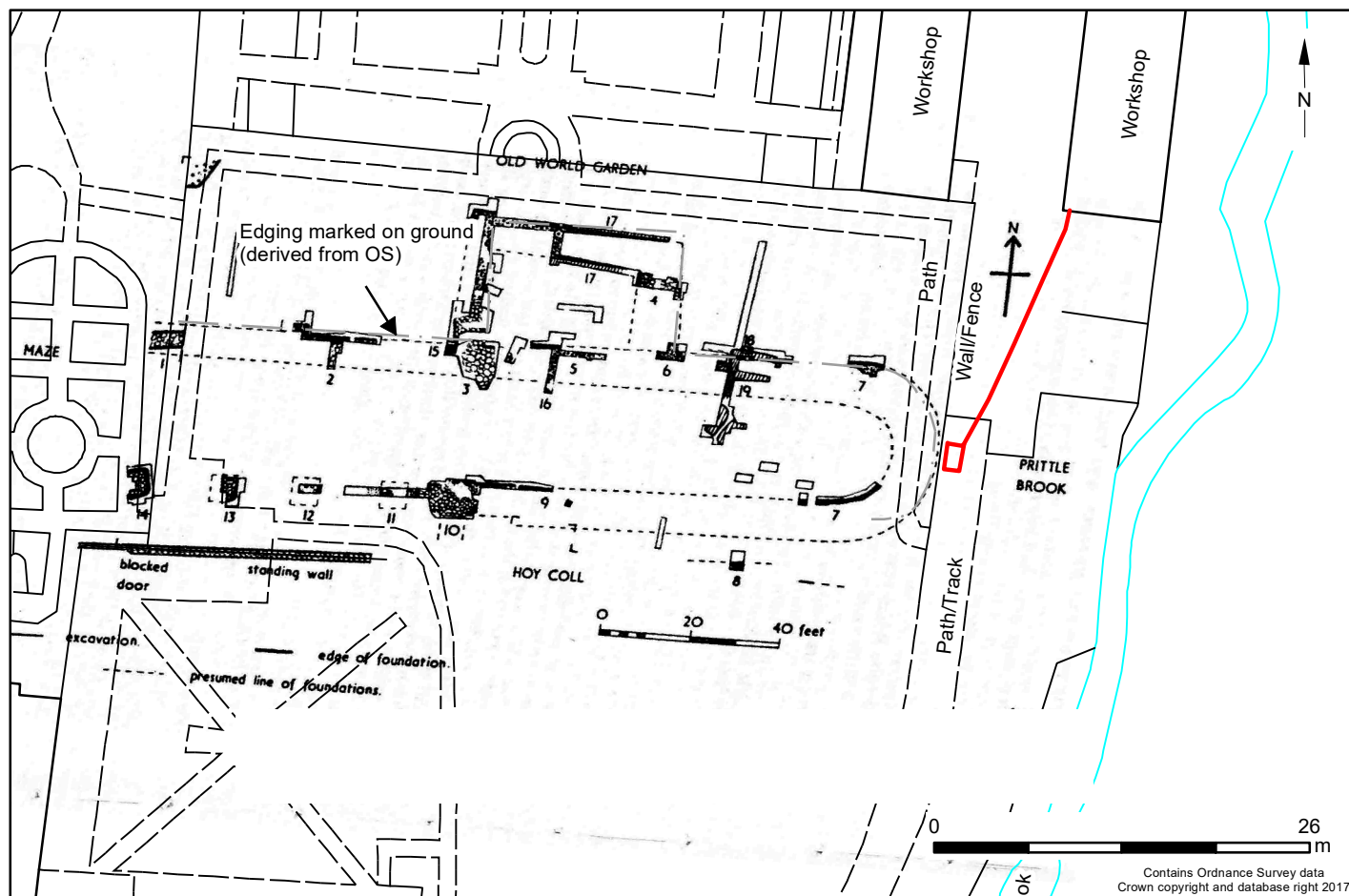


Contains Ordnance Survey data  
Crown copyright and database right 2017

© Archaeology South-East		Prittlewell Priory, Southend-on-Sea.	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 170549	July 2017	Monitored chamber and duct (in red)	
Report No: 2017435	Drawn by: EMH		

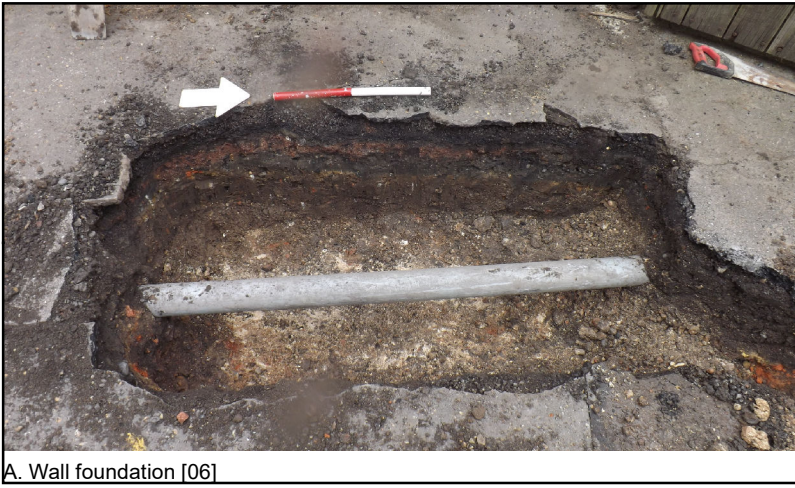


A. Location of the cable duct and modern mapping overlaid on a 1923 plan of the priory (in Pollitt 1923)



B. Location of the cable duct and modern mapping overlaid on a 1958 plan of the priory church (Helliwell 1958)

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Project Ref: 170549	July 2017	Historic plans of the priory	
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A. Wall foundation [06]



B. Example of made ground layers along the trench



C. Wall foundation [06]

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Project Ref: 170549	July 2017	Selected Site Photographs	
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