
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE,
BISHAM ABBEY, BERKSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

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NGR: TL 038 136	Report No: 3286
District: East Herts	Site Code: BPO.02
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: P1539
Signed:	Date: April 2009

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey, Berkshire, An archaeological monitoring and recording</i>		
<p><i>During March 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks associated with the replacement of a leaking fire hydrant valve.</i></p> <p><i>The site is occupied by a sports hall with associated facilities including hard and grassed courts and pitches, accommodation blocks and access roads. In the western part of a site, the main administrative buildings occupy a Grade I Listed medieval and Tudor house. To the south of the main house, several other historic buildings survive including a 15th century dovecote and former barns, and contemporary agricultural buildings.</i></p> <p><i>The area of monitoring was within the original enclosure of the medieval monastic precinct therefore a high potential existed for medieval and post-medieval remains to be encountered. In the event the groundworks were limited to the area of previous ground disturbance associated with the construction of the fire hydrant, and no archaeological features or finds were present within the area monitored</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	17 th March 2009		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work? Y/N	N
P. number	3395	Site code	BPO.02
Type of project	<i>Watching Brief</i>		
Site status	<i>National Monument</i>		
Current land use	<i>National Sports Centre, grassland</i>		
Planned development	<i>Replacement of a leaking fire hydrant valve</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>No archaeological features present</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>No archaeological finds recovered</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Berkshire</i>	<i>Windsor Maidenhead</i>	<i>and Bisham</i>
HER/ SMR for area			
Post code (if known)	<i>SL7 1RT</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 5000m²</i>		
NGR	<i>SU 848 848</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>c.28 – 29</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>No formal brief – requirement of SAM consent</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Rozwadowski M.</i>		
Funded by	<i>Johnson Control Systems</i>		
Bibliography			
Full title	<i>National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey, Berkshire An archaeological monitoring and recording.</i>		
Authors	<i>Rozwadowski, M.</i>		
Report no.	<i>3286</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>April 2009</i>		

NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE, BISHAM ABBEY, BERKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

SUMMARY

During March 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks associated with the replacement of a leaking fire hydrant valve.

The site is occupied by a sports hall with associated facilities including hard and grassed courts and pitches, accommodation blocks and access roads. In the western part of a site, the main administrative buildings occupy a Grade I Listed medieval and Tudor house. To the south of the main house, several other historic buildings survive including a 15th century dovecote and former barns, and contemporary agricultural buildings.

The area of monitoring was within the original enclosure of the medieval monastic precinct therefore a high potential existed for medieval and post-medieval remains to be encountered. In the event the groundworks were limited to the area of previous ground disturbance associated with the construction of the fire hydrant, and no archaeological features or finds were present within the area monitored

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 During March 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording in association with ground works related to replacement of leaking fire hydrant valve (Figs.1-2). The monitoring was carried with Scheduled Monument Consent, and was commissioned by Johnson Control Systems.

1.2 The monitoring and recording was carried out in accordance with a specification prepared by AS (dated 04/03/2009), and approved by English Heritage, and as part of Scheduled Monument Consent granted for the works to the hydrant.

1.3 The project followed the procedures outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2001).

1.4 The principal objective was to monitor all aspects of the development programme likely to affect archaeological remains; to secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme; and to secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of project archive.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 The site is occupied by a sports hall with associated facilities including hard and grassed courts and pitches, accommodation blocks and access roads. In the western part of a site, the main administrative buildings occupy a Grade I Listed medieval and Tudor house. To the south of the main house, several other historic buildings survive, including a 15th century dovecote and former barns and contemporary agricultural buildings. The latter have now been converted to private residential accommodation. The current area of monitoring is located in the middle of a site, approximately 80m east of the Tudor house.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

2.1 Bisham Abbey and its adjacent village occupy the floodplain of the river Thames at approximately 29m AOD. Soil maps illustrate a narrow band of Thames alluvium occupying the river margins, indicative of the more recent limits of flooding and deposition, while the former fields and flat lands extending through the area comprise the Sutton 2 Association, composed of a well-drained fine and coarse loamy soil (SSEW 1983).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site is presented in detail in a preceding desk-based assessment, which is summarised below (Prosser, 2001, HAT Report 920):

4.2 The assessment recorded that many of the buildings and sports pitches lie within the original enclosure of the medieval monastic precinct, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument containing Grade I and Grade II Listed buildings.

4.3 Prehistoric activity in the Bisham area is poorly understood. Artefacts have been found extensively on the gravels of the river Thames, attesting long-term occupation, and cropmarks of possible Bronze Age burial mounds have been located close to the assessment area. Ephemeral Roman evidence is likewise found quite close to the abbey. Before the later Middle Ages however, East Berkshire was a poorly defined and peripheral area, in which colonisation and settlement is attested, though the archaeological resource remains inadequately quantified.

4.4 During the 12th century, the manor was granted to the Knights Templar, who established a preceptory on the present site. Buildings dating from the later period of their occupation still exist, including the magnificent hall and porch with its impressive door, which are notable and important buildings of their type. After the suppression of the Order, the site was granted to the earls of Salisbury, who founded a priory for Augustinian canons in 1334.

During the following two centuries, members of the family continued to occupy the former preceptory buildings, which adjoined the priory range.

4.5 The priory was suppressed during the dissolution of the lesser monasteries in 1536, but re-founded for a short time by King Henry VIII as a Benedictine abbey. After its second suppression in July 1537, the church was demolished and the associated buildings gradually removed by the Hoby family, who purchased the site and converted it to an aristocratic residence in Tudor Renaissance style. In 1780, the manor was purchased by the Vansittart family, who occupied the estate until a descendant gave the buildings over to the use of the Council for Physical Recreation in 1947. Though the site is now subdivided and has undergone much modification and alteration, it retains a wealth of historic landscape and buildings interest.

4.6 The resistivity survey commissioned by HAT and undertaken by Stratascan (HAT Report No.967) covered three areas and revealed high resistance linear anomalies in each area, suggesting the presence of buried walls possibly relating to former monastic buildings.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of all ground works, inspection of subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features, the examination of spoil heaps and the recording of soil profiles. Deposits were recorded by means of *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for archaeological finds.

5.2 The monitoring and recording was conducted on ground works associated with replacement of a fire hydrant valve. A site visit was undertaken to monitor these works on 17th March 2009.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

6.1 Drainage Works

Sample Section 1: DP 1

<i>Sample section facing west</i>		
<i>Facing south 0.00 = 28.50m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.20m	L3000	Topsoil. Dark blackish grey soft clayey silt.
0.20m+	L3001	Backfill. Dark brownish grey moderately compact clayey silt with occasional fragments of CBM, flints and rounded pebbles.

Sample Section 2: DP 2

<i>Sample section facing east</i>		
<i>Facing south 0.00= 28.52m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.20m	L3000	Topsoil. Dark blackish grey soft clayey silt.
0.20m+	M3002	Brick wall. Modern brick wall of a fire hydrant.

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors, inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds during the archaeological monitoring and recording

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 A dark blackish grey soft clayey silt topsoil (L3000; 0.20m thick) was present. It overlay a dark brownish grey moderately compact clayey silt with occasional fragments of CBM, flints and rounded pebbles (L3001). The latter represents the backfill of a modern trench.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 The area of monitoring was within the original enclosure of the medieval monastic precinct, with an attendant high potential for medieval and post-medieval remains to be encountered. The groundworks monitored were extremely limited, and contained within the area of previous ground disturbance related to the original construction of the fire hydrant. No archaeological features or finds were recovered from this small area.

10 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

Archive records (with an inventory) will be deposited at Reading Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AS would like to thank Johnson Control Systems for funding the project and to Chris Rhodes for his assistance.

AS would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Mr Martyn Hopwood of Turner & Townsend and Mr Chris Welch of English Heritage.

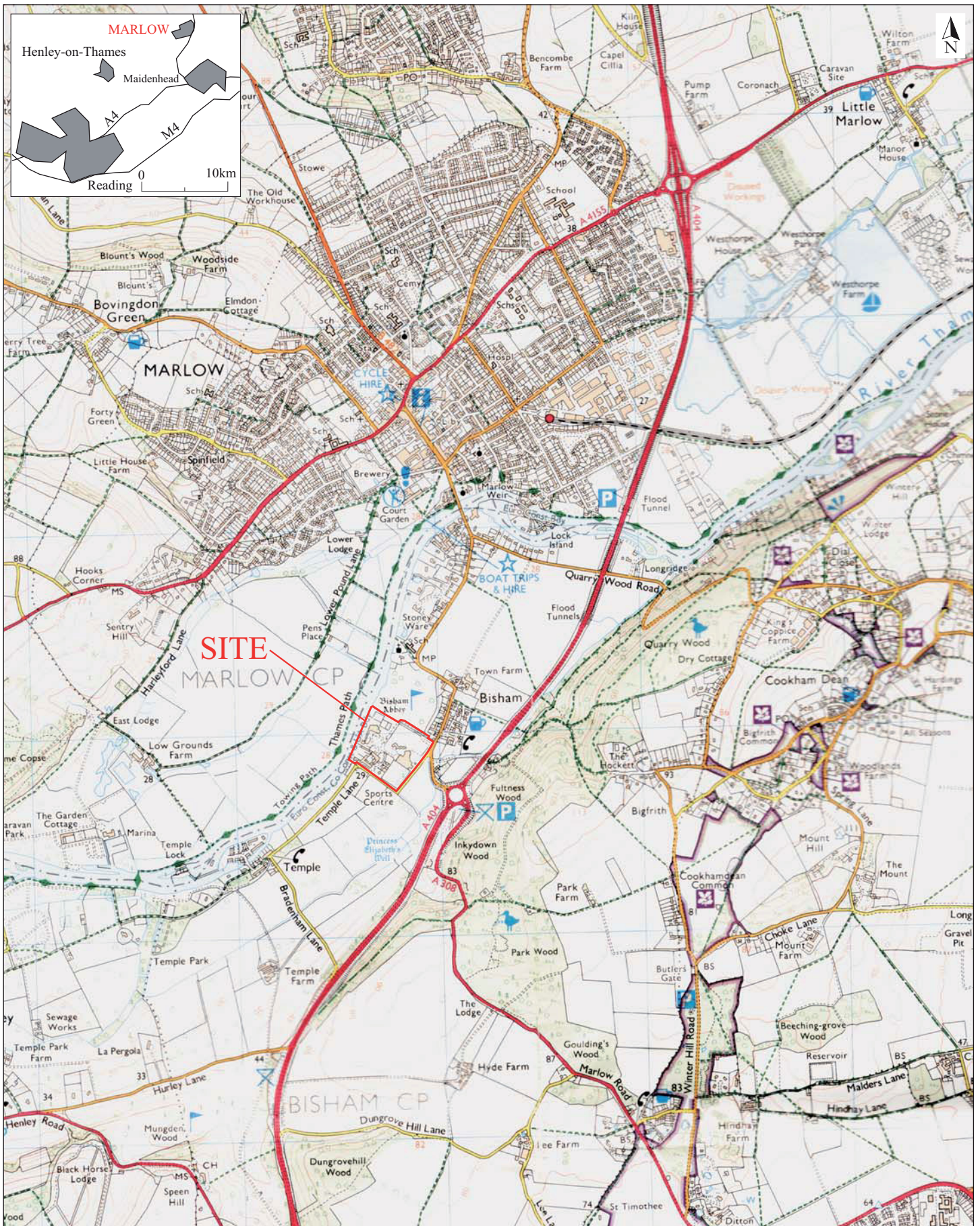
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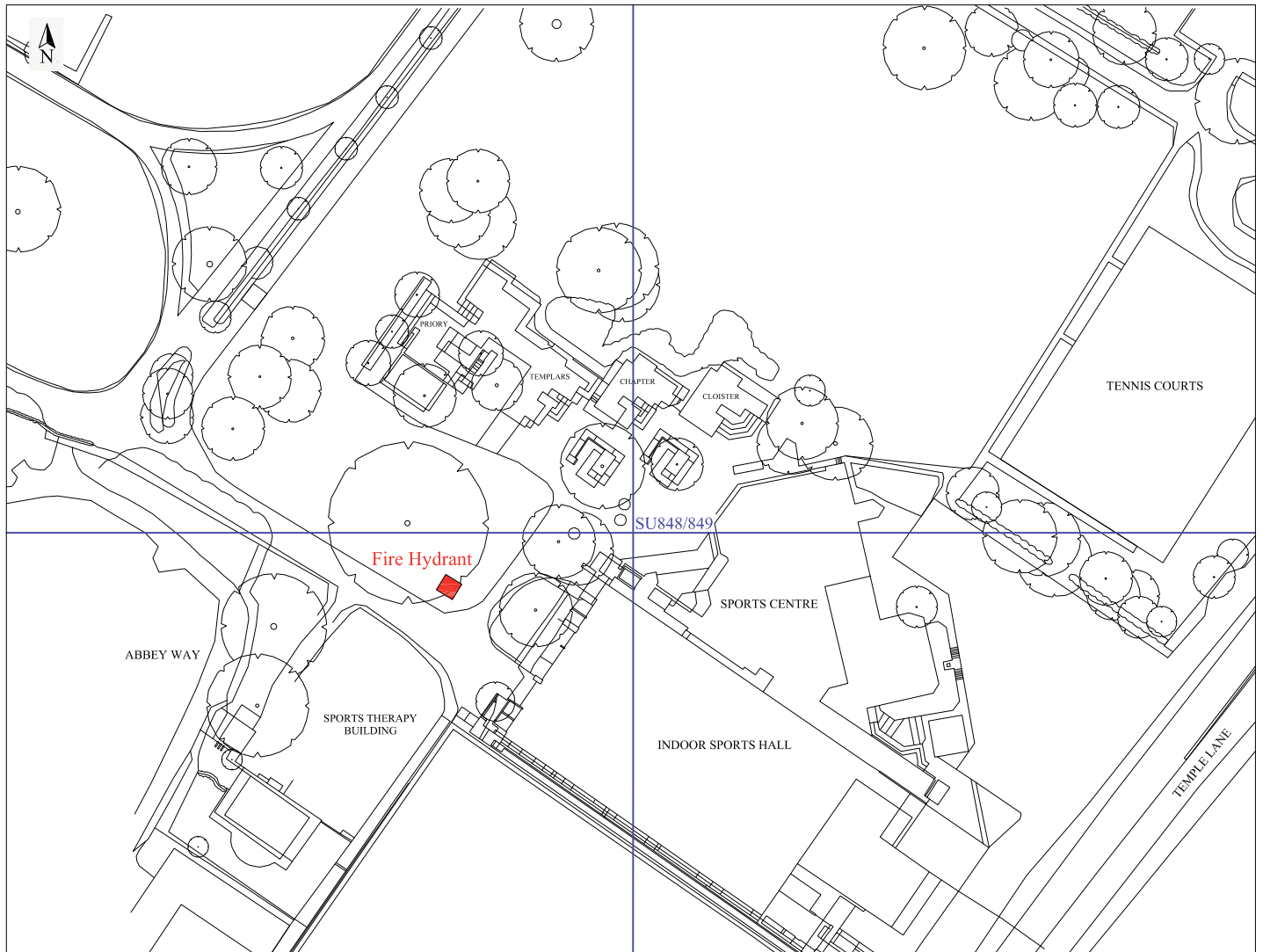
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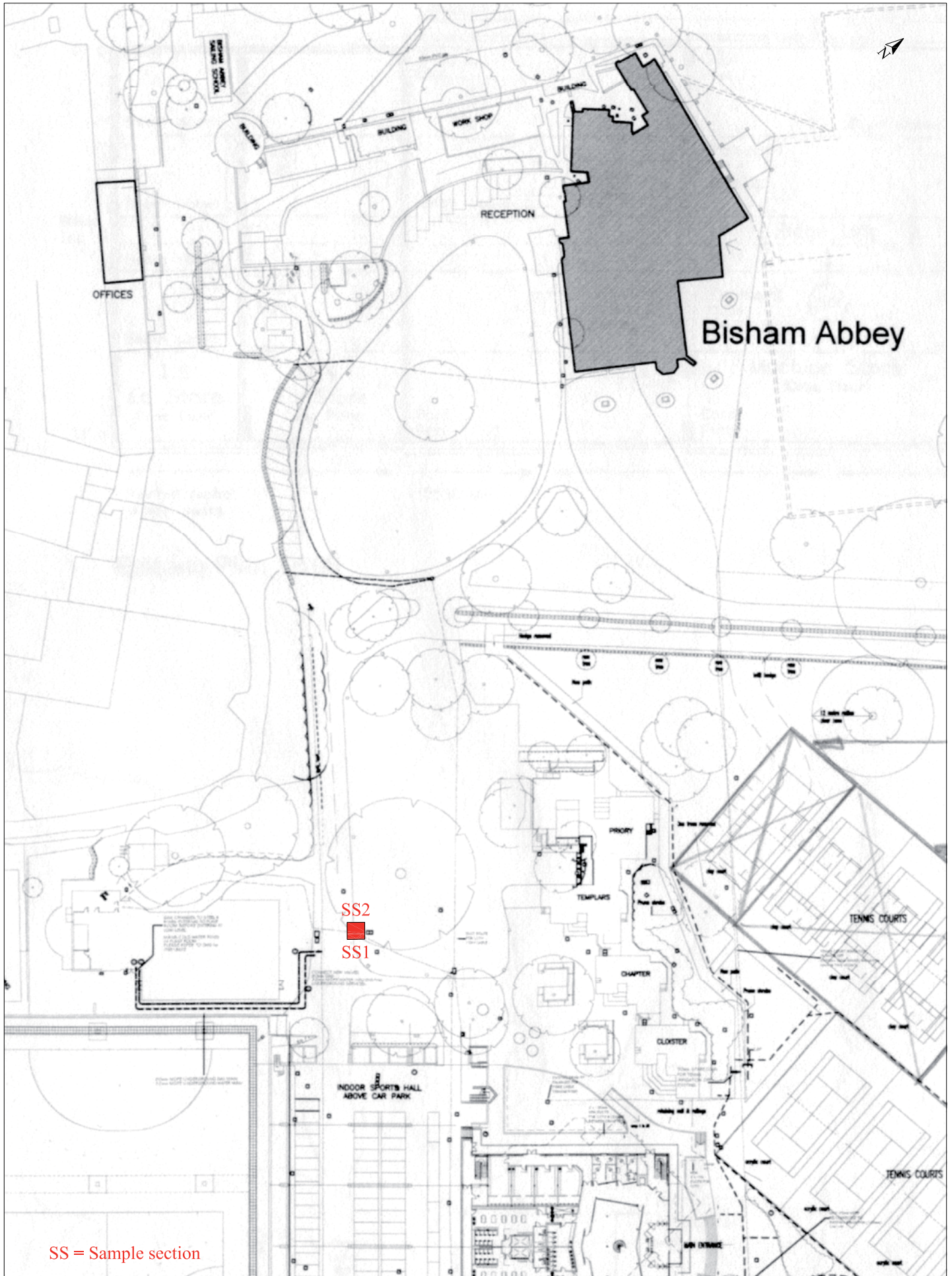
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000



0 50m

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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
Scale 1:1250 at A4



SS = Sample section

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Fig. 3 Section location plan

Scale 1:1000 at A4

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP1 Sample Section 1. Looking E.



DP2 Sample Section 2. Looking W.



DP3 Area of works. Looking NE.