

Archaeological Observation

On behalf of

English Heritage Trust

Cleeve Abbey Phase 2

Abbey Road

Washford

Old Cleeve

Watchet

Somerset

TA23 OPS



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Cover: View northwest of South Cloister of Cleeve Abbey showing new pavilion structure and location of Pit 2

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Contents:

1	Executive Summary	1
2	Introduction.....	2
	2.1 Soils & Geology	3
3	Aims & Objectives.....	3
4	Scheme of Works.....	4
	4.1 Recording.....	5
5	Results	6
	5.1 Pit 2.....	6
	5.2 Pit 3.....	10
6	Conclusions.....	13
7	Copyright	13
8	Bibliography.....	13
9	Appendix 1: Table of Results	15
	9.1 Pit 2.....	15
	9.2 Pit 3.....	17

1 Executive Summary

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Daniel Comerford of Ellis & Co Shepton Mallet Somerset on behalf of the English Heritage Trust (EHT) to carry out a programme of archaeological observation during drainage works associated with the removal of a temporary marquee structure at Cleeve Abbey Somerset and replacement with a purpose-built single-storey timber-framed pavilion to protect the 13th -century Old Refectory tiled pavement (NGR: ST 04714 40676).

In May and July 2015, BA monitored previous groundworks at the site relating to the removal of an area of turf and topsoil at the southern extent of the Old Refectory and the locating of a 20th -century storm drain cover to the south of the cloister. No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered, although material of a late medieval date was uncovered within a deposit possibly of in-situ demolition material associated with the dismantling of the Abbey in the post-Dissolution period but which could equally have been redeposited from elsewhere on the site at a much later date.

This second phase of groundworks included two small pits to connect new drainage associated with the pavilion into the existing pipework. To the east of the Old Refectory, a pit was excavated connecting the 20th -century storm drain uncovered during the previous phase of works into the new drainage, utilizing the course of an existing drainage channel. To the west of the Old Refectory the new drainage was connected into existing pipework via the removal and re-laying of previously-lifted stones forming the Old Refectory wall and necessitating the removal of a small area of previously undisturbed wall footings.

Other than the structural elements encountered during the observation, no further remains or finds of archaeological significance were uncovered. Results relating to the first phase of work are contained within a separate report.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Daniel Comerford of Ellis & Co Shepton Mallet Somerset on behalf of the English Heritage Trust (EHT) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation during drainage works associated with the removal of a temporary marquee structure at Cleeve Abbey Abbey Road Washford Somerset TA230PS and its replacement with a purpose-built single-storey timber-framed pavilion to provide shelter and environmental protection for the 13th-century Old Refectory tiled pavement (NGR: ST 04714 40676) (Planning Ref. 3/26/14/024) (*fig. 1*).

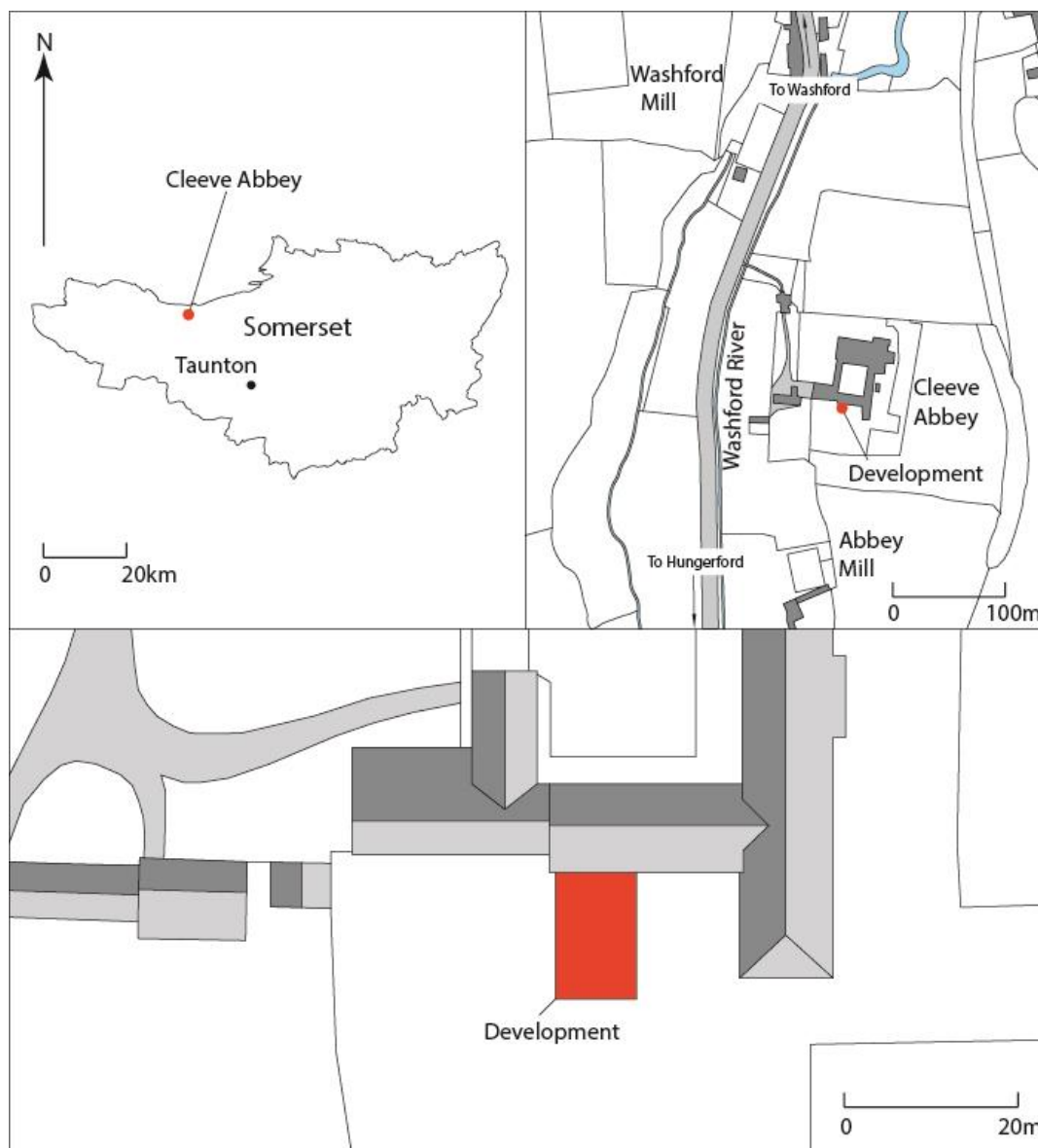


Fig. 1: Site location plan

Cleeve Abbey, or *Vallis Florida*, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. SM 28519, HA 1014824) founded in

1198 by Cistercian monks from Revesby Lincolnshire and is regarded as small by medieval standards. The Abbey was subject to the ravages of the Dissolution and little now remains above ground of the Church except low walls and foundations.

The site comprises a Grade I Listed Building (Ref. 264814) and is notable for the extensive survival of its monastic buildings, the E and S ranges of the claustral ranges being remarkably complete. The 15th -century wooden vaulted Refectory survives, as does the Chapter House and Great Dormitory, together with 13th -and 15th -century painted decorative, and 13th -century heraldic, tiled flooring. The early 16th -century gatehouse today serves as the main visitors' entrance. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the monastery supported up to 28 monks, together with a number of lay brothers, who occupied both the monastery itself and its surrounding granges.

The tiled pavement represents a survival of the earlier Refectory building of the 13th century, which was replaced in the 15th century, when the entire S range of the monastery was substantially altered. In support of the application (Ref. S00096117), EH South West refers to the *Conservation Management Plan* from 2000, which considered the tiled pavement - which represents a considerably larger range of designs and fabric types than had been previously thought (Harcourt 2001) - to be of European significance, comparable with the Chapter House pavement at Westminster Abbey in its contribution to an understanding of the development of decorated tiles in NW Europe.

During previous archaeological observations at the site by BA in May and July 2015 a 13m x 2.4m area of topsoil and underlying material was removed, to a maximum depth of 0.34m, at the southern extent of the Old Refectory building. Underlying the topsoil, the sequence of deposits comprised a made-ground layer sealing a further dumped deposit which contained medieval dating material and was potentially an *in-situ* demolition layer associated with the dismantling of the Abbey in the post-Dissolution period, although it could equally have been redeposited from elsewhere on the site at a much later date. Underlying this material and present at the impact depth was a pinkish-brown silty coarse sand and stone deposit that may have formed part of the original construction of the Refectory, although no supporting dating evidence was recovered.

2.1 Soils & Geology

The soils in the immediate vicinity of the site are predominantly typical brown earths of the CREDITON (541e) series, composed of well-drained gritty reddish loamy soils over Devonian and Permo-Triassic sandstone (SSEW 1983).

3 Aims & Objectives

The aim of the archaeological observation was to locate and record any archaeological finds, features or deposits within the ground works area and to confirm that no impact on the archaeological resource occurred during the course of the works without the implementation of this programme of archaeological work.

Research objectives were consistent with those set out in *The Archaeology of South West England: South West*

Archaeological Research Framework (Webster 2007).

4 Scheme of Works

Archaeological observation was carried out in accordance with *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief (ClfA 2014)*, *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (ClfA 2014)* and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide (Lee 2015)*. BA adheres to the *ClfA Code of conduct (2014)* and to the content of the *Somerset County Council Heritage Services Archaeological Handbook (Membrey 2011)*.

The groundworks forming Phase 2 (*figs. 2 & 3*) comprised two pits located to the E and W of the new pavilion structure (Pit 2 and Pit 3, respectively). To avoid duplication of context numbers, the Phase 1 trench previously opened was referred to as Trench 1 whilst the numbering system for this current Phase 2 report commenced with Pit 2.

Pit 2 measured 0.7m × 0.35m × 0.7m (maximum depth).

Pit 3 measured 0.8m × 0.65m × 0.4m (maximum depth).

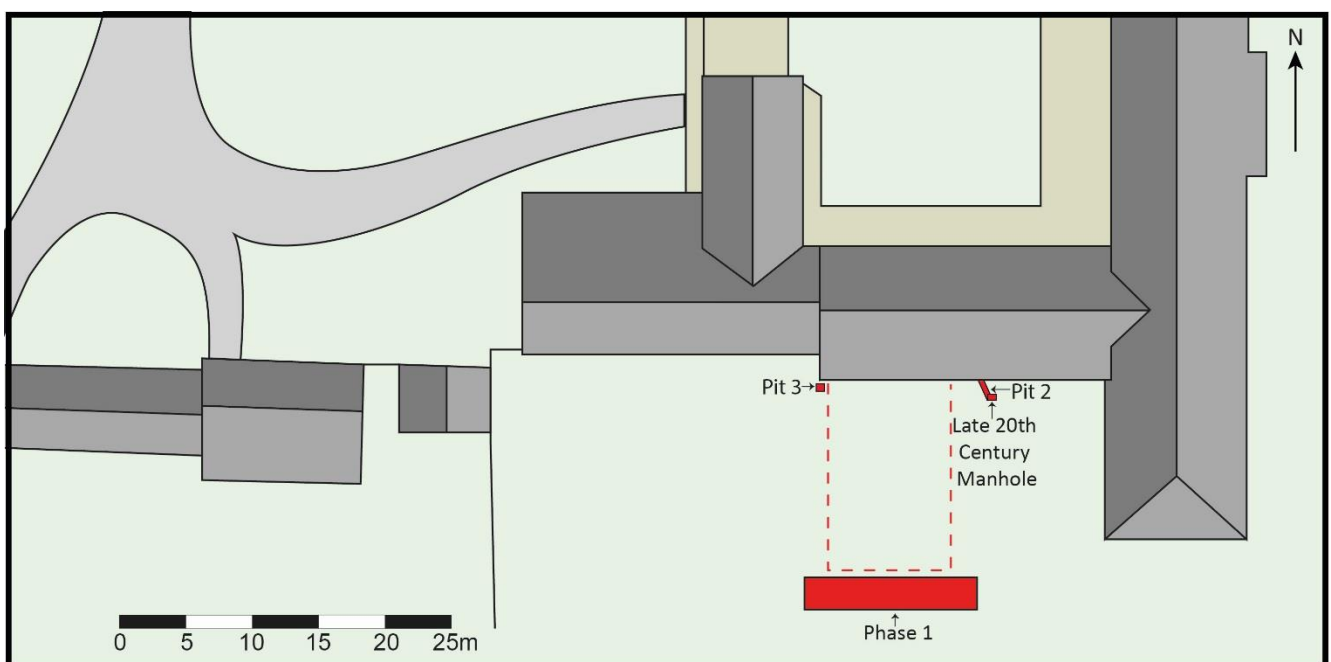


Fig. 2: Plan showing location of Phase 1 and Phase 2 groundworks

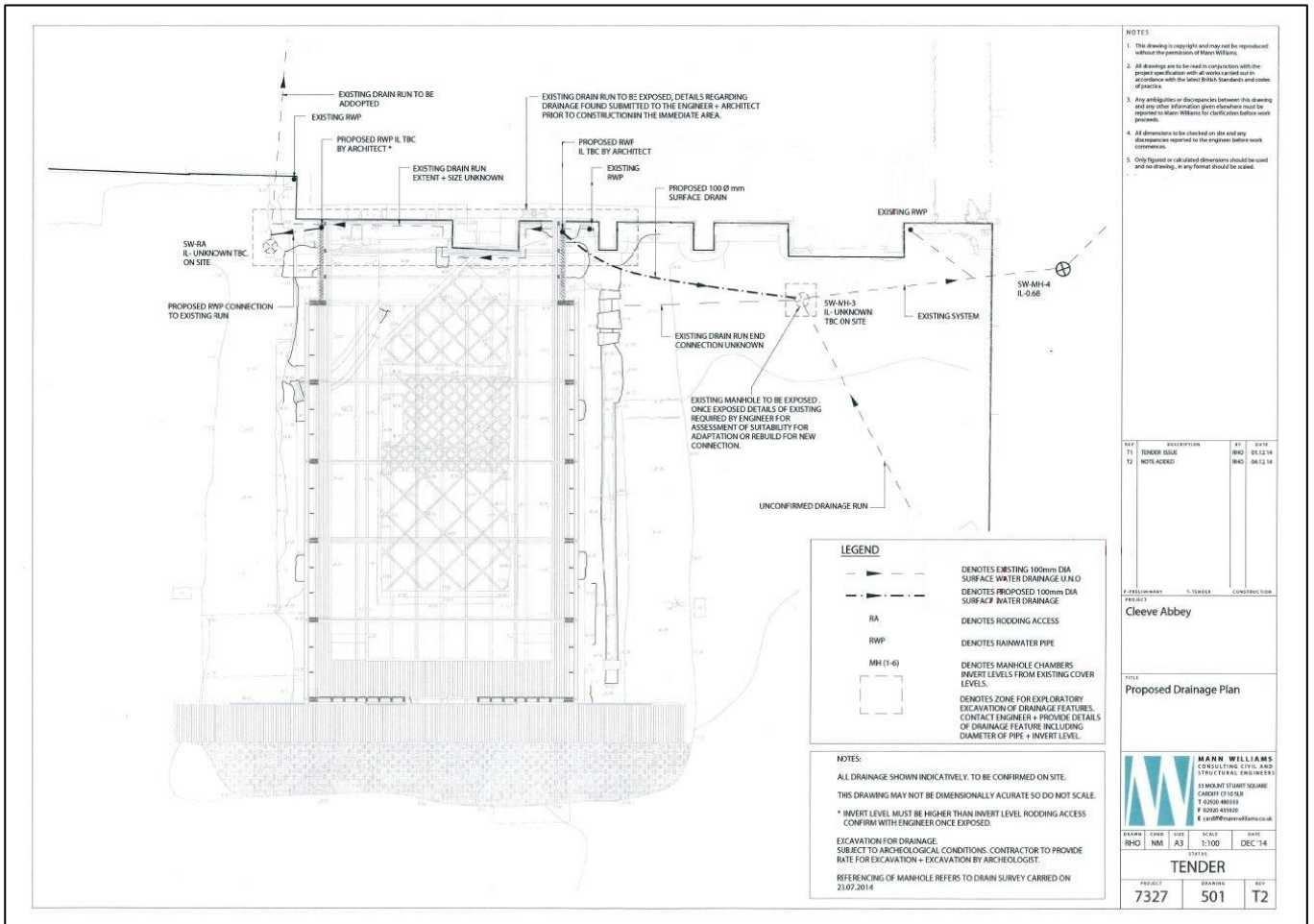


Fig. 3: Proposed drainage plan
(Supplied by Mann Davies Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers for information – Drawing No. 501 T2)

4.1 Recording

Full written, drawn and photographic records were made in accordance with *BA's Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (BA 2014).

Records include the following:

1. A *pro-forma* context record for each stratigraphic unit examined
2. Plans and sections at scales of 1:10, 1:20 & 1:50. All hand-drawn records were produced on gridded, archive-stable polyester film. These are numbered and listed in a drawing register, with drawing numbers cross-referenced to written site records.
3. A detailed high-resolution (16MPX) photographic record. All photographic records have been indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. A photographic register contains details of subject and direction of view, indexed by frame number.

5 Results

5.1 Pit 2

Pit 2 was located approximately 2.5m to the E of the eastern edge of the pavilion structure (*cover image*), joining new drainage into the line of the existing drain, via an inspection chamber (205); inspection chamber (205) was previously identified during Phase 1 of the groundworks. The route of the new drain utilized the course of a drainage channel (202), which ran beneath the buttresses of the South Cloister of the Abbey (*Plate 1*). Although the date of this channel is unknown, it appears to be post-medieval. The S side (202) was constructed of brick and concrete, although excavation of the pit revealed that the slate base, (203) extended slightly further southwards than the modern edging (202) (*Plate 2*). This may suggest that the post-medieval structure utilised an earlier, existing drain.



Plate 1: View N of South Cloister wall and slate drainage channel (203)

To connect the course of (203) with the drainage inspection chamber (205), a layer of gravel overlying (203) was removed along the entirety of the route and a small turfed area measuring 0.7m × 0.35m was hand-excavated.

The turf and topsoil (200) extending across the site (which was the same as the material identified during Phase 1 of the groundworks) was composed of lightly compacted dark greyish-brown, slightly silty clay with frequent very small to small angular to sub-rounded stones, very small fragments of bluish-grey slate and rare flecks and small fragments of CBM. Directly underlying this, at the northern part of the excavated area, was a made-ground

deposit of unknown date (201) that appeared to be the same as or similar to the material previously identified during Phase 1. The made ground (201) was composed of loose to lightly compacted mid-brown to pinkish-brown coarse sandy gravel and silt containing frequent small stones and rare small fragments of bluish-grey slate.

This material had been truncated by construction cut [208] for the modern concrete-and-brick edging material (202) of the drain and in turn had been truncated by cut [204] for the drain inspection chamber (205). Whilst the construction of (202) retained the slate layer (203) as its base, (205) was much deeper and so construction cut [204] truncated the slate (203) as well as the made ground (201) (*fig. 4*).

There was no backfill present in the drain. It was necessary to remove the section of brick edging that was present within the Pit to allow access for the new water pipe, which was laid directly above the slate (203).



Plate 2: View S of Pit 2 during excavation showing exposed slate layer (203)

Within cut [204], were two backfill deposits, the upper deposit (206) evidently having formed from disturbed and re-deposited made ground material (201). Present within this backfill was a single large flat stone that was likely to have been part of the original edging of the drainage channel (203). Underlying (206) and present at the impact depth, was a loose light reddish-pink, slightly silty sand with frequent small and medium sub-rounded stones. This material appeared to be similar in terms of composition to the earliest stratigraphic context revealed during Phase 1 of the groundworks, although the limited area exposed within Pit 2 means it is unclear if (207) originally formed part of a similar deposit or if it was imported from elsewhere to be used as backfill.

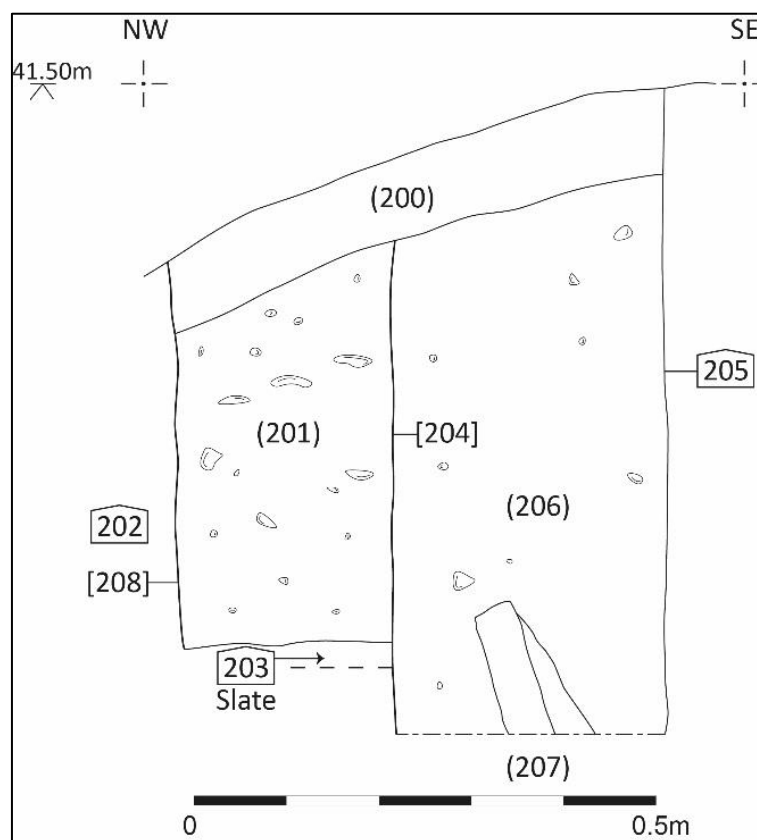


Fig. 4: SW-facing section of Pit 2

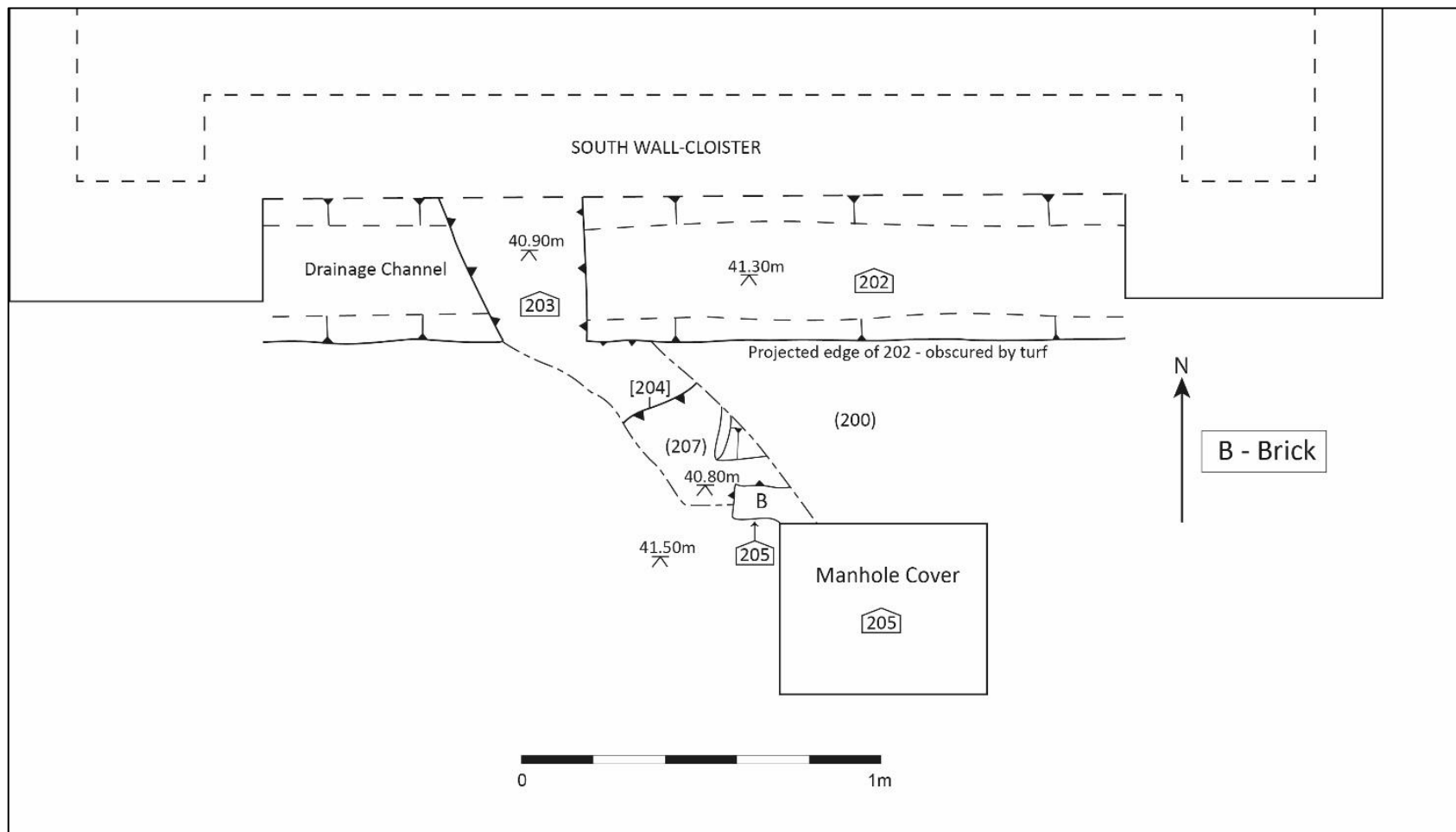


Fig. 5: Plan of Pit 2

5.2 Pit 3

Pit 3 was located adjacent to the corner of the western edge of the pavilion structure and the South Range of the Abbey (*Plate 3*) in order to connect the new drain into the existing drainage, which was laid around 2001 and which had necessitated the removal and relaying of several stones at the northern end of the western wall of the Old Refectory.



Plate 3: View E showing location of Pit 3

To avoid any undue disturbance to the extant fabric of the Abbey building, one of the previously removed stones (300) measuring 0.4m × 0.36m × 0.05m was lifted to allow access to the existing drainage (*Plate 4*).

Directly underlying the stone was a shallow layer of modern pink lime mortar (301) that was used during the relaying of the stone and which overlay the modern drainage pipe. To the immediate N of the pipe and partially overlain by (300), part of the extant fabric of the wall footings of the South Range of the Abbey was exposed (302). This was revealed further at ground level prior to excavation by the removal of a thin layer of gravel adjacent to the edge of the building.

The E-W wall footings (302) were of light pinkish-red medium sub-angular and sub-rounded unworked sandstone construction with a light pink mortar bond. A small area measuring 0.3m × 0.3m × 0.25m was removed to allow sufficient space for the connection (*Plate 5, fig. 6*).



Plate 4: Pre-excitation view E of Pit 3



Plate 4: Post-excitation view E showing partially removed wall footing (302)

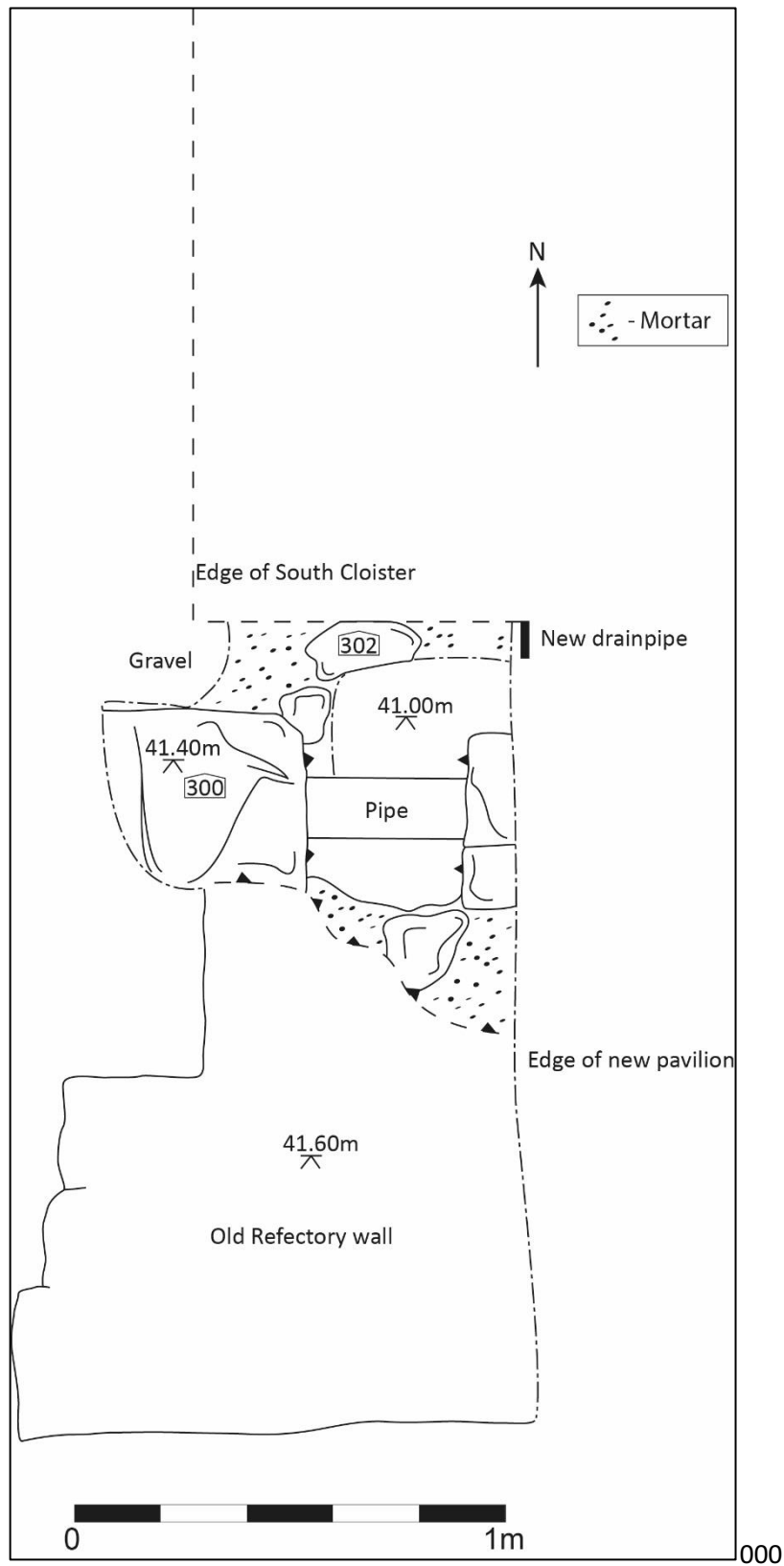


Fig. 5: Plan of Pit 3

6 Conclusions

The second phase of archaeological observation of groundworks activity associated with the construction of a new pavilion over the remains of the medieval Old Refectory revealed structural remains associated with the South Cloister of the Abbey and later drainage features. All of the archaeology revealed during the course of the groundworks would have been identified previously and since been covered.

A made-ground deposit of unknown date (201), as previously identified during Phase 1 of the groundworks, was also revealed within Pit 2; however, no other deposits encountered were of archaeological significance, as all of these related to modern drainage features.

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9 Appendix 1: Table of Results

9.1 Pit 2

Context	Type	F/B	F/O	Context Information	Interpretation	Finds	Misc.	Date	Comments
(200)	Deposit	-	-	Lightly compacted dark greyish-brown very slightly silty clay; frequent very small-small angular to sub-rounded stones, very small fragments of bluish-grey slate, rare very small fragments/flecks of CBM; extended pit wide to an av. depth 0.1m. Overlying (201)	Topsoil	-	-	Modern	Same material as (100) seen during Phase 1 of groundworks
(201)	Deposit	-	-	Loose to lightly compacted mid-brown to pinkish-brown coarse sandy gravel & silt; frequent small stones, rare small fragments of bluish-grey slate; measured (as exposed) 0.25m × 0.22m × 0.42m. Underlying (200), overlying (203), cut by [204] [208]	Deposit	-	-	Post-medieval	Same material as (101) seen during Phase 1 of groundworks
(202)	Masonry	-	[208]	Hard white concrete, red brick; average brick size 230mm × 100mm × 60mm; 3 three courses + 0.06m concrete skim; measured (as exposed) 0.4m × 0.4m × 0.26m. Overlying (203), fill of [208]	Brick & concrete drainage channel	-	-	Modern	-

Context	Type	F/B	F/O	Context Information	Interpretation	Finds	Misc.	Date	Comments
(203)	Masonry	-	-	Bluish-grey slate; compact single layer; measured (as exposed) 0.7m × 0.4m maximum × 0.04m. Underlying (201), (202), overlying (207), cut by [204]	Slate drainage/damp-proof abutting S Cloister wall	-	-	Post-medieval	-
[204]	Cut	(205) (206) (207)	-	Rectangular plan; break of slope top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base & base not exposed; measured (as exposed) >0.4m × >0.35m × >0.55m. Cutting (201), (203), filled by (205), (206)	Construction cut for drainage inspection chamber	-	-	Modern	-
(205)	Masonry	-	[204]	Red brick structure; rectangular plan; average brick size 230mm × 100mm × 60mm; >6 courses; light grey cement mortar bond; measured 0.8m × 0.7m × >0.7m. Fill of [204]	Drainage inspection chamber	-	-	Modern	-
(206)	Deposit	-	[204]	Loose to lightly compacted mid-brown to pinkish-brown coarse sandy gravel & silt; frequent small stones; measured >0.35m × 0.28m >0.35m × 0.28m >0.6m. Underlying (200), overlying (207), fill of [204]	Backfill of redeposited (201) in cut [204]	-	-	Modern	-
(207)	Deposit	-	[204]	Loose light reddish-pink slightly silty sand; frequent small & medium sub-rounded sandstone; measured >0.35m ×	Backfill of potentially redeposited	-	-	Modern	Similar in properties to (103) seen during Phase 1 of groundworks

				0.28m >0.35m × unknown depth (exposed only at base of pit). Underlying (206), fill of [204]	archaeological material				
[208]	Cut	(202)	-	Linear plan; break of slope top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base sharp, base flat (utilizing slate layer (203); measured (as exposed) >0.4m × >0.35m × 0.33m. Cuts (201), filled by (202)	Construction cut for drainage channel	-	-	Modern	Drainage channel (202) was constructed abutting cut at S edge thus no backfill present

9.2 Pit 3

Context	Type	F/B	F/O	Context Information	Interpretation	Finds	Misc.	Date	Comments
(300)	Masonry	-	-	Compact light grey sandstone; av. size of materials 0.4m × 0.3m × 0.05m; measured >0.92m × 0.4m × 0.05m. Overlying (301) (302)	Part of original construction of Old Refectory wall	-	-	Medieval/modern	Previously recently lifted and re-laid
(301)	Deposit	-	-	Firm light pink lime; measured 0.4m × 0.4m × 0.02m. Underlying (300), overlying (302)	Mortar bedding for (300)	-	-	Modern	-
(302)	Masonry	-	-	Compact light pinkish-red sandstone; aligned E-W; size of materials 150-240mm × 60-250mm × 40-100mm; light pink mortar bond; measured >0.75m × 0.25m × >0.4m. Underlying	Abbey wall footings	-	-	Medieval	-

			(300)						
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