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birmingham archaeology

HALESOWEN ABBEY,
HALESOWEN, DUDLEY.
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION,

2007

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

REGISTERED IFA ORGANISATION

Project No. 1695

By

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For

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SUMMARY

In October 2007, Birmingham Archaeology undertook an Archaeological Evaluation at Halesowen Abbey, Halesowen, Dudley, West Midlands. The evaluation was commissioned by Mr C. Tudor of Manor Farm ahead of proposed residential development at Halesowen Abbey. Ten test pits were excavated across the site in the locations of proposed drainage works.

Excavations revealed a series of features relating to the monastic occupation of the site, including the corner wall of the chapter house, the north and probable west wall of the cloister alley, an extension of the frater range south wall, a possible cloister floor surface and evidence for water or waste management (lavatorium). Several features, layers and surfaces were also identified dating to the Dissolution and post-Dissolution.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by Mr C. Tudor, Manor Farm, to undertake a series of archaeological test pits ahead of proposed residential development at Halesowen Abbey (hereinafter referred to as the site). This report can then be used to inform possible mitigation strategies in conjunction with an application for scheduled monument consent.

This report outlines the results of a field evaluation carried out in October 2007, and has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (IFA 2001). The evaluation conformed to a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2007) which was approved by English Heritage prior to implementation.

1.2 Location and geology

Halesowen Abbey, a Premonstratensian foundation, lies 1km to the southeast of Halesowen in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley, on the western outskirts of Birmingham (NGR SO 9767 8283, Fig.1). The abbey is one of the best-preserved monastic sites in the West Midlands, with important archaeological remains surviving both above and below ground. These remains now form part of Manor Farm, and are situated on a spur of south-facing land drained by tributaries of the River Stour. The natural geology consists of sandstone and grey clays with thin seams of coal and Spirorbis limestone, while there are areas of alluvial deposits along the stream courses to the south and west of the abbey (Geology Survey 1" Sheet 168).

The two blocks of farm buildings, to which the development proposals relate both lie within the former abbey's inner precinct (Figs. 2 and 3). The western one is situated immediately south of the former position of the nave of the abbey church, roughly on the site of the medieval cloister. The east one is positioned to the east of the cloister and south transept of the abbey church, its northern end close to the site of the choir.

An area which includes almost all the earthworks connected with the abbey has been designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Monument Number 21568), and portions of the standing remains of the abbey are Guardianship monuments.

2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Hales as a manor certainly existed at the time of the Norman conquest as it was granted to the Earl of Shrewsbury after 1066 (Marsden 1986 5). After various lords during the early medieval period (including the Welsh Owens, when Hales probably picked up the suffix 'owen'), the abbey was founded 1215 at the manor of Hales (Marsden 1986 5-6). It is more than probable that the form and function of the abbey evolved throughout its history (Ferris 1987 21).

In 1536 the monastery was surrendered to the crown and either in 1538 or 1539 the structures were partially demolished (Marsden 1986 8). As parts of the abbey are still standing it is obvious that the building was not razed to the ground at this point. The remains of the standing buildings of the abbey were obviously incorporated into the farm, however, it is difficult to ascertain whether the structures fell into a state of disrepair and were subsequently reused some time later, or whether parts were in constant use.

The following summary is based upon an unpublished report by Litherland and Moscrop. This is the most up to date statement concerning research into the history and development of Halesowen Abbey, and stems from the following sources; building recording of the historic fabric of the abbey, geophysical and landscape survey, and documentary research carried out between 1987 and 2003.

- **2.1 Documentary evidence**

Apart from scattered references in Crown documents, the main documentary sources for the abbey are the Court Rolls of the manor of Hales for 1270-1307 (Amphlett 1930; Wilson 1933), the register of Richard Redmant, Abbot of Shap, 1459-1505 (Gasquet 1904-6) and various charters and other documents which survived in the Hagley Muniments and are now mainly to be found in Birmingham Reference Library. The abbey's cartulary, however, has been lost (Colvin 1951, 380). A full account of the historical and documentary background to the site can be found in Litherland and Moscrop (nd).

There are two major descriptions of the abbey ruins, in Holliday 1871a, and *VCH* 1906 (II, 137-9). Additionally, a historical and archaeological assessment of the abbey was commissioned by Dudley Borough Council in 1986 (Marsden 1986a), with illustrations of Halesowen Abbey since the 18th century also listed (Marsden 1986b, 89).

- **2.2 Prior Investigations**

The plan of the abbey has been recovered, principally by excavation. Holliday conducted the first recorded excavations at Halesowen Abbey in 1870 (Holliday 1871). Although most of the records of his work have since been lost, a manuscript plan of the abbey, which includes the positions of foundations traced from excavation and of two *in situ* portions of tile floor, is in Birmingham Reference Library (BRL 353137).

Holliday's plan of the abbey church and main claustral buildings was enhanced by further work on the site by Brakspear in 1906 (Clapham 1923, pl. facing p. 252), and by Somers from 1928 to 1930 (Somers and Somers 1932, 4-10). Later excavation, during the widening of Manor Lane to the west of the church, found wall foundations and a cobbled track; these may have been part of the outer gatehouse of the abbey (Somers 1938, 82).

The Duke of Rutland also conducted minor excavations on the site between 1925-28 and 1934-40, in search of medieval floor tiles. The exact location of this work is unknown, apart from a reference to, and photograph of, his 1938 excavation of the Chapter House (Somers 1938, 82).

In more recent times, a short note on a watching brief on the supposed site of the Guest House is available; however, this also appears to be inaccurately located. A further watching brief was observed by BUFAU in 2003, during the installation of a new drainage system around Manor Farmhouse (immediately southeast of the cloister area). This recorded the profile of an

east-west aligned bank which may have formed the southern boundary of the abbey's inner precinct (Cherrington and Hislop 2003).
Halesowen Abbey has also been the focus of research work, which has been applied to the abbey precinct, the wider landscape surrounding the abbey complex and on its dependent granges. These works were undertaken as assessed projects by students from the University of Birmingham and Birmingham Archaeology (including Marsden 1986; Moscrop 1993a, 1993b; Millard 1994; Evans 2003; and Kincey 2003).

Geophysical investigation, undertaken to the northeast of the eastern barn complex and to the south of the site in the area of a double-ditched earthwork provided tantalising clues (Kincey 2003). Investigation of the double-ditched earthwork supported, and expanded upon, the earlier suggestion by Marsden (1986:48) that this area may hold the remains of the abbey mill, with the detection of a high-resistance anomaly which may represent this structure, and the identification of further detail of the associated earthworks. In the area to the north-east a large potential structure was identified on a different alignment to the abbey, predating a putative boundary ditch running north-south across the area.

A programme of building recording has also been undertaken upon the abbey, mainly on behalf of English Heritage. This work has focused upon the surviving abbey buildings that are under Guardianship within the Manor Farm complex. The infirmary building and the west frater wall have been recorded in detail by BUFAU (now Birmingham Archaeology) and consolidated by English Heritage. In addition, a stone-by-stone record has been made of the frater south wall, the cart shed to the west of the frater and readily accessible areas of exposed stonework in the long barn. The aims of this survey were to establish the character, history, dating, and archaeological development of each surviving structure, and the activity generated an archive of drawings and detailed reports (Ferris 1987 and 1990) to be lodged with English Heritage's Historic Properties Midlands section and the National Monuments Record. Copies of the reports are held by Dudley Borough Council and the West Midlands SMR. The later farm buildings were also studied by students of the University of Birmingham's Diploma in Practical Archaeology in 1990 and 1995 (Learmonth and Heath 1995). These comprised part of a barn, a brick-built stock house, and a small brick-built stable. Recording of these structures consisted of a photographic record and descriptive text. Further recording work was carried out on the west frater wall by BUFAU in 2002 (Hislop and Litherland 2003).

• 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principal aim of the evaluation was to determine the character, state of preservation, and potential significance of any buried remains, and to assess the depths of such deposits below current ground level. This report can then be used to assist in any subsequent mitigation strategies associated with the application for Scheduled Monument Consent.

• 4 METHODOLOGY

A total of 10 test pits were excavated across the site. These were located along the proposed route of several drainage trenches which were planned as part of the proposed development (Fig. 2). Each test pit was excavated (by hand) by a qualified archaeologist down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned and sections were drawn at appropriate scales. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context and

feature cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using digital, monochrome and colour slide photography.

The full site archive includes all artefactual and/or ecofactual remains recovered from the site. This archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage* (UKIC, 1990), and *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). Finds and the paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository, subject to permission from the landowner.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The following is a narrative of the results from the test-pits. Natural ground was encountered at depths of between 0.70m and 1m (below current ground surface) across the area of investigation (between 126.60 and 128.10m AOD), sloping downwards to the south and west of the site.

5.2 Test Pit 1

Test pit 1 (Figs. 2, 3 and 4, and Plate 1) measured 1m², and was excavated within the north range of the eastern barn complex, to a depth of 0.84m below the modern ground surface (128.05m AOD). At this depth natural clay **1007** was encountered, sealed by 0.22m of brown sandy-clay (**1006**), that was in turn overlain by 0.40m of clay (**1003**). The western side of **1003** contained large amounts of sandstone rubble. 1003 was sealed by 0.12m of brown silt **1002** that in turn was overlain by 0.03m of **1001**, consisting of black coal, clinker and slag. This probably acted as a bedding layer for the concrete which at present constitutes the barn floor (**1000**).

5.3 Test Pit 2

Test pit 2 (Figs. 2, 3 and 4, and Plate 2) was in the northwest corner of the courtyard of the eastern barn complex and was located at the proposed site of a manhole. This test pit was 1m ² in plan and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.76m below the modern ground level (128.07m AOD).

Natural subsoil **2005**, which consisted of grey sandy-clay with pebbles throughout, was identified at the base of the test pit. Above this was a layer of soft beige silt-rich clay with pebbles (**2004**). This was sealed by **2003**, a layer of brown sandy-clay 0.25m deep. Above this was a layer 0.16m deep (**2002**), consisting of brown sandy-silt rich in rubble, especially roof tile and mortar, or plaster. In turn 2002 was overlain by 0.05m of industrial waste and charcoal (**2001**) which seemed to form a bedding layer for the brick built floor surface (**2000**) (the current yard surface). In the southeast corner of the test pit was a ceramic drain 0.18m in diameter. The cut for this was not visible in the section so it is difficult to fit this into the stratigraphy of the trench.

5.4 Test Pit 3

Test pit 3 was located in the southeast corner of the courtyard of the eastern barn complex (Figs. 2, 3, 4, and Plate 3). This was the proposed location of manhole 2. This test pit was 1m²

in plan and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.72m below the modern ground surface (128.09m AOD), at which depth the natural subsoil (**3008**) was encountered. This appeared to be dipping downwards towards the southwest of the test pit. Above this was a deposit of soft grey clay (**3007**) 0.18m thick. Sealing this in turn was a layer of compact blue-grey clay 0.2m thick (**3004**). This deposit contained quite large quantities of charcoal.

3004 was cut by a foundation trench (**3006**) which was about 0.4m deep, and was filled by a mixture of sandstone rubble and broken tile set in sandy-silt (**3005**) with the remains of a single course of masonry set on this. Although within the narrow confines of this test pit the dimensions of this wall could not be ascertained, it is most probable that this is the south-eastern corner of a structure. Overlying this was a layer of sandy-silt rich in demolition rubble (**3003**), from which medieval pottery and tile were retrieved dating to the 16th century.

3003 was capped by a narrow band of black coal and slag which was 0.04m deep (**3002**). This was in turn overlain by a narrow band of beige silt and clay 0.01m deep (**3001**). These contexts probably constitute the bedding material for the brick floor surface (**3000**).

- **5.5 Test Pit 4**

Test Pit 4 (Figs. 2, 3, 5, and Plate 4), was located within the north range of the western barn complex. The test pit was 1m² in plan and was excavated to maximum depth of 1m below the modern ground surface (127.07m AOD).

Natural subsoil (**4007**), comprising of compact grey clay, was identified at the base of the trench. Over this was a layer of orange sandy-gravel 0.1m deep (**4006**). This was sealed by 0.24m of brown sandy-silt **4005**.

It is probable that the foundations of walls **4008** and **4009** are cut through **4005**. However as these walls were left i*n situ* it was impossible to determine the relationship between **4005** and the structure. **4008** was aligned north-south and although the full extent could not be ascertained within the confines of the test pit, it was at least 0.5m long, 0.33m wide and 0.5m high. It was constructed from large pink sandstone ashlar blocks of which two courses survived. No mortar was visible. Butting this wall to the east, on an east-west alignment, was wall **4009**. Constructed in a similar manner to **4008**, this was at least 0.66m long, 0.2m wide and 0.48m high. Again the nature of the footing and the stratigraphic relationship were not evident, however, two courses of pink sandstone ashlar blocks were present. To the north of this wall it is probable that the rubble core (**4010**) had been mortared in place, although the full nature of the wall could not be ascertained.

It is probable that layer **4004** post-dates the walls. This was a narrow deposit of crushed mortar or plaster in a silt matrix 0.04m deep. Sealing this and the walls was layer **4003**, which consisted of sandstone and tile demolition material set in beige sandy-silt that contained late 17th to early 18th century pottery. This had a maximum depth of 0.4m. This deposit had been cut by the foundation trench (**4001**) for the internal dividing wall within the existing barn. This wall seemed to be constructed by a primary fill of lime mortar and silt (**4011**) onto which large sandstone blocks (**4000**) had been placed. The area of the test pit was sealed by a layer (**4012**) consisting of black coal and slag which seemed to form a bedding for a brick floor (**4002**) which at present constitutes the internal floor of the barn.

- **5.6 Test Pit 5**

Test Pit 5 (Figs. 2, 3, 5, and Plate 5), was located within the northeast corner of the courtyard of the western barn complex; in the proposed location of manhole 3. The top of the natural

subsoil (**5005**), which consisted of brown sandy-clay and was encountered 1m below the modern ground surface (126.66m AOD). Sealing this was 0.38m of beige sandy-silt (**5004**) with pieces of sandstone throughout that, in turn, was overlain by cobble floor surface (**5003**) constructed of rounded pebbles compacted into a clay matrix, which has in places been stabilised with broken roof tile. This deposit had a maximum depth of 0.1m. Sealing this was a layer of black crushed coal (**5002**) with a maximum depth of 0.2m, very compact and probably representing a surface construction.

Sealing this was layer **5001** a dark grey deposit of coal, silt and charcoal, with crushed brick or tile and mortar dating to the late 18th - early 19th centuries. Sealing this was a layer of concrete 0.14m deep that made the present yard surface (**5000**).

- **5.7 Test Pit 6**

Test Pit 6 (Figs. 2, 3, 6, and Plate 6) was located in the northwest corner of the courtyard of the western barn complex. The test pit was 1m² in plan and was excavated to a depth of 0.9m below the modern ground surface (127.06m AOD). The earliest deposit encountered at the base of the pit was the natural sub-soil **6009**, consisting of grey sandy-clay with gravel throughout. Sealing this was **6008**, a layer of beige sandy-clay 0.22m deep. This was overlain by a layer of brown silt rich clay with bits plaster or mortar throughout (**6007**). This had a maximum depth of 0.46m.

6007 was cut by a foundation trench (**6005**). This was 0.46m deep and at least 0.6m wide. The foundation was constructed from large sandstone blocks with some sign of mortaring (**6002**), set into the foundation trench by silt and clay (**6004**). This foundation was overlaid by a 0.2m layer (**6003**) of demolition rubble set in silt containing 17th to 18th century pottery that, in turn was overlain by layer (**6001**) consisting of a charcoal rich silt and clay. This had a maximum depth of 0.12m and was only present in the northwest corner of the trench. Finally, the area of the trench was sealed by the concrete floor surface of the yard. (**6000**).

- **5.8 Test Pit 7**

Test Pit 7 (Figs. 2, 3, 6, and Plate 7) was located within the western range of the western barn complex, was 1m² in plan, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.58m below the modern ground surface (127.34m AOD).

The earliest deposit encountered consisted of large sandstone blocks (**7004**) that had been heavily heat affected. Above this on the southern half of the trench was a deposit of slag (**7006**) 0.04m deep. This was extremely hard, suggesting the possibility that this could be an *in situ* deposit. Above this was a layer (**7003**) of loose charcoal and ash-rich industrial waste that had a depth of 0.2m. Sealing this was a layer of sandstone rubble compacted with sand and silt (**7002**) which had a maximum depth of 0.15m. Some roof tile was retrieved from this feature. Above this was a layer of orange silt and sand (**7001**) that was 0.1m deep. This layer seemed to be the bedding layer for the brick built floor surface (**7000**) that (at the time of excavation) made the barn floor surface. No datable finds were recovered from this test pit.

- **5.9 Test Pit 8**

Test Pit 8 (Figs. 2, 3, 6, and Plate 8) was located in the southwest corner of the western barn complex. Although originally 1m² in plan, this trench was extended to the east to further understand the deposits encountered. Altogether this trench was 1m wide and 1.8m long, and excavated to a depth of 0.65m below the modern surface (127.16m AOD). Due to the very wet conditions of the excavation, and the immovable nature of the deposits, the archaeology was

not fully defined. The trench was aligned northeast-southwest, respecting the alignment of the western wing of the western barn complex, which is the only part of the farm complex not to be aligned with abbey.

Probably the earliest deposit encountered was a large stone wall at the western side of the test pit. This wall (**8008**) seemed to be aligned northwest-southeast, parallel to the later barn structures. It consisted of large sandstone facing blocks (**8012**) although later activity seemed to have nudged these out of alignment. The wall seemed to have a rubble core held together with lime mortar, present at the south-western extent of the trench. Similarly at the north-eastern extent of the trench the edge of a further structure, made of large, possibly dressed, sandstone blocks was evident (**8013**).

Sealing these structures were a series of layers, the earliest of which was **8007**, a deposit of grey silt, rich in industrial waste. This was 0.02-06m deep and filled some of the cracks between the stonework. Sealing this was a 0.04m deep layer (**8006**) of beige silt, again rich in industrial waste. Above this was **8005**, a layer of black industrial waste with coal and slag, 0.4m deep. In turn this was overlain by 0.05m of layer (**8004**) consisting of brown silt, again rich in industrial waste. This was sealed by 0.1m of grey silt **8014** that contained mixed coal and slag throughout.

These layers had been cut by a pipe trench (**8003**). This seemed to be 'v' shaped in plan, with probably an original pipe trench located over the facing blocks (**8012**) of wall **8008,** and then being moved to the northeast of this feature, presumably to avoid having to excavate the wall. A ceramic pipe was located in the north-eastern cut. This had been broken, and as a consequence was flooding the trench. The pipe trench had been backfilled by a mix of silt and industrial material (**8002**). Sealing this was a layer of rubble hardcore (**8001**) 0.1m deep, which acted as a levelling layer for the concrete floor surface of the farmyard (**8000**).

- **5.10 Test Pit 9**

Test Pit 9 (Figs. 2, 3, 7 and Plate 9) was located towards the southeast corner of the yard of the western barn complex, in the proposed location of manhole 4. This pit was 1m² in plan and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m below the modern ground surface (126.94m AOD).

The earliest deposit encountered was the natural subsoil **9007**, which consisted of grey gravel-rich silt and clay. Overlying this was a 0.2m deep layer (**9006**) which consisted of beige silt and clay with pebbles throughout. Above this was a pebble surface (**9005**) constructed of small rounded pebbles compacted into a silt and clay matrix. In turn this was sealed by a layer of black crushed coal (**9004**) 0.18m deep that seemed to make up an old surface. This was capped by a layer of sandy-silt with burnt coal and crushed brick rubble. Overlying this was a 0.1m deep layer (**9002**) of purple sand and silt with slag and stones throughout. Sealing this was a layer (**9001**) of dark grey silt with charcoal, brick and tile rubble throughout that was 0.12m deep. Sealing this was the concrete floor surface of the farmyard (**9000**).

- **5.11 Test Pit 10**

Test Pit 10 (Figs. 2, 3, 7 and Plate 10) was located over the proposed course of the drain on the line of the frater range south wall. The majority of the southern, and the entire western wall of the frater range still stand, and it was considered important to define the extent of preservation at this point. The test pit was 1m wide and 2.2m long and aligned northeast-southwest. This was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m below the modern ground surface (126.69m AOD).

Probably the earliest deposit encountered was not excavated and only observed in the edge of the modern service cut. This layer, **1110**, was probably a layer of buried soil, and consisted of beige sandy-silt with pieces of sandstone throughout. This was at least 0.2m deep. Above this, and also only visible in the edge of the cut for the service trench, was a narrow layer (**1112**) of grey silt 0.05m deep. It is possible that the foundation wall (**1108**) pre-dated both of these layers; although within the confines of the test pit the relationship was not clear. The remains of the frater south wall were clearly visible, and consisted of the remnants of large ashlar blocks of sandstone on the south face of the wall, and of a sandstone rubble block core. The gaps between the stones were full of sand, presumably weathered sandstone. The southern extent of the wall was not encountered within the trench. Butted to the northern side of this wall was a mortar floor surface (**1111**) 0.04m deep. This seemed to have been heat affected. There was little evidence of a robbed out tile floor in the topography of the layer, however a narrow band of silt parallel to the wall was visible in plan.

Above this surface seemed to be a layer of stone demolition rubble (**1107**), 0.05m deep, and which had some pieces of broken glazed floor tile within it. The top of this layer seemed to have been incorporated into pebble surface **1105**, which was overlying this to the northwest of the trench. This was 0.04m deep, and consisted of rounded pebbles within a silt matrix. Above this was a layer of black crushed compacted coal (**1104**), which seemed to form a surface that sealed both the earlier floor surfaces and the remains of the wall. Overlying this was a layer (**1106**) that consisted of alternating lenses of black coal and ash, and crushed brick or tile, 0.15m deep. Over this was a layer of grey silt, with gravel and coal contained throughout.

Cut through all previous deposits was a modern service trench (**1102**). This was 0.4m wide and 0.5m deep, and aligned north-south. This contained live services (gas and water) which could not be excavated, and was backfilled with silt and large quantities of sandstone rubble (**1101**). It is apparent that to the west of the cut there had also been quite a bit of modern disturbance. Whether this was due to an earlier, larger service trench, or to the topography of the surrounding land, was impossible to determine within the confines of this pit. The area of Test Pit 10 was sealed by a layer of stone hardcore (**1100**) which was 0.14m deep, and by the concrete farmyard surface, present in the northern corner of the test pit.

• 6 THE FINDS

• 6.1 The Pottery and Ceramic Building Materials by Stephanie Ratkai

A total of 27 pottery sherds (735g), 2 ridge tiles (182g), and a fragment of drainage pipe were recovered from the 10 test pits. The most interesting (and largest) group came from context **3003**, a demolition deposit. The latest material from this group comprised two cistercian ware cup sherds, a coarseware sherd and three late oxidised ware sherds (fabrics late oxidised 1 and late oxidised 2). This suggests that the building was demolished in the 16th century, an event possibly associated with the Dissolution. The coarseware jar represents an early form of the later black- or dark brown-glazed coarsewares, which are a common feature of the 17th and 18th centuries. The coarseware sherd from **3003** had a slightly sandy orange fabric and an internal and external, lustrous, purple-brown slip coating and traces of brown glaze runs on the interior. The rim sherd is broadly similar in form and fabric to a pipkin recovered from Dudley Castle (Rátkai 1987 Fig. 3, 13), dated to the Civil War but probably residual. Fabric late oxidised 2, could be directly matched to a sherd from Clarkson Road, Wednesbury (BA 1686) and suggests that this was the source for the Halesowen sherd. The two other late oxidised sherds contained moderately frequent ironstone fragments. These too could be Wednesbury products but if not were certainly locally produced.

Some earlier material was found in **3003**. Most sherds were in a pale salmon pink fabric with sparse iron-stained quartz inclusions. Most of these sherds were from a single vessel, a baluster jug with an apple green glaze. One of the sherds had a trace of combed decoration. The vessel was similar to ones found in Walsall (Wrathmell and Wrathmell 1976-77).

All the pottery from **3003** could be matched by pottery found at Dudley Castle (pers. inspection by author) and suggests that it was all produced in the Black Country. The glazed ridge tile and the crested ridge tile from **3003** (Table B), indicate a high quality building in the area. As such, they are not uncommon on ecclesiastical sites.

The remaining pottery from the site consisted of later post-medieval wares. This was in insufficient quantities to allow further interpretation.

TP	Cont	fabric/ware	qty	weight	mv	form	date	Comment
3	3003	cistercian ware	1	6		cup	late 15th-mid 16th c	
3	3003	cistercian ware	1	1		cup	late 15th-mid 16th c	
3	3003	coarseware	1	18	1	jar	16th c	
3	3003	late oxidised ware 1	2	42		jug/jar cistern	15th-16th c	heavy internal limescale
3	3003	late oxidised ware 2	1	4		jug/jar cistern	15th-16th c	Wednesbury
3	3003	iron-poor ware 1	9	90		baluster jug	late 13th-14th c	
3	3003	iron-poor ware 1	2	21		jug		
3	3003	iron-poor ware 2	1	4		jug		
4	4003	slip-coated ware	1	13		hw	late 17th-18th c	
5	5001	creamware	1	6		plate	c 1780-1800	
5	5001	industrial slipware	1	5		mug	early 19th c	
6	6001	coarseware	1	78		bowl	17th c (possibly 18th c)	heavy wear on base
6	6001	drainage pipe	1					
8	8006	brown salt-glazed stoneware	4	442		large storage jar	19th c	
9	9001	?slipped creamware	1	5	1	?	1760s-1770s	

- *Table 1: The pottery*

TP	Cont	Weight	Form	Description	Date
3	3003	80	ridge tile	iron-poor fabric, slightly grittier than iron-poor fabric 2, pale green glaze with copper mottles	medieval
3	3003	102	crested ridge tile	hard, slightly sandy, red fabric, toffee brown glaze, base of looped crest or horned crest	?late medieval

Table 2: The ceramic roof tile

• 7 DISCUSSION

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the archaeological deposits and features within the test pits whilst ensuring any significant remains were left i*n situ*. As a result of this requirement, much of the archaeological deposits encountered in the course of this test-pitting exercise could not be fully understood. The historic background suggests that the majority of the deposits do relate to either the Abbey or its dissolution, the medieval occupation of the site, demolition deposits, or as the post medieval reuse of earlier features and structures.

• 7.1 Pre Monastic

It is obvious that the earliest deposits encountered relate to the pre-monastic landscape. It is probable that primary layers in Test Pits 1-6 and Test Pits 9 and 10 are all probably the remnants of the original soil surface (contexts **1006**, **2004**, **3007**, **4006** and probably **4005**, **5004**, **6008**, **9006** and **1110**).

• 7.2 Monastic

Some of the archaeological deposits can be related to the monastery buildings as they are understood as illustrated in Fig. 3. The corner of a foundation wall encountered within Test Pit 3 (**3006**, Fig. 4, Plate 3) aligns with the conjectured location of the south-eastern corner of the chapter house. In all likelihood this deposit is an *in situ* monastic remain. The uppermost level of this deposit survived 0.16m below the modern ground surface, directly below the make-up layer of the floor surface. This suggests the potential for the preservation of archaeological deposits associated with the standing buildings close to the surface in this area of the site. It also seems likely that the structural remains identified in Test Pit 4 represent the south wall of the north cloister alley (**4008**) with perhaps one of its external buttresses (**4009**). It may be that the sandstone blocks identified in the base of Test Pit 7 (**7004**) may represent the east wall of the west cloister alley.

The wall encountered in Test Pit 10 (**1108**) is almost certainly the frater range south wall; as the majority of this wall is still standing, and the line of its continuation through the trench was quite clear (Fig. 10). It is also clear that a floor surface, presumably associated with the frater range south wall, was preserved within the structure (**1111**). It is possible that this is the remains of mortar bedding for a tiled floor; a small amount of evidence supported this hypothesis, although no *in situ* tiles remained and the mortar appeared to be burnt in places. It is tempting to associate this burning with a violent period of dissolution, however, it is just as likely to represent a hearth deposit.

The location of the cloister is a suggestion based on a combination of early archaeological investigation, combined the standard pattern layout of an abbey. Marsen's (1986) illustration compiles the major excavations undertaken on the abbey, and indicates that no below ground archaeological work had been undertaken within the cloister area. In Test Pit 8, the construction of wall **8008**, with large facing stones and a mortared core, certainly seems substantial enough to be monastic. On the eastern side of Test Pit 8 the large sandstone blocks could very well be the remains of a large stone lined drain, or trough, which could relate to water management or indeed a lavatorium. It is probable that water management played a role in the monastic precinct, and certainly the surveyed remains of ponds and leats on-site suggest a complex system of water management (Marsden 1986 25).

Test Pits 5 and 9 both confirmed the nature of the cloister garth in this area. It is hard to ascertain if pebbled surfaces **5004** and **9006** in Test Pits 5 and 9 dates to the monastic period. It is conceivable to suggest the cloister garth had a surface of this type. Both surfaces were embedded directly upon the upper surface of natural clay deposits, which differs from the third pebbled surface 1105 in Test Pit 10 that appears to post-date dissolution demolition deposits.

- **7.3 Dissolution and post-Dissolution**

A series of probable demolition layers (**3003**, **1107**) associated with the Dissolution were identified in several test pits. The impression of post-dissolution or late monastic building work of the abbey site is reflected in building recording work done on the standing building to the east of the site. This structure is nominally the 'infirmary', and it is suggested that major structural change to this building was undertaken either late in the history of the abbey or post Dissolution, however, the dating was not clear (Ferris 1987 21). The deposits encountered in Test Pit 7 proved of particular interest. Context **7004** would appear to represent an *in situ* industrial surface, based upon the solidity of the deposit, its composition (slag), and the presence of heat affected sandstone blocks around it. The secondary deposit sealing this feature (**7003**) was also rich in industrial waste. No dating evidence was available for this feature; however, its position within the area of the historic cloister would suggest it post-dates the Dissolution, the presence of industrial working in an extant Abbey Cloister being highly unlikely.

It is made apparent by the buildings that at present occupy the site that during the 19th century the abbey underwent a significant change in use. The present Manor Abbey Farm house, constructed in the 1860s (Cherrington and Hislop 2003 2), and the further augmentation of the associated barns during the 19th century (Ferris 1990 8-9), would suggest some remodelling and construction work on the farmyard during this period. It is tempting to suggest that the crushed coal surfaces excavated in Test Pits 5, 9 and 10 (**5002**, **9004**, and **1104**) could relate to this period of post medieval construction, but with out any firm dating evidence it is difficult to relate this surface to a specific date. If it is assumed that this is a single continuous farmyard surface, then it can be shown to overly the demolished remains of the frater range south wall, and post-dating the dissolution of the monastery.

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Plate 1

Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 4

Plate 5

Plate 6

Plate 7

Plate 8

Plate 9

Plate 10


Site
DUDLEY
SANDWELL
OLDBURY
BLACKHEATH
HALESOWEN
Romsley
Hunnington
Reproduced from the 1998 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office,
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BIRMINGHAM
B15 2TT
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Fig.1

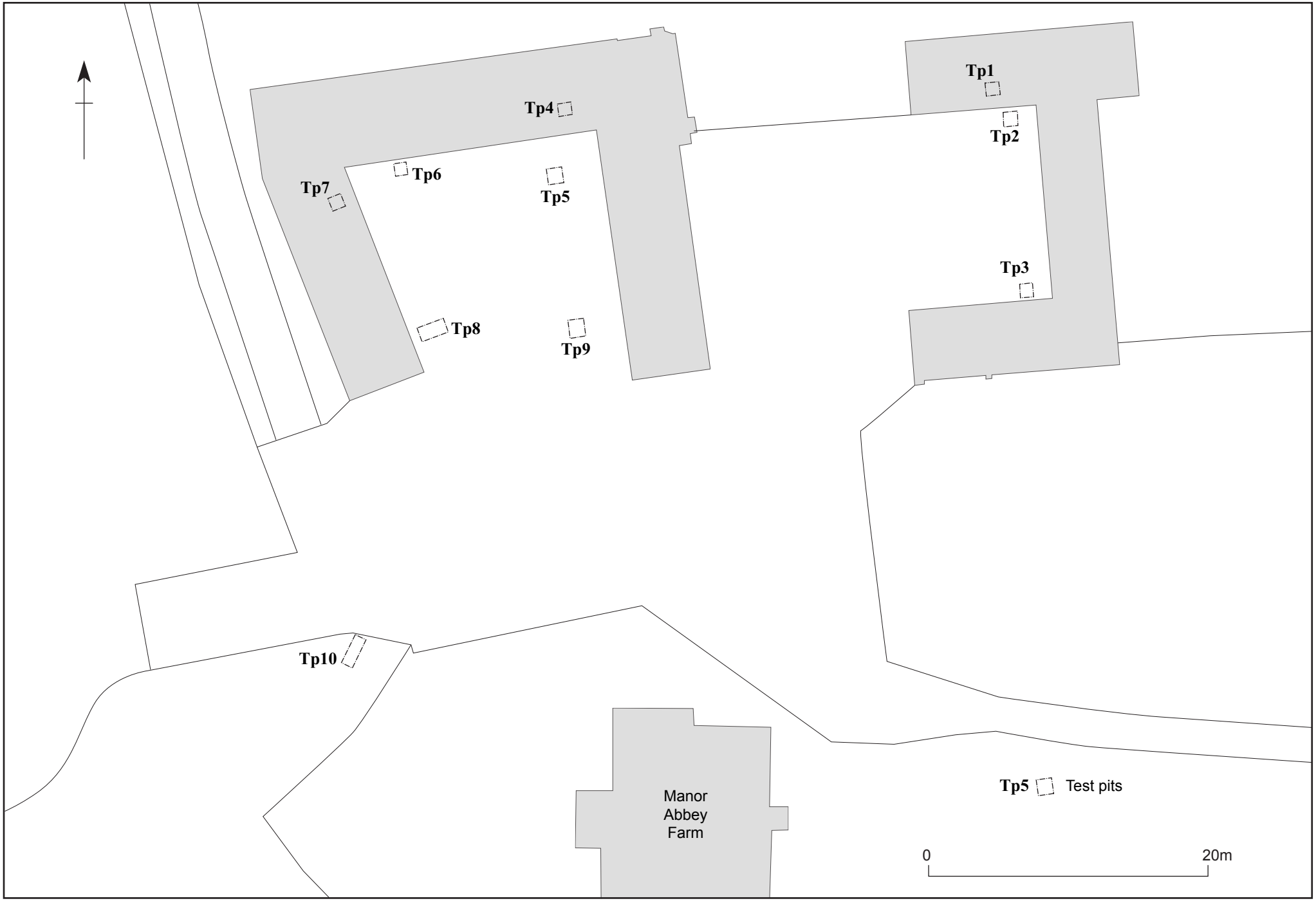
Tp1
Tp2
Tp3
Tp4
Tp5
Tp6
Tp7
Tp8
Tp9
Tp10
Manor
Abbey
Farm
Tp5 Test pits
0
20m

Fig.2

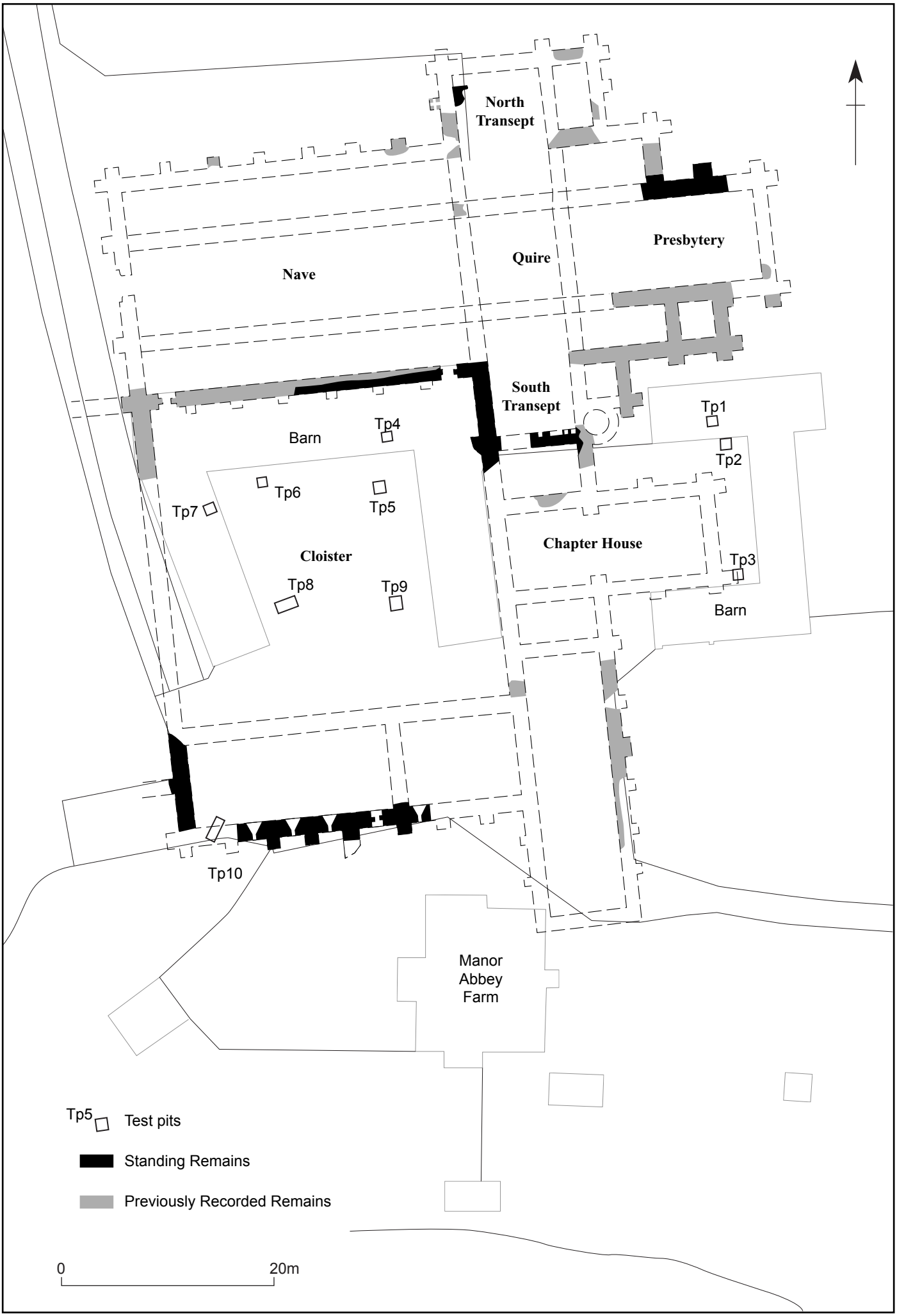
North Transept
Nave
Quire
Presbytery
South Transept
Barn
Tp4
Tp1
Tp2
Tp6
Tp5
Tp7
Cloister
Chapter House
Tp3
Tp8
Tp9
Barn
Tp10
Manor Abbey Farm
Tp5 Test pits
Standing Remains
Previously Recorded Remains
0
20m

Fig.3

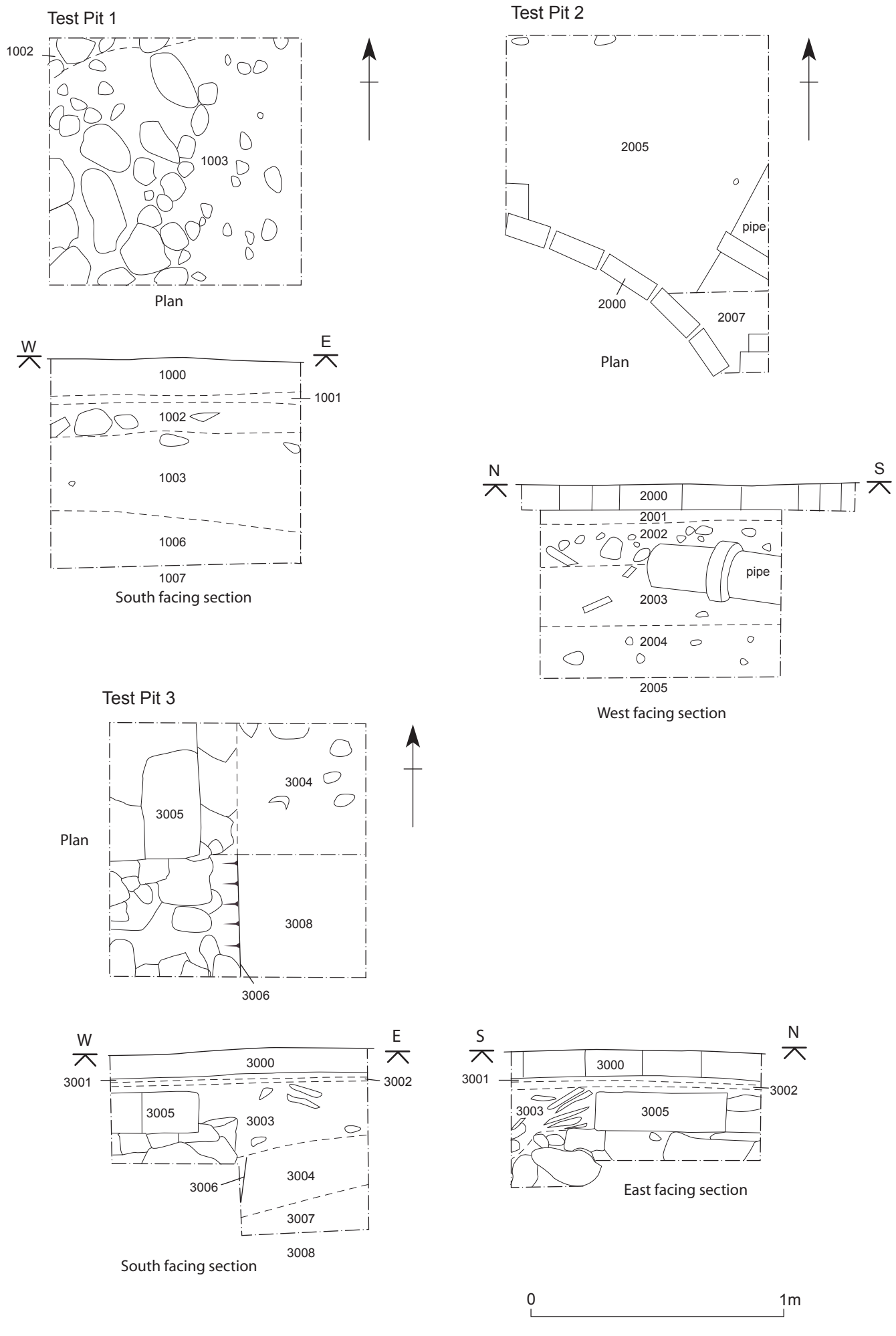
Test Pit 1
1002
1003
Plan
W
E
1000
1001
1002
1003
1006
1007
South facing section
Test Pit 2
2005
pipe
2000
2007
Plan
N
S
2000
2001
2002
pipe
2003
2004
2005
West facing section
Test Pit 3
Plan
3004
3005
3008
3006
W
E
3000
3001
3002
3005
3003
3004
3006
3007
3008
South facing section
S
N
3000
3001
3002
3003
3005
East facing section
0
1m

Fig.4

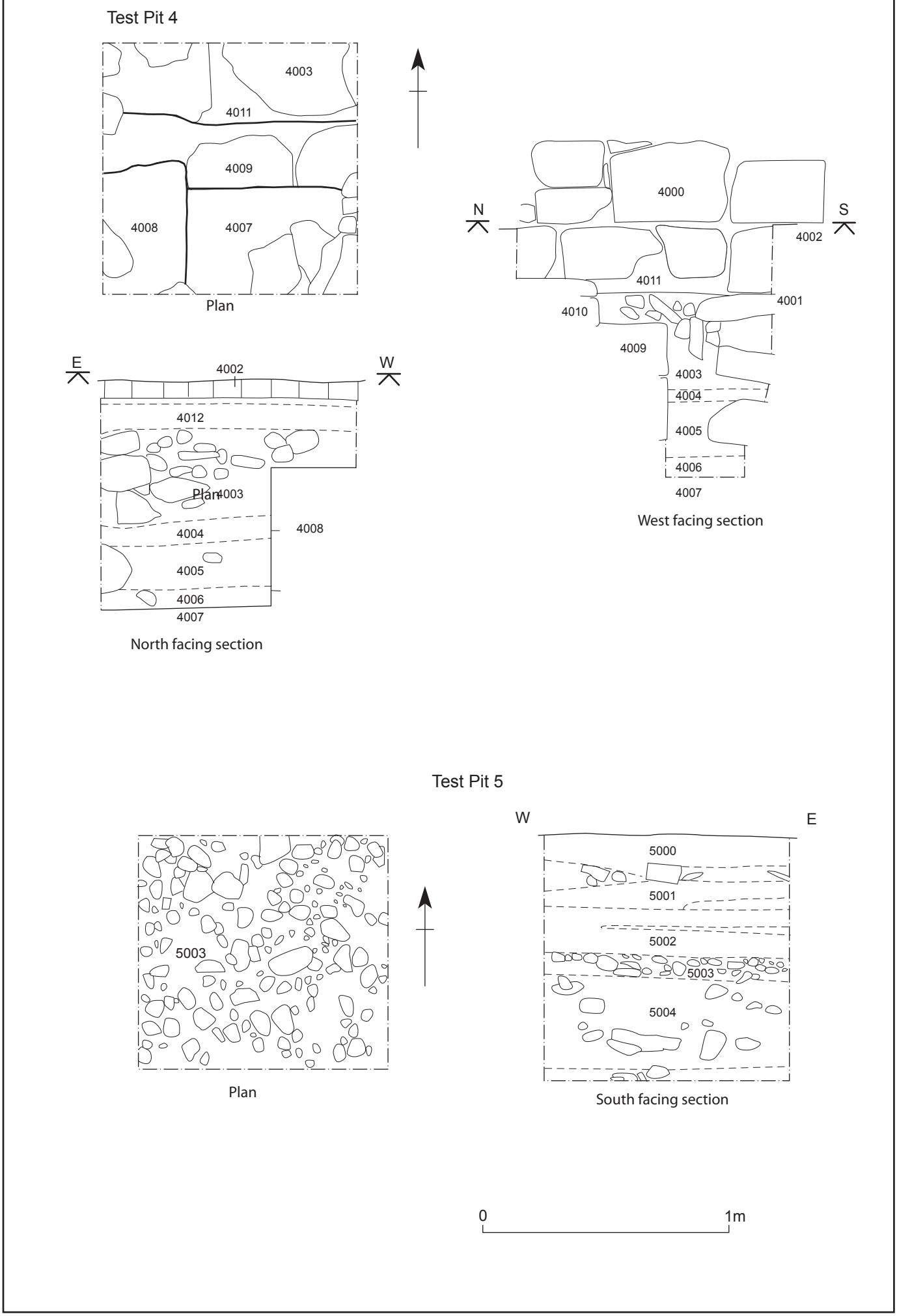
Test Pit 4
4003
4011
4009
4008
4007
Plan
N
S
4000
4002
4011
4001
4010
4009
4003
4004
4005
4006
4007
West facing section
E
W
4002
4012
Plan 4003
4008
4004
4005
4006
4007
North facing section
Test Pit 5
W
E
5000
5001
5002
5003
5004
5003
Plan
South facing section
0
1m

Fig.5

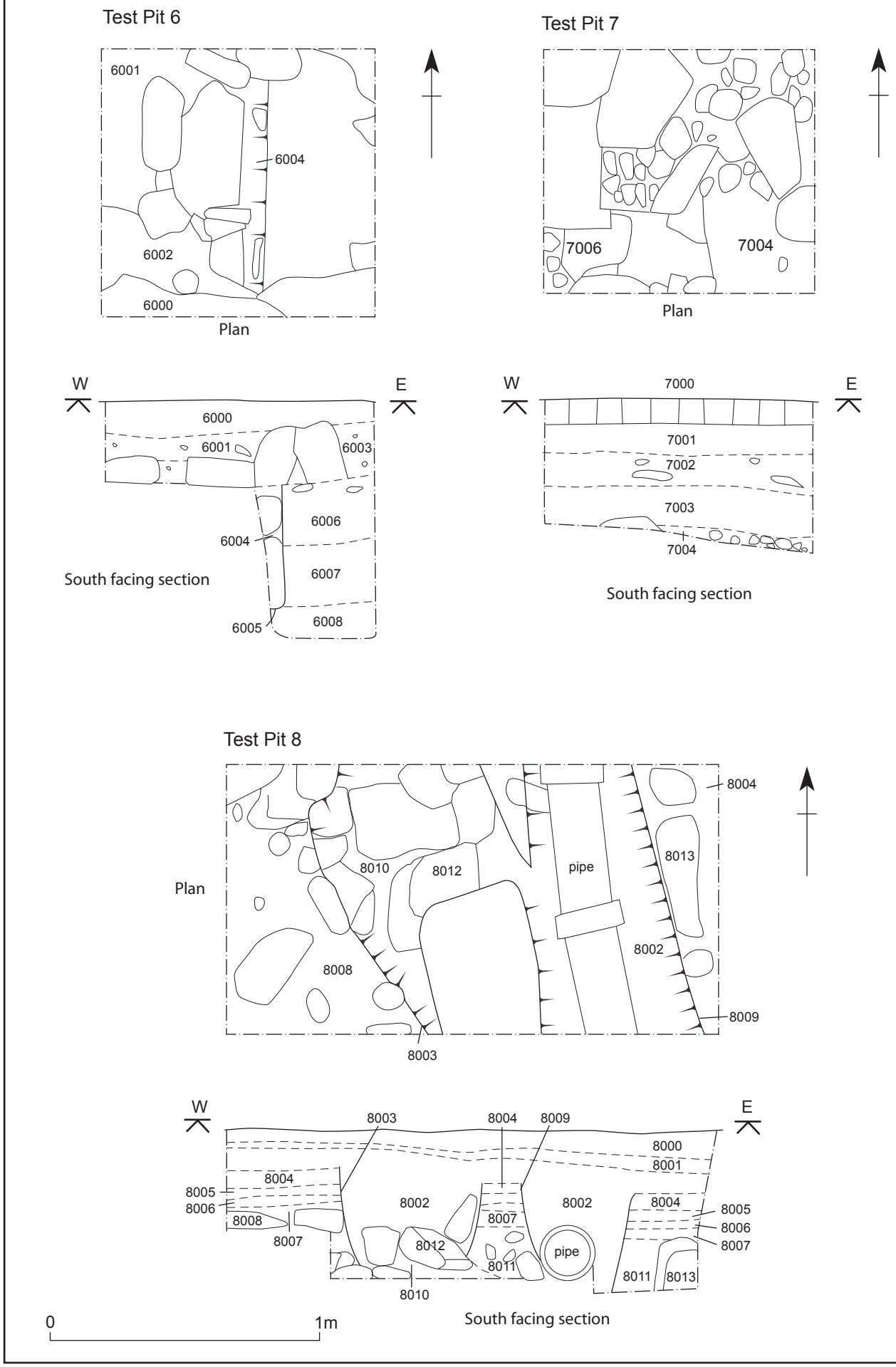
Test Pit 6
6001
6004
6002
6000
Plan
Test Pit 7
7006
7004
Plan
W
E
6000
6001
6003
6006
6004
6007
6008
6005
South facing section
W
7000
E
7001
7002
7003
7004
South facing section
Test Pit 8
Plan
8004
8013
8010
8012
pipe
8002
8008
8009
8003
W
E
8003
8004
8009
8000
8001
8004
8005
8006
8002
8002
8004
8005
8008
8007
8007
8006
8012
pipe
8011
8007
8011
8013
8010
0
1m
South facing section

Fig.6

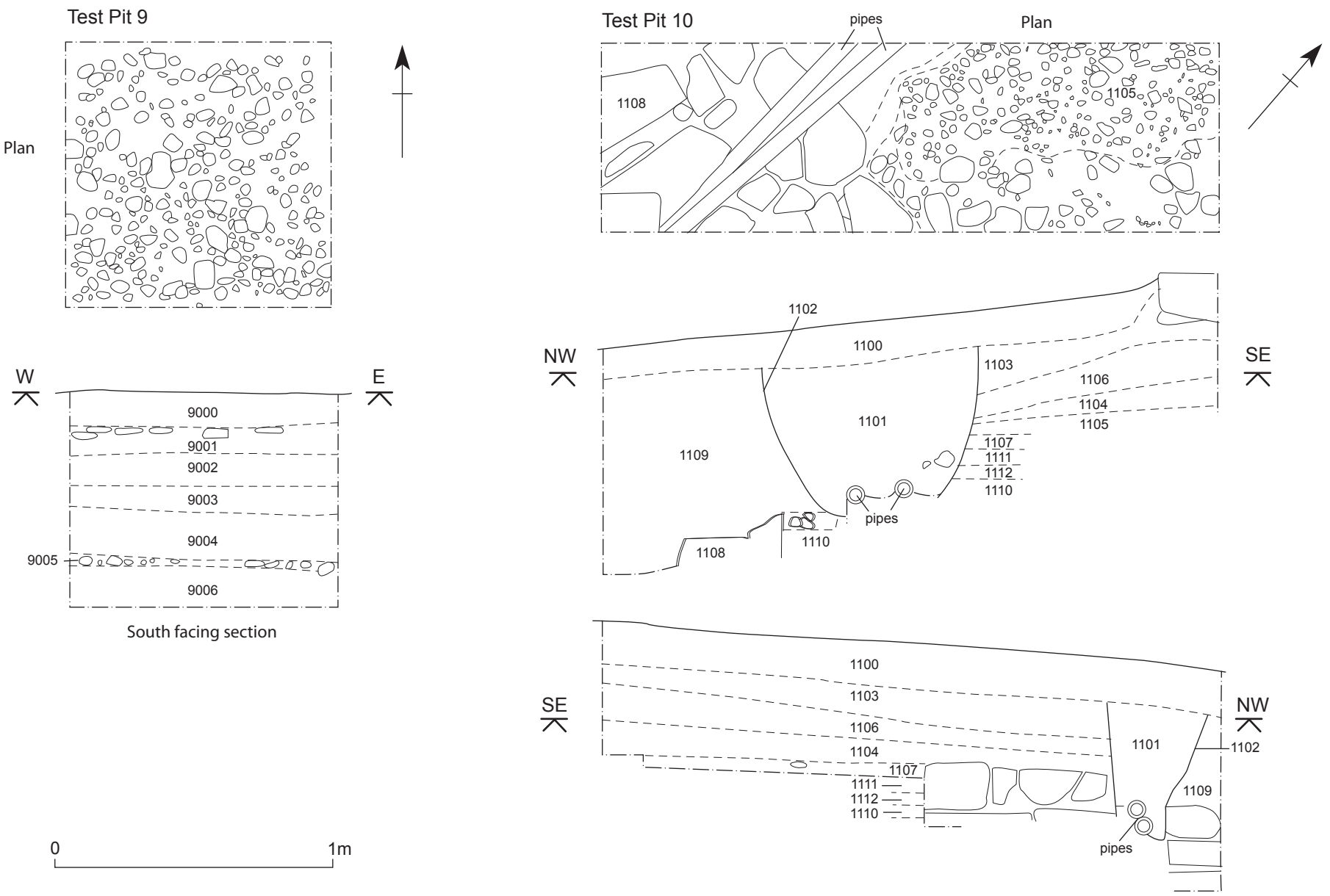
Test Pit 9
Plan
W
E
9000
9001
9002
9003
9004
9005
9006
South facing section
0
1m
Test Pit 10
pipes
Plan
1108
1105
NW
SE
1102
1100
1103
1106
1104
1105
1101
1109
1107
1111
1112
1110
pipes
1110
1108
SE
NW
1100
1103
1106
1104
1107
1111
1112
1110
1101
1102
1109
pipes

Fig.7