

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT:  
OTTER'S COTTAGES, LINCOLN, LINCOLNSHIRE**

Planning Reference: 2006/0661/F  
NGR: SK 9695 6911  
AAL Site Code: LIOC 09  
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-73529



Report prepared for Tennyson Homes Ltd

By  
Allen Archaeology Limited  
Report Number 2010012

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The  
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Planning  
Services

## Contents

Summary	1
<b>1.0</b> Introduction	2
<b>2.0</b> Site Location and Description	2
<b>3.0</b> Planning Background	2
<b>4.0</b> Archaeological and Historical Background	2
<b>5.0</b> Methodology	4
<b>6.0</b> Results	4
<b>7.0</b> Discussion and Conclusions	5
<b>8.0</b> Effectiveness of Methodology	6
<b>9.0</b> Acknowledgements	6
<b>10.0</b> References	7
<b>11.0</b> Site Archive	7

### List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Colour Plates	8
Appendix 2: Ceramic Building Material Archive	9
Appendix 3: Context Summary List	10

### List of Figures

- Figure 1:** Site location at scale 1:25,000, with site shown in red  
**Figure 2:** Site plan at scale 1:200. Previous evaluation trench shown in red with archaeological features in black. Sections shown on Figure 3  
**Figure 3:** Sections A-B, C-D and E-F at scale 1:50 and section G-H-I at scale 1:20. Located on Figure 2  
**Figure 4:** Detailed plan of stone structure 106 at scale 1:20. Sections located on Figure 2

### List of Plates

- Plate 1:** Working shot looking north along service trench towards St. Catherine's Grove  
**Plate 2:** Limestone rubble deposit 103 in service trench, looking east-south-east  
**Plate 3:** Walls 106 and 107, at south end of service trench, looking west-south-west

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## **Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during a residential development by Tennyson Homes Ltd on land to the rear of Otter's Cottages off Newark Road in Lincoln, Lincolnshire.

The site is situated beyond the southern extent of the Roman and medieval city, although it lies close to the line of a Roman road, and is also located immediately to the south of the Gilbertine Priory of St. Katherine.

The watching brief exposed a dumped deposit of limestone interspersed with a small assemblage of medieval tile, associated with a nearby demolished building that may potentially have been associated with the former Priory of St. Katherine. An undated stone wall was also exposed, that had later been reused as the foundations for a brick wall. One side of a linear feature was recorded in a soakaway pit to the north of the new building, representing the continuation of a ditch recorded in a preceding evaluation of the site.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Tennyson Homes Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land to the rear of Otter's Cottages, off Newark Road in Lincoln, Lincolnshire.
- 1.2 The excavation, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*' (IfA 1999), and the local guidelines set out in the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice* (LCC 2009).
- 1.3 The archive will be submitted to The Collection, Lincoln, within six months of the completion of the report, where it will be stored under the museum accession number 2007.197.

## **2.0 Site Location and Description**

- 2.1 Otter's Cottages comprise a row of cottages approximately 2km to the south-south-west of the centre of Lincoln, accessed by a small lane on the west side of Newark Road. The proposed development is at the west end of the existing row of buildings, centred on NGR SK 9695 6911.
- 2.2 The site is a broadly sub-rectangular block of open waste ground of c.450m<sup>2</sup>, lying at approximately 7m OD. The ground surface slopes down very slightly westwards towards the River Witham.
- 2.3 The local geology comprises superficial deposits of undifferentiated river terrace sand and gravel, sealing a solid geology of Lower Lias clay, shale and rare limestone (British Geological Survey 1973).

## **3.0 Planning Background**

- 3.1 Planning permission was granted for the construction of a terrace of four three-storey dwellings attached to the west end of 9 Otter's Cottages, Lincoln (Planning Reference: 2006/0661/F). The permission was granted subject to the undertaking of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching to provide information to assist in the mitigation for the new development (AAL 2007).
- 3.2 Following the results of the trial excavation it was requested by the City of Lincoln Archaeologist that a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording should be undertaken during the groundworks, as a final stage of mitigation.

## **4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 4.1 There is some evidence for prehistoric activity in the immediate vicinity of the site. Recent fieldwork exposed a series of sand layers containing Mesolithic worked flint and smaller quantities of Neolithic material (Field, forthcoming). This is paralleled by evidence for the later prehistoric exploitation of the floodplain of the Witham Valley further afield.
- 4.2 Romano-British activity in the region may have begun with the imposition of a fort in the area of South Common/Wigford suburb, pre-dating the legionary fortress on the north side of the Witham Valley. The possibility of an early fort has been postulated due to the presence of a

number of legionary tombstones of an early date found largely around Monson Street, c.1.3km to the north-east of the site (Jones 2002).

- 4.3 Following the abandonment of the legionary fortress in Lincoln in the latter part of the first century AD, the site was developed as a *colonia*, a settlement of retired legionary soldiers and their dependents, and an administrative centre. The city expanded rapidly beyond the confines of the former legionary fortress, with the area along the High Street, which broadly follows the line of the Roman road, developing as an industrial and residential suburb. It is unlikely that the Roman suburbs extended as far south as Otter's Cottages, although the site lies close to the line of the Roman Fosse Way, which runs south-westwards towards Leicester. As with the suburbs to the east, west and north of the Roman city, a number of burial areas have been identified in the lower suburb, close to the site (*ibid.*).
- 4.4 Lincoln as a whole appears to have suffered a gradual decline in population and prosperity towards the end of the Roman period, leading to widespread abandonment and decay of much of the Roman city by the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. Only small quantities of post-Roman pottery have been recovered from the city, attesting a low level of activity (Vince 2003a). However, recent fieldwork in advance of the proposed Lindongate redevelopment project has exposed several phases of timber building associated with a large assemblage of pottery indicating permanent settlement activity during the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> centuries. The site was situated c.1.9km north-north-east of the current site, on a sand and gravel bank in the river, known as Thorn Island and later documented as a medieval suburb of the city (AAL 2009a).
- 4.5 The pottery evidence begins to increase somewhat into the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the area along the High Street developed as the suburb of Wigford, principally an industrial quarter, with an extensive quayside developing along the Witham to the west of the High Street, and low-lying marshy ground used for seasonal pasture, which was gradually reclaimed throughout the middle ages to the east (Vince 2003b). At the south end of the High Street was a large funnel shaped market place, known as St. Botolph's Green, which was first laid out in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and effectively marked the southern extent of the suburb of Wigford (*ibid.*).
- 4.6 To the south of this market place, and to the north of the proposed development area was the site of the Gilbertine Priory of St. Katherine, established by Bishop Robert de Chesney soon after 1148 (Vince 2003b). Recent excavations in advance of development have exposed elements of the Priory to the north of the site, off Newark Road (Field, forthcoming), and further elements have been recorded beneath the existing St. Katherine's Church (AAL 2009b).
- 4.7 Lincoln suffered widespread population decline and a downturn in commercial activity from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, due to the effects of the loss of the cloth trade, followed by the Black Death in the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century. Significant revival of the fortunes of Lincoln did not begin until the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the city developed an extensive heavy manufacturing industry. Rapid expansion of the urban area took place during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as rows of terraced houses were built to provide accommodation for the workers, including within the area of the proposed development (Stocker 2003). Otter's Cottages themselves are of later 19<sup>th</sup> century date, and had been constructed by the time of the 1889 First Edition 6 inch scale Ordnance Survey map. By the time of the 1933 Ordnance Survey map, a number of small outbuildings are shown within the development area, and the site was occupied by post-war garages until their recent demolition.
- 4.8 Prior to the current phase of works, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the site, comprising a single 10m long trench within the footprint of the proposed development. The trench exposed a single linear feature and a former ground surface of 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century date, as

well as a large dyke which had later been culverted by means of a large ceramic drain (AAA 2007).

## 5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 Prior to being commissioned to undertake the archaeological works, the foundations for the new dwelling were excavated and concreted. Following discussions between the client, AAL and the City Archaeologist, it was agreed that all services, access and drainage works should be monitored as a final mitigation. The ground works were monitored by Chris Clay and Kevin Trott of AAL between 29<sup>th</sup> September and 27<sup>th</sup> October 2009. The archaeological monitoring pertained to the inspection of an open soakaway pit to the south of the new building (Pit 1), partial monitoring of a second soakaway to the north (Pit 2), and monitoring of drainage trenches along the west side of the new building, running northwards to connect to an existing manhole in the access road towards St. Catherine's Grove.
- 5.2 During excavation, all exposed plan and section surfaces were examined and periodically cleaned where possible; in order to determine the stratigraphic sequence and to determine the presence or absence of archaeological features or deposits. Spoil from the excavations was examined for finds recovery. Each context was recorded on pro-forma AAL context record sheets, accompanied by section drawings at appropriate scales (1:20 and 1:50). A full photographic record was maintained throughout the watching brief and selected prints have been included as an appendix to this report (Appendix 1).
- 5.3 Each deposit, layer or cut was allocated a unique identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 3. Two digit numbers within square brackets reflect cut features (e.g. pit [109]).

## 6.0 Results (Figures 2 – 4)

### 6.1 Soakaway Pit 1

- 6.1.1 The pit had been excavated prior to the commencement of the watching brief, but was open to be inspected. The uppermost deposit was a modern topsoil horizon, 100, comprising dark brown compact sandy silt interspersed with large quantities of limestone fragments, bricks and tarmac, which was approximately 0.7m thick. It sealed a 0.3m thick compact mid yellowish brown silty sand, 102, interpreted as a ground raising and levelling deposit of early modern date. This is likely to be the same material as layer 02 recorded in the preceding evaluation of the site, directly below the topsoil (AAL 2007). Below this was a layer of dark grey silty sand, 108, containing occasional limestone fragments and mortar flecks, and interpreted as a possible buried soil horizon. No further inspection was possible due to standing water in the base of the pit.

### 6.2 Soakaway Pit 2

- 6.2.1 In this pit topsoil 100 was approximately 0.25m thick and sealed a 0.68m thick layer of ground raising/levelling deposit 102. A single 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century roof tile fragment was recovered from this layer. 102 was cut by a single feature, [109], in the eastern half of the pit. One shallow sloping side of the feature was exposed, aligned broadly north – south. It was approximately 0.2m deep with a flat base, and contained a fill of moderately compact grey clayey sand, 110. A large collection of modern broken pan tiles, bricks and mortar fragments were evident in this pit fill combined with small degraded plastic pieces.

- 6.2.2 It was not possible to inspect the soakaway pit below layer 102, as the remainder had been excavated without archaeological monitoring and partially backfilled with a layer of light brown sand.

### 6.3 Service Trench

- 6.3.1 The topsoil in the service trench varied in depth between 0.15m and 0.45m. It sealed a mid to dark brown silty sand, 101, reflecting a probable former garden soil, which was up to 0.25m thick. This layer was recorded in the northern and southern portions of the service trench but was not apparent in the central part of the service trench.
- 6.3.2 Below layer 101 was deposit 102, which sealed a 0.2m thick layer of limestone rubble 103, interspersed with degraded mortar fragments that extended for a distance of c.10m in the northern portion of the service trench. Four fragments of roof tile were recovered from this deposit, three of which were dated to the late 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century, with one fragment that could be more closely dated to the late 12<sup>th</sup> to mid 13<sup>th</sup> century. This is likely to represent demolition material from a nearby structure of medieval date. It sealed the natural geology, a light yellow/brown sand, 104.
- 6.3.3 Towards the south end of the service trench, layer 102 sealed layer 108, which extended below the limit of excavation. Also recorded towards the south end of the trench was a portion of a brick and stone wall, 106/107, aligned broadly north – south. The lower portion of the structure comprised three courses of roughly dressed blocks of limestone (c.0.15m x 0.10m), bonded with a degraded grey/yellow sandy mortar. In plan the structure exhibited a slight recess, perhaps indicating a blocked entrance, approximately 0.60m wide.
- 6.3.4 Limestone wall 106 was subsequently utilised as the foundations for a brick wall, 107. Four courses of this structure survived above limestone wall 106, to a height of c.0.35m. The wall was of an irregular bond, with headers and stretchers incorporated in no obvious pattern. This suggests that the surviving portion of the brick wall represents below ground foundation courses. The bricks were regular machine made bricks suggesting a later 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century date for the wall.

## 7.0 Discussion and Conclusion

- 7.1 The earliest dateable deposit identified during the watching brief comprised a layer of demolition rubble containing several medieval roof tile fragments. It seems likely that this relates to the demolition of stone structures in the vicinity, potentially elements of the documented former Priory of St. Katherine. Although undated in this phase of works, a possible buried soil horizon, 108, exposed in Soakaway Pit 1 and the southern part of the service trench is likely to represent the medieval soil horizon 03 recorded in the preceding evaluation (AAA 2007).
- 7.2 Monitoring of the service trench also exposed an undated brick and stone structure, 106/107. The date of the stone footings is unclear, and could not be resolved either stratigraphically or artefactually, as there were no associated finds and no construction cut evident. The presence of a small recess (possibly a blocked doorway) in the stone structure suggests that it may represent a building, extending to the west, rather than a boundary wall. The later brick component of the structure comprised machine-made bricks and is likely to be of 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century date.



- 7.3 A single cut feature was exposed in Soakaway Pit 2, pit [109]. It aligns broadly with ditch [05] exposed in the evaluation, a feature that is shown on historic maps as a meandering dyke that enters the site from the north before turning westwards towards the River Witham. The evaluation trench also exposed a large ceramic pipe that had later been inserted into this ditch prior to the development of the area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (AAA 2007). The current feature had a wide and shallow profile however, and was cut from directly below the topsoil, whereas ditch [05] in the evaluation was sealed by a thick levelling deposit, which was recorded as layer 102 in the current programme of works.

## **8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology**

- 8.1 The watching brief methodology was on the whole appropriate to the scale and nature of the development. Unfortunately a lack of communication between the developer and AAL resulted in the foundation trenches for the new building being excavated and concreted without archaeological monitoring. Nevertheless, the inspection and monitoring of soakaways and service trenches on the site has allowed for an adequate record of the archaeological deposits to be made.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Tennyson Homes Ltd for this commission and for their co-operation during the fieldwork.

## 10.0 References

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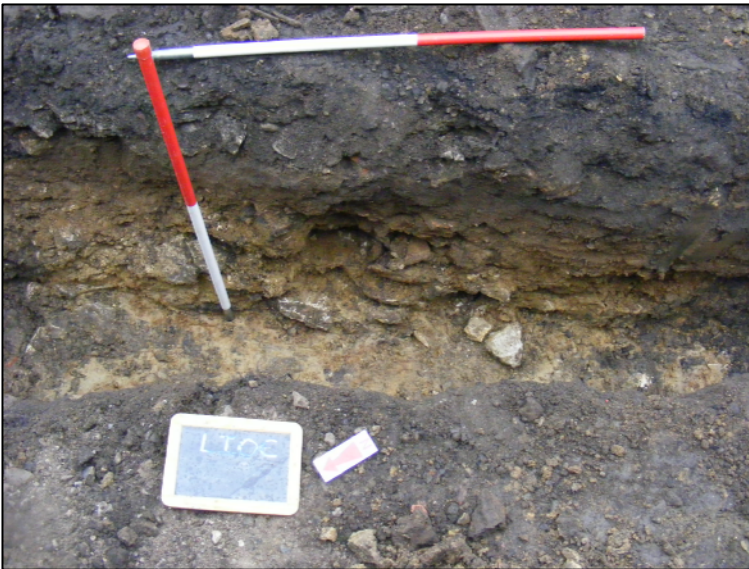
## 11.0 Site Archive

- 11.1 The documentary archive is currently in the possession of Allen Archaeological Associates. It will be submitted to The Collection, Lincoln within six months, where it will be stored under the unique archive code 2007.197.

## Appendix 1: Colour Plates



**Plate 1:** Working shot looking north along service trench towards St. Catherine's Grove



**Plate 2:** Limestone rubble deposit 103 in service trench, looking east-south-east



**Plate 3:** Walls 106 and 107, at south end of service trench, looking west-south-west

## Appendix 2: Ceramic Building Material Archive

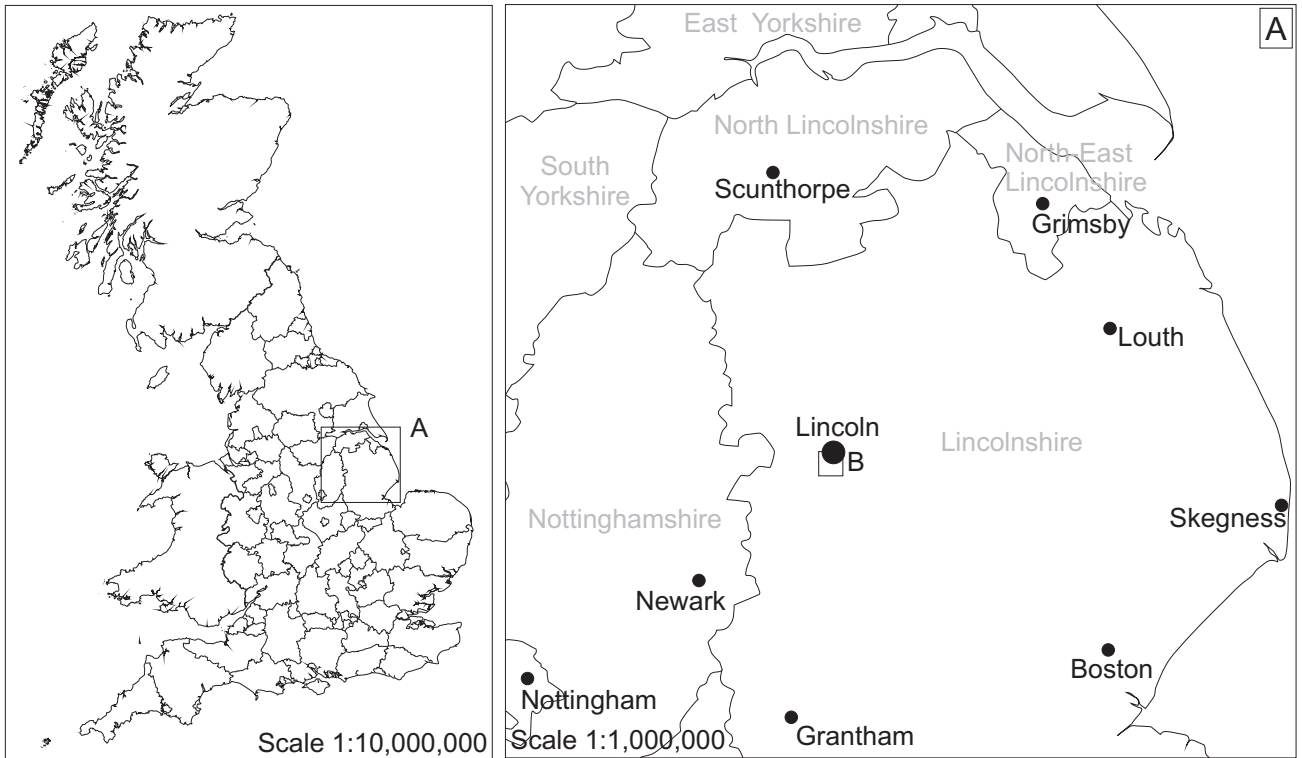
*By Jane Young*

context	cname	full name	fabric	frags	weight	action	description	date
102	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	Fabric 13	1	40	discarded	flat roofer	late 12th to 14th
103	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	Fabric 14	1	123	discarded	flat roofer	late 12th to 14th
103	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	Fabric 7	1	55	discarded	flat roofer;mortar	late 12th to mid 13th
103	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	Fabric 12	1	83	discarded	flat roofer,corner; salt surfacing	late 12th to 14th
103	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	Fabric 12	1	151	discarded	flat roofer; salt surfacing	late 12th to 14th

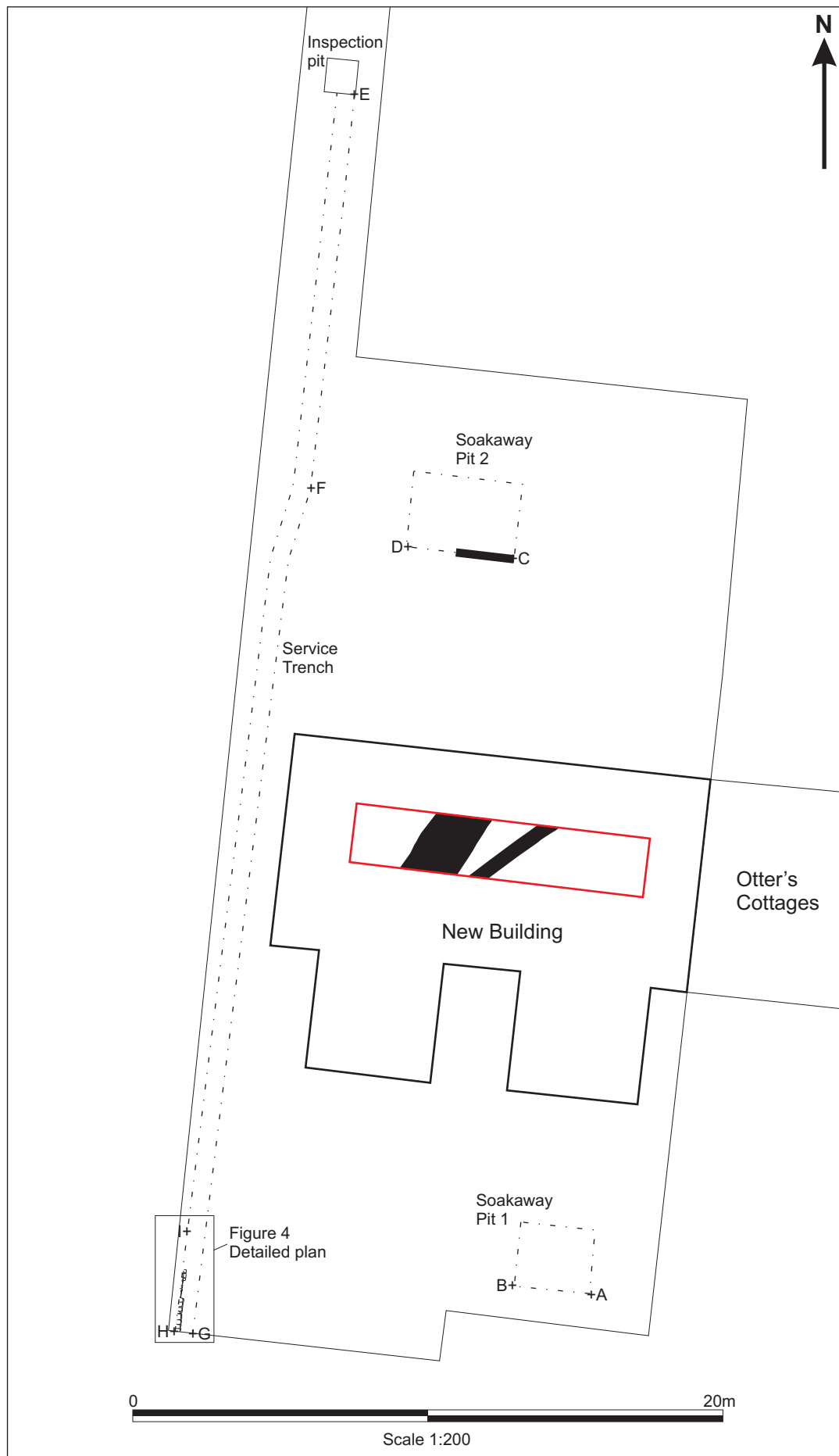
**Appendix 3: Context Summary List**

<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
100	Layer	Dark brown silty sand, frequent modern rubble. Seals 101	Modern topsoil
101	Layer	Mid to dark brown silty sand Sealed by 100, seals 102	Former garden soil
102	Layer	Yellowish brown silty sand. Sealed by 100, 101. Seals 103, 104, 108. Cut by [109]	Subsoil
103	Layer	Poorly sorted sub-angular limestone rubble in brown sandy matrix. Sealed by 102, seals 104	Demolition deposit. Contains medieval roof tile
104	Layer	Light yellow/brown sand. Sealed by 103	Natural geology
105	Void	Void	Void
106	Structure	Three courses of roughly dressed limestone blocks boned with pale grey/yellow mortar	Limestone wall
107	Structure	Four courses of irregularly bonded machine made bricks	Brick wall, using 106 as footings
108	Layer	Dark grey silty sand. Sealed by 102	Possible buried soil
109	Cut	One side of north – south aligned shallow sided cut, flat base	Ditch or pit
110	Fill	Grey clayey sand, frequent demolition rubble	Fill of ditch/pit [109]



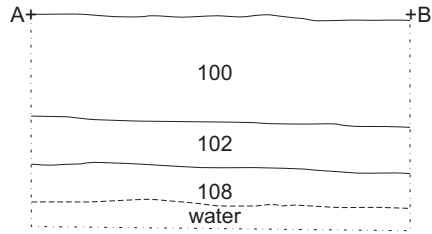


**Figure 1:** Site location at scale 1:25,000, with site shown in red.  
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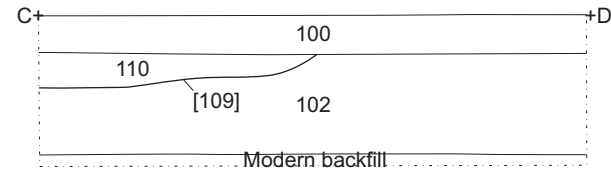


**Figure 2:** Site plan at scale 1:200. Previous evaluation trench shown in red with archaeological features in black. Sections shown on Figure 3

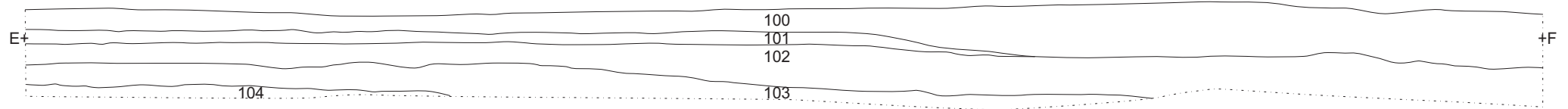
North facing section



North-east facing section



West facing section



North facing

East facing section

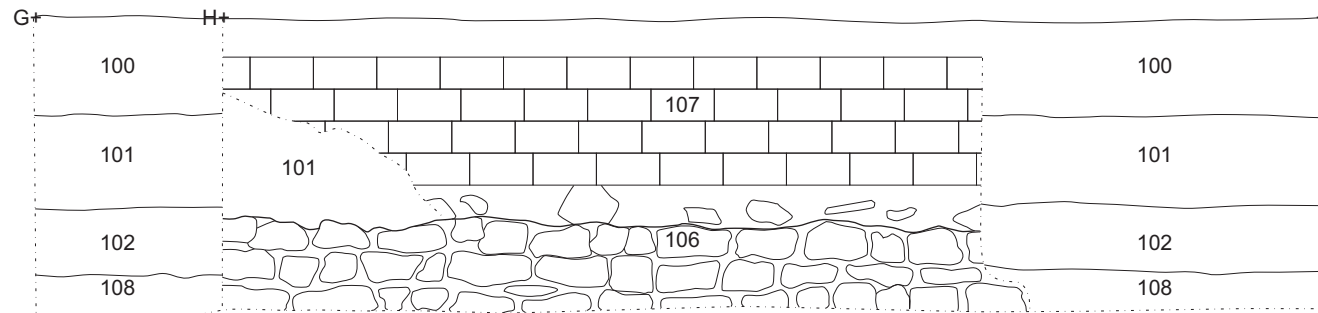
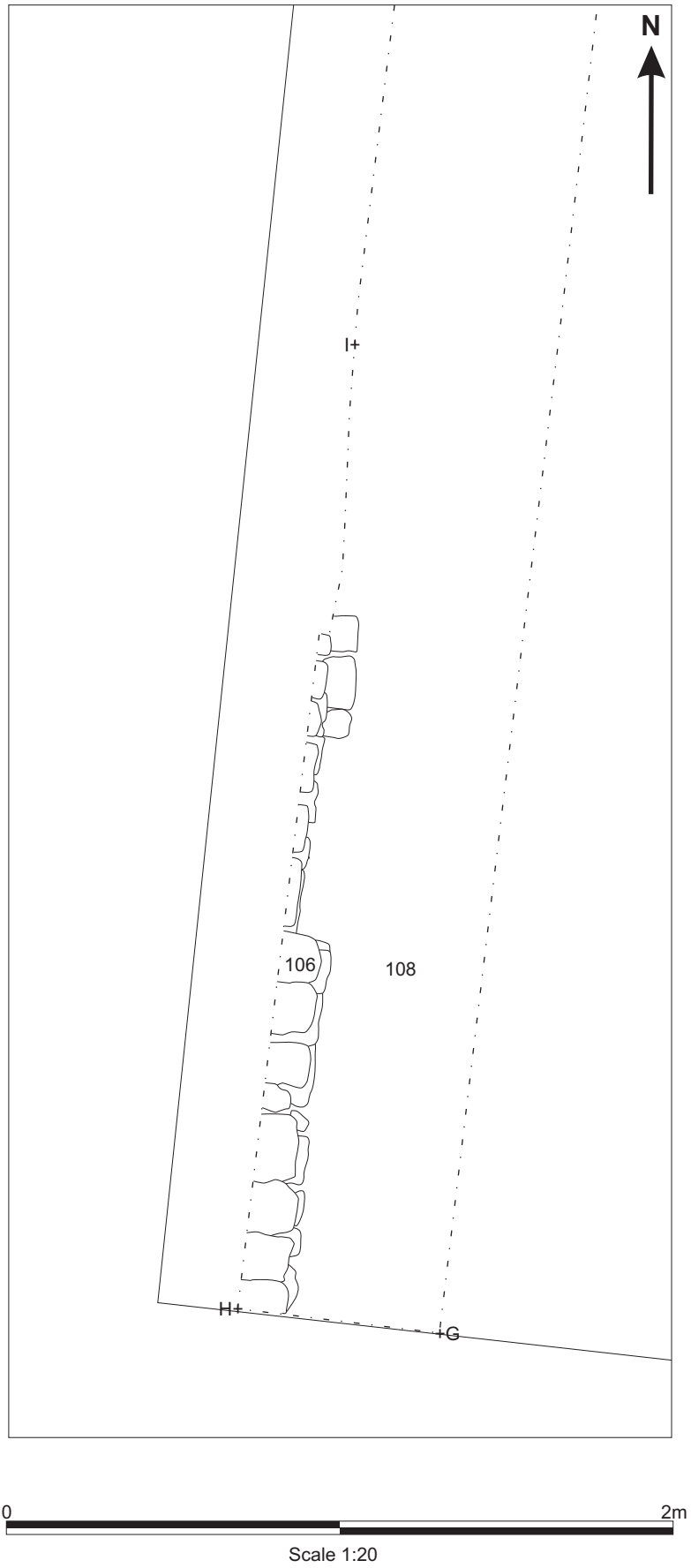


Figure 3: Sections A-B, C-D and E-F at scale 1:50 and section G-H-I at scale 1:20. Sections located on Figure 2





**Figure 4:** Detailed plan of stone structure 106 at scale 1:20. Located on Figure 2