

**68–72 Abbey Row
Malmesbury
Wiltshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

for

ASA Structures

on behalf of

Mr T. Vaughan, Mrs S. Kershaw and Ms E. Clark


CA Project: 3466
CA Report: 11287

December 2011

68–72 Abbey Row
Malmesbury
Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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issue	01

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SUMMARY

Project Name: 68–72 Abbey Row
Location: Malmesbury, Wiltshire
NGR: ST 9310 8730
Type: Watching Brief
Date: 10–17 October 2011
Planning Reference: N/10/01450/LBC (68 Abbey Row); N/11/02268/FUL and
N/11/02269/LBC (70 Abbey Row); N/10/02132/FUL and
N/10/02133/LBC (72 Abbey Row)
Location of Archive: To be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum
Site Code: ARM 11

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the reconstruction of a retaining wall at 68–72 Abbey Row, Malmesbury, Wiltshire.

Health and safety considerations precluded close examination of the exposed deposits. The earliest encountered layers may have been the natural substrate or rampart deposits. These were overlain by two thin possible redeposited natural layers, which might be rampart deposits or associated with post-medieval dumping. Overlying these were thick dumped deposits most likely to represent levelling associated with the construction of the Abbey Row properties from the late 18th century onwards. The retaining wall itself post-dated these deposits and would therefore appear to be a post-medieval build. With the exception of a layer of wall collapse which contained modern finds, all of these deposits remained undated.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In October 2011 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the request of ASA Structures on behalf of Mr T. Vaughan, Mrs S. Kershaw and Ms E. Clark at 68–72 Abbey Row, Malmesbury, Wiltshire (centred at NGR: ST 931 873; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent for the reconstruction of a retaining wall (Planning ref: N/10/01450/LBC for 68 Abbey Row; N/11/02268/FUL and N/11/02269/LBC for 70 Abbey Row and N/10/02132/FUL and N/10/02133/LBC for 72 Abbey Row). The objective of the watching brief was to record all archaeological remains exposed during the development.

1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a recommendation for an archaeological watching brief issued by Ms Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council (WC) and with a subsequent detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2011) and approved by NWDC acting on the advice of Ms Pomeroy-Kellinger. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008), the *Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Wiltshire* (Wiltshire County Council 1995), the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006).

The site

1.3 The development comprised the reconstruction of retaining walls for three houses along Abbey Row, which is located in the north-western corner of the town along the southern edge of the raised limestone promontory upon which the town of Malmesbury is situated (Fig. 2). The walls lie to the rear of the properties, along the northern side of the road known as Burnivale. The site lies at approximately 75m AOD, with ground level falling away to the south and south-east towards the River Avon, which loops around the Malmesbury promontory.

1.4 The underlying solid geology of the area is mapped as the Forest Marble Formation of the Bathonian geological era, which comprises greenish-grey mudstone with limestone beds (BGS 2011). Possible natural substrate deposits were exposed during the works (see below).

Archaeological background

- 1.5 The background information detailed below has been gathered from the Malmesbury Extensive Urban Survey (WCAS 2004) and the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (WHER).
- 1.6 The Malmesbury promontory lies within a loop of the River Avon and includes steep slopes from the plateau on which the historic town core lies. This advantageous topography has encouraged settlement, for which evidence exists from the prehistoric period onwards. Excavations along the eastern side of the medieval town wall uncovered a complex sequence of ramparts and ditches belonging to a multivallate Iron Age hillfort, first established in the Early Iron Age (Longman 2006; Collard and Havard 2011). The route that these defences take along the western side of the town is unknown although, on topographical grounds, it is possible that they follow Abbey Row, in which case the lower parts of the defences could extend into the current site.
- 1.7 There is documentary evidence for a 7th-century monastery at Malmesbury and in the later 9th century the town was included by King Alfred in his *burh* system of defences for the kingdom of Wessex. Medieval stone wall defences survive in places and it is likely that most of the surviving walls, whilst being later rebuilds, preserve the line of these defences. The retaining wall that is the subject of this report is not thought to be on the line of these later stone defences.
- 1.8 The houses of 68–72 Abbey Row are all Grade II Listed buildings. Nos 70 and 72 date to c. 1770 (WHER 1269561) whilst No. 68 dates to the early 19th century (WHER 1269560).

Methodology

- 1.9 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2011). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks comprising machine grading of the slope to the rear of the retaining walls and the removal of collapsed wall fabric, followed by the excavation of a foundation trench measuring 5m x 3m, with a 0.5m wide slot in the base, to accommodate the foundations for the reconstructed wall (Fig. 2). Because of the depth and potential instability of the trench, close inspection of the exposed deposits was not possible, and all recording

was undertaken from a safe distance, which means that some descriptions of deposits, and their interpretations, are limited.

- 1.10 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).
- 1.11 The archive is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble and will be deposited with the Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

2. RESULTS (FIGS 2–4)

- 2.1 The earliest encountered deposit was layer 115, which was exposed only within the 0.5m wide slot at the base of the trench (Fig. 3). It comprised pale green-grey clay with tabular limestone and was excavated to a depth of 0.6m without its base being encountered. Overlying this was layer 109, a yellow sandy clay with tabular limestone, which was 1.6m deep. Both deposits appear to relate to the natural substrate, although given their limited exposure within the trench, it is difficult to determine whether they are *in situ* geological layers or have been redeposited.
- 2.2 Layer 109 was overlain by two layers, 108 and 111. The lowest of these, 108, was a 0.08m thick yellow-brown layer whilst the uppermost, 111, was a 0.13m thick mid brown-yellow layer. The pale colouring of these deposits, which was very similar to the underlying clay may indicate that they are redeposited natural.
- 2.3 Layer 111 was overlain by a substantial depth of made ground, comprising mid yellow-brown layer 105, overlain by pale grey layer 104. These had been cut by construction cut 106 for the retaining wall 102, which penetrated as deep as layer 115. The wall itself was faced externally, with rubble to the rear and was largely of drystone limestone construction, with some evidence of repairs using cement. A series of buttresses was observed to the east of the trench, of which one, 114, lay alongside the eastern edge of the trench (Fig. 3).

- 2.4 The latest deposits comprised 103, the garden soils of the Abbey Row properties, and wall collapse 101 (which overlay 110 and the modern road beyond). The finds collected from deposit 101 probably derive from both of these layers. A limited range of material was recovered and included three glass bottles (pharmaceutical and meat paste types), a bottle stopper, a clay pipe bowl, a gas light fitting and a meat cleaver (Appendix B). Based on the glass bottle types, the finds were recorded as having been discarded in the early 20th century. The finds assemblage was of no archaeological significance and the material was not retained.

3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 Given the limited exposure of the deposits, and the fact that they had to be recorded remotely, providing a definitive interpretation of the layers beneath and to the rear of the wall (layers 115, 109, 108, 111, 105 and 104) is impossible. The two lowest layers (115 and 109) may represent *in situ* natural substrate, particularly since the limestone within them seemed well and horizontally bedded. An alternative possibility is that these represent rampart materials. Although no inclusions were observed within these two layers, some of the Iron Age and medieval rampart deposits observed elsewhere in Malmesbury have included layers of redeposited natural substrate with few if any inclusions (Collard and Havard 2011, 83–85).
- 3.2 The two overlying deposits, 108 and 111, seem likely to represent redeposited natural substrate. However, both were undated and were only partially exposed. It is possible that they are rampart deposits (and potentially more substantial beyond the limit of excavation), although of what date is unclear. Alternatively, they may represent post-medieval dumping to the rear of the Abbey Row properties, designed to raise and level the ground during the construction of these properties. Such dumping provides the best explanation for the later dumped layers, 105 and 104, although these too are undated.
- 3.3 The retaining wall itself occupies a construction cut which post-dates all of the deposits discussed above. If layers 105 and 104 were dumped during construction of the Abbey Row properties, built from the late 18th century onwards, then the wall in this location is a post-medieval build, with buttress 114 being a later addition.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Hart. This report was written by Jonathan Hart with illustrations prepared by Jonathan Bennett. The archive has been compiled by Jonathan Hart and prepared for deposition by James Johnson. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young.

5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2011 Geology of Britain Viewer
http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html accessed 17
November 2011

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2011 *68–72 Abbey Row, Malmesbury, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

Collard, M. and Havard, T. 2011 'The prehistoric and medieval defences of Malmesbury: archaeological investigations at Holloway, 2005–2006'. *Wiltshire Archaeol. Natur. Hist. Mag.* **104**, 79–94

Longman, T. 2006 'Iron Age and Later Defences at Malmesbury: Excavations 1998–2000', *Wiltshire Archaeol. Natur. Hist. Mag.* **99**, 104–164

WCAS (Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service) 2004 *The Archaeology of Wiltshire's Towns: An Extensive Urban Survey: Malmesbury*



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1

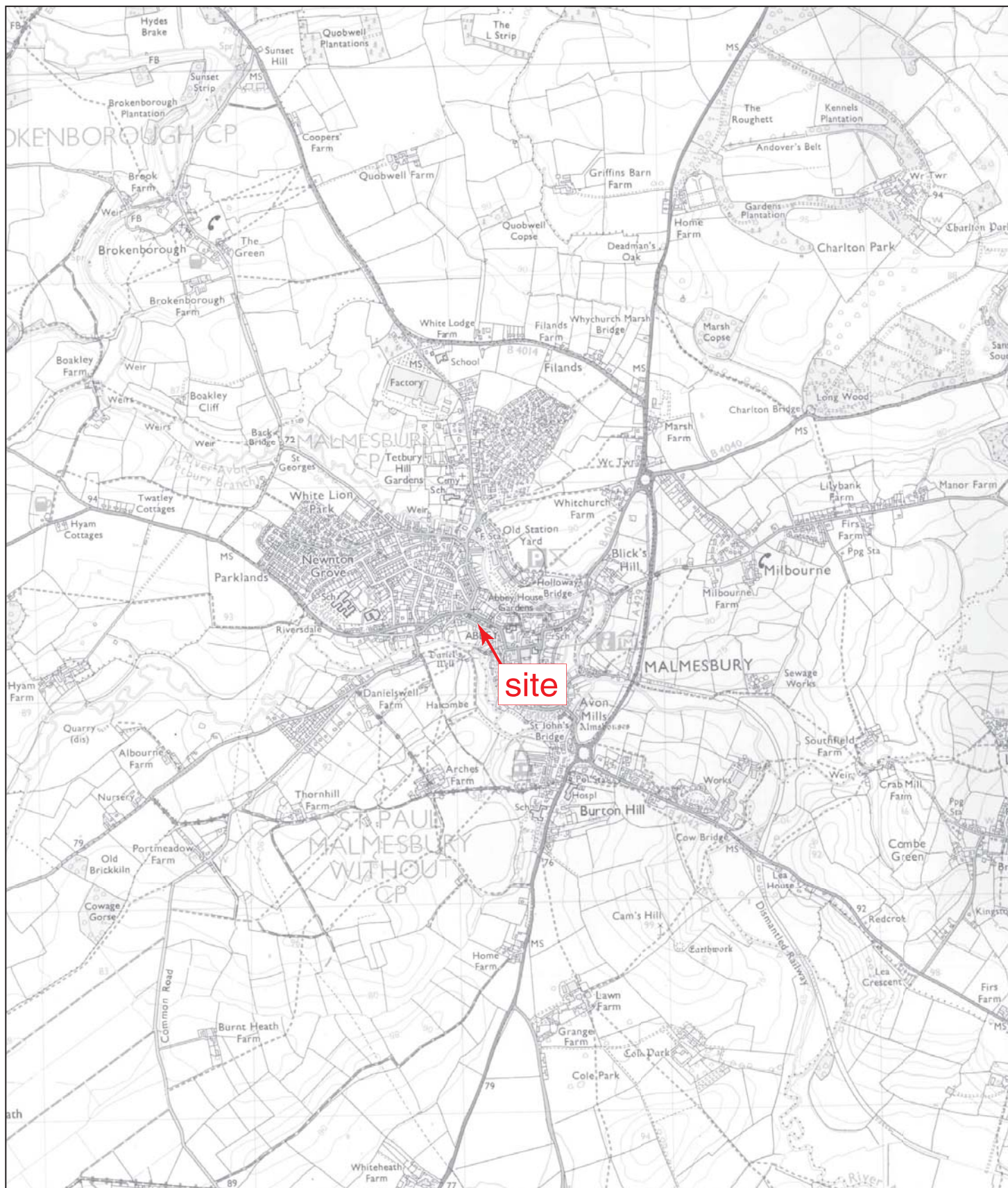
No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth/height (m)	Spot-date
101	Layer	Collapse deposit from wall, removed prior to watching brief but finds retained				
102	Wall	Stone retaining wall either side of site works, retained <i>in situ</i> . Faced drystone construction with rubble to rear. Some evidence of repair using cementitious mortar		0.7 at base/ 0.4 at top	3.7	
103	Layer	Topsoil within plots behind wall 102			0.8	
104	Layer	Make-up for Abbey Row: pale grey layer			0.58	
105	Layer	Make-up for Abbey Row: mid yellow-brown layer			2.0	
106	Cut	Construction cut for 102		>3.8	4.3	
107	Fill	Backfill of 106 behind wall 102: mid brown ?silty clay with occasional limestone fragments		1.6	3.3	
108	Layer	Yellow-brown layer			0.08	
109	Layer	?natural substrate: yellow sandy clay with tabular limestones.			1.6	
110	Fill	Fill of 106 beneath wall 102: mid brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments			0.9	
111	Layer	Mid brown-yellow layer			0.13	
112	Surface	Extant tarmac road surface of Burnivale			0.06	
113	Layer	Crushed limestone make-up for 112			0.06	
114	Wall	Buttress for 102: one of a series located to east of site				
115	Layer	?natural substrate: green-grey clay with limestone fragments. Excavated to 0.6m depth without base being encountered				

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Context	Description	Ct.	Wt.	Date
101	Glass: bottles, meat paste and pharmaceutical	3	312	EC20
	Rubber: bottle 'screw-stopper'	1	23	
	Steel: Cleaver	1	392	
	Cu-alloy: Gas fitting	1	29	
	Clay tobacco pipe: Bowl	1	21	

APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	68–72 Abbey Row, Malmesbury, Wiltshire: Archaeological Watching Brief	
Short description	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the reconstruction of a retaining wall at 68–72 Abbey Row, Malmesbury, Wiltshire.</p> <p>Health and safety considerations precluded close examination of the exposed deposits. The earliest encountered layers may have been the natural substrate or rampart deposits. These were overlain by two thin possible redeposited natural layers, which might be rampart deposits or associated with post-medieval dumping. Overlying these were thick dumped deposits most likely to represent levelling associated with the construction of the Abbey Row properties from the late 18th century onwards. The wall itself post-dated these deposits and would therefore appear to be a post-medieval rebuild. With the exception of a layer of wall collapse which contained modern finds, all of these deposits remained undated.</p>	
Project dates	10–17 October 2011	
Project type	Archaeological Watching Brief	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	68–72 Abbey Row, Malmesbury, Wiltshire	
Study area	n/a	
Site co-ordinates	ST 9310 8730	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Wiltshire Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Richard Young	
Project Supervisor	Jonathan Hart	
MONUMENT TYPE	Town Defences	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	n/a	n/a
Paper	Wiltshire Heritage Museum	Context records, drawings, reports
Digital	Wiltshire Heritage Museum	digital photos, reports
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2011 68–72 Abbey Row, Malmesbury, Wiltshire: Archaeological Watching Brief. CA typescript report 11287		



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PROJECT TITLE

**68 - 72 Abbey Row, Malmesbury
Wiltshire**

FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

0 1km

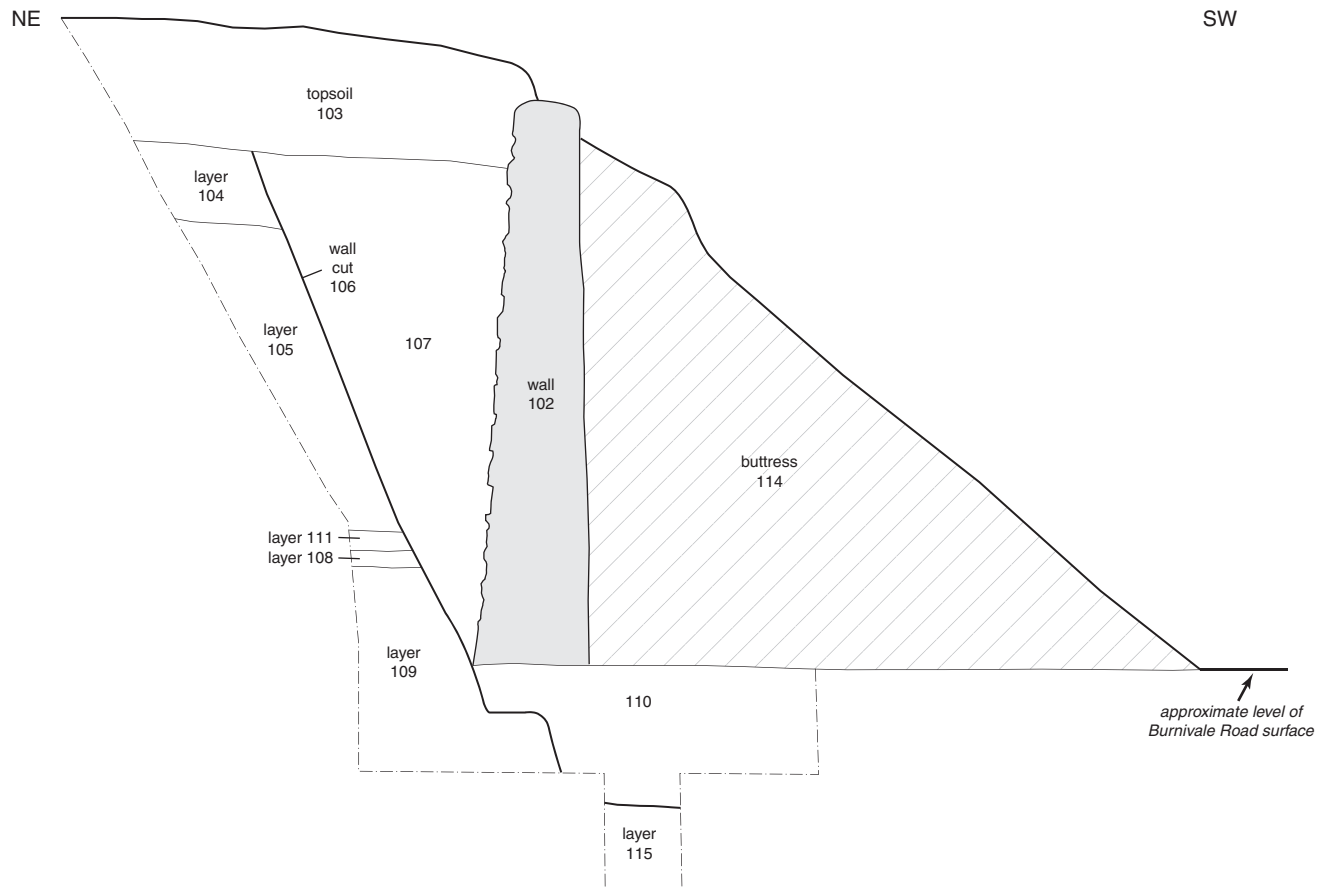
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PROJECT NO. 3466 DATE 29-11-2011
DRAWN BY JB REVISION 00
APPROVED BY PJM SCALE@A4 1:25,000

FIGURE NO.

1

Section AA



 retaining wall
 buttress

0 3m



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PROJECT TITLE

68 - 72 Abbey Row, Malmesbury
Wiltshire

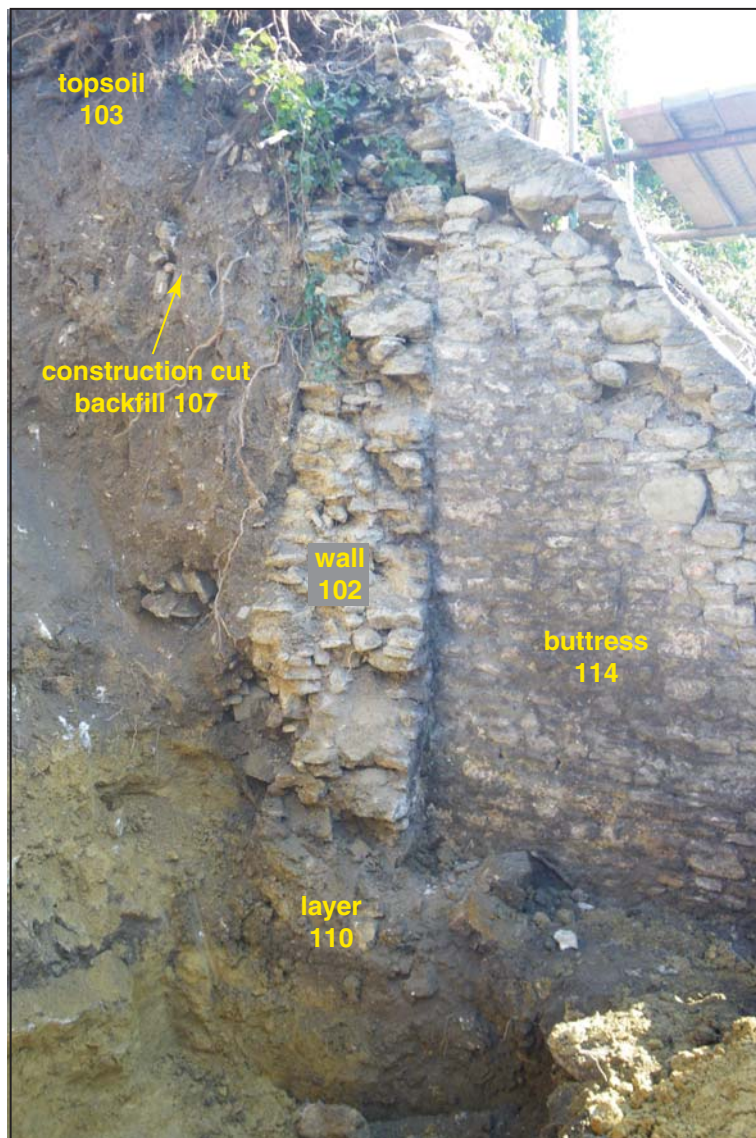
FIGURE TITLE

**Section AA: representative section of
buttress 114, wall 102 and associated
deposits**

PROJECT NO. 3466 DATE 29-11-2011
 DRAWN BY JB REVISION 00
 APPROVED BY PJM SCALE@A4 1:50

FIGURE NO.

3



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PROJECT TITLE

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Wiltshire**

FIGURE TITLE

Trench 1, looking north-east

PROJECT NO. **3466** DATE **29-11-2011**
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FIGURE NO.

4