

The Cinema Site Lewis Lane Cirencester Gloucestershire



Archaeological Evaluation
Test Pits 11, 12, 13 and 14



Oxford Archaeology

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THE CINEMA SITE, LEWIS LANE, CIRENCESTER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE TEST PITS 11, 12, 13 AND 14

NGR SP 0263 0178

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between the 22nd and 24th July 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at the Cinema site, Lewis Lane, Cirencester on behalf of Heritage Homes Wessex/Capital Consultancy Group. Four test pits were excavated adjacent to the eastern and western boundary walls of the site, which is known to lie at the eastern extent of the forum of Roman Corinium. A layer of limestone rubble thought to be associated with the late-Roman abandonment of the forum was revealed in Test Pit 13. The remaining test pits contained a disturbed horizon of 'garden soil'. Test Pit 11 also contained a rubble deposit associated with the cellar of Chester House, a building known to have occupied the site during the 19th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In July 2002, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at the Cinema site, Lewis Lane, Cirencester, Gloucestershire on behalf of Heritage Homes Wessex/Capital Consultancy Group (Fig. 1). Four test pits were excavated (Fig. 2). The work was undertaken according to a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA July 2002) prepared by OA and approved by Charles Parry, Senior Archaeological Officer with Gloucestershire County Council, Planning and Development Department.

1.1.2 It is proposed to redevelop the land at the site, a plot which is bounded to the north-west by Lewis Lane and to the south by The Avenue (NGR SP 0263 0178, Fig 1). The proposal involves the construction of 25 town houses, with accompanying access road, landscaping including paved areas and services. The existing Coach House will be retained and refurbished.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The underlying geology consists of Jurassic cornbrash limestone overlain by up to 8 m of river terrace gravel. The gravels are overlain by up to 4m of post-Roman made ground.

1.2.2 The site is currently occupied by the cinema and a Tarmac car park. The topography slopes gently downwards from north to south with an average current ground level of 110.5 OD at the north and 109.2 at the south.

1.3 General project background

1.3.1 The detail of the re-development proposal, the planning background and the archaeological and historical background for the proposal area are located in the document titled 'The Cinema Site, Lewis Lane, Cirencester, Gloucestershire; Archaeological Impact Assessment and Strategy for Monitoring and Mitigation of Proposed Impact' produced by OA in December 2001, and currently being revised. A

previous evaluation was undertaken by OA in May 2002, the results of which are presented in a separate report. The present document provides supplementary information and should be read in conjunction with the previous documents.

2 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

2.1 Scope of fieldwork

2.1.1 Four test pits were excavated (Fig. 2). All digging was done by hand.

2.1.2 All four test pits measured 1m x 1m. Test Pits 11 and 12 were located adjacent to the western boundary wall of the proposed development site. Test Pits 13 and 14 were located adjacent to the eastern boundary wall. The test pits were located to establish the nature and depth of the retaining walls flanking the site and to assess the extent of the disturbance to archaeological deposits on the site caused by the excavation of the construction trench for those walls. It is hoped that this area of disturbance will be utilised for the insertion of concrete beams beneath the edges of the rafts indicated on Figure 2. The level of the dark earth and the top of the late-Roman archaeological horizon was also to be recorded, if possible.

2.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

2.2.1 The Test Pits were cleaned by hand and revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20.

2.2.2 All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

2.3 Finds

2.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

2.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

2.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental analysis were encountered during the evaluation.

2.5 Presentation of results

2.5.1 In the following sections the deposits are described Test Pit by Test Pit; the stratigraphy of each Test Pit is described individually, from earliest to latest. There is additional comment on the finds. A discussion and interpretation of the archaeology then follows.

2.5.2 An inventory, with further detail for each individual context, is included as Appendix 1.

3 RESULTS: GENERAL

3.1 Soils and ground conditions

3.1.1 The soils consist of well-drained silty and organic loams (garden soils) overlying the late-Roman archaeological horizon. The site is currently occupied by the Cinema and a tarmac surface car park .

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Description of deposits

Test Pit 11 (Fig. 3)

- 4.1.1 Test Pit 11 was located towards the northern end of the cinema and adjacent to the brick retaining wall bordering the western side of the proposed development. It was 1 m x 1 m and excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2 m.
- 4.1.2 A dark grey clay loam (11008 - 'dark earth'/garden soil) was encountered at a depth of 1.14 m (109.46 m OD) below the surface. The deposit did not contain any finds. Dark earth 11008 was truncated by the stone foundations (11010) of a wall. The foundations comprised of roughly worked limestone blocks 0.02 m thick and 0.10 m long. Four courses were exposed to a total depth of 0.12 m. Stone foundations 11010 were bonded with white mortar.
- 4.1.3 Stone foundations 11010 were abutted by a 0.20 m thick reddish brown ashy deposit (11007), which also overlaid dark earth 11008. A 0.04 m thick layer of compacted white sandy mortar (11006) overlaid the ashy deposit. Mortar deposit 11006 may have originally extended over the top of stone wall foundations 11010 but the relationship between the two contexts (11006 and 11010) had been removed by the brick wall (11009) which physically overlaid the stone foundations. Brick wall 11009 extended 1.10 m below the ground surface. The bricks were 220 mm x 110 mm x 80mm and were bonded with white mortar. The mortar was pointed to the full depth of the wall.
- 4.1.4 A 0.26 m thick layer of light grey brown silty loam (11005) abutted brick wall 11009 and physically overlaid mortar surface 11006. A 0.40 m thick demolition horizon (11004), comprising fragmented limestone rubble blocks, overlaid silty loam 11005. A layer of orangey brown coarse gravel (11003), 0.30 m thick, overlaid the demolition horizon. The gravel had been deposited in order to level the ground for the concrete foundations (11002) for the present car park. A 0.22 m thick layer of topsoil (11001), and turf (11000) overlaid the concrete.

Test Pit 12 (Fig. 3)

- 4.1.5 Test Pit 12 was located towards the southern end of the cinema and adjacent to the brick retaining wall bordering the western side of the proposed development. The test pit was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.4 m below current ground level.
- 4.1.6 A stone wall/foundation (12004) comprising roughly worked limestone blocks 0.02m thick and 0.1m long was the earliest context excavated. Sixteen courses were exposed to a total depth of 1.4 m (108.30 m OD). The stone was bonded with white mortar. A brick wall (12003) was situated directly upon stone wall 12004 at 0.20 m below ground level. The bricks were 220 mm x 110 mm x 80mm and were bonded with white mortar. The mortar was pointed to the full depth of both the brick and stone walls.
- 4.1.7 A mid grey silty loam (dark earth/garden soil) containing a small amount of limestone rubble (12001) abutted the stone wall 12004 to the maximum depth of the test pit (1.4 m). The base of the deposit was not revealed. Pottery and clay pipe of 19th-century date was retrieved from throughout this deposit, which was in turn overlain by topsoil (12000).

Test Pit 13 (Fig.5)

- 4.1.8 Test Pit 13 was located adjacent to the eastern boundary wall towards the rear of the present cinema building and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1 m.
- 4.1.9 An horizon of limestone rubble in a matrix of dark-grey clay-silt (13011) was located at 1 m below current ground level (108.54 m OD). The limestone was sub-angular and either roughly hewn or unworked with an average block size of 0.10 m³.
- 4.1.10 A thin horizon of clay-silt and gravel (13010) overlaid the rubble horizon.
- 4.1.11 A 0.20 m thick layer of silty loam (dark earth/garden soil - 13009) was truncated by a construction cut (13005). Into the base of this cut was set a concrete foundation (13004) for a brick retaining wall offset (13003) of the eastern boundary wall (13002).
- 4.1.12 Construction cut 13005 was 0.60 m deep and did not truncate the limestone rubble 13011 or the gravel 13010. Concrete foundation 13004 was 0.14 m thick and was overlaid by the brick wall offset 13003 which was 0.54 m high and 0.22 m wide. The brick offset was six courses deep. The bricks measured 220 mm x 110 mm x 80mm and were bonded with white mortar. Offset 13003 abutted the main brick wall 13002 of the eastern boundary. The top of the offset was revealed at 0.22 m below the ground surface. The brick wall located behind it also comprised bricks measuring 220 mm x 110 mm x 80mm.

-
- 4.1.13 The construction cut 13005 for the offset and the wall was backfilled with a mixed deposit of brown sandy clay with gravel (13007), 0.5 m thick. A layer of mortar (13006), 0.08 m thick, capped the back fill of the construction cut.
- 4.1.14 A 0.22 m thick layer of made ground (13001) overlaid the mortar surface (13006). This was overlaid by topsoil and turf (13000) with a maximum thickness of 0.08 m

Test Pit 14

- 4.1.15 Test Pit 14 was located adjacent to the eastern boundary wall towards the rear of the present cinema building and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3 m.
- 4.1.16 The earliest context was a mid brown silty loam (dark earth/garden soil 14014) which was revealed 0.60 m below the ground surface. Deposit 14014 was excavated to a total depth of 0.60 m; its full depth was not revealed. A construction cut (14013) for the eastern boundary wall (14001) and its brick and stone offsets (14003, 14004) truncated the garden soil deposit 14014. The construction cut extended westwards 1m from the main brick wall 14001. The cut was 0.6 m deep.
- 4.1.17 The main brick wall 14001 had two brick offsets (14003, 14004) extending to the west. The first offset, 14003, was 0.10 m wide (1 brick) and directly abutted the inner face of the main wall. Seven courses of brick were revealed above the upper surface of the second offset 14004. The second offset consisted of a stone foundation of unworked limestone blocks which extended 0.4 m to the west of the inner face of the first offset. The width of the foundation was reduced to 0.22 m at the top where it was capped with two courses of brick 14004. All the bricks revealed in Test Pit 14 were 220 mm x 110 mm x 80mm and both brick and stone was bonded with white sandy mortar.
- 4.1.18 Five layers of mixed gravel and soil (14012, 14011, 14010, 14009, 14008) backfilled the construction cut 14013 to a total depth of 0.68 m. A 0.30 m thick layer of gravelly made ground (14007), concrete foundation for the car park and a second layer of made ground (14006), overlaid the upper fill of the construction cut and the bricks of the second offset. Topsoil (14002) and turf (14000), 0.2 m thick, overlaid the made ground.

4.2 Finds

Pottery and clay pipes, by Paul Booth

- 4.2.1 Context 12001, a substantial deposit of garden soil, contained ten sherds of pottery. Two sherds were of late-Roman date; the remaining eight were all post-medieval, including obviously 19th-century wares.
- 4.2.2 Four clay tobacco pipe stem fragments were also recovered from this deposit.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpretation

- 5.1.1 The retaining walls on either side of the proposed development were found to extend below the safe working limit of 1.2 m in the hand dug test pits. The western boundary wall appeared to have been constructed prior to the demolition of structures (as shown by demolition deposit 11004 in Test Pit 11) and the digging of a possible garden feature (garden soil 12001 in Test Pit 12), both probably associated with Chester House.
- 5.1.2 The brick wall(s) in both the test pits located on the western side of the proposed development was constructed upon stone foundations. A mortar floor (11006) in Test Pit 11 may have originally extended east over the stone foundations (which were encountered at a much lower level than in Test Pit 12). The significant depth of garden soil (12001) in Test Pit 12 contained pottery of 19th-century date and probably represents a backfilled garden feature. The dark earth 11008 revealed in Test Pit 11 had been truncated by the earlier stone foundations 11010.
- 5.1.3 Test Pit 13 was located towards the rear of the cinema on the eastern side of the proposed development. The offset wall foundations (13004) in Test Pit 13 were constructed above the Roman demolition horizon which was revealed at 108.86 m OD. The same horizon was located at 108.87 m OD in Test Pit 10 of the previous evaluation (OA 2002). A garden soil (14014) was revealed at the base (109.06 m OD) of Test Pit 14. The Roman horizon was not present in this test pit and if not truncated by later disturbance were probably located at a lower level.
- 5.1.4 Overall, it appears that later activity associated with the construction and demolition of Chester House has removed any archaeologically significant horizons on the western side of the proposed development to a depth of at least 1.2 m and a width of approximately 1m. On the eastern side, the Roman demolition horizon appeared to be undisturbed towards the rear of the cinema but was absent towards the northern end of the wall (at the depth excavated).

5.2 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.2.1 The integrity of the stratigraphic evidence encountered during the evaluation is believed to be good.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Test Pit</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
011	11000	Layer		0.08	Turf
011	11001	Layer		0.30	Topsoil
011	10002	Layer		0.23	Concrete
011	11003	Layer		0.30	Gravel
011	11004	Layer		0.42	Rubble
011	11005	Layer		0.26	Garden soil
011	11006	Layer		0.05	Mortar surface
011	11007	Layer		0.36	Ash
011	11008	Layer		?	Dark earth
011	11009	Struct		>1.20	Wall
011	11010	Struct	0.25	>0.10	Foundation
012	12000	Layer		0.40	Topsoil
012	12001	Layer		0.40	Garden soil
012	12002	Void			
012	12003	Struct		>1.40	Wall
012	12004	Layer		>1.20	Foundation
013	13000	Layer		0.10	Topsoil
013	13001	Layer		0.20	Made ground
013	13002	Struct		>1.00	Wall
013	13003	Struct		0.50	Wall offset
013	13004	Struct		0.22	Wall offset
013	13005	Cut		>1.00	Construction Cut
013	13006	Fill		0.10	Mortar
013	13007	Fill		0.50	Sandy Clay
013	13008	Fill		0.10	Mortar Frags
013	13009	Layer		0.50	Sandy loam
013	13010	Layer		0.10	Gravel
013	13011	Layer			Roman Demolition
014	14000	Layer		0.10	Turf

<i>Test Pit</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
014	14001	Struct			Wall
014	14002	Layer		0.10	Topsoil
014	14003	Struct		0.40	Offset
014	14004	Struct		0.22	Offset
014	14005	Struct		0.65	Foundations
014	14005	Fill		0.15	Sandy Silt
014	14006	Fill		0.40	Made ground
014	14007	Layer		0.10	Silt clay
014	14008	Layer		0.20	Mortar
014	14009	Layer		0.20	Gravel
014	14010	Layer		0.25	Sandy Clay
014	14011	Layer		0.05	Mortar
014	14012	Layer		0.20	Sandy Silt
014	14013	Cut		0.60	Construction Cut
014	14014	Layer		?	Garden soil

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OA December 2001, The Angel Cinema Site, Lewis Lane, Cirencester: Archaeological Impact Assessment and Strategy for Monitoring and Mitigation of Proposed Development
- OA March 2002, The Cinema Site, Lewis Lane, Cirencester: Archaeological Evaluation - Written Scheme of Investigation
- OA April 2002, The Cinema Site, Lewis Lane, Cirencester: Archaeological Evaluation Report
- Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: The Cinema Site, Lewis Lane, Cirencester

Site code: CIRCIN02

Type of evaluation: Four test pits

Date and duration of project: 22-24/07/02

Summary of results: The retaining wall of the boundaries to the site on both east and west were revealed, along with the disturbance associated with their construction. A horizon consisting of limestone rubble was revealed at approximately 1 m below ground level in Test Pit 13. It seems likely that the deposit is associated with the demolished remains of the Roman Forum, or of the *inter-insulae* street running up the eastern limit of the forum.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with an appropriate museum in due course.

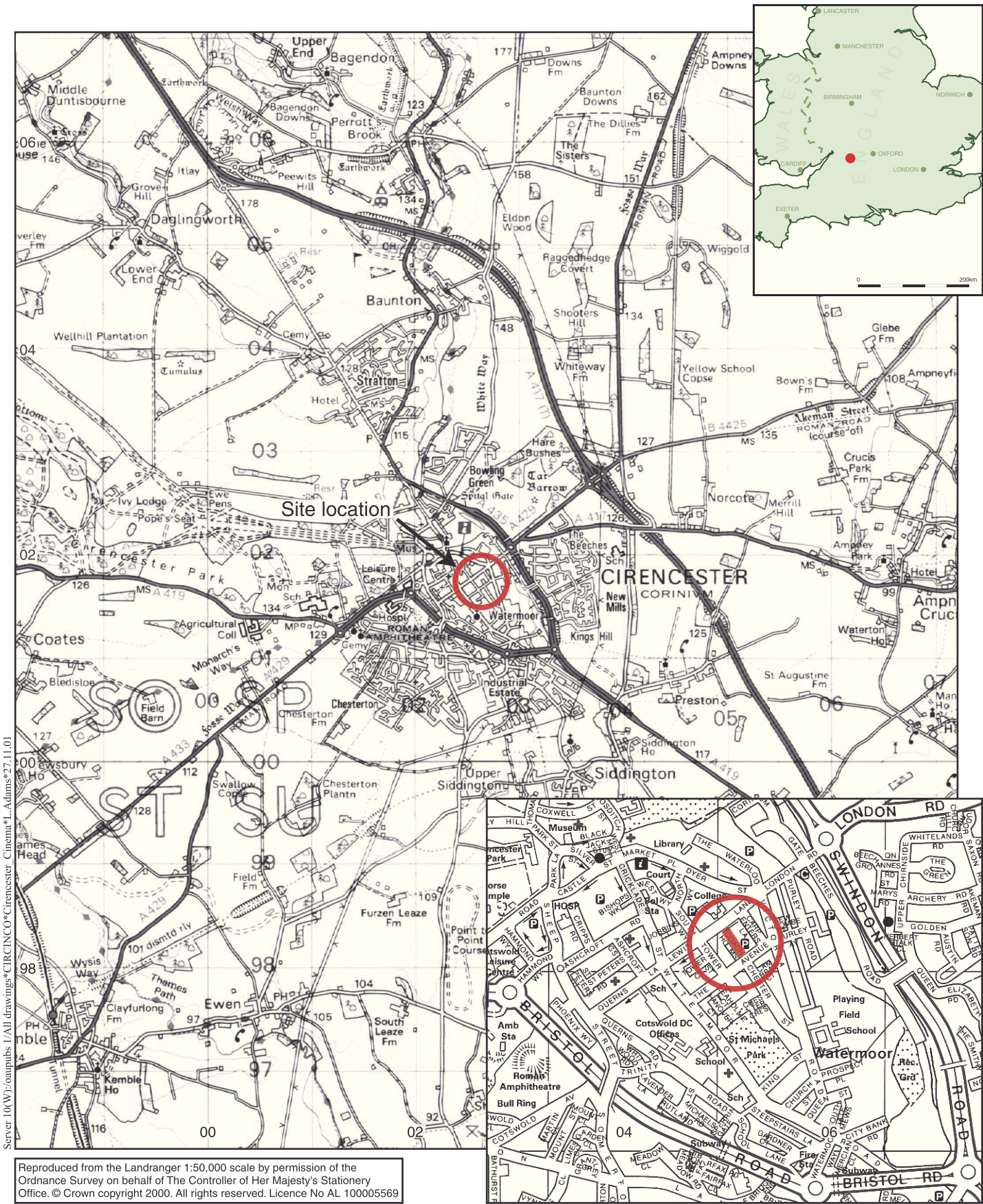
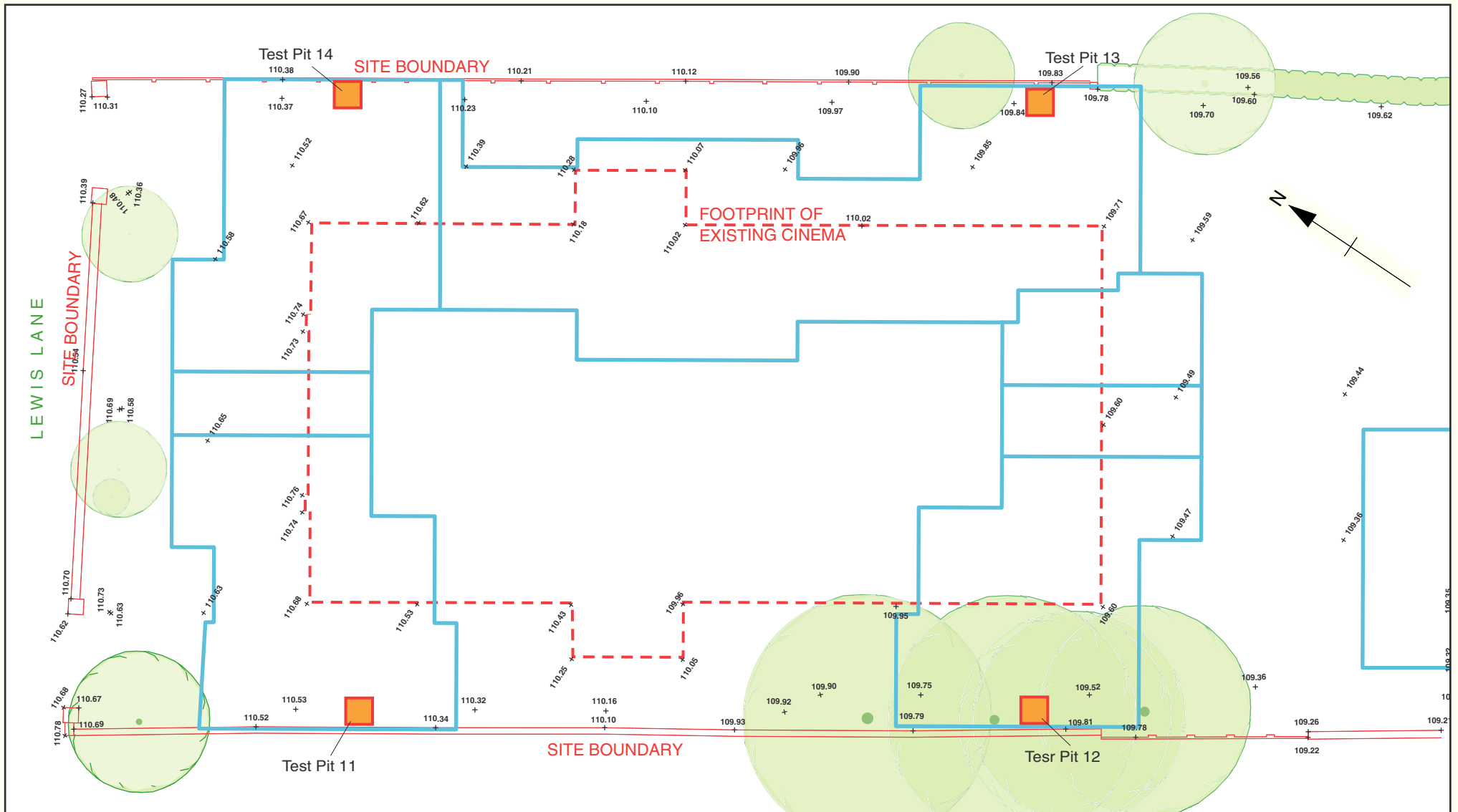






Figure 1 Site location plan.



-  Existing trees
-  Test Pit (1x1m)
-  Location of rafts
-  Current ground levels

0 20m

Figure 2. Location of Test Pits.

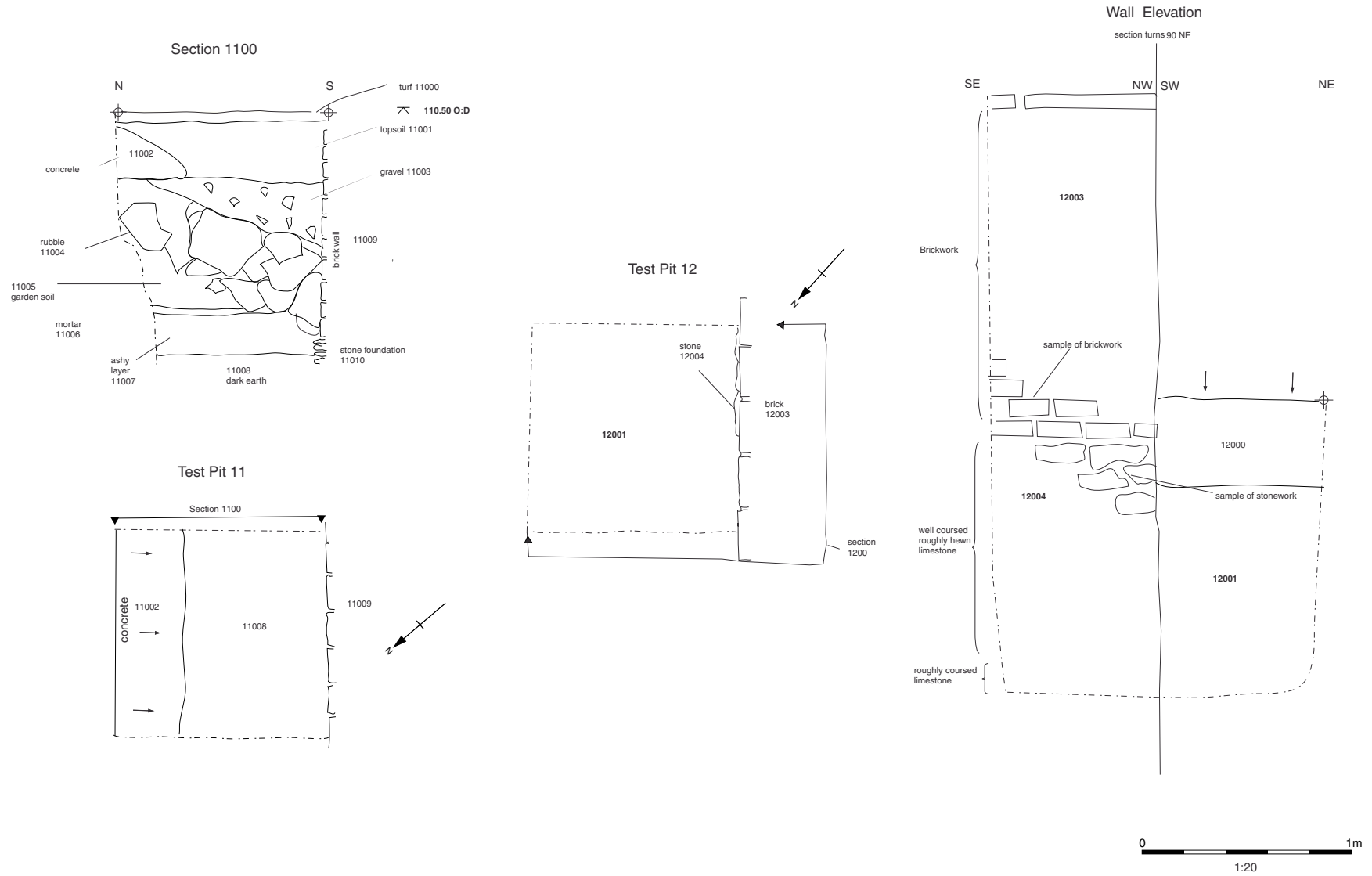


Figure 3. Test Pits 11 and 12

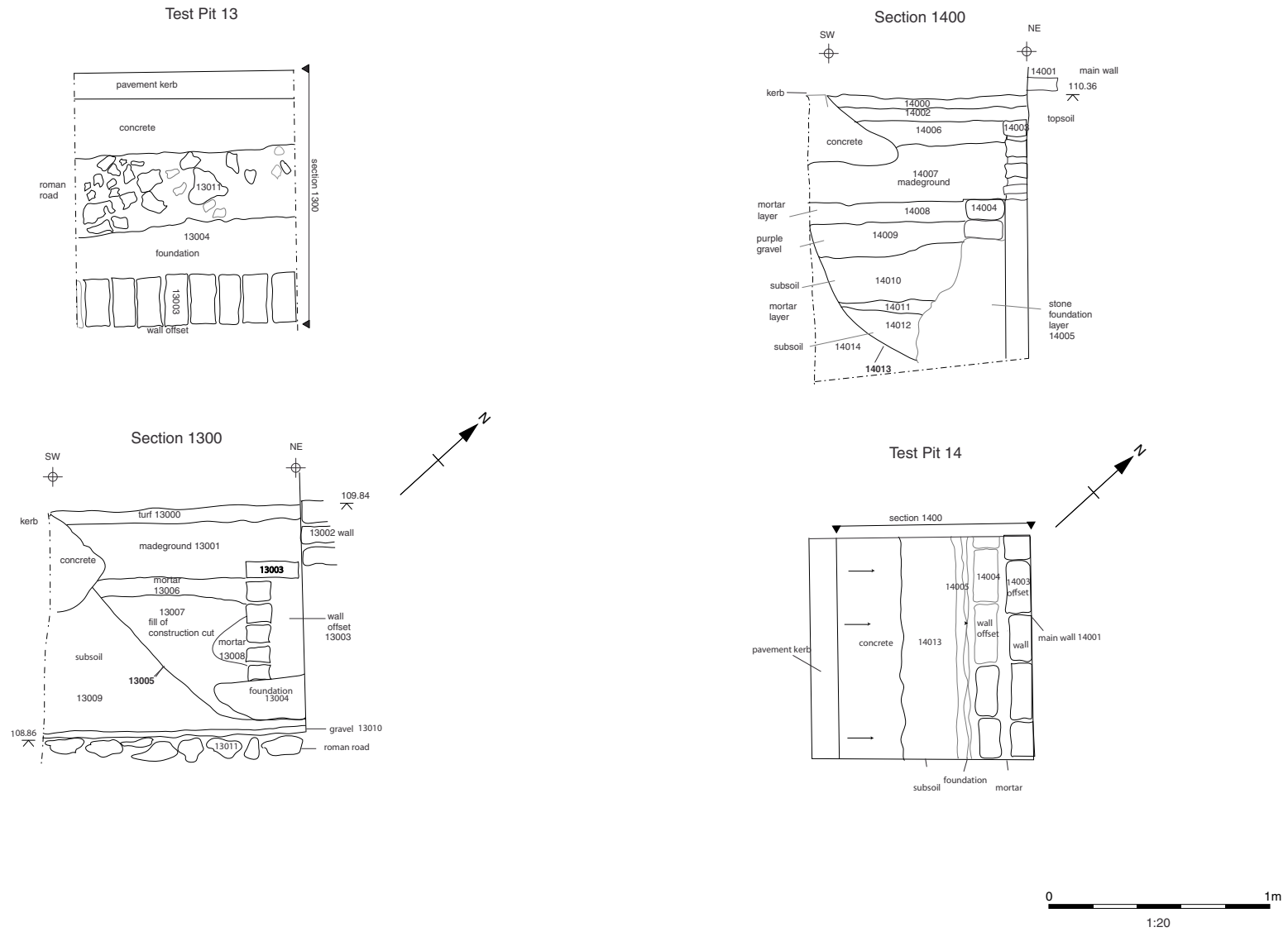


Figure 4. Test Pits 13 and 14 Plans and Sections