

# Great Hall Court Hampton Court Palace



**Archaeological  
Test Pit and Historic  
Building Recording**



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***Great Hall Court Yard, Hampton Court Palace***  
***ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION REPORT***

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## SUMMARY

*In February 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) hand-excavated a single archaeological test pit in Great Hall Court at Hampton Court Palace, to a depth of 0.4 m. The work was commissioned by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP,) in advance of stabilisation work to the buttresses to the north of the Great Hall. A north-south brick wall of apparent Wolsey or pre-Wolsey date was exposed. It may run right across the court to join with another wall fragment recently exposed against the south cloister wall. The north-south wall was abutted by a deposit, possibly a surface, of Wolsey or pre-Wolsey brick, which also abutted the wall of the Great Hall. Above this brick deposit were a number of make-up layers for the current cobbled surface.*

*A watching brief during removal and replacement of quoins on Buttress 3 showed that the east and west sides of buttress 3 are mainly faced with Henrician stock brick, Hampton Court Brick Typology Type 'C'. This is built with an English bond and features a typical creamy coloured friable lime mortar with white lime inclusions. There was evidence of some later repair work.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In February 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) excavated a single test pit at Great Hall Court, Hampton Court Palace. The work was commissioned by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) in advance of stabilisation work to the buttresses to the north of the Great Hall. OA also carried out a watching brief during removal and replacement of quoins buttress 3.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on at 9.6m above OD on the First Terrace Gravels of the River Thames.

### 1.3 Planning background

1.3.1 Scheduled Monument Clearance for the works was granted on 20th January 2010 (Letter M Turner to P Les, Case No S00005389). Condition 3c of the clearance was that intrusive groundworks should be supervised by Oxford Archaeology – in the event, Oxford Archaeology themselves carried out the excavation.

### 1.4 Archaeological and historical background

1.4.1 The following is intended only as a short summary. More detail is available in a number of published works (Thurley 2003, Ford and Turner 2004, Foyle 2002).

1.4.2 In 1532 Henry VIII began to dismantle the building(s) which then existed in order to build his new hall. Exactly what those buildings were, and how much of them he

dismantled, has been the subject of considerable research. Foyle contends that Henry partly demolished a hall built by Cardinal Wolsey, leaving the oriel window, some of the north wall and other elements of the Wolsey structure. Thurley maintains that no hall was built by Wolsey, and that Henry pulled down a pre-Wolsey structure. In a more detailed examination of this, Ford and Turner conclude that only part of the east wall was kept from a pre-Wolsey structure. They also note (*pace* Foyle) that the oriel window is demonstrably of the Wolsey period (and that Wolsey may therefore have intended to build a hall). The window stonework is interpreted as having been left un-erected at Hampton Court by Wolsey, and then incorporated into Henry's design. The pre-Wolsey structures, of which foundations have been found in excavations, are plausibly interpreted as a hall (or the undercroft to a hall) due to the location opposite the pre-Wolsey gatehouse in the south range.

- 1.4.3 The area under investigation in this project lies between the north wall of the Great Hall and the Great Kitchen. The kitchen and a servery at the east end of the hall existed before Wolsey and some of this kitchen survives; Henry VIII extended the kitchen westwards and built a second, western servery. He also built the wall on the north side of what is now called Great Hall Court, creating a long, narrow enclosed space. We do not know if this area, or any part of it, was covered.
- 1.4.4 A ground floor survey of Hampton Court, dated c. 1732-42, shows a series of small structures within the yard. The outlines of these structures are shown on Fig. 4. These are material proof of the series of changes to the old Tudor kitchens begun under Charles II in the 1660s and continuing under George I (Thurley 2003: 262-3); the structures were later cleared, as was a 19th-century WC in the north-east corner of Great Hall Court.
- 1.4.5 Previous archaeological excavations are shown on Fig.4. In 2001 a small trench (4B) just north of the eastern buttress (and therefore very close to the trench being reported on here) revealed two phases of build in the buttress (OA 2002). Just north of the buttress was an east-west wall (460) with a brick north face and rubble core. This wall was dated, from the few visible bricks, as possibly Henrician. Much of the detail was concealed by a late drain (458) built in concrete and reused brick of various periods.
- 1.4.6 Two buttresses to the west was an unpublished 1988 trench excavated by English Heritage, the results of which are summarised by Ford and Turner (2004). The buttress exposed in this trench was of a single phase. An east-west wall which might align with the wall found in Trench 4B, is shown as unphased (Ford and Turner 2004, Fig.2).
- 1.4.7 At the time of writing (7/7/10) a north-south brick wall has been exposed in a test pit further to the north, against the south cloister wall.

## 1.5 Acknowledgements

## **2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Aims**

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the works.
- 2.1.2 To establish any archaeological cause for the subsidence affecting the buttresses.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.
- 2.1.4 To record and interpret any detail revealed during the work on the historic fabric.



## 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The current cobbled surface was removed by HRP. A single trench was then hand-excavated by OA. It measured 1.3m north-south and 1.1m east-west, to a depth of 0.4 m where significant archaeological remains were encountered and it was decided to leave these in situ. (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:20 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made following procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The trench consisted of 10 deposits including the current cobbled surface. The majority of these were levelling and make-up deposits overlying two brick structures, 103 and 108 (Fig. 3). Wall 103 was brick-built, measuring 0.8m north-south and 0.4m east-west within the trench, but continuing north and west beyond the limit of excavation. At its south end the wall appeared to end, with the rough nature of the end suggesting a cut or break (Plate 1). It was preserved to a height of at least 0.18m high where visible in the side of the later cut 109. The brick was sampled and matches reasonably well with Hampton Court Brick Typology Type A, Pre-Wolsey and Wolsey, as defined by Ford. This was supported by a mortar sample of a rich brown and sandy nature also considered typical of building work of this period, but the average width and length of the bricks is slightly smaller than those given for Type A. The only visible (east) face of the wall was laid as stretchers, while there are at least two rows of bricks laid across the wall, to the west of the face.
- 3.1.2 Abutting wall 103 on its east side and also appearing to butt the wall's south end, was another brick-built structure (108) (Fig. 3, Plate 1) covering the remainder of the trench. This also appeared to butt the north wall of the Great Hall (107) and to obscure double-struck pointing in that wall, so far as this could be observed without removal of structure 108. The bricks of 108, again of Type A, were packed very tightly against the Great Hall wall, and did not seem to be laid in any particular pattern, although this may have been obscured by the mortar which was not removed. The mortar was also similar to that described above for wall 103.
- 3.1.3 Wall (107) is the north wall of the existing Great Hall; the elevations below ground level on the two exposed sides were recorded (Fig 4). No rebuilds or alterations were observed.
- 3.1.4 Brick structures 103 and 108 were cut at the north edge of the excavation by an east-west cut (109; Fig. 3 and 4) of which only the south side was visible. The cut was

only seen in the far corner of the trench and was excavated to 0.5m beneath ground level where it appeared to be bottoming out. The material filling the cut was a dark grey brown, sand silt deposit (104) with crushed mortar, peg tile, broken brick and post medieval pottery.

- 3.1.5 Overlying 104 were a number of make-up and levelling deposits associated with the current cobbled surface (Fig. 4 and 5). Deposit 105 was a very clean brown yellow sand deposit. This was very similar to deposit 102 to the south of the trench, which overlay wall 103; the two are probably the same deposit with only a small break seen in section. Overlying both of these deposits was a large homogenous levelling deposit (101). This was a mid grey brown, sand silt containing a high quantity of broken brick and peg tile. Deposit 101 was overlain by a similar deposit (100). This was the deposit directly beneath the current cobbled surface. Finally, structure 106 was the current cobbled surface of the courtyard made up of roughly rounded cobbles c. 20-100mm in diameter.

### 3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 A sample of peg tile and brick was recovered from 100 and 101 and two sherds of post-medieval pot were also recovered from 100. One sherd was a large piece of post-medieval red ware with an internal glaze. Two brick samples were also taken from structures 103 and 108.

### 3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No Palaeo-environmental remains were encountered during the watching brief.

### 3.4 **Historic building recording results**

- 3.4.1 The east and west sides of buttress 3 are mainly faced with Henrician stock brick, Hampton Court Brick Typology Type 'C'. This is laid in an English bond and features a typical creamy coloured friable lime mortar with white lime inclusions. The characteristic double struck pointing can still be seen in places. The east and west sides of the buttress also feature areas of repair and repointing with cementitious mortar and there are occasional modern brick replacements. There are some tile repairs over and below the stone quoins on the east and west sides. The lower buttress, below the lower string course, features frequent modern brick replacements and a yellowish cementitious mortar characteristic of 1980s repairs.
- 3.4.2 The north face of the buttress, which is largely made up of limestone quoins, features modern replacement bricks. These are large squared bricks, ranging from dark red and purplish in colour, and features a yellowish cement mortar with large pale pebble inclusions. It is the characteristic brick of the repair and replacement work done in the 1980s.

#### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Wall 103 gives us an apparently Wolsey or pre-Wolsey wall on an alignment where no wall has previously been found. At the time of writing (7/7/10) a north-south wall has been exposed in a test pit further to the north, against the south cloister wall. This may align with wall 103, implying that this wall runs right across what is now Great Hall Court. The newly discovered wall also turns eastwards to run under the south cloister wall.
- 4.1.2 Wall 103 has a cut or broken south terminus, suggesting that it could have been partially demolished for the construction of the Great Hall. It is not clear, however, why the wall was left standing proud of the brick deposit (perhaps a brick surface) 108 which is demonstrably later than the Great Hall. Furthermore, where 108 butts up to the Great Hall wall and buttress it conceals double-struck pointing, implying that the surface of Great Hall Court (which was in use when the current Hall was built, could lie further down in the sequence, so that a greater height of wall 103 would have been exposed. Overall, this seems unlikely, given that other walls have been found at a similar height, such as that in the 2002 excavations. It may simply be that in some cases double-struck pointing was used on parts of the wall which were then concealed at a later phase of the construction project, such as the laying of exterior surfaces. There are, then, some unexplained aspects of the stratigraphy, but this is not surprising given that the test pit was very small, and it was only partially excavated.
- 4.1.3 The brickwork that makes up the facing of Buttress 3 seems consistent with that of the the other buttresses on the north side of the Great Hall and the elevations in between. No diaper was detected on the buttress but occasional vitified bricks, typical of Type 'C' brick, are present. Where quoining is to be replaced, the facing of limestone is in poor condition but otherwise appears to be structurally sound.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Thickness</i>	<i>North-South</i>	<i>East-West</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds/Sample</i>
100	Deposit	0.1m	0.3m	1.15m	Levelling for current cobbled surface	2x Post-med' pot, 1x animal bone, brick, peg tile
101	Deposit	0.24m	1.3m	0.7m	Levelling	Brick, peg tile
102	Deposit	0.7m	0.65m	1.15m	Levelling	
103	Structure	0.18m	0.4m	0.88m	Pre-Henrician wall	Brick sample (1)
104	Deposit	0.4m	0.3m	1.1m	Backfill of service/robber	
105	Deposit	0.2m	0.38m	0.3m	Sandy levelling deposit	
106	Structure	0.05m	N/A	N/A	Current cobbled surface	
107	Structure	0.4m	1.3m	1.2m	Great Hall North Wall	
108	Structure	0.15m	1.3m	1.2m	Possible wall/floor	Brick Sample (2)
109	Cut	0.4m	0.3m	1.15m	Robber/service cut	

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2002 Hampton Court Palace Research Excavations: archaeological evaluation, Unpublished client report for HRP.

Ford and Turner 2004 The Kynges New Haul: a response to Jonathan Foyle's 'Reconstruction of Thomas Wolsey's Great hall at Hampton Court Palace, *Architectural History* 47, 53-76.

Foyle 2002 A reconstruction of Thomas Wolsey's Great Hall at Hampton Court, *Architectural History*, XLV, pp. 125-58.

Thurley 2003 *Hampton Court: a social and architectural history*, London.

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name: Great Hall Courtyard, Hampton Court Palace**

**Site code: HCP75**

**Grid reference: TQ185 684**

**Type of watching brief: Test Pit**

**Date and duration of project: 10th-11th February 2010**

**Area of site: 1.2m x 1.3m**

**Summary of results: The trench contained a number of leveling and make-up deposits associated with previous and the current cobbled surfaces. Beneath these were the remains of two possible pre-Henrician structures**

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number:





Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location



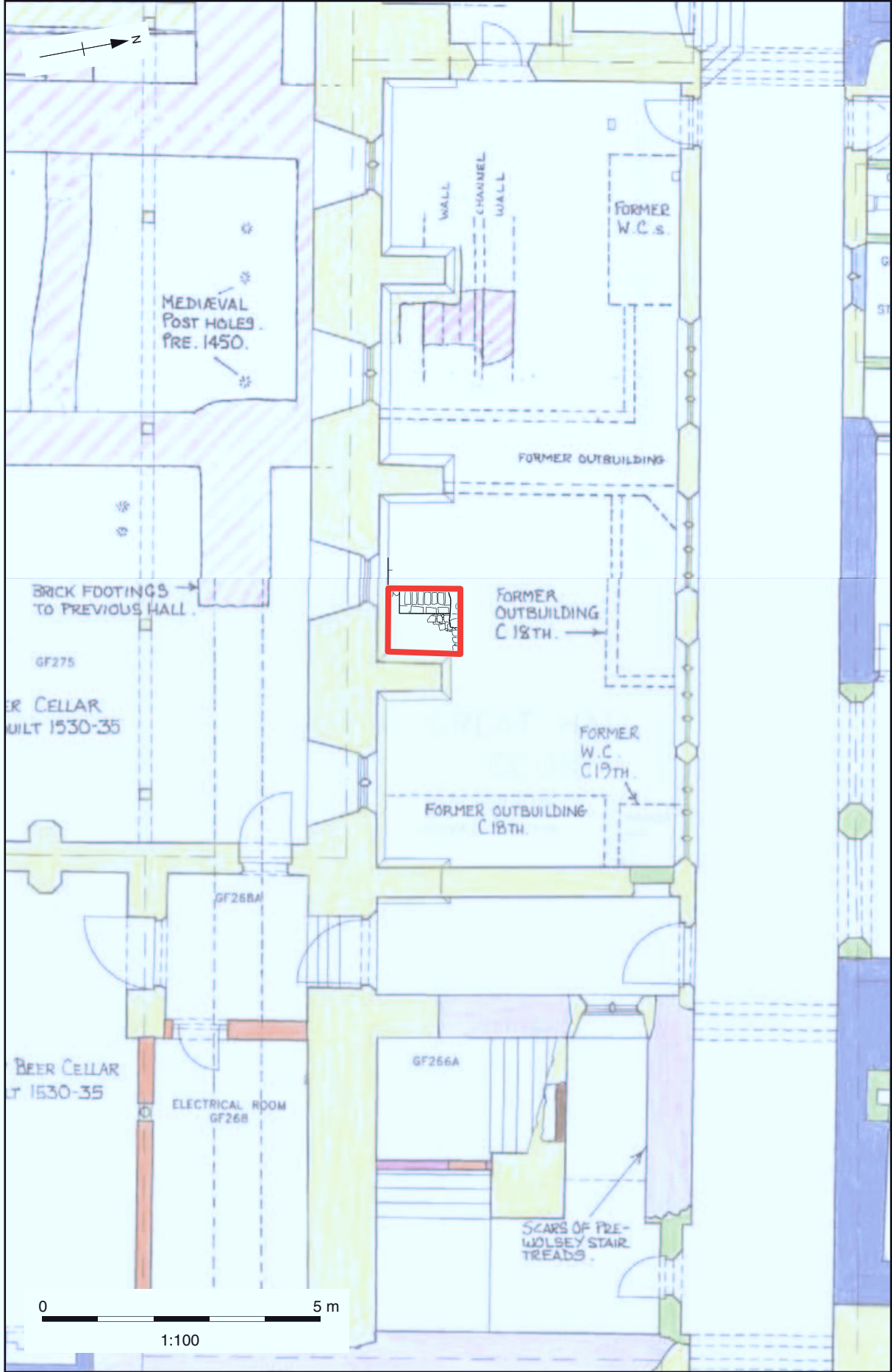


Figure 2: Trench location



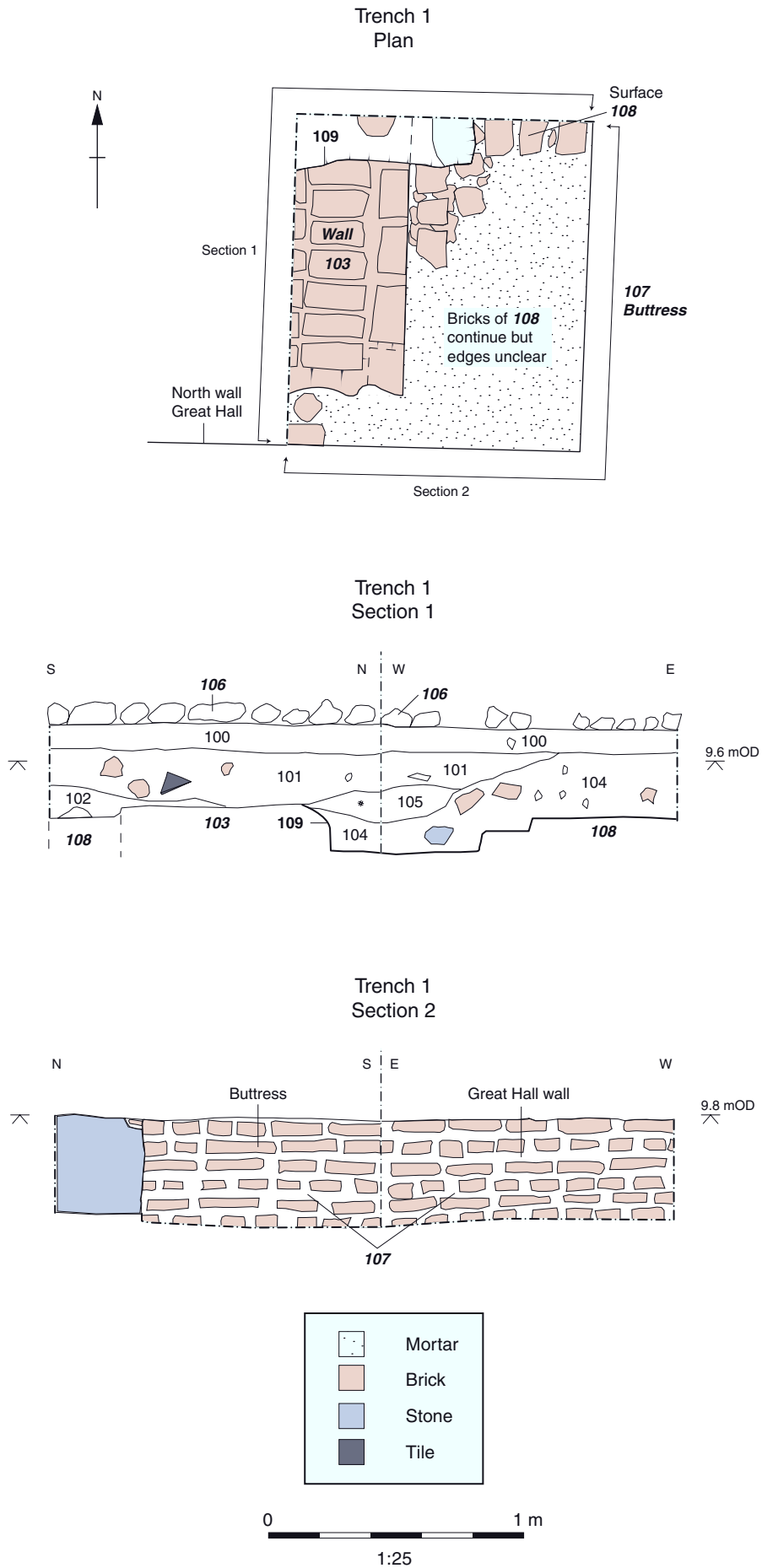


Figure 3: Trench plan and sections

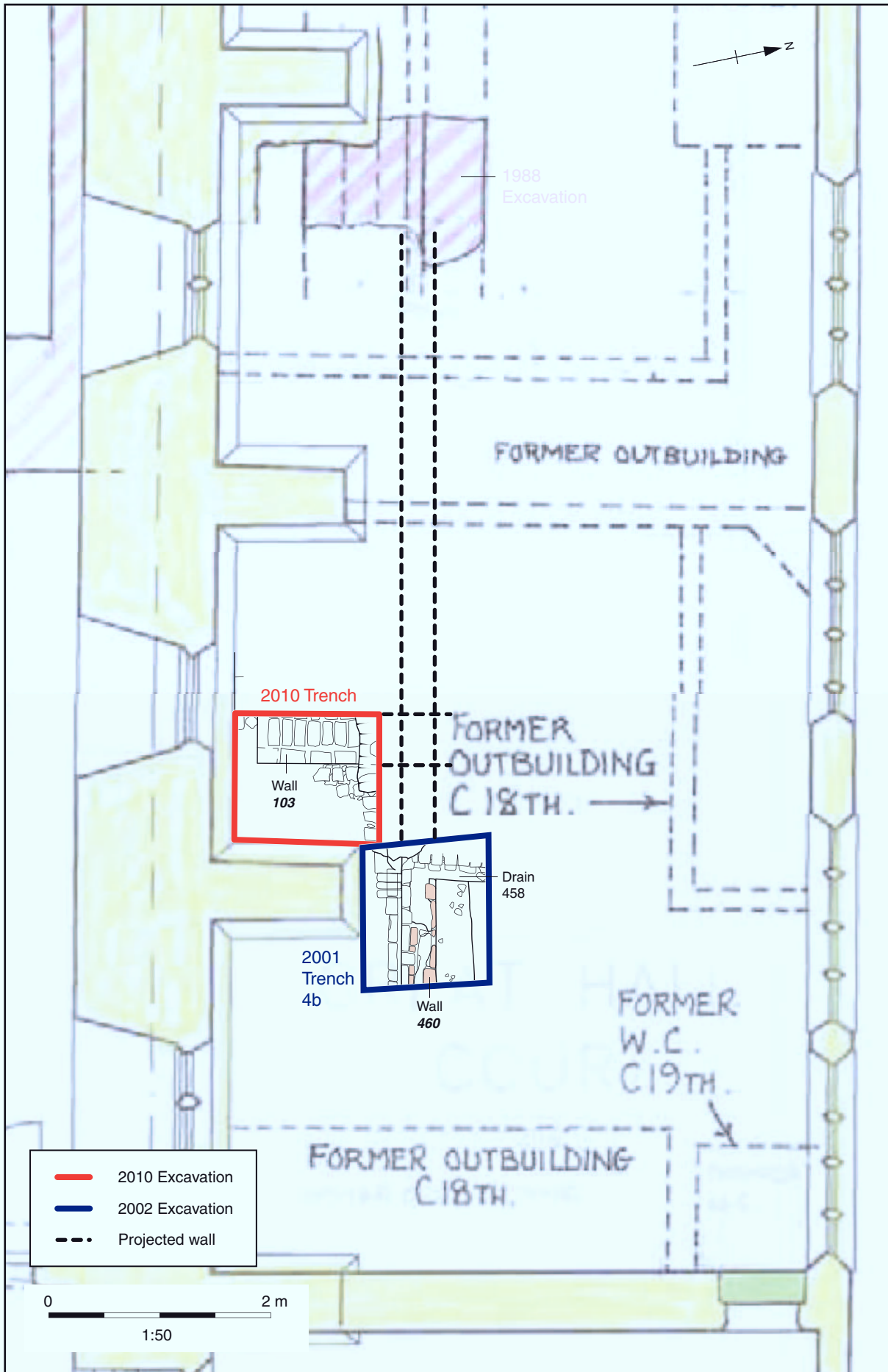


Figure 4: Great Hall Court showing locations of previous excavations





Plate 1: Trench shot showing *103* and *108*



Plate 2: Section 1 and *103*







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