

Derwent House Derby Derbyshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



June 2009

Client: Environment Agency

Issue No:1

OA Job No: 3746

NGR: SK35222 37543

Client Name: Environment Agency

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Derwent House, Derby, Derbyshire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: SK35222 37543

Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 3746

Site Code: DBYMU2007-298

Invoice Code: DERBYWB

Receiving Museum: Derbyshire County Museums Service

Museum Accession No: DBYMU2007-298

Prepared by: Jim Mumford
Position: Project Officer
Date: 30th June 2009

Checked by: Paul Booth
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 30th June 2009

Approved by: Dan Poore
Position: Head of Fieldwork
Date: 30th June 2009

Signed.....

Document File Location Smallworks/Projects/Derbyshire/3746 Derwnt House,
Derby WB/Derwent wb report.doc

Graphics File Location Servergo:/oaupubs1 AthuH*DBYMU2007-
298*DERBYWB*Derwent House*MRG*17.06.09

Illustrated by Mark Gridley

Disclaimer:

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

Oxford Archaeology

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2009

Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

Derwent House, Little Chester, Derby, Derbyshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Location and scope of work	1
1.2 Geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology	2
2.1 Aims	2
2.2 Methodology	2
3 Results	2
3.1 Description of deposits	2
3.2 Finds	3
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains	3
4 Discussion And Conclusions	3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory	5
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references	5
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details	4

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
Fig. 2 Site plan and section 1 and 2

Cover Plate: View of Derwent house from the west.

SUMMARY

In 2007 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Derwent House, Little Chester, Derby, Derbyshire (NGR SK 35222 37543) The work was commissioned by the Environment Agency in advance of construction of a temporary flood defence wall. The watching brief revealed a number of archaeological deposits and features from the Roman period to the post-medieval period.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In 2007 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Derwent House, Little Chester, Derby, Derbyshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the Environment Agency in respect of the construction of a temporary flood defence wall.

1.1.2 A programme of archaeological mitigation was approved by English Heritage as Class V Consent was deemed appropriate due to the urgency of the work before the existing flood defence wall (part of the Scheduled Ancient Monument Derbyshire 147) failed. No brief or Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared for the site.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on alluvium overlying Keuper marl with skerry bands at 46 m above OD. The site is situated on the east bank of the river Derwent in the grounds of Derwent House, north of Derby city centre.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 Little Chester (SAM Derbyshire 147), on the outskirts of Derby, located in the English county of Derbyshire is the site of a series of Roman forts and associated civilian settlement known as Derventio (Rivet and Smith 1979, 333-4).

1.3.2 The first Roman fort in the area was probably built on the opposite bank of the River Derwent. It was replaced about AD 80 by a fort on the present site, but this only lasted about forty years. A third fort was erected in the mid-2nd century associated with a pottery and ironwork producing industrial suburb to the east. There was also a cemetery with fine stone mausolea. Military occupation may have ended by the early 3rd century at the latest (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 224).

1.3.3 The defensive bank and timber palisade were now remodelled and stone gates built. Internal buildings were demolished and a civilian settlement grew up with a large-scale industrial area. Again, this only lasted about twenty-five years, although the nearby suburb or vicus seems to have been unaffected. The site was then unoccupied until the late 3rd century when a stone wall was built around the town and residents returned. Settlement seems to have ended before the late 4th century (ibid., 225).

- 1.3.4 In 1926 during ground works council workers found part of the fort's north wall and a stone lined culvert. At the same time five human burials were uncovered within the fort near to the west wall and were dated from the 5th to 13th century (Brassington 1993).
- 1.3.5 Derwent House is situated in the western part of the area occupied by the Flavian and later forts and the late Roman defended circuit. Just to the south, the site of the west gate was partly examined in 1968, in the context of floodbank construction (Annable and Wheeler 1985). A small area excavated just north-east of the present site in 1979-80 also lay adjacent to and just north of the flood wall, here aligned east-west (Wheeler 1985).

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 development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 A mini excavator with a 1.6 m wide ditching bucket excavated the trench for the new wall using a smaller 0.5 m wide bucket for the centre trench. The removed soil was taken off site and stored. These operations were carried out under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at a scale 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. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The trench was 29 m long and 1.5 m wide with a deeper 0.5 m wide trench in the centre (Fig. 2). This was excavated along the west side of the floodwall.
- 3.1.2 The trench cut into a mid yellowish brown silty sand loam (21) disturbed soil horizon. Mid way along the trench was a vertical-sided and flat-based construction cut (18) for a stone culvert (17), which was constructed of rough hewn sandstone blocks with 0.10 m thick sandstone capping stones. Only a 0.55 m length and 0.55 m width was exposed in the base of the trench (Fig. 2). Towards the southern end of the trench a 2.5 m wide band of mid grey brown silty clay (22), which might have represented the backfill of a linear aligned east to west. Overlaying this was a 0.10 m thick layer of light reddish brown silty clay (23).

- 3.1.3 At the north end of the trench two linear bands of sandstone rubble (11 and 14) were recorded. These could be the tops of walls, but were only exposed in the base of the trench. Sealing all these features and deposits was a 0.4-0.5 m thick mid yellowish brown silty sand loam (13 and 15) cultivated soil. This had been cut by the foundation trench (3) for rough hewn sandstone block (1) wall, which measured 1.6 m long, 1.8 m wide and 0.8 m high. This is thought to be an earlier boundary wall. A wall (19) of similar construction and on the same alignment was exposed in the southern part of the trench (Fig. 2, section 2).
- 3.1.4 A number of sandstone and silty sand (4, 5 and 12) deposits were spread 2.7-4.6 m from the walls and had been cut by construction trench (10) with a concrete footing (8) for the present listed flood wall (9). Against this was a 0.32 m thick mid yellowish brown silty sand loam (6) garden soil, which was sealed below a 0.4-0.5 m thick dark brown silty sand loam (7 and 16) topsoil (Fig. 2, section 1).

3.2 Finds

Pottery by Paul Booth

- 3.2.1 Six sherds of pottery, weighing a total of 160 g and all of 19th century date, were recovered. These were a fragment of white ware, three (joining) sherds of stoneware and a black glazed earthenware sherd from context 6 and a further stoneware sherd from context 12. The material is unremarkable.

Ceramic Building Material by Paul Booth

- 3.2.2 Three pieces of post-medieval flat roof tile were recovered, two (183 g) from context 11 and one (28 g) from context 15.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief revealed a number of archaeological features and deposits. These included a stone lined culvert (17), possibly dating to the Roman period and similar to the one found in 1926. Deposit 22 was possibly an upper fill of a large linear feature, possibly a ditch relating to the Roman fort sequence, although if so its probable east-west alignment would have been approximately perpendicular to the west side of the defences. These two possible Roman features were sealed under a thick cultivated soil horizon in which the line of a robbed stone wall was recorded at the north and south end of the trench. Post medieval pottery and ceramic building material was recovered from these and the overlying layers.
- 4.1.2 The wall remains (1 and 19) could be an earlier retaining or boundary wall for Derwent House and the evidence suggests that the trench cut into the post medieval

levelling and cultivation of the site deposits formed when it was part of the grounds of the house. No Roman finds were recovered from the features or deposits.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Wall		1.85 m	1.6 m	Early stone wall	
2	VOID	VOID	VOID	VOID	VOID	VOID
3	Cut		1.85 m	1.6 m	Construction cut	
4	Layer	0.6 m	1.6 m	2.7 m	Rubble spread	
5	Layer	0.5 m	1.6 m	4.6 m	Levelling deposit	
6	Layer	0.32 m			Garden topsoil	Pottery
7	Layer	0.4 m			Garden topsoil	
8	Layer	0.05 m			Concrete foundation	
9	Wall				Flood defence wall	
10	Cut				Construction cut for wall	
11	Structure		0.55 m	1.6 m	Rubble layer	CBM
12	Layer	0.5 m	2.7 m	1.6 m	Deposit of material	Pottery
13	Layer	0.48 m			Garden topsoil	
14	Layer		1.9 m	1.6 m	Rubble layer	
15	Layer	0.5 m	1.6 m	35 m	Garden topsoil	
16	Layer	0.54 m	1.6 m	35 m	Garden topsoil	
17	Culvert		0.55 m	0.55 m	Stone culvert	
18	Cut				Construction cut	
19	Layer	0.4 m			Rubble layer	
20	Wall				Flood defence wall	
21	Layer	0.5 m			Levelling layer	
22	Layer				Clay fill	
23	Layer	0.10 m	1.6 m	4 m	Make up layer	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Annable, R and Wheeler, H, 1985 The west gate excavations 1968, *Derbyshire Archaeol J* **105**, 33-37

Brassington, M 1993 Little Chester, Derby, the 1926 Excavations, *Derbyshire Archaeol J* **113**, 26-31

OA, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1st edition, ed. D Wilkinson)

Rivet, A L F, and Smith, C, 1979 *The place-names of Roman Britain*, Batsford, London

Wheeler, H M, 1985 North-west sector excavations 1979-80, *Derbyshire Archaeol J* **105**, 38-153

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Derwent House, Little Chester, Derby, Derbyshire

Site code: DBYMU 2007-298

Grid reference: NGR SK 35222 37543

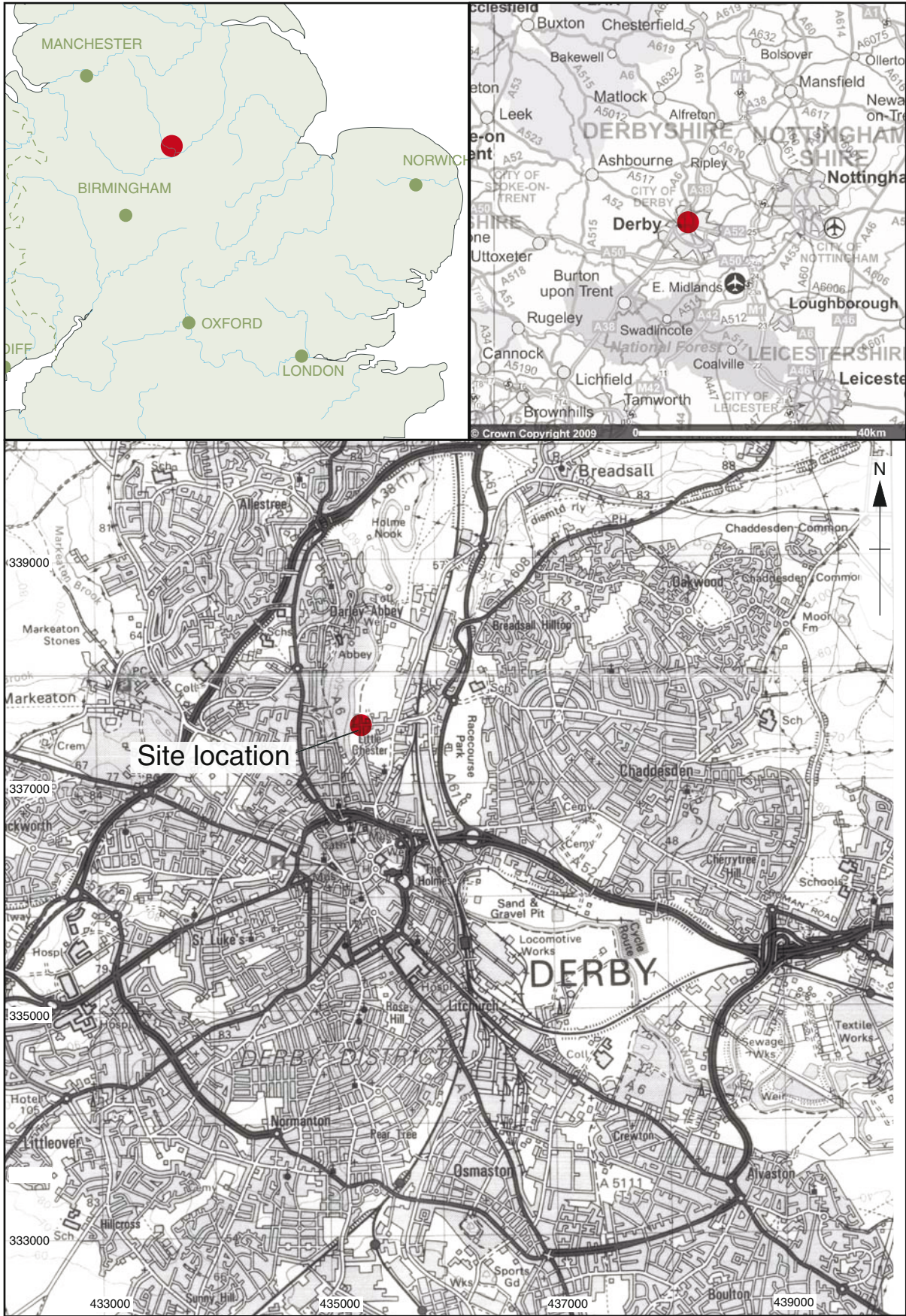
Type of watching brief: Excavation for construction of temporary floodwall.

Date and duration of project: Four days on site from 30/7/2007 to 2/8/2007.

Area of site: A trench 29 m long and 1.5 m wide.

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed a number of archaeological deposits and features from the Roman period to post medieval period.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Derbyshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: DBYMU 2007-298



Reproduced from the Landranger 1:50,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 1991. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 10000569

Figure 1: Site location

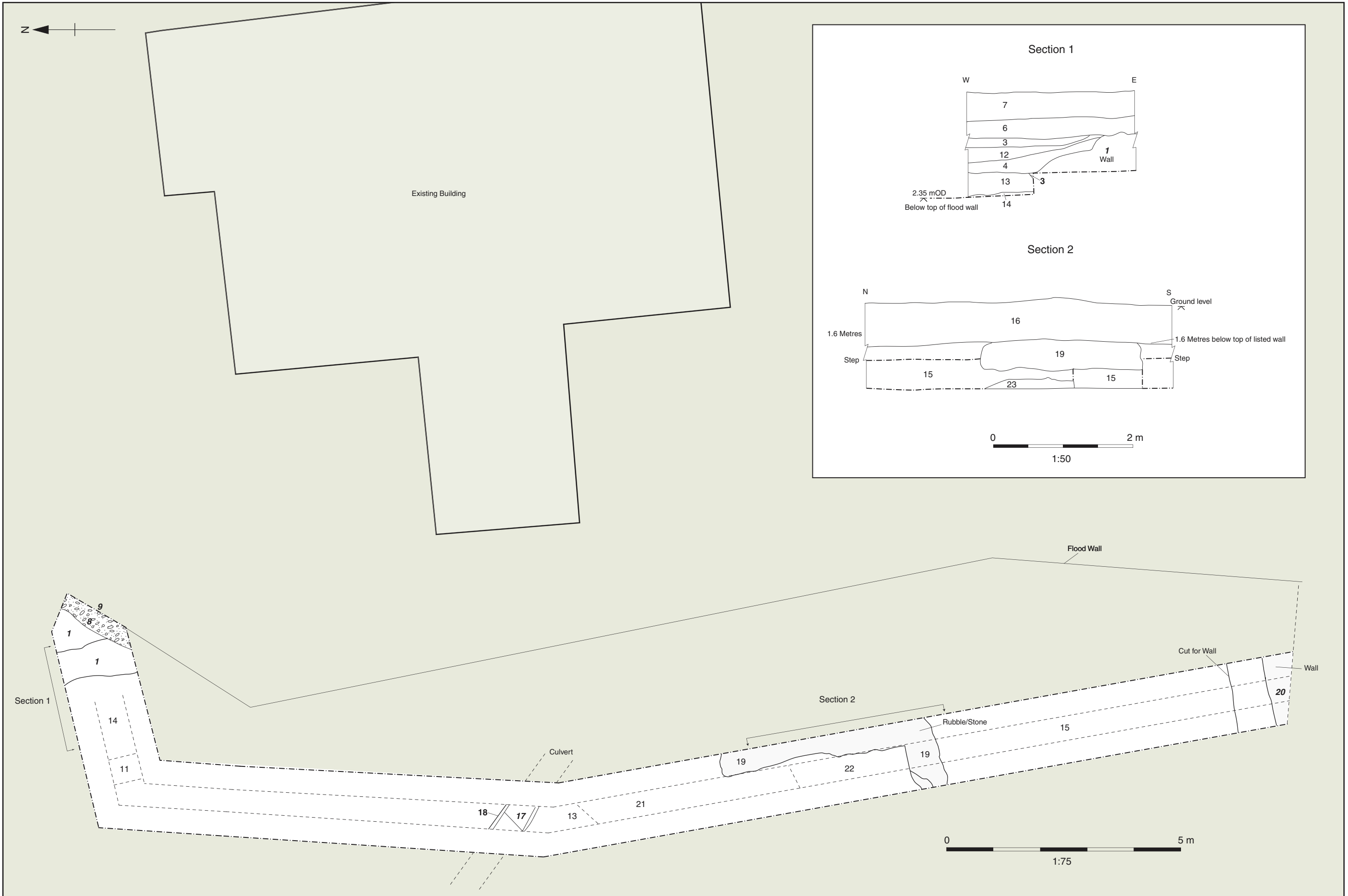


Figure 2: Site Plan and Sections 1 and 2



OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oanorth@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
f: +44 (0) 1223 850599
e: [oaeast@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA Méditerranée

115 Rue Merlot
ZAC La Louvade
34 130 Maugeio
France

t: +33 (0) 4.67.57.86.92
f: +33 (0) 4.67.42.65.93
e: [oamed@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oamed@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://oamed.fr/>

Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA



*The Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd is a Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597 and a Registered Charity, No: 285627
Registered Office: Janus House,
Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES*