ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AT THE CATHEDRAL BUILDING, WORCESTER TECHNICAL COLLEGE, WORCESTER

Simon Sworn

With a contribution by Angus Crawford

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 2813
Report 1429
WCM 101402

Archaeological excavation at Cathedral Building, Worcester Technical College, Worcester

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Background information

Client	Worcester Technical College
Site address	Cathedral Building, Worcester Technical College, Worcester
National Grid reference	SO 8492 5468
Sites and Monuments Record reference	WCM 101402
Planning authority	Worcester City Council
Brief	N/A
Project design	HEAS 2006
Project parameters	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

A comprehensive desk-based assessment was prepared (Vaughan and Woodiwiss 2004) prior to the commencement of fieldwork, which provided a background for the archaeological context of the site.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

The site lies within the known extent of the area occupied by the Roman town and the area is also thought to have been occupied by the late Anglo-Saxon enclosure or *haga*.

The Cathedral Building is also located close to the multi-period excavations at Deansway (Dalwood *et al* 2004), and there have been other smaller interventions in the vicinity (Vaughan 2004, Goad 2004, Gelling 1958),

Aims

The aim of the excavation was to observe and record archaeological deposits, prior to the construction of a lift-shaft, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995	
Sources consulted	SMR	
Date of fieldwork	4th April 2006	
Area of site	*c* 1.10m² Indicated on Fig 2	
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Test pit	length 1.05m width 1.04m depth 1.50m

Access to, and visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during and after hand excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits. All areas were cleaned by hand.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of the deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Deposit description

Context	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
100	Blue bricks, 220 x 110 x 65mm	Modern	Present brick surface	0 – 0.65m
101	Loose light brown sand	Modern	Bedding for 100	0.65 – 0.10m
102	Reinforced concrete	Modern	Concrete slab	0.10 – 0.36m
103	Reinforced concrete	Modern	Concrete slab	0.23 – 0.36m
104	Loose dark brown silty sand, frequent sub-angular gravels, brick and concrete fragments	Modern	Levelling layer	0.36 – 0.40m
105	Loose green/brown silty clay, frequent large sub-rounded sandstone blocks	Modern	Construction cut backfill	0.40 – 0.66m
106	Loose green/mid – dark brown silty clay, frequent large sub-rounded sandstone blocks and occasional charcoal flecks	Modern	Construction cut backfill	0.40 – 0.95m
107	Loose green/brown silty clay, frequent large sub-rounded sandstone blocks	Modern	Construction cut backfill	0.39 – 0.95m
108	Friable mid – dark brown sandy silt, occasional brick rubble, charcoal and small sub-rounded gravels	Modern	Construction cut backfill	0.81 – 1.13m
109	Loose green/brown silty clay, frequent large sub-rounded sandstone blocks		Construction cut backfill	0.61 – 1.50m+
110	Partly exposed concrete footing, no sign of cut	Modern	Concrete footing for Technical College building	0.95m+

Artefact analysis, by A. Crawford

Artefact recovery policy

All artefacts from the area of salvage recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended).

Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Artefacts were identified, quantified and dated and a *terminus post quem* date produced for each stratified context.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992; Hurst 1994).

Artefactual analysis

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the excavated area consisted of 4 sherds of pottery weighing 50g; in addition fragments of tile, brick and animal bone were recovered. The group came from 3 stratified contexts and could be dated from the Roman period onwards (Table 1). Level of preservation was generally fair with the majority of sherds displaying low levels of abrasion.

Context	Material	Type	Total	Weight (g)
104	Stone	Natural	2	4
107	Pottery	Post-medieval	1	1
107	Pottery	Roman	1	3
107	Tile	Roof	1	14
108	Bone	Animal	1	24
108	Brick	Post-medieval	1	31
108	Pottery	Medieval	1	14
108	Pottery	Post-medieval	1	42
108	Stone	Limestone	3	6
108	Tile	Roof	1	54

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Discussion of the pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (Table 2). All pottery sherds were datable by fabric type to their general period or production span.

The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, *terminus post quem* dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Roman period

Only a single sherd of Roman pottery was present within the assemblage. The sherd was identifiable as that of Severn Valley ware (fabric 12, context 107) and could only be broadly dated to between the 1st to 4th centuries. Context 107 also contained material of post-medieval date indicating that this was a residual sherd.

Medieval period

A single sherd of medieval pottery was identified as Malvernian unglazed ware (fabric 56, context 108) dating from between the late 12th and 14th century. The presence of sooting to the external surface further indicated that it originated from a medieval cooking pot. Context 108 also contained post-medieval material indicating that this was also a residual sherd.

Post-medieval period

The post-medieval assemblage consisted of two sherds of pottery, a fragment of roof tile and a further fragment of brick. Both sherds were of post-medieval orange ware (fabric 90, contexts 197 and 108) and dated to the 18th century.

The brick and roof tile could not be dated more specifically than within the general post-medieval period.

Context	Fabric	Fabric name	Total	Weight (g)
107	12	Severn Valley ware	1	3
107	90	Post-medieval orange ware	1	1
108	56	Malvernian unglazed ware	1	14
108	90	Post-medieval orange ware	1	42

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

Significance

The assemblage as a whole is representative of general discard rather than that of significant archaeological activity. While the Roman and medieval material is residual, the post-medieval material may also have been deposited at a latter date due to ground soil disturbance. Therefore the assemblage may be the product of modern disturbance to the site.

Discussion

Observations were undertaken during and after the excavation of a hand dug test pit in the location of the proposed new lift-shaft on the southern side of the Cathedral Building. All deposits observed related to the construction and present usage of the Technical College.

A layer of blue bricks (220 x 110 x 65mm) sat on a thin band of sand bedding forming the present exterior surface to the north of the Cathedral Building. Below this surface two substantial layers of reinforced concrete slabs were observed butting up against the college wall. These concrete surfaces sealed the main backfill of the construction cut, created during the insertion of the concrete foundations of the building. The backfill consisted mainly of various deposits primarily of large sandstone blocks and green/brown silty clay, all of which contained brick, concrete rubble and other modern material. These deposits in turn overlay, or were butted against a large, partially exposed concrete footing (110). Though not completely established, it appeared that this footing was the foundation for one of the nearby concrete support pillars on the northern side of the college building. No other deposits were observed during the excavation.

Conclusions

The excavation of the proposed lift-shaft indicated only areas of modern disturbance that related to the construction of the Technical College in the mid 20th century. All the deposits either relate directly to the present building, the brick surface (100) and the concrete footing (110), or to the infilling of the construction cut, created for the insertion of the footings. The excavation only observed deposits within this cut, the edge of the construction cut therefore extended beyond and below the limits of the excavation. This though is quite feasible considering the size and frequency of the concrete pillars in this location. The artefacts indicated material associated with the construction of the college in the 20th century, though there were also two fragments of earlier

residual pottery, one Roman sherd and one medieval sherd. These, however, clearly came from much later contexts but do indicate evidence of well-documented earlier activity in the vicinity.

Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological excavation was undertaken on behalf of Worcester Technical College at the Cathedral Building, Worcester Technical College, Worcester (NGR ref SO 8492 5468*; SMR ref WCM 101402). The excavation consisted of a very limited trial pit (c 1 x 1 x 1.5m), against an existing wall to the north of the Cathedral Building, prior to the construction of a lift-shaft. The excavation indicated only areas of modern disturbance related to the construction of the Technical College in the mid twentieth century. All the deposits either relate directly to the present building, or to the infilling of the construction cut, created for the insertion of concrete footings. The excavation only observed deposits within this cut, the edge of the construction therefore extended beyond and below the limits of the excavation. This though is quite feasible considering the size and frequency of the concrete pillars in this location. Recovered artefacts indicated material associated with the construction of the college in the twentieth century. There were also two fragments of earlier residual pottery, one Roman sherd and one medieval sherd. Though they clearly came from much later contexts they indicate evidence of well-documented activity within the vicinity.*

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	1
Photographic register AS3	1
Digital photographs	30
Trench records AS41	1
Drawings	3
Boxes of finds	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:	Worcestershire County Museum Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury Near Kidderminster Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
telephone	01299 250416

Acknowledgements

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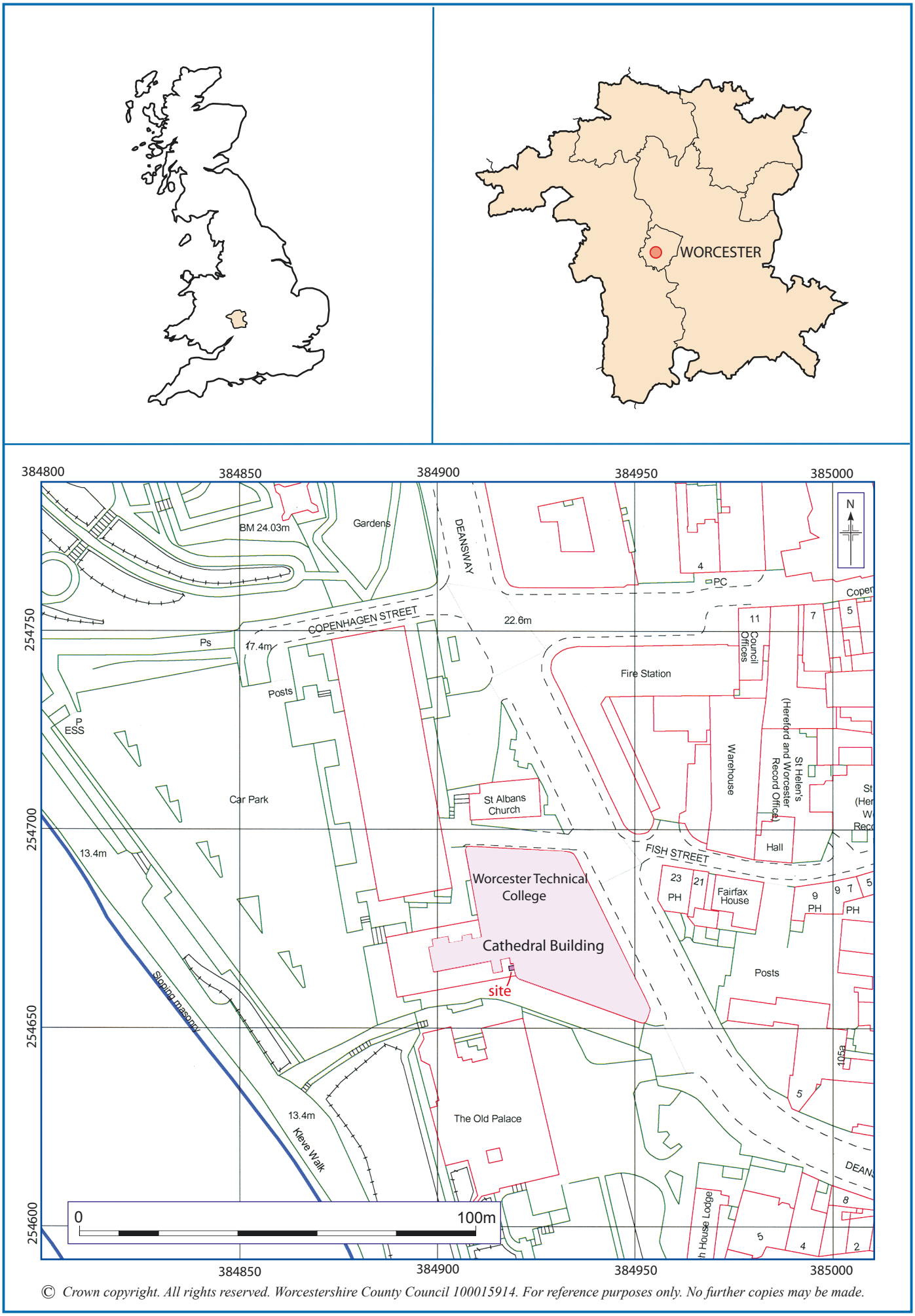
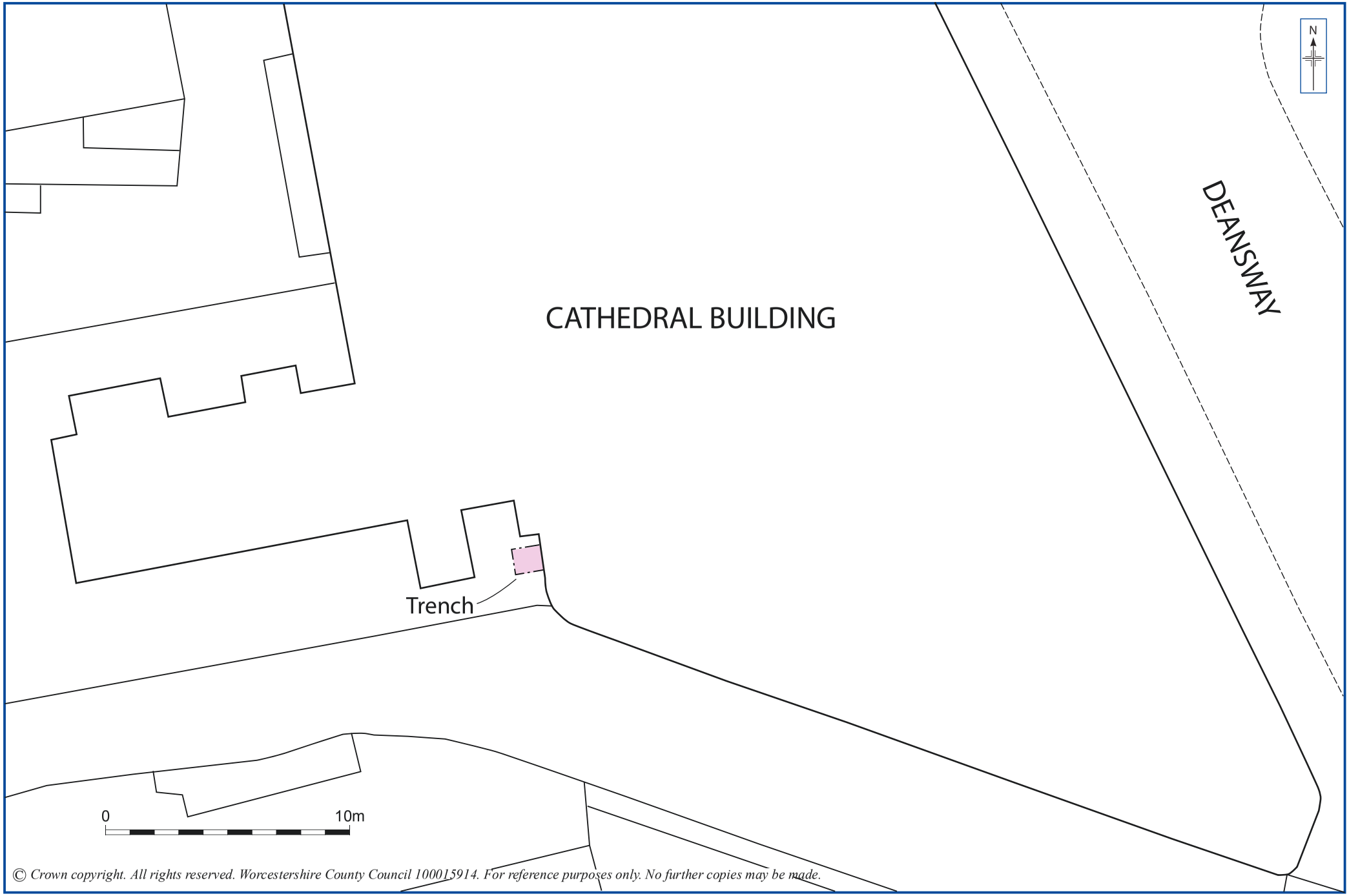
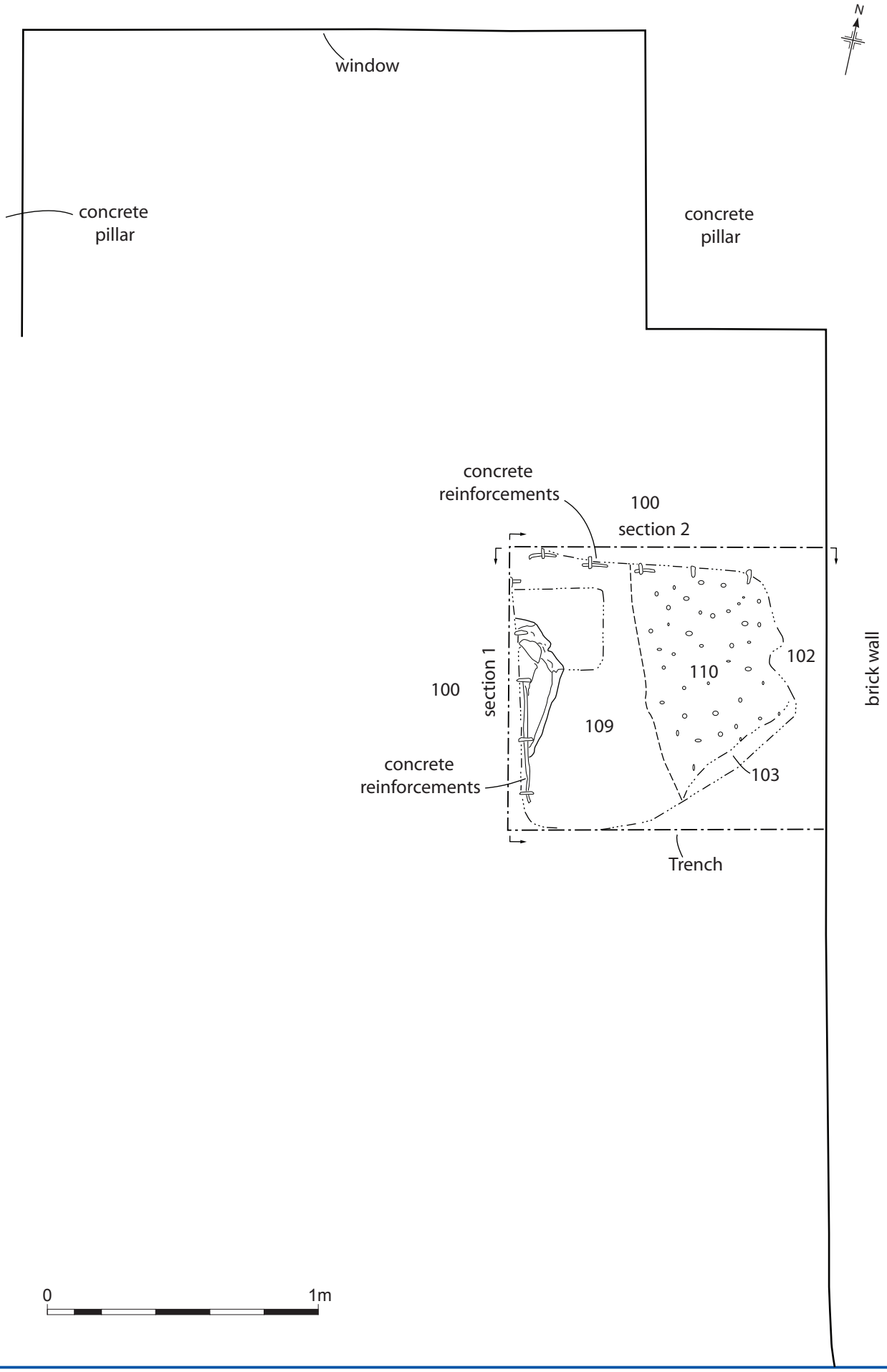


Location of the site. *Figure 1*

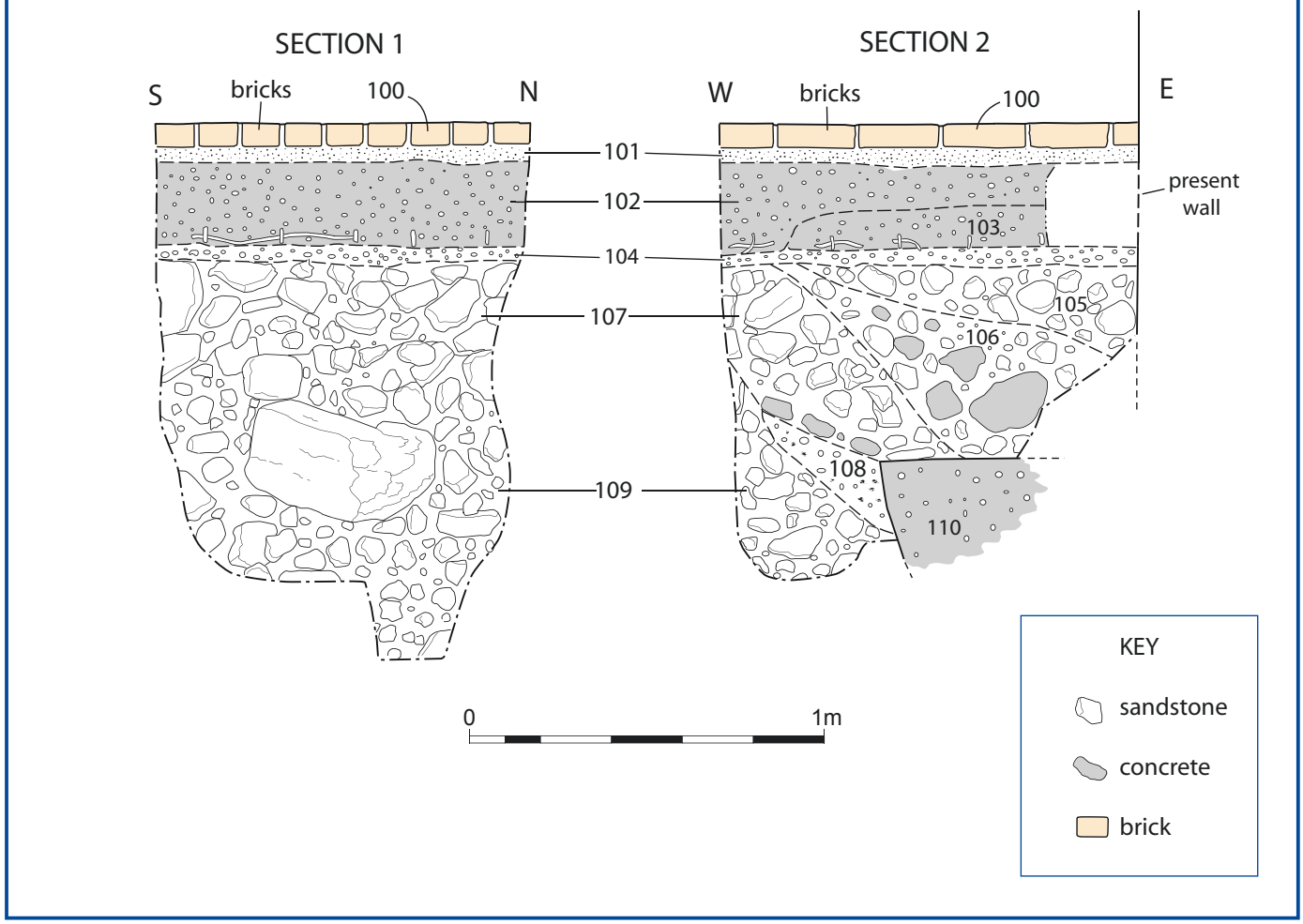


Trench location plan

Figure 2



Plan of trench *Figure 3*



Sections

Figure 4

Plate 1: General view of excavation and northern elevation of Technical College, facing south

Plate 2: northern facing section, facing south

Plate 3: present brick surface, underlying concrete slabs and large concrete footing in base of excavation, facing east

Plate 4: Eastern facing section, facing west