

New Buildings and Kitchen Terrace Mansfield College Oxford



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



June 2008

**Client: A Mathews and R Mather,
Architects**

Issue No:1
OA Job No: 3442
NGR: SP 516 068

Client Name: A Mathews and R Mather, Architects

Client Ref No:

Document Title: New Buildings and Kitchen Terrace, Mansfield College,
Oxford

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: SP 516 068
Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 4040
Site Code: OXMALO 08
Invoice Code: OXMALOWB
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Museum Accession No: OXCMS:2008.38

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Date: 2nd June 2008

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Date: 26nd June 2008

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Position: Head of Fieldwork
Date: 6th June 2008

Document File Location W:PROJECTS Oxfordshire OX/Oxford City OC \8522
Love lane Buildings/wbREP.doc

Graphics File Location Server go/oaupubs 1_ItoQ*OXMALOWB*Mansfield
College, Oxford*MD*2.6.08

Illustrated by Markus Dylewski

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New Buildings at Love Lane and Kitchen Terrace, Mansfield College, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In May 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief during geo-technical test pitting and bore holing at Mansfield College, Oxford (NGR: SP 516 068). The work was commissioned by A. Mathews and R. Mather Architects in advance of proposed construction of 2 new buildings adjacent to Love Lane and the construction of a sunken terrace adjacent to the college kitchens. The watching brief revealed details of the construction of the main college buildings and deposits of made ground associated with the 19th-century landscaping of the college grounds. No other significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 In May 2008 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Mansfield College. The work was commissioned by A. Mathews and R. Mather, Architects in respect of a proposal to construct 2 new buildings adjacent to Love Lane and the construction of a sunken terrace adjacent to the college kitchens.

1.1.2 A project brief was agreed with the City Archaeologist, Brian Durham, requiring that an archaeologist be present during the excavation of the geo-technical test pits and the proof holes prior to drilling.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 Mansfield College (Fig. 1) is located on the north edge of the historic core of Oxford and on the line of Oxford's Civil War Defences, and lies at approximately 60 m above OD. The site is bounded to the east by Mansfield Road, to the west by Love Lane and to the north and south by college buildings. The development areas are currently part of the gardens and lawns surrounding the existing college buildings and occupy an area of 12,000 m². The underlying geology is alluvium over floodplain terrace gravel (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no 236).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared at the beginning of the project and is summarised below.

Summary of Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.2 The Site lies on the northern edge of the historic core of Oxford and within the belt of defences built to defend Oxford during the Civil War of 1642 - 1646. Five archaeological excavations have already been undertaken within 100 m of the Site. These comprise excavations at the Institute of American Studies (Booth and Hayden

2001) c30 m to the north, the new Chemistry Research Building (Bradley et al 2005) c80 m to the north-east, a watching brief undertaken within the grounds of Mansfield College during the construction of a new accommodation block in 2006 (OA, 2006), work during the construction of the new Biochemistry Building immediately to the north of the college (OA, 2006a) and a watching brief during the construction of the Memorial Garden, Rothermere Library c25 m to the north-west of the site (OA, 2006b). These sites have provided limited evidence for some form of Neolithic activity, strong evidence for the presence of a late Iron Age/Romano-British rural settlement and identified elements of the Civil War defensive system in the area. All the sites showed that significant post medieval disturbance had occurred through building or cultivation activities.

Prehistoric

- 1.3.3 Extensive evidence for prehistoric activity is recorded from the immediate area. This evidence includes at least six Neolithic/Bronze Age ring ditches and other features noted on aerial photographs of University Parks c400 m to the north of the site and excavated evidence for further ring ditches from the Gene Function Centre c200 m to the north of the Site (Boston et al 2002). Further excavated evidence for ring ditches have been identified at the Sackler Library c650 m to the south west of the site. Limited evidence for Neolithic activity was noted at the Institute of American Studies (Booth and Hayden 2001) and Chemistry Research Sites (Bradley et al 2005). The site probably lies within part of a Neolithic/Bronze Age ritual landscape of ring ditches and associated features. Activity of Iron Age date has also been recognised during investigations at the Rex Richards Building and Radcliffe Science Library suggesting that a later prehistoric rural landscape that may include settlement is superimposed over the Neolithic/Bronze Age ritual features (Booth and Hayden 2001, 329).

Roman

- 1.3.4 The excavations for Mansfield College (Booth and Hayden 2001), the Chemistry Research Building (Bradley et al 2005) and the Memorial Garden, Rothermere Library (OA, 2006b) all recorded evidence for the presence of a Romano-British rural settlement. This evidence included at least one structure and a number of enclosure ditches and other features. A single burial was also recorded from one of the ditches at the Chemistry Research Site (Bradley et al 2005, 195). A considerable amount of Romano-British pottery has also been recovered from a number of locations elsewhere in the University Science and Parks area suggesting that the area supported a Romano-British settlement (Booth and Hayden 2001, 329). The Site therefore lies in an area with a high potential for the presence of Romano-British rural settlement activity.

Medieval

- 1.3.5 The results of the excavations for the Institute of American Studies and Chemistry Research Building both suggested that the area in which the Site lies has a minimal

potential to contain meaningful evidence for activity between the end of the Romano-British period and the construction of the Civil War defences in the mid 17th century. Documentary and map sources indicate that the area of the Site lay outside the northern perimeter of the medieval town of Oxford and in cultivated land associated with the Manor of Holywell, an ancient property belonging to Merton College (Bradley et al 2005, 143).

The Civil War Defences

- 1.3.6 The Site lies in the space between the two main defensive lines laid out by Bernard De Gomme to defend the northern edge of Oxford. Part of the outer defence was recorded at the Chemistry Research Building Site (Bradley et al 2005, 198 - 199) and features associated with the inner line at the Institute of American Studies Site (Booth et al 2001, 331). The watching brief on the new accommodation block in 2006 observed the line of one of the ditches running north-west to south-east across the north-east corner of the site (OA, 2006), and the continuation of this ditch was observed within the Memorial Garden, Rothermere Library (OA, 2006b) .

Past impacts on the Site

- 1.3.7 The Site lies within the grounds of Mansfield College and comprises a mixture of courtyard and garden areas, which has been terraced. This terracing and other building activity associated with the adjacent buildings of Mansfield College may have damaged or possibly removed any archaeological deposits within the Site.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological deposits or features that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of this phase of ground works.
- 2.1.3 To provide information to determine a mitigation strategy for the main phase of construction.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a continuous archaeological presence during the hand excavation of the test pits and proof holes. The original location of 2 of the test pits was in the south-west corner of the college grounds; however it was later decided to investigate these areas using bore holes and these test pits were moved closer to the main college buildings.

2.2.2 A plan showing the location of the test pits and bore holes was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and the sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and any recorded sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Test Pit 1

- 3.1.1 This was originally located in the back of a garage butting up against the north wall of the chapel (Fig. 2, Test pit 1(a); Fig. 3, Section 1a).
- 3.1.2 The underlying terrace gravel (18) was encountered at a depth of 1.2 m below the floor of the garage. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m deep layer of mixed silts and gravel (17), a probable naturally occurring bioturbation layer. Overlying this layer was a 0.15 m deep layer of grey silt clay (16), a possible original sub-soil layer. This was sealed below a 0.1 m deep layer of dark red-brown clay silt (15) which probably represents the original topsoil. This was cut by the foundation trench (19) which contains the north wall of the chapel.
- 3.1.3 Overlying this was a 0.4 m deep layer of mixed grey-brown silt clay and gravel lenses (14), a layer of modern made ground. This was overlaid by a 0.3 m deep layer of grey yellow-brown silt clay (13) containing some brick fragments, another layer of made ground. Laid directly upon the surface of this layer was a 0.1 m deep layer of crushed brick and concrete (12) which forms the hardcore base for the 0.1 m thick concrete slab (11) forming the floor of the garage.
- 3.1.4 This test pit failed to find the base of the chapel wall. It was impossible to enlarge the hole in this location in order to increase its depth so a second test pit was dug outside the garage on the other side of the buttress forming the east side of the original test pit (Fig. 2, Test Pit 1(b); Fig. 3, Section 1b)
- 3.1.5 The underlying terrace gravel (106) was reached at a depth of 1.2 m below ground level. This was sealed by a 0.15 m deep layer of mixed silts and gravel (105) similar to Layer 17. Overlying this was a 0.15 m deep layer of light red-brown sandy silt clay (104), a probable layer of alluvium. This was overlaid by a 0.12 m deep layer of dark red-brown clay silt loam (103), similar to, and a probable continuation of, the layer of buried topsoil (15). Cutting this layer was the foundation trench (108) containing the buttress (107).
- 3.1.6 Sealing layer 103 and butting up to 107 was a 0.5 m deep layer of grey-brown silt clay with gravel lenses (102), a layer of made ground. Overlying this was a layer of dark grey-brown clay silt (101) measuring 0.2 m deep. This layer contained numerous brick and stone fragments and represents a modern landscaping layer.

Test Pit 2

- 3.1.7 This was located within the kitchen basement of the main building (Fig. 2, Test Pit 2; Fig. 3, Section 2)
- 3.1.8 A layer of natural blue-grey clay (23) was encountered at a depth of 0.9 m below the basement floor. This was overlaid by a 0.6 m deep layer of gravel (22), which represents the truncated base of the terrace gravel deposit. This was cut by the foundation trench (24) containing the concrete footings for the kitchen wall (25).
- 3.1.9 Sealing the gravel, and butting up to 25 was a 0.15 m thick concrete floor (21).

Test Pit 3

- 3.1.10 This was located against the south wall of the kitchen basement in the main building (Fig. 2, Test Pit 3; Fig. 3, Section 3)
- 3.1.11 The underlying terrace gravel (34) was encountered at a depth of 1 m below the current garden level. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m deep layer of mixed silts and gravel (33), a bioturbation layer similar to, and a probable continuation of, layers 15 and 103. Cutting this deposit was the 0.7 m deep foundation trench (35), containing the foundation plinth for the south wall of the kitchen (36). A grey-brown clay silt deposit (37) was used to backfill the foundation trench after construction of 36.
- 3.1.12 Sealing the foundation trench and butting up to wall 36 was a 0.5 m deep layer of light brown clay silt (32). This layer contained fragments of brick and pockets of blue-grey clay indicating that it was a layer of made ground. This was overlaid by a 0.22 m deep layer of dark grey-brown silt loam (31), a modern landscaping layer.

Test Pit 5

- 3.1.13 This was located against the north wall of the basement kitchen in the main building (Fig. 2, Test Pit 5; Fig. 3, Section 5).
- 3.1.14 The foundation plinth of the north wall (53) was encountered at a depth of 1 m below the level of the carpark. Overlying this and butting up against the north wall of the kitchen was a 0.85 m deep layer of yellow-brown silt clay (52). This contained numerous fragments of brick and salt glazed sewer pipe strongly indicating that it had been disturbed by the installation of the mains sewerage immediately to the north of the test pit.
- 3.1.15 An overall layer of tarmac (51), 0.12 m deep, forming a carpark surface had been laid directly over this layer.

Borehole proofing holes

- 3.1.16 These proof holes measured approximately 0.25 m square and were hand dug. Boreholes 1 and 2 were located in the landscaped gardens immediately to the east of Love Lane. Both these holes encountered the terrace gravel at approximately 0.6 m

below the garden level which was directly overlaid by modern made ground and landscaping deposits.

- 3.1.17 Borehole 3 (located in the driveway to the north-east of the chapel) produced a stratigraphy similar to Test Pit 5, with no archaeologically significant deposits encountered.

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 No dating evidence other than intrusive modern finds were recovered during the course of the watching brief. The presence of these artefacts was recorded but they were not retained.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were observed during the course of the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 All the archaeologically significant deposits and structures observed relate to the 19th-century construction of the college. This can be accounted for by both the limited area exposed and the proximity of the test pits to the standing buildings.
- 4.1.2 It is probable that the construction cut for these buildings (particularly those with basements) has destroyed the archaeological potential for the areas immediately adjacent to the buildings.
- 4.1.3 The proof holes for the boreholes exposed landscaping deposits overlying natural gravel suggesting that the surrounding area, particularly that adjacent to Love Lane, had also been truncated during the construction of the college.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
Test Pit 1(a)						
11	Layer	0.1 m	-	Concrete floor of garage	-	C20th
12	Layer	0.1 m	-	Hardcore base for floor	Brick	C20th
13	Layer	0.3 m	-	Made ground	Brick	C19th
14	Layer	0.4 m	-	Made ground	Brick	C19th
15	Layer	0.1 m	-	Buried topsoil horizon	-	-
16	Layer	0.15 m	-	Buried subsoil horizon	-	-
17	Layer	0.15 m	-	Bioturbation layer	-	-
18	Layer	> 0.15 m	-	Terrace gravel	-	-
19	Cut	> 0.6 m	-	Foundation cut for north wall of chapel	-	C19th
Test Pit 1(b)						
101	Layer	0.2 m	-	Landscaping layer	Brick	C19th
102	Layer	0.5 m	-	Made ground	Brick	C19th
103	Layer	0.12 m	-	Buried topsoil horizon	-	-
104	Layer	0.15 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-
105	Layer	0.15 m	-	Bioturbation layer	-	-
106	Layer	> 0.15 m	-	Terrace gravel	-	-
107	Structure	> 2 m	> 1 m	Foundations for north wall of chapel	-	C19th
108	Cut	0.4 m	> 1m	Foundation trench for north wall of chapel	-	C19th
Test Pit 2						
21	Layer	0.15 m	> 3 m	Concrete floor of basement	-	C19th/ C20th
22	Layer	0.6 m	-	truncated base of the terrace gravel	-	-
23	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Natural clay	-	-
24	Cut	0.65 m	-	Foundation trench for east wall of kitchen	-	C19th
25	Structure	> 3 m	0.8 m	East wall of kitchen	-	C19th

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
Test Pit 3						
31	Layer	0.22 m	-	Modern garden soil	Plastic, bottle glass	C20th
32	Layer	0.5 m	-	Made ground	Brick	C19th
33	Layer	0.15 m	-	Bioturbation layer	-	-
34	Layer	> 0.7 m	-	Terrace gravel	-	-
35	Cut	0.85 m	-	Cut for kitchen basement foundations	-	C19th
36	Structure	> 3 m	0.8 m	South wall of kitchen	-	C19th
37	Fill	0.2 m	0.3 m	Backfill of foundation trench	-	C19th
Test Pit 5						
51	Layer	0.12 m	-	Tarmac carpark surface	-	C20th
52	Layer	0.85 m	-	Modern disturbed ground	Brick, salt glazed pipe	C19th/ C20th
53	Structure	> 3 m	0.8 m	North wall of kitchen	-	C19th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Bradley, P, Charles, B, Hardy, A and Poore, D, 2005 *Prehistoric and Roman activity and a Civil War ditch: Excavations at the Chemistry Research Laboratory, 2-4 South Parks Road, Oxford; Oxoniensia LXX p 141-202*

IFA, 2001 *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological watching Briefs*

OA, 2006 *New Accommodation Block, Mansfield College, Oxford: Archaeological Watching Brief report*

OA, 2006a *Bio-Chemistry building, South Parks Road, Oxford: Archaeological Watching Brief report*

OA, 2006b *Memorial Garden, Rothermere Library, South Parks Road, Oxford: Archaeological Watching Brief report*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

OAU, 1992 *Mansfield College, Oxford. Archaeological Evaluation Report*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Mansfield College, Oxford, Oxfordshire

Site code: OXMALO 08

Grid reference: SP 519 068

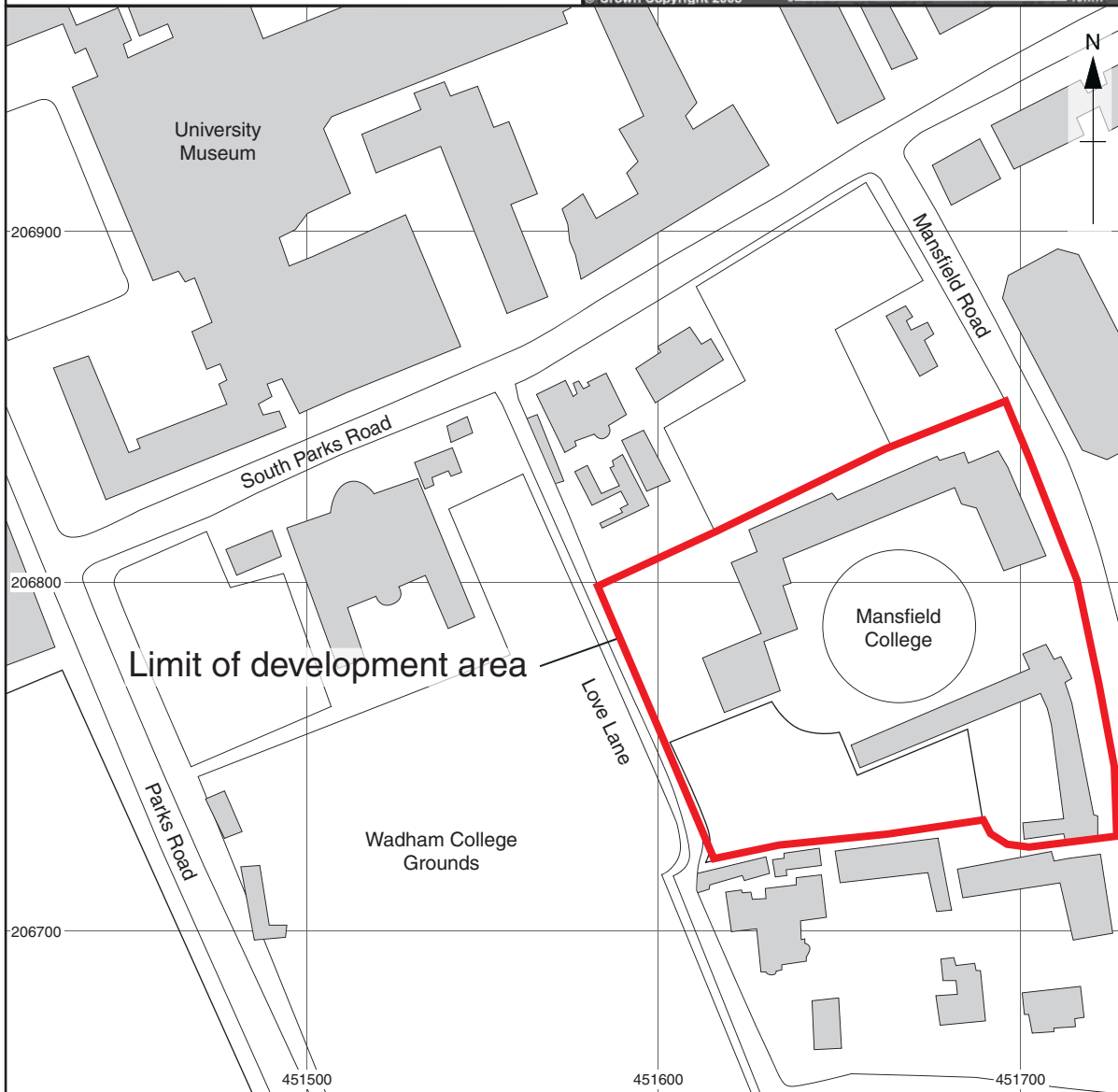
Type of watching brief: Hand excavation of 5 test pits and 2 proof holes.

Date and duration of project: 12th and 13th May 2008, two days on site

Area of site: c5,000 m²

Summary of results: The watching brief observed deposits and structures relating to the 19th-century construction of the college and the landscaping of the grounds. No other significant archaeology was encountered.

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: OXCMS:2008.38



Scale 1:2000

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Figure 1: Site location

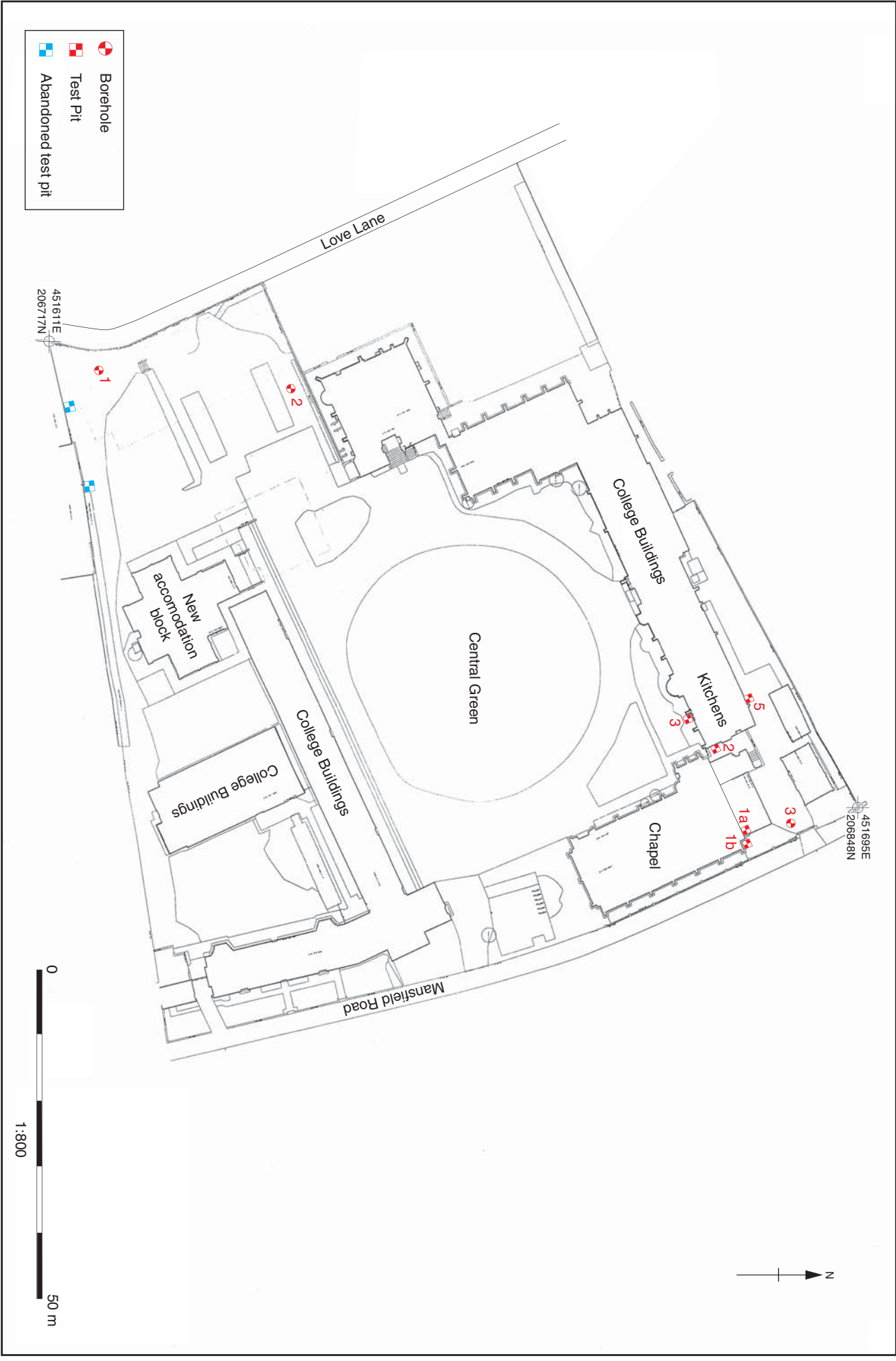


Figure 2: Site plan

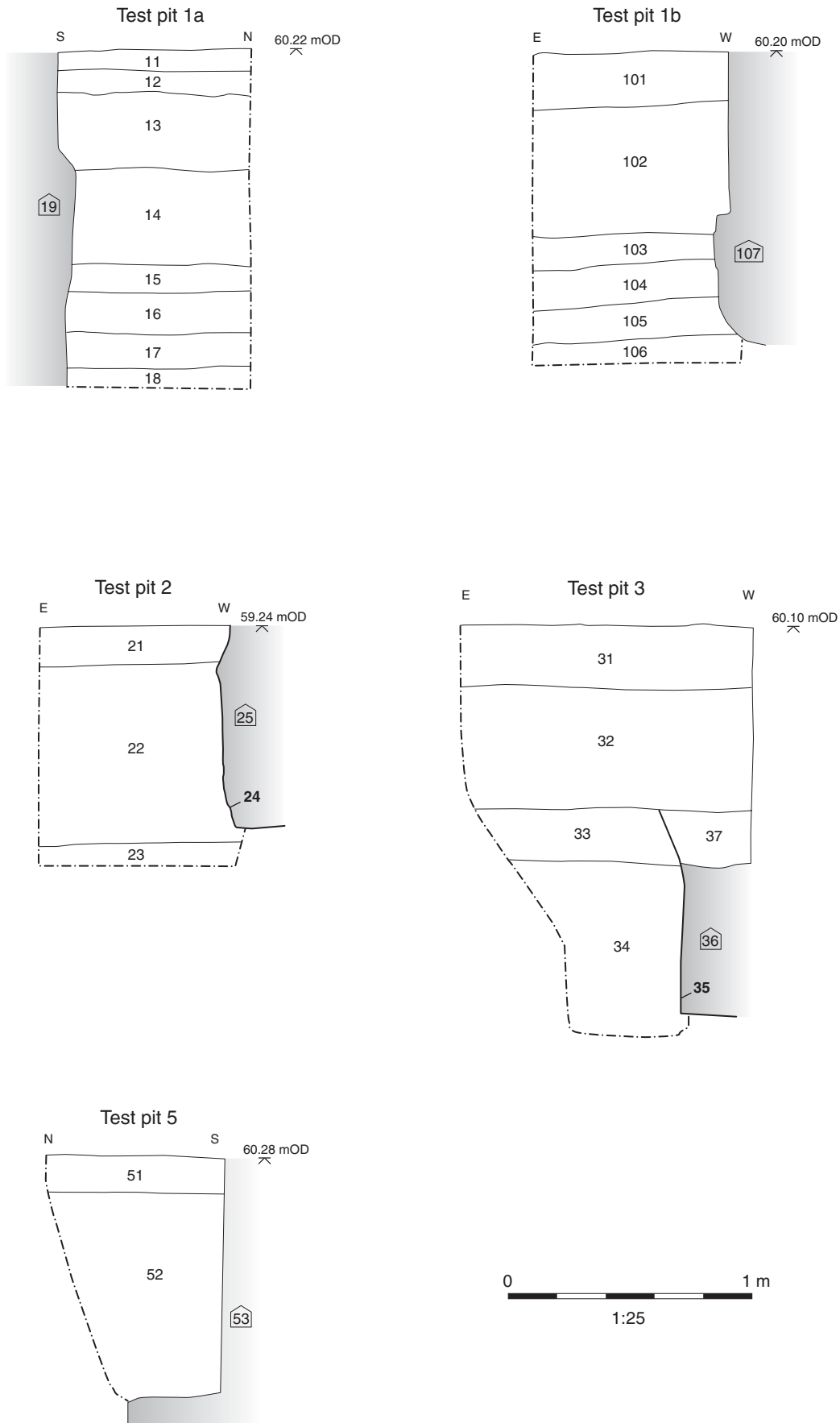


Figure 3: Sections



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