

Denny Abbey Waterbeach Cambridgeshire



Archaeological Test Pit Evaluation Report



August 2011

Client: The Farmland Museum

OA East Report No: 1292

OASIS No: oxfordar3-106155

NGR: TL 4924 6847

Denny Abbey, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Test Pit Evaluation

By Nick Gilmour MA AlfA

Editor: Rachel Clarke BA AlfA

Illustrator: Nick Gilmour MA AlfA

Report Date: August 2011

Report Number: 1292
Site Name: Denny abbey, Waterbeach
HER Event No: ECB 3622
Date of Works: July 2011
Client Name: Farmland Museum
Client Ref: n/a
Planning Ref: n/a
Grid Ref: TL 4924 6847
Site Code: WAT FAM 11
Finance Code: WAT FAM 11
Receiving Body: CCC Stores, Landbeach
Accession No: WAT FAM 11
Prepared by: Nick Gilmour
Position: Supervisor
Date: August 2011
Checked by: Stephen Macaulay
Position: Project Manager
Date: August 2011
Signed: 

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 East,

15 Trafalgar Way,
Bar Hill,
Cambridge,
CB23 8SQ

t: 01223 850500
f: 01223 850599
e: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net/oaeast>

© Oxford Archaeology East 2011
Oxford Archaeology Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

Table of Contents

Summary.....	5
1 Introduction.....	7
1.1 Location and scope of work (fig. 1).....	7
1.2 Geology and topography.....	7
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	7
1.4 Acknowledgements.....	8
2 Aims and Methodology.....	9
2.1 Aims.....	9
2.2 Methodology.....	9
3 Results.....	10
3.1 Introduction	10
3.2 Test Pit 1 (Fig. 3).....	10
3.3 Test Pit 2.....	10
3.4 Finds Summary.....	10
4 Discussion and Conclusions.....	12
4.1 Test Pit 1.....	12
4.2 Test Pit 2.....	12
4.3 Significance.....	12
4.4 Recommendations.....	12
Appendix A. Test Pit Descriptions and Context Inventory.....	13
Appendix B. Bibliography	14
Appendix C. OASIS Report Form	15

List of Figures

- Fig. 1 Site location map
- Fig. 2 Location of test pits in relation to existing buildings
- Fig. 3 Test pit plan and sections
- Fig.4 Plan of the Franciscan nuns' buildings (after Poster and Sherlock 1988, Fig.1)

List of Plates

- Plate 1 Test pit 1 from the north-east
- Plate 2 Test pit 2 from the south

Summary

On 28th and 29th July 2011, Oxford Archaeology East carried out a test pit evaluation within the Scheduled Monument of Denny Abbey (SM 13219), Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire. This was carried out in advance of the proposed construction of an extension to a children's play area. One test pit revealed only rubble dating to the 19th century or later. The second test pit contained a wall, which was overlain by a layer of rubble, possibly of 16th century date. This wall is likely to be medieval and potentially represents part of the remains of an annex to the refectory building, which still stands on the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work (fig. 1)

- 1.1.1 An archaeological test pit evaluation was conducted by Oxford Archaeology East at the Farmland Museum, Denny Abbey, Waterbeach, (TL 4924 6847) scheduled monument number 13219. This consisted of the excavation of two 1m square test pits and was in advance of the potential extension of a children's play area.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Dan McConnell of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East. All works carried out were in accordance with Scheduled Monument consent issued by Will Fletcher of English Heritage.
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by English Heritage and CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on River Terrace Gravels, at an average height of 5.80m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The site is located within the bounds of Denny Abbey, a medieval monastic priory complex, occupied from the 12th to the 16th centuries (SM 13219). The abbey is a Scheduled Monument of national importance and is managed by the Farmland Museum Trust, on behalf of English Heritage under a Local Management Agreement (LMA). Currently two medieval stone buildings survive (the church and refectory), both of which are grade 1 Listed.
- 1.3.2 The remainder of the precinct includes the below ground remains of ancillary buildings constructed at various times by the three separate religious communities that occupied the site during the medieval period. These remains include visible earthworks and a causeway which once connected Denny Abbey to the nearby village of Waterbeach. A hollow way is known to the north of the precinct and a number of earthwork banks represent field and stock enclosures. Two rectangular features, interpreted as fish ponds lie in fields to the west of the modern access road.
- 1.3.3 The land around Denny Abbey has periodically produced remains of Roman date and the area is known to have been settled during this period.
- 1.3.4 Several excavations have taken place within the Abbey, the most relevant of which are those carried out within and around the refectory building in 1984-1985 (Poster and Sherlock 1988). These showed that the standing refectory building had originally continued to the west, directly to the north of the current proposed development area.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank the the Farmland Museum who commissioned the work. All of the staff of the Farmland Museum were extremely supportive, particularly Corrina Bower.
- 1.4.2 The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay. Nick Gilmour directed the fieldwork, with the assistance of Patrick Moan. The excavation was monitored for Cambridgeshire County Council by Andy Thomas, who visited the site along with Quinton Carol. Rob Atkins identified the ceramic building material and Carol Fletcher commented on the pottery.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this test pit evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.
- 2.1.2 In the event that archaeological remains are present the evaluation will seek to consider appropriate methodologies and suitable resourcing levels for excavation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that two 1m square test pits be excavated by hand to the geological horizons, or to the upper interface of archaeological features or deposits, whichever is encountered first.
- 2.2.2 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.3 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.4 No environmental samples were taken, as no suitable deposits were excavated.
- 2.2.5 Conditions on site were generally good, with bright sunny weather predominating.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Details of each test pit, including depths, are given in Appendix A. Written descriptions of each deposit identified within the test pits are given below.
- 3.1.2 The pottery was identified by Carol Fletcher and the ceramic building material by Rob Atkins. The nature of the assemblage is such that it has been entirely reported on in the sections given below.
- 3.1.3 The topsoil was the same in both test pits, being a mid-dark brownish grey silty loam. It appeared to represent an imported soil.

3.2 Test Pit 1 (Fig. 3)

- 3.2.1 Test Pit 1 was located within the south of the proposed development area. A wall footing (3) constructed of mortar with clunch and limestone inclusions was revealed in this test pit. This had a maximum visible width in the test pit of 0.70m, although only one side of it was visible. The top of the wall footing began only 0.15m below the present ground surface, the depth to which this footing survives was not determined. There was no facing visible on the side of the wall excavated and this makes it difficult to determine whether this was internal or external, and if external, which side was the outside.
- 3.2.2 Deposit 4 was recorded alongside this wall, it was a dark greyish brown silty clay, with moderate gravel inclusions. Following discussions on site it was not excavated, as it was felt not to be appropriate to dig such a small part of an unknown deposit.
- 3.2.3 Layer 2 sealed both the wall (3) and deposit 4, this was a mid brownish grey, silty clay which contained frequent inclusions of mortar, with a maximum depth of 0.09m. Pottery recovered from layer 2 was of 12th to 14th century date, however, this is likely to be residual, as a large quantity of ceramic building material recovered from the same layer is of 16th century date. The topsoil (1) directly overlay layer 2.

3.3 Test Pit 2

- 3.3.1 A series of layers, which appeared to represent late post medieval or modern dumped deposits, were revealed in Test Pit 2. The earliest deposit recorded comprised a mid orangey brown clayey loam (15) which was up to 0.04m thick and lay directly above the natural clayey gravel. Above this was layer 14, a dark greyish brown clayey loam, with a maximum thickness of 0.12m. This was in turn sealed by layer 13, a mid greyish brown silty loam, with a maximum depth of 0.26m.
- 3.3.2 A pale greyish brown, silty loam, with frequent mortar inclusions and a depth of 0.26m (12) overlay layer 13. Above this was layer 11, a mid grey slightly silty clay, with a maximum depth of 0.08m. This was overlain by the topsoil (10).
- 3.3.3 Ceramic building material was recovered from the majority of these deposits, this showed them to be of 19th century, or later, date.

3.4 Finds Summary

- 3.4.1 A large quantity of ceramic building material (28.300kg) and a small assemblage (0.082kg) of pottery, together with several pieces of worked stone (7.280kg) was found in the two test pits, these are discussed below.

Ceramic Building Material (Rob Atkins pers. comm.)

- 3.4.2 A large amount of ceramic building material, consisting of both brick and tile were recovered from the test pits.
- 3.4.3 The most significant assemblage is that from layer 2, in Test Pit 1, which consisted of 10.400kg of material. This largely comprises brick fragments, the largest of which has a complete width of 109mm and thickness of 44mm and a maximum surviving length of 192mm. All of these brick fragments are 16th century in date and are very similar to those in the Tudor chimney still standing nearby on site.
- 3.4.4 The material recovered from Test Pit 2 (layers 10-15) is a mixed assemblage containing some pieces of 16th century date, but also large fragments of 19th century date.

Worked Stone

- 3.4.5 A single large piece (7.200kg) of worked clunch was recovered from layer in Test Pit 2. This is a block of stone which retains five worked surfaces, it has a length of 295mm, width of 194mm and is 112mm thick.
- 3.4.6 In addition, 6 small fragments (0.080kg) of stone roof tile were recovered from layer 15 in Test Pit 2.

Pottery (Carol Fletcher pers. Comm.)

- 3.4.7 A total of eight sherds of pottery, weighing 0.082kg was recovered from the two test pits.
- 3.4.8 Six sherds of pottery were recovered from layer 2. This included three sherds (0.037kg) (probably from the same jug) of orange sandy ware of 12th to 14th century date. In addition two sherds (0.019kg) of Essex fine sandy ware type, of 12th to 14th century date, were recovered, one of which was heavily sooted. A single sherd (0.003kg) of transfer printed refined white earthenware was also recovered, dating between 1780 and 1900. All of these sherds were moderately abraded.
- 3.4.9 Two sherds (0.023kg) of abraded post-medieval black glazed ware of 17th century date were also recovered from layer 12, in Test Pit 2.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Test Pit 1

- 4.1.1 The wall footing identified in Test Pit 1 is very similar to those excavated during the 1984-1985 work (Poster and Sherlock 1988), projecting from the west end of the refectory building. It also appeared to be on a similar alignment as the refectory and therefore it seems extremely likely that this footing represents part of the postulated kitchen area (Poster and Sherlock 1988, 77) which extended from the west of the refectory building (fig.4). It is possible that this footing formed part of a second annex on the northern wall, similar to that known to have existed towards the north-east corner.
- 4.1.2 The rubble layer (2) which overlay this wall largely comprised of 16th century building material, apart from a single small fragment of later pottery. It is therefore likely that this represents an a 16th (post - Dissolution?) or potentially 17th century demolition layer.

4.2 Test Pit 2

- 4.2.1 The layers excavated in Test Pit 2 were largely 19th century in date. This suggests that any archaeology that was present in this location has been truncated by later activity. The latter probably relates to when the abbey was used as a farm. It is of note that a distinct drop is visible in the ground surface roughly halfway between Test Pits 1 and 2, with Test Pit 2 being in the lower ground. It is possible that this drop represents the point at which disturbance to archaeological remains begins.

4.3 Significance

- 4.3.1 The test pit evaluation has shown that medieval structural remains still survive within part of the proposed development area at a depth of only 0.15m. However, the work has also demonstrated that in places there is significant of modern disturbance.

4.4 Recommendations

- 4.4.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office and by English Heritage.

APPENDIX A. TEST PIT DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Test Pit 1						
General description					Orientation	-
Test Pit revealed a wall of probable medieval date, overlain by a rubble layer of probable 16th century date.					Max. depth (m)	0.21
					Width (m)	1
					Length (m)	1
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.12	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.09	Rubble layer	CBM, Pottery	16th Century
3	Wall footing	-	-	Wall Footing	-	Medieval?
4	Deposit	-	-	Deposit	-	-

Test Pit 2						
General description					Orientation	-
Test pit revealed a series of layers of material which appear to represent late post medieval to modern dumped deposits.					Max. depth (m)	0.58
					Width (m)	1
					Length (m)	1
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
10	Layer	-	0.1	Topsoil	-	-
11	Layer	-	0.08	Clay layer	-	-
12	Layer	-	0.26	Dumped deposit	Pottery, CBM	19th century
13	Layer	-	0.26	Dumped deposit	CBM	19th century
14	Layer	-	0.12	Buried topsoil?	-	-
15	Layer	-	0.04	Interface	-	-

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Poster, J. and Sherlock, D. 1988; Denny Abbey: The Nuns' Refectory. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 76.

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-106155		
Project Name	Test pit evaluation at Denny Abbey, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	28-07-2011	Finish	29-07-2011
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Unknown

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	WATFAM11	Planning App. No.	n/a
HER No.	ECB 3622	Related HER/OASIS No.	CHER 05394

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent
Development Type	Amenity Area (e.g. public open space)

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
wall	Medieval 1066 to 1540	pottery	Medieval 1066 to 1540
	Select period...	cbm	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	South Cambridgeshire	Denny Abbey, Ely Road, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB25 9PQ	
Parish	Waterbeach		
HER	Cambridgeshire		
Study Area	75sqm	National Grid Reference	TL 4924 6847

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Dan McConnell
Project Design Originator	Stephen Macaulay
Project Manager	Stephen Macaulay
Supervisor	Nick Gilmour

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
CCC Stores	OA East, Bar Hill	CCC Stores
WATFAM11	WAT FAM11	WATFAM11

Archive Contents/Media







	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey











Notes:

Drawing Conventions

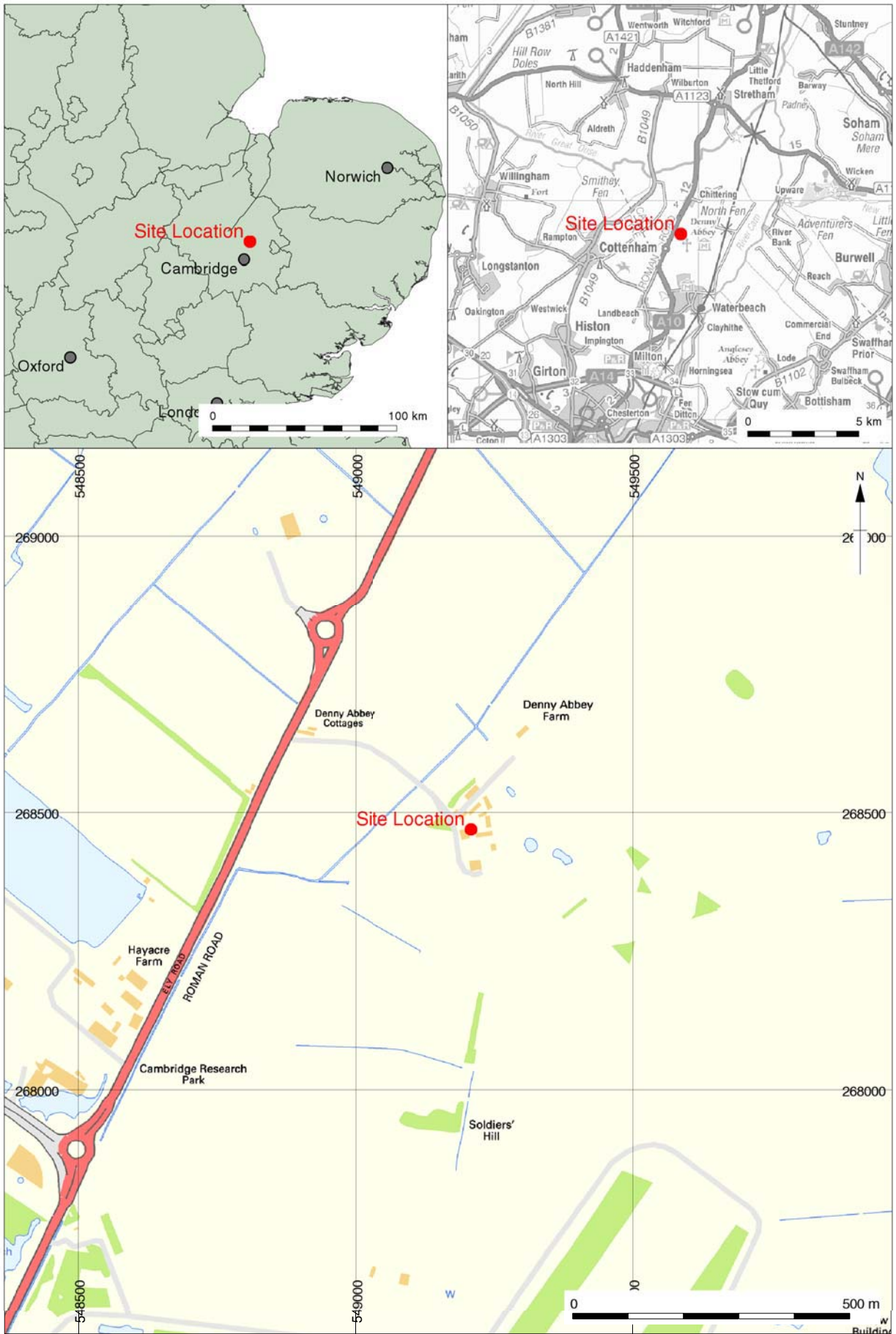
Plans

Limit of Excavation		
Illustrated Section		
Archaeological Deposit		
Wall		
Clunch		
Limestone		
Deposit Number	118	

Sections

Limit of Excavation		
Wall footing		
Deposit Horizon		
Intrusion/Truncation		
Top Surface/Top of Natural		
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing		
Cut Number	118	
Deposit Number	117	
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD 	
Brick		
Clunch		
Inclusions		

Convention Key



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2011

Figure 1: Site location

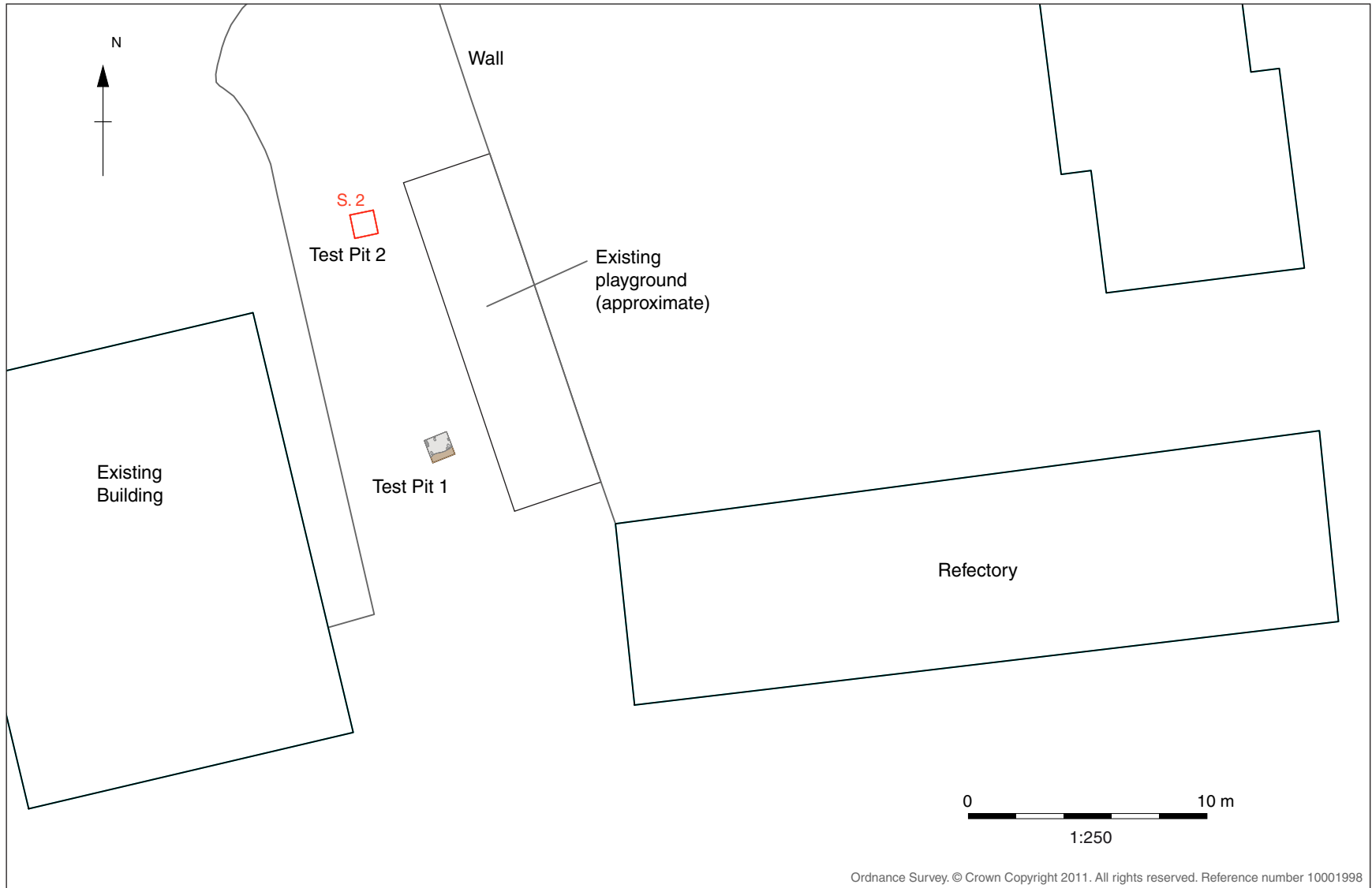


Figure 2: Location of test pits in relation to existing buildings

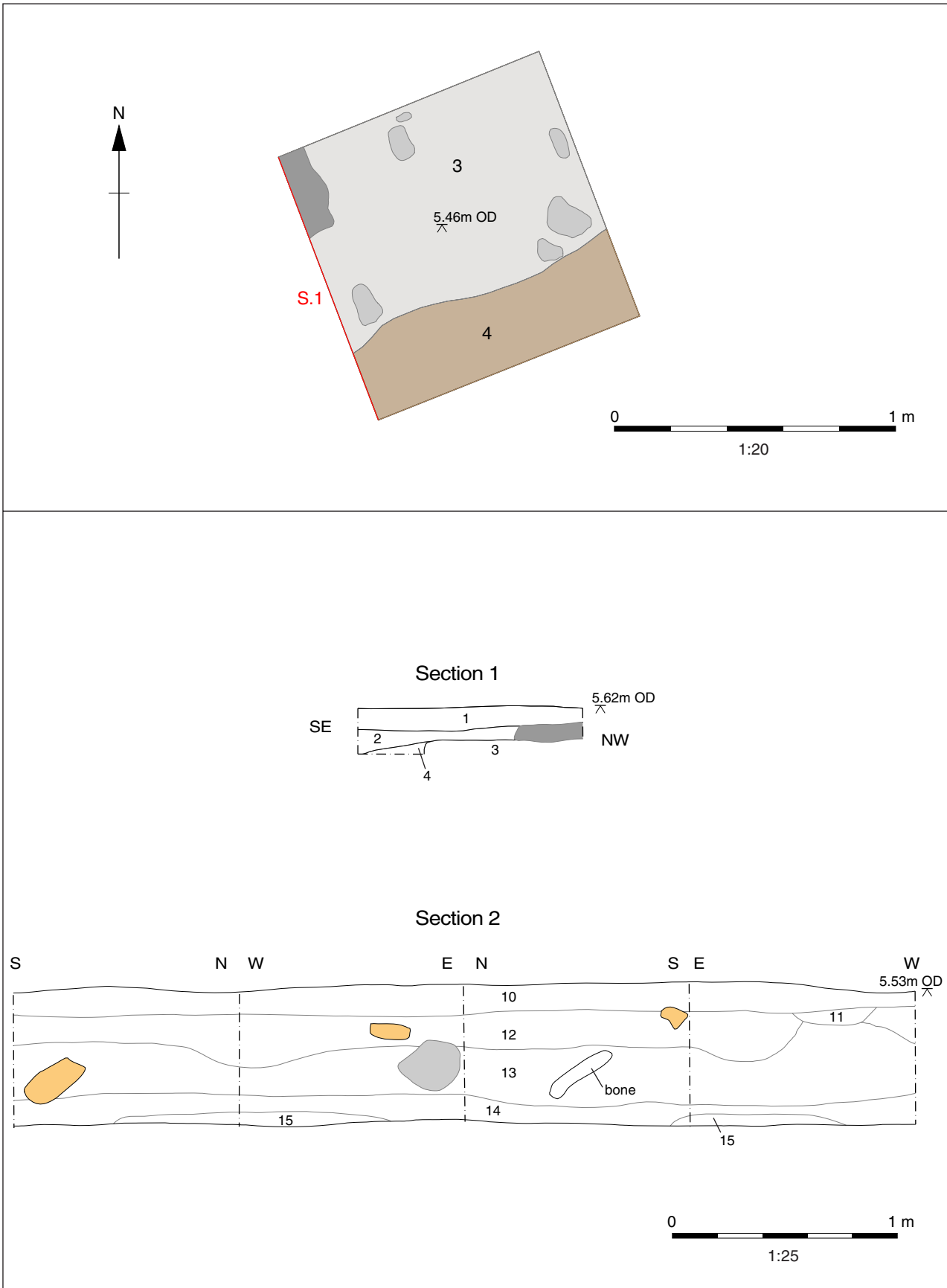


Figure 3: Test pit plan and sections

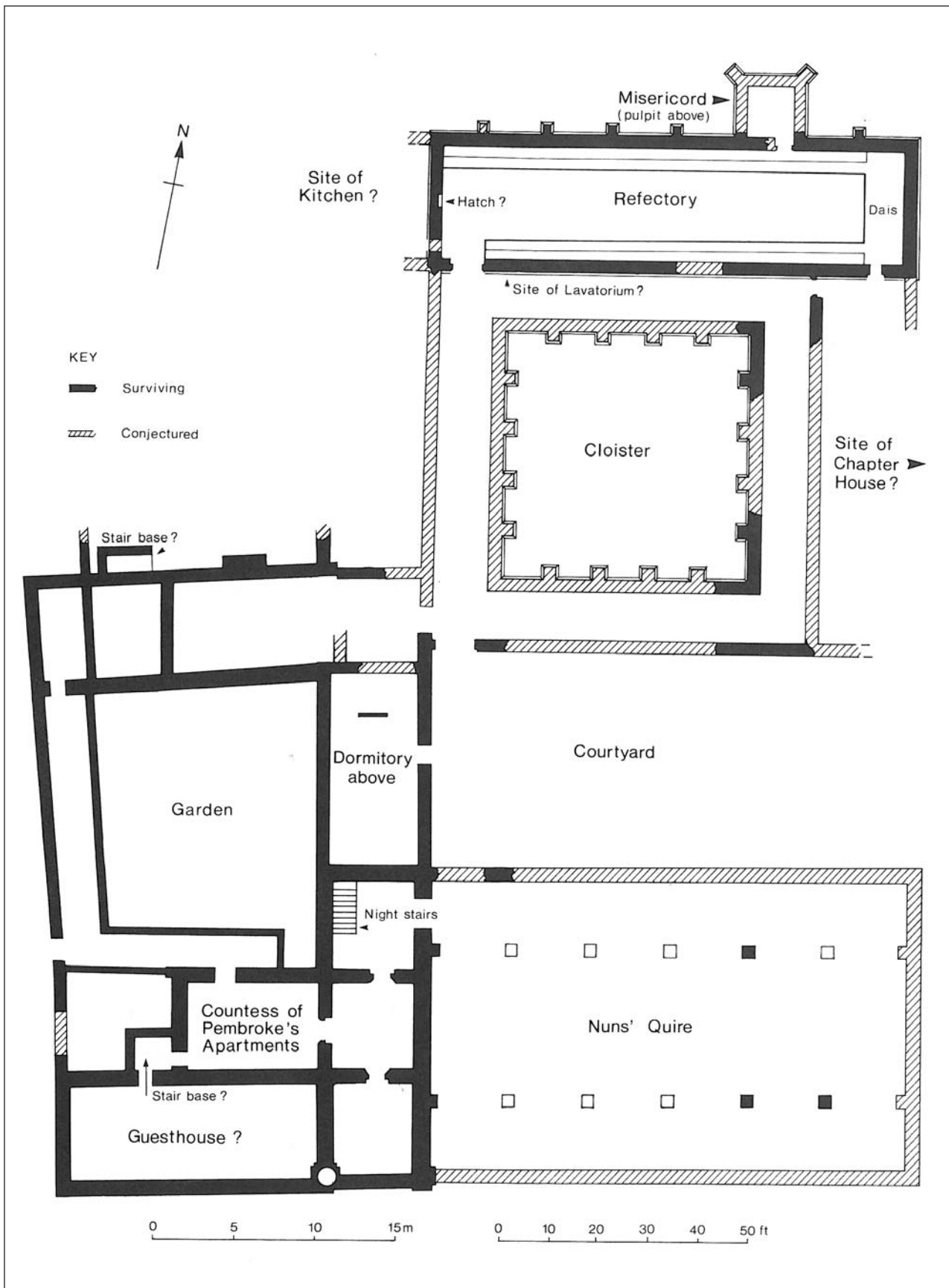


Figure 4: Plan of the Franciscan nuns' buildings (after Poster and Sherlock 1988, fig.1)



Plate 1: Test Pit 1 from the north east



Plate 2: Test Pit 2 from the south



**Head Office/Registered Office/
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
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>



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

*Oxford Archaeology Ltd is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627*