

A Roman Boundary Ditch and Medieval Building at The Old Rectory, Great Casterton



Archaeological Evaluation Report



May 2012

Client: PCA Architects

OA East Report No: 1366

OASIS No: oxfordar3-124987

NGR: TF 0002 0075

A Roman Boundary Ditch and Medieval Building

At

The Old Rectory, Great Casterton

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Report Date: May 2012

Report Number: 1366
Site Name: The Old Rectory, Great Casterton
HER Event No:
Date of Works: 12th – 13th April 2012
Client Name: PCA Architects
Client Ref:
Planning Ref: 2011/0372
Grid Ref: TF 0002 0075
Site Code: XLEORG12
Finance Code: XLEORG12
Receiving Body: Rutland Museum
Accession No: OAKRM:2012.6
Prepared by: Sarah Henley
Position: Supervisor
Date: 1st May 2012
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Date: May 2012
Signed:



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Summary

On the 12th and 13th of April 2012 OA East undertook the machine excavation of ten metres of evaluation trenching in advance of the proposed construction of an extension to the Old Rectory in Great Casterton. The evaluation trench revealed evidence of a significant ditch, possibly the boundary to the Roman town. Overlying the ditch was a stratified sequence of walls and floor surfaces which continued beyond the limit of excavation toward the Old Rectory itself. These deposits were sealed by demolition layers containing medieval pottery, indicating a significant sequence of settlement activity prior to the construction of the current Rectory.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at the Old Rectory, Great Casterton, TF 0002 0075.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Leicestershire County Council's Historical and Natural Environment Team, supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East.
- 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 Leicestershire County Council, 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 in the south-west corner of the village of Great Casterton in the grounds of the Old Rectory immediately east of the river Gwash. The site lies on the Upper Lincolnshire Limestone.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The Old Rectory is just outside of the Scheduled Area of Great Casterton Roman town (SM 161) but lies over the fourth century Roman defences of the town (MLE 8776), within the recorded extent of the town (MLE 5924). A possible Roman bath house was recorded underneath the village hall to the north east (MLE 5285) and a section of Roman wall was recorded nearby in 1965 (MLE 17239) (Drummond-Murray, J. 2012).
- 1.3.2 The site also lies within the historic core of the medieval settlement of Great Casterton (MLE 8829) and was attached to the adjacent 13th century church of St Peter and St Paul. Medieval activity has been recorded in the vicinity (MLE 8525) as has a post-medieval malting kiln (MLE 8525) (Drummond-Murray, J. 2012).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank the clients, PCA Architects. The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray. John Diffey and Rob Atkins carried out the excavation, supervised by Sarah Henley.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this archaeological 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.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that ten metres of evaluation trenching be opened within the proposed development area.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out by Sarah Henley using Leica GPS.
- 2.2.4 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.
- 2.2.5 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.
- 2.2.6 Site conditions were variable, ranging from overcast with occasional rain to sunshine. A modern drainage pipe was encountered at the southern end of the trench and the northern end was disturbed by tree roots.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The 10m long 1.6m wide trench was located along the length of the proposed extension to the Old Rectory, within the footprint of the development area (see fig. 2). It was excavated by machine to a depth of 1.1m, the top of the archaeological deposits (see fig. 3 and plate 1).
- 3.1.2 Five layers of overburden were removed by mechanical excavator. These were: topsoil (c.0.02m thick), a modern gravel path (c. 0.4m), subsoil (c.0.14m) and two layers of mixed demolition material/ rubble (c.0.12m and c.0.4m) (see fig. 3).

3.2 Trench 1

- 3.2.1 Seven features were identified within the trench, no natural geology was visible. The earliest feature was exposed in a 1mx1m exploratory slot at the southern end of the trench. The deposit (5) was a mid yellowish grey silty clay with rare stone inclusions. It has been interpreted as a fill of the Roman boundary ditch which is visible as an earthwork 1.5m to the west of the excavation area where it has been backfilled and modified to form a Ha-Ha (see plate 2). The fill was hand excavated to a depth of 0.6m and augered for a further 1.5m to a gravel deposit, possible a basal fill or natural geology.
- 3.2.2 A wall (6) oriented NE-SW and measuring 5.4m in length was investigated at the southern end of the trench. It comprised of rough hewn limestone blocks, faced on the exposed outer surface with a possible limestone core just visible before the baulk (see plate 3). Seven courses of stone were exposed to a depth of 0.6m. The wall turned north-east at its northern end and continued beyond the limit of excavation.
- 3.2.3 Contemporary with the wall was a limestone stone floor surface (12) which was exposed in a 1x1m slot at the northern end of the trench. This was overlain by a second, partially surviving limestone surface (11) (see plate 4).
- 3.2.4 At the northern end of the trench a wall (10) oriented NE-SW overlay the stone surfaces. It measured 1.3m in length but survived for only two courses of stone. Again, it comprised of rough hewn limestone blocks faced on the exposed outer surfaces and it too turned a corner, mirroring wall 6.
- 3.2.5 The narrow (c.0.85m) space between the two walls had been deliberately blocked with rough hewn limestone (deposit 9) exposed in the exploratory slot to approximately eight courses.
- 3.2.6 The latest deposit (8) was a 0.6m deep mixed rubble/ demolition deposit built up against walls 6 and 10 and underlying the overburden. Pottery from this deposit dated from the 13th to mid 14th centuries and consisted of fairly locally made, domestic fabrics (see Appendix B: Pottery and Ceramic Building Material). The animal bones recovered also represent general domestic settlement debris, and include fragments of cattle, sheep and pig (see Appendix C: Faunal Remains).

3.3 Finds Summary

- 3.3.1 Thirteen sherds of pottery, twelve fragments of animal bone, two pieces of stone roof tile and one fragment of glazed ceramic roof tile were recovered from the evaluation. The pottery and roof tile were of medieval date, two sherds of Lyvenden-Stanion wares date securely to the 13th to mid 14th centuries.

3.4 Environmental Summary

- 3.4.1 No environmental samples were taken from the exposed archaeological features, however augering of the ditch fills revealed organic, charcoal rich deposits at a depth of 1.5m.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Discussion

- 4.1.1 Great Casterton is situated in a loop of the river Gwash and originated as a *vicus* (small town) to the south west of a military base which was constructed in the AD 40s. During the 4th Century AD the reorganisation of the town defences resulted in the infilling and replacement of the settlement boundary ditch with a larger ditch up to 18.3m wide around the northern and eastern limits of the town (Burnham, B.C. & Wachter, J. 1990: 339) (see fig 4). It is unclear whether the defensive ditch was replaced around the entire perimeter of the town. In 1961 Corder noted that the first phase of ditch '*had not been infilled like its eastern counterpart, suggesting the defensive alterations did not extend to this side*' (Corder 1961:33).
- 4.1.2 Excavation and augering of the ditch fills identified in the evaluation trench, when combined with the earthworks in the garden, indicate a substantial boundary ditch measuring at least 5m wide and over 2.3m deep. No pottery was recovered from the fills, but future work may securely date this stretch of ditch and thus identify the extent of the 4th century AD boundary reorganisation. A residual, abraded sherd of Roman Nene Valley Colour Coat was retrieved from demolition layer 5, which overlies medieval deposits.
- 4.1.3 The Old Rectory is adjacent to the church of St Peter and St Paul, which dates to the Saxon period. Additions and alterations to the Church have continued up to the present day. The Old Rectory itself was built in the 18th century, however there were almost certainly earlier versions as several of the outbuildings, including a former dovecote date to the 17th century (R. Atkins pers. comm.).
- 4.1.4 The exposed walls and floor surfaces overlain by medieval demolition material indicate that an earlier form of the Rectory was located to the south west of the present building. At least three phases structure were identified, two walls with separate phases of floor surfaces were discovered and a space between the two walls had been infilled with limestone blocks.

4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 The identification of a Roman town boundary ditch and possible medieval precursors to the current Rectory are extremely significant to the evolution of the town and development of the early Church and Rectory. The level of preservation of the exposed walls and floor surfaces and the depth of archaeology indicate that complex, deeply stratified urban archaeology could survive to a depth of up to 2.3m below the present ground surface.

4.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
10m trench parallel to Old Rectory running the length of the development area.					Avg. depth (m)	1.1m
					Width (m)	1.6m
					Length (m)	10m
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.2m	Topsoil	N	
2	Layer	-	0.4m	Modern	N	
3	Layer	-	0.14m	Subsoil	N	
4	Layer	-	0.12m	Layer	N	
5	Layer	-	0.4m	Rubble/Demolition	Y	
6	Structure	-	0.65m	Wall	N	
7	Fill	-	-	Ditch Fill	N	
8	Layer	-	0.4m	Rubble/Demolition	Y	13th- Mid 14th Century
9	Structure	-	-	Wall	N	
10	Structure	-	-	Wall	N	
11	Surface	-	-	Floor	N	
12	Surface	-	-	Floor	N	
13	Layer	-	-	Rubble/Demolition	Y	13th- Mid 14th Century

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery and Ceramic Building Material

By Carole Fletcher, Roman Pottery Identification by Stephen Wadeson

- B.1.1 The evaluation produced a small pottery assemblage of 14 sherds, weighing 0.144kg, from three contexts. The condition of the overall assemblage is moderately abraded and the average sherd weight from individual contexts is small to moderate at approximately 10g.
- B.1.2 Ceramic fabric abbreviations used in the dating table are:
- | | |
|------|-------------------------|
| BOUB | Bourn B |
| CC | Chilvers Coton |
| LYST | Lyveden-Stanion wares |
| MP | Midland Purple |
| MSW | Medieval Sandy Ware |
| NVCC | Nene Valley Colour Coat |
- B.1.3 The Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG) documents *A guide to the classification of medieval ceramic forms* (MPRG, 1998) and *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics* (MPRG, 2001) act as a standard. The Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG) documents *A guide to the classification of medieval ceramic forms* (MPRG, 1998) and *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics* (MPRG, 2001) act as a standard.
- B.1.4 Pottery was only recovered from the rubble demolition layers, and of these, context 5 which, produced the largest number of sherds. These included a single residual abraded sherd of Roman Nene Valley Colour Coat and a sherd of Midland Purple which has its origins in the late medieval period and continues in production until the end of the 17th century. The small Midland Purple sherd is not closely datable within this period.
- B.1.5 The remaining sherds have tentatively been identified as medieval Bourne B and medieval glazed sandy wares from Lincolnshire. A single fragment of medieval glazed roof tile was also recovered.
- B.1.6 Context 8 produced a single sherd of medieval Lyveden-Stanion from a green glazed jug. Context 13 contains a single small abraded sherd of Chilvers Coton and an unabraded sherd from a Lyveden-Stanion bowl.
- B.1.7 The medieval pottery, although domestic in origin, most likely represents rubbish disposal. Some of the deposits were disturbed when the 18th century Ha Ha was developed and it is possible that this is when the small sherd of Midland purple became deposited alongside medieval sherds.
- B.1.8 An assemblage of this size provides basic dating information and an indication of the origins of pottery brought to the site. Further work will be required on this assemblage should excavation be undertaken. At this stage the pottery will be recorded according to the Leicester codes and the type series consulted if required.

Context	Fabric	Basic Form	Sherd Count	Weight (kg)	Context Date Range
5	BOUB	Bowl	1	0.032	
	BOUB	Jug	1	0.007	
	MSW	Jug	3	0.051	
	MSW	Jug	2	0.015	
	MSW	Bowl	2	0.004	
	MP		1	0.009	
	NVCC		1	0.006	
8	LYST	Jug	1	0.008	13th-mid 14th century
13	LYST	?Bowl	1	0.010	13th-mid 14th century
13	CC		1	0.002	13th-mid 14th century

Table 1: Pottery dating

B.2 Worked Stone

By Robert Atkins

B.2.1 Two broken pieces of limestone roof tile were recovered from context 8, the demolition/ rubble layer overlying walls 6 and 10 (Plate 5). The total weight of the assemblage is 447g. These tiles are almost certainly medieval in date and sourced from local limestone quarries at Barnack or Collyweston. Stone roof tiles from these quarries were used across a significant area of Eastern England including as far as Cambridge and Huntingdon.

APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Faunal Remains

By Chris Faine

C.1.1 Twelve fragments of animal bone were recovered from the evaluation with 7 fragments identifiable to species. The total weight of the assemblage is 713g. The largest number of identifiable fragments was recovered from context **5** in the form of an adult horse tibia, juvenile pig humerus and large mammal skull fragments. Context **8** contained cattle humerus and inominate fragments along with a pathological sheep radius showing evidence of moderate osteo myelitis (infection of the bone) above the distal epiphysis. A portion of pig scapula and large mammal rib fragments were recovered from context **13**. The assemblage is too small to draw any conclusions from but most likely represents general settlement debris.

APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX E. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-124987		
Project Name	The Old Rectory, Great Casterton		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	12-04-2012	Finish	13-04-2012
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Unknown

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	XLEORG12	Planning App. No.	2011/0372
HER No.	OAKRM:2012.6	Related HER/OASIS No.	

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Planning condition
Development Type	Large/Medium Scale Extensions to Existing Structure

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input checked="" 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 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
Boundary Ditch	Roman 43 to 410		Select period...
Wall	Medieval 1066 to 1540		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Rutland	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	Rutland	The Old Rectory, Main Street, Great Casterton, Stamford, PE9 4AP
Parish	Great Casterton	
HER	Leicestershire and Rutland	
Study Area	16m	National Grid Reference
		TF 0002 0075

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	
Project Design Originator	James Drummond-Murray
Project Manager	James Drummond-Murray
Supervisor	Sarah Henley

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Rutland Museum	OA East (Bar Hill).	Rutland Museum
OAKRM:2012.6	XLEORG12	OAKRM:2012.6

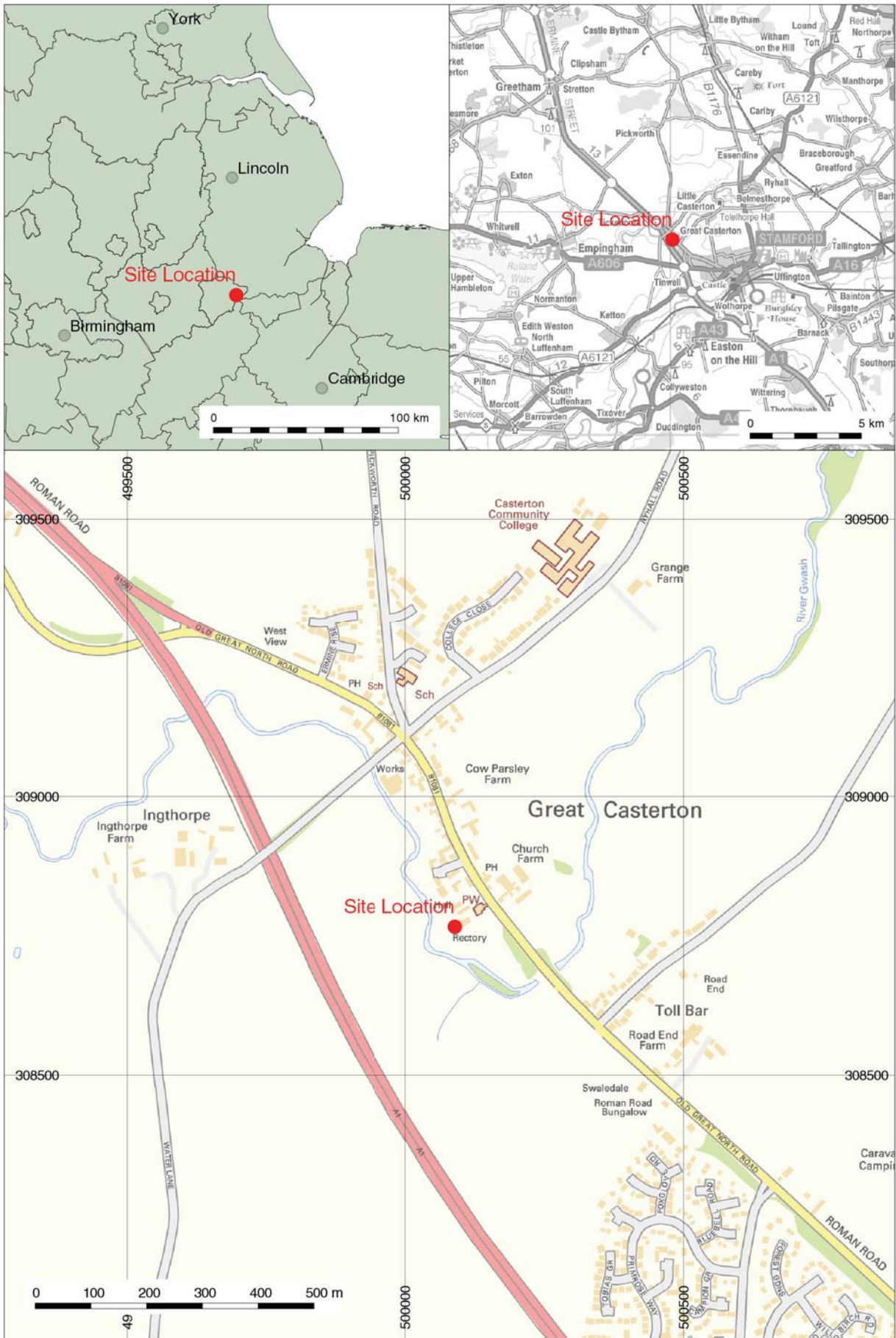
Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:

The trench revealed evidence of a large ditch, possibly the 4th Century AD Roman town boundary. To the east of this two walls and two phases of stone floors were exposed. Medieval pottery was recovered from demolition deposits overlying these features. The proximity of this archaeology to the Church and Rectory suggests it is an earlier building of this type.



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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Trench Location

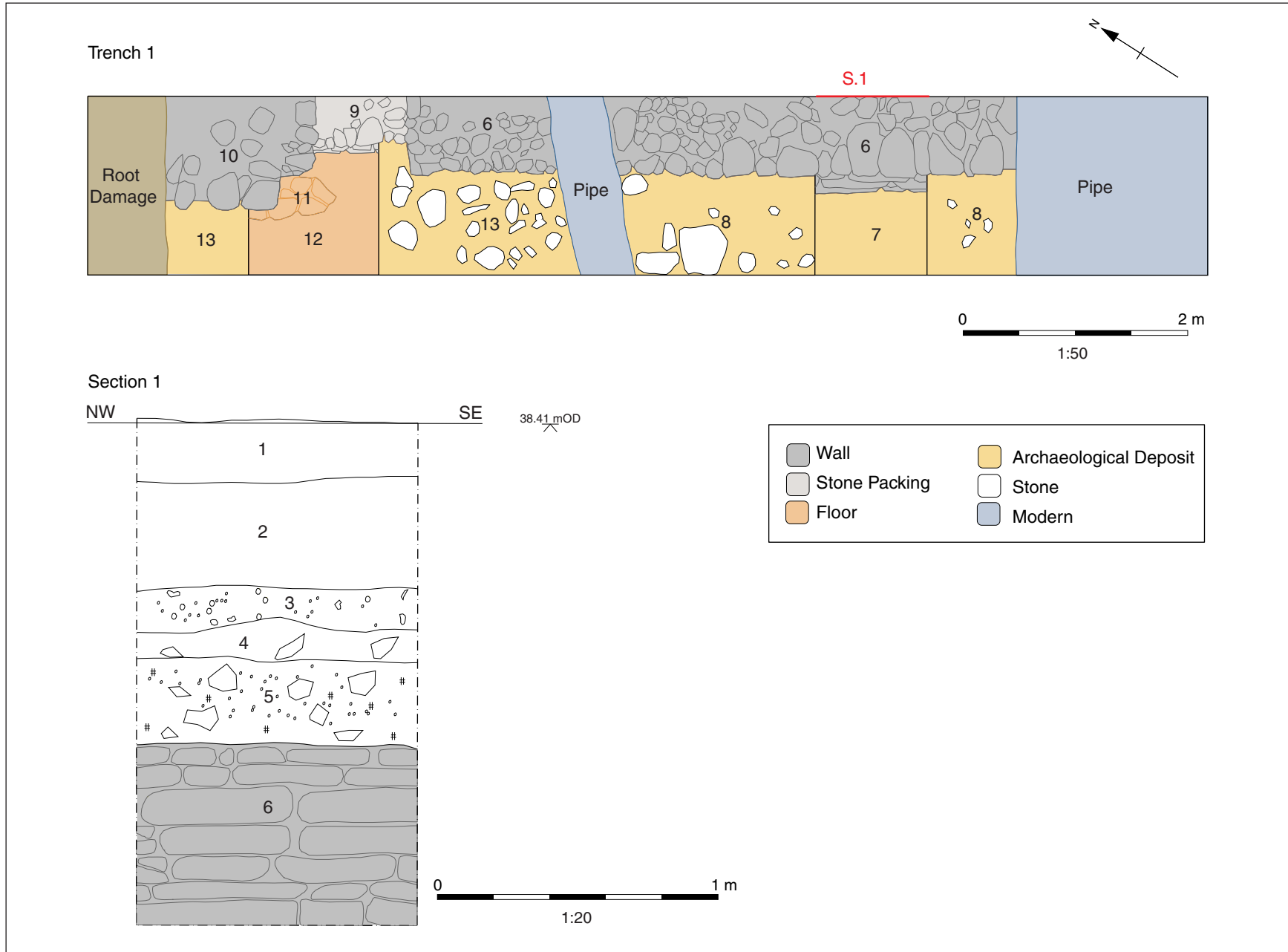


Figure 3: Trench plan and section

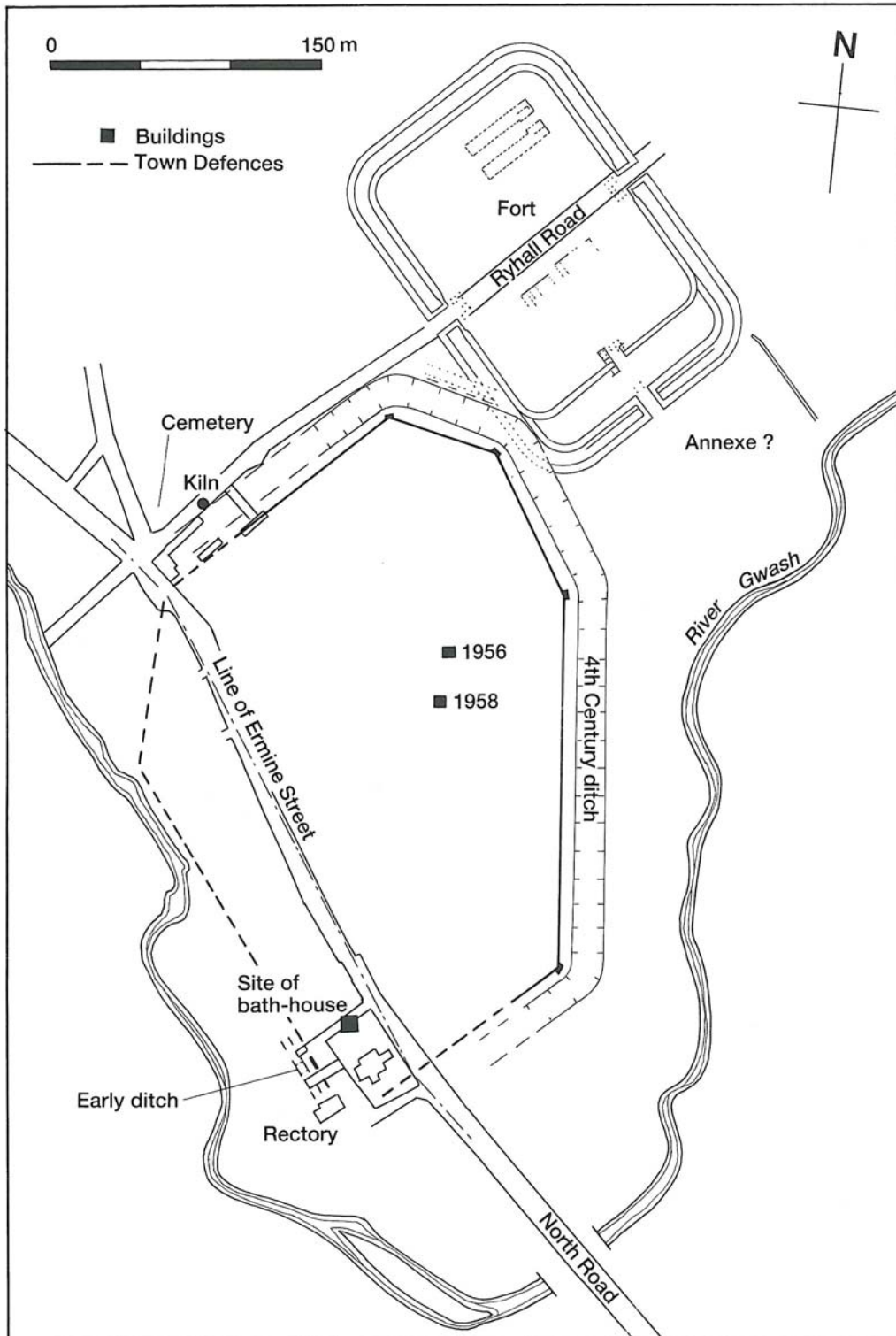


Figure 4: 4th Century Roman Boundary Ditch, Great Casterton (Burnham, B.C. & Watcher, J. 1990: fig 35)



Plate 1: Trench shot taken from north-east



Plate 2: Roman boundary ditch taken from south-east



Plate 3: Section of exposed wall (6)



Plate 4: Exposed walls and floor surfaces



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