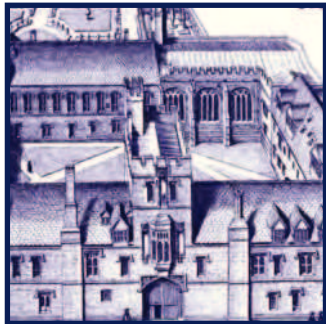


Master's Lodgings New Basement Balliol College Oxford



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

12th December 2002

Client Name: Balliol College

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 3128

Museum Accession N^o: OXCMS:2001.11

NGR: SP 5135 0650

Client Name: Balliol College, Oxford

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Balliol College, Broad Street, Oxford

Document Type: Written Scheme of Investigation

Issue Number: 2

National Grid Reference: SP 5135 0650

Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 531
Site Code: OXBALL01
Invoice Code: OXBALLwb
Museum Accession No:

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Position: Senior Project Manager, Small Works
Date: 3rd December 2001

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Position: Senior Contracts Manager
Date: 3rd December 2001

Approved by: Jon Hiller Signed.....
Position: as above
Date: 3rd December 2001

Document File Location U:\OAU\oau\WS\WBEVALNEW\OXFORD\Balliol\WSI
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Balliol College, Oxford

Master's Lodgings New Basement

NGR SP 5135 0650

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In April, August and December 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Balliol College, Broad Street, Oxford. The work was commissioned following advice given to the College by the City Archaeologist, Brian Durham. The watching brief took place whilst excavations of a new basement underneath the Masters Lodgings were being carried out. The excavations revealed the natural gravel capped by a layer of red-brown prehistoric subsoil. Five early medieval pits dating from the mid-late 11th century were recorded. These represent domestic rubbish pits associated with early tenements on the site. A substantial section of masonry was also uncovered and may be associated with the early foundation of the college. A later section of walling may relate to a garden wall depicted by Loggan's drawing of 1675.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In April 2001, August 2001 and December 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook an archaeological watching brief at Balliol College, Broad Street, Oxford, (NGR SP 5135 0650) (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was commissioned following advice given to the College by the City Archaeologist, Brian Durham, under guidelines contained in Local Planning Policy EN41. OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA January 2001a and revised December 2001b).
- 1.1.3 With Trinity College on the East and St John's on the north there is now no further room for expansion of the College, hence the need for excavating the basement under the Master's Lodgings in order to create more space for storage (Fig. 2).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the gravel terrace that is capped with a layer of red-brown prehistoric subsoil, at 62.35 m above OD.
- 1.2.2 The site is situated along the north side of Broad Street, Oxford and is 9.52 m² in area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2001a). A more detailed history of the site is included below.
- 1.3.2 The early history of the University of Oxford is not well documented. It appears to have evolved in an *ad hoc* manner from modest and imprecise origins. The first clear indication of the existence of a substantial body of scholars is in the late twelfth

century (Jones, 1997), though it is doubtful that any formal colleges had been established.

- 1.3.3 The roots of Balliol College stem from John de Balliol, a Baron of considerable importance who ruled the district around Barnard Castle, his family home like a 'petty sovereign'. Balliol had persistent altercations with his neighbour Walter Kirkham, the Bishop of Durham. These differences came to a head around 1255-60 when the Bishop excommunicated several of Balliol's retainers. Balliol responded violently, initiating an attack on the Bishop, capturing him and some of his entourage.
- 1.3.4 Thus the Bishop complained to King Henry III, who issued a writ condemning the actions of Balliol and demanding instant reparation (Jones 1997). Hence, the Bishop made Balliol, as part of his penance, pay a 'sum of fixed maintenance to be continued forever' to scholars studying at Oxford (Paravicini, 1891).
- 1.3.5 Following the construction of the late Saxon burh in the 10th century, many tenement lots sprang up in the surrounding area (Fig. 3) (Williams, 1732)
- 1.3.6 Balliol hired a house in the suburbs of Oxford, near the church of St Mary Magdalen (Fig. 4). This first tenement used for college purposes was situated on the northern side of Broad Street, formally Horsemonger Street, opposite the northern entrance of the defensive burh that surrounded the town of Oxford (Paravicini, 1891).
- 1.3.7 John de Balliol died in 1268. His widow, Lady Dervorguilla continued maintaining and developing the college until she was able to give the 'House of Balliol' a more distinct character by endowing it with permanent buildings and substantial funds. Yet, 1282 is traditionally referred to as the date of the creation of Balliol College, as it was in this year that the 'House of Balliol' received its statutes for self-governance (Paravicini, 1891).
- 1.3.8 Balliol College can be considered as one of the oldest foundations in Oxford, yet none of its original walls and rooms remain above the ground (Paravicini, 1891). However, it is possible that archaeological evidence associated with, and pre-dating the foundation of the college survives beneath the existing College buildings and grounds.
- 1.3.9 The tenements that formed the south side of the college (those running along Broad Street) must have been small and irregular (Paravicini, 1891). Antony à Wood describes St Margaret's Hall, which stood where the Master's house now joins the corner of the front quadrangle, as 'the 7 tenement from the south east end of the College' (Wood, undated). Therefore we can guess, pretty accurately what must have been the size of the houses, which were probably detached, each containing perhaps three to four rooms, and each having a small piece of land belonging to it. Dervorguilla must have enclosed, or connected the three tenements that she bought in 1284 (Fig. 4), when she gave a common name to them (Paravicini, 1891).

1.3.10 Nevertheless, many of the tenements were not acquired primarily for the purpose of enlarging the college facilities, indeed they were purchased as an investment and as a source of income. Despite this, during the latter half of the 18th century all of the property that was owned by Balliol College, between Trinity College and St John's College, began to be used for academic purposes (Salter, 1913).

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 OA would like to thank Dr John Jones for his help and expert advice on the historical details contained within this report as well as his comments on the interpretation of the archaeology uncovered. Robin Bashford of OA carried out the site work.

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 The site contractors carried out all engineering groundworks and excavation by hand. OA recorded section profiles and wall elevations as exposed during the course of the works and made a plan of the base of the excavations.

2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales 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 and followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (Ed D. Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The natural gravel was observed at a depth of 62.30 m OD and was overlain by a 0.25 m thick layer of red-brown prehistoric subsoil (2). This in turn was covered by a layer of clay silt (3), probably a former soil horizon. Within the new excavated basement several pits were revealed. The principal features and structures are detailed below.

Pits 44 and 34

3.1.2 To the north-west of the basement and cutting layer 2 was a probable circular pit (44) with a near vertical west edge (Fig. 11, Section 6). The pit was 0.84 m deep as exposed. The earliest excavated fill (45) was a dark-grey silty clay that was overlain by a grey-brown silty clay (46). Neither fill contained dating evidence. The fills of pit

(44) were cut away to the east by a large pit (34) (Fig. 10, Section 5) that was at least 1.4 m deep and up to 1.9 m in diameter.

- 3.1.3 The earliest observed fill (35), an undated clay silt was overlain by a blue-grey clay (36) that contained two sherds of mid-11th century pottery. This was overlain by a charcoal-rich silty clay (43), in turn covered by a 0.3 m thick deposit of brown clay silt with gravel (37) that contained sherds of mid-late 11th century date and animal bones, some of which exhibited butchery marks. These deposits, presumably domestic waste material, were sealed by a 0.15 m thick layer of re-deposited natural gravel (38). Fill (38) was overlain by a 0.22 m thick deposit of silty clay (39) that showed evidence of burning, in turn overlain by a clay silt deposit (40) that contained late 11th century pottery and butchered animal bone. Above lay a mid-brown clay silt (41) containing late 11th century pottery. The upper fill (42) comprised a deposit of reddish-brown clay silt with around 40% gravel inclusions.

Pits 9 and 47

- 3.1.4 At the west edge of the basement and cutting layer (3) (Fig. 7, Section 1) was a pit (9) that was 0.52 m in diameter and 0.6 m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. The pit had one fill, a mid-brown clay silt (10) with gravel inclusions. A piece of animal bone was recovered but no dating evidence was found. However, it is likely that pit 9 was contemporary with the others in the basement. The pit was truncated on its western side by a modern brick retaining wall.
- 3.1.5 Just south-west of the centre of the basement was a small circular pit (47) (Fig. 9, Section 3). The pit was 0.12 m deep and 0.16 m in diameter and cut into layers 2 and 3. The pit was filled by a mid-brown-grey clay silt (48) that was undated.

Pit 25

- 3.1.6 Situated in the south-east corner of the basement was a large pit (25) (Fig. 8, Section 2). It was 1.16 m deep and 1.2 m in diameter and cut into the natural (1). The primary fill of the pit was a red-brown silty clay (11) that had the appearance of being partially scorched. Covering this was a layer of re-deposited gravel (12). A layer of dark grey clay silt with charcoal inclusions filled the base of the southern side of the pit (23).
- 3.1.7 These fills were all overlain by a red-brown silty clay that was 0.08 m thick, which also showed some evidence of scorching (13). On top of this lay a mid-grey silty clay deposit (14) made up of 25% gravel. Above lay a very dark clay silt (15) with gravel, in turn covered by a 0.18 m thick brown silty clay (16) with charcoal inclusions. A dark-brown silty clay (17), which also contained charcoal, lay above this. Fill 17 was overlain by a very dark clay silt (18), that contained numerous charcoal pieces, which was overlain by a mid-dark grey silty clay fill (19) with slight evidence of charcoal residue.
- 3.1.8 The upper fills of pit (25) comprised context (20), a very dark clay silt layer with charcoal and, the penultimate layer (21), a dark-brown clay silt fill which contained

gravel. Two fragments of medieval Oxford ware and one piece of Brill/Boarstall ware were recovered suggesting a *terminus post quem* date of the 13th century for the fill and arguably the pit. However, the pottery is likely to be intrusive, as the fills of pit 25 were cut by another pit (27) of earlier 11th century date (see below). The final fill of the pit was a deposit of brown silty clay with charcoal pieces (22).

Pit 27

- 3.1.9 The lower fills of pit (25) were cut away by pit 27 (Fig.9, Section 4). The primary fill was a green-grey clay deposit (30), suggestive of decomposed cess material. A dark red-brown clay silt (28) overlay 30 and contained some gravel. A re-deposited layer of natural gravel (29) had been dumped to fill the pit at this point. The uppermost fill (26), a mid-grey silty clay, contained five sherds of late 11th century pottery.
- 3.1.10 A possible floor surface layer (4) comprising fired clay sealed all of the upper pit fills.

Structure (31)

- 3.1.11 Two significant walls were identified at the east and south sides of the new basement and both were stratigraphically later than the pit deposits. The earlier of the two structures was a north-south aligned wall footing (31, Fig. 6) cut through the fills of pit 34 and set upon the natural gravel (Fig. 10, section 5).
- 3.1.12 The wall comprised a substantial footing of roughly hewn limestone blocks. The largest stone observed measured 1 m by 0.4 m, and on average the stones measured 0.5 m x 0.5 m. The footing was capped with well-dressed limestone blocks. A total length of 2.2 m of walling was observed with the well-dressed stones continuing out of the excavation area to the north. A change in the wall alignment was noted in the north-east corner of the basement where a recess is suggested (Fig. 6). It is possible that this relates to a structural feature on the other side of the wall.

Structure (24)

- 3.1.13 In the south-east corner of the basement, east-west wall 24 was observed abutting the large foundation wall (31). The wall was set into the upper fills of pit 25 and consisted of three courses of roughly dressed stone with a total length of 1.2 m. The wall was overlain and abutted by a modern brick retaining wall that forms part of the 19th century cellars here (Fig. 8, section 2).
- 3.1.14 Observed only in section, wall 24 was abutted by layer 5, a clay silt overlying layer 4. Layer 5 was overlain by a 0.2 m thick layer of loam and broken tiles, possibly construction debris associated with a phase of building. A general mixed make-up layer (7) overlay the tiles, which was in turn sealed by a layer of modern concrete (8).

3.2 Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

- 3.2.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 34 sherds with a total weight of 754 g. It was all of early medieval date, with most context-specific assemblages dating to the later 11th or 12th centuries. It was recorded utilising the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1989; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 8 sherds, 312 g.

OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 22 sherds, 377 g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 4 sherds, 65 g.

- 3.2.2 The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	OXAC		OXY		OXAM		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
U/S	3	161	10	226	3	50	U/S
21			2	22	1	15	13thC
26			5	24			L11thC
36	2	29					M11thC?
37	1	18	1	33			L11thC
40			2	21			L11thC
41	2	104	2	51			L11thC
Total	8	312	22	377	4	65	

The Animal Bone by Bethan Charles

- 3.2.3 A total of 17 (415 g) fragments of animal bone were recovered (Table 1). The bone was in very good condition with very little attritional damage. In addition to the animal bone two fragments of oyster shell were recovered from an unstratified deposit.

Table 2: Total number of animal bones according to context and species

Context	Cattle	Sheep	Pig	Unidentified	Total
10	0	1	0	0	1
21	0	0	0	1	1
36	2	0	0	0	2
37	1	1	0	2	4
40	1	0	0	0	1
Unstratified	3	2	1	2	8
Total	7	4	1	5	17

3.2.4 Cattle and sheep were the most numerous elements recovered and consisted of rib, vertebrae and skull fragments. Butchery cut and chop marks were identified on the cattle ribs and some of the unidentified elements. It is almost certain that the material represents butchery or kitchen waste. The bones were from large animals, which indicates that they were improved breeds likely to date from post medieval period of occupation at the site.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No samples suitable for environmental sampling were identified.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The excavations revealed evidence for a period of occupation of the site from the early Norman occupation of Oxford until the purchase of the land by Dervorguilla and transformation of the site initiated by her in 1284 (see Fig. 4).

4.1.2 A total of five pits were identified in the basement excavations and appear typical of the rubbish pits found in early medieval Oxford's tenement back-yards. The pits contained evidence of butchery waste and pottery, and residue from fires in the form of charcoal. One pit was apparently used for cess with a green-grey clay silt deposit sealed by a layer of re-deposited natural.

4.1.3 The pits presumably were originally dug within the garden of a tenement block outside the northern extent of the burh. The concentration of the pits to the east of the basement site and the relatively undisturbed gravel to the west could suggest that the west part of the site represents a space between two dwellings. The upper fills of the pits were sealed by a distinctive fired clay deposit, presumably indicating a change in use of the site, though it is unclear if this represents the start of the college proper.

4.1.4 Two wall footings were exposed during the excavations. The north-south aligned wall has a substantial foundation supporting a single remaining course of well-dressed stone. This dressed stone changes direction at the northern extent of the excavation (turning approximately 45° to the north-east. It is unclear why there is no solid stone foundation where the dressed stone changes direction, but this presumably relates to a structural feature on the other side of the wall.

4.1.5 This foundation could be the original stones of the first phase of building on the Masters Lodgings site or a section of the foundations for the building in which the new library now stands. Loggan's drawing of 1675 (Fig. 5) depicts a structure with a chimney just west of the Old Hall or Library so this may relate to that building. It is likely that the dressed stone would have been designed to be seen and thus must form a part of the original college buildings, possibly a cellared room to the east of the current basement being excavated.

- 4.1.6 The east-west aligned wall footing was of slighter build and was added to the existing north-south footing. It is possible that this represents part of the wall footing of the garden wall depicted on Loggan's drawing of 1675 (Fig. 5).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	Natural Gravel	
2	Layer	Old topsoil/Supernatural	
3	Layer	Makeup layer for overlying floor surface.	
4	Layer	Fired clay floor surface	
5	Layer	Occupation debris	
6	Layer	Demolition layer	
7	Layer	Garden soil	
8	Layer	Hardcore/ Made ground/ Concrete	
9	Cut	Pit cut	
10	Fill	Fill of pit 9	1 piece of sheep bone.
11	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
12	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
13	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
14	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
15	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
16	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
17	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
18	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
19	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
20	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
21	Fill	Fill of pit 25	3 sherds of 13 th century pottery. 1 piece of unidentified bone.
22	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
23	Fill	Fill of pit 25	
24	Structure	Footing	
25	Cut	Pit cut	
26	Fill	Fill of pit 27	5 sherds of late 11 th century pottery.
27	Cut	Pit cut	
28	Fill	Fill of pit 27	
29	Fill	Fill of pit 27	
30	Fill	Fill of pit 27	
31	Structure	Footing	
33	Fill	Fill of pit 34	
34	Cut	Pit cut	
35	Fill	Fill of pit 34	
36	Fill	Fill of pit 34	2 sherds of middle 11 th century pottery. 2 pieces of cattle bone.
37	Fill	Fill of pit 34	2 sherds of late 11 th century pottery. 1 piece of cattle bone, 1 piece of sheep bone, 2 pieces of unidentified bone.
38	Fill	Fill of pit 34	
39	Fill	Fill of pit 34	
40	Fill	Fill of pit 34	2 sherds of late 11 th century pottery. 1 piece of cattle bone.
41	Fill	Fill of pit 34	4 sherds of late 11 th century pottery.
42	Fill	Fill of pit 34	
43	Fill	Fill of pit 34	
44	Cut	Pit cut	
45	Fill	Fill of pit 44	

46	Fill	Fill of pit 44	
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APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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Wood, Antony à undated *History and Antiquities of the Colleges and Halls in the University of Oxford*.

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Balliol College, Broad Street, Oxford

Site code: OXBALL 01

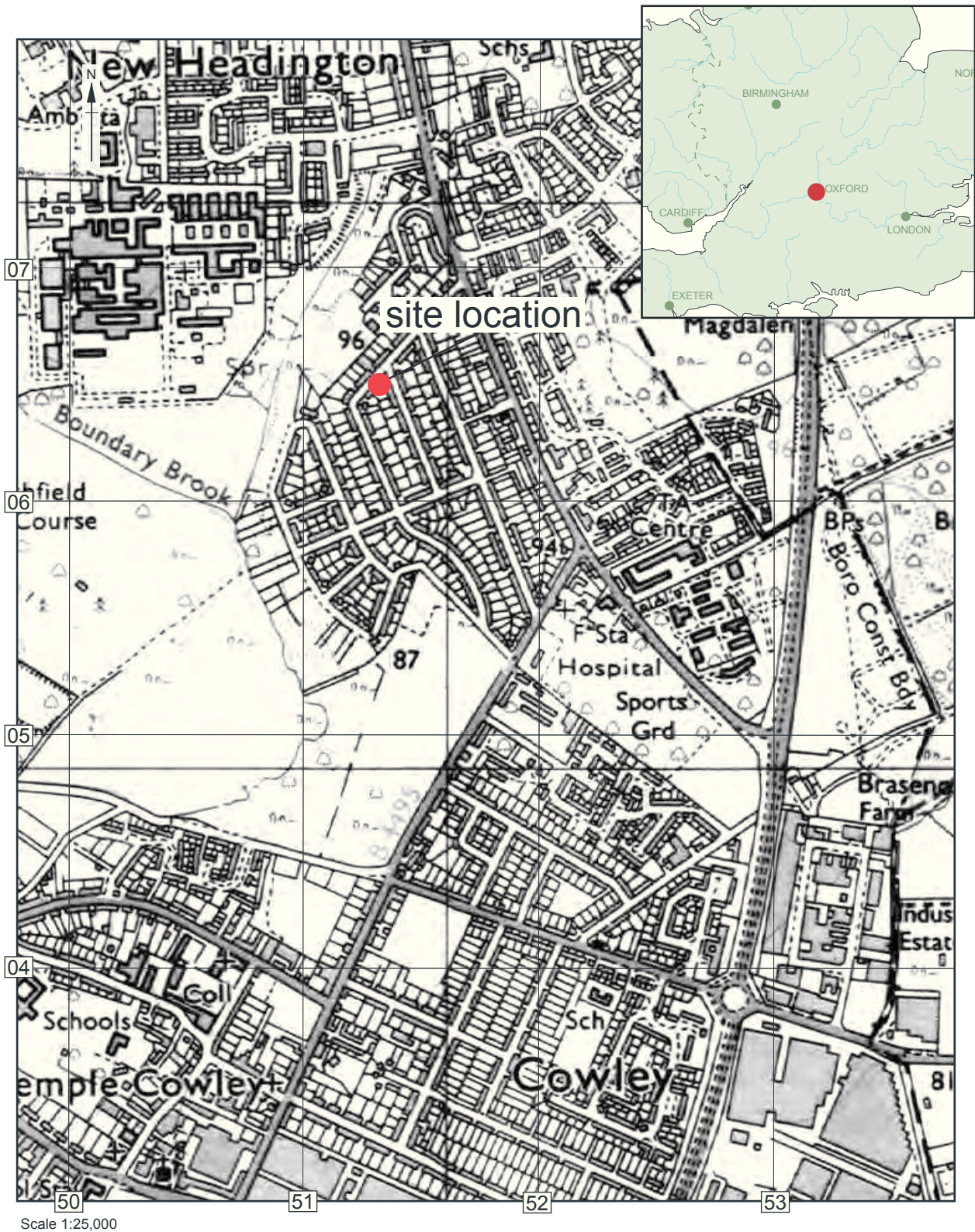
Type of watching brief: Excavation of new basement beneath the Master's Lodging's, Balliol College, Broad Street, Oxford.

Date and duration of project: April 2001 to December 2001

Area of site: 9.52 m²

Summary of results: Five early medieval pits were revealed containing domestic rubbish and cess material. A substantial section of stonework was also identified which may be part of the early buildings of the college.

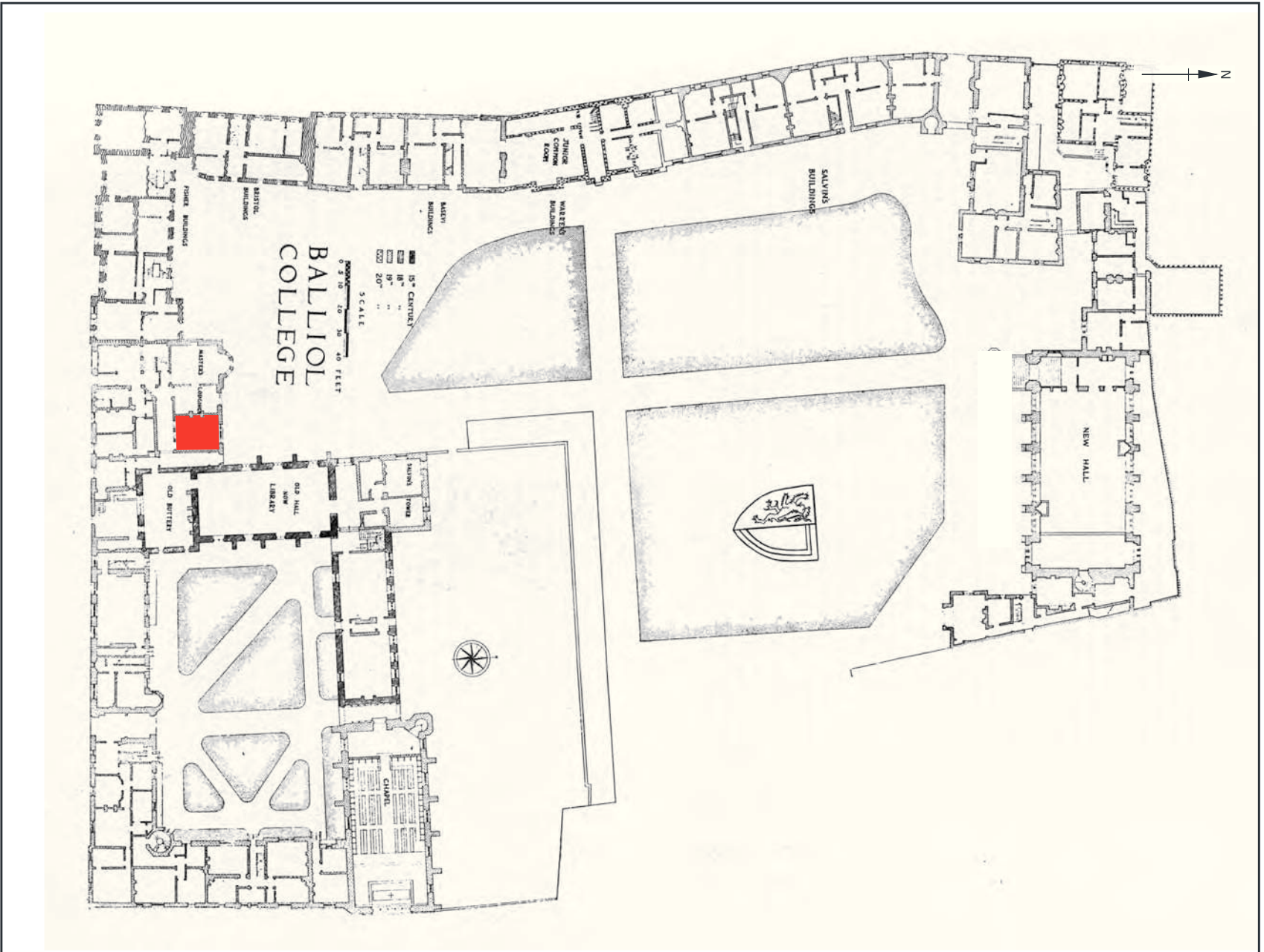
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2001.11



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Figure 1: Site location



Excavated basement

Figure 2: Area of investigation.

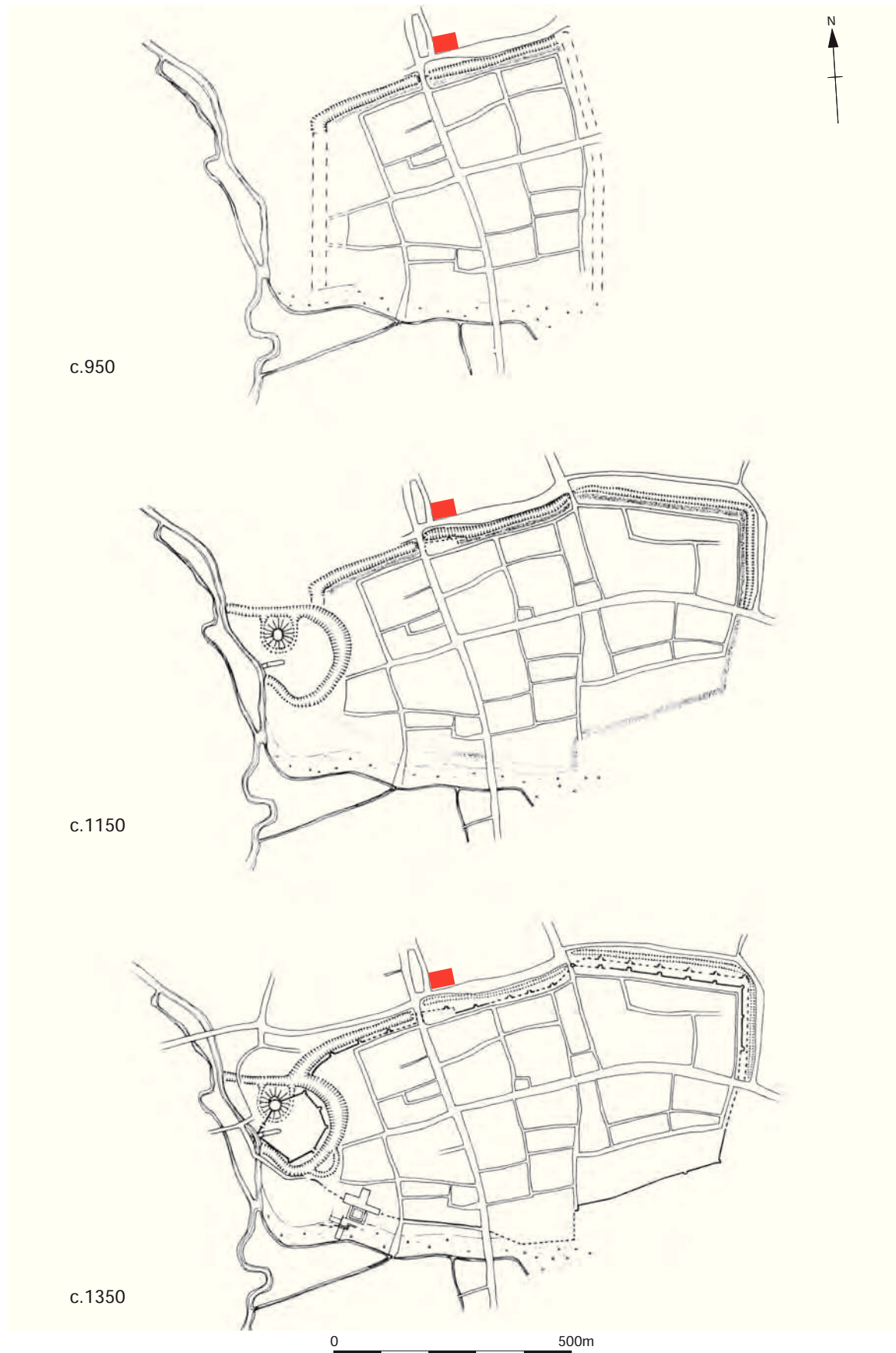


Figure 3: The Location of Balliol College in Relation to the Saxon Burh of Oxford

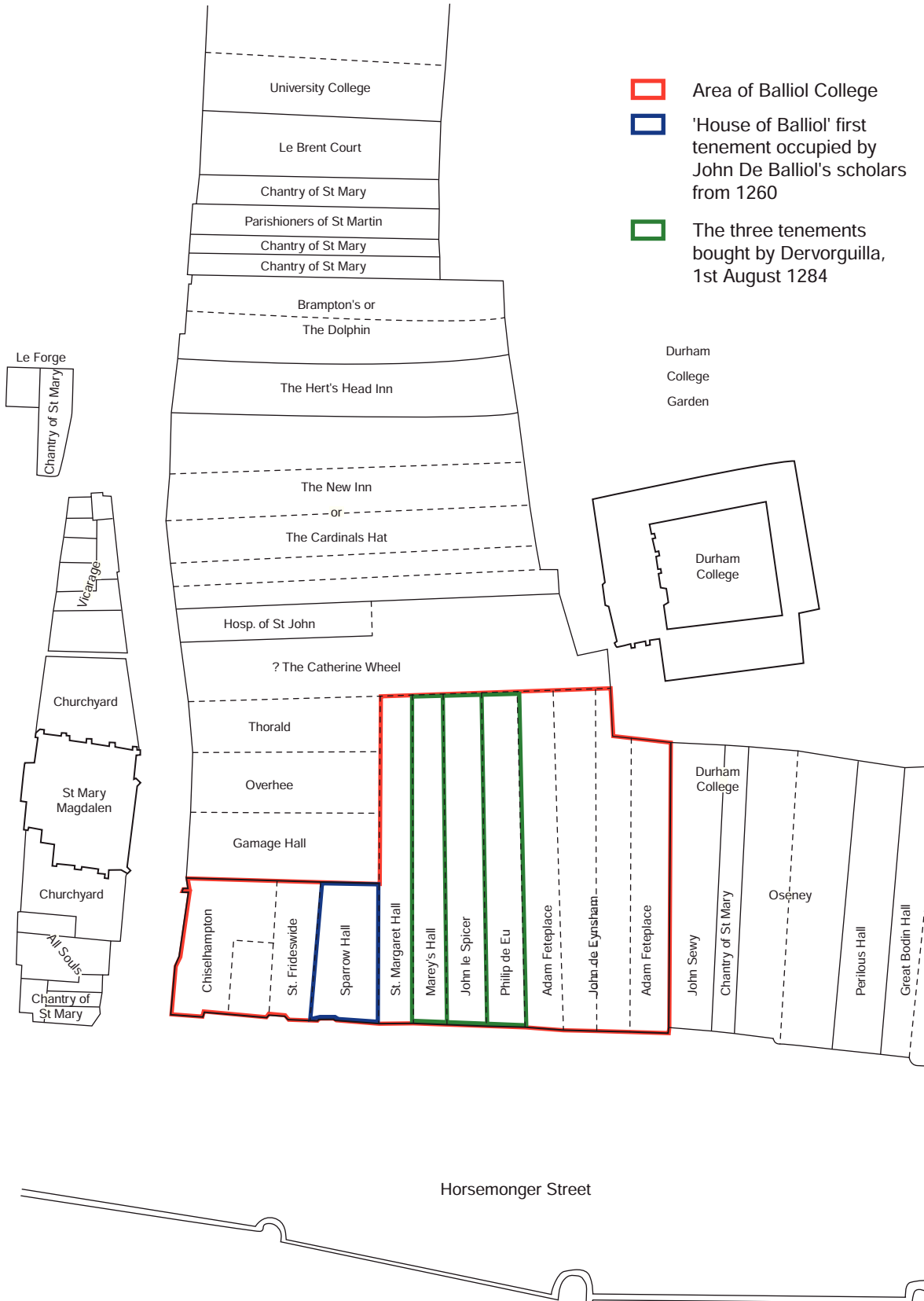


Figure 4: Limits of Balliol College applied to Salter's map of Medieval Oxford

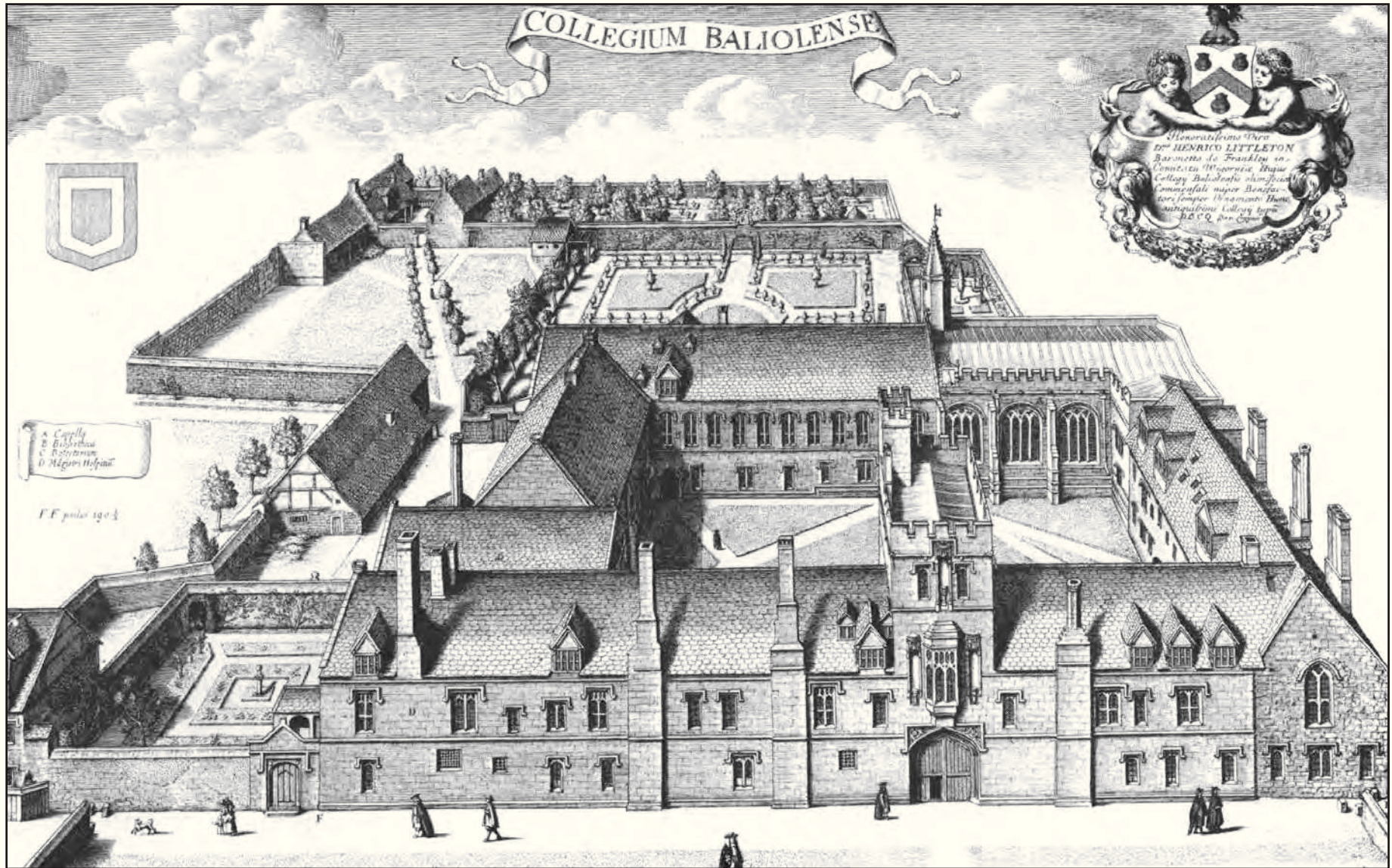


Figure 5: Balliol College in 1675, by Loggan

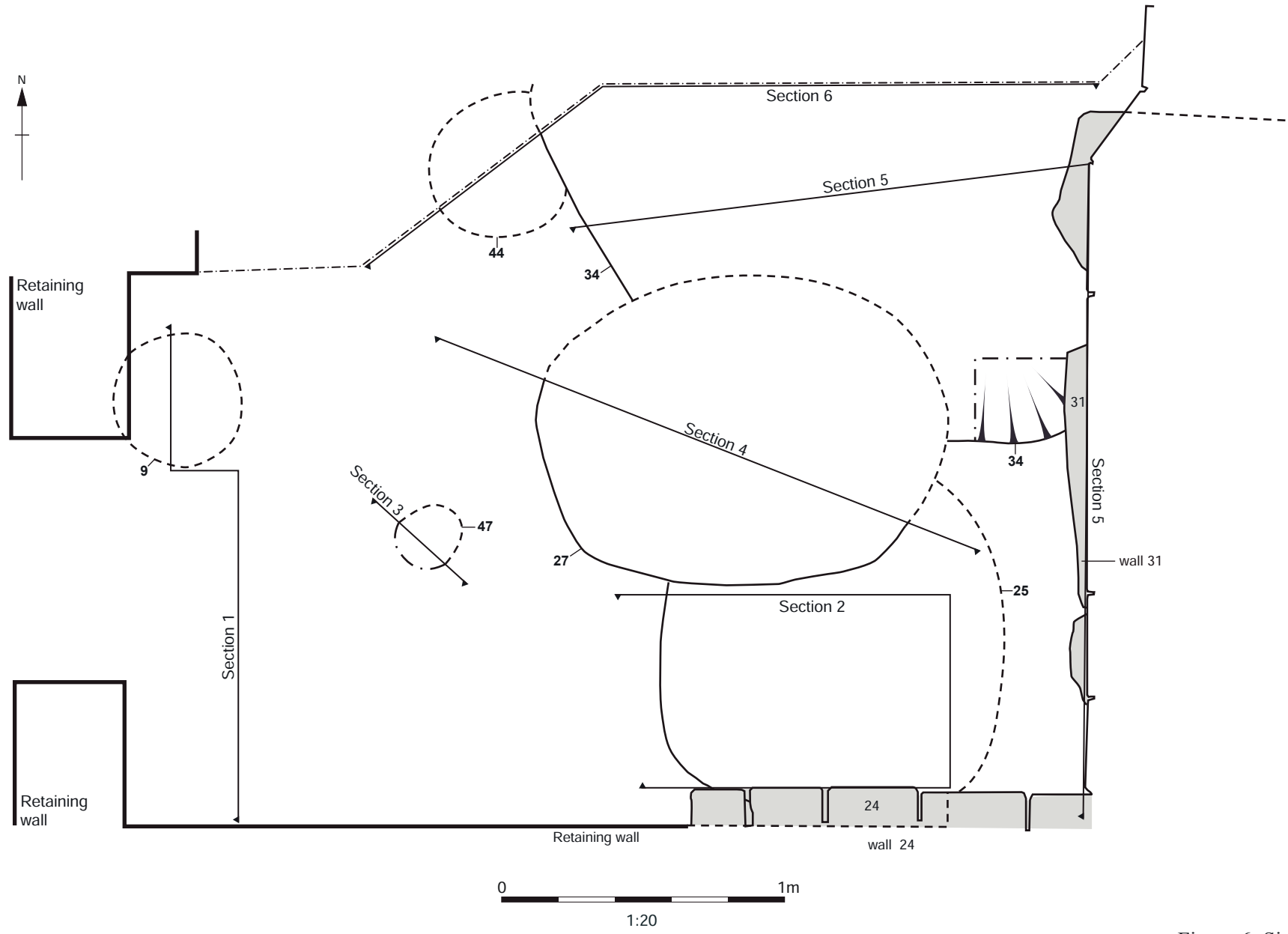


Figure 6: Site Plan.

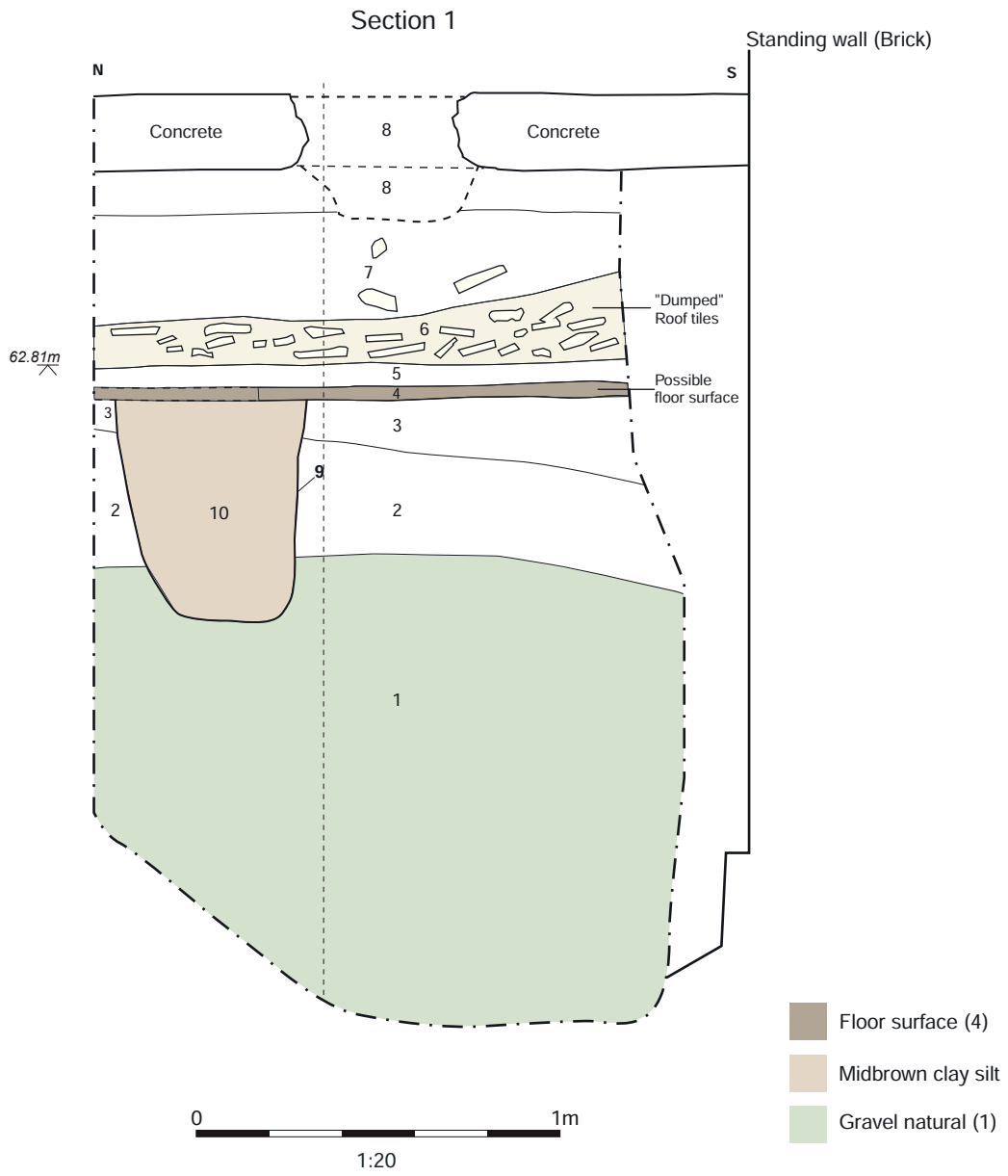


Figure 7: Section 1.

Section 2

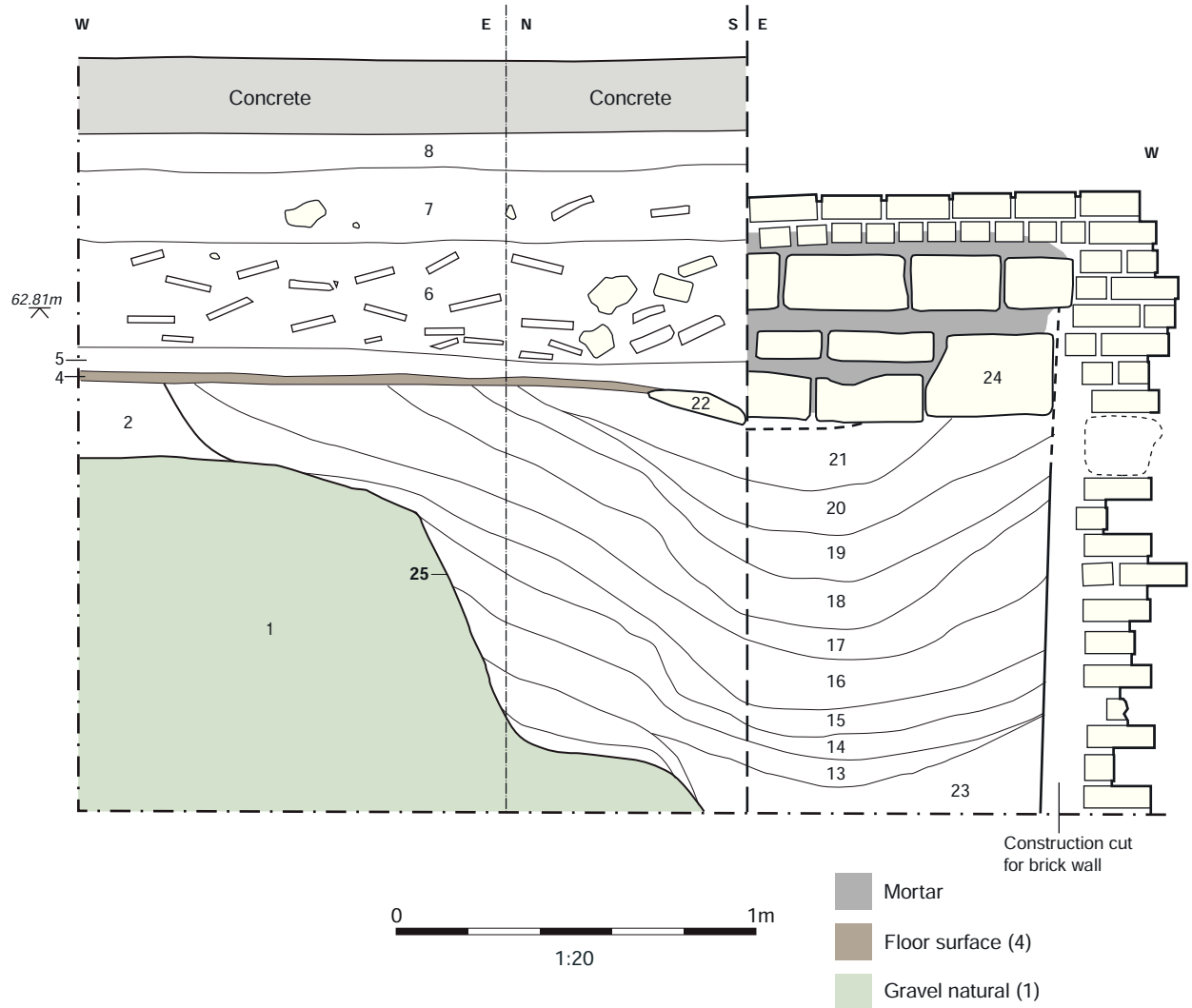


Figure 8: Section 2.

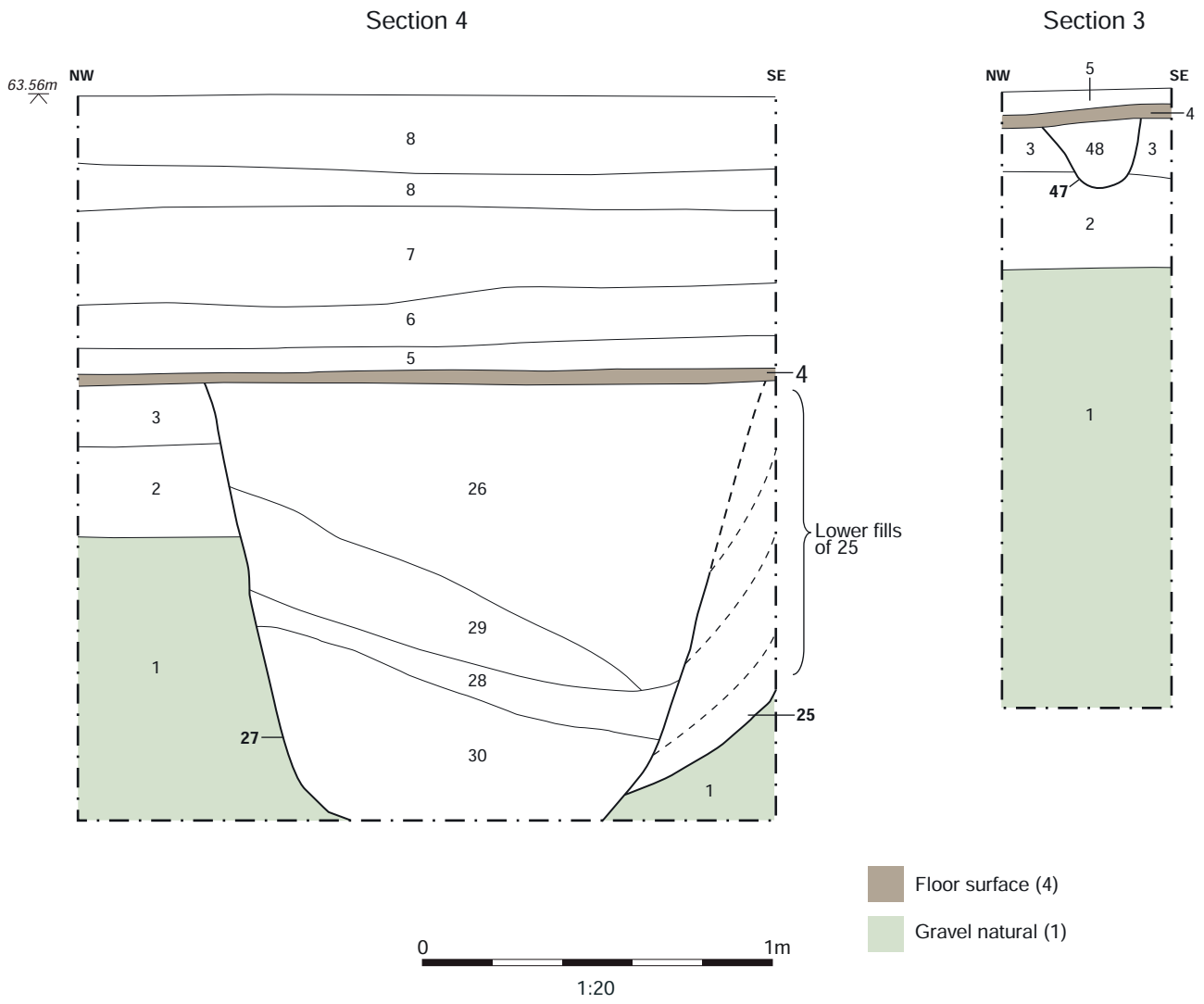


Figure 9: Sections 3 & 4.

Section 5

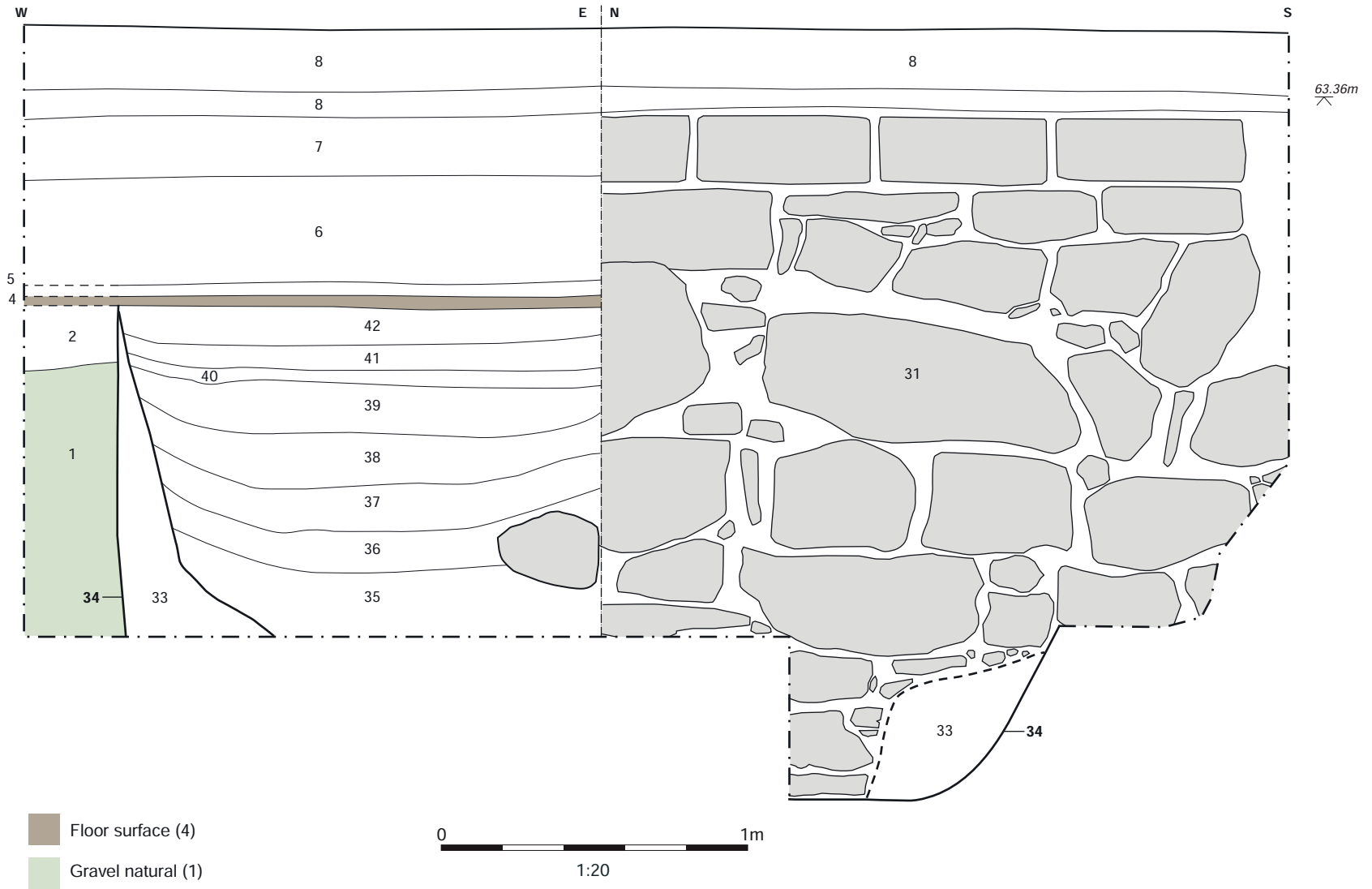


Figure 10: section 5.

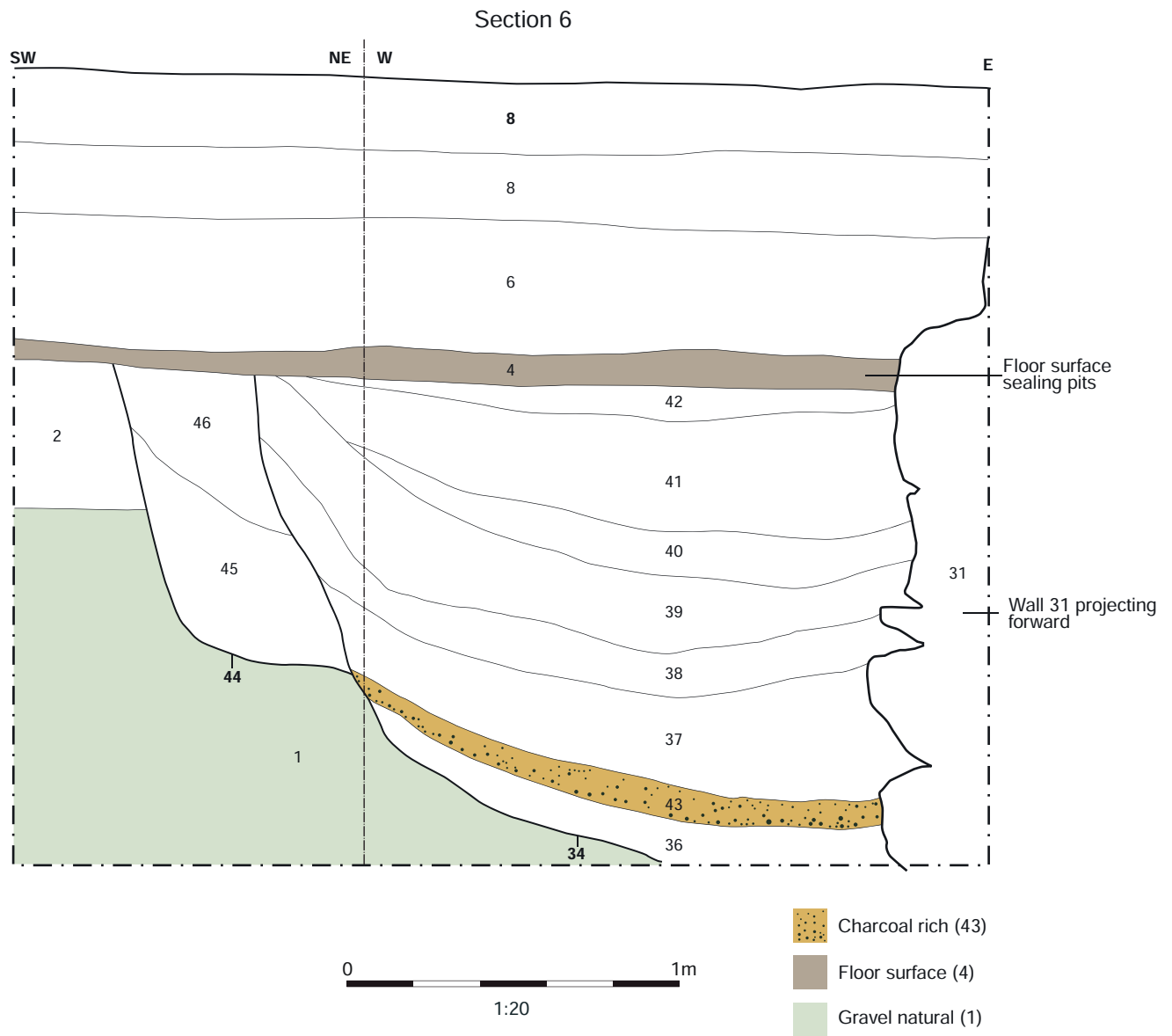


Figure 11: Section 6.



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