

A Medieval Moat at Crows Parlour, Fowlmere Cambridgeshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



April 2015

**Client: Robert & Annette Mill and
English Heritage**

OA East Report No: 1759

OASIS No: TL 4250 4563

NGR: oxfordar3-206604

A Medieval Moat at Crows Parlour, Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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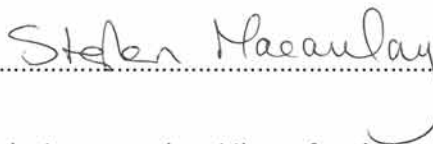
Report Date: April 2015

Report Number: 1759
Site Name: Crows Parlour, Fowlmere
HER Event No: CHER 4395
Date of Works: March 2015
Client Name: Robert & Annette Mill and English Heritage
Grid Ref: TL 4250 4563
Site Code: FOWCRP 15
Finance Code: FOWCRP 15
Receiving Body: CCC Stores

Accession No:

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Date: 27/3/15

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Summary

During March 2015, Oxford Archaeology East carried out an archaeological watching brief at Crows Parlour, Chapel Lane, Fowlmere (TL 4250 4563). The monitoring was carried out during removal of modern debris from a medieval moat (Scheduled Monument 1014211) as a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent related to the reconstruction of the moat. Modern infill was present along the western, northern and southern arms of the moat. No medieval deposits associated with the scheduled monument were disturbed during these works.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Crows Parlour is located on the southern edge of the historic village of Fowlmere (TL 4250 4563; Fig. 1). The monitoring was undertaken during works associated with the partial reconstruction of the moat which involved the removal of modern rubble that had been tipped into the moat in the early 1990s. Crows Parlour is a Scheduled Monument (No.1014211) and consequently English Heritage required that mitigation works, in the form of archaeological monitoring, be undertaken during all groundworks to remove the rubble. This was a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) under the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act.

1.1.2 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 a bedrock of Zag chalk formation, with no overlying substrate recorded (British Geological Survey 1995).

1.2.2 The area comprises grassland to the north of the moat, with the moated enclosure itself partially wooded. It is relatively flat at 25m OD and is located on the eastern side of the river Shep, located on the eastern side of the site.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The following archaeological and historical background is based on that within the Design Brief (Poppy 2015).

1.3.2 The moated island is roughly square in plan, the western and southern sides measuring approximately 34m, some 4m less than the length of the opposing sides. The surrounding ditch varies between 6m in width to the north and west and 4m in width to the south and east. The eastern arm of the moat, together with the adjoining halves of the northern and southern arms, descend to a depth of between 1m and 1.5m, and still retain water seasonally. The remaining sections of the moat have largely become infilled over recent years, yet they survive as buried features. The positions of these buried sections are indicated by the upper edge of the inner scarps, and the dimensions have been recorded by earlier surveys.

1.3.3 A narrow outflow channel, also largely infilled but visible as a slight depression, extends northwards for approximately 5m from the north-eastern corner of the moat. This feature would originally have joined with the former course of a brook situated on the eastern side of the monument, which has been replaced by a field boundary ditch. The water supply is thought to have been provided by two narrow channels which connected the southern corners of the moat with a leat which crossed the fields further to the south.

1.3.4 The location of a bridge, which would have provided access to the island across the northern arm of the moat, is indicated by a slight narrowing of the ditch some 10m from the north-western angle. Material quarried during the construction of the moat was used to create a raised area around the perimeter of the island on all but the northern side. This is particularly noticeable along the eastern edge which retains a raised platform, 0.5m in height and 5m in width, considered to mark the foundations of a former building. The western and southern arms of the moat are also flanked by an external

bank, which measures approximately 3m in width and between 0.3m and 0.75m in height.

- 1.3.5 The moated site is depicted as an old enclosure on a tithe map dated 1847 (not illustrated), at which time it contained pasture and was surrounded by water on all but the southern side. The site is apparently unexcavated, although the northern and western arms of the moat were partially re-cut prior to 1903.
- 1.3.6 The moated site is one of two known moated sites in Fowlmere, with the Round Moat located 150m to the north-west, thought to be possibly Anglo-Saxon in origin. Crows Parlour is part of a more common pattern of moated sites constructed in the medieval period, created between the 12th to 14th centuries as indicators of the owners wealth and status.
- 1.3.7 Fowlmere is recorded as *Fuelmere* in Domesday, meaning 'wild birds mere'.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Robert and Annette Mill, and English Heritage who commissioned and funded the archaeological work.
- 1.4.2 In addition to the author, the fieldwork was carried out by Kat Nicholls and John Diffey, while survey was undertaken by Robin Webb. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay. The brief for archaeological works was written by Sarah Poppy of English Heritage, who visited the site and monitored the archaeological works.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methodology

- 2.1.1 The investigation consisted of the monitoring of a tracked mechanical excavator during the removal of modern infill from sections within the moat ditch and ensuring that deeper medieval deposits were left undisturbed.
- 2.1.2 Along the western side of the moat the agreed methodology was that trenches would be placed at regular points across the monument in order to establish the width and depth of the original moat. This in turn informed and ensured that the machine-excavation of the reconstructed moat between the trenches could be undertaken with a level of certainty that no archaeological deposits would be disturbed.
- 2.1.3 The site survey was carried out using a Leica GS08 GPS fitted with Smartnet live correctional data feed.
- 2.1.4 Site conditions were good, with dry and sunny weather experienced on all visits.

3 RESULTS

3.1.1 The results of the monitoring are presented below by site visit/area of watching brief, supported by plans and profiles (Figs 1-3) in addition to selected photographs (Plates 1- 5). No artefacts were recovered.

3.2 Northern Arm (Site visit 02/03/15 – 04/03/15) Figs 2-3; Plate 1

3.2.1 During this visit the removal of modern deposits within the northern arm of the moat was monitored. The resulting profile of the reconstructed moat was 8.2m wide and 1.1m deep (see Fig. 3 for section profile). No deposits associated with the scheduled monument were disturbed during these works.

3.3 Southern Arm (Site visit 09/03/15 and 12/03/15) Figs 2-3; Plates 2-3

3.3.1 Modern infill (4) consisting of dark greyish brown topsoil, brick and concrete rubble was removed along the southern arm of the moat. No deposits associated with the original scheduled monument were exposed during these works. The profile along this arm measured 7.55m wide (see Fig. 3 for section profile). The outer edge of the reconstructed moat was narrower than the original moat at this point to allow sufficient space between the moat and the modern fenced boundaries for access to the external part of the site.

3.3.2 The rubble from the southern arm element of the south-eastern corner of the moat was excavated by mini-digger. Observations recorded that no archaeological deposits were exposed at this point, largely due to the presence of modern boundaries extending within the monument.

3.4 Western Arm (Site visit 10/03/15) Figs 2-3; Plates 4-5

3.4.1 Four trenches were placed at a distance of c.5m apart (see Fig. 2). The northern three trenches (1-3) each exposed the remnant topsoil (3) on the western side of the moat, while the southern trench (Trench 4; not illustrated), positioned across the south-west corner, did not expose any archaeological deposits. At this point the reconstructed moat had to be narrowed due the presence of modern boundary fences.

3.4.2 The deposits that were removed on this arm consisted of a mixture of dark greyish brown clayey silt with brick and mortar rubble (4). No finds other than 20th century objects were observed.

3.4.3 In Trench 1 the original moat cut measured 12.5m wide and was exposed at a depth of 0.7m (see Fig. 3 for section profile). From the slope of the remnant topsoil (mid greyish brown silty clay (3) it is suggested that this is where the moat starts to turn towards the east.

3.4.4 Trench 2 lay 5m to the south along its western side (see Fig. 3 for profile). The trench exposed the remnant topsoil (3) at a depth of 0.64m. At this point the moat measured 12.6m wide.

3.4.5 Within Trench 3 the remnant topsoil (3) was exposed at a depth of 0.65m. The moat measured 9.15m wide at this location (see Fig. 3 for section profile).

3.5 Internal Mound (Site visit 17/03/15) Fig. 2

3.5.1 A sub-circular pit (1) was excavated in the western part of the internal mound/island. The pit measured 3.5m by 2m and 0.4m deep. The fill (2) contained concrete and 20th century rubbish. No soil from the scheduled monument was removed and the pit was subsequently filled in with topsoil.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Reconstructed moat

- 4.1.1 The archaeological monitoring has formed part of an agreed programme of works to undertake a (partial) reconstruction of the moat by removing rubbish dumped in the ditch during the 20th century. Along the northern and eastern side of the moat the reconstruction is accurate to the original form. Subsequent boundary changes, however, have meant that the south-west corner now lies outside the plot, which has meant that the reconstructed moat is narrower at this point than the outline of the moat shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1903 (Fig. 4).
- 4.1.2 No medieval moat deposits were removed during the ditch reconstruction, with modern infill and former topsoil deposits only being encountered. The internal (upper) profile of the original moat was exposed in some parts, while the profile of the outer edge was exposed in three small areas (totalling c. 3msq) that were subsequently backfilled.
- 4.1.3 As not all the modern infill was completely removed, this should provide a barrier to prevent erosion of the scheduled monument and thus enhance the visual appreciation of this ancient moat.
- 4.1.4 The intention to seed the moat with grass will also help to protect the scheduled monument by creating a stronger ground coverage, as bare soil results in earthwork erosion. Trees located on the slopes of the moat ditch will, however, continue to be an erosion threat (uprooting) to the monument and any dead, dying or tree likely to topple should be removed.

APPENDIX A. CONTEXT INVENTORY

Ctxt	Cut	Feature Type	Date/Function	Width	Depth	Artefacts (not retained)
1	-	Pit	Rubbish pit	1.5	0.3	Concrete, brick, plastic
2	1	Pit	Rubble fill of pit	1.5	0.3	-
3	-	Layer	Remnant topsoil from monument	-	-	-
4	-	Layer	Modern infill of moat	7.5	0.6	Concrete, brick, plastic

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Macaulay, S. 2015 Specification for Archaeological Evaluation. Oxford Arch. East Tender Ref No 16899 (unpublished) Tender Ref. No. 16899 (unpublished)
- Poppy, S 2015 Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording. English Heritage (unpublished)

Cartographic Sources

British Geological Survey, 1995 Sheet 190, England and Wales 1:50,000

Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 25 inch Map. Cambridgeshire. Sheet LIV.2 1903

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-206604		
Project Name	The medieval Moat at Crows Parlour, Fowlmere		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	02-03-2015	Finish	15-03-2015
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Unknown

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	FOWCRP15	Planning App. No.	
HER No.		Related HER/OASIS No.	

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

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
moat	Medieval 1066 to 1540		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	South Cambridgeshire	Crows Parlour Chapel Lane Fowlmere
Parish	fowlmere	
HER	Cambridgeshire	
Study Area		National Grid Reference <input type="text" value="tl 4250 4563"/>

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	sarah poppy (CCC, English heritage)
Project Design Originator	Stephen Macaulay (OA East)
Project Manager	Stephen Macaulay (OA East)
Supervisor	helen Stocks-Morgan (OA East)

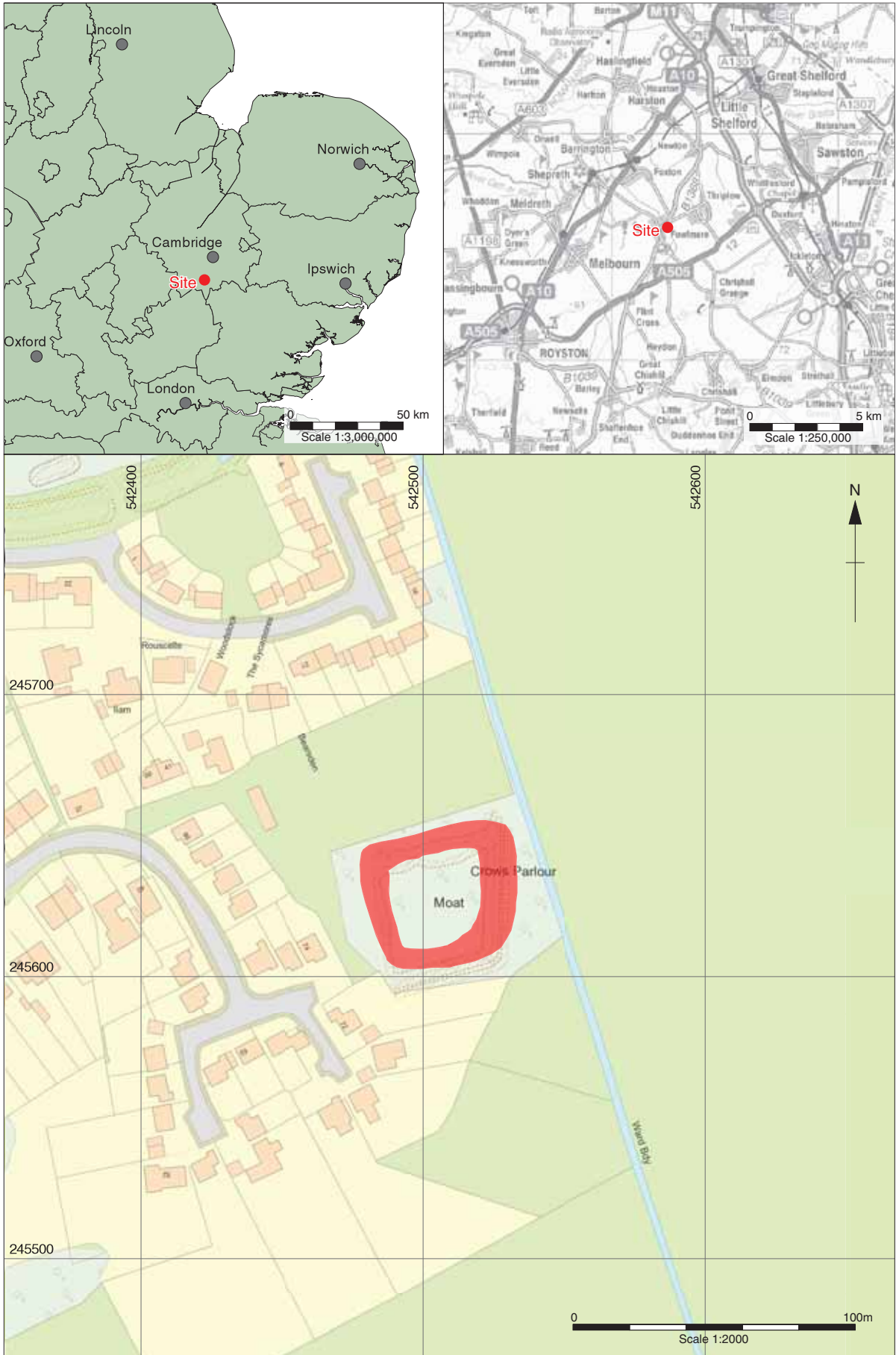
Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
county stores	OA East	county stores
FOWCRP15	FOWCRP15	FOWCRP15

Archive Contents/Media

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Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input 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"/>
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Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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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 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
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<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey



Ordnance Survey. © Crown copyright 2015. All rights reserved. Licence number 0100031673.

Figure 1: Site location map

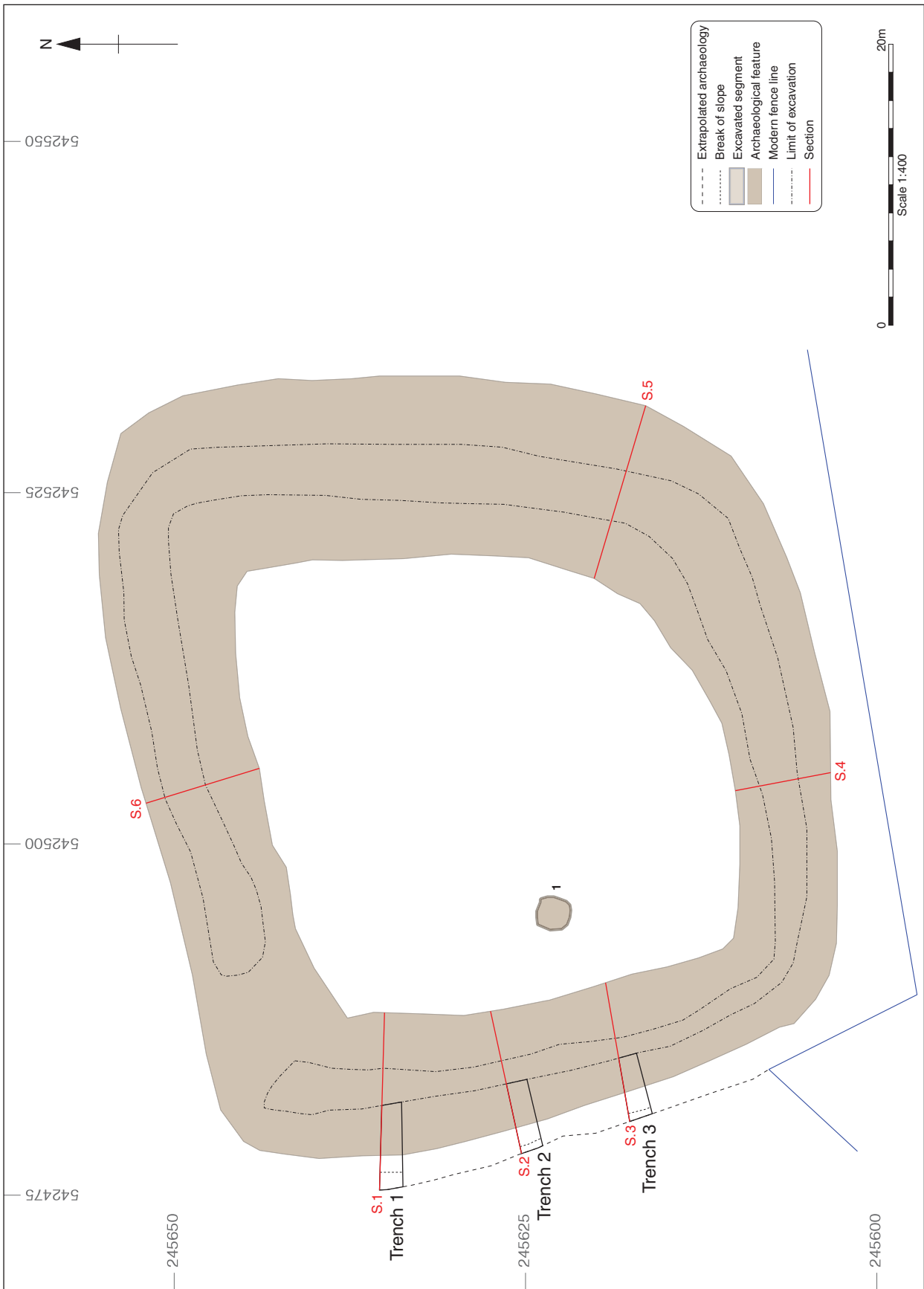


Figure 2: Plan of reconstructed moat and archaeological trenches

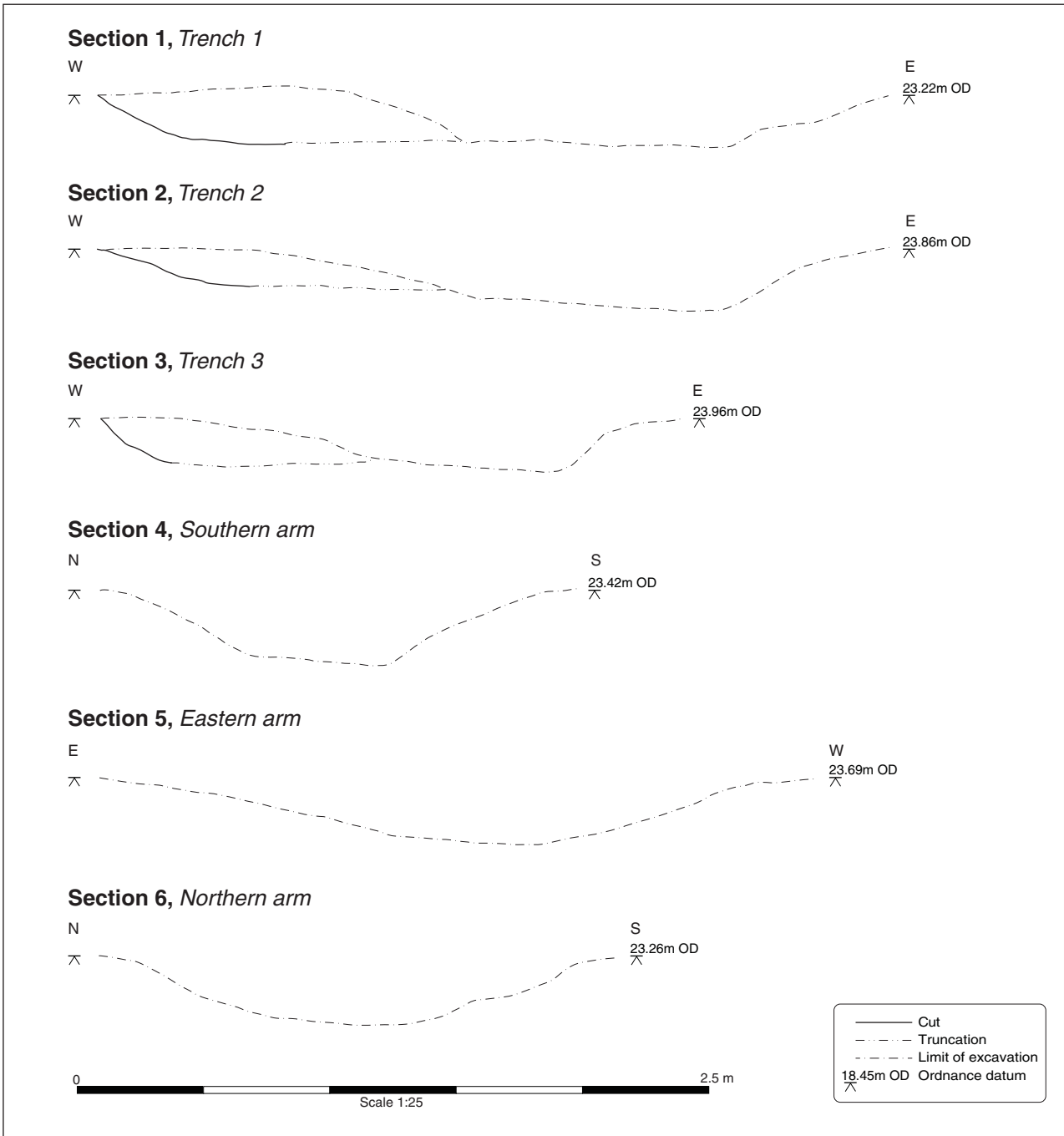


Figure 3: Selected sections



Figure 4: Plan of reconstructed moat overlain on 1903 OS map (Scale 1:1000)



Plate 1: Northern arm after works, viewed from east



Plate 2: Southern arm after works, viewed from west



Plate 3: South-eastern corner after works, viewed from south-west



Plate 4: Western arm before works, viewed from west



Plate 5: Western arm after works, viewed from south



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