

Cornbury Park Near Charlbury Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

14th November 2002

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Cornbury Park, near Charlbury, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Cover Plate: View of the Pavilion from the south.

SUMMARY

In September and October 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Cornbury Estate Park, near Charlbury, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 3509 1816). The work was commissioned by Cornbury Park Estate in advance of construction of a new swimming pool. The watching brief revealed that prior to the construction of a sunken garden in the 19th century, the site was part of the driveway leading up to the front of the Cornbury Park House.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In September and October 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Cornbury Park, near Charlbury, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Cornbury Park Estate in respect of a planning application for new swimming pool and ground works in the garden (Planning Application No. W2000/0091, 0092)

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Hugh Coddington the Deputy County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council.

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2002).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on fine loam soils over Limestone/Tayton stone at 123 m above OD. The site is situated adjacent to Cornbury House, Cornbury Park, which lies southwest of the town of Charlbury.

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, 2002) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 Cornbury House is a Grade I Listed building of late 16th century date and enlarged in 1632-3 by Nicholas Stone for Henry Danvers, the Earl of Derby. In 1337 it is referenced as a hunting lodge in the Royal Forest of Wychwood, "built of stone and timber" (Pevsner and Sherwood, 1974, 553-5). The building seems to have been demolished when the present structure was built.

1.3.3 The stables were built in 1663 and a chapel added in 1677. A wall creating an entrance court was added in 1689 (*ibid.*)

1.3.4 The site of the new swimming pool is situated on the site of a 19th century sunken garden. This was situated to the north of the east facade of the house and was surrounded by a Ha Ha wall with an ornate pavilion at the north end. The garden was decorated with a number of garden stone ornaments.

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 First a trench was excavated around the south end of the proposed swimming pool to re-route a water pipe around the house. Then the area of the swimming pool was excavated with a 360⁰ machine (Fig. 2). The area was piled and then the concrete was poured. The drive in front of the east front of the house was graded for new drive.
- 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. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Swimming Pool and Pipe Trench

- 3.1.1 The excavations for the swimming pool showed that the natural (7) was sealed below a 1 m thick layer (6) a series of thin dumps of silty clay loam over compacted layers of crushed stone and gravel. This was the remains of an earlier driveway to the house. Overlying this was a 0.7 m thick layer of yellowish brown silty clay (2) with lenses of limestone fragments and gravel. This was material used to build up the ground for the sunken garden. Cut into this was a large circular feature (3) with near vertical sides rounding to a flat base. It measured 2 m in diameter and 1.5 m in depth and contained a limestone soakaway (4) constructed in rough drystone courses on a compact rubble base. This had slowly silted up with dark greyish brown silty clay (5) (Fig. 3).
- 3.1.2 Two other features were observed, comprising a 20th century brick drain (8) and a 1.2 x 1.2 x 1m plinth of concrete and brick rubble (9) for a garden ornament (Figs 2). These were all sealed under a 0.4 m thick layer of dark brown silty clay loam topsoil (1).

New driveway

- 3.1.3 Where the area for a new driveway was stripped by the machine a 0.2-4 m thick layer of topsoil (1) overlying the combrash natural (7) was identified (not illustrated).

Ha Ha Wall repair

3.1.4 The Yew tree next to the Ha Ha wall was removed because of the root damage to the base of the wall. This revealed a 1.5 m wide wall constructed of rough limestone blocks bonded with a lime mortar and rubble core. This formed the solid base for the present tall west garden wall (Fig. 2).

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The results from the watching brief showed that prior to the construction of the 19th century sunken garden, the driveway ran up to the front of the house. In the 19th century stone retaining walls boxed in the area and the interior was filled with rubble and landscaped including foundations for garden monuments and accesses for services.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.4 m			Topsoil	None
2	Layer				Garden make up	None
3	Cut	1.5 m	2 m	2 m	Cut for soakaway	
4	Structure	1.5 m	1.6 m		Stone soakaway	
5	Fill				Fill of soakaway	None
6	Layer				Old driveway	None
7	Natural					
8	Structure	1.4 m	0.5 m	0.5 m	Brick Drain	None
9	Structure	1 m	1.2 m	1.2 m	Plinth for garden ornament	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 1992 Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

OA 2002 *Land Adjacent to Cornbury Park Estate, near Charlbury, Oxfordshire* Written Scheme of Investigation

Geotechnical Engineering Ltd 2002 report of *Ground Investigation at Cornbury House, Charlbury, Oxfordshire*

Pevsner, N and Sherwood L. 1974 *Buildings of England, Oxfordshire*. Penguin.

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Cornbury Park, near Charlbury, Oxfordshire

Site code: CHCOPA 02

Grid reference: NGR SP 3500 1816

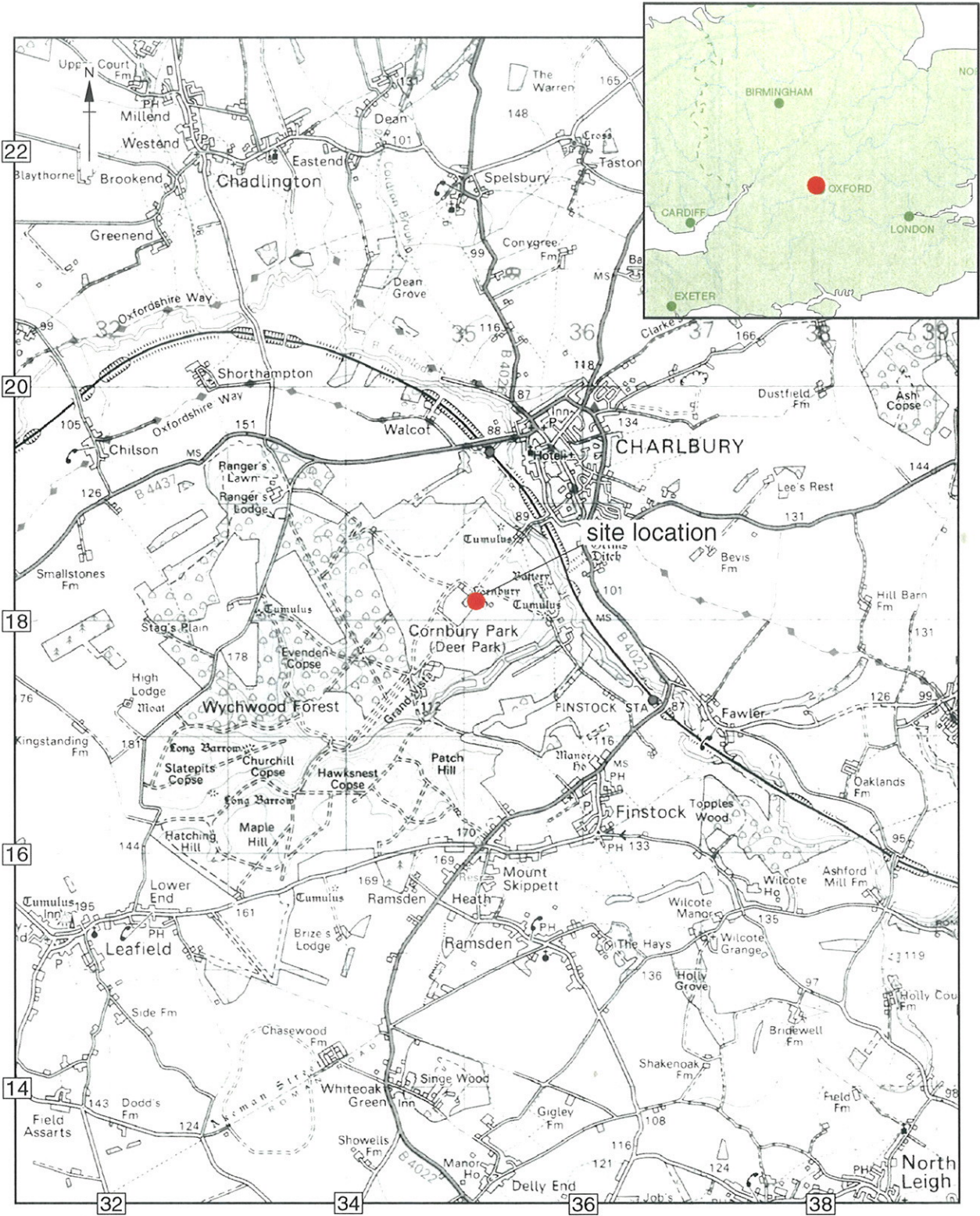
Type of watching brief: Ground works for new swimming pool.

Date and duration of project: Five site visits from the 2/9/2002 to 14/10/2002.

Area of site: 22 m x 52 m

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed that prior to the 19th century sunken garden the area was part of the driveway up to the front of the house.

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: 2002.179



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

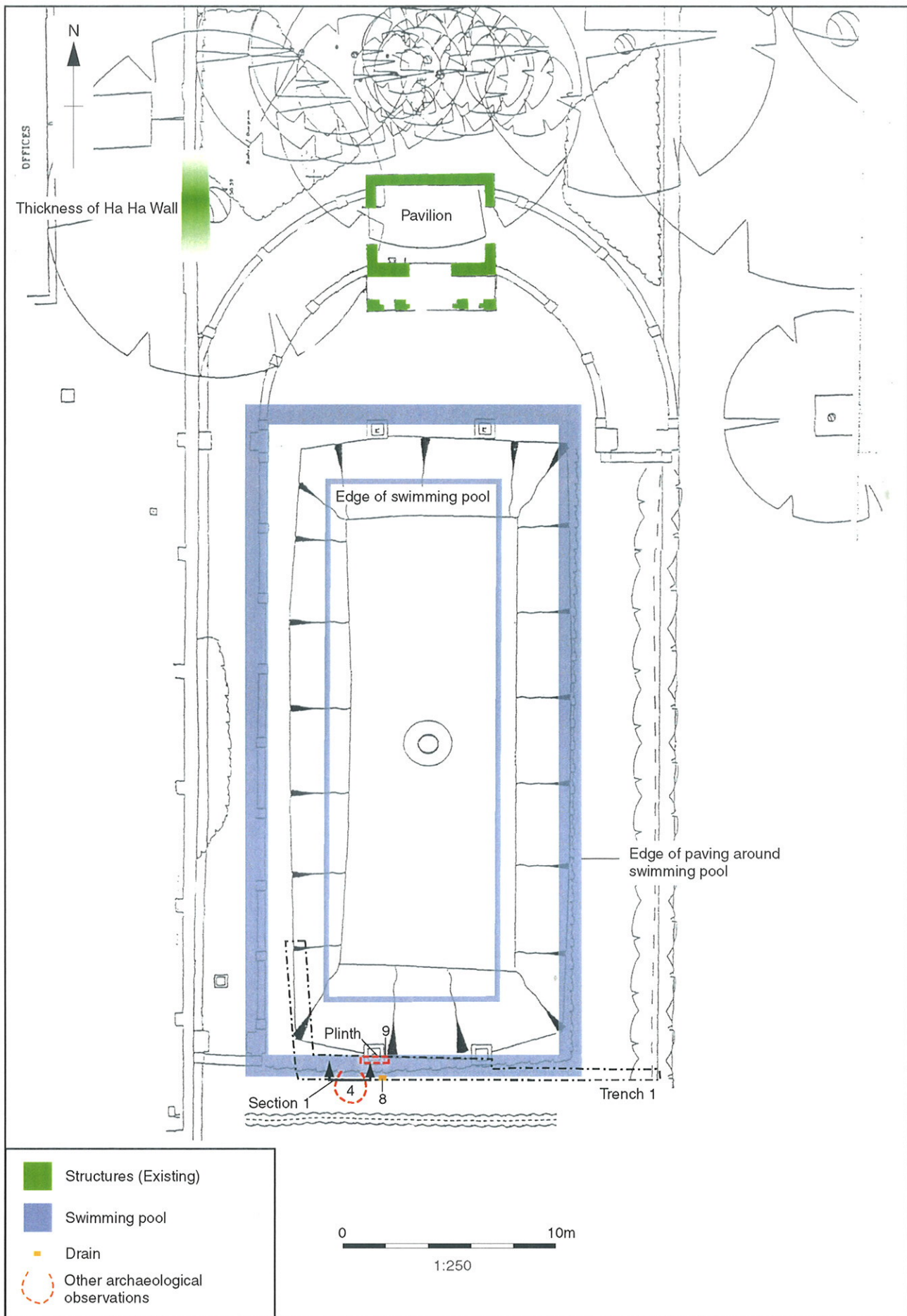


Figure 2: Site Plan

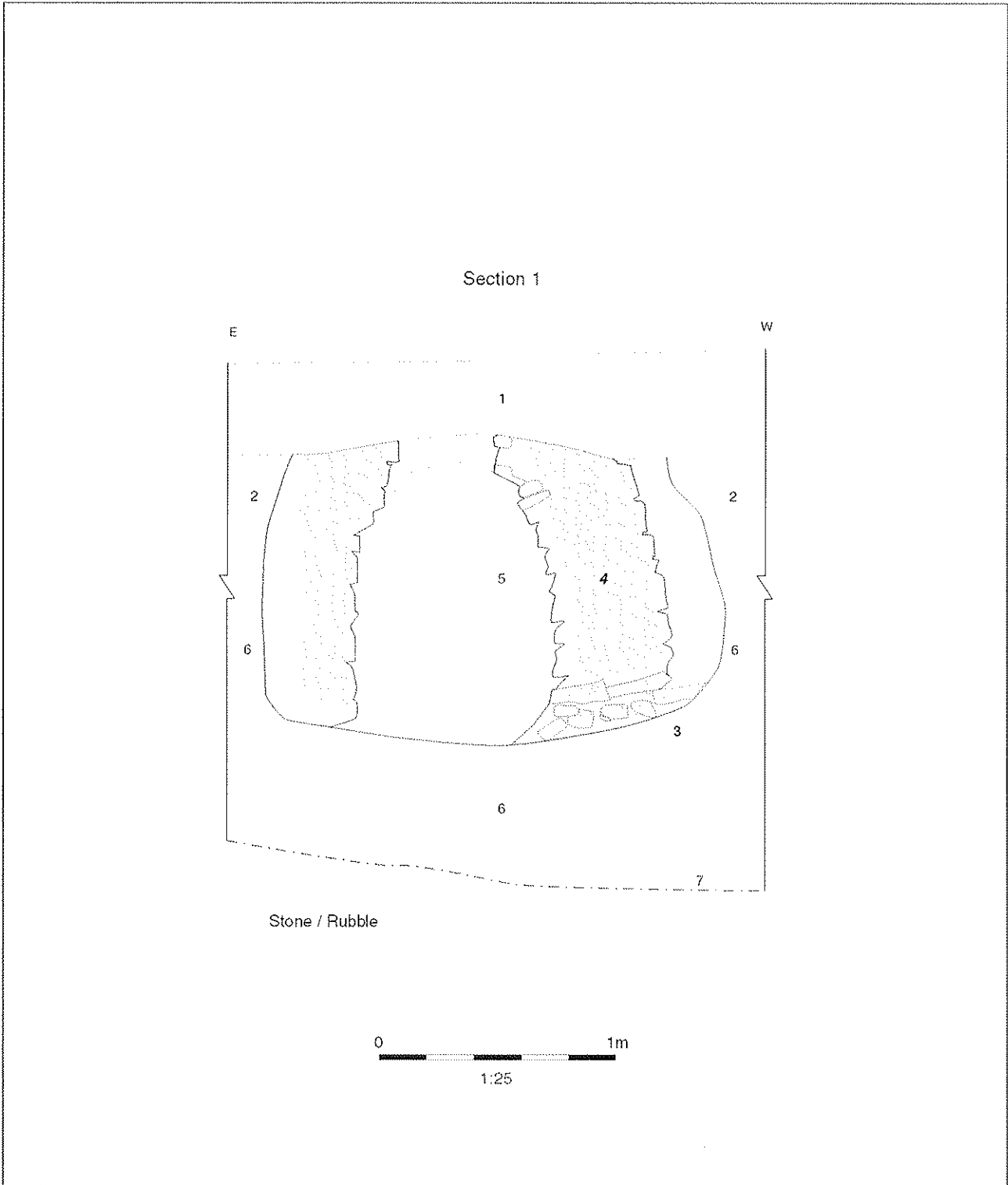


Figure 3: Section 1



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