

Lower Leas Coastal Park Folkstone Kent



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Prepared by: Mike Sims
Position: SWD Project Supervisor
Date: 10th February 2006

Checked by: Dan Dodds
Position: Head of Small Works
Date: 17th February 2006

Approved by: Nick Shepherd
Position: Head of Fieldwork
Date: 20th February 2006

Signed. 

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Oxford Archaeology

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Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

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Lower Leas Coastal Park, Folkestone, Kent

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Front Cover Leas Cliff Hall from the south

SUMMARY

Between May and June 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Lower Leas Coastal Park, Folkestone, Kent (centred at NGR: TR 2250 3555). The work was commissioned by Shepway District Council in advance of restoration, conservation, general refurbishment and enhancing work. The watching brief revealed evidence for an earlier pathway as well as an earlier flower garden, both probably dating to the Victorian origins of the park. No other significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between May and June 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Lower Leas Coastal Park, comprising Leas Cliff Park and its environs (centred at NGR: TR 2250 3555). The work was commissioned by Shepway District Council in respect of a proposal to undertake restoration, conservation, general refurbishment and enhancing work at the site.
- 1.1.2 Due to the potential of the works to disturb archaeological remains associated with the former Victorian park, the Heritage Conservation Group of Kent County Council (HCGKCC) recommended that a watching brief be maintained during intrusive groundworks. A specification was produced setting out the requirements of the watching brief (HCGKCC 2004).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet these requirements (OA 2005).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the southern edge of Folkestone (Fig. 1) and consists of a seafront cliff overlooking the English Channel, bounded by Lower Sandgate Road to the south and West Cliff to the north. The site lies approximately between 9 m and 46 m above OD. The underlying geology is Lower Green Sandstone of the Folkestone beds (Institute of British Geological Sciences ed. 1979, Sheet 305).

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 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The archaeological potential of the site is based on the proximity of archaeological remains presently recorded in the SMR.
- 1.3.3 The site lies in an area of archaeological potential associated with the Victorian park of Leas Cliff Park.

- 1.3.4 The early OS maps indicate post-medieval landscape leisure features within the West Cliff including laid out paths, the Leas Cliff Lift, Victoria Pier and associated landscaping.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To record the extent, date, character, quality, significance and state of preservation of the archaeological remains within the areas of the site affected by the proposed works. In particular, to preserve by record structures, features and deposits associated with the former Victorian park.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The site was monitored as a series of site visits during works likely to disturb or destroy deposits with archaeological potential. These works included top and subsoil stripping, excavation of path and roadways, excavation of foundation trenches and the excavation of service trenches.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the location of any excavations was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The work observed was broadly divided into 4 different categories:
- Stripping of top and sub soil and stripping out of an existing pathway.
 - Excavation of a foundation trench for a retaining wall at the base of the cliff.
 - Excavation of a new pathway down to the seafront, including a retaining wall and a soakaway pit.
 - Excavation of service trenches for new lighting and CCTV standards.
- 3.1.2 Each category of work will be described separately followed by an overall discussion and conclusion.

Stripping of soil and existing pathway

- 3.1.3 This work included the stripping of a bank of accumulated soils that abutted the northern edge of Lower Sandgate Road within the eastern extent of the site, and the stripping out, widening and deepening of an existing pathway at the western extent of the site.

- 3.1.4 The stripping of the bank of soil that had accumulated along the northern edge of the road was done both in order to provide a level surface for the excavation of the foundation trench for the retaining wall, and to facilitate the landscaping of the area.
- 3.1.5 The depth of removed material varied between 0.4 m up to 1.0 m in depth. The base of the excavation came down onto the top of a layer of friable very dark grey-brown silty loam (10), the original ground surface (Figs. 3 and 4, Sections 6 and 7). Overlying this was a layer of grey-brown silty loam (9), between 0.2 m and 0.9 m in depth. This layer contained many lenses of green sand and fragments of sandstone and probably represents an accumulation of colluvium or hillwash from the cliff face to the north. This was overlaid by a layer of dark olive-grey sandy loam (1) measuring 0.15 m to 0.2 m in depth, the present day topsoil and turf.
- 3.1.6 The stripping out of an existing path within the western extent of the site necessitated the removal of an existing tarmac path and the lowering and widening of the route in order to provide sufficient depth for the construction of a new pathway.
- 3.1.7 These works comprised approximately a 95 m length of 3 m wide excavation to an average depth of 0.55 m (Fig. 4, Sections 10 and 11).
- 3.1.8 The base of the excavations cut 0.1 m deep into the surface of a layer of pale brown silty sand (16), which was exposed throughout the length of the work and probably represented a buried soil horizon (Fig. 4, Section 10). Towards the western end of the excavation (Fig. 4, Section 11) the edge of a semi-circular cut (18) was seen to run in from the southern edge (visible in plan only). On exploration this was seen to have a steeply sloping edge and was filled by a light brown sandy silt (17) which could be seen to be in excess of 0.15 m deep. Its shape and the composition of the fill suggests it may have been the edge of a circular flower bed, probably predating the removed path. This feature, and layer (16) were sealed below a layer of dark brown sandy silt (15), measuring between 0.2 m and 0.4 m in depth. This layer contained many subangular sandstone fragments and may represent a landscaping layer or possibly a layer of colluvium. This layer was overlaid by a layer of light brown silty sand (14) of up to 0.18 m in depth. This may represent a layer of made ground, or possibly an earlier pathway. Overlying this was a layer of dark brown sandy loam (13) between 0.15 and 0.25 m in depth, a modern landscaping layer, the present day topsoil and turf.

Excavation of foundation trench

- 3.1.9 These works comprised the excavation of a 120 m length of 0.6 m wide trenching to a depth of between 0.7 m and 1.3 m depending on the topology, but maintaining a level base (Figs. 3 and 4, Sections 6 and 7).
- 3.1.10 Within the deepest part of the excavation the natural green sandstone (20) was encountered at a depth of approximately 1.1 m below the current ground level (Fig. 4, Section 7). This was overlaid by a 0.9 m deep layer of green sand (4), probably the result of the decomposition and weathering of the solid sandstone. This was sealed

by a 0.2 m thick layer of dark olive grey sandy silt (11). This is probably a buried soil horizon, possibly the original topsoil layer.

- 3.1.11 Overlying this was a layer of dark grey-brown silty loam (10) between 0.25 m and 0.4 m in depth, a later landscaping deposit (it was at this layer that the top and subsoil stripping stopped).

Excavation of a new pathway down to the seafront

- 3.1.12 These works included the excavation of a 5 m wide stepped cutting from Lower Sandgate Road down to Marine Walk. The depth of excavation varied from 0.4 m at the higher, northern end, rising to 3.7 m as it cut through the sea defences (Fig. 4, Section 8).
- 3.1.13 The northern end of the excavation cut approximately 2.7 m deep into the top of a layer of disturbed green sandstone blocks within a matrix of green sand (19). This probably represents a layer of weathered and decomposed sandstone, possibly the original base of the cliff before erosion and weathering occurred. At the southern end of the excavation this was overlaid by a layer of dark orange-brown silty sand (12) in excess of 3.5 m in depth. This deposit probably represents a large deposit of colluvium that had accumulated at the base of the cliff, which was later landscaped during the Victorian period. This was sealed by a 0.3 m thick layer of dark grey-brown silty loam (10), a modern layer of topsoil and turf.
- 3.1.14 To the west of the new pathway a 10 m long excavation was cut into the bank in order to provide a foundation for a new seawall along the north side of Marine Walk (Fig. 4, Section 9).
- 3.1.15 A layer of the dark orange-brown silty sand (12) was exposed to a depth in excess of 2.4 m within the section and could be seen to be sealed by a 0.15 m thick layer of the modern topsoil and turf (10).
- 3.1.16 To the east of the new pathway a soakaway pit measuring 2 m by 3 m by 1.1 m deep was excavated (Fig. 3, Section 3).
- 3.1.17 A layer of green natural sand was encountered at a depth of 0.08 m below the surface of Marine Walk (4), which could be seen in section to be in excess of 1 m deep. This was sealed by the 0.08 m thick tarmac surface (5), Marine Walk.

Excavation of service trenches

- 3.1.18 A total of 5 excavations were monitored where trenches had been dug in order to intercept existing service runs.
- 3.1.19 A pit measuring approximately 1.4 m square was excavated on the northern edge of Sandgate Lane below Leas Cliff Hall (Fig. 3, Section 1).
- 3.1.20 The natural, a green sand (4), was encountered at a depth of 0.62 m below the road surface. This was overlaid by a 0.2 m thick layer of mixed silts and green sand (3), a

probable layer of colluvium washed down from the cliff face. Overlying this was a 0.15 m thick layer of light yellow-brown sand (2), possibly a layer of made ground, similar to layer (14) noted in sections 10 and 11. This was sealed by a 0.25 m deep layer of dark olive-grey sandy loam (1), a probable colluvium.

- 3.1.21 A trench measuring approximately 3.5 m long by 0.8 m wide was excavated running across Sandgate Road (Fig. 3, Section 2). The natural green sand (4) was again encountered at a depth of 0.5 m below the road surface. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m deep layer of light green coarse sand (8), a layer of weathered sandstone probably colluvial in origin. This was sealed by a 0.12 m thick layer of crushed stone (7), a modern hardcore base for the 0.15 m deep concrete roadway (6). The 0.07 m thick modern tarmac surface (5) had been laid directly on top of the concrete.
- 3.1.22 A 1.7 m long by 1 m wide trench had been excavated into the bank immediately north of Sandgate Road (Fig. 3, Section 4). The natural green sand (4) was encountered at a depth of 0.6 m below the road surface. This was overlaid by a 0.22 m deep layer of mixed silts and sand (3), a probable colluvium. Overlying this was a 0.1 m thick layer of grey-brown sandy silt loam (9), also a layer of colluvium. This was sealed by a 0.4 m deep layer of the dark olive-grey sandy loam (1), also a probable colluvium.
- 3.1.23 Approximately 20 m east of this trench another 1.7 m long by 1 m wide trench had been opened (Fig. 3, Section 5). The natural green sand (4) was encountered approximately 0.15 m below the road surface. This was overlaid by a 0.25 m thick layer of olive-grey sandy silt (11). This layer is a probable layer of colluvium. Sealing this was a 0.3 m thick layer of dark grey-brown silty loam (10), a probable landscaping layer. Overlying this was a 0.2 m thick layer of dark olive-grey sandy loam (1), a probable layer of colluvium.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 The only artefacts encountered were plastic and 19th and 20th century bottle glass from the layer of colluvium (1), suggesting that this was of recent origin, and modern bottle glass recovered from layer (10), a landscaping layer. No finds predating the 19th century were observed. These finds were evaluated on site but were not retained.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No samples suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief showed that thick deposits of colluvium had accumulated at the base of the cliff. Traces of an earlier flower bed and possibly an associated path were observed at the western end of the site, below Leas Cliff Hall, where they had been sealed by a modern landscaping layer. Little evidence of the Victorian origins and

extent of the park were encountered during the watching brief, although this was felt to be due to the impact of the work mostly occurring in areas that had been encroached upon by modern features such as roadways and services rather than an absence of evidence.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.25 m	-	Hillwash/ Colluvium	Plastic, bottle glass	C20th
2	Layer	0.19 m	-	Made ground	-	-
3	Layer	0.2 m	-	Hillwash/ Colluvium	-	-
4	Layer	> 0.6 m	-	Natural green sand	-	-
5	Surface	0.07 m	5.8 m	Modern tarmac road surface	-	C20th
6	Layer	0.15 m	5.8 m	Concrete base for tarmac	-	C20th
7	Layer	0.1 m	5.8 m	Hardcore base for concrete	-	C20th
8	Layer	0.15 m	-	Weathered sandstone	-	-
9	Layer	0.1 m	-	Hillwash/ colluvium	-	-
10	Layer	0.3 m	-	Modern landscaping layer	glass	C20th
11	Layer	0.3 m	-	Buried soil horizon	-	C19th ?
12	Layer	> 3.8 m	-	Hillwash/ colluvium	-	-
13	Layer	0.15 m	-	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th
14	Layer	0.15 m	-	Made ground, possibly an earlier path ?	-	C19th/ C20th
15	Layer	0.4 m	-	Landscaping layer ? Possible colluvium ?	-	-
16	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Buried soil horizon	-	-
17	Fill	> 0.1 m	> 1.8 m	Worked soil	-	C19th ?
18	Feature	> 0.1 m	> 1.8 m	Semi-circular flower bed	-	C19th ?
19	Layer	> 2.7 m	> 5 m	Weathered sandstone	-	-
20	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Natural green sandstone	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

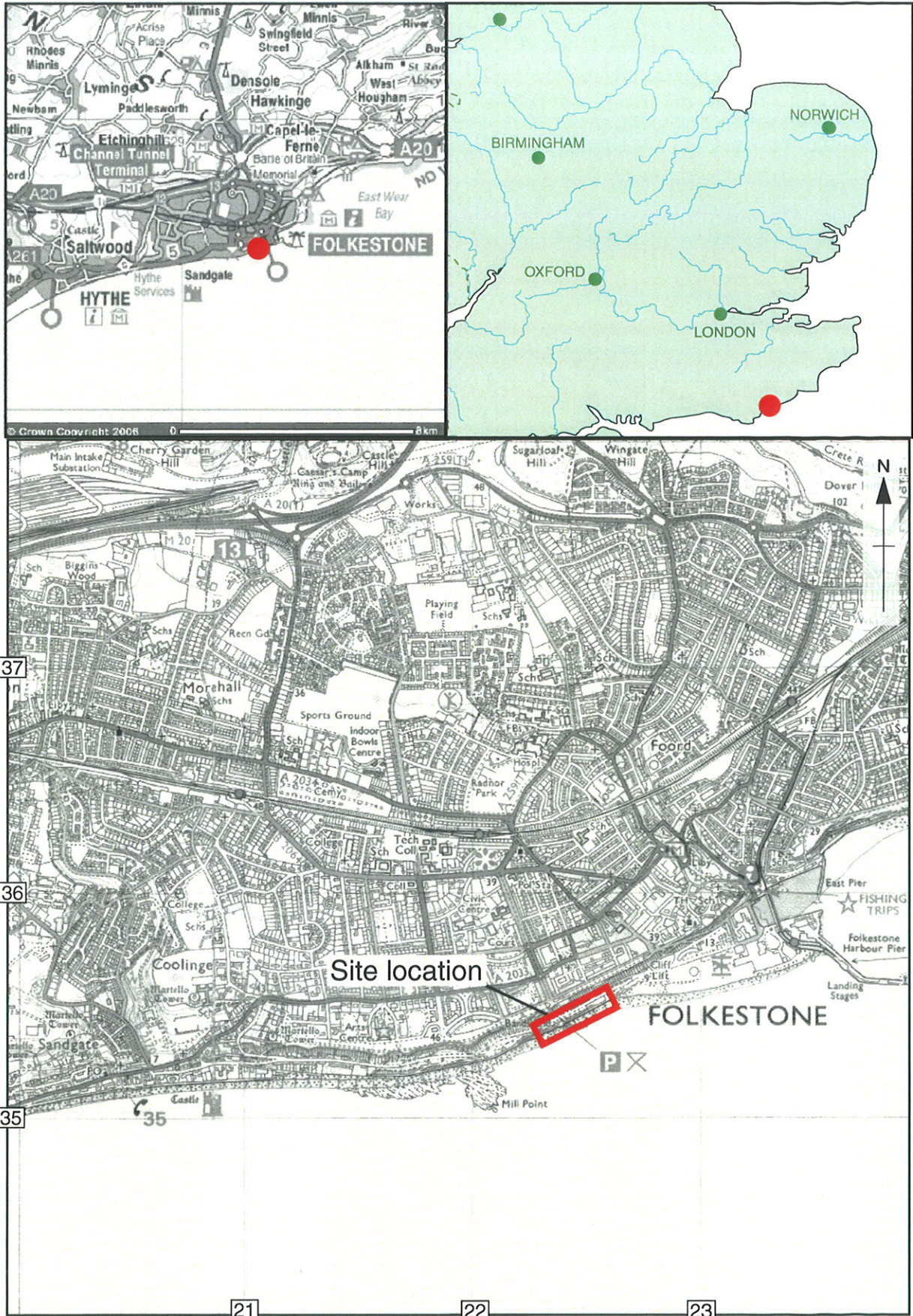
HCGKCC, 2004 *Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief, Leas Cliff Park (East), Folkestone*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2005 *Lower Leas Coastal Park, Folkestone, Kent: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OAU, 1992 *OA Field Manual (ed. D Wilkinson)*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**Site name:** Lower Leas Coastal Park, Folkestone, Kent**Site code:** FOLL 05**Grid reference:** Centred TR 2250 3555**Type of watching brief:** Machine excavation of foundation and service trenches, top and subsoil stripping**Date and duration of project:** May and June 2005, 2 months**Area of site:** 3.5 hectares**Summary of results:** Observation of possible earlier pathway and probable flower bed**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Folkestone Museum in due course.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

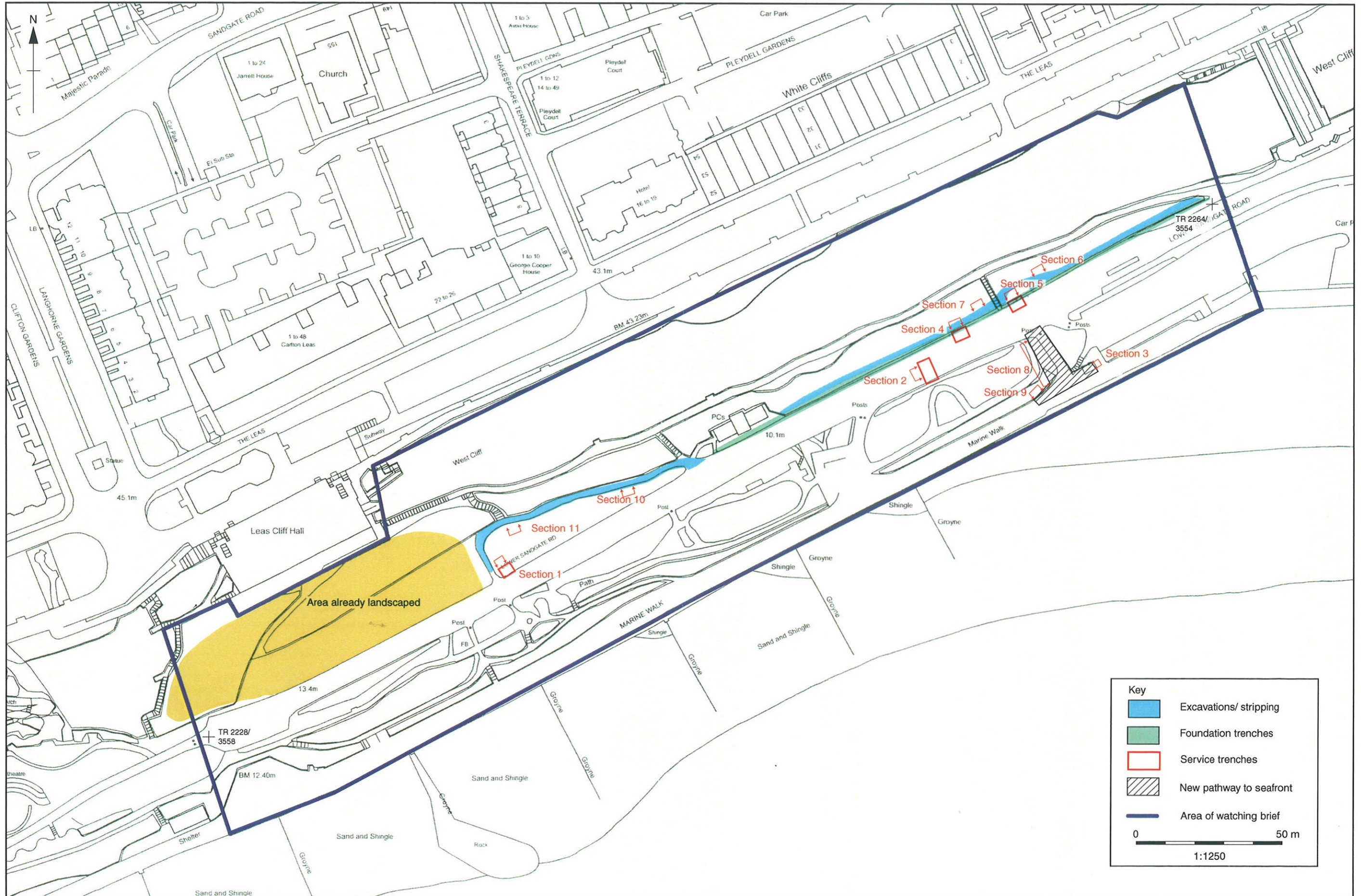


Figure 2: Site plan showing area of watching brief

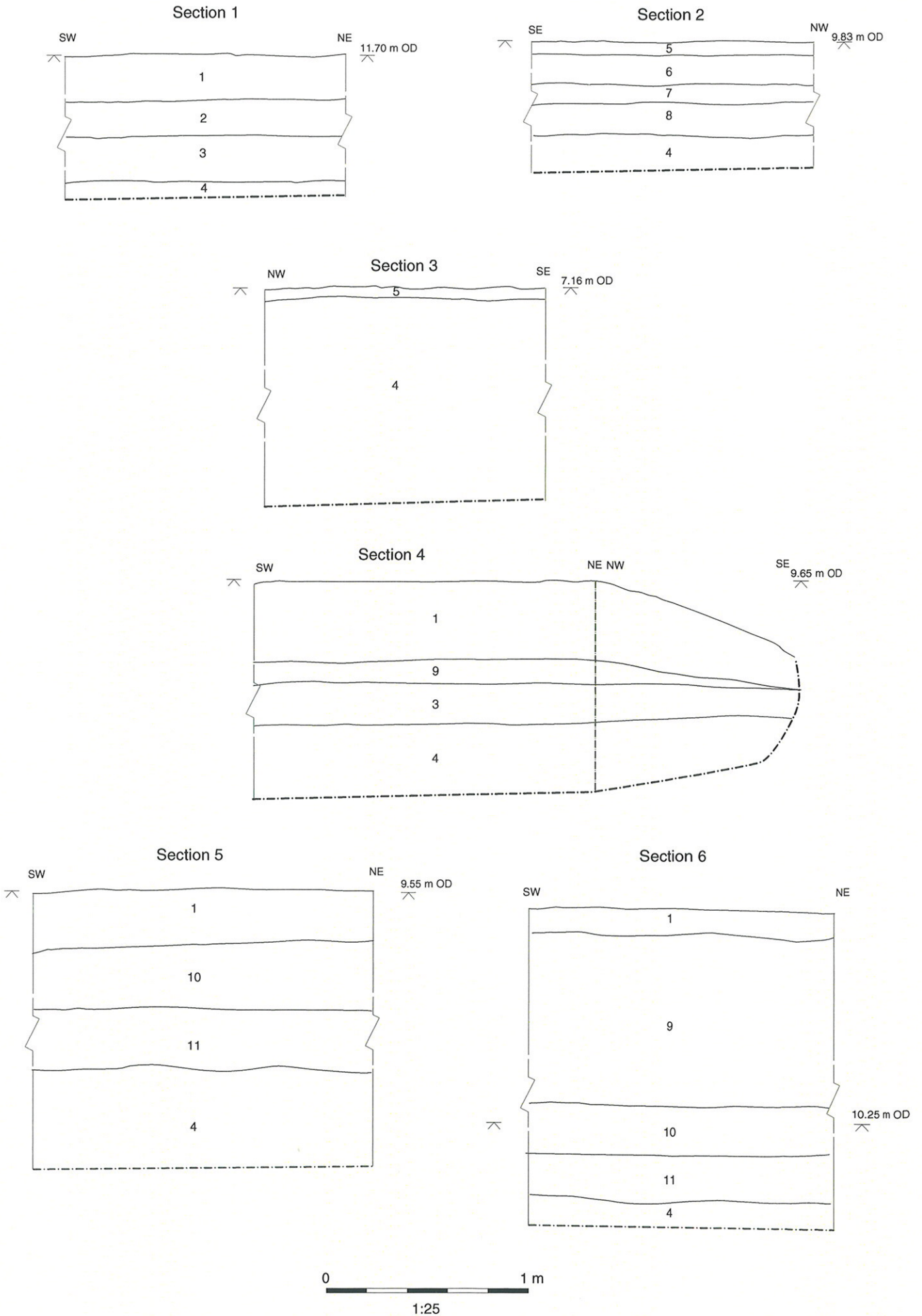


Figure 3: Sections 1- 6

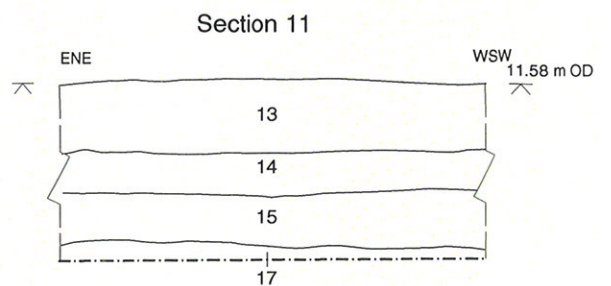
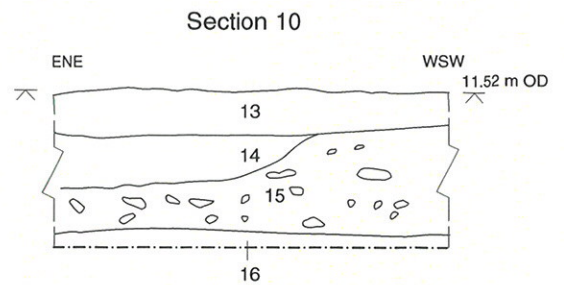
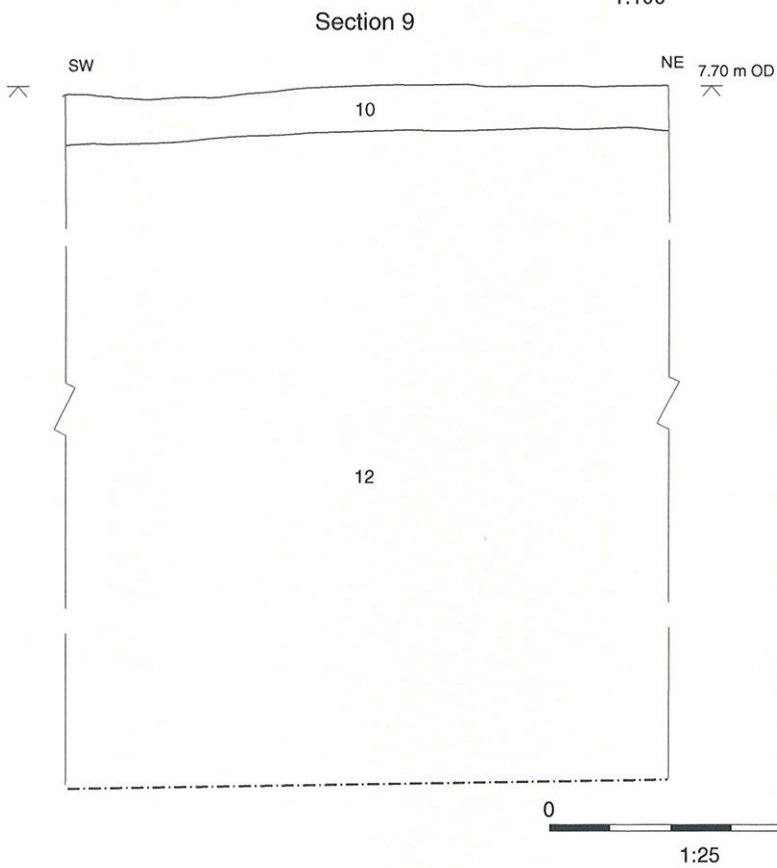
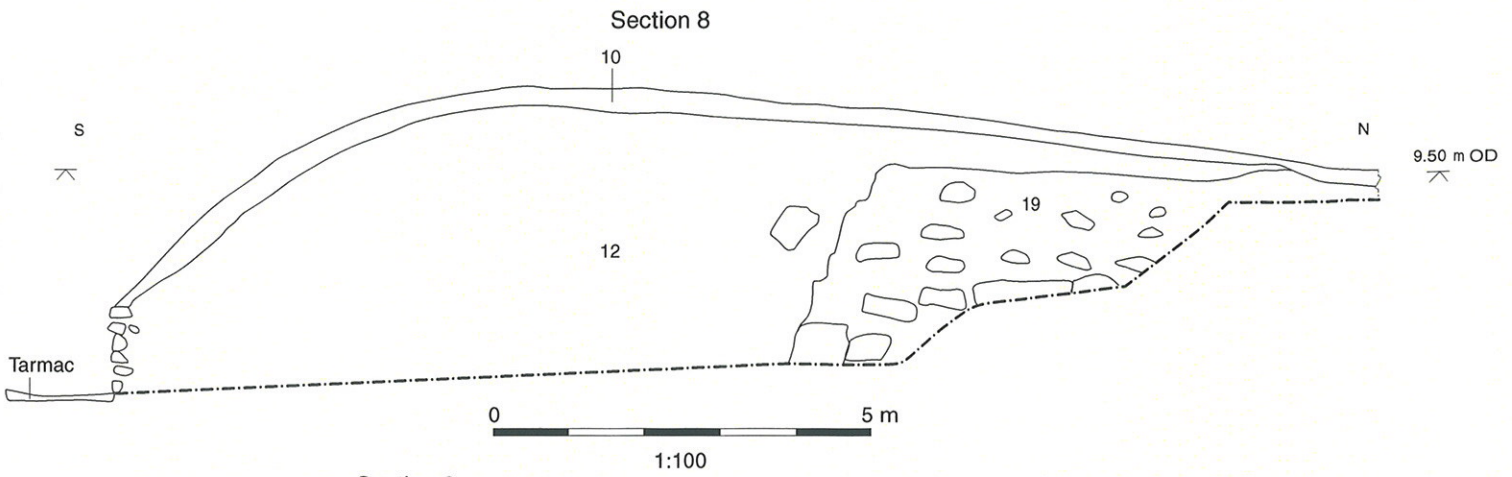
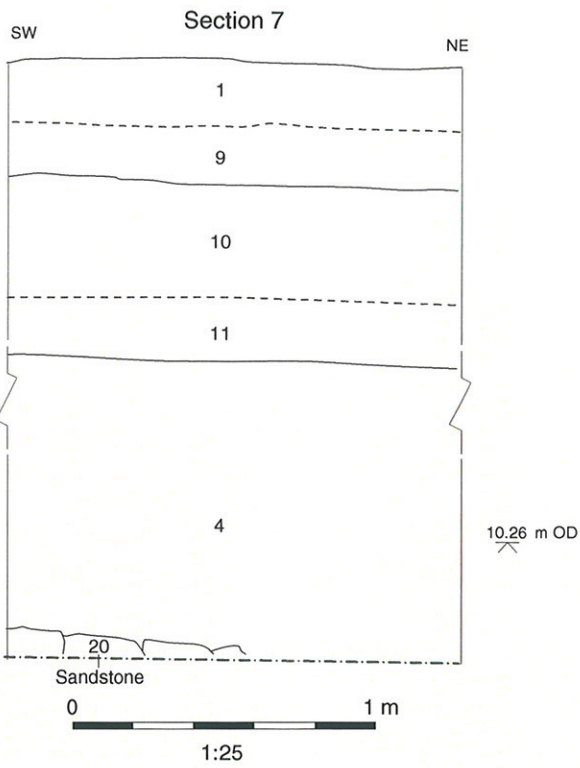


Figure 4: Sections 7 -11



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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