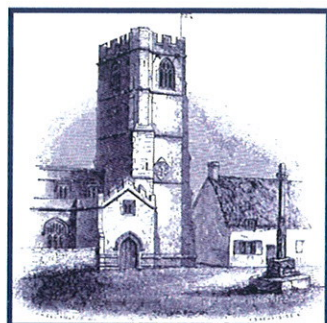


St Leonard's Church Eynsham Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology

27th May 2002

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St Leonard's Church, Eynsham, Oxfordshire***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Location and scope of work	1
1.2 Geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
1.4 Acknowledgements	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	1
2.1 Aims	1
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3 Results	2
3.1 Description of deposits	2
3.2 Pipe trench	2
3.3 Foundation trenches.....	2
3.4 Pipe connection hole.....	3
3.5 New Doorways	3
3.6 Finds	3
3.7 Palaeo-environmental remains	4
4 Discussion And Conclusions	4
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory	5
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references	5
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	5

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 OS Site location map
 Fig. 2 Site location
 Fig. 3 Site plan and Section Locations
 Fig. 4 Section 1
 Fig. 5 Sections 2 - 5

SUMMARY

In April and May of 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Leonard's Church, Eynsham, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4331 0922). The work was commissioned by St Leonard's Parish Church Council in advance of the construction of new WC on the north side of the church east of the vestry. The watching brief revealed two medieval pits from the mid 11th century, which predated the construction of the church.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In April and May 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Leonard's Church, Eynsham, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by St Leonard's Parish Church Council in respect of a planning application for construction of new toilet on side of church.

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Julian Munby the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on terraced river gravels at 67.7 m above OD. The site is situated south of the town square of Eynsham (Fig. 2).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was included in the Archaeological Recording Specification and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The church is adjacent to the abbey precinct, but is a separate church dating from the 12th century or earlier, possibly in origin a chapel by the monastic gate (*VCH Oxon xii*, 147-50). A number of restorations have taken place, and modern extensions include the Victorian vestry (Pevsner, *BoE Oxfordshire*, 601).

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 OA extends its thanks to Mr Mike Dingle and his workmen for their assistance while the watching brief was carried out.

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 work was carried out in a number of phases. First the new pipe trench around the east end of the church was excavated followed by the foundations for the new WC against the vestry. Once the walls had been built the new doorway was cut into the east vestry wall and a second internal doorway in the vestry was constructed. There was also a small excavation at the south west corner of church for the connection of the water pipe.
- 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

3.2 Pipe trench

- 3.2.1 The trench was excavated around the east end of the church (Fig. 3) and was a 0.3 m wide and 0.6–7 m deep. This cut through a number of layers and features. These consisted of turf and a 0.1 m thick layer of concrete overlying a thick layer of dark brown silty sand loam cultivated grave yard soil (1). This had been cut by a circular brick lined soakaway fed by a 5" ceramic pipe leading from the northeast corner of the church. Also the layer was cut by a rectangular shaped soakaway with vertical sides and filled with limestone fragments and fed by a 3" pipe leading from the northeast corner of the vestry.

3.3 Foundation trenches

- 3.3.1 The toilet block was constructed in the north east corner, where the vestry joins the nave, and consisted of a north and east wall built against the walls of the church (Fig. 3). The trenches were 0.6 m wide and 1.55 m in depth. They cut through a number of layers and features (Fig. 4).
- 3.3.2 The upper part of the trenches cut through modern ground make up and construction of boundary wall, which sealed the 19th century construction layer (2) from the vestry and the foundation trench (10) for the vestry wall. The vestry wall cut into a large medieval rubbish pit (6), which was sub circular in shape with near vertical sides rounding sharply to a flat base (0.8 x 0.6 x 1.2 m). This contained two fills; the upper fill (8) was a deposit of silty sand and gravel dumped in the top of the pit. This overlay a dark brown silty sand loam (7) from which a number of pottery sherds and bone fragments were recovered.
- 3.3.3 The pit cut into a medieval soil horizon of dark grayish silty clay (3), which was also cut by the foundation trench (12) for the nave, built in the late 13th century. The soil layer sealed a small pit (4), which was sub rectangular in shape with steep sloping

sides and a concave base (measuring 1.2 x 0.44 x 0.2 m). This contained a fill of dark brown silty clay loam (5) from which a fragment of glass was recovered. The pit cut disturbed subsoil of dark grayish brown silty clay (9), which overlay the natural gravel (14).

3.4 Pipe connection hole

- 3.4.1 This was a rectangular hole (measuring 1.1 x 0.8 x 0.6 m) and excavated at the south-west corner of the church for the connection of the water pipe (Fig. 3). It cut through the gravel (15) path for the graveyard and into the mid brown silty clay (16) graveyard soil (Fig. 5, section 2).

3.5 New Doorways

- 3.5.1 Two new doorways were cut through the church walls. The first doorway was for the access to the toilet through the east wall of the 19th century vestry in line with the window, which was reduced in height from 2.7 m to 1.4 m. The hole for the doorway was 2.3 m high, 0.9 m wide and wall thickness 0.6 m. The wall was constructed of limestone fragments and rough cut blocks bonded with a light brown sandy mortar with fine gravel inclusions (Figs 3 & 5, section 3).
- 3.5.2 The second doorway was cut through the west wall of vestry into the north aisle of the nave. The doorway was 2.2 x 0.9 x 0.75 m and revealed the east facing side of the wall that was faced with rough blocks of limestone in regular courses. The west face was a rough irregular finish which was plastered (Figs 3 & 5, sections 4 & 5).

3.6 Finds

- 3.6.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 30 sherds with a total weight of 704 g. With the exception of four Victorian sherds, the entire assemblage comprises a group (context 7) of large sherds of well-preserved pottery of Saxo-Norman date, with the fragments originating from no more than three vessels. These include the full profile of an OXAC bowl, and it appears that the group is very much the product of primary deposition.

- 3.6.2 The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1989; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD 975-1350. 20 sherds, 524 g.

OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD 1050-1400. 6 sherds, 158 g.

WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, mid-19th - 20th C. 4 sherds, 22 g.

- 3.6.3 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		OXBF		WHEW		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
2					4	22	19thC
7	20	524	6	158			M11thC?
Total	20	524	6	158	4	22	

3.7 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.7.1 No environmental samples were taken during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The results from the watching brief showed that the service trenches for the pipes did not extend beyond the depth of the graveyard soil. The foundation trenches were much deeper and exposed two rubbish pits dating from the mid to late 11th century, which pre-dates the construction of the church. These are rubbish pits from the abbey or from the burgrave plots backing onto the abbey grounds boundary. The church is thought to be at the gateway of north boundary to the abbey, but the true location is unclear. The 19th century construction of the vestry cut and sealed these features.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer				Graveyard soil	
2	Layer				Construction layer	Pottery
3	Layer				Medieval soil	
4	Cut				Pit	
5	Fill				Fill of pit	Glass
6	Cut				Pit	
7	Fill				Fill of pit	Pottery and Bone
8	Fill				Fill of pit	
9	Layer				Topsoil	
10	Cut				Foundation trench	
11	Fill				Fill of trench	
12	Cut				Foundation trench	
13	Fill				Fill of trench	
14	Natural				Natural gravel	
15	Layer				Gravel path	
16	Layer				Graveyard soil	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

D Wilkinson, 1992, *OAU Fieldwork Manual*.

Pevsner, N, 1960, *The buildings of England: Oxfordshire*.

Mellor, M, 1989 A summary of the key assemblages. A study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century in TG Hassall et al, *Excavations at St Ebbe's Oxoniensia* 49, 181-219.

Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* 59, 17-217

Victorian County History of Oxfordshire, volume xii

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Leonard's Church, Eynsham, Oxfordshire.

Site code: EYSL 02

Grid reference: NGR SP 4331 0922

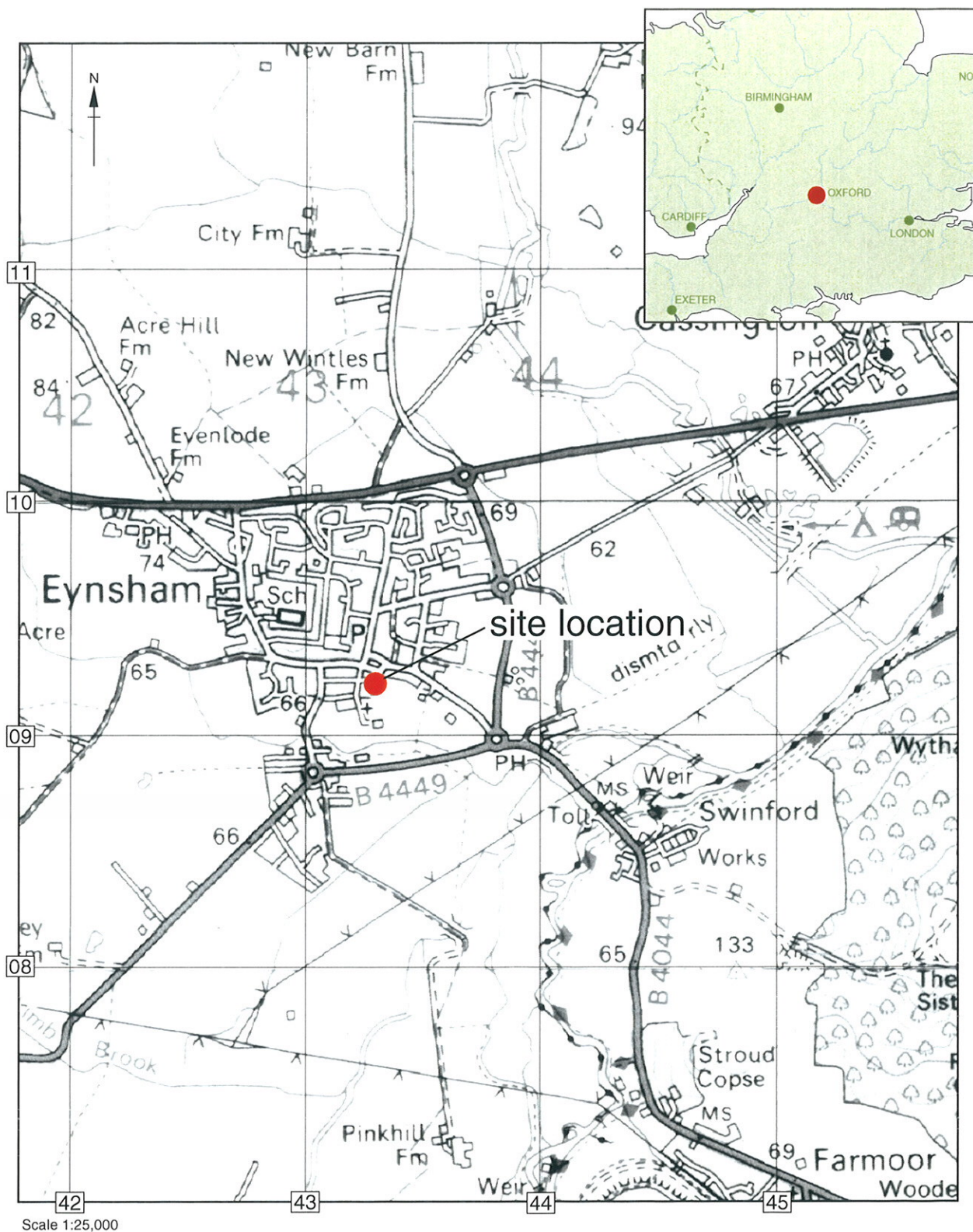
Type of watching brief: Construction of new toilet on side of church.

Date and duration of project:

Area of site: 2.2 m x 2.5 m

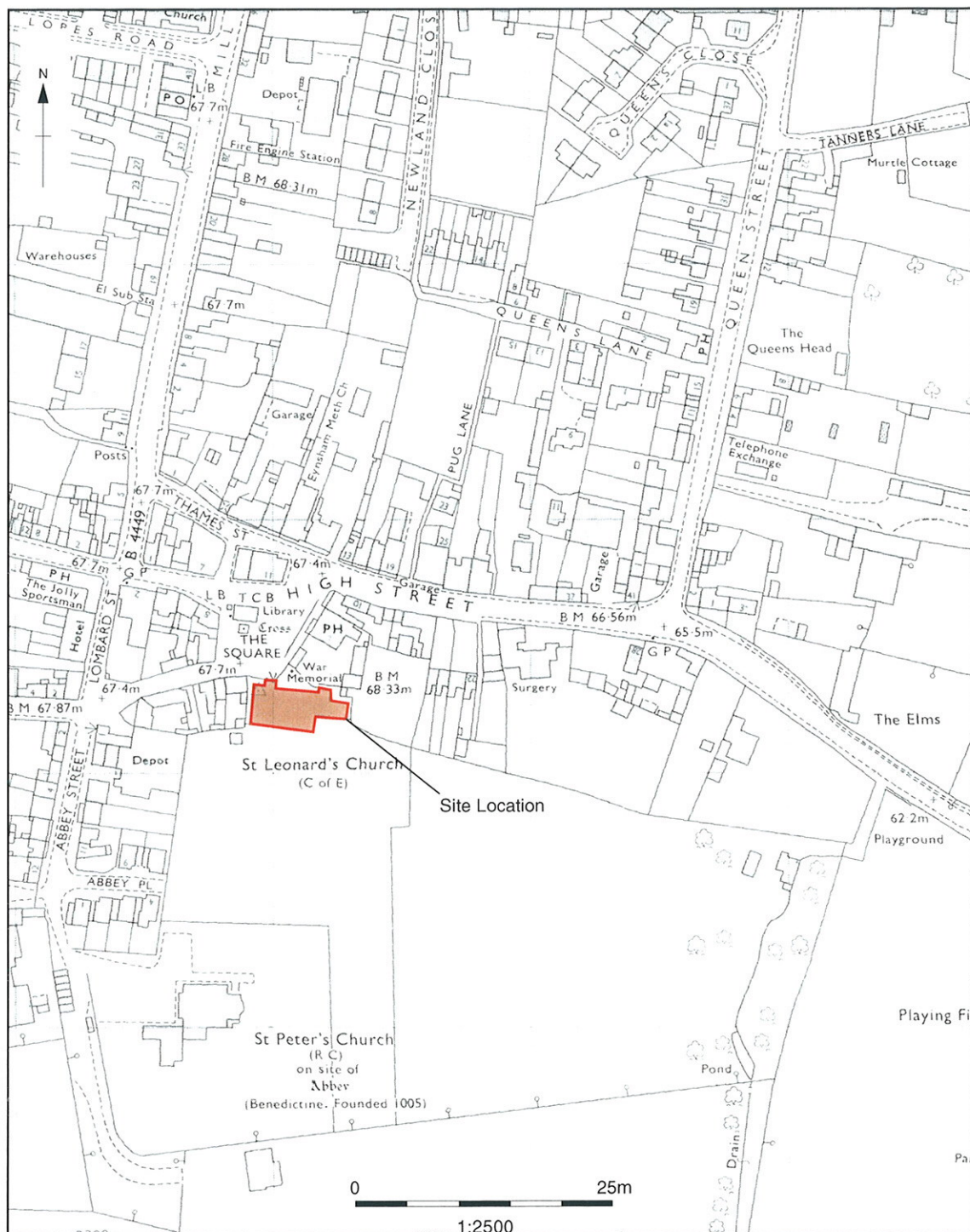
Summary of results: Two medieval pits from the mid 11th century were exposed and predated the construction of the church.

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: 2002.87



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Figure 1: Site location



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Figure 2: Site Location

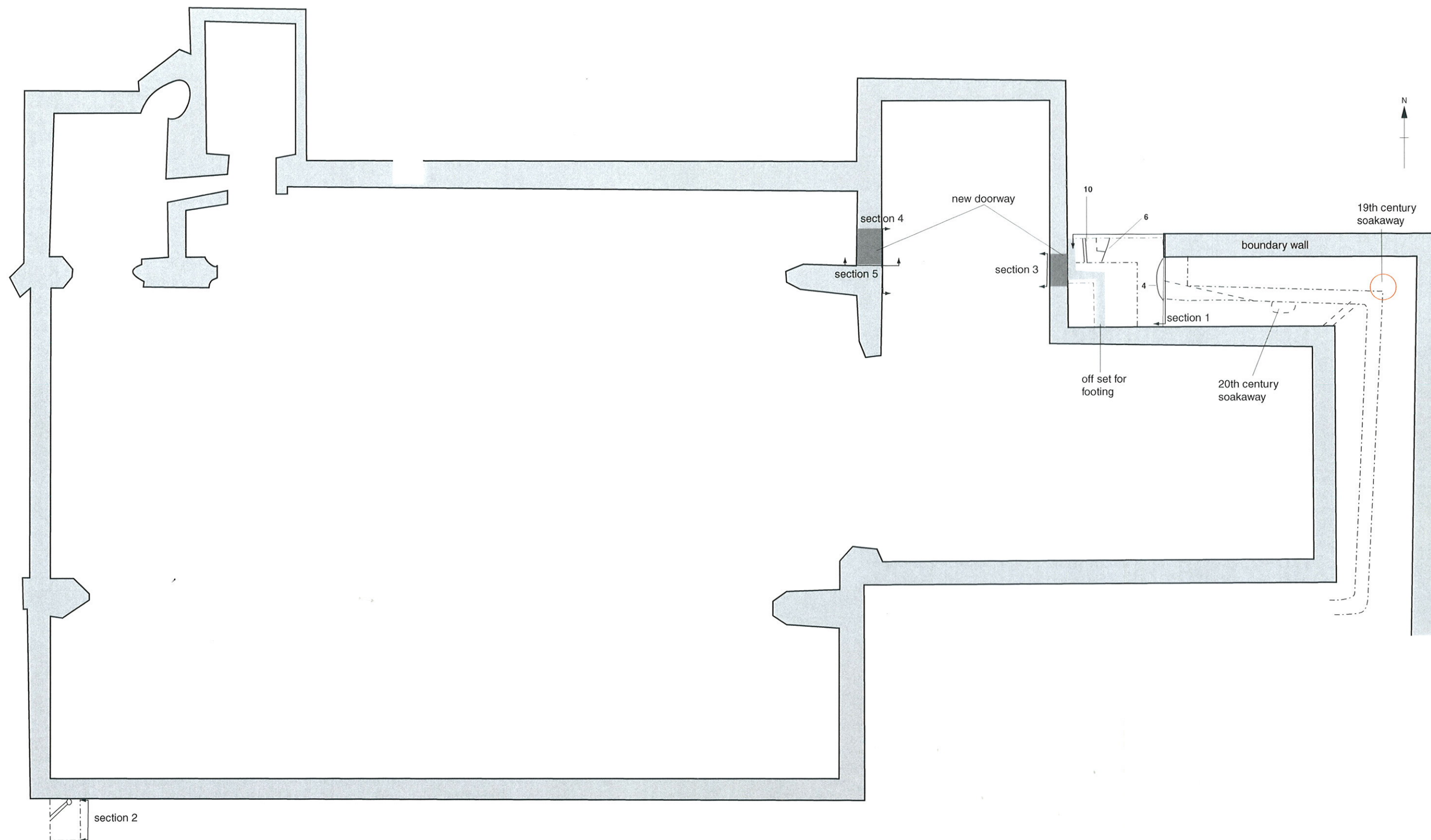


Figure 3: Site Plan

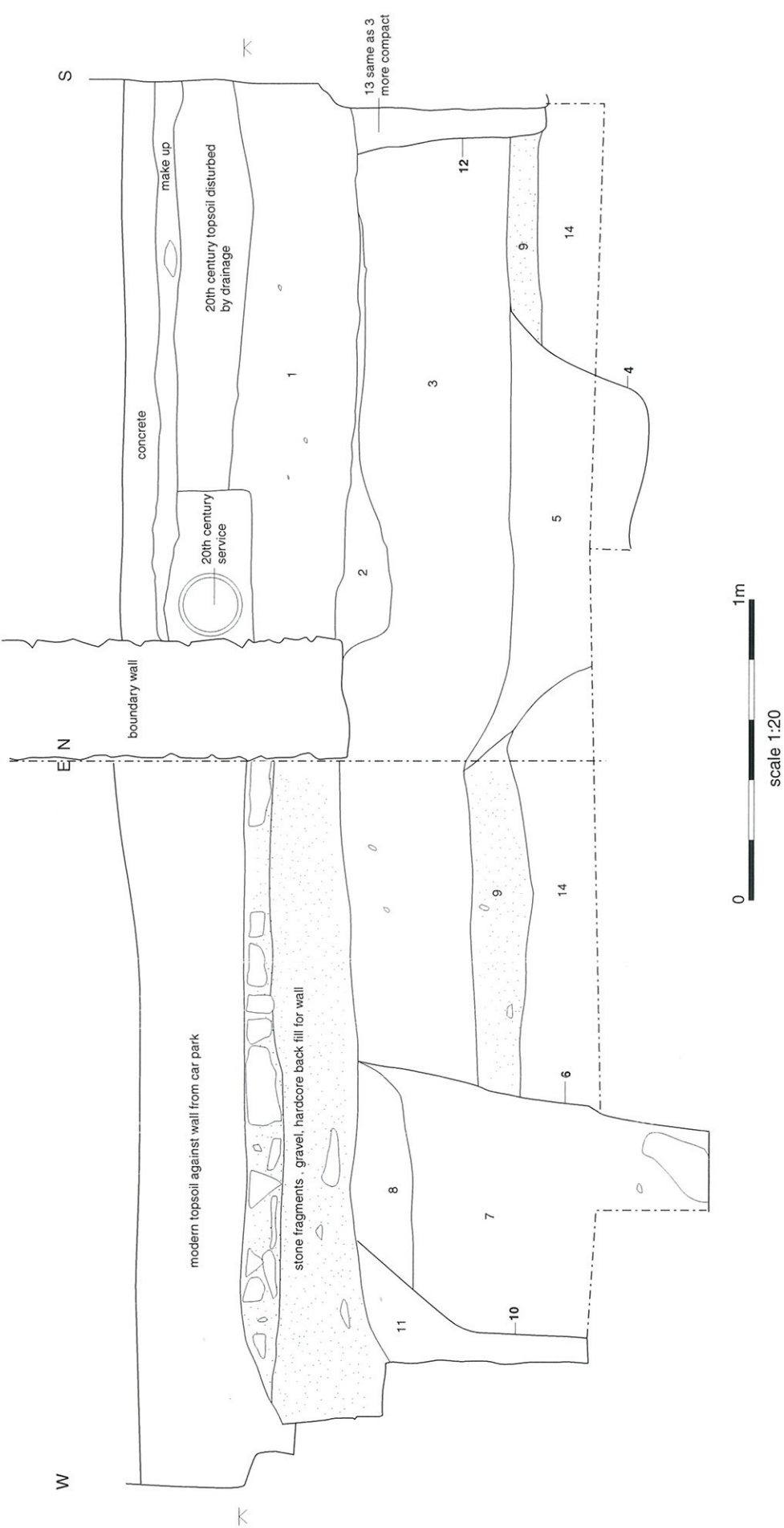


Figure 4: Section 1

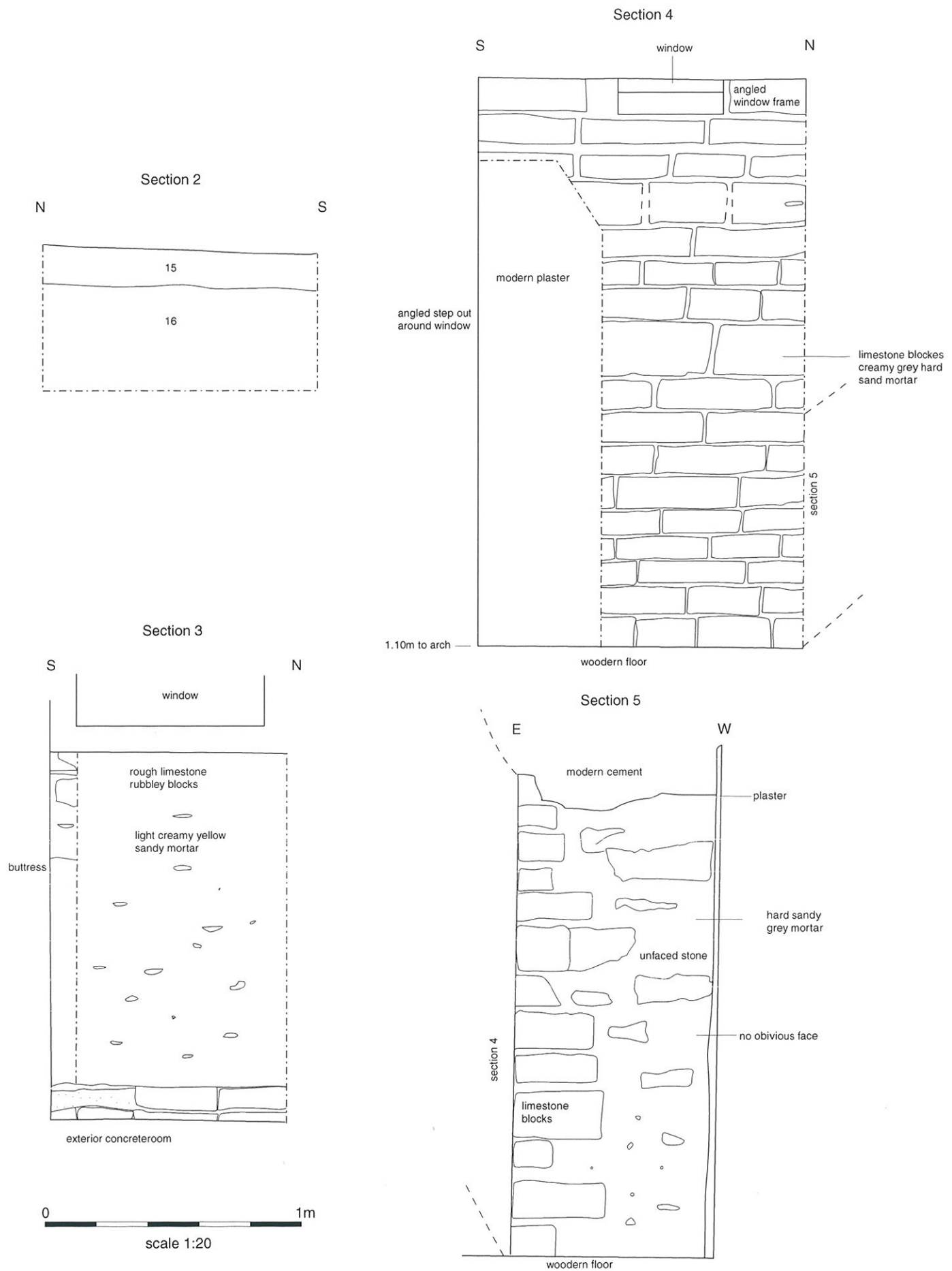


Figure 5: Sections 2-5



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