

OXON  
SUSPC 04

SWINBROOK

Pebble Court  
Swinbrook  
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological  
Watching Brief Report**



**Oxford Archaeology**

April 2005

**Client: Mr and Mrs T F Bell**

Issue N<sup>o</sup>: 1

OA Job N<sup>o</sup>: 2453

Planning Ref N<sup>o</sup>: 03/2013, 2014

NGR: SP 2798 1209

**Client Name:** Mr & Mrs T F Bell

**Client Ref No:**

**Document Title:** Pebble Court, Swinbrook, Oxfordshire

**Document Type:** Watching Brief

**Issue Number:** 1

**National Grid Reference:** NGR SP 2798 1209

**Planning Reference:** 03/2013, 2014

**OA Job Number:** 2453

**Site Code:** SWPC 04

**Invoice Code:** SWPCWB

**Receiving Museum:** Oxfordshire County Museums Service

**Museum Accession No:** OXCMS 2044.135

**Prepared by:** James Mumford

**Position:** SWD Supervisor

**Date:** 20th May 2005

**Checked by:** Andrew Holmes

**Position:** Head of Small Works

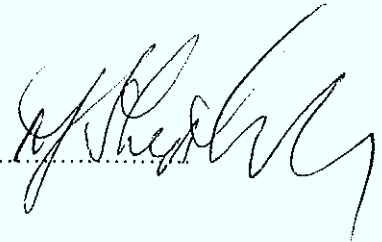
**Date:** 20th May 2005

**Approved by:** Nick Shepherd

**Position:** Head of Fieldwork

**Date:** 23rd May 2005

Signed.....



**Document File Location** U:/OAU/wbREPORTS/Oxfordshire/SWPC.doc

**Graphics File Location** Server 10:/oapubs1 RtoZ\*SWPC04\*SWPCWB\*Pebble  
Court, Swinbrook\*GS\*23.11.04

**Illustrated by** Georgina Slater

**Disclaimer:**

*This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.*

**Oxford Archaeology**

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2005

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 Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

**Pebble Court, Swinbrook, 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
2 Project Aims and Methodology .....	2
2.1 Aims.....	2
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3 Results.....	2
3.1 Description of deposits .....	2
3.2 Finds.....	3
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains.....	3
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 Site location  
 Fig. 2 Site plan showing the location of works, sections and features  
 Fig. 3 Plan of structure  
 Fig. 4 Sections 1 - 4  
 Fig. 5 Location of new drainage trench and section 5

Cover Plate: View of Pebble Court with church in background after initial topsoil strip.

## SUMMARY

*From September 2004 to April 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Pebble Court, Swinbrook, Oxfordshire. The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs T F Bell in advance of the construction of a garage and pool building, an outdoor swimming pool and a tennis court. The watching brief revealed remains of the Fettiplace Manor and related garden features.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 From September 2004 to April 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Pebble Court, Swinbrook, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs T F Bell in respect of a planning application for the construction of a garage and pool building, an outdoor swimming pool and a tennis court (Planning Application No. 03/2013.2014).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Hugh Coddington the Deputy County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council (OCAS 2004).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2004).

#### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development area is located to the south of the Church of St Mary, Swinbrook and to the south-east of the village (NGR SP 2798 1209). The proposed development is within the private garden of Pebble Court and lies at approximately 98 m OD. The underlying natural geology is limestone overlain by alluvial deposits.

#### 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 2004) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 Pebble Court is a Grade II listed building dating to the early eighteenth century consisting of two storeys made of stone. Dendrochronology has provided a date of AD 1436-37 for some of the roof timbers. It stands either on the site or in the immediate vicinity of an earlier mansion that was constructed by the Fettiplace family in around 1490. The mansion was demolished in 1805 when the last member of the Fettiplace family died.
- 1.3.3 Pebble Court itself is believed to incorporate some of the building materials from the earlier mansion. The Fettiplace family was of considerable regional importance and wealth and it is likely that the mansion was a sizeable structure. This would be in line with the extensive garden features seen to extend westwards to Widford.

- 1.3.4 Excavations for a septic tank behind the adjacent Old Post Office revealed substantial limestone foundations approximately 2 m below the present ground surface, and were noted to stand approximately 1 m in depth. They were aligned north-east south-west turning to the north-west, creating a corner. The wall was constructed of well cut limestone quoins approximately 0.6 m<sup>2</sup>. South-west of the church is an earthwork that possibly formed part of an enceinte relating to the mansion.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or 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 was cleared by the demolition of the old pig sheds and outbuildings. The site was stripped of topsoil and the driveway built up. The pond was cleared out and the swimming pool excavated, followed by the excavation of the foundations for the garage. The services were then laid to the new garages and a new overflow from the old soakaway was excavated. This was carried out under archaeological supervision. The area of the tennis courts were built up after the topsoil strip and was not monitored.
- 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 Field Manual* (OAU 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

#### Driveway

- 3.1.1 The topsoil strip of the driveway exposed a series of walls and culverts (Fig. 3). The structures were built through a subsoil layer of a light brown silty clay loam (2), which overlay the natural gravel (9). The structures consisted of a wall (3) aligned east to west. It measured 5.5 m x 0.9 m x 0.2 m and was constructed of limestone fragments two to three courses high with a dark yellowish brown clay bond. This wall had been butted by a wall (4) and a stone culvert (5) at its east end. At the corner where the two walls joined, a void for a quoin stone measuring 1.3 m x 0.5 m was observed. Wall 4 was constructed of limestone fragments with a dark yellowish brown clay bond, measuring 1 m x 0.9 m x 0.25 m and stood two courses high.

3.1.2 Built against walls 3 and 4 was the stone lined culvert (5) running north to south with a spur running in from the east. It was constructed of limestone slabs with drystone limestone walls forming a 0.30 m wide channel. The walls were two courses high, covering an area of 2 m x 0.8 m x 0.18 m. The channel was filled by a loose dark grey brown silty sand (7) with pottery from the 17th century. To the east the remains of the east to west channel was exposed. It measured 2.8 m x 0.9 m x 0.20 m and had a 0.25 m wide channel in the centre. It was of similar construction as culvert 5 and was filled by a loose dark grey brown silty sand (7). Overlying these structures was a 8 mm -0.20 m thick layer of 19th century demolition material of yellowish brown silty clay (6) with limestone fragments. This was overlain by topsoil (1) and the old driveway.

### **Swimming Pool and Garage foundations**

- 3.1.3 The excavation for the swimming pool measured 13 m x 7.5 m with a sloping base of 1.2 m to 2.4 m. It cut into the natural gravel (9) and revealed a number of features. Overlying the natural was a 0.5 m thick layer of light brown silty clay loam subsoil (2), which was sealed below a deposit of pea gravel (14) and a 0.70 m thick layer of cultivated garden soil (13) of dark grey brown silty clay. These possibly relate to garden activity in front of the manor house. These had been cut by a large sub-circular feature (15) with very steep sloping sides rounding to a flat base (Fig. 4, section 2). This contained a number of fills consisting of a primary fill of light grey silty clay (16) over which was a thick dump of grey brown silty clay (17) containing over 60% limestone rubble. A 0.40 m thick layer of light grey and reddish brown silty sand (18) had built up in the top of the feature, but had been covered by light brown silty clay (19) levelling the top.
- 3.1.4 This feature appears to extend northwards and was observed in section within the foundation trench of the new garages (Fig. 4, section 3). The sides were less steeply sloped with a concave base (22) with a primary fill of light grey silty clay (21) overlain by a light yellowish brown silty clay (20) containing over 75% limestone rubble. Two fragments of mid 16th century pottery was recovered from this fill.
- 3.1.5 Another smaller feature (26) was located in the south side of the new wine cellar and is thought to be a root-hole from the former garden to the manor (Fig. 4, section 4). It had steep sloping sides rounding sharply to a flat base, measuring 1.2 m wide and 0.48 m in depth. It contained a fill of dark reddish brown silty clay loam (27) containing 5% limestone fragments. These features had been sealed below a 0.25 - 0.7 mm thick layer of topsoil (1).
- 3.1.6 This topsoil layer had been cut by the shaft (10) for a garden well. It measured 1.5 m in diameter and 2.10 m in depth and a lining (11) of limestone fragments of drystone construction. This had been filled with a light reddish brown silty clay loam (12) with limestone fragments in the base from the top of lining being pushed in. This was sealed with a thin 0.2 m layer of re-deposited garden topsoil.

### Service trenches

- 3.1.7 Two service trenches were excavated, one for the electric cable to the garage and plant room and the other for drainage (Fig. 2). The cable trench was excavated from the east side of the house and ran across the garden to the driveway. It then turned south along the driveway curving eastwards to enter the north-west corner of the new garage. This trench measured 0.40 m wide and was between 0.40 - 50 m in depth.
- 3.1.8 The trench cut through a dark yellowish brown silty clay (25) with demolition rubble, which was sealed by a 0.25 m thick dark grey brown silty clay (24) representing cultivated soil. This was sealed by a 0.10 m thick lawn turf (23). Where the trench cut along the drive it exposed the present and earlier hardcore make up for the drive but did not go below this level.
- 3.1.9 The drainage trench cut through the new ground make up until the last 2 m of the manhole and was observed cutting through topsoil (1) and into the subsoil (2).

### New drain across garden from soakaway

- 3.1.10 This new overflow drain ran from an old circular limestone and mortar soakaway to the south-west of the house (Fig. 5). It ran for 35 m into the field measuring 0.5 m wide and 0.75 m in depth. It cut 0.45 m into the light brown silty clay loam subsoil (2). This had been overlain by a spread of building debris (30), consisting of mid brown silty clay with loose limestone rubble and stone tile fragments. At the south-western edge of the trench a large vertical sided cut (28) was exposed, with a fill of light brown silty clay (29) with a large quantity loose limestone fragments. It is possible that the sides of the cut had a dry stone limestone wall, which has collapsed into the feature, but this was not clear in section. Overlying these features was a 0.30 m thick layer of topsoil (1).

## 3.2 Finds

### *Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

- 3.2.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 5 sherds with a total weight of 181 g. It was all post-medieval in date. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXST: Frechen Stoneware, 1550 – 1700. 1 sherd, 139 g.

OXFI: Chinese Porcelain, c1550+. 1 sherd, 2 g.

OXCE: Tin-glazed Earthenware, 1613 – 1800. 1 sherd, 13 g

WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> C. 2 sherds, 28 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	OXST		OXFI		OXCE		WHEW		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
6							2	28	M19thC
7					1	13			17thC
20	1	139	1	1					M16thC
Total	1	139	1	1	1	13	2	28	

### 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 watching brief revealed a number of features relating to the former mansion of the Fettiplace family, which was demolished in 1805. The initial stripping of topsoil and clearing of the site exposed the remnants of a building corner with a stone built culvert (5) alongside it. A second section of the culvert (8) ran into it from the west. Pottery dating from the 17th century was recovered from material which had silted up the culvert. This evidence and the earlier discovery of substantial building remains to the west, in the next doors garden, suggests a form of an entrance way through the mansion building from Pebble Court road into the garden at the front of the house had previously existed. The wall remains had been extensively robbed of its stone to just below ground level during early 19th century demolition work.
- 4.1.2 The ground works on the new garage and swimming pool revealed a number of cultivated soil layers and deep back filled features, which could be part of extensive garden features of the former mansion observed to the south and west of the site. These have been in-filled with loose stone rubble, possibly from the demolition of the house or from quarry pits seen to the north-west of the village.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.2-3 m			Topsoil Layer		
2	Layer	0.2 m			Subsoil		
3	Structure	0.2 m	0.9 m	5.7 m	Manor house wall		
4	Structure	0.25 m	0.9 m	0.8 m	Manor house wall		
5	Structure	0.18 m	0.8 m	2 m	Stone lined culvert		
6	Fill	0.08-2 m			Demolition Layer	Pottery	19th Century
7	Fill				Fill of culvert	Pottery	17th Century
8	Structure	0.2 m	0.9 m	2.8 m	Stone lined culvert		
9	Natural				Natural gravel		
10	Cut	2.1 m	1.4 m		Cut for well		
11	Structure				Stone lining of well		
12	Fill				Backfill of well		
13	Layer	0.7 m			Cultivated soil		
14	Layer				Dump of material		
15	Cut	2.4 m	4 m	10 m	Large feature		
16	Fill				Fill of feature		
17	Fill				Fill of feature		
18	Fill				Fill of feature		
19	Fill				Fill of feature		
20	Fill				Fill of feature		
21	Fill				Fill of feature		
22	Cut				Continuation of 15		
23	Layer	0.10 m			Lawn turf		
24	Layer	0.25 m			Garden sub soil		
25	Layer				Demolition spread		
26	Cut	0.75 m	0.50 m	4.90 m	Garden feature		
27	Fill				Fill of feature		
28	Cut	0.60 m	1.50 m		Garden feature		
29	Fill				Fill of feature		
30	Layer	0.45 m			Rubble spread		

**APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

Mellor, M, 1984 *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, CE Halpin and M Mellor, Excavations at St Ebbe's Oxoniensia 49, 181-219.*

OA, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D.Wilkinson, first edition, 1992)

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*

OCAS, 2004 *Pebble Court, Swinbrook Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief*

OA, 2004 *Pebble Court, Swinbrook, Oxfordshire Written Scheme of Investigation*

**APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** Pebble Court, Swinbrook, Oxfordshire

**Site code:** SWPC 04

**Grid reference:** NGR SP2798 1209

**Type of watching brief:** Ground works during the construction of new garages, swimming pool and tennis court.

**Date and duration of project:** A total of eight visits from the 28/9/2004 to the 4/4/2005.

**Area of site:** 70 m x 20 m

**Summary of results:** The watching brief revealed remains of the Fettiplace Manor house and relating garden features.

**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 2004.135



Scale 1:25,000

Reproduced from the Landranger 1:25000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office  
 © Crown Copyright 1983. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100005569

Figure 1: Site location

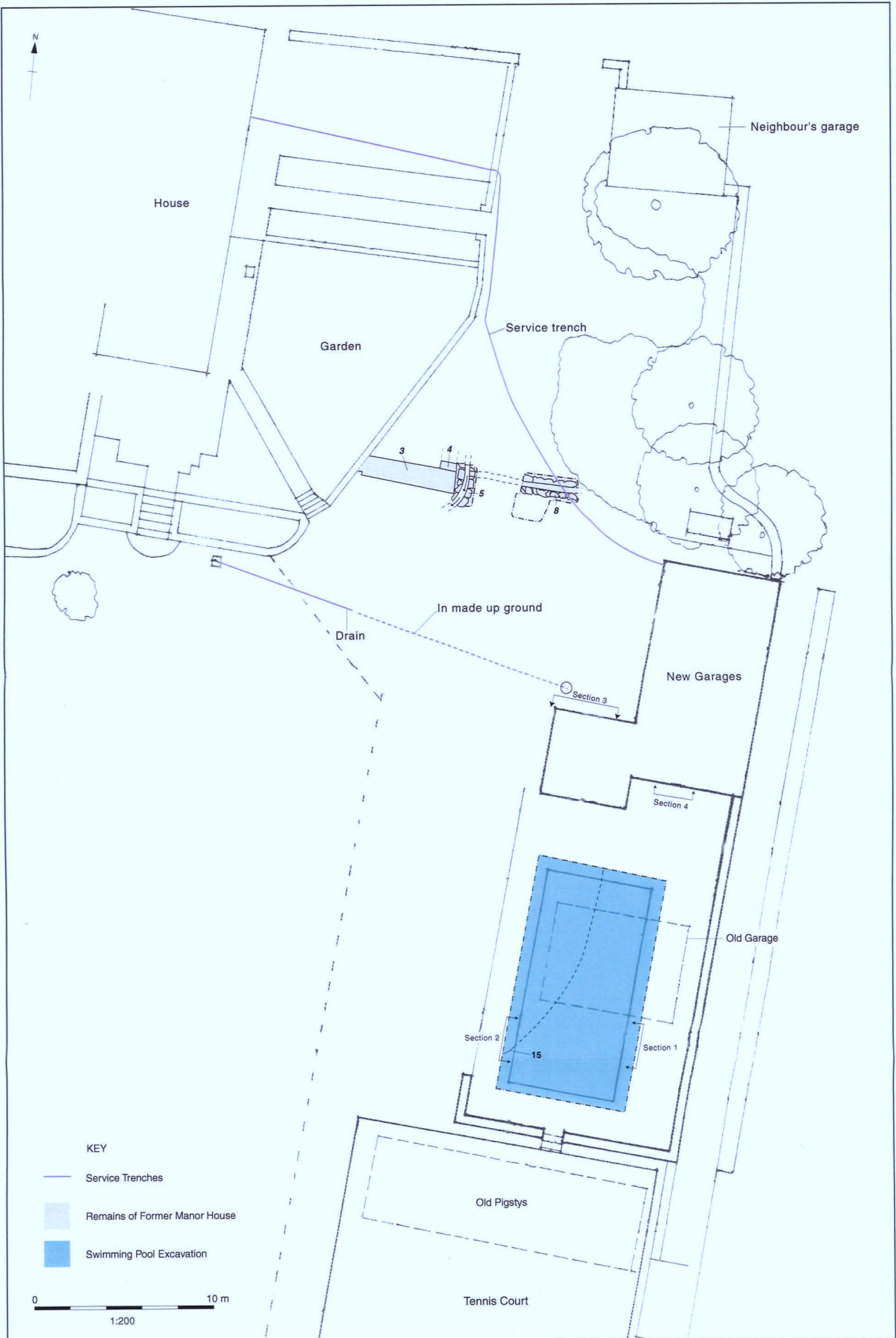


Figure 2: Site plan showing the location of works, sections and features



N

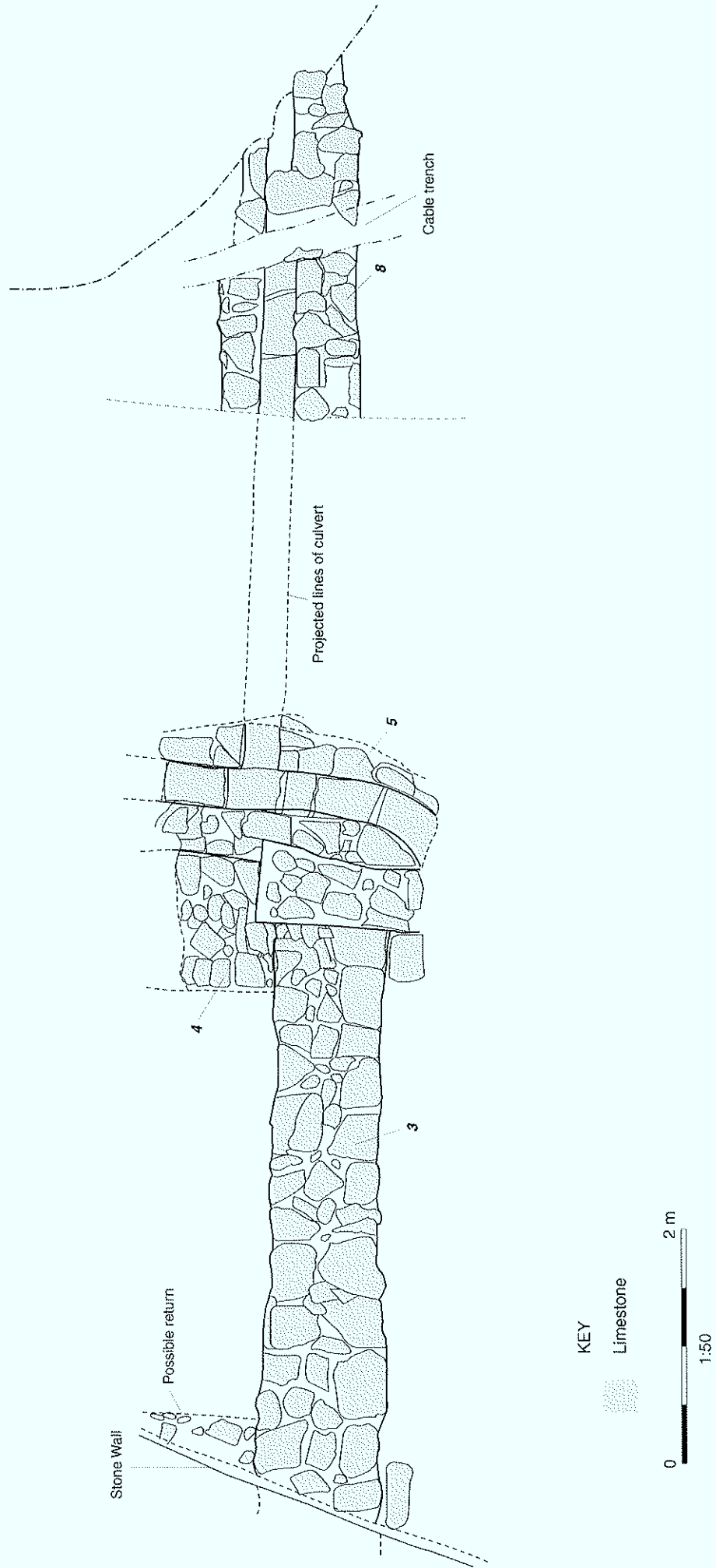
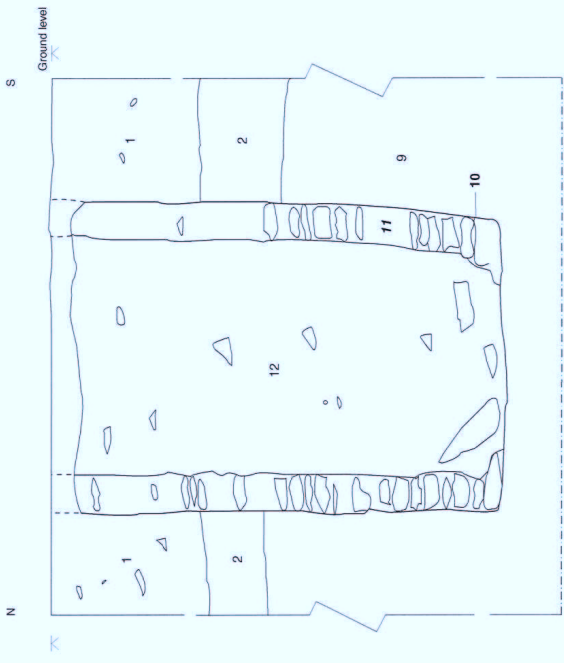
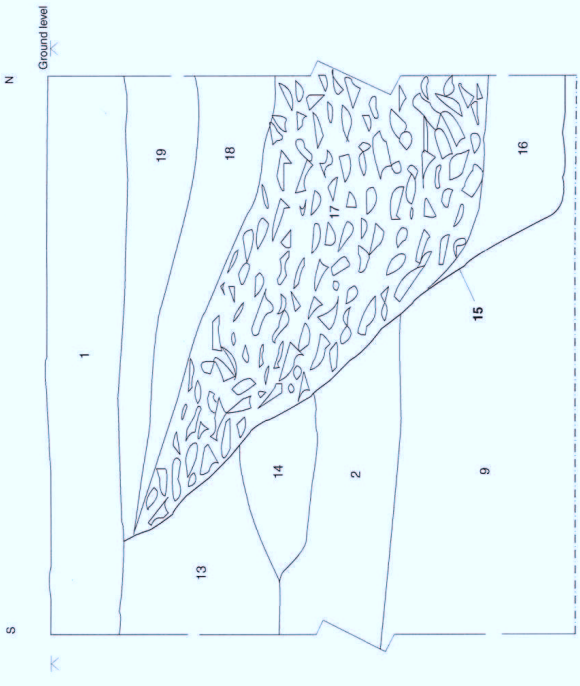


Figure 3: Plan of structure

Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



Section 4

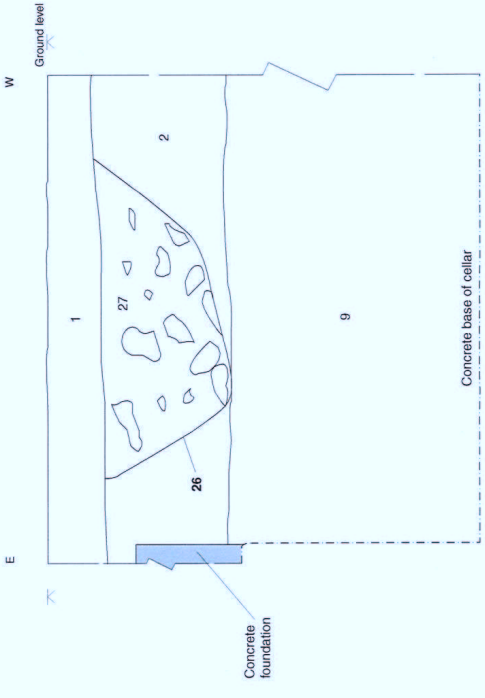


Figure 4: Sections 1 - 4

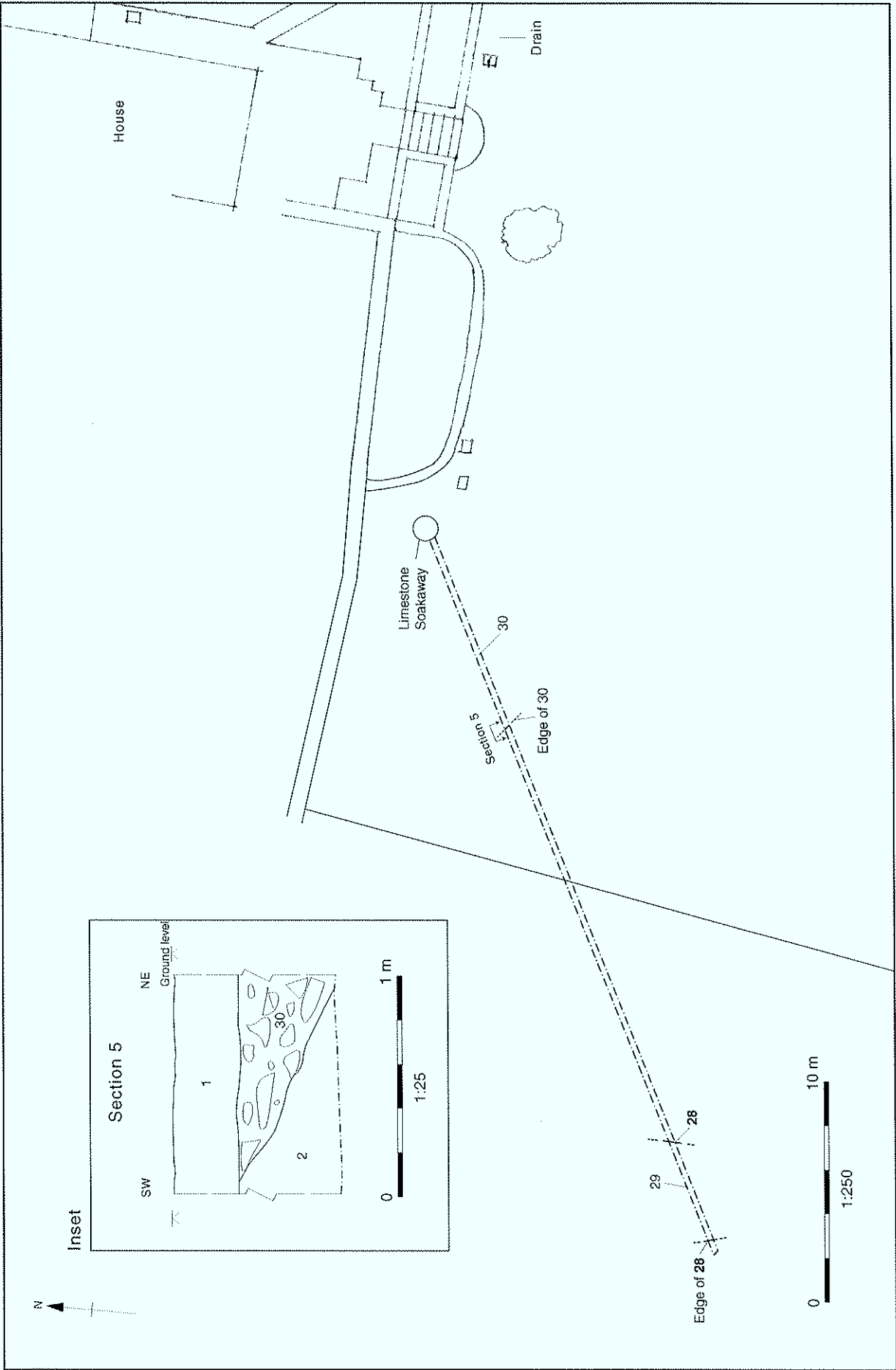


Figure 5: Location of new drainage trench and section 5



### **Oxford Archaeology**

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800  
f: (0044) 01865 793496  
e: [info@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:info@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w: [www.oxfordarch.co.uk](http://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](mailto:lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w: [www.oxfordarch.co.uk](http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk)



**Director:** David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

Oxford Archaeological Unit is a  
Private Limited Company, N<sup>o</sup>: 1618597  
and a Registered Charity, N<sup>o</sup>: 285627

**Registered Office:**

Oxford Archaeological Unit  
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES