



# West Wycombe Park Temporary Toilets

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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## West Wycombe Temporary Toilets

### *Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*By Adam Fellingham*

*Illustrated by Ben Brown, Gary Jones and Charles Rousseaux.*

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## Summary

*In March 2017 Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at West Wycombe Park, West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. The work was commissioned by the National Trust to allow for new drainage, water and electrical services to be laid across the western car park for the construction of temporary toilets. The watching brief was maintained during the groundworks.*

*The excavation of these trenches revealed little to no significant archaeology other than a flint quarry pit of unknown date.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by The National Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief at West Wycombe Park, West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire during work to allow for new drainage, water and electrical services to be laid across the western car park for the construction of temporary toilets. The work entailed a continuous watching brief, carried out for a total of three days (20th-21st and 23rd March 2017). All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies. The project is also covered by the National Trust archaeology, event no. ENA8670.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 West Wycombe Park is situated in the southern Chilterns, slightly removed from the urban extent of High Wycombe. West Wycombe Park covers an area of more than 112 hectares and is located directly adjacent and south-east of the village of West Wycombe.

1.2.2 The site is located within the north-west extent of West Wycombe Park within the National Trust car park that is south of a residential property known as the North West Lodge, south of the High Street. The site location is centred at NGR SU 82773 94614 (Fig. 1).

1.2.3 The British Geological Survey (BGS) records the bedrock geology of the north-west extent of West Wycombe Park as Pit Chalk Formation, the sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 89 to 94 million years ago, during the Cretaceous period. A superficial alluvium overlies the natural bedrock made up of clay, silt, sand and gravel. This superficial alluvium was formed up to 2 million years ago, in the Quaternary period.

1.2.4 The BGS has recorded a borehole to the south-east of site within West Wycombe Park. The borehole sample shows top soil and sub soil deposits of an average depth of 1m overlying a flinty gravel.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeology and historical background to the site has been described in detail in a previously prepared Desk Based Assessment (OA 2017), a summary of which is reproduced below.

1.3.2 West Wycombe House is a Grade I listed building and the surrounding parkland is included in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. There are additional Grade I, II\* and II buildings in the parkland, in the village, and to the north-west on West Wycombe Hill. Furthermore, the Iron Age hillfort on West Wycombe Hill is a Scheduled Monument. The estate was purchased in 1698 by Sir Samuel Dashwood and his brother Francis, and the clear majority of the features in the parkland and Pleasure Grounds are thought to have been commissioned by Francis Dashwood and his son the second baronet, inspired by his lengthy stays in Italy. Today West Wycombe Park is



owned by the National Trust and is open to the public.

### ***Prehistoric Period (500,000 BP - 43 AD)***

- 1.3.3 There have been three finds of prehistoric flints in the vicinity of the site. The first was an Upper Palaeolithic or Mesolithic flint blade found within the park itself. The second was a Neolithic flint blade and two flakes. Thirdly, a Neolithic polished flint axe, was found at Toweridge.
- 1.3.4 A substantial earthwork has been recorded in the area. This has been tentatively interpreted as a Bronze Age round barrow, though it is thought locally to have been an 18th-century landscape feature, which is perhaps more likely given its location on a valley floor.
- 1.3.5 The scheduled Iron Age hillfort located to the north of the site is obviously the most substantial Iron Age feature in the area. It is a circular fort with a monumental double ditch and bank enclosure, truncated by the Dashwood family mausoleum and the medieval church of St Lawrence.
- 1.3.6 An Iron Age/Roman field system comprising lynchets, probably associated with the hillfort, is recorded on the slopes of the hill to the north of the site. Other potentially Iron Age earthworks indicative of a field system have been surveyed within the park to the north-east of Druid's Hut, more than 500m away from the site.

### ***Romano-British Period (AD 43-410)***

- 1.3.7 There are a number of definite and possible Roman remains within the area. The most substantial of these are two partially excavated Roman cemeteries located more than 300m apart at 40 Church Lane in West Wycombe Village (Carlyle 2010) and to the east between the line of the A40 and the northern border of West Wycombe Park (Farley and Wright 1979). A third cemetery was excavated in 1845 at St Paul's Church, but the graves were undated (Marshall 2008).
- 1.3.8 It has been suggested from substantial finds of Roman pottery found whilst dredging the lake bed in the park that a Roman villa might be found in the area (Harman 1934; Marshall 2008). However, this may have been located on the site of the present-day village rather than in the immediate locale of the lake (Marshall 2008). In 1991 metal detectorists turned up 237 Roman coins from the dredged lake silts among other Roman finds. Several features comprising pits and ditches have also been identified (Marshall 2008).
- 1.3.9 It has been suggested that a Roman road may once have run through West Wycombe, although the proposed line appears to run south of the site of the watching brief (Morris *et al.* 1970). Nevertheless, the presence of such a road may well have attracted further Roman activity to the vicinity.

### ***The Early Medieval (AD 410-1066) and Medieval Periods (AD 1066-1550)***

- 1.3.10 Early medieval remains from the area are very few, including two instances of Anglo-Saxon metalwork found by metal detecting outside the park to the north and two more from within the park, to the south of the site, including a very fine coin of Offa (AD 757-796). The manor of West Wycombe ('*Wicumbe*') is recorded in Domesday Book as belonging to the Bishops of Winchester and is first recorded in 944-6 (McOmish *et al.* 2001).
- 1.3.11 Medieval remains from the area are few, although there is plenty of documentary evidence for the medieval manor being within the area, and it certainly appears in the Domesday survey of 1086.
- 1.3.12 There is some evidence that the village of West Wycombe was a planned medieval settlement, although the standing vernacular architecture of the village dates at the earliest to the early 15th century at the Old Vicarage, Church Loft. During the medieval period the manor was an important source of food for the monks of Winchester. After the Dissolution in 1551 it was taken over by the crown and, after changing hands a few times, the estate was granted to a former tenant Lord Dormer in 1602 (Everett 1993, 5; McOmish *et al.* 2001, 14).



1.3.13 The 13th century Church of St Lawrence built within the Iron Age hillfort on West Wycombe Hill was the most substantial medieval structure in the area, although it was heavily remodelled in the 18th century. A small amount of 13th and 14th century pottery has been found near the church, as well as on Park Farm Road.

#### ***Post-Medieval Period (1550 – 1900)***

1.3.14 There have been no recorded post-medieval assets within the site. The site lies within the former gardens of the North West Lodge which lies to the north of the site and is a Grade II\* listed building dating from the 18th century. It appears on the John Richardson's Estate map of West Wycombe, 1767.

#### ***20<sup>th</sup> Century***

1.3.15 There are very few recorded 20th century features within West Wycombe Park.

## **2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Aims**

#### ***General aims***

2.1.1 The general aims and objectives of the archaeological watching brief were:

- to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the site;
- to assess the vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed archaeological remains;
- to provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of any proposed developments to be assessed.

### **2.2 Methodology**

2.2.1 The watching brief was maintained on the service trenches for electrical, water and drainage utilities for a total of three days from 20th March 2017. During this time monitoring was maintained upon any groundworks which had the potential to have an impact upon any archaeological deposits.

2.2.2 All trenches were numbered and where appropriate a full set of records were produced under the OA's general approach to excavation and recording (Wilkinson 1992). A series of section drawings were produced to show the presence and/or absence of archaeological remains.

2.2.3 As well as trenching for the service runs there was also moleing to pull the services through. This was designed to reduce the area of impact and save time. It was agreed that if any obstructions were encountered during moleing, a trench would be opened to allow for archaeological investigation. No obstructions were encountered during the moleing process.

## **3 RESULTS**

### **3.1 Reliability of results**

3.1.1 The trenches varied in size from 1.50m length, 0.70m wide and 0.90m deep, and therefore the following interpretation is necessarily tentative. The majority of archaeological deposits of interest were encountered at a depth of roughly 0.60m from top of ground level. All trench measurements are:



<b>Trench Number</b>	<b>Trench measurements (L x W x D)</b>
1	2m x 0.80m x 0.30m
2	1.50m x 1.50m x 1m
3	2m x 0.70m x 0.80m
4	2.50m x 0.70m x 1.20m
5	1.50m x 0.70m x 0.90m
6	1.50m x 0.70m x 0.90m
7	2.90m x 1.50m x 0.80m
8	80.50m x 0.40m x 0.40m
2 extension	10.50m x 0.80m x 1m

### 3.2 Description of deposits

#### *Trench 1*

3.2.1 The trench reached a maximum depth of 0.30m and exposed only a modern concrete culvert overlain by modern levelling deposits and the car park gravel surface (1). This trench was primarily for moleing at both its northern and southern extents.

#### *Trenches 2 and 3*

3.2.2 The earliest deposit encountered was a natural flint deposit (4), which was a loose mid greyish brown clayey silt with a frequent sub angular flint inclusion. This was overlain by a subsoil (3) consisting of a mid yellowish brown clayey silt and a buried topsoil/garden soil (2) consisting of a mid blackish brown clayey silt. This deposit produced two sherds of 19th-century pottery and three pieces of 20th century ceramic building material.

3.2.3 Trench 3 was situated against the boundary wall (6) that divided the car park from the gardens of the North West Lodge. Excavation of the trench exposed the face of the wall's brick foundation, which featured an arch (7) that measured more than 1.3m wide and 0.3m high.

#### *Trench 4 (Fig. 3)*

3.2.4 The natural flint (4) was cut by pit 8 (Fig. 4 section 3; Plate 2). The feature was filled by two deposits comprising fill 9, a firm mid brownish grey silty clay with a sub angular flint inclusion, and fill 10, a moderately compact dark brownish grey silty clay with frequent gravel inclusions. Both fills were most likely the result of deliberate backfilling. No dating material was retrieved. Due to the narrowness of the trench (which was only 0.70m wide and its depth of 0.80m) the works afforded only a very limited view of this negative feature. The pit was overlain by the subsoil (3), a former topsoil layer (2) and the tarmac surface of the car park (1).

#### *Trenches 5, 6 and 7*

3.2.5 The earliest deposit encountered in these trenches was a layer of an uncertain origin (13), comprising a moderately firm mid greyish brown silty clay (Fig. 4 section 4). This deposit was





sealed by the subsoil (12) and topsoil (11). A small assemblage of 10 sherds of pottery dated to c 1830-1880 were recovered from topsoil 11.

### Trench 8

3.2.6 Trench 8 produced no significant archaeological deposits as the earliest deposit encountered was subsoil 3. This is due to the average impact depth being only 0.30m. However, towards its western extent deposit 14 was exposed, a modern levelling layer associated with the current car park. Deposit 14 was mainly encountered toward the western extent of Trench 8, reaching a maximum depth of 0.20m.

## 4 FINDS

### 4.1 Pottery

*Identified by John Cotter*

4.1.1 A total of 12 sherds of pottery weighing 288g were recovered from two contexts. This was all of later post-medieval date. The condition of the material is generally good but fragmentary. Domestic pottery typical of the 18th and 19th centuries is represented, mostly the latter. Given the small size of the assemblage a separate catalogue has not been constructed and instead the pottery is simply described and spot-dated above. Post-medieval fabric codes referred are those of the Museum of London (MoLA 2014). No further work is recommended.

Context	Description	Date
2	2 sherds (27g). 1x body sherd from the lower wall of a 19th-century jug in transfer-printed whiteware (TPW) with partial landscape scene in blue transfer. 1x dish footring base sherd and lower wall in tin-glazed earthenware (TGW). This has a yellow fabric and all over internal and external pale eggshell-blue tin glaze typical of the 18th century.	c1830-1900 (but see CBM date below)
11	10 sherds (261g). 8x sherds probably from two large sub-rectangular dishes in transfer-printed whiteware (TPW). Rims and reconstructable profile present. Both decorated in typical 'willow pattern' in blue transfer. 1x teacup rim in TPW with grey transfer printed landscape design externally with green and yellow painted highlights, floral design in green and yellow internally. 1x flat base and lower wall from a cylindrical ?ink or ?blackening bottle in 19th-century brown salt-glazed English stoneware (ENGS).	c1830-1880

### 4.2 Ceramic Building Material

*Identified by John Cotter*

4.2.1 Three pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered and are described below. No further work is recommended.

Context	Description	Date
2	3 pieces (44g). Fresh pieces from two very modern-looking bathroom/kitchen-type wall tiles, both machine-made. Fine white fabric (REFW). Two pieces	c1960-2000+



	are probably from a single tile with a white glaze with shallow square-shaped keying recesses on the back. The other piece is from a slightly thicker tile with a pale eggshell-blue glaze. The back of the latter still has a layer of rubbery yellowish adhesive still attached.	
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### 4.3 Animal Bone

*Identified by Lee Broderick*

Context	Description
2	A chopped-through fragment of medium mammal rib and a sawn cow tibia were recovered from context 2 (197g).

### 4.4 Environmental remains

- 4.4.1 No environmental material was retrieved during the archaeological watching brief as no deposits were suitable for environmental sampling.

## 5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 The works revealed no significant archaeology and deposits encountered were buried garden soils below the current carpark surface. The only feature uncovered was pit 8 in Trench 4. The pit was undated, but since it was cut into gravel natural it may have been a gravel quarry pit.
- 5.1.2 The west face of the foundation of the boundary wall that divided the car park from the gardens of the North West Lodge was exposed in Trench 3, including a brick arch. The brick arch is most likely for structural purposes, this is due to the absence of waterborne deposits or features within the trench.
- 5.1.3 Rubble levelling deposit 14 in Trench 8 provided evidence for levelling associated with the construction of the modern car park. This suggested the original gardens sloped from east to west.



**Appendix A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Description
1	Deposit		0.10	Current gravel carpark surface	Compact sandy silt mid to dark yellowish black
2	Deposit		0.32	Buried topsoil	Mid blackish brown clayey silt
3	Deposit		0.34	Subsoil	Mid yellowish brown clayey silt
4	Deposit		0.64	Natural flint deposit	Loose mid greyish brown clayey silt, 90% sub angular flint
5	Cut			Foundation cut	
6	Structure			Boundary wall	Red brick
7	Structure			Archway	Red brick not fully excavated
8	Cut	1.80+	0.50+	Possible quarry pit cut	Not fully excavated
9	Fill	1.80	0.24+	Pit fill	Firm mid brownish grey silty clay ≤10% sub angular flint
10	Fill	1.75	0.26	Pit fill	Moderately compact dark brownish grey silty clay with frequent gravel ≤20mm
11	Deposit		0.18	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay
12	Deposit		0.14	Subsoil	Moderately firm mid yellowish brown
13	Deposit		0.34	Deposit of uncertain origin	Moderately firm mid greyish brown
14	Deposit		0.20	Rubble levelling	Loose mid brownish white sandy silt with frequent to moderate degraded cbm and concrete



## Appendix B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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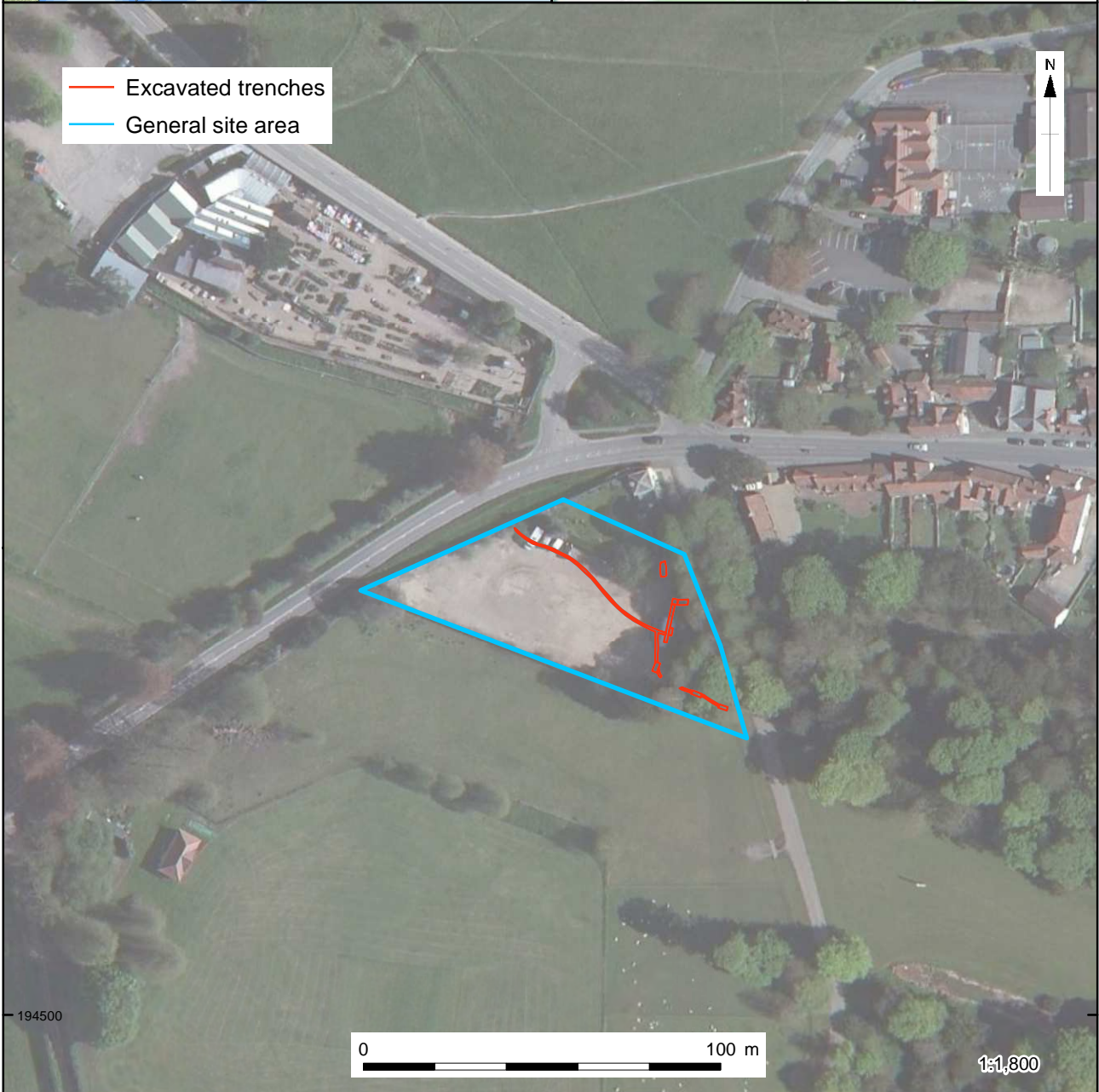
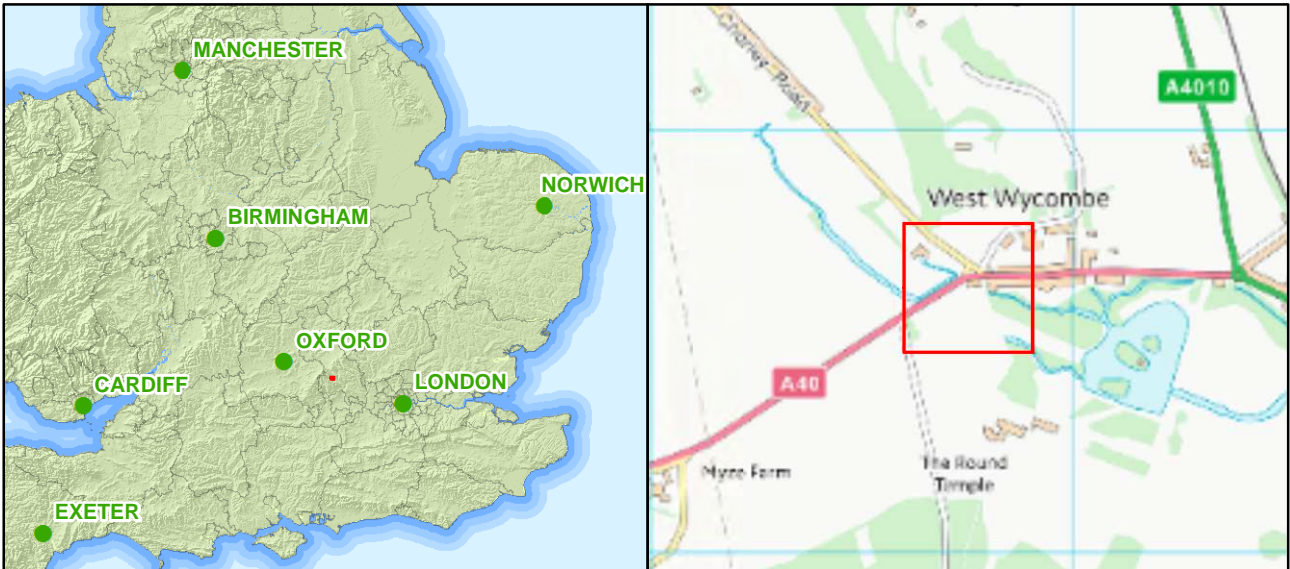
### *Other Sources*

BGS Online, <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>



**Appendix C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

Site name:	West Wycombe Park Temporary Toilets
Site code:	WWTT17
Grid reference:	SU 82773 94614
Type of watching brief:	Observation of service trenches for temporary toilets
Date and duration of project:	20th-23rd March 2016 (3 days)
Area of site:	Approximately 3.26 hectares
Summary of results:	The only feature uncovered was an undated pit, probably a gravel quarry pit. The west face of the foundation of the boundary wall that divided the car park from the gardens of the North West Lodge was exposed, including a brick arch.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently located at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES. It will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course under the accession number: AYBCM: 2017.68



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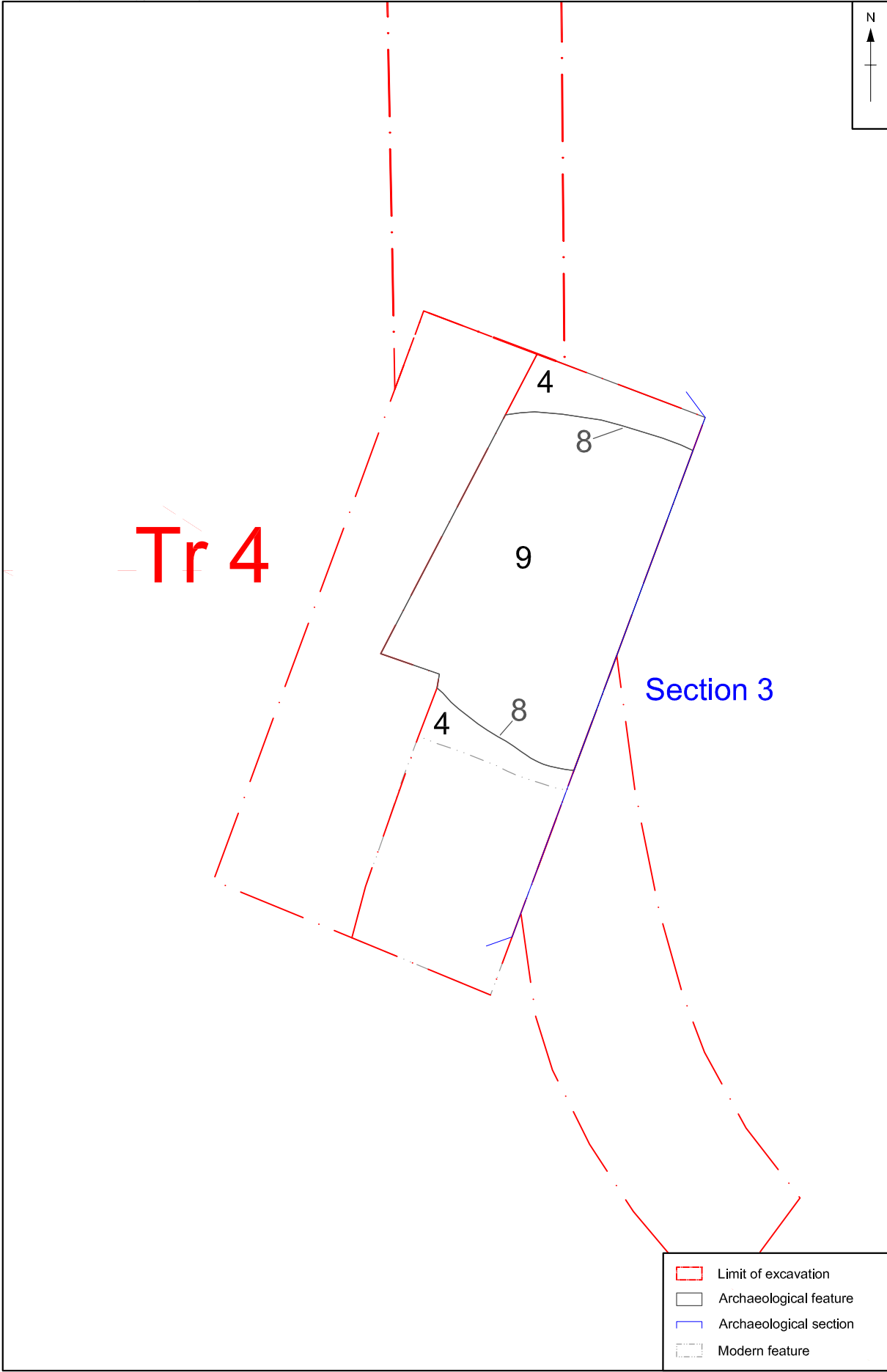
Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Trench locations

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Section 3

Tr 4

- Limit of excavation
- Archaeological feature
- Archaeological section
- Modern feature

0 1 m  
Scale at A4 1:25

Figure 3: Detailed plan of Trench 4

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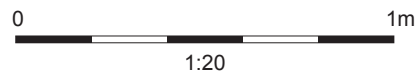
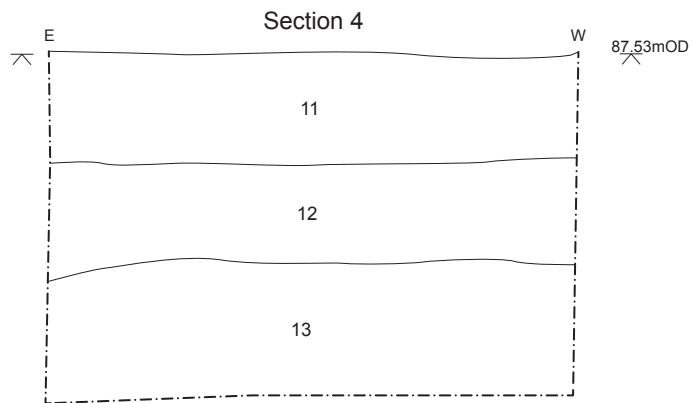
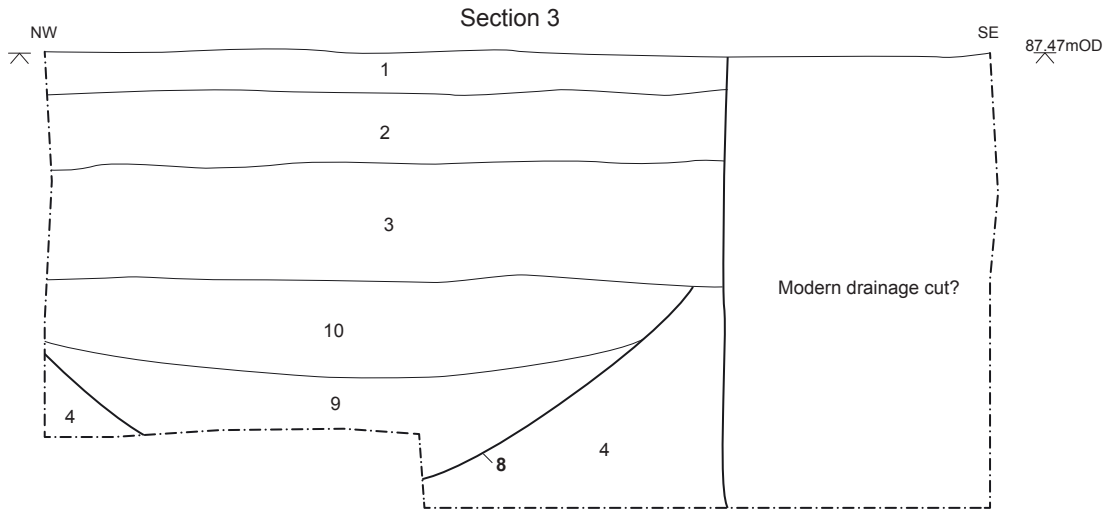


Figure 4: Section 3 and 4



Plate 1: Foundation of boundary wall 6 exposed in Trench 3, showing brick arch



Plate 2: Showing pit 8



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