

30 Sun Street
Waltham Abbey
Essex



Archaeological Report



November 2005

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(South Woodford) Ltd.**

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**30 Sun Street,
Waltham Abbey, Essex
NGR: TL 3825 0050**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between March and September 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 30 Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex (NGR: TL 3825 0050). The work was commissioned by Kensington Properties (South Woodford) Ltd., in advance of construction of side extensions and erection of a detached building to the rear. The watching brief revealed a sequence of alluvial deposition overlaid by evidence of medieval activity including a cess pit.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between March and September 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 30 Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex (NGR: TL 3825 0050). The work was commissioned by Kensington Properties (South Woodford) Ltd. in respect of a planning application for the construction of side extensions and erection of a detached building to the rear (Planning Application No. EPF/2099/03).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Vanessa Clarke, Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion (HAMP) Team Officer for Essex County Council, Historic Environment Branch (HAMP, 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 site is located on the western edge of Waltham Abbey with the old River Lea to the north-west, the Market Square to the west and the Abbey precinct to the north (Fig. 1). The site lies at approximately 20 m above OD and occupies an area of 350 m². The underlying geology is gravel terrace deposits 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 reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 Historically Waltham Abbey consisted of the Abbey and Town, which were interdependent. There appears to have been a royal estate at Waltham Abbey, and it is also the hundred meeting-place. The Saxon church also appears to have been a Minster Church. The foundations of three successive pre-Norman churches have been identified (Huggin 1982). The first church is thought to date to the 7th century, the second to the 8th century. King Harold increased the original foundation by rebuilding and extending the church and creating a college of secular canons in c.

1060. Saxon burials have been found within the monastic precinct, and a late 10th to 11th century hall to the north of the church has been excavated.
- 1.3.3 There is documentary and excavation evidence for a rectangular enclosure (known as Edleworth) within which the medieval marketplace developed. However, the angle of this enclosure in relation to the medieval settlement pattern suggests the enclosure pre-dates the market place. The line of the ditch has been excavated at several places, revealing finds dating from the Bronze Age to the medieval periods. The dating of the enclosure is therefore obscure; however it is possible that it served as a boundary to the late Saxon/early medieval settlement.
- 1.3.4 Not much is known about the Saxon settlement, but the Domesday book shows it to have had a sizeable population in 1066. The 'Viking Hall' to the north of the church is thought to lie within the area of the royal enclosure. The Minster church lay to the south of this enclosure and to the south of the church was the Saxon village.
- 1.3.5 The Domesday Book depicts a sizeable town with a growing population in 1086. In 1177 the secular canons were replaced by the Augustinian priory, which in 1184 was upgraded to Abbey status. Two further successive churches were built on the site. The fourth church was the second collegiate priory church built in c. 1090-1150. The fifth church was the Augustinian church of 1177. The monastic precinct, following its establishment in 1177, formed the dominant topographic feature in medieval and post-medieval Waltham Abbey (the walls dating to c.1370). Within the precinct were the principal abbey buildings including the church and the canons lodgings.
- 1.3.6 The medieval town lay immediately to the south of the monastic precinct. Some of the current street-plan is that of the medieval town. The oldest portion of it appears to be that closest to the church and market place, although it expanded to the east, south and west over the centuries. From Market Square and parallel to the monastic precinct wall runs Sun Street (originally East Street). Excavation at the rear of 1-5 Sun Street, adjacent to Market Square revealed part of an 11th century ditch, which was possibly part of the Edleworth enclosure and a large pit containing butchered bone, suggesting that in the post-medieval period the yards off Sun Street were used as shambles as part of the livestock market. Finds from a number of small-scale excavations at the east of Sun Street suggest that the occupation of the area began in the 13th century. At 46 Sun Street, pits containing poisonous plants including black herbsbane and less hemlock were recovered in association with 16th century pottery (EHCR 3487).
- 1.3.7 The abbey was dissolved in 1540, and by 1550's the demolition of the main portion of the abbey buildings had taken place, with the exception of the nave of the monastic church, which was retained as a parish church. In 1590's Abbey House was built immediately to the north-east of the church.
- 1.3.8 Waltham Abbey is one of the most extensively excavated towns in Essex, largely due to the work of the Waltham Abbey Historical Society who have conducted numerous

excavations since 1966, both within the monastic precinct and in the historic town. These include excavations at no.s 1-5, 8, 12, 41, 43A, 46, and 48 and Sun Street Car Park site. The Market Square, Sun Street and Church Street have been described as probably the most archaeologically informative areas within the area of the medieval town (Medlycott 1999).

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, in particular features and deposits associated with the Saxon, Medieval and post-medieval settlement at Waltham Abbey.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any features or deposits that may be damaged or removed during the course of the development.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was undertaken as a series of site visits in order to monitor and record any ground intrusive works likely to expose, disturb or damage archaeological deposits.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of these works and the location of recorded sections was drawn at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and the recorded 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

Section 1 (Figs 2 and 3)

- 3.1.1 The natural orange-brown clay (106) was encountered at a depth of 1.6 m below the current ground level. This was cut by a 1.1 m deep circular feature (105) of 1.3 m diameter. This was filled by an olive-grey silt (104), which contained a high organic content and which produced animal bone, oyster shell, shards of pottery and a fragment of peg tile, suggesting a rubbish or cess pit. The pottery provisionally dated as medieval. This was sealed by a 0.25 m thick layer of light grey-brown silt (103), which also produced medieval pottery and probably represents an occupation layer. Overlying 103 was a 0.8 m deep layer of grey-brown clay silt (102) which produced Medieval pottery and represents a second occupation layer.

- 3.1.2 This was overlaid by a 0.25 m thick layer of black silt and brick fragments (101), a probable construction layer associated with the construction of the standing property. Sealing 101 was a 0.4 m thick layer of dark brown silt loam (100) containing brick fragments, a modern landscaping deposit.

Section 2 (Figs 2 and 3)

- 3.1.3 A layer of dark grey-brown clay (111), an alluvial deposit, was observed at a depth of 1.3 m below ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.2 m thick layer of orange-brown clay (112) also an alluvial deposit. Overlying this was a 0.25 m deep layer of grey-brown loamy clay (109) another alluvial deposit. This was sealed by a 0.2 m thick layer of grey-brown loamy clay (108). Containing many limestone and flint fragments, this represents a layer of made ground.
- 3.1.4 This was overlaid by a 0.2 m deep layer of orange-brown sandy clay (107), a probable layer of made ground. Sealing 107 was a 0.18 m thick layer of black silt and brick fragments which could be seen to be a continuation of 101, a layer of made ground. This was overlaid by a 0.25 m thick deposit of the modern landscaping layer (100).

Sections 3 (Figs 2 and 3)

- 3.1.5 The natural, a layer of brown clay loam (116) was encountered at a depth of 0.7 m below ground level. This had been cut by a foundation trench (125). This contained the 0.3 m thick concrete footing (118) upon which the brick foundations (117) were built. The space between the brick foundations and the edge of the foundation trench was filled by a 0.1 m thick layer of orange silty clay (115), a 0.12 m thick layer of brown loam (114) and a 0.5 m deep layer of reddish brown clay loam (113). Butting up to 117 and sealing 113 was a 0.12 m thick layer of cement mortar forming the bed for the stone set surface (112). This had been sealed by a modern concrete surface, 0.08 m deep, the present day floor level.

Sections 4 (Figs 2 and 3)

- 3.1.6 A layer of grey silty sand (119) was encountered 1.1 m below ground level. This produced fragments of 19th century building rubble and represents a layer of made ground. Cutting the made ground within section 4 (and forming the face within section 3) was a construction cut (125), up to 0.6 m in depth. This contained the 0.35 m deep concrete footings (118) upon which the foundations of the standing brick walls (117) were built.

Section 5 (Figs 2 and 3)

- 3.1.7 Within section 5, a layer of dark brown sandy loam alluvium (124) in excess of 0.5 m depth was encountered at a depth of 1.2 m below ground level. This was sealed by a 0.45 m thick layer of light orange-brown silt clay (123), a layer of alluvium. Overlying this was a 0.3 m deep layer of dark brown silty loam (122) another layer of alluvium. This was overlaid by a 0.4 m thick layer of grey clay sand (121), a layer

of made ground, which is a probable continuation of layer 119 within section 4. This layer was cut by a construction cut (125), which contained the continuation of the wall footings (117). The 0.08 m thick modern yard concrete yard surface (120) partially overlaid the top of these foundations.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Fragments of sand tempered ware were recovered from contexts 102, 103, 104 and 108. These fragments have been identified as fragments of cooking vessels dating to the late medieval period, 15th and 16th century. Fragments of clay peg tiles were recovered from contexts 103 and 104, while fragments of bone and shell were also recovered from 104, the fill of cess pit 105.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 Due to depth and inaccessibility of the trenches, it was deemed as unsafe to collect samples from the trench sides, while the excavated material was too contaminated to be suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 A sequence of alluvial deposits (109, 110 and 111 within section 2 and 122, 123 and 124 within section 5) was exposed within some areas of the site. These produced no dating evidence and may be pre-historic in date and may represent paleo-channels. A cesspit whose contents produced medieval dated finds was observed. This was sealed by layers also producing artefacts dating to the medieval period suggesting occupation or activity within the development area during this period. The lack of evidence for structures and the composition of the deposits suggests this may have been on the margin of medieval activity, possibly as pasture or market gardens.
- 4.1.2 There is a gap in dating evidence between the medieval period and the late post-medieval possibly suggesting a contraction of the town in that period, with the 19th century expansion of housing finally developing the site.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/ Height</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
100	Layer	0.4 m	-	Modern made ground	-	C20th
101	Layer	0.28 m	-	Modern made ground	-	C20th
102	Layer	0.75 m	-	Made ground	Pot	Medieval
103	Layer	0.25 m	-	Made ground	Pot	Medieval
104	Fill	1.1 m	1.3 m	Fill of cess pit	Pot. Bone, Tile	Medieval
105	Cut	1.1 m	1.3 m	Circular cess pit	-	Medieval
106	Layer	> 0.3m	-	Natural clay	-	-
107	Layer	0.18 m	-	Made ground	-	-
108	Layer	0.2 m	-	Made ground	Pot	Medieval ?
109	Layer	0.55 m	-	Alluvium	-	-
110	Layer	0.2 m	-	Alluvium	-	-
111	Layer	0.1 m	-	Alluvium	-	-
112	Surface	0.1 m	-	Stone set floor	-	C19th
113	Layer	0.55 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th
114	Layer	0.1 m	-	Construction debris	-	C19th
115	Fill	0.1 m	-	Upper backfill of foundation trench	-	C19th
116	Fill	> 0.6 m	-	Lower backfill of foundation trench	-	C19th
117	Structure	> 1.3 m	-	Brick foundations of house	-	C19th
118	Structure	0.32 m	-	Concrete/mortar plinth for foundations 117	-	C19th
119	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th/C20th
120	Layer	0.08 m	-	Modern concrete yard surface	-	C20th
121	Layer	0.37 m	-	Modern made ground	-	C20th
122	Layer	0.3 m	-	Possible alluvium	-	-
123	Layer	0.46 m	-	Possible alluvium	-	-
124	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Alluvium	-	-
125	Cut	0.65 m	-	Construction cut for structure 117	-	C19th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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OA, 2000 *OA Environmental Guidelines for sampling*

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APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: 30 Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex

Site code: 2004.496

Grid reference: TL 3825 0050

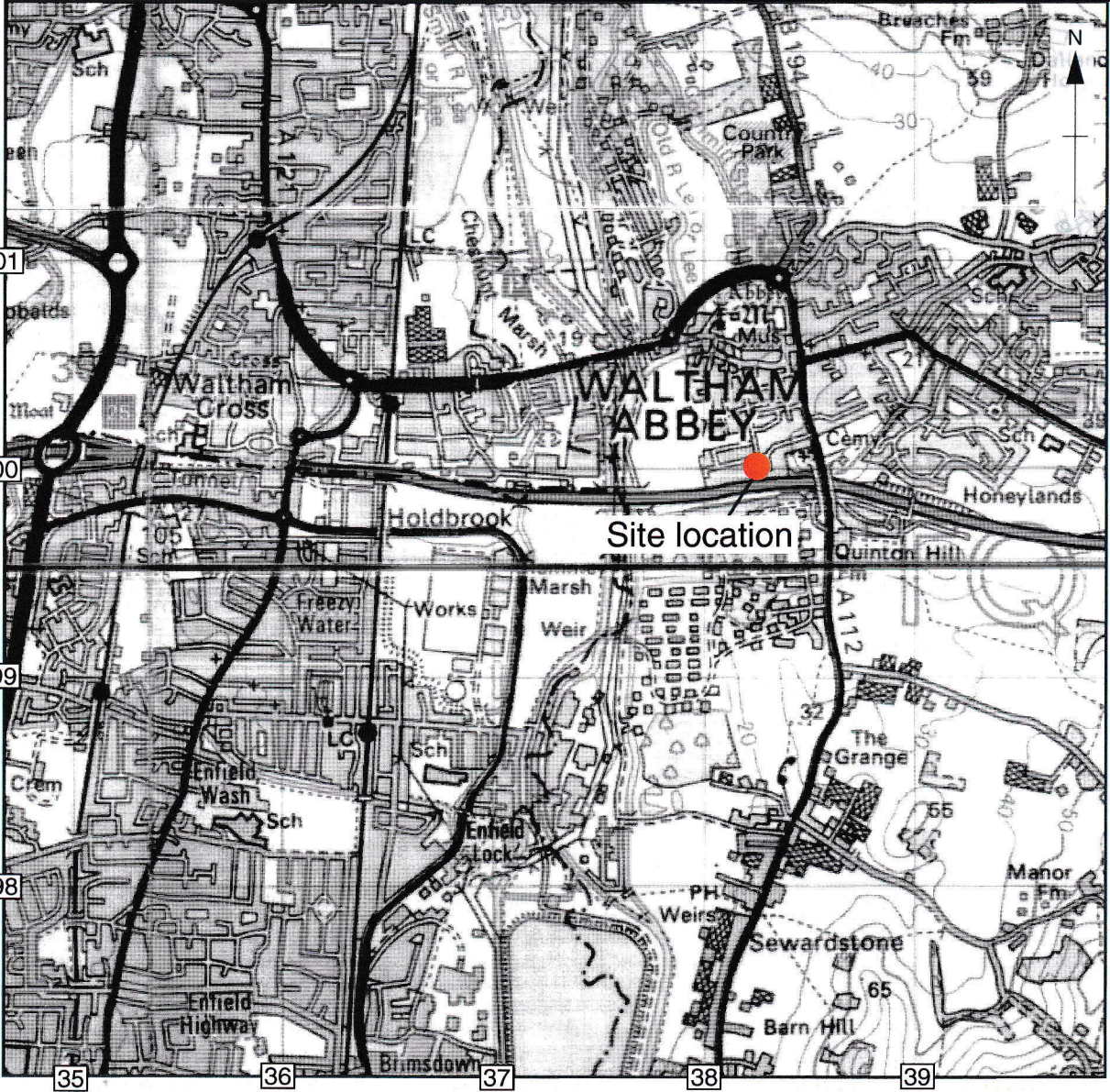
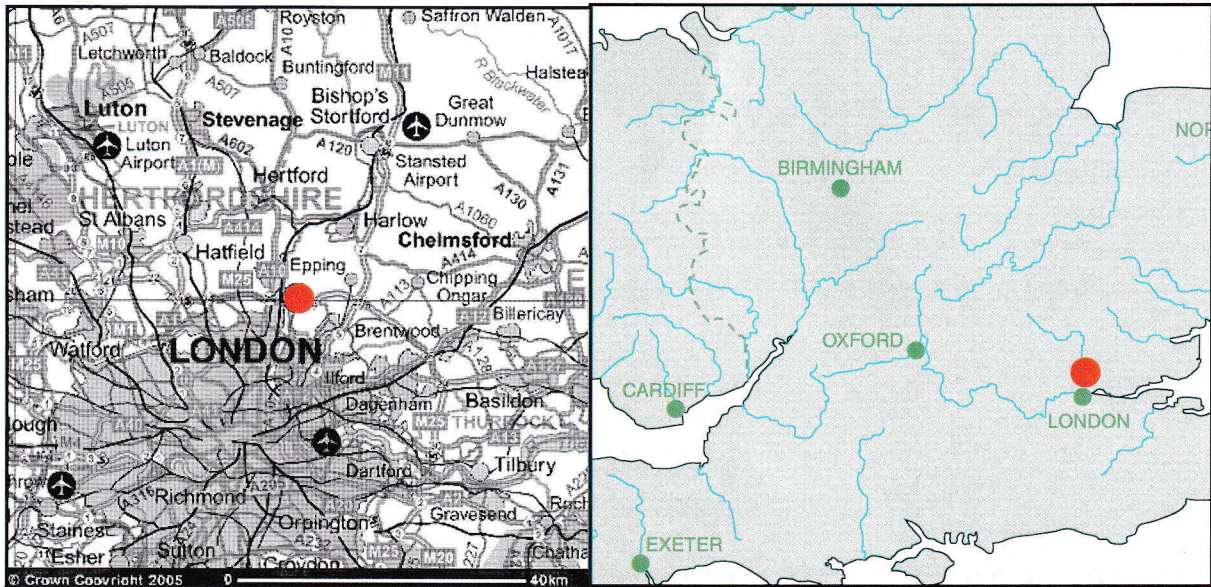
Type of watching brief: Monitoring of hand dug foundation trenches.

Date and duration of project: Monitored between March and September 2005, 7 months.

Area of site: 350 m²

Summary of results: Medieval occupation levels overlaid by 19th century construction

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Epping Forest District Museum in due course, under the following accession number: 2004.496

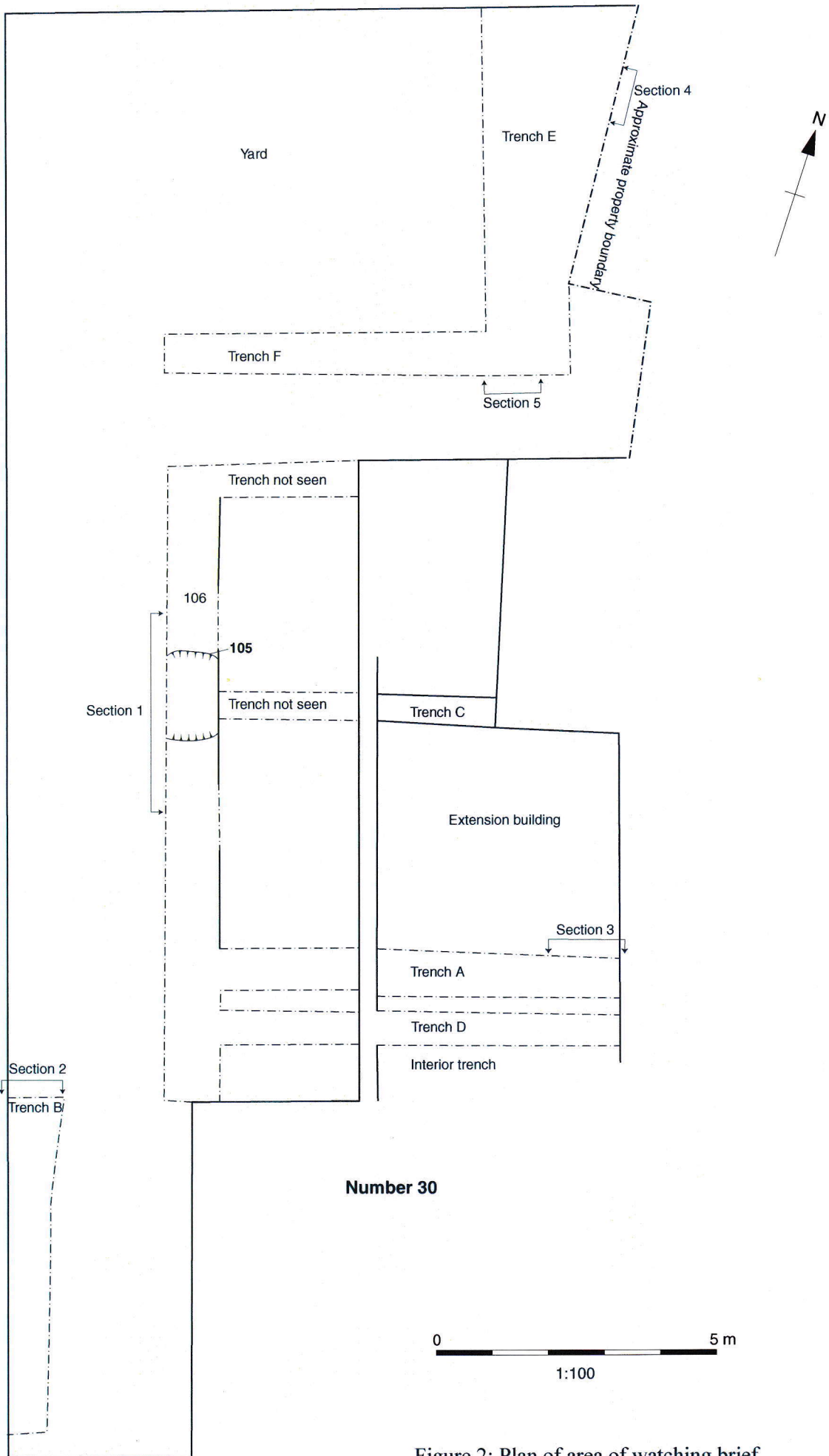


Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

Plan 1



Number 30

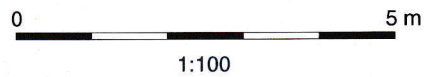
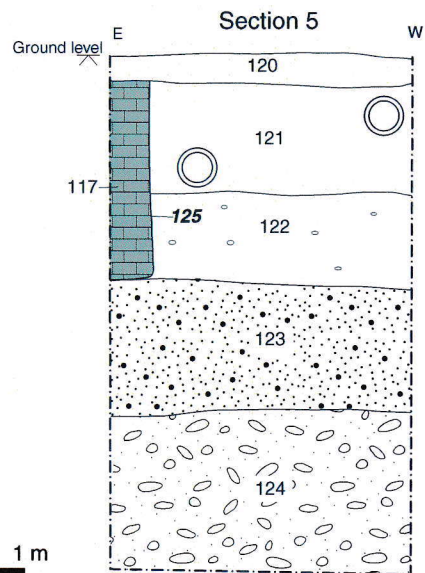
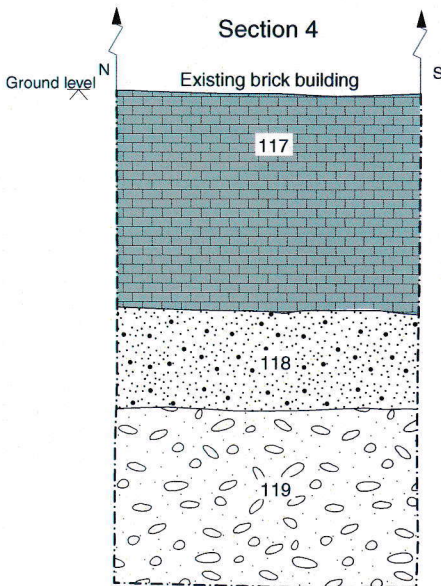
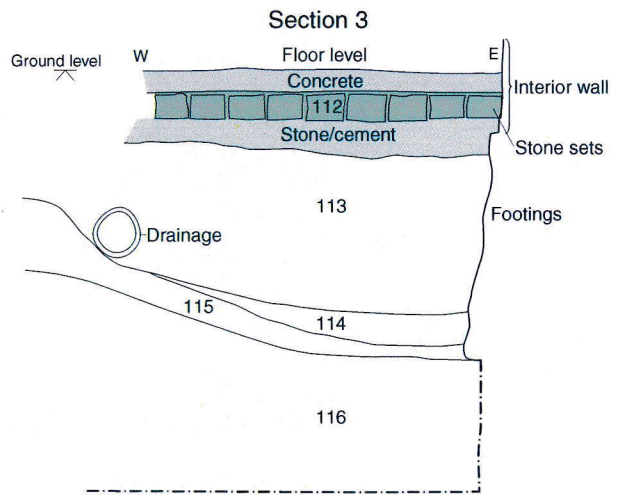
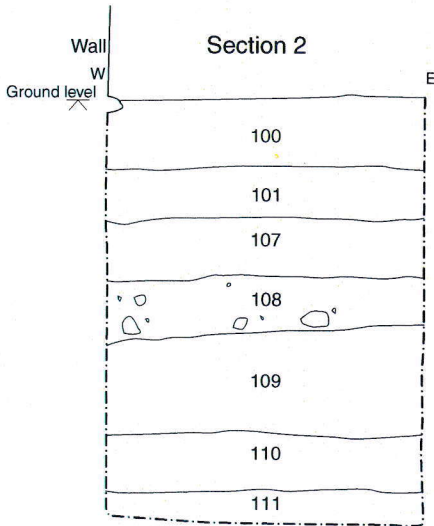
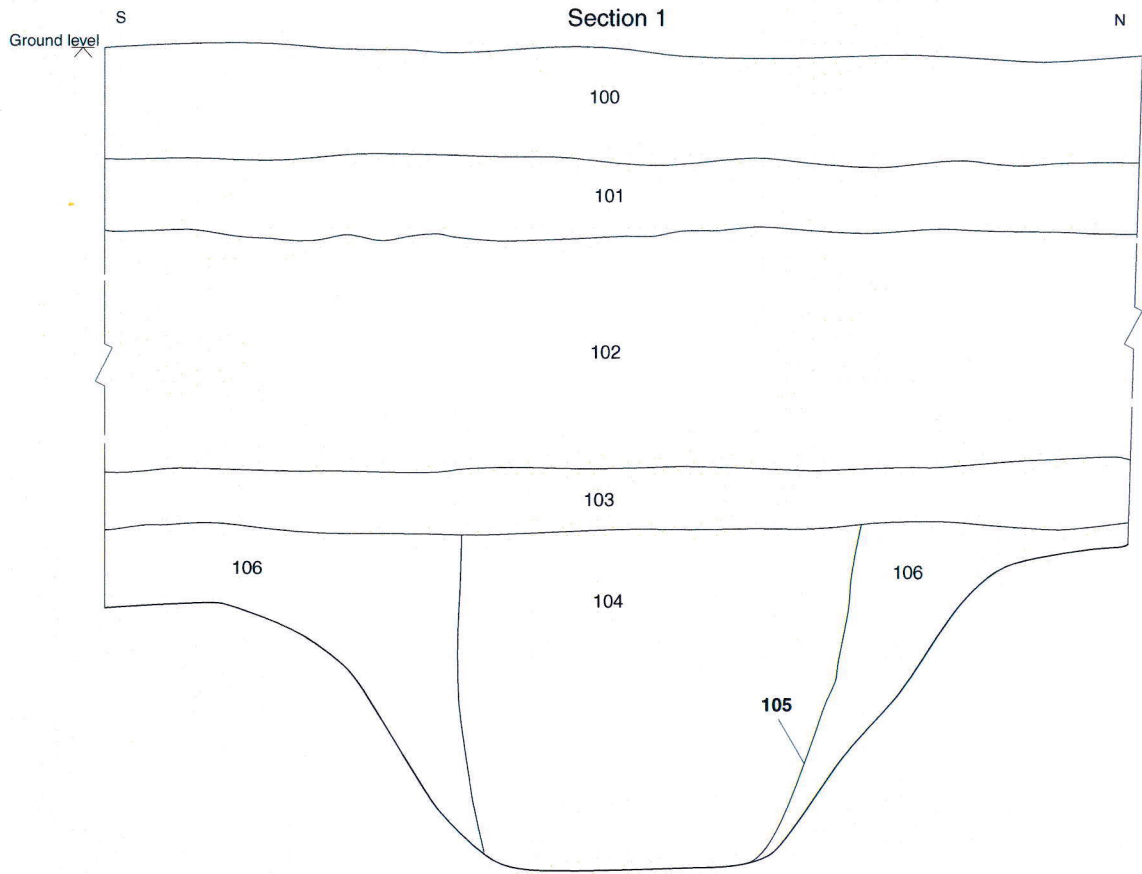


Figure 2: Plan of area of watching brief.



1:25

Figure 3: Sections 1 to 5.



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