



# St Edmund Hall, Old Dining Hall Ramp, Oxford

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

October 2020

**Client: St Edmund Hall, Oxford**

Issue No: 1

OA Reference No: OXEDODWB

NGR: SP 5185 0630

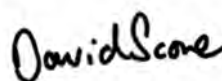




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Issue No: 1  
Date: October 2020  
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## *St Edmund Hall, Old Dining Hall Ramp, Oxford*

### *Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*Written by Elizabeth Kennard*

*With contributions from John Cotter, Rebecca Nicholson and  
illustrations by Charles Rousseaux and Anne Kilgour.*

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## Summary

*Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Original Field of Architecture on behalf of St Edmund Hall, Oxford to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new disabled access ramp for the 17<sup>th</sup> century Grade I listed Old Dining Hall on the west side of Front Quad at St Edmund Hall, Queen's Lane, Oxford. The site is centered on NGR SP 5185 0630.*

*A single trench measuring 10.50m (N-S) by 2.30m (E-W) was machine excavated to between 0.45m and 0.60m below existing ground level (bgl) (60.27maOD) and was located adjacent to the eastern wall of the Old Dining Hall within the Front Quad. Archaeology was encountered from 0.14m below ground level, downwards to the limit of excavation (max. 0.65m bgl) at 60.27maOD; further archaeological deposits undoubtedly lie below this level.*

*The earliest deposit encountered within the trench was an undated garden soil, a possible limestone surface and a garden soil dating from the late medieval to early post-medieval period. These deposits probably predate the construction of the existing college West Range and indicate survival of late medieval-early post-medieval archaeological sequences at the site.*

*The limestone foundations for the Old Dining Hall were partially revealed. The joint between foundation and wall probably indicates the level of construction for the existing West Range, and although no construction cut was visible, this horizon appears to separate the pre mid-17th century archaeological sequence (including late medieval deposits) from the post mid-17th century deposits.*

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## Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Andrew Dawson from Original Field of Architecture for commissioning this project and St Edmund Hall for funding the project. Thanks are also extended to David Radford who monitored the works on behalf of Oxford City Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Ben Ford MCIFA. The fieldwork was undertaken by Elizabeth Kennard. Thanks is also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Leigh Allen and prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.



## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Scope of work**

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Original Field of Architecture on behalf of St Edmund Hall, Oxford to undertake an archaeological watching brief within the Front Quad during the construction of a new access ramp to the Old Dining Hall at St Edmund Hall, Queen's Lane, Oxford.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a Condition of Planning Permission (Ref. 20/00961/FUL). A written scheme of investigation (WSI) (OA 2020) was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the Planning Condition.
- 1.1.3 This document details the results of the archaeological watching brief. All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies and according to the standards and guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA 2014).

### **1.2 Location, topography and geology**

- 1.2.1 The college lies within the north-eastern extent former walled medieval historic core of Oxford, on land bounded by Queen's Lane (to the west), St Peter in the East (to the north) the City Wall (to the east), and the rear boundaries to a complex of multiple buildings fronting onto both Queen's Lane and the High Street (to the south). The Old Dining Hall is situated in the western range of the Front Quad at National Grid Reference (NGR) SP 5185 0630 (Figs 1 and 2).
- 1.2.2 Topographically St Edmund Hall sits towards the eastern extent of an elevated and well-drained gravel promontory (defined by the Thames to the west and Cherwell to the east), upon which medieval Oxford developed.
- 1.2.3 The site itself currently occupies relatively level ground at approximately 61m above ordnance datum (aOD). The underlying geology is Second Terrace River Gravel and Oxford Clay (BGS Sheet 236).

### **1.3 Archaeological and historical background**

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background has been described within the written scheme of investigation by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2020) and will not be reproduced here.

## 2 WATCHING BRIEF AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 General

2.1.1 The general aims of the watching brief were to determine and understand the nature, function, and character of any archaeological remains within their cultural and environmental setting. Other general aims included:

- i. to determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence,
- ii. establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the area of groundworks,
- iii. determine and confirm the character of any remains present,
- iv. determine or estimate the date range of any remains from artefacts or otherwise,
- v. establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits within the site and to take samples where appropriate,
- vi. to generate an accessible and useable archive which will allow future research to be undertaken if appropriate,
- vii. to disseminate the results of the work in a format and manner proportionate to the significance of the findings.

### 2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the watching brief were:

- viii. to seek to avoid any unnecessary loss of significant archaeology,
- ix. to pay specific regard to the potential for medieval and post-medieval remains.
- x. ensure that where there is an unavoidable impact on archaeological remains that an adequate record is produced,
- xi. to record and leave any human remains that may be revealed *in-situ*
- xii. to collect technical data as to the absolute height of the first significant archaeological horizon and full depth and nature of archaeological sequence (where practical)
- xiii. to use the data gathered to inform the project architects and engineers.

### 2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 A single trench measuring 10.50m (N-S) by 2.30m (E-W) was machine excavated by Richard Ward contractors using a toothless bucket to 60.27m OD, 0.60m bgl at the southern end and 0.44m bgl at the northern end of the trench. An archaeologist was in attendance throughout these groundworks to record the stratigraphical sequence, and any archaeological remains within the trench. The watching brief was undertaken using Oxford Archaeology's general approach to excavation and recording as outlined in the WSI (OA 2020).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the watching brief are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the archaeological remains. The full details with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are presented in Appendix B.

### 3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence throughout the trench was relatively uniform with garden soils and occasional surfaces overlain by modern service trenches.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the watching brief were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify.

### 3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 The trench was located adjacent to the eastern wall of the Old Dining Hall within the Front Quad (Figure 2). It measured 10.50m (N-S) by 2.30m (E-W) and was machine excavated to 0.60m bgl (60.27m aOD).

3.3.2 The deepest archaeological sequence was seen in the south-western part of the trench. Here the earliest archaeological remains encountered comprised a garden soil deposit (5). This was a firm mid pinkish-brown sandy silt seen in the south-west corner at the base of the trench (60.22m aOD). It was overlain by the remains of a limestone-rich layer (4), which, as the limestones were laid horizontally, was possibly a 'surface' at 60.41m aOD. The limestones were within a matrix of compact mid greyish-brown clayey silt with orange clay mottling and were also only seen in the south-west corner (Fig. 3, Plate 2). Garden soil (3) (Fig. 4, Plate 1), seen at 60.48m aOD, overlay this 'surface', and was observed across nearly the whole base of the trench at the limit of excavation. It was a firm dark greyish-brown clayey silt containing frequent inclusions of pottery dated to 1480-1550 AD, charcoal, animal bone, limestone fragments and flint gravel, and spanned the entire length of the trench.

3.3.3 Probably cutting these three earlier deposits, but not discernable, was the construction cut for the stone foundations (12) which supported the east wall of the Old Dining Hall (13), built in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century (<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/oxon/pp100-103>). These were revealed along the western extent of the trench. The foundations were made from roughly shaped limestone in a random, but roughly coursed bond, with pale coarse yellowish-grey sandy mortar (Fig. 4, Plate 3).

3.3.4 Garden Soil (3) was overlain by a second garden soil (6), at 60.76m aOD, which consisted of a compact mid greyish-brown clayey silt containing charcoal and animal bone fragments and was only seen beneath the steps of the Old Dining Hall in the north of the trench.

3.3.5 Foundation (12) was also abutted by a sealed-up and disused brick-built coal chute (11), and further truncated by east-west modern service trenches which were seen in

section 3 at the southern limit of excavation (8), and towards the northern end of trench leading to a modern concrete service duct (9), which defined the eastern limit of excavation at the northern end of the trench.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 Archaeology was encountered from 0.14m bgl downwards to the limit of excavation (max. 0.65m bgl) at 60.27m aOD, further archaeological deposits undoubtedly lie below this level.
- 4.1.2 The earliest deposit encountered within the trench was an undated garden soil (5), overlain by a possible surface of horizontally laid limestones(4), which was in turn overlain by a later garden soil dating from the late medieval to early post-medieval period (3). These deposits probably predate the construction of the West Range and indicate survival of late medieval-early post-medieval archaeological sequences at the site.
- 4.1.3 The limestone foundations (12) for the Old Dining Hall, were partially revealed, these probably date to the construction of the building, along with the remainder of the West Range, in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century (<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/oxon/pp100-103>). The joint between the rougher stonework of the foundation and neat ashlar-built stone-work of the wall probably indicates the level the West Range (Old Dining Hall) was originally constructed from, and although no construction cut was visible (probably because the building was 'trench-built, where the fabric of the foundation is built up to and against the construction cut), this horizon appears to separate the pre mid-17<sup>th</sup> century archaeological sequence (including late medieval deposits) from the post mid-17<sup>th</sup> century deposits.
- 4.1.4 A later garden soil was seen in the northern end of the trench beneath the steps for the Dining Hall. Various modern services routes were observed truncating the archaeological sequence encountered within the trench as well as cutting through the Old Dining Hall wall, this included a disused and sealed brick-built coal chute (11).

## APPENDIX A DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1 (WB1)						
<b>General description</b>				<b>Orientation</b>	E-W	
<p>The trench measured 10.50m (N-S) by 2.30m (E-W) and was excavated to 60.27m aOD, (0.60m bgl in the South and 0.44m bgl in the north). It consisted of the Dining Hall foundations (12), which were seen from ground level (60.87m aOD), though no construction cut was observed. Garden soil 5, 60.22m aOD, which was overlaid by cobbled surface 4, 60.41m aOD, which was subsequently overlaid by garden soil 3, 60.48m aOD. This was in turn overlaid by made ground 6, 60.76m aOD, which was seen beneath the steps for the old dining hall in the north of the trench, and East-West service trench 7, 60.57m aOD, in the south. Service trench 7 was overlaid by poured concrete 2, 60.57m aOD. Made ground 6 was truncated by modern service trench 9 and bricked up coal chute 11, 60.61m aOD. All was overlaid by current slab surface and concrete bedding 1.</p>				<b>Length (m)</b>	30	
				<b>Width (m)</b>	2	
				<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.30	
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.30	Concrete slab and bedding	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.18	Concrete	-	-
3	Layer	-	>0.20	Garden soil	Pottery Animal bone	1480-1550 -
4	Layer	-	0.10	Cobbled surface	-	-
5	Layer	-	>0.02	Garden soil	-	-
6	Layer	-	0.20	Made ground/Garden soil	-	-
7	Cut	-	0.12	Service trench	-	-
8	Fill	-	0.12	Fill of 7	-	-
9	Cut	>8.00	>0.44	Construction cut	-	-
10	Fill	>8.00	>0.44	Fill of 9	-	-
11	Structure	2.00	0.40	Coal Shute	-	-
12	Structure	>1.20	>0.60	Foundation wall	-	-
13	Structure	-	-	Dining Hall wall	-	-

## APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

### Post-Roman Pottery by John Cotter

#### *Introduction and methodology*

- B.1.1 A total of 4 sherds of pottery weighing 206g were recovered from a single context. Given the small quantity present, this has not been separately catalogued but is fully described below. Medieval fabric codes referred to are those of the Oxfordshire type series (Mellor 1994), whereas post-medieval fabric codes are those of the Museum of London (MoLA 2014).

#### *Description*

- B.1.2 **Context (3) Spot-date: c 1480-1550.** Description: 4 sherds (weight 206g). The sherds, which are large and fresh, come from three vessels. The largest piece is from the frilled base of a Raeren stoneware drinking jug (RAER, c 1480-1550), imported from Germany (approx. 45% of the base circumference present). The other 3 sherds are in late medieval Brill/Boarstall ware (OXBX, c 1400-1625). These comprise two joining sherds from the flat base of a large jar or jug, and a yellow-glazed sherd from the base of another vessel. All these pottery fabrics are commonly found in central Oxford.

#### *Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material*

- B.1.3 The pottery has little potential for further analysis and could be discarded if so desired.

### Animal Bone by Rebecca Nicholson

#### *Introduction*

- B.1.4 A total of thirteen bone fragments weighing 103g was recovered from a single context (3) which has been spot dated to c. 1480-1550 based on pottery. Bones were recorded using a modern comparative bone collection, with readily identifiable elements identified to species or family. Large mammal indicates animals of cattle, horse or red deer size, medium mammal indicates animals of pig, sheep/goat, roe deer, dog and cat size. Due to the small number of fragments, the bone has not been separately catalogued.

#### *The assemblage*

- B.1.5 Bone condition is fair to good, but bones are incomplete, often exhibiting fresh breaks. No fragments could be determined to species: the assemblage comprises four fragments of large mammal rib, one medium mammal rib, one fragment of large mammal pelvis, one fragment probably from a large mammal mandible ramus and six small indeterminate fragments of mammal bone. There are no butchery marks or pathologies evident.

---

***Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material***

B.1.6 The animal bone has no potential for further analysis and consequently retention in the archive is not recommended



## APPENDIX C      BIBLIOGRAPHY

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**APPENDIX D****SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>Site name:</b>	St Edmund Hall, Old Dining Hall Ramp, Oxford
<b>Site code:</b>	OXEDOD20
<b>Grid Reference</b>	SP 5185 0630
<b>Type:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>Date and duration:</b>	August 2020 (5 days)
<b>Area of Site</b>	615sqm
<b>Location of archive:</b>	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus house, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Services in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS : 2020.69.

**Summary of Results:** Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Original Field of Architecture on behalf of St Edmund Hall, Oxford to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new disabled access ramp for the 17<sup>th</sup> century Grade I listed Old Dining Hall on the west side of Front Quad at St Edmund Hall, Queen's Lane, Oxford. The site is centered on NGR SP 5185 0630.

A single trench measuring 10.50m (N-S) by 2.30m (E-W) was machine excavated to between 0.45m and 0.60m below existing ground level (bgl) (60.27maOD) and was located adjacent to the eastern wall of the Old Dining Hall within the Front Quad. Archaeology was encountered from 0.14m below ground level, downwards to the limit of excavation (max. 0.65m bgl) at 60.27maOD; further archaeological deposits undoubtedly lie below this level.

The earliest deposit encountered within the trench was an undated garden soil, a possible limestone surface and a garden soil dating from the late medieval to early post-medieval period. These deposits probably predate the construction of the existing college West Range and indicate survival of late medieval-early post-medieval archaeological sequences at the site.

The limestone foundations for the Old Dining Hall were partially revealed. The joint between foundation and wall probably indicates the level of construction for the existing West Range, and although no construction cut was visible, this horizon appears to separate the pre mid-17th century archaeological sequence (including late medieval deposits) from the post mid-17th century deposits.

### Project Details

OASIS Number			
Project Name			
Start of Fieldwork		End of Fieldwork	
Previous Work		Future Work	

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code		Planning App. No.	
HER Number		Related Numbers	
Prompt			
Development Type			
Place in Planning Process	Choose an item.		

### Techniques used (tick all that apply)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography – interpretation | <input type="checkbox"/> Grab-sampling          | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new            | <input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-core           | <input type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning         | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Augering                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey        | <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey          | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors        | <input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey       | <input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling              | <input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey    | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography  | <input type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief                         |

Monument	Period	Object	Period
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.

Insert more lines as appropriate.

### Project Location

County		Address (including Postcode)
District		
Parish		
HER office		
Size of Study Area		
National Grid Ref		

### Project Originators

Organisation	
Project Brief Originator	
Project Design Originator	
Project Manager	
Project Supervisor	

## Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)		
Digital Archive		
Paper Archive		

Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Human Remains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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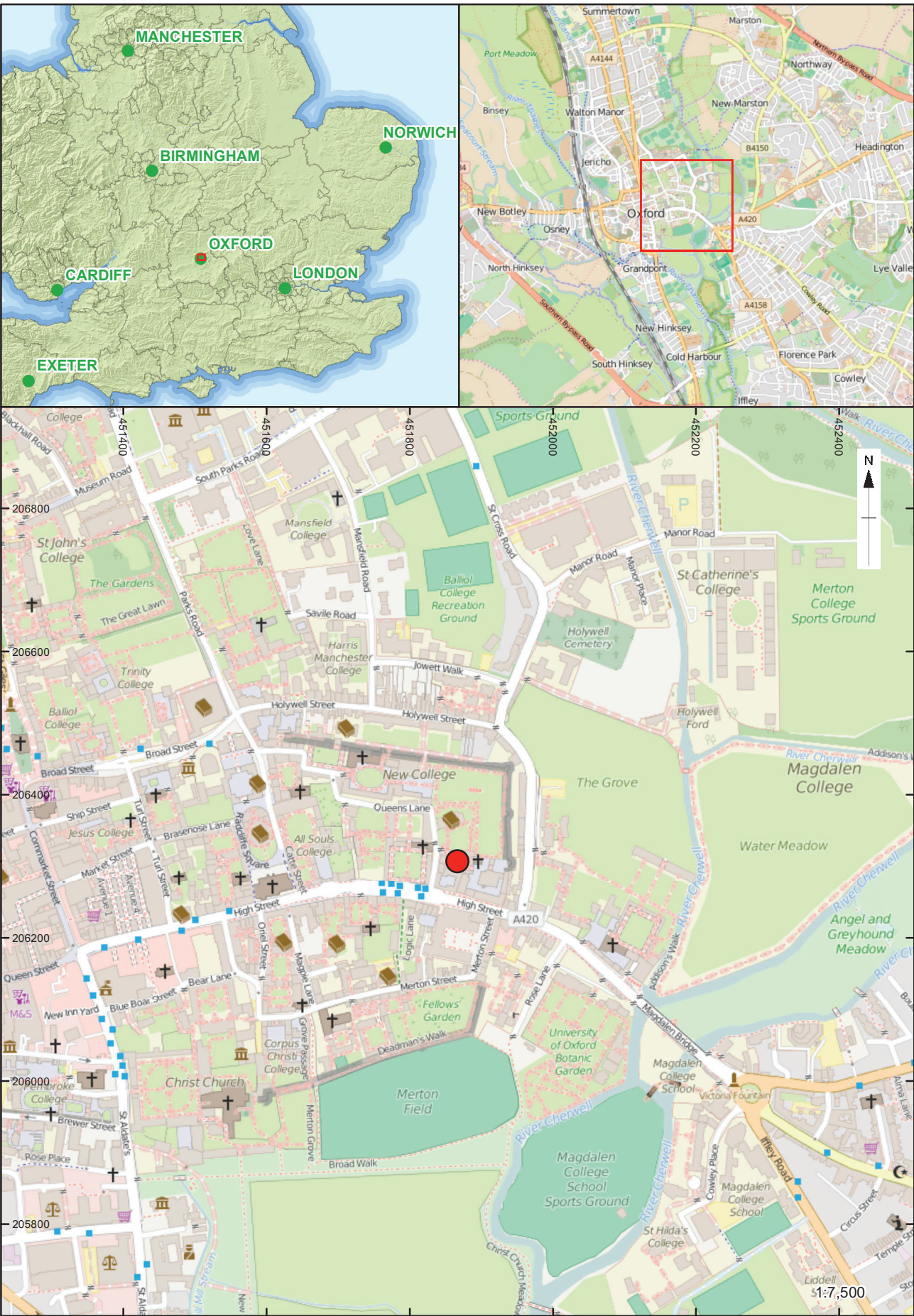
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GIS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images (Digital photos)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Illustrations (Figures/Plates)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text	<input type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Paper Media

Aerial Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Context Sheets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map	<input type="checkbox"/>
Matrices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microfiche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research/Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sections	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Further Comments



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Figure 1: Site location map

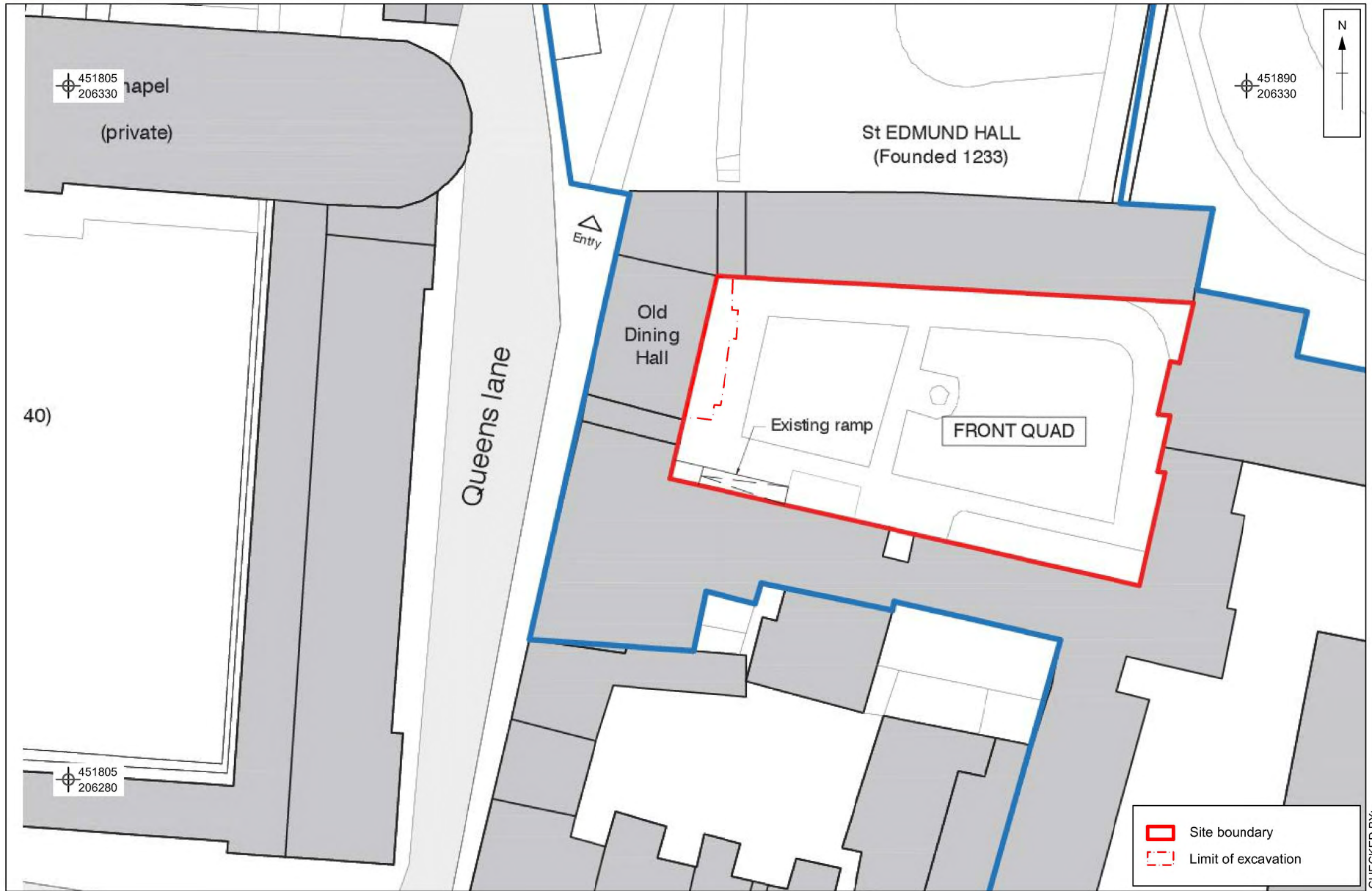
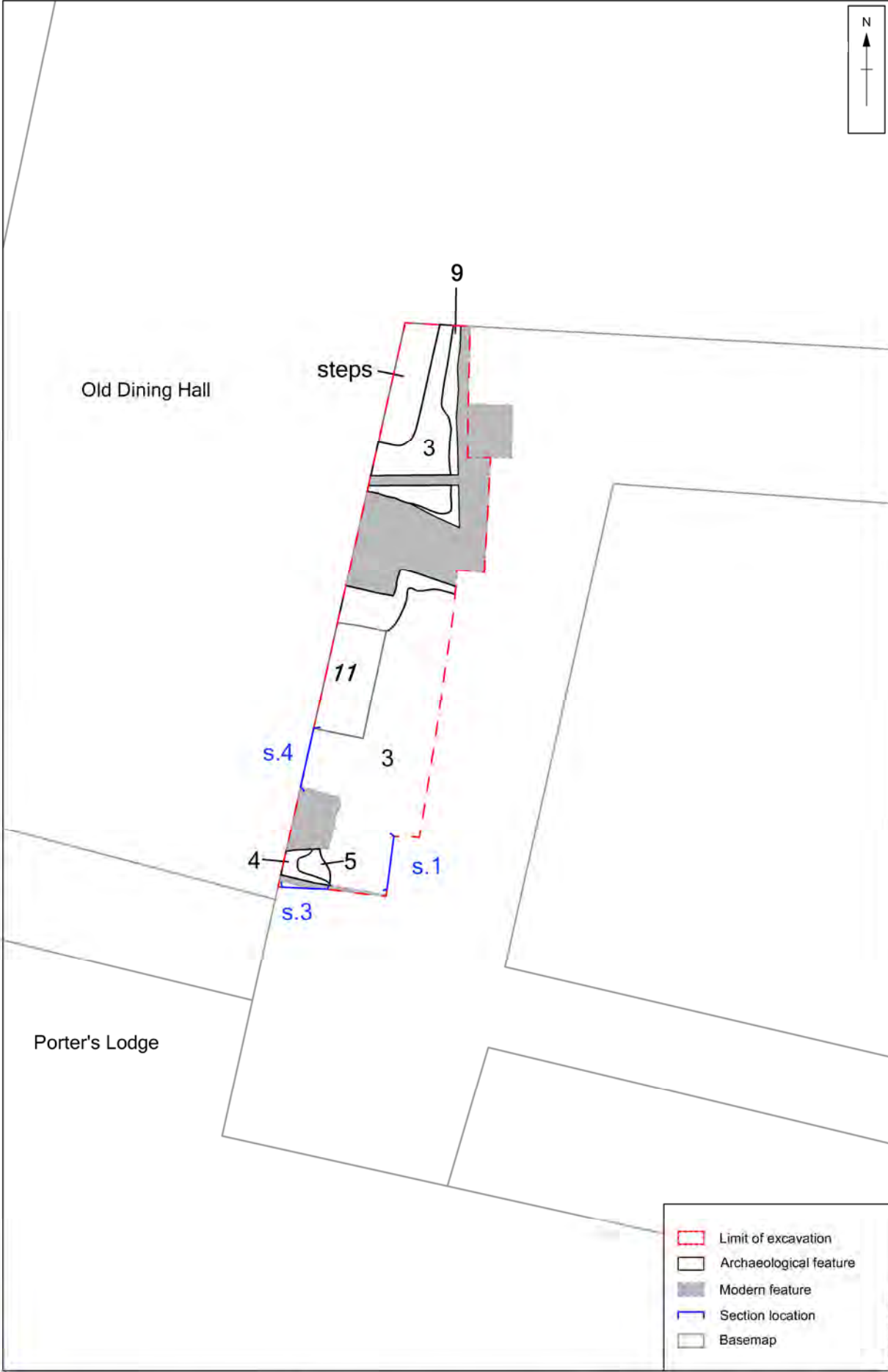


Figure 2 : Trench location plan

X:\Oxford St Edmunds Hall\10\Geomatics\03\_CAD\OXEDOD\_16092020.dwg(A4 portrait)marjaana.kohitamaki\* 02 Oct 2020



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Figure 3: Trench Plan

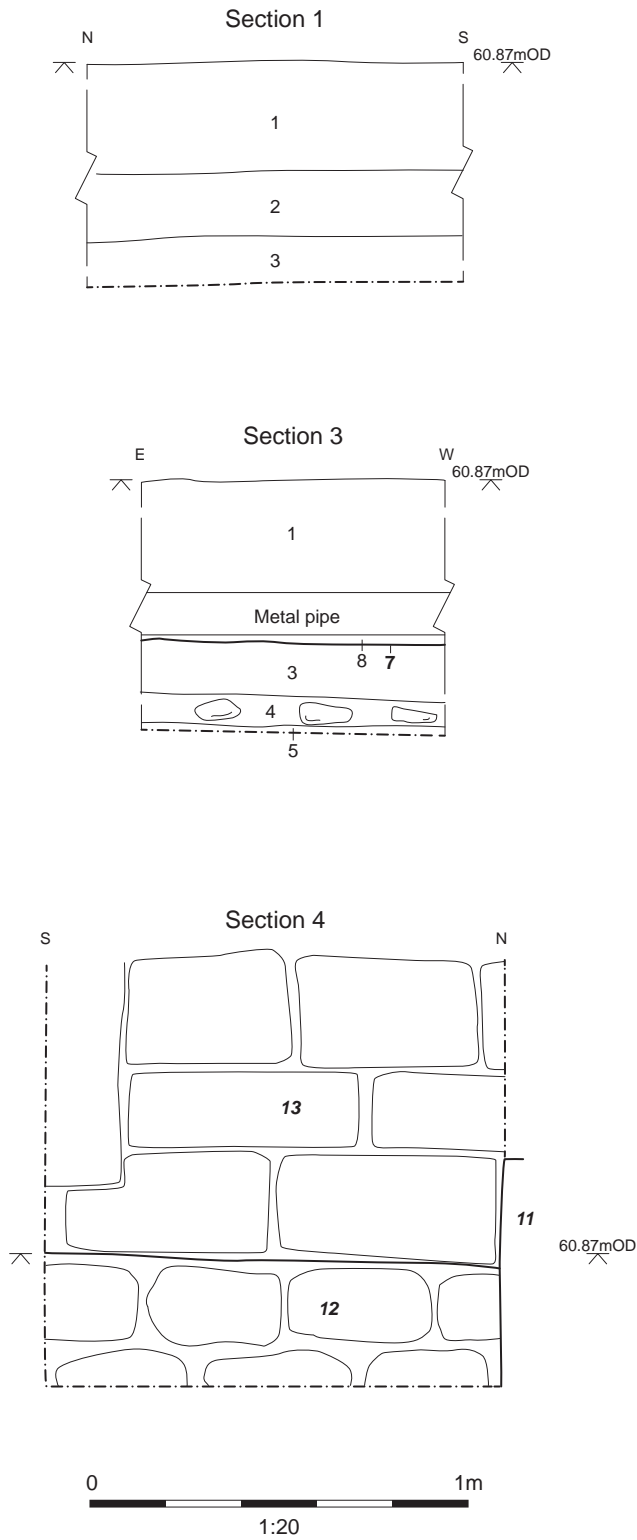


Figure 4: Sections 1, 3 and 4





Plate 1: Section 1, west facing



Plate 2: Cobbled surface 4



Plate 3: Foundation wall 12



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