



St Peters College, Linton House Basement Works

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

November 2021

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St Peters College, Linton House Basement Works

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Paul Murray and Gerry Thacker

With contributions from Leigh Allen, John Cotter Adrienne Powell and Kirsty Smith and illustrations by Matt Bradley and Charles Rousseaux

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Summary

In August 2021, Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief on remodeling works in the Basement of Linton House, St Peters College, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford in respect of planning reference 20/03022/LBC. The watching brief revealed a series of probable pits dating from between 11th and 14th centuries. The pits are likely to have been located in the rear plots of tenements fronting onto New Inn Hall Street (formerly Little Bailey).

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Gray Baynes + Shew for commissioning this project. Thanks, are also extended to David Radford, Oxford City Archaeologist, who monitored the work.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Gerry Thacker. The fieldwork was directed by Paul Murray. Digitising was carried out by Matt Bradley and Charles Rousseaux. Thanks, are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Leigh Allen, and prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Gray Baynes + Shew to undertake an archaeological watching brief during refurbishment and damp remediation works to the basement of Linton House, St Peters College, Oxford.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. 20/03022/LBC). A specification was set by David Radford the Oxford City Archaeologist detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition; and a written scheme of investigation was produced by OA (OA 2021). This document outlines how OA implemented those requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the western side of New Inn Hall Street, Oxford, and is centred on SP 511 062.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of the basement of the Grade II listed Linton House (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is the Summertown-Radley Sand and Gravel Member overlying the Oxford Clay Formation (BGS online).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Linton House is a former Georgian office building constructed by the Oxford Canal Company in 1797 and is the oldest college building. It was purchased in 1878 by Canon Henry Linton as a rectory for the new St Peter-Le-Bailey church (1874). Linton House is a 3-storeyed building with a basement. The central block is flanked on either side by gable chimney stacks and 2-storey, 1-bay, wings. The building is faced with finely-jointed ashlar stone with low stone parapets, stone cornices, and dentils. All roofs are Welsh Blue Slate. A new porch in Clipsham stone, by Thomas Rayson, was constructed in 1954. Major internal alterations were executed in 1960.
- 1.3.2 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in a Desk Based Assessment (OA 2015a), and further in several WSIs and reports (OA 2014, OA 2015b, OA 2016) relating to works in Linton and Chavasse Quads and for the newly constructed Perrodo Building. The results of these investigations have recently been synthesised in Simmonds et al. (OAHS 2020). The investigation included “small scale excavations, a watching brief and a borehole survey. An augur hole and borehole recorded evidence for a large negative feature that lies on one possible projected alignment of the western defences of the Anglo-Saxon burh, though the interpretation of this feature remains uncertain. Evidence was also found for medieval tenements that occupied this part of New Inn Hall Street before the eponymous academic hall was built, and the western range of the medieval hall itself was exposed”.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

2.1.1 To make a record of any archaeological features or deposits encountered during the works and to make the findings available to any interested parties.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives.

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the investigation were:

- i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- ii. To produce an adequate record of any *in-situ* significant remains should they be encountered, and interpret these with reference to the known archaeology of New Inn Hall Street.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The works comprised the refurbishment and damp remediation to the basement of Linton House involving: new cavity drainage system to internal and external walls; new underfloor drainage system including new slab, drainage membrane, insulation and screed; minor internal alterations to create an additional WC and new cleaner's cupboard; new decorations and floor finishes; new heating and lighting; additional fire escape to existing library room comprising new egress window and external steel ladder and gate positioned within an existing lightwell.

2.3.2 Archaeological monitoring was carried out during all groundworks which had the potential to disturb below ground archaeological features or deposits which may have survived the construction of the basement. This included general ground reduction, excavation of the drainage trenches and the excavation of two pits for the installation of pumps.

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 exposed features and deposits. The full details of all contexts, with dimensions and depths, can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The geological horizon (6) was recorded in small areas of the basement at 2.9m below the ground level (estimated at c 62m above Ordnance Datum (aOD)) and comprised the Summertown-Radley Sand and Gravel Member.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the watching brief were generally poor. The lighting was just about adequate in most areas, and the conditions were cramped, dusty and damp (Plates 1 and 5). Archaeological features, where present, were not easy to identify apart from where they impacted localized areas of geology. Much of the archaeological horizon was obscured by a thin deposit (16) which appeared to be the remnants of a modern levelling deposit (3) for the (now removed) concrete floor.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits (Figs 2 and 3)

3.3.1 Archaeological features, comprising pits and/or quarries and a modern well were recorded in corridor B8 and rooms B2, B10, B11, B13 and B14 (Fig 2). Other rooms were either not reduced to a sufficient depth to reveal archaeological features or the natural geology (B3 B4, B6, B8, B9 and B12). In other locations, such as B16 and B10, archaeological deposit was revealed by the partial removal of deposits 16 as part of the general reduction to the construction formation level. No works were undertaken in Room B1.

Room B2 (The WC)

3.3.2 Natural gravel, 6, was present in a small area to the western end of room B2. This was cut by a probable pit, 12, which had near vertical sides and measured 0.8m across as found (Figs 3 and 4, Section 1). The western extent of the pit was truncated by a later pit, 8. Pit 8 contained three fills: the lower fill, 9, was a loose light brown sandy gravel; this was overlain by fill 10, a compact dark grey-brown sandy silt; which in turn was sealed by 11, a dark grey sandy silt. A further pit, 14, was located at the eastern end of the room and measured 2.8m across. This pit was observed to cut the natural gravels, 6 (Fig 4, Section 2) and pit 12.

Room B14 (The Library)

3.3.3 In B14 the geological horizon, 6, was established in two locations, at the north-eastern end of the room and within the drainage trench located at the south-east end. Deposit 7 was recorded overlying the geology and comprised a soft, dark reddish brown sandy silt with very occasional small gravels. Investigation established that this deposit was 0.1m thick and appeared to represent a geological variation.

3.3.4 Deposit 7 was cut by a small ovoid pit, 23, measuring 1.2m x 0.7m (Figs 3 and 4, Section 5). The pit was partially impacted by the excavation of the new drainage trench and three sherds of pottery dating from AD 1075-1300 were recovered from the fill, 24. Adjacent to pit 23, but sharing no clear relationship, were two larger potential quarry pits, 4 and 30. Pit 4, the northern of the two, measured 3m by 2.3m and contained a loose dark grey-brown silty sand, fill 5, from which animal bone, pottery dating from AD 1175-1350 and tile from the late 12th-15th century were recovered. The southern pit, 30, had a visible width of 2.8m but its southern extent was obscured by layer 16. The fill, 31, was a loose dark grey sandy silt.

Room B13 (The Library)

3.3.5 In the southern part of the library, a possible pit, 26, was identified as cutting the natural gravel. The pit measured around 2m in diameter (Figs 3 and 4, Sections 4 and 6). The fill, 27, was a loose dark brown sandy silt. The pit was cut by well structure 1 (Plate 2). The well sat within construction cut 32 (backfilled with 33) and was 2.5m in diameter. Finds recovered from the backfill of the well are of 20th century date.

Room B11 (Boiler Room)

3.3.6 General ground reduction within B11 stopped at the horizon of deposit 16 and no archaeological feature were observed at this point. However, two potential pits, 19 and 21, were partially revealed during the excavation of a drainage trench (Fig. 4, Section 3; Plates 3 and 4). Pit 19, the most southerly of the two pits, appeared to have steep profile and contained a loose mid brown sandy silt, 20, from which a fragment of animal bone, either sheep or goat, and a worked bone gouge or corer were recovered. The bone tool is likely to be late medieval date (see Appendix B.3). The northern pit, 21, had an equally steep profile and the fill, 22, was a loose dark grey sandy silt.

Room B10 (Periodicals Room)

3.3.7 A possible pit, 28, was located at the western end of room B10 and was observed to truncate the natural gravels. Unfortunately, the pit was mostly obscured by deposit 16 to the east and its fully profile / extents are unknown (Figs 3 and 4, Section 4). The pit had steep sides and was filled by a loose mid grey-brown sandy silt, 29.

Room B6 (Wine Cellar)

3.3.8 Another possible pit, 19, was identified in room B6 but the full extent was obscured by layer 16 to the south (Fig 3). The pit truncated the natural geology and had near vertical sides and the fill, 18, was a loose mid grey-brown sandy silt. The feature did not continue to the west beyond the corridor wall.

3.4 Finds summary

3.4.1 Medieval pottery (Appendix B.1) was recovered from fills 5 and 24, and tile or fired clay from fills 5, 16 and 24. A worked bone gouge or corer was recovered from context 20, and unworked animal bone from fills 5 and 22.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The interpretation of the limited number of revealed features was hampered by limits to the impact depth across the majority of the area, which only partially revealed these in plan. Site conditions (being within a basement) were suboptimal for archaeological recording. The great majority of all deposits and features encountered will be preserved *in-situ* beneath the new flooring, and the construction impacts were minimal.

4.2 Objectives and results

4.2.1 The watching brief successfully identified the presence of archaeological features across the basement area, and some of these were shown to be of medieval date. A record was made of these.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.2 Although archaeological features were uncovered within the basement, the limited construction impacts hindered their interpretation. It is likely on balance that the features represent refuse, or quarry pits, in the rear plots of tenements fronting onto New Inn Hall Street (formerly Little Bailey). Although there was a general paucity of datable material, where pottery was present this dated to between the 11th and 14th centuries, and as such the pits are likely to just predate the founding of New Inn Hall to the south in 1392.

4.3.3 Previous work undertaken ahead of the construction of a soakaway in adjacent Linton Quad revealed the first significant archaeological horizon at 63.48m OD. This comprised the probable fills of a pit of 16th-17th century date (OA 2014). An auger hole identified further deposits down to 61m OD. The basement floor (after the removal of slab), sat at around 62m OD, suggesting that the lower fills identified in the auger hole could be of similar date to the pits identified in the basement.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context register						
Context No.	Type	Width	Depth	Description	Finds	Date
1	Structure	0.97m	-	Brick well.	-	20 th C
2	Layer	0.2m		Concrete and screed associated with well 1.	-	20 th C
3	Layer	0.3m		Make up layer/levelling for concrete surface. Loose, sand and brick rubble.	-	20 th C
4	Cut	2.3m x 3m		Quarry. Sub rectangular. Western extent not observed.	-	-
5	Fill		0.3m as seen	Fill of 4. Loose, dark grey brown silty sand with 15% small, poorly sorted gravels.	Pottery. Animal bone. CBM.	AD Pot 1175-1350; Tile L12 th -15 th C
6	Layer			Geology. Loose, light yellow brown sandy gravel.	-	
7	Layer		0.1m as seen	Loose/soft, dark reddish brown sandy silt with 1% small gravels. Geological variation?	-	
8	Cut	0.8m as seen	0.8m as seen	Only NE edge of cut was observed. Almost certainly a pit/quarry.	-	
9	Fill	0.2m	0.8m	Fill of 8. Edge erosion/collapse. Loose, light-mid brown sandy gravel.	-	
10	Fill		0.2m	Fill of 8. Moderately compact, dark grey brown sandy silt.	-	
11	Fill		0.74m	Fill of 8. Loose, dark grey sandy silt.	-	
12	Cut	0.9m	0.8m	Only one edge observed. Almost certainly a pit/quarry.	-	
13	Fill	0.9m	0.8m	Fill of 12. Loose, mid-dark grey sandy silt with 5% small poorly sorted gravels.	-	

14	Cut	2.8m	0.3m as seen	Only NE and SW extents observed. Pit/quarry.		
15	Fill	2.8m	0.3m as seen	Fill of 14. Loose, mid grey sandy silt with 15% small poorly sorted gravels.	-	
16	Layer		0.05m – 0.2m	Patchy layer recorded throughout area. Remnants of layer 3.	CBM. Metal.	18-19 th C/ 20 th C
17	Cut	2.3m x 0.7m	0.3m as seen	Circular (?) pit or quarry. Only NE extent observed.	-	
18	Fill	2.3m x 0.7m	0.3m as seen	Loose, mid grey brown sandy silt with 10% small poorly sorted gravels.	-	
19	Cut	0.8m x 0.42m	0.8m	Pit or quarry. Only NW extent observed.	-	
20	Fill	0.8m x 0.42m	0.8m	Fill of 19. Loose, mid brown sandy silt with 30% small poorly sorted gravels.	Worked bone	Late medieval?
21	Cut	0.8m x 0.08m	0.8m	Pit. Only SE extent observed.		
22	Fill	0.8m x 0.08m	0.8m	Fill of 21. Loose/soft, dark grey sandy silt with 5% small poorly sorted gravels.	Animal bone	
23	Cut	1.2m x 0.7m		Pit		
24	Fill	1.2m x 0.7m		Fill of 23. Loose/soft, dark brown sandy silt with 15% small poorly sorted gravels.	Pottery. Animal bone.	AD 1075- 1300
Void						
26	Cut	2m	0.3m as seen	Pit/quarry.	-	
27	Fill		0.3m as seen.	Fill of 26. Loose, dark brown sandy silt with 10% small poorly sorted gravels.	-	
28	Cut	Not established	0.3m as seen	Pit/quarry. Only the SW extent observed.	-	
29	Fill		0.3m as seen	Fill of 29. Loose, mid grey brown sandy silt with 10% small gravels.	-	

30	Cut	2.8m	0.3m as seen	Pit/quarry. Only NW and SW extents defined.		
31	Fill	2.8m	0.3m	Fill of 30. Loose, dark grey sandy silt with 10% small poorly sorted stones.		
32	Cut	2.5m		Construction cut for well.		
33	Fill	2.5m		Backfill of 32. Loose brick rubble.		20 th C

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Post-Roman Pottery

By John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

B.1.1 A total of three sherds of pottery weighing 116g were recovered from two contexts. 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).

Description

B.1.2 Context (5) Spot-date: c 1175-1350. Description: 1 sherd (weight 52g). Fresh body sherd from a baluster-type jug in early Brill/Boarstall ware (Fabric OXAW). This has the lower stump of a narrow strap-handle with stabbed circular pits on the back. The jug bears typical red lattice decoration carried out in dark red-brown slip strokes, or streaks, under a clear yellow glaze.

B.1.3 Context (24) Spot-date: c 1075-1300 Description: 2 sherds (weight 64g). Fresh body sherds possibly from the same cooking pot in Medieval Oxford ware (OXY). Sooted externally from use.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

B.1.4 The pottery here has some potential to inform research through re-analysis - particularly when reviewed alongside other assemblages from the same general area. It is therefore recommended that the pottery be retained.

B.2 Ceramic building material

By Kirsty Smith

B.1.5 A very small quantity of ceramic building material was recovered from the basement of Linton House, St Peters College, Oxford. Fragments of CBM and fired clay were recovered from a quarry fill (context 5), a modern layer (context 16) and a medieval pit (context 24). The material is poorly preserved consisting of small moderately to heavily abraded fragments, with no complete dimensions surviving except for thickness. The CBM is medieval/post-medieval in date and the fired clay cannot be dated, but the CBM from that context includes late medieval fragments. The assemblage has been fully recorded on an Excel spreadsheet in accordance with guidelines set out by the Archaeological Ceramic Building Materials Group (ACBMG 2007). Fabrics were characterised with the aid of x20 hand lens and have been assigned to the Oxford CBM fabric series.

B.1.6 The CBM from context 5 included two fragments of roof tile, one flat tile fragment and one ridge tile fragment. They were both made from fabric IIIB, an orange red fabric with a grey core and a high density of coarse white quartz sand. The flat tile was 13mm

thick, with two rough edges and a small patch of green glaze on the upper surface towards one of the edges of the tile. The ridge tile was 15mm thick, with one side and one end edge. The tile was slanted from the side edge when resting on a flat surface, a characteristic of ridge tiles. These tiles date from the late 12th-15th century.

- B.1.7 The amorphous undatable fragment of fired clay from context 5 weighed 91g. It was buff/brown with coarse white quartz sand and occasional ferruginous grits up to 5mm long, and grey pebbles up to 8mm long. It also had a possible thumb print on one side which was 18mm wide. The fragment did not have any signs of burning so it may have been part of a structure but not close to a heat source.
- B.1.8 The CBM from context 16 comprised two fragments of dark red brick (77g), possibly part of a paviour. Both pieces were made from fabric OXP3 and had common maroon ferruginous grits up to 3mm except one up to 7mm long. The larger piece of brick had a top and bottom surface and one rough side edge surviving with a thin layer of mortar on the bottom surface and side edge. It measured 43mm thick (1¾ inches) which is thin for a structural brick, so this was probably a brick paviour used as flooring. These pieces probably date to the 18th-19th century.
- B.1.9 The abraded fragment of flat roof tile from context 24 was also made from fabric IIIB. It was 13.5mm thick and had one very worn edge. As with the fragments of IIIB from context 5, this tile dates to the late 12th-15th century.

B.3 Worked bone

By Leigh Allen

- B.3.1 A single worked bone object was recovered from Linton House, St Peters College, Oxford from context 20. The object is a small gouge or corer (L:80mm) made from a sheep metatarsal. The distal end is unmodified and forms the head or handle. The proximal end has been removed and the shaft has been cut in half longitudinally. The tip of the shaft is rounded, the back and tip are both highly polished through use. The gouge is quite short and the cut across the shaft poorly finished at the top, it is possible that the implement has broken at some point in the past and then been recut and shaped.
- B.3.2 These common items could have been used for coring apples or taking samples from cheese to test the ripeness (MacGregor 1985, 180) and are generally dated to the post Medieval period.

APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Animal Bone

By Adrienne Powell

- B.3.3 Two contexts excavated during the watching brief at St Peter's College, Linton House produced one fragment of hand collected bone each, both in good condition.
- B.3.4 Context 5: one pig left fourth metatarsal, distally unfused (7g); context 22: one sheep/goat right radius shaft splinter, distally fused (6g).
- B.3.5 Neither specimen exhibits butchery marks but the sheep/goat radius does show carnivore gnawmarks.

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APPENDIX E SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	St Peters College, Linton House
Site code:	OXPTLH21
Grid Reference	SP 511 062
Type:	Watching brief
Date and duration:	
Area of Site	c 140m ²
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2021.54.
Summary of Results:	In August 2021 Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief on remodeling works in the Basement of Linton House, St Peters College, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford in respect of planning reference 20/03022/LBC. The watching brief revealed a series of probable pits, which where dated were of between 11th and 14th century date. The pits are likely to been located in the rear plots of tenements fronting onto New Inn hall Street (formerly Little Bailey).



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Figure 1: Site location

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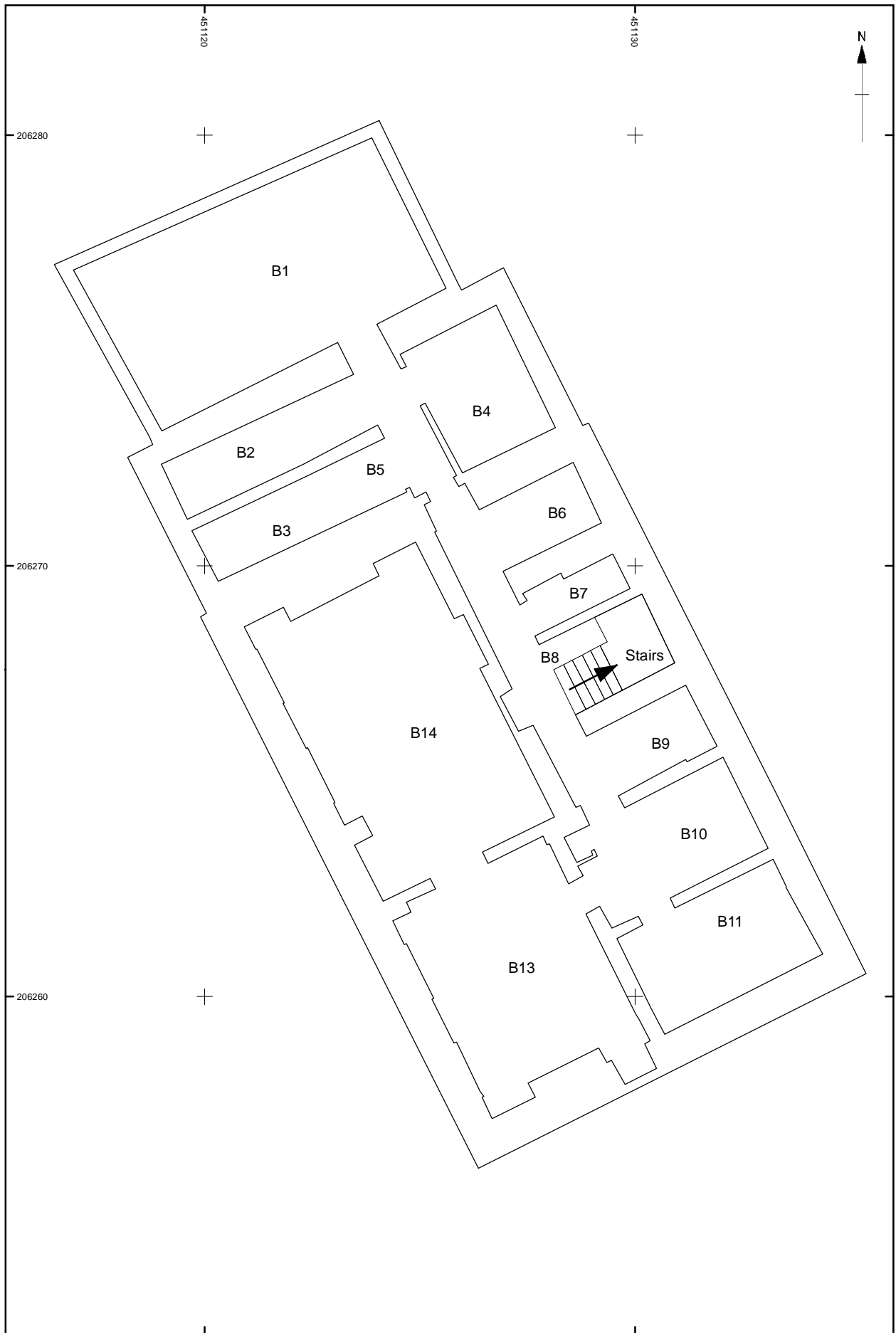


Figure 2: Area of watching brief

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Figure 3: Archaeological features

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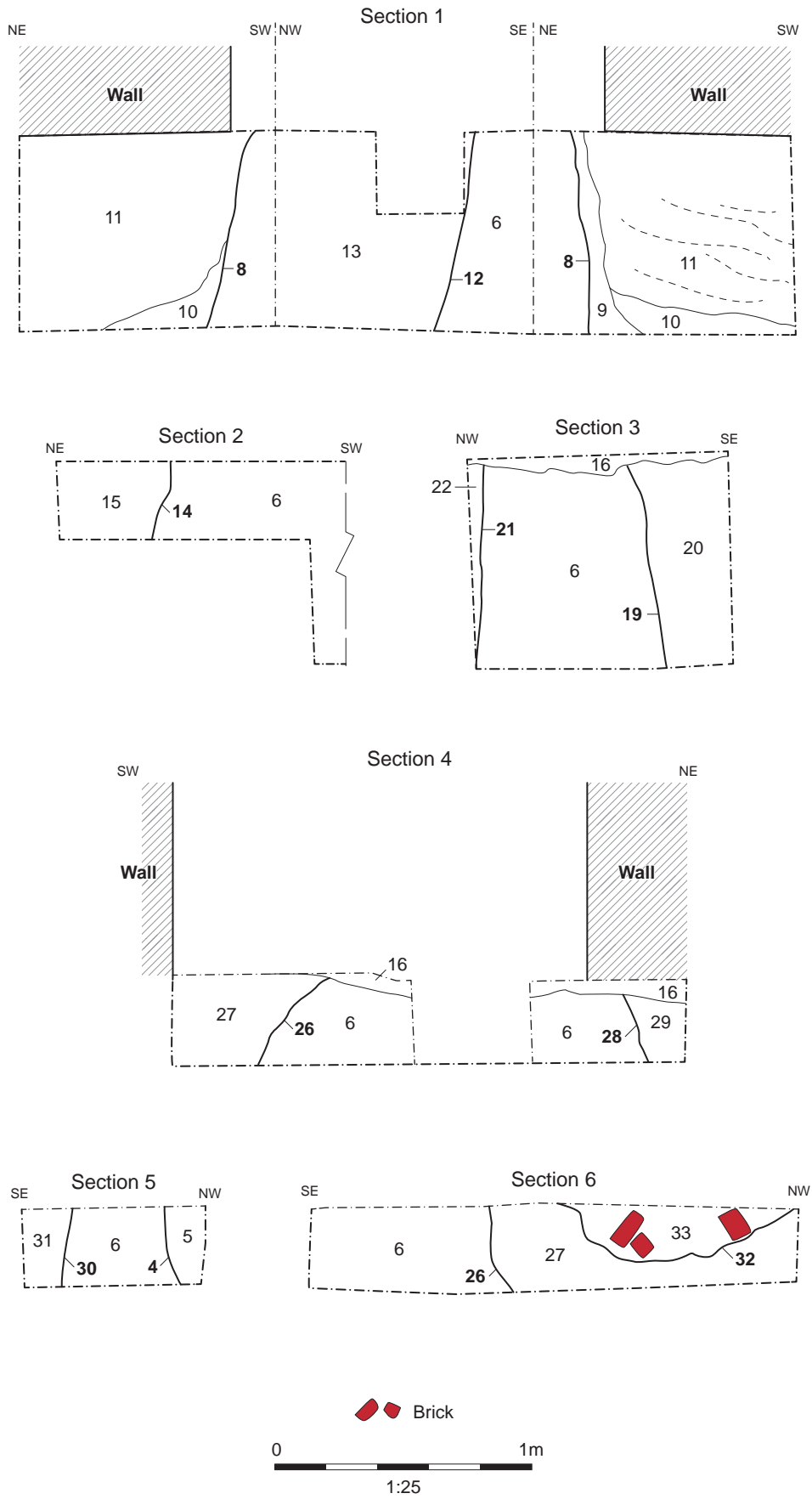


Figure 4: Sections



Plate 1: General View of works along central corridor



Plate 2: Well 1



Plate 3: Section 3, view to SE

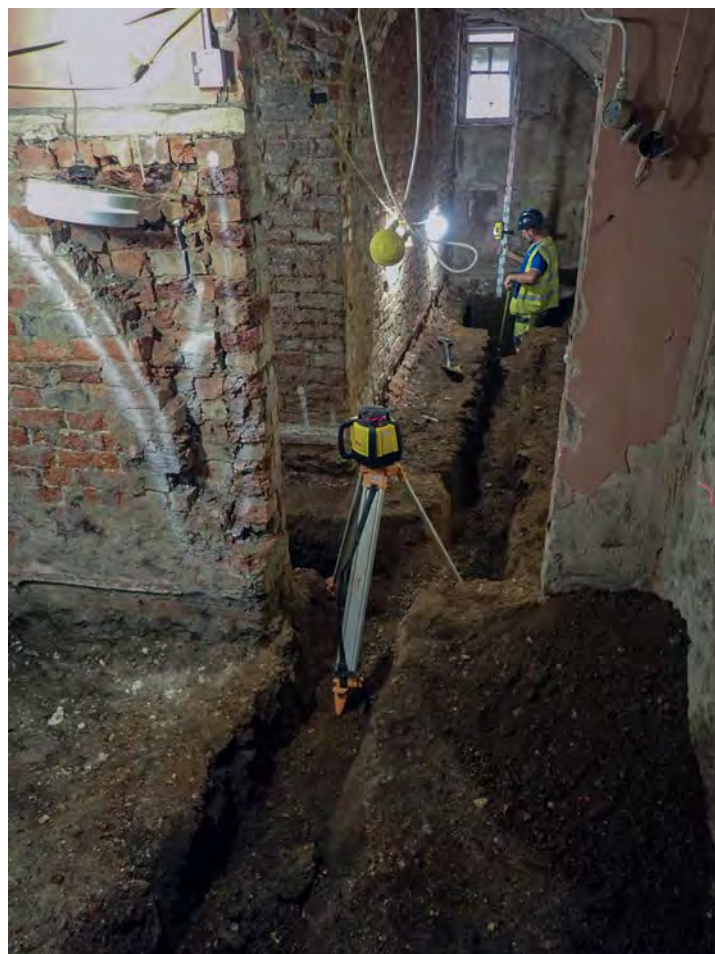


Plate 4: View into Room B11 Boiler Room. View to NE



Plate 5: General View of Works



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