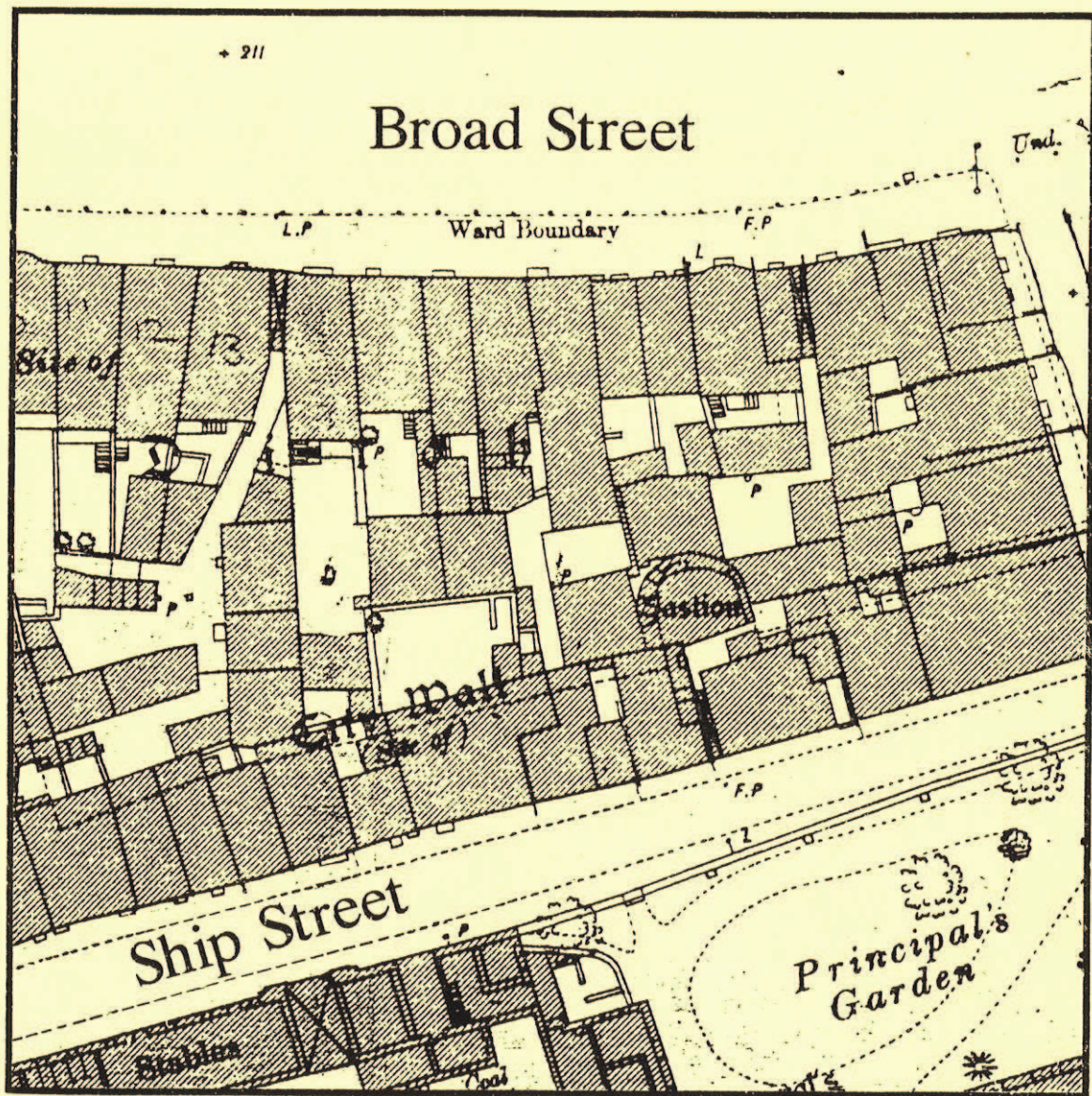


OXFLBS (OX)
94/94

FLAGGS, 18 BROAD STREET

OXFORD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



AUGUST 1994

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Acknowledgments

Thanks to management and staff of "Flaggs" for their cooperation during the evaluation and to Julian Mumby for his information on the history of Oxford.

1 Summary

The Oxford Archaeological unit (OAU) undertook a small archaeological evaluation at the back of Flaggs clothes shop, 18, Broad Street, Oxford, in July 1994. The work was carried out on behalf of Berman Guedes Architectural Partnership, as part of the conditions of planning permission to extend the ground floor of the shop back to the line of the medieval city wall.

Two small, connecting trenches were excavated by hand, in an area some 5 m to the north of the city wall. Excavation was limited to a maximum depth of 1.2 m.

Two phases of a stone built structure, projecting back to the city wall, were located only 0.20 m below the present ground surface. The walls were surrounded by intercutting 17th and 18th century rubbish pits and part of one of the walls had been robbed during this period. This indicated that the walls were no later than 17th century in date, though their exact date could not be established due to the limited depth of excavation.

It is suggested that the walls are related to property boundaries projecting though from Ships Street, or lean-to structures up against the city wall.

2 Introduction

It has been proposed to extend the ground floor of Flaggs clothes shop, 18 Broad Street, Oxford, NGR SP51380640 (fig.1) back to the medieval city wall, which forms the southern boundary of the property. The wall, which includes a bastion at this point, would be opened up to become a visible feature within the shop.

The building of foundations for the proposed extension would disturb or possibly destroy any archaeological remains within the area of development. The aim of the evaluation was therefore to establish the presence, degree of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains, so possible mitigation strategies could be proposed.

Two trenches were positioned and excavated according to a brief set by The Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service.

Field work took place over a period of 3 days at the end of July 1994.

3 Archaeological and Historical background

The 13th century town wall, forms the southern boundary of the property, and the west side of a bastion lies within the south-east corner of the development area. As well as the town wall, the medieval defense also consisted of a large ditch, which ran parallel immediately to the north of the wall. The Proposed extension would therefore straddle the line of the backfilled ditch.

Loggans map of Oxford in 1675 and Taylors map of 1750 appear to show that there was also an outer city wall at this point, similar to that at New College and this would also run through the area of the proposed development.

4 Methodology and Strategy (see fig. 2 for trench locations)

The development area consists of two storerooms and an open yard at the back of the shop. Due to the very limited access to the site the trenches had to be entirely excavated and backfilled by hand.

It was intended to excavate a trench across the suggested line of the outer city wall. However, the existence of a storeroom in this area meant that the trench had to be staggered to become two smaller trenches diagonally connected outside the NE corner of the storeroom. The close proximity of the trenches to a standing building meant that they could only be excavated to a maximum depth of 1.20 m.

Trench 1, excavated to the N of the storeroom, was 2 m x 1.2 m in size, with a 1.50 m x 0.40 m extension on the east side. Trench 2, excavated to the east of the storeroom, was 1.50 m x 1 m in size.

As excavation proceeded the various phases of deposits located were described, planned and photographed and sections were drawn where appropriate.

5 Archaeological Description

(see figs. 3 and 4 for plan and sections of archaeological deposits)

Trench 1

A rough, but fairly solidly built stone wall (106), which ran through the southern half of the trench in an E-W alignment, was located only 0.20 m below the present ground surface. The wall, which was some 0.50 m wide, was observed to a depth of 1.2 m, but continued down below this level. Projecting out from the southern face of wall 106 was a N-S wall of similar size (118); the two walls forming a 'T' shaped structure. Running parallel, butting up against the east face of wall 118 was a second N-S wall (105), the northern end of which overlay wall 106.

The area of the trench to the north of wall 106 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.25 m. The deposits in this area consisted of a sequence of dump layers (122, 121, 120,

119, and 109) truncated by a large, vertically sided feature (112), which was only partly within the area of the trench. Both, the fills of feature 112 (117, 116, 115, 114, 113 and 111), and the dump layers through which it was cut, contained 17th and 18th century pottery, clay pipes, and glass. All of these deposits butted up against the north face of wall 106.

What appeared to be part of a robber trench (123), robbing the area of wall 106 to the east of wall 105, was cut from the top of one of the higher dump layer, 109, in the SE corner of the trench.

In the small open area of the trench to the south of wall 106, and west of wall 118, was a deposit of clay loam 107, which abutted the walls. Due to the limited space this area could only be excavated to a depth of 0.60 m, but the deposit continued down below this level.

A large modern pipe trench (103) ran through the north end of the trench.

Trench 2

This trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.20 m. The only deposits located in this trench were layers of silt loam, which extended throughout the trench (206, 205, 204 and 203). All of these layers contained large quantities of 17th and 18th century clay pipes and pottery.

6 Discussion

Walls 106 and 118 were part of the same build, and therefore wall 106 must have formed a common northern boundary of a number of structures or plots projecting southwards. Wall 105 is a later addition and appears to be the rebuilding or refacing of wall 118. This later wall overlies the E-W wall 106, and in the area to the east of wall 105, the earlier wall has been partially robbed. This appears to indicate that the part of the original structure to the east of wall 118 was demolished at the time 105 was built, so walls 106 and 105 then become the NE corner of a single structure. (see fig. 3).

All of the deposits to north of wall 106, and those in trench 2, would appear to be the fills of intercutting rubbish pits, dating from the 17th and 18th centuries.

7 Conclusions

At the time of the evaluation the exact design of the proposed extension had not been finalised, so the position and depths of the foundations were not available. However, the fact that the structural remains located existed only 0.20 m below the present ground surface makes it likely that any ground work would disturb them.

The limited depth of excavation meant that the walls could not be more accurately dated other than the fact that they were no later than 17th century. Along with the very small area of the remains observed by the evaluation, this makes the interpretation and therefore

the significance of these structures difficult to establish.

It has been suggested that during the 16th and 17th centuries some of the owners of plots in Ship Street, which projected back to the city wall, broke through the wall to extend their properties further to the north. The main evidence that this practice took place is derived from the observation that some of the property boundaries in Ship Street appear to project though to the north of the city wall.

If this practice did occur it is possible that the walls found in the evaluation represent the remains of boundary walls which defined the northern limit of these extended plots.

Another possible explanation is that the walls are simply the foundations of lean-to structures, built up against the north face of the city wall.

It could be of significance that the north wall of the structures found in the evaluation lies on the projected line of the supposed outer city wall. This may indicate that they were respecting an existing boundary which the outer wall originally formed and it is even possible that the structures are reusing the remains of the outer wall as a foundation. However, they could also simply be respecting the medieval defensive ditch, which may still have been partially open at the time they were built.

C.Bell
OAU
August 1994

Pottery dating by Lucy Bown

Clay pipe dating by John Moore

Table of Contexts and Finds

TRENCH	CXT	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	COMMENTS	FINDS
1	100	Slabs		0.07	Present slab surface	
	101	Layer		0.12	Bedding sand for slabs	
	102	Layer		0.20		18th century clay pipes, pottery and glass
	103	Pipe trench	> 1.20	0.64	Modern	
	104	Fill		0.64	Fill of 103	
	105	Wall	0.50	>0.80	Rebuilding of 118	
	106	Wall	0.48	>1.20	E-W aligned	
	107	Layer		>0.60		18th century clay pipes and pottery
	108	Layer		0.16		18th century pottery and glass
	109	Dump layer		0.20	Pit fill?	17th + 18th century clay pipes, pottery and glass
	110	Foundation trench			Foundations trench for wall 105	
	111	Pit fill		0.09	Fill of 112	
	112	Pit	> 1.50	>1.00	Only partly within the trench	
	113	Pit fill		0.10	Fill of 112	
	114	Pit fill		0.06	Fill of 112	18th century pottery, clay pipes and tile
	115	Pit fill		0.15	Fill of 112	17th + 18th century pottery, clay pipes, tile and animal bone
	116	Pit fill		0.20	Fill of 112	17th + 18th century pottery and clay pipes
	117	Pit fill		>0.40	Fill of 112	17th + 18th century pottery, clay pipes and glass
	118	Wall	0.46	>0.60	N-S aligned	
	119	Dump layer		0.30	Pit fill?	18th century pottery and clay pipes
	120	Dump layer		0.07	Pit fill?	
	121	Dump layer		0.27	Pit fill?	
	122	Dump layer		0.20	Pit fill?	
	123	Robber trench?	1.00	0.40	Robbing wall 106	
	124	Fill		0.40	Fill of 123	17th + 18th century clay pipes
2	200	Slabs		0.07	Present slab surface	
	201	Layer		0.10	Bedding sand for slabs	
	202	Pipe trench	0.20	0.22	Modern	

TRENCH	CXT	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	COMMENTS	FINDS
	203	Layer		0.16		17th + 18th century pottery, clay pipes and glass
	204	Dump layer		0.34	Pit fill?	17th + 18th century pottery, clay pipes and glass
	205	Dump layer		0.60	Pit fill?	
	206	Dump layer		0.26	Pit fill?	17th century pottery and clay pipes

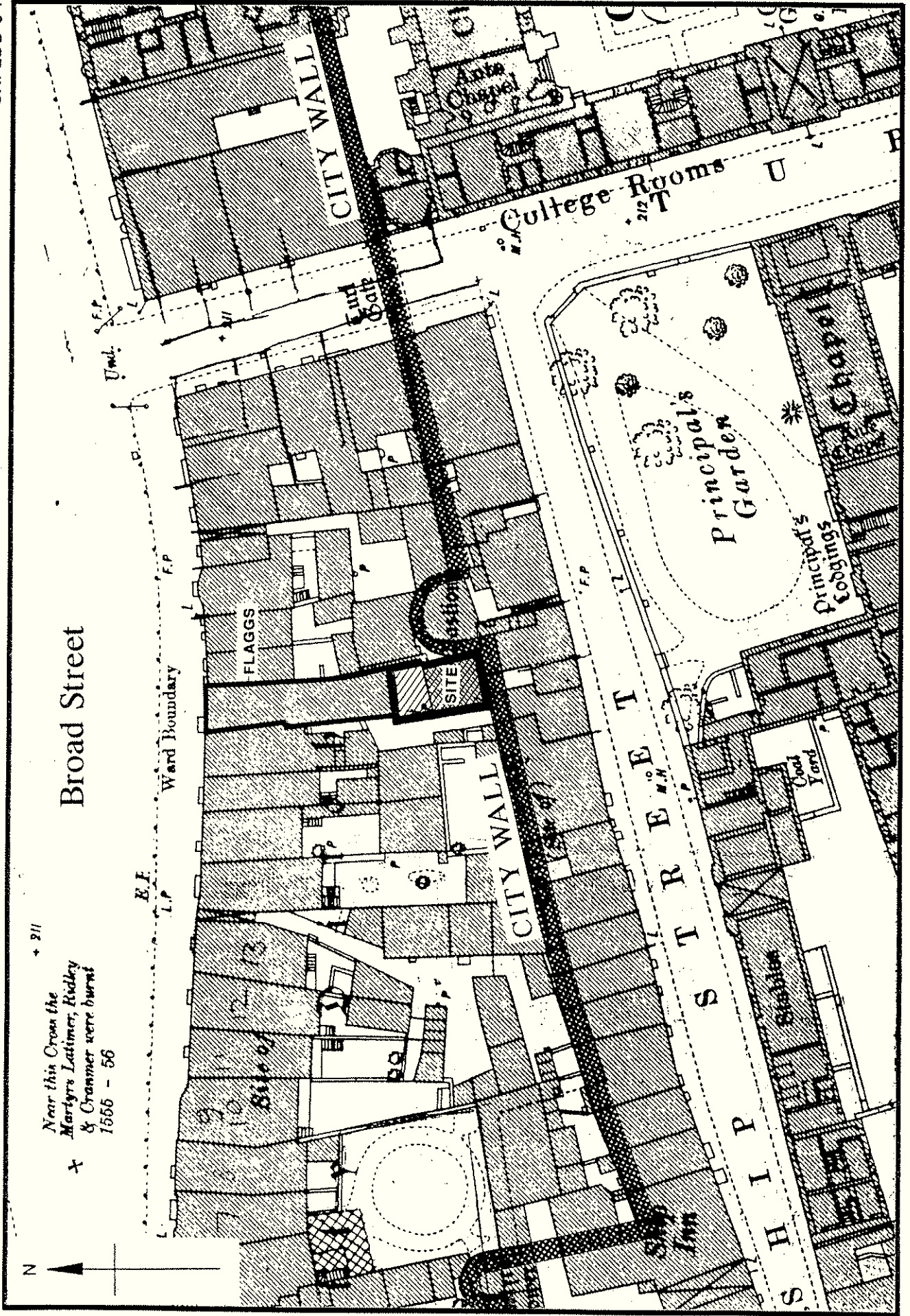
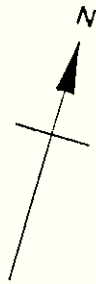


figure 1: Site location (1878 Ordnance Survey map)



Key
Walls located in evaluation
Phase 1
Phase 2

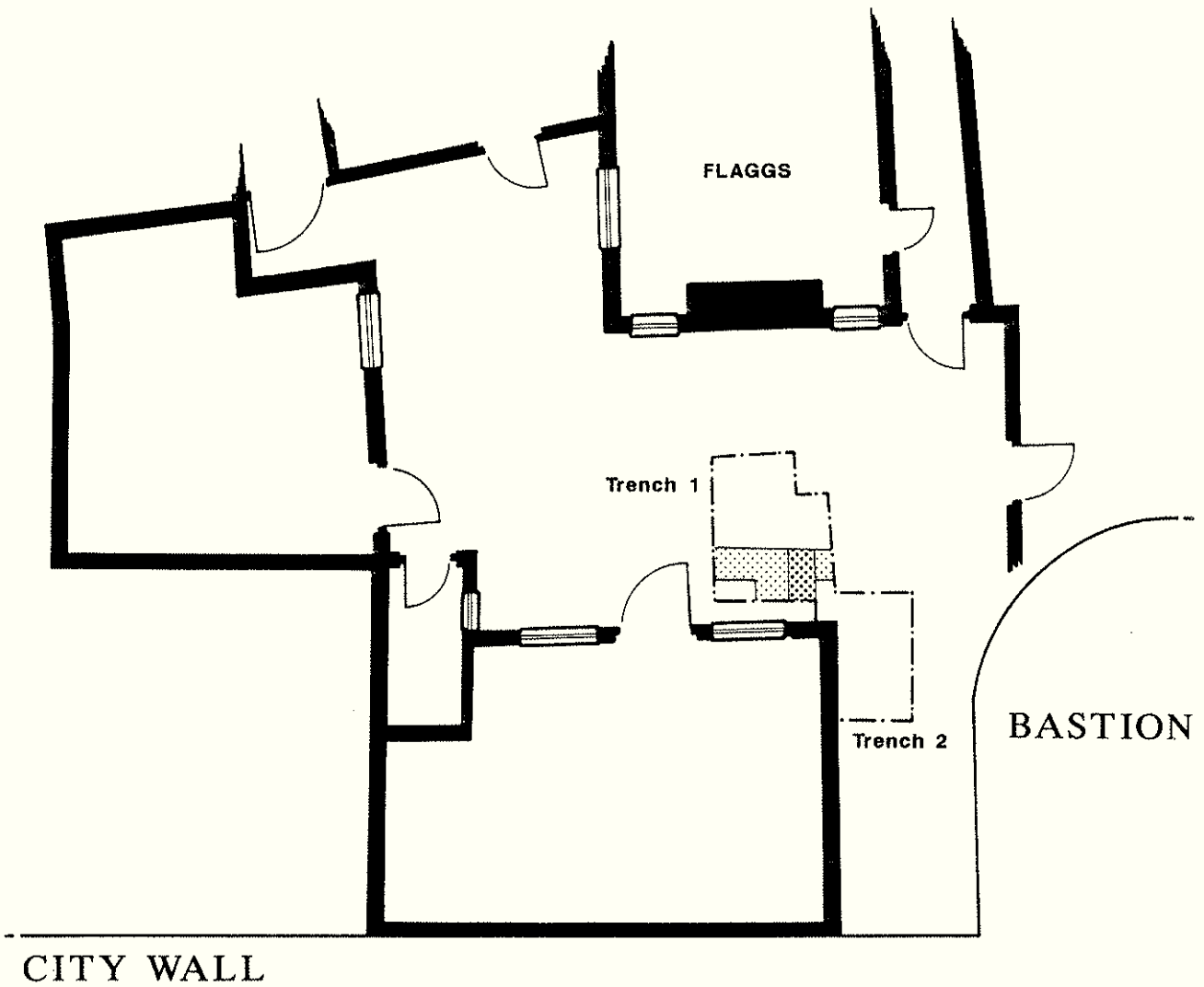


figure 2: Trench location

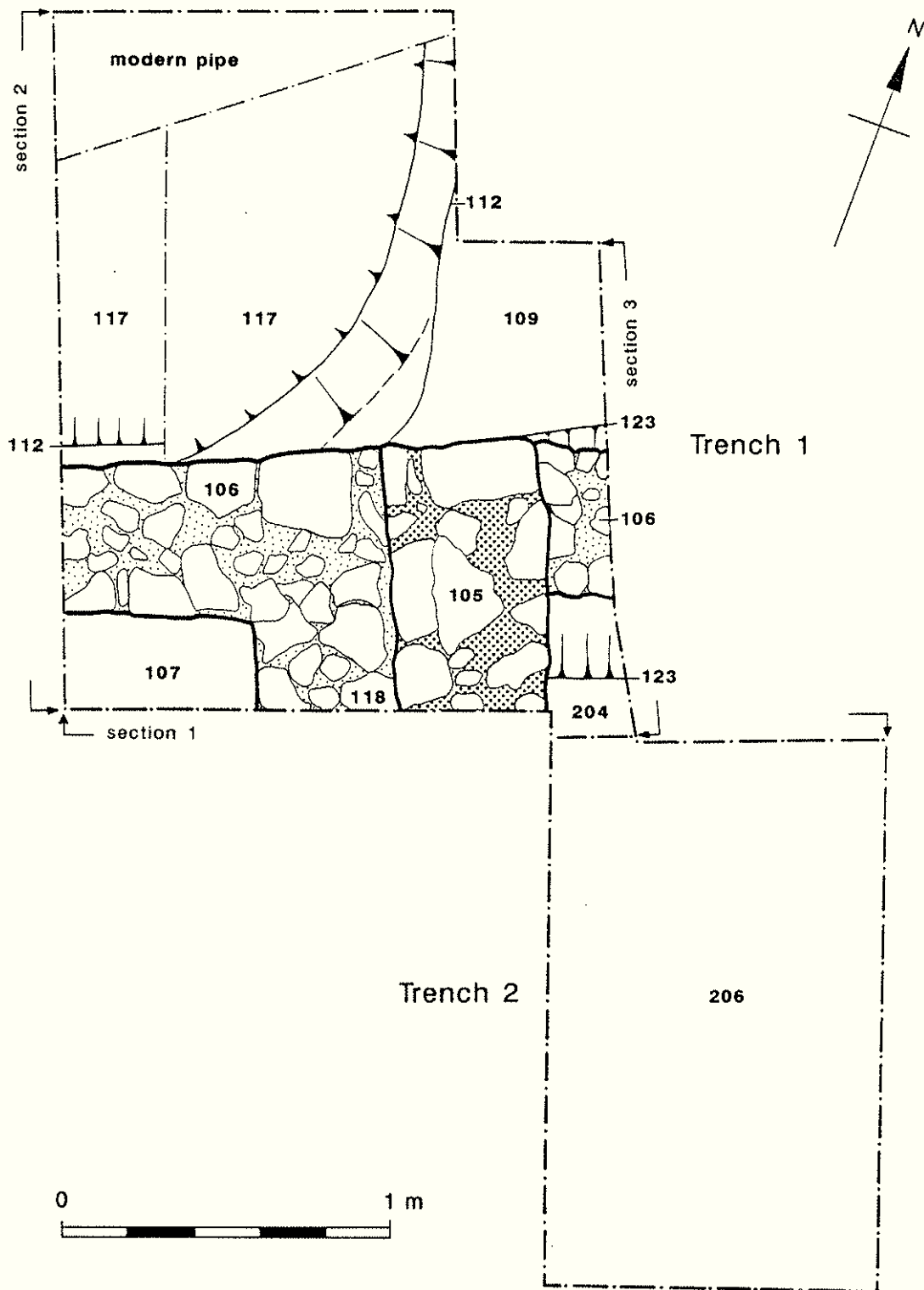


figure 3: Trench plans

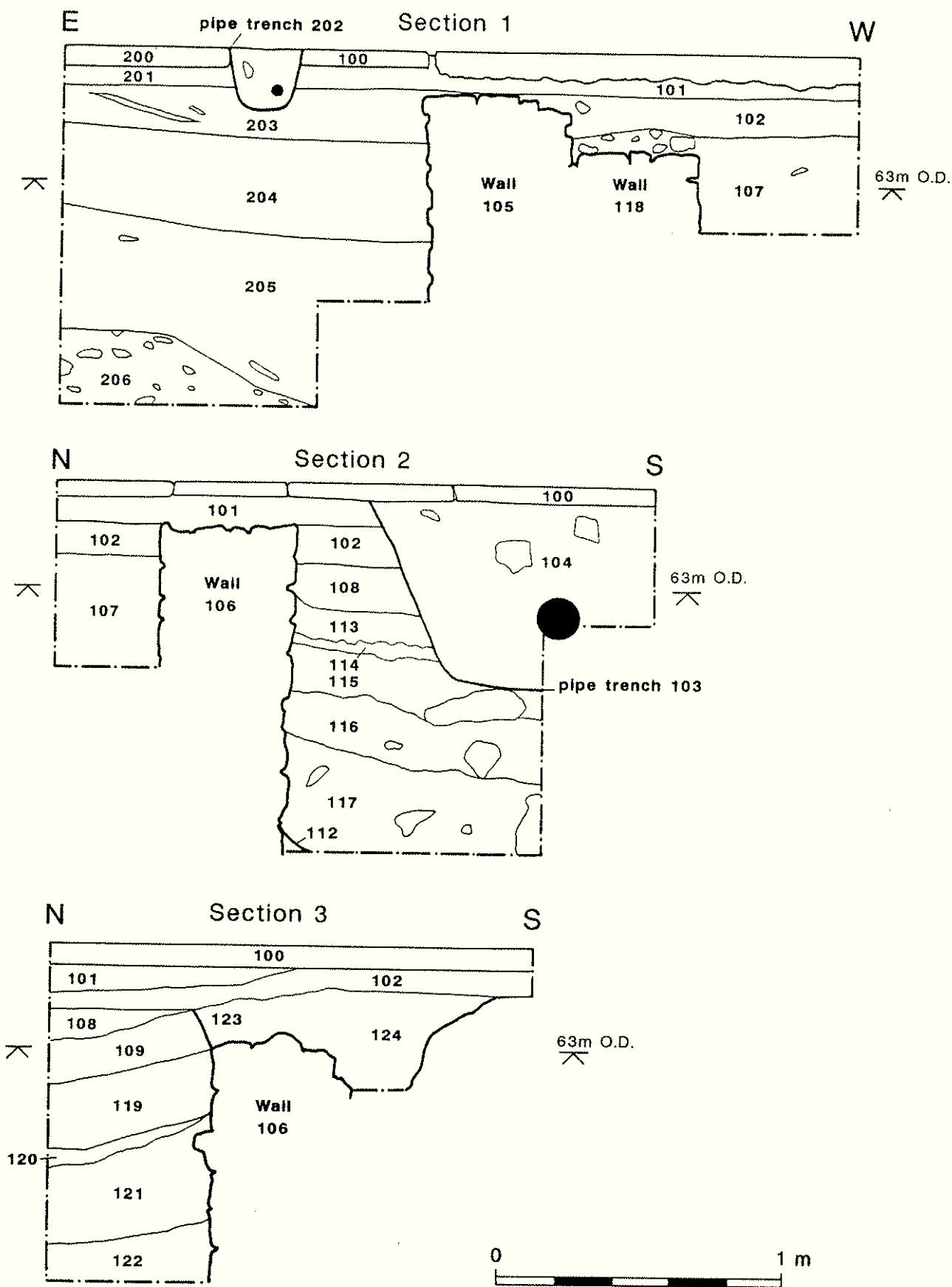


figure 4: Sections 1,2 & 3

Oxford Archaeological Unit

46 Hythe Bridge Street

Oxford OX1 2EP



Tel: 0865 243888 Fax: 0865 793496

Registered Charity No. 285627

Private Limited Company No. 1618597