

Wesley Memorial Church New Inn Hall Street Oxford



Archaeological Evaluation Report



July 2010

Client: Wesley Memorial Church

Issue No: 1

OA Job No: 4701

NGR: SP 5110 0630



Client Name: Wesley Memorial Church
Client Ref No:
Document Title: Wesley Memorial Church, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford
Document Type: Evaluation Report
Issue/Version Number: 1
Grid Reference: NGR SP 5110 0630
Planning Reference: 09/01947/FUL
OA Job Number: 4701
Site Code: OXWSMO 10
Invoice Code: OXWSMOEV
Receiving Museum: Oxford County Museums Service
Museum Accession No: OXCMS 2010.20
Event No:

Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
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Document File Location X:\OXWSMO Wesley Memorial Church\Reports\Eval report\rep
Graphics File Location \\Server8\invoice codes i thru q\O_codes\OXWSMOEV
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Wesley Memorial Church, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by J Mumford

*with contributions from John Cotter, Ian Scott and Rebecca Nicholson and illustrated by
Georgina Slater and Julia Moxham*

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Summary

In June 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a single trench evaluation against the south side of Oxford's city wall at the rear of the Wesley Memorial Church, New Inn Street, Oxford. The work was commissioned by the Wesley Memorial Church ahead of the construction of a new kitchen extension (Planning Ref. 09/01947/FUL). The evaluation revealed a 17th-century garden soil and a robber trench for the 13th-century city wall. The wall had been subject to at least two repairs/alterations, one of which may have comprised the creation of a doorway. The construction deposits were overlain by two thick soil horizons deposited prior to the 19th-century redevelopment of the site.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 The site is situated within the central Oxford area, c. 160 m north-west of its focus at Carfax. It is bounded on the west and south sides by St Peter's College and on the east by New Inn Hall Street (Fig. 1). To the north is the line of the former city wall with part of the History Faculty of Oxford University on its other side. The area of proposed development lies within the parish of St Michael at the Northgate.
- 1.1.2 The work was commissioned by the Wesley Memorial Church ahead of the construction of a new kitchen extension (Planning Ref. 09/01947/FUL). David Radford of Oxford City Council (OCC) issued a brief outlining the archaeological requirements of the work (OCC 2009). In response OA produced a written scheme of investigation (WSI; OA 2010) detailing how those requirements would be met.
- 1.1.3 The area of proposed development is currently occupied by the Wesley Memorial Church and, on its north side, the church hall. These two buildings are linked by a lobby. The proposed new kitchen will be located at the west end of the church hall (Fig. 2).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The area of proposed development lies on the western edge of the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace c. 190 m east of the nearest river channel, the Castle Mill Stream. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development lies at c. 63-64 m OD. New Inn Hall Street slopes gently to the north, but the site itself is fairly level.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

General

- 1.3.1 OA undertook a desk based assessment (DBA) of the site in November 2009 (OA 2009). The following information is summarised from the DBA.

Past archaeological investigations

- 1.3.2 No archaeological investigations have been carried out within the area of proposed development, although a Roman urn was recovered when the church was constructed in 1870.
- 1.3.3 Human remains from the Wesleyan Methodist graveyard, which lies 40 m outside the site to the west, were recorded during construction of the Emily Morris Building at St Peter's College in 1929.
- 1.3.4 A watching brief took place at St Peter's College in 2003, 50 m west of the area of proposed development, but no significant archaeological material was revealed. A series of excavations in George Street, c. 20 m north of the site, and in St Michael's Street, c. 50 m to the east, found the line of the Saxon defensive ditch as well as the medieval defences.

Prehistoric period (500,000 BP – 43 AD)

- 1.3.5 No archaeological finds from the prehistoric period have been found within the area of proposed development.

**Roman period (43 AD – 410 AD)**

- 1.3.6 A Roman urn was found when the Wesleyan Methodist Church was built in 1870, the urn may have originated from a burial and other graves may survive. Roman spot finds and a plough soil have also been found close to the site.

Anglo-Saxon (AD 410 – 1066)

- 1.3.7 No material dated earlier than the 9th century has been found close to the site but the site lies at the north-western limits of the late Saxon burh, founded in 911. A defensive bank and ditch were constructed around the town, parts of which have been found in archaeological investigations. The turf rampart was found in the centre of St Michael's Street during drainage work in 1976, at No 24 St Michael's Street in 1985 and at Oxford Castle in 2003. St Michael-at-the-Northgate church was founded during the late Saxon period. Its tower dates to the 11th century and formed part of the north gate of the burh.
- 1.3.8 During excavations at 40 George Street in 1977-8, on the opposite side of the city wall from the area of proposed development, a large north-south ditch was found which predated the line of the medieval stone wall; it is thought that this ditch was the Saxon defensive ditch. In 1980 an excavation for St Peter's College at the south end of Bulwarks Lane, c. 120 m south of the area of proposed development, found an area of turf stripping that was attributed to the Saxon rampart. The turf probably represented a continuation of the north-south alignment of the defensive ditch.

Later medieval period (AD 1066 - 1550)

- 1.3.9 Oxford continued to be an important town throughout the later medieval period although the main focus of settlement was confined within the city wall. In 1071 Robert D'Oilly built Oxford Castle on the west side of the town, c. 100 m west of the area of proposed development. A new wall, using the line of the Saxon defences for much of its length, is also believed to have been constructed at that time. The stone wall was strengthened and bastions added between 1224 and 1260. The city wall joined the castle defences, running along the north side of the site and meeting the castle ditch on the opposite side of Bulwark's Lane.
- 1.3.10 The area of proposed development lay within the historic parish of St Michael-at-the-Northgate. The boundary between this parish and that of St Peter-le-Bailey lay just to the south of the site. St Peter-le-Bailey church lay at the south end of New Inn Hall Street until the late 19th century. The area of proposed development was occupied by Elm Hall and some Osney Abbey properties.
- 1.3.11 Although the property boundaries around the area of proposed development are fairly well understood, little is known about what activity was taking place within the plots at that time. Elm Hall had been an academic hall, but had ceased to serve this function by the 15th century (Salter 1929, 97). Tenements usually had houses on the street frontage with backyards behind, used for gardens, storage, animals, workshops and waste.

Post-medieval period (AD 1550 onwards)

- 1.3.12 In the early 16th century Oxford went through a period of depopulation and Elm Hall and the adjacent properties became gardens, which were recorded in leases (Salter 1926, 205-6). This is confirmed by Agas' Map of 1587, which shows orchards.
- 1.3.13 By the later part of the 17th century a considerable amount of development had taken place across Oxford. Loggan's Map of 1675 shows Elm Hall and its neighbouring



properties continuing as gardens, but in the north-east corner within the area of proposed development, a building has been constructed close to the city wall.

- 1.3.14 The Wesleyan Methodists purchased the property south of Elm Hall in the early 19th century (Crossley 1979, 420). The Oxford Canal Company's 1838 plan does not show the details of the then Methodist site, but to the north where the church hall now stands are some buildings, including a stable and Elm Cottages, built into the bastion.
- 1.3.15 A Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was constructed at the north of New Inn Hall Street in 1818, but it lay almost entirely outside the area of proposed development to the west. Behind it, on Bulwarks Lane, a school was built in 1830, when the room at the rear of the chapel proved too small (Crossley 1979, 456). Both buildings can be clearly seen on the OS 1:500 Map of 1876. Between the buildings is the graveyard and in 1929 human remains were found when St Peter's College built the Emily Morris Building adjoining the site. The northern part of the area of proposed development was still occupied by Elm Cottages and various buildings along New Inn Hall Street, divided by a drive leading the chapel.
- 1.3.16 The Methodist church was very successful and in the later 19th century more land was acquired to the north and a larger church constructed; the old church was entirely converted to a school (Crossley 1979, 420). The new and existing church opened in 1878, and was designed by Charles Bell and built by the local man, Joshua Symm.
- 1.3.17 The 1939 OS map is the first to show St Peter's College to the west and south of the area of proposed development. The former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel itself was bought in 1932 and used by the college until 1969, after which it was rebuilt (Crossley 1979, 420). The sale prompted construction of the church hall along the city wall, which required the demolition of Elm Cottages. No further alterations have taken place within the area of proposed development except construction of the existing link between the church and church hall in the 1970s.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Many thanks are extended to Niokos Paplomatas of the Wesley Memorial Church for his help during the project. Thanks are also extended to David Radford (OCC) and Chris Welch (EH), who monitored the archaeological work. Jim Mumford was assisted by Pete Gane and Chris Richardson during the fieldwork, and thanks go to Georgina Slater and Julia Moxham who produced the illustrations.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

General

- 2.1.1 The aims of the investigation are to determine the existence or absence of any archaeological remains, within the area of the site impacted by the footprint of the new development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the investigation.

Specific

- 2.1.3 To record any evidence for the town's late Saxon defences.
- 2.1.4 To record the exposed inner face of the city wall, and any associated deposits.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Following the removal of the existing concrete yard surface, all revealed deposits were hand-excavated in stratigraphic order. Excavation stopped at a depth of 1.2 m, the agreed maximum impact depth of the proposed development. All fieldwork and recording followed standard OA guidelines (Wilkinson 1992).



3 RESULTS

3.1 Distribution of archaeological deposits (Figs 3-5)

- 3.1.1 The trench measured 2.5 m x 2.4 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.2 m. The lowest deposit comprised a very dark brown silty sand loam (20) containing pottery dating from the 17th century. A total of 0.2 m thickness of the deposit was revealed, which was assumed to form a garden/cultivation soil overlying the late-Saxon rampart and medieval soils (Figs 3-5).
- 3.1.2 The soil had been cut by a wall robber trench (21), which measured 1.2 m x 0.54 m and had a vertical south face. The trench was assumed to have facilitated the removal of the internal face of the city wall, and allowed the repointing/reconstruction of its southern face (15; Figs 3 and 5). The base of the cut was below impact level and was not seen. The observed rear face of the wall (15) measured 1.35 m wide and 0.75 m high, and was constructed from rough ragstone blocks with a yellowish brown sandy mortar. It was offset from the upper wall face (13) by 0.15 m, and a 0.60 m x 0.25 m wide buttress was located in the centre (Fig. 4, Elevation 3). The construction/robber trench was backfilled with a compact reddish brown silty sand loam (23) that was overlain with a very dark grey brown sand loam (22), containing animal bone and pottery dating from the 17th century.
- 3.1.3 The fill of the robber/construction trench had been landscaped and its southern extent was overlain by a 0.38 m thick reddish brown silty sand loam (8) soil horizon (Figs 3-5), containing pottery, bone and clay pipe dating from the 17th century. The soil had been cut by the construction trench (16) for a rebuild to the city wall (14). The trench measured 0.45 m wide and over 0.58 m deep with a vertical southern edge, but the base was below impact level (Fig. 4, section 4). Wall 14 was of tabular ragstone fragments with small slithers of stone used to level courses. The wall had a unfinished bond of light brown mortar and was abutted by a backfill of loose light brown silty sand (17) containing gravel, 19th-century pottery and bone.
- 3.1.4 The trench backfill was overlain by a 0.40 m thick dark reddish brown silty sand loam soil horizon (7), containing redeposited 17th-century pottery, bone and ceramic building material (CBM). The layer was cut by two construction trenches. The first trench (18) was for the construction of the upper part (13) of the existing city wall, and was located along the northern edge of the excavation. The trench measured 0.54 m x 0.54 m and had a vertical southern side and flat base. The wall measured 1.8 m high and 0.5 m wide, and was constructed of rough ragstone blocks with a light brown sandy mortar. A loose very dark grey brown silty sand loam (19) was used to backfill between the construction cut (Fig. 4, Section 4).
- 3.1.5 The second construction cut (3) was aligned north to south and was located in the centre of the trench (Figs 3 and 4, Section 4) It had vertical sides and flat base and measured 1.4 m long, 0.55 m wide and 0.57 m deep. It contained a rough limestone foundation (4), constructed with a light yellowish coarse sandy mortar. The trench was backfilled with a loose light brown silty sand loam (5). The foundation was part of a small outbuilding behind the church and against the city wall.
- 3.1.6 A 0.2 m thick compact light yellowish mortar floor make-up deposit (2) abutted the east side of the wall (4), and contained brick, slate and mortar fragments. The deposit was overlain by a 0.4 m to 0.12 m thick demolition layer of loose grey brown silty sand (12) with CBM and slate fragments. On the west side of the wall was a 0.18 m thick dark



grey brown garden soil (6). The demolition deposit had been cut by service trenches (24/25 and 9/10/11), which were overlain by the existing concrete surface (1).



4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 The evaluation trench revealed the rear face of the 13th-century city wall (context 15), which had been robbed and refaced in the 17th century. No evidence for earlier Saxon defences was observed, and presumably lie below the soil horizon (20) revealed at 1.2 m below ground level. The width of the robber trench gives some indication of the original width of the 13th-century (or earlier) wall, the edge of which was 2.1 m from the existing wall's outer face. The Saxon town wall was seen to be c. 1.8 m wide at New College (Booth 1995, 221; fig. 9) and 1.9 m at Oxford castle (Norton et al forthcoming), and both sections of wall are comparable with the width of the revealed trench at the church.
- 4.1.2 The city wall showed evidence for a second rebuild in the 17th or 18th century, with a later section of wall (14) lying to the east of the revealed internal buttress. The date of the buttress is not immediately obvious, but presumably it was created following the robbing of the inner face, so as to provide stability to the wall once it had been significantly reduced in thickness. Another possibility is that it defined an exit point through the city wall to the west of Bastion 1. An 18th-century doorway was inserted into Bastion 21 at New College, and served to provide access to the kitchen yard. A door within the revealed section of the city wall at the Wesley Memorial Church may have allowed access from Elm Cottages, built into Bastion 1 in the 19th century, to the land later occupied by St Peter's College. The later wall (14) may have been constructed to infill such a doorway once it fell out of use, possibly after the construction of the Wesley Memorial Church in the late 19th century. However, there is no evidence for a doorway on the northern side of the wall, and wall 14 may represent a repair to the wall's internal face. The upper part of the city wall was also constructed in the 19th century.
- 4.1.3 The deposits overlying the later construction deposits comprised garden soils and foundations (4) of a small outbuilding abutting the inner face of the city wall.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description				Orientation		E-W
Trench cutting through series of soil horizons and exposing top of robber trench of the city wall.				Avg. depth (m)		1.2 m
				Width (m)		2.5 m
				Length (m)		2.4 m
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer		0.15 m	Concrete surface		
2	Layer		0.20 m	Floor make up		
3	Cut	0.55 m	0.75 m	Construction trench		
4	Structure	0.50 m	0.70 m	Wall foundations		
5	Fill					
6	Layer		0.18 m	Garden topsoil		
7	Layer		0.40 m	Soil horizon	Pottery, Bone, CBM	13 th - 17 th C
8	Layer		0.38 m	Soil horizon	Pottery, Bone, CBM	13 th - 17 th C
9	Cut	0.90 m	0.65 m	Service trench		
10	Service			Concreted ceramic pipes		
11	Fill			Backfill of trench		
12	Layer		0.12 m	Demolition layer		
13	Structure	0.50 m	1.80 m	Wall rebuild		
14	Structure	0.50 m	0.50 m	Wall rebuild		
15	Structure	0.65 m	0.75 m	Wall rebuild		
16	Cut	0.45 m	0.58 m	Construction trench		
17	Fill			Backfill	Pottery, Bone, CBM	19 th C
18	Cut	0.54 m	0.54 m	Construction trench		
19	Fill			Backfill		
20	Layer		0.15 m	Top of rampart?	Pottery, Bone, CBM	13 th - 17 th C
21	Cut	1.20 m	0.54 m	Robber trench		
22	Fill			Backfill	Pottery, Bone, CBM	13 th - 17 th C
23	Fill			Backfill		
24	Cut	0.25 m	0.30 m	Service trench		
25	Fill			Backfill of trench		



APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

Pottery by John Cotter

A total of 27 sherds of pottery weighing 937 g were recovered from five contexts. All the pottery was examined and spot-dated and is all of post-medieval date. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded, followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (eg. decoration etc.).

The assemblage is mostly in a fresh condition with fairly large sherds present. The earliest pieces are a late Brill pink-buff ware chafing dish (portable stove) and other sherds of late 16th- or early 17th-century date including the base of a German Frechen stoneware jug. Post-medieval Brill red wares replaced the pink-buff wares in Oxford from c. 1640 and these are fairly common on this site. Three or possibly four of the five contexts contain pottery compatible with a date of c. 1640-1700 (see also similar clay pipe dates). One context only produced 19th-century pottery. The pottery types present are fairly unremarkable for Oxford and further details are recorded in Table B1.

Table B1 Pottery

Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight	Comments
7	c. 1640-1700	4	40	2 joining rims from ribbed PMR (post-med red earthenware) jug with good quality glossy black glaze allover. 2x poss Brill PMR w brown glaze int
8	c. 1640-1700	16	738	Prob late 16/early 17C Brill pink-buff coarsewares incl prob chafing dish rim & prob jar & large dish sherds. Early Brill redware incl near dish profile with broad flanged rim. 2x yellow Border ware incl prob jug pad base. 2x Frechen stoneware incl moulded jug pad base c1550-1625
17	c. 1800-1900+	4	120	1x red terracotta flowerpot base. 2x prob Brill PMR
20	c. 1640-1800?	1	7	Bs unglazed coarse PMR jug/jar w reduced surfaces
22	c. 1640-1700?	2	32	Bss prob early Brill redware w int greenish glz incl dish/bowl
Total		27	937	

The clay pipes by John Cotter

Eleven pieces of clay pipe weighing 70 g were recovered from three contexts. These have been catalogued and spot-dated in a similar way to the pottery though in slightly more detail (see Table B2). Bowl shapes have been compared to those published from St Ebbe's, Oxford (Oswald 1984). The assemblage, which is in good condition, includes three complete 17th-century bowls. These are all plain and unmarked. Three pieces of 19th-century date, including a damaged bowl, came from a separate context.

Table B2 Clay pipes

Context	Spot-date	Stem	Bowl	Mouth	Tot sherds	Tot Wt	Comments
7	c. 1650-1690	2	2	0	4	32	Complete bowl with stubby spur St Ebbes Type B (Oswald 1984, fig. 51B).



							1 other stem with larger stubby spur. 2 stems with stem bores (SBs) c2mm prob L17C?
8	c. 1630-1655	3	1	0	4	27	2 complete bowls (3 frags). 1 with circular heel as St Ebbes Type A, the other of similar size but with short stubby spur. SBs c3-3.5mm
17	19thC	1	2	0	3	11	1x bowl with v prominent spur and missing its rim. 2x stems with SBs c1mm
Total		6	5	0	11	70	

The ceramic building material (CBM) by John Cotter

The CBM assemblage comprises six pieces weighing 562 g from three contexts. These all appear to be of medieval date and are therefore residual in their contexts. The assemblage was examined and spot-dated during the present assessment stage following standard Oxford Archaeology procedures (Table B3). As usual, the dating of broken fragments of ceramic building materials is an imprecise art and spot-dates derived from them are necessarily broad and should therefore be regarded with caution. The pieces include roof tile fragments probably of 13th-14th century date, and one piece of glazed ridge tile possibly of 13th-15th century date.

Table B3 CBM

Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight	Comments
8	13-14C	3	391	1x curved ridge tile frag in reduced grey sandy fabric with oxidised orange-red int margin. Good quality glossy greenish-brown glaze - date uncertain prob 13-14C but could be 15-16C? 2x pink fabric VIIIB roof tiles incl large thick edge frag max 19mm thick
20	13-15C	2	135	Edge frags red sandy fabric IIIB roof tiles with patchy greenish and dark brown glaze. Slightly worn
22	13-15C	1	36	Worn frag red sandy fabric IIIB roof tile
Total		6	562	

Animal Bone by Rebecca Nicholson

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered and contexts containing bone included 7, 8, 20 and 22, from soil horizons/dumped layers and the the fill of a robber trench of likely post-medieval date.

In total 21 identifiable fragments were recovered, weighing 513 g. All were identified using comparative collections held at Oxford Archaeology South and fully recorded on a Microsoft Access 97 database.

The assemblage as a whole was very well preserved, although most bones were fragmented. Cattle, sheep/goat, horse and domestic fowl were represented. Butchery evidence was confined to a domestic fowl tibiotarsus, chopped through above the distal epiphysis, heavy cleaver chops to the lateral aspect of a sheep/goat tibia above the distal epiphysis, and a smaller chop mark on a cattle radius shaft, all related to butchery/dismembering. Fine knife cuts to a sheep/goat tibia mid-shaft (cranial aspect), probably relate to skinning. The presence of teeth, mandible fragments and bones from



the lower parts of the limbs suggests that a significant part of the small assemblage was primary butchery waste. In general, the domesticates appeared to be relatively large animals, which is consistent with their presumed post-medieval date.

Table B4 Animal bone

Element	Cattle	Domestic fowl	Horse	Large mammal	Medium mammal	Sheep/goat	Grand Total
Cranial frag				1			1
Femur						1	1
Mandible					1	1	2
Metapodial				1			1
Metatarsal	1						1
Pelvis				1			1
Phalange 1	2						2
Radius	1					1	2
Rib				2			2
Thoracic vertebra					1		1
Tibia						3	3
Tibiotarsus		1					1
Tooth	1		1			1	2
							21
Grand Total	5	1	1	5	2	7	42

Glass by Ian Scott

The glass comprises six sherds from three contexts. All the glass is from free blown wine bottles.

Context 7

One body sherd of olive green glass from a free blown cylindrical wine bottle of late 18th- or early 19th-century date. The sherd has iridescent weathering on the inner face.

Context 8

One body sherd of dark green glass from a free blown wine bottle. The sherd is weathered. Not closely datable, but probably late 18th or early 19th century.

Context 17

Two sherds from the bases of free blown cylindrical wine bottles of late 18th- or early 19th-century date. One sherd is dark olive green, the other olive green.

One sherd from the junction of shoulder and neck of a free blown cylindrical wine bottle, in brownish olive green metal. Late 18th- or early 19th-century date.

One sherd, probably from shoulder of cylindrical wine bottle in light olive green glass. Not closely datable. Could be late 18th-century or 19th-century in date.



APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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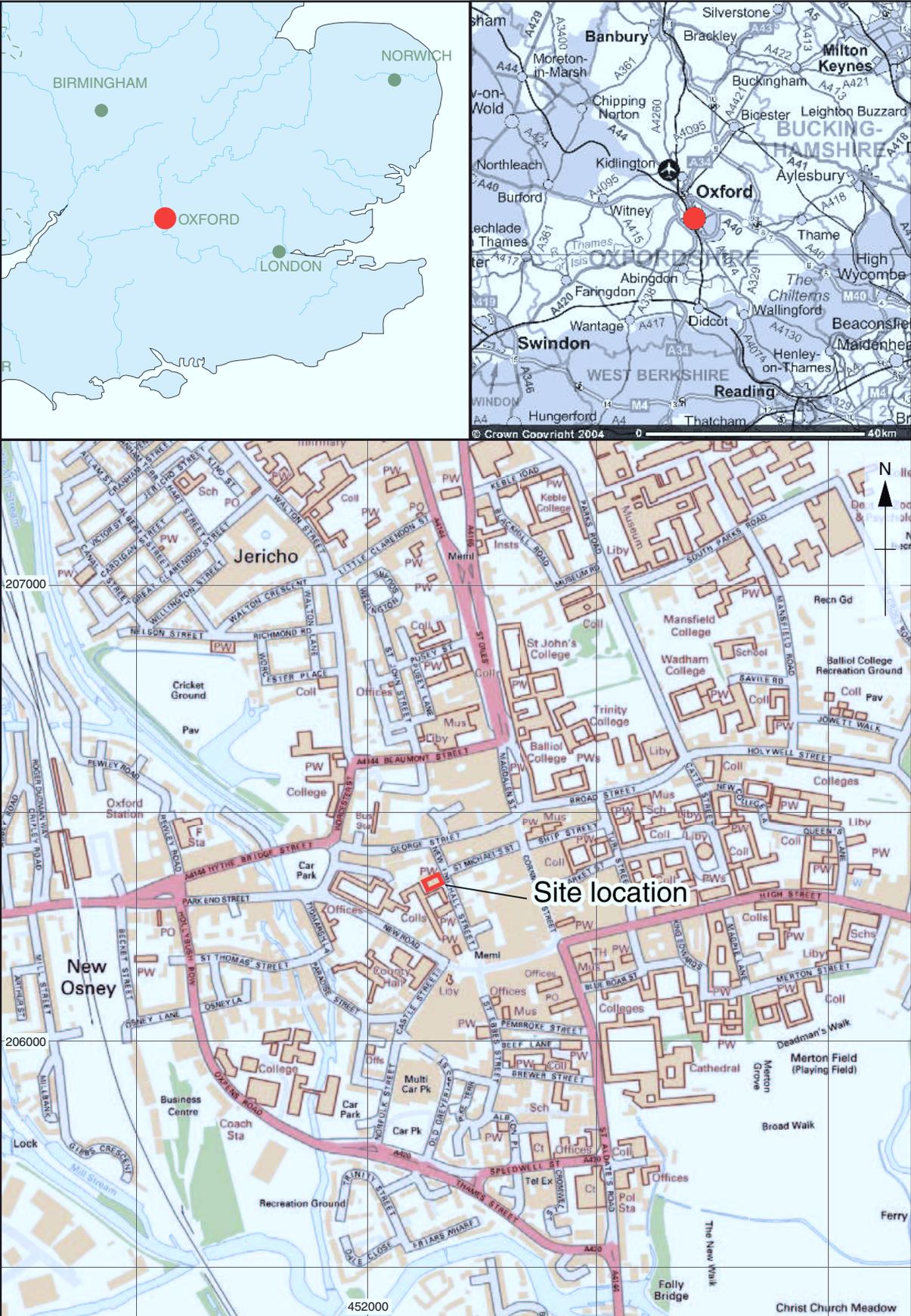
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APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Wesley Memorial Church, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford
Site code:	OXWSMO 10
Grid reference:	NGR SP 5110 0630
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	11/5/2010 to the 20/5/2010
Area of site:	2.5 m x 2 m
Summary of results:	The evaluation revealed the rear of the front face of the 13th-century city wall and a robber trench cutting a soil horizon. These had been sealed below two thick 17th-century cultivated soil horizons from gardens and landscaping prior to redevelopment and building on the site in the 19th-century.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2010.20.



Scale 1:10,000

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Figure 1: Site location

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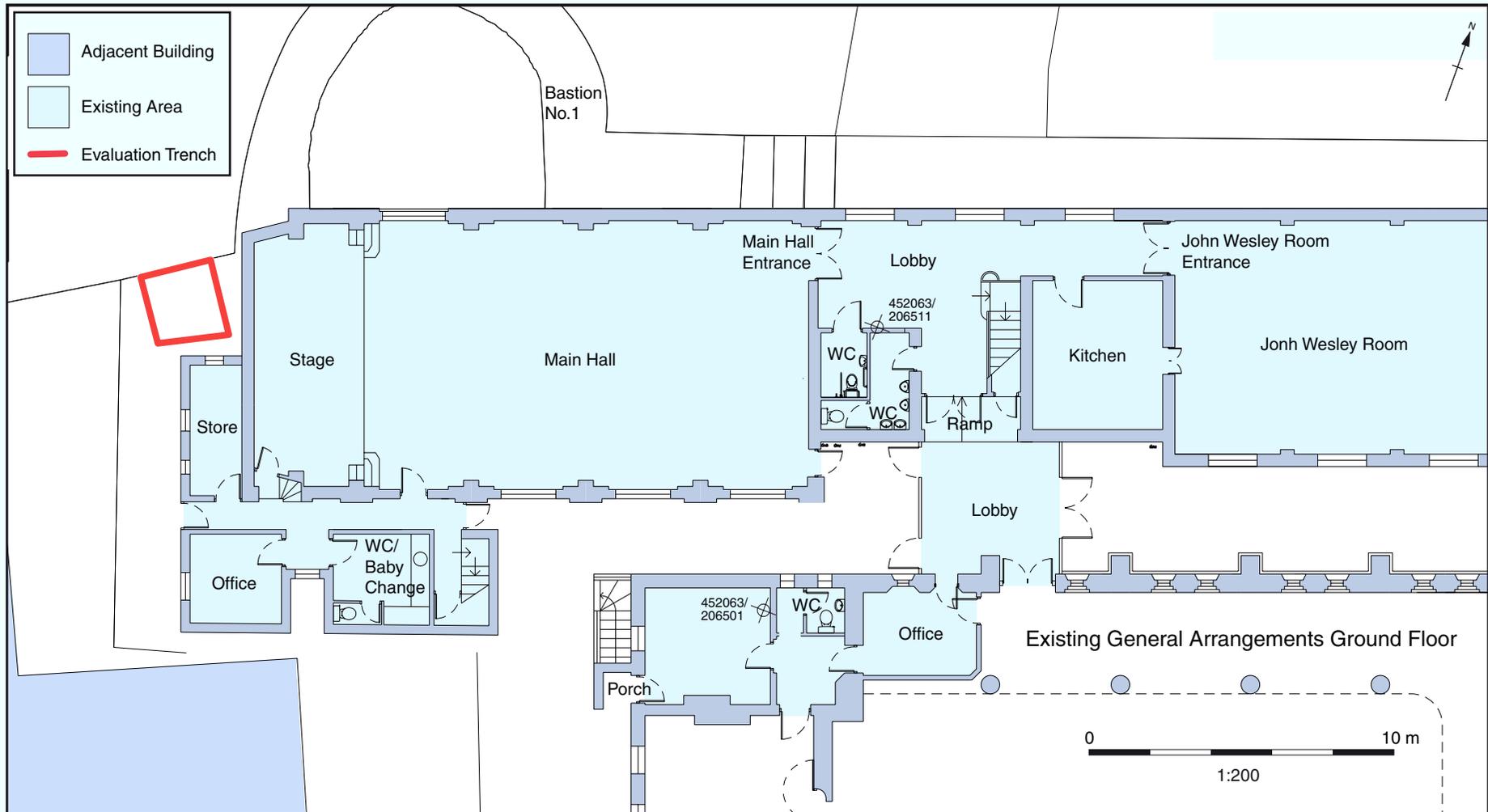


Figure 2: Trench location plan

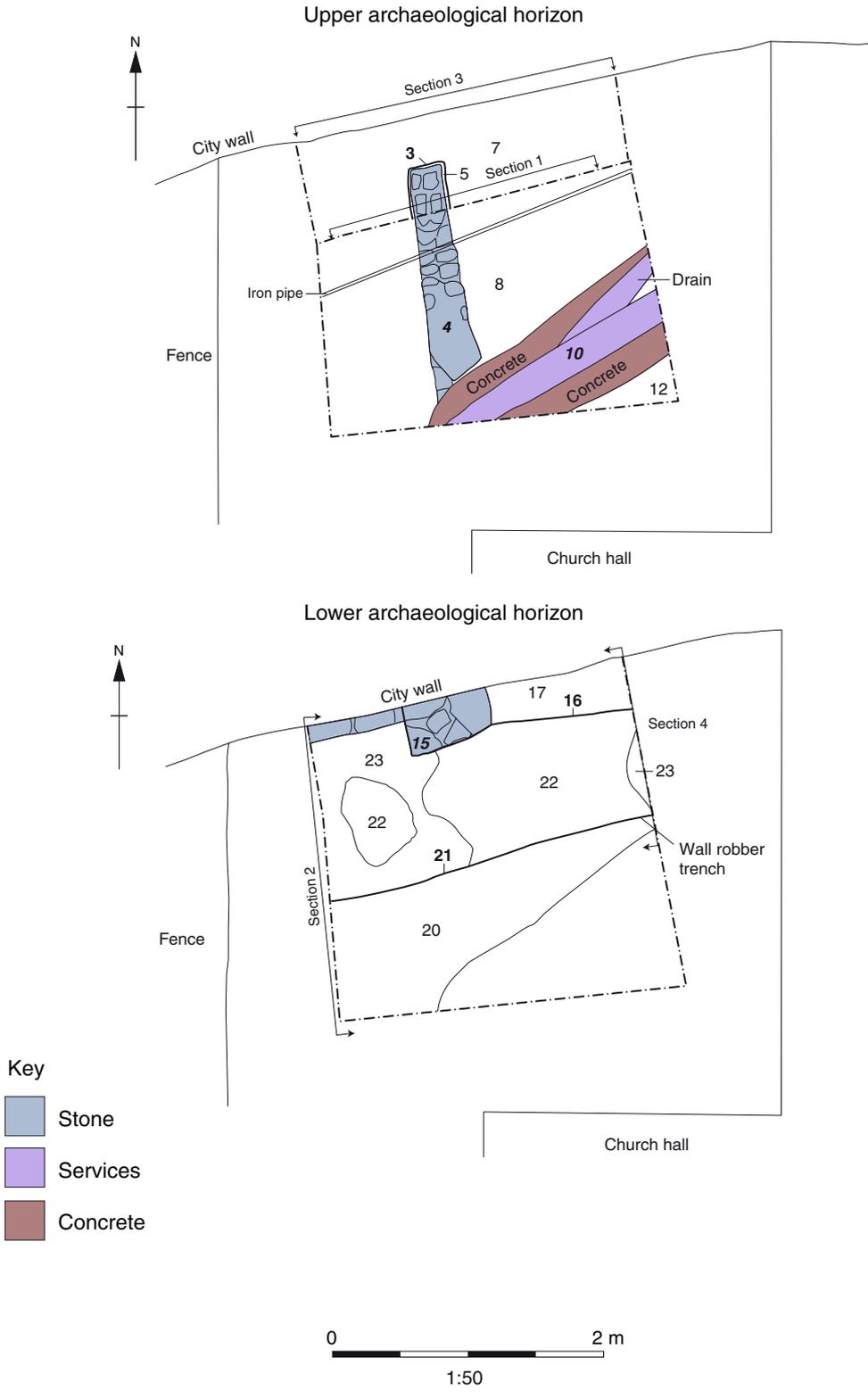


Figure 3: Trench plans

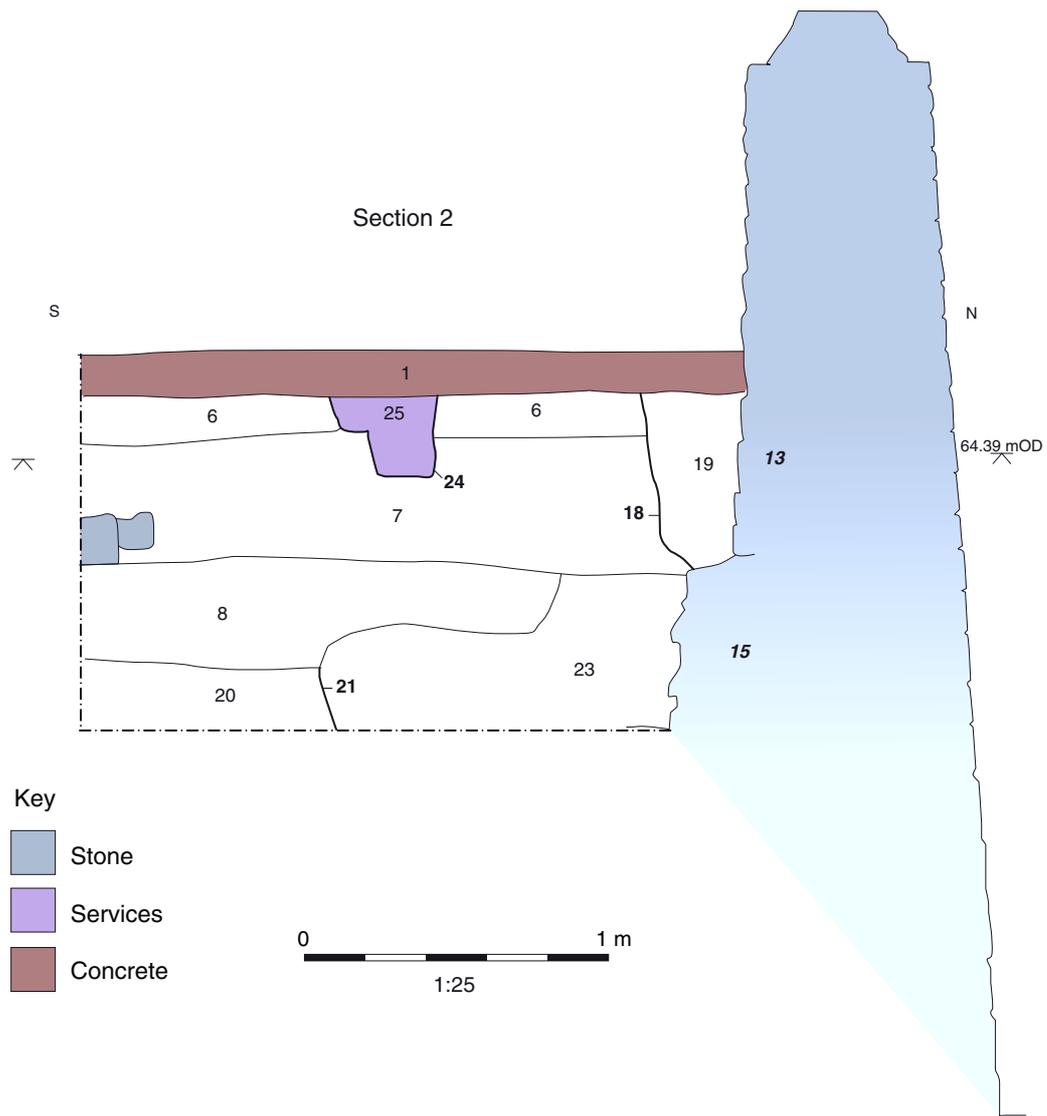


Figure 5: Section 2



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