

22-26 Northgate Street Gloucester



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Maslen Brennan Henshaw Partnership

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Gloucester*****ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

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SUMMARY

Between July 2006 and January 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA), carried out an archaeological watching brief at 22-26 Northgate Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 8322 1857). The work was commissioned by the Maslen Brennan Henshaw Partnership in advance of the excavation of foundation pits for the new supporting steel framework. The watching brief revealed deep deposits of post-medieval made ground sealing post-medieval cess pits. No archaeological deposits or features earlier than the post-medieval period were encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In July 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 22-26 Northgate Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 8322 1857). The work was commissioned by the Maslen Brennan Henshaw Partnership in respect of the excavation of foundation pits for a new supporting steel framework.
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Phil Greatorex, on behalf of the Gloucester Historic Environment Team (GHET), requesting that a Controlled Archaeological Watching Brief be conducted on the site as part of best practise policy by the City Council (GHET 2005). The work was designed to follow on from previous fieldwork that included an evaluation and a watching brief on the geo-technical test pits (Gloucester Archaeology Unit, 2000).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2006a).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The proposed development is located within the centre of Gloucester, 70 m north of the town cross, centred on NGR: SO 8322 1857 (Fig. 1). The site is bounded by Northgate Street to the west, New Inn Lane to the north, the Oxeboe to the south and by commercial property and an access road to the east. The site lies on slightly sloping ground, falling to the north-east, at a height of approximately 18 m OD. The underlying geology is alluvium and fan gravel deposits over Lower Lias clay (Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet no 234).

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, 2006a) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 Gloucester was founded as a Roman fortress in the 60s AD, and became a colonia in c AD 100, seeing the construction of stone walls and gates, a stone quay and quayside retaining wall at this time. The Roman north and east gates survived until

the 11th century – the east, south and part of the north lengths of the town wall still defended the city in the 17th century (Herbert 1988). Northgate Street, on which the site is situated, follows the line of the Roman city street. Several Roman cemeteries are known in the city, including Brunswick Road, Kingsholm, Barnwood and Wotton.

- 1.3.3 The site is part of a larger Study Area, the Urban Archaeological database for Gloucester, and search of a 70 m radius area centred on the site produced 10 known find spots.
- 1.3.4 A Roman limestone votive tablet was recovered during at 2-4 Northgate Street, 60 m south-east of the site, a leather sheath, leather scraps and pottery were recovered during a watching brief at 5 Northgate Street 50 m to the east.
- 1.3.5 Excavations at 13-23 Northgate Street, directly opposite the site, produced Roman and medieval street surfaces and ditches. Work during construction of a department store 40 m to the north-east produced Roman street surfaces, carved limestone, building plaster, pottery and a tessellated pavement. Skeletons were recovered from below the pavement as well as a undated copper spearhead.
- 1.3.6 At 5 Eastgate Street, 55 m to the south-east a Roman pavement and pottery were observed and during an evaluation at 13-15 Eastgate Street, 50 m to the south encountered a Roman surface and well and a medieval building.

Previous fieldwork

- 1.3.7 Further to the desk based assessment an archaeological evaluation carried out on the site (GAU, 2000) revealed that a large degree of truncation caused by post-medieval cellar excavation had taken place on the site, with no significant archaeological deposits encountered. A watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of engineering test pits in January 2006 (OA, 2006b) which showed that deposits of medieval and post-medieval material predating the construction of the cellars and the ground floor still exist in situ.
- 1.3.8 No evidence for the Roman city other than a few residual finds was encountered during the watching brief. It was unlikely that this was due to the absence of archaeology but more likely that the depth of the excavations failed to impinge upon any significant archaeological horizon.

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.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological deposits or features that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of the groundworks.

- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The site was monitored as a continuous watching brief during the excavation of foundation pits for the new steel supporting skeleton within the existing building.
- 2.2.2 These were excavated by a 1.5 tonne tracked machine using a 0.6 m toothless bucket.
- 2.2.3 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The site can be divided into two main parts, the southern half within the older brick built cellarage, and the northern half which consisted of a modern steel framed cellar which had been excavated to a depth of approximately 1.5 m lower than the southern half.
- 3.1.2 All the foundation pits within the northern half displayed the same stratigraphy, coming straight down onto the natural blue-grey clay after the breaking out of the reinforced concrete floor. Within this area no archaeological deposits survive and a photographic record only was kept.
- 3.1.3 Only those pits within the southern half displayed surviving archaeological deposits and only these will be described in detail (Fig. 2).

Pit 1, (Fig. 3, Section 1)

- 3.1.4 This pit was located at the eastern end of the higher earlier cellar range and measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m below the basement floor.
- 3.1.5 A layer of light brown sandy clay (104) was encountered at a depth of 1.1 m below the cellar floor. This was a very clean deposit and may represent a layer of undisturbed natural. This was overlain by a 0.4 m deep layer of light grey-brown silt clay (103). This deposit some abraded brick fragments and charcoal flecking and is a probable layer of made ground, date unknown. Overlying this within the west of the pit was a 0.6 m deep layer of very dark grey clay (102) which contained many small stone fragments and is also a probable layer of made ground. Cutting in from the eastern side of the pit was the edge of a circular feature (105). This measured approximately 2.5 m in diameter by 0.6 m deep and was filled by a very dark yellow-brown clay silt (101). This deposit had a high organic content and charcoal flecking

suggesting it was the fill of a probable cess pit. This feature was sealed by the hardcore base for the modern concrete floor.

Pit 2, (Fig. 3, Section 2)

- 3.1.6 This was located 1.5 m west of Pit 1 and measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m.
- 3.1.7 A layer of light brown sandy clay (203) was encountered at a depth of 1.3 m below the cellar floor. This is a probable continuation of the natural deposit 104 from within Pit 1. This was overlain by a 0.4 m deep layer of light grey brown silt clay (202), a probable continuation of layer 103 in pit 1. Overlying this was a 0.4 m deep layer of very dark grey clay silt (201). This layer had a high organic content and produced charcoal flecking and many stone fragments suggesting that it was an occupation layer or possibly a layer of made ground.

Pit 3, (Fig. 3, Section 3)

- 3.1.8 This was located in the centre of the earlier cellar range, measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m below the cellar floor.
- 3.1.9 A layer of natural grey clay (303) was encountered 1.4 m below the cellar floor. This was overlaid by a 0.5 m deep layer of dark red-brown clay silt (302). This deposit contained many pebbles and is a probable layer of alluvium. Overlying this was a 0.4 m deep layer of dark grey clay silt (301). This deposit contained charcoal flecking and small stone fragments and is a probable continuation of layer 201. This deposit was sealed by a 0.3 m deep layer of concrete, the cellar floor.

Pit 4 (Fig. 3, Section 4)

- 3.1.10 This was located in the centre of the earlier cellar range, measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.3 m below the cellar floor.
- 3.1.11 The underlying natural, a blue-grey clay (406) was encountered at a depth of 0.6 m below the cellar floor. This layer had been cut by 2 irregular features, (403) and (405). Both of these were roughly circular features *c.*1.5 m in diameter and 0.5 m deep. These were filled with a black clay silt (402) and (404) respectively. Both these deposits contained a high organic content suggesting that 403 and 405 were both cess pits. These features were sealed by a 0.3 m deep layer of dark grey-brown clay silt (401) which contained fragments of post-medieval building material such as brick and tile. Overlying this was the modern concrete floor, 0.3 m deep.

Pit 5 (Fig. 3, Section 5)

- 3.1.12 This was located adjacent to the southern basement wall in the western half of the earlier cellar range. This pit measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.3 m.

3.1.13 A layer of light grey silt clay with orange sand inclusions (503) was encountered at a depth of 0.7 m below the cellar floor level. This deposit was very clean, which together with the sand inclusions, suggests it was a natural deposit. Overlying this was a 0.35 m deep layer of grey-brown silt clay (502). This appears to be a layer of made ground, but no dating evidence was recovered. This was overlain by a 0.15 m deep layer of grey-brown clay silt (501). This deposit contained numerous fragments of 19th-century brick and was a probable layer of made ground. This was sealed by a 0.15 m deep layer of concrete, the cellar floor.

Pit 6 (Fig. 3, Section 6)

3.1.14 This was located adjacent to the southern basement wall in the south-western part of the earlier cellar range. This pit measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.3 m.

3.1.15 A layer of light grey silt clay with orange sand inclusions (603), was encountered at a depth of 0.7 m below the cellar floor. This is identical to, and a probable continuation of, layer 503 in Pit 2. This was overlain by a 0.35 m deep layer of grey-brown silt clay (602), a probable continuation of layer 502. This also appears to be a layer of made ground, but no dating evidence was recovered. Overlying this was a 0.15 m deep layer of grey-brown clay silt (601). This deposit contained numerous fragments of 19th-century brick similar to layer 501 and also is a probable layer of made ground. This was sealed by a 0.15 m deep layer of concrete, the cellar floor.

Pit 7 (Fig. 3, Section 7)

3.1.16 This was located adjacent in the south-west corner of the earlier cellar range. This pit measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.6 m.

3.1.17 The undisturbed natural, a blue-grey clay (706) was encountered at a depth of 0.85 m below the cellar floor. This was overlaid by a 0.5 m deep layer of grey-brown clay silt (705), this was a layer of made ground, a probable continuation of 602 and 502. This was sealed by a black clay silt (704), a probable occupation layer. Cut into this deposit was circular feature, 0.85 m diameter by 1.25 m deep (702). Built within this pit was a circular brick built structure (701) constructed using unfrogged red bricks measuring 0.226 m by 0.110m by 0.073 m. These were laid in alternating courses of header and stretcher bricks bonded using a pale brown lime mortar. Filling the centre of this structure was a black fine sandy silt (703). This material had a very high organic content and produced fragments of 18th/19th-century pottery including earthenware and creamware. The use of mortar to bond the bricks together with the organic content of the fill suggests that the structure was intended as a cess pit. The top of the pit was capped by 2 limestone slabs which were probably removed when the pit was emptied.

3.1.18 Sealing these slabs was the hardcore base for the concrete cellar floor.

Pit 8 (Fig. 3, Section 8)

- 3.1.19 This was located adjacent to the western wall of the earlier cellar range and measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m and 1.0 m deep.
- 3.1.20 The natural blue-grey clay (803) was encountered at a depth of 0.9 m below the cellar floor. This was overlain by a 0.6 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown silt clay (802). This deposit had numerous pockets of red-brown sand and is a probable layer of alluvium. This was sealed by a 0.18 m deep layer of crushed stone in a dark grey-brown clay matrix (801), the base for the 0.1 m thick concrete cellar floor.

Pit 9 (Fig. 3, Section 9)

- 3.1.21 This measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m by 1.1 m deep and was located in the centre of the platform overlooking the lower modern cellar range.
- 3.1.22 The stratigraphy exposed was very similar to that described in Pit 8 with the natural clay (903) encountered at a depth of 1.0 m below the cellar floor. This was overlaid by 0.7 m of a yellow-brown silt clay (902), which in turn was overlaid by a 0.18 m deep layer of hardcore (901) supporting a 0.1 m thick concrete cellar floor.

Pit 10 (Fig. 3, Section 10)

- 3.1.23 This was situated to the north of a doorway separating the earlier cellar range and the platform overlooking the modern cellar range. It measured 1.5 m by 1.5 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m
- 3.1.24 The blue-grey clay natural (1004) was observed at a depth of 1.1 m below the cellar floor. Overlying this was a 0.75 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown silt clay (1003). This deposit contained inclusions of red-brown sand and was similar to, and a probable continuation of, layers 802 and 902. The southern extent of this deposit was truncated by a circular cut (1002). This measured approximately 3 m in diameter, had steeply sloping sides and was excavated to a depth of 1 m. Filling this feature was a black fine silt (1001). This had a very high organic content and is probably the fill of a cess pit. No dating evidence was recovered from the fill.
- 3.1.25 Sealing this feature was a 0.15 m deep layer of hardcore, the base for the 0.12 m thick concrete cellar floor.
- 3.1.26 It can be noted from the plan that there was a area measuring 13 m east-west by 6 m north-south left unexcavated between the earlier and modern cellar ranges. It was the contractors intention to erect part of the steel skeleton using the foundation pits recorded to support the building while this area was excavated. However OA was not informed when this excavation was undertaken and this area was unrecorded.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Fragments of 18th/19th century pottery were recovered from fill 703 and retained, while fragments of brick and tile were observed within layers 102, 201, 301, 401,

501, 601 and 901. Where these fragments were of sufficient size to be diagnostic they were found to be of 18th, 19th and early 20th century in origin. These fragments were recorded but not retained.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 The majority of the deposits and fills encountered were deemed to be of post-medieval origin with no significant archaeological potential.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief showed that the area within the earlier northern cellar range had been truncated down to the top of the natural deposits and that only post-medieval deposits and features were encountered below the level of the existing cellar floors to the south.
- 4.1.2 It is probable that this area has been excavated, possibly for medieval cellarge?, and that the construction of the current range of buildings made use of these excavations to construct their own cellars. The presence of the cess pits within three of the foundation pits suggest that this area may have been open between the medieval buildings and the construction of the standing buildings, however Cess pit 701 uses materials contemporary with the buildings and may have been part of the original structure. There is the possibility that it was an earlier, deeper pit and that it was truncated when the earlier cellar was constructed, and that the stone slabs may represent a capping over the feature. The other pits may also be of earlier origin but may also have been truncated in depth as part of the cellar excavations, however the lack of dating evidence makes it difficult to determine their origins.
- 4.1.3 The area within the modern lower cellar range appears to have excavated down to the natural probably during the early 20th-century when the buildings facing the Oxebode were constructed. These excavations have truncated any stratigraphy and no conclusions can be drawn.
- 4.1.4 The area unobserved between the 2 cellar ranges contained a brick built well whose materials suggest that it was of 18th-century origin. It is probable that it was originally accessed from the surface, but that the subsequent construction of No 22 and 24 made it necessary to construct a passageway enabling it to be accessed from the earlier cellar range below no 22. While OA was unable to observe the excavation of this area it is felt that it would have exhibited the same stratigraphy as observed within the evaluation, the earlier watching brief and this watching brief.
- 4.1.5 These post-medieval activities have completely truncated any evidence of the Roman and possible Saxon occupation and aside from some residual Roman finds recovered during the earlier watching brief no evidence was observed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
Pit 1						
101	Fill	0.6 m	2.5 m	Fill of cess pit 105	-	-
102	Layer	0.6 m	-	Made ground	Brick, stone	-
103	Layer	0.4 m	-	Made ground	Brick, stone	-
104	Layer	> 0.4 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-
105	Cut	0.6 m	2.5 m	Cesspit	-	-
Pit 2						
201	Layer	0.4 m	-	Made ground	Brick, stone	-
202	Layer	0.4 m	-	Made ground	Brick, stone	-
203	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-
Pit 3						
301	Layer	0.4 m	-	Made ground	Brick, stone	-
302	Layer	0.5 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-
303	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Natural blue-grey clay	-	-
Pit 4						
401	Layer	0.3 m	-	Made ground	Brick, stone	-
402	Fill	0.5 m	1.5 m	Fill of cess pit 403	-	-
403	Cut	0.5 m	1.5 m	Cess pit	-	-
404	Fill	0.5 m	1.5 m	Fill of cess pit	-	-
405	Cut	0.5 m	1.5 m	Cess pit	-	-
406	Layer	> 0.6 m	-	Natural blue-grey clay	-	-
Pit 5						
501	Layer	0.15 m	-	Made ground	Brick	C19th
502	Layer	0.35 m	-	Made ground	Brick, stone	-
503	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-
Pit 6						
601	Layer	0.15 m	-	Made ground	Brick	C19th
602	Layer	0.35 m	-	Made ground	Brick, stone	-
603	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
Pit 7						
701	Structure	1.25 m	0.85 m	Brick built cess pit with stone slab capping	Brick	C18th/ C19th
702	Cut	1.25 m	0.85 m	Circular pit containing 701	-	C18th/ C19th
703	Fill	1.25 m	0.5 m	Fill of 701	Pottery	C18th/ C19th
704	Layer	0.12 m	-	Occupation layer	-	C19th
705	Layer	0.5 m	-	Made ground	Brick, stone	C18th/ C19th
706	Layer	> 0.7 m	-	Natural blue-grey clay	-	-
Pit 8						
801	Layer	0.18 m	-	Crushed stone, hardcore	-	C19th
802	Layer	0.6 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-
803	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Natural blue-grey clay	-	-
Pit 9						
901	Layer	0.18 m	-	Crushed stone, hardcore	-	C19th
902	Layer	0.6 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-
903	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Natural blue-grey clay	-	-
Pit 10						
1001	Fill	1.0 m	3.0 m	Fill of cess pit 1002	-	-
1002	Cut	1.0 m	3.0 m	Cess pit	-	-
1003	Layer	0.75 m	-	Probable alluvium	-	-
1004	Layer	0.3 m	-	Natural blue-grey clay	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

GAU, 2000 *22 -26 Northgate Street, Gloucester (GLRCM2001/27) Archaeological Evaluation*

GHET, 2005 *22 - 26 Northgate Street, Gloucester: Brief for a Controlled Watching Brief*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual (ed. D. Wilkinson)*

OA, 2006a *22-26 Northgate Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OA, 2006b *22-26 Northgate Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: 22-26 Northgate Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire

Site code: GLNORS 06

Grid reference: SO 8322 1857

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of foundation pits

Date and duration of project: 24th July 2006 to 14th January 2007, 7 months

Area of site: 1350 m²

Summary of results: Post-medieval deposits overlying natural. 4 Cess pits, probably post-medieval in origin were observed. No archaeological deposits or features earlier than post-medieval were observed.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Gloucester City Museum in due course.



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

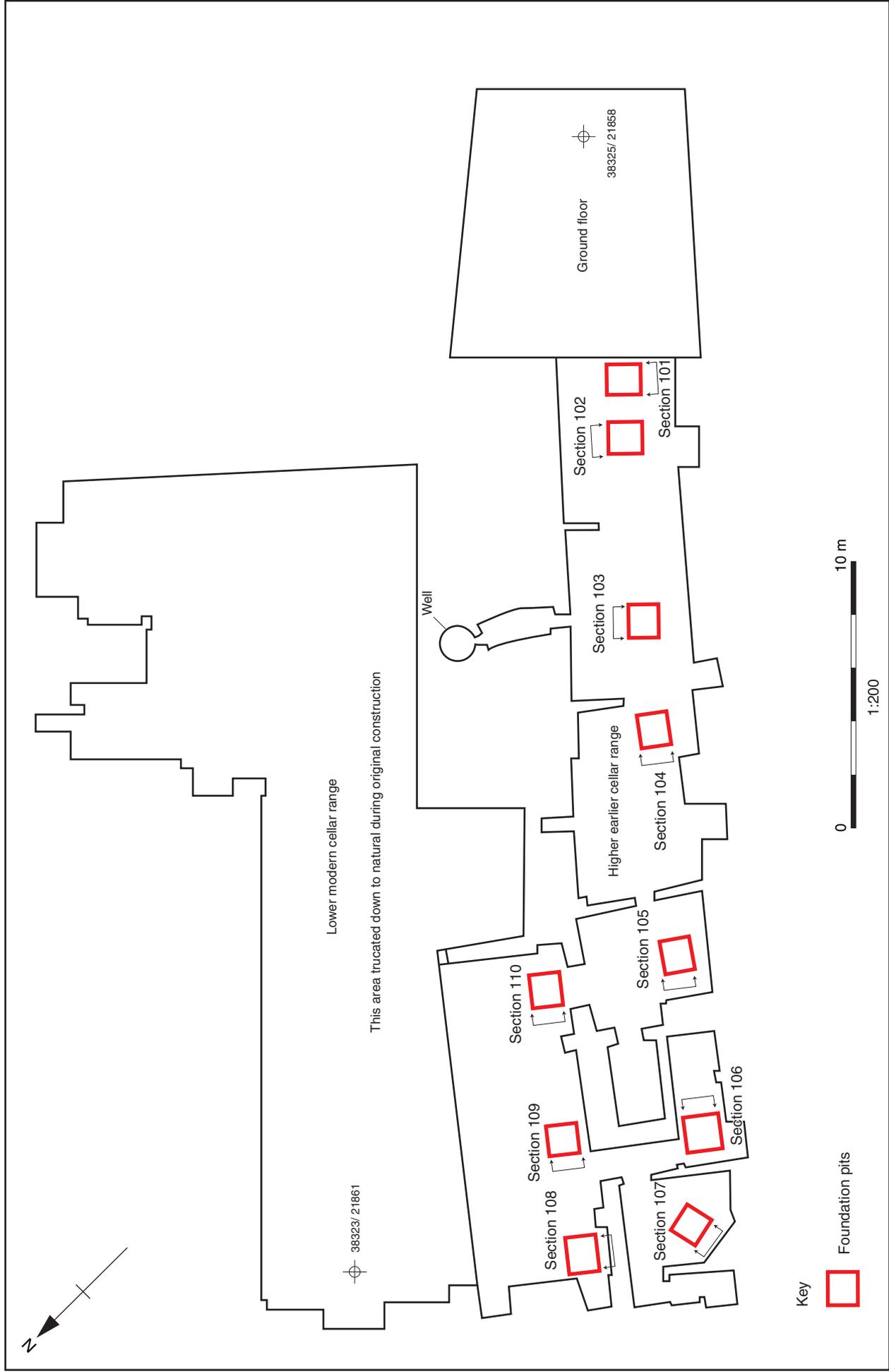


Figure 2: Area of watching brief

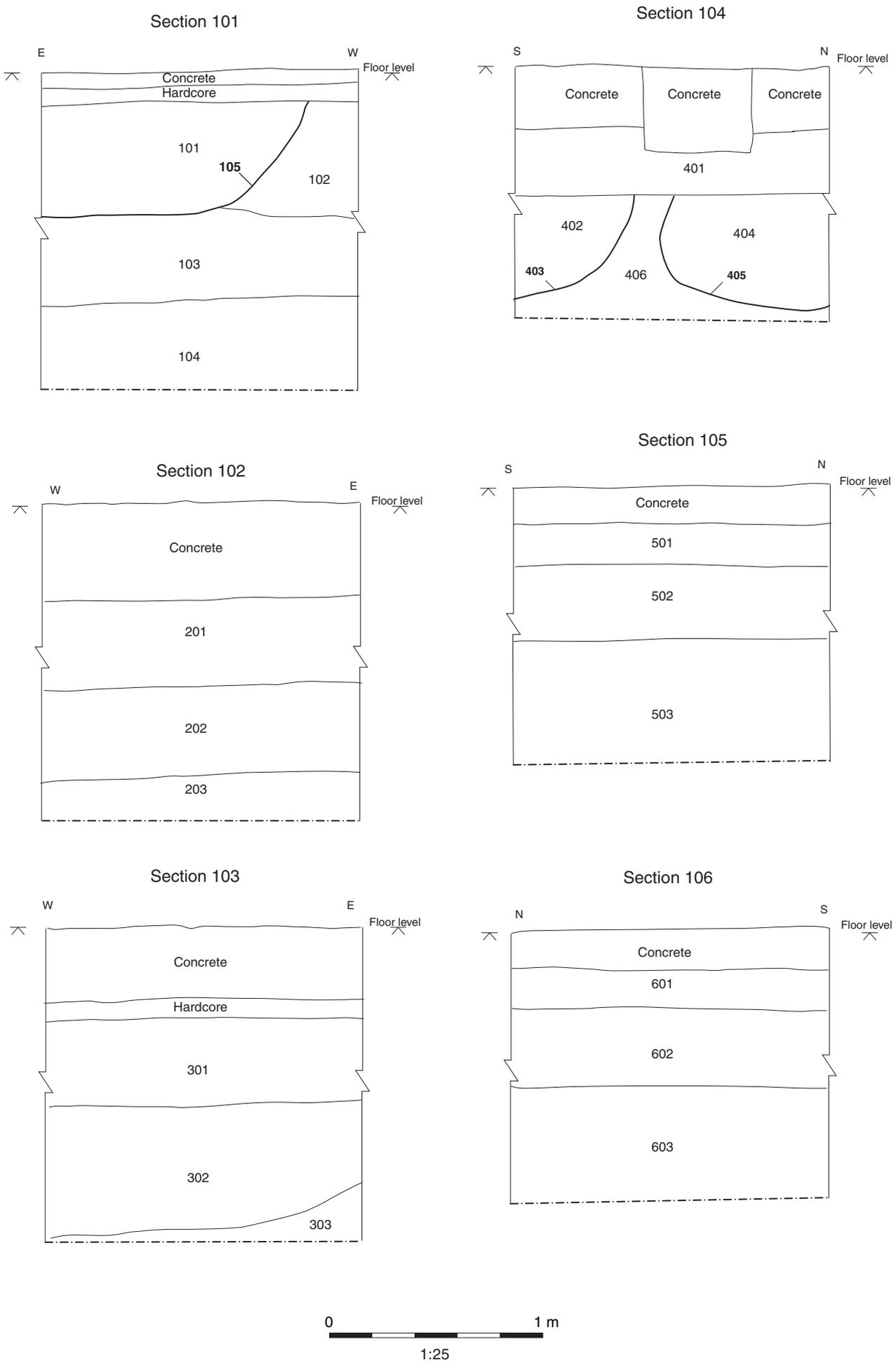
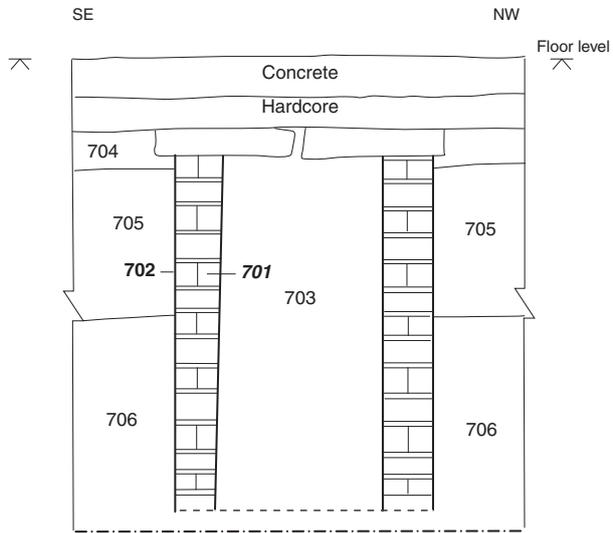
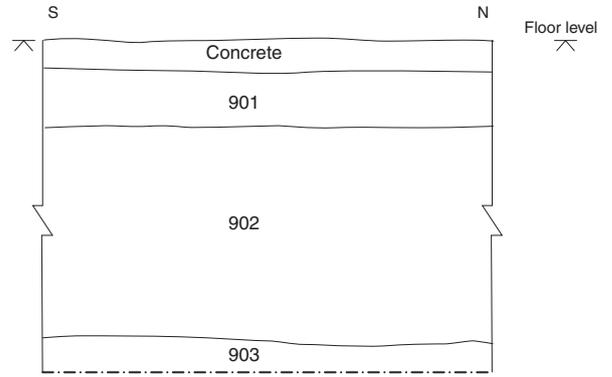


Figure 3: Sections 101-06

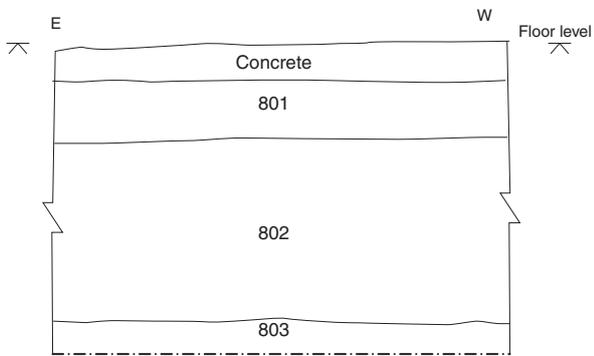
Section 107



Section 109



Section 108



Section 110

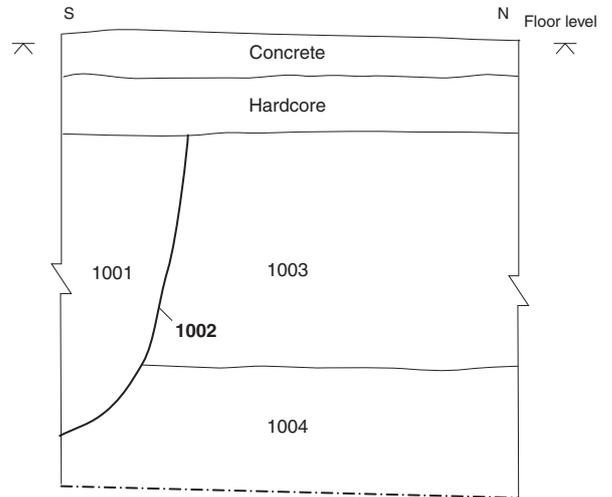


Figure 4: Sections 107-110



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