

Apprentice Store De Montalt Mill Combe Down Bath



Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief Report



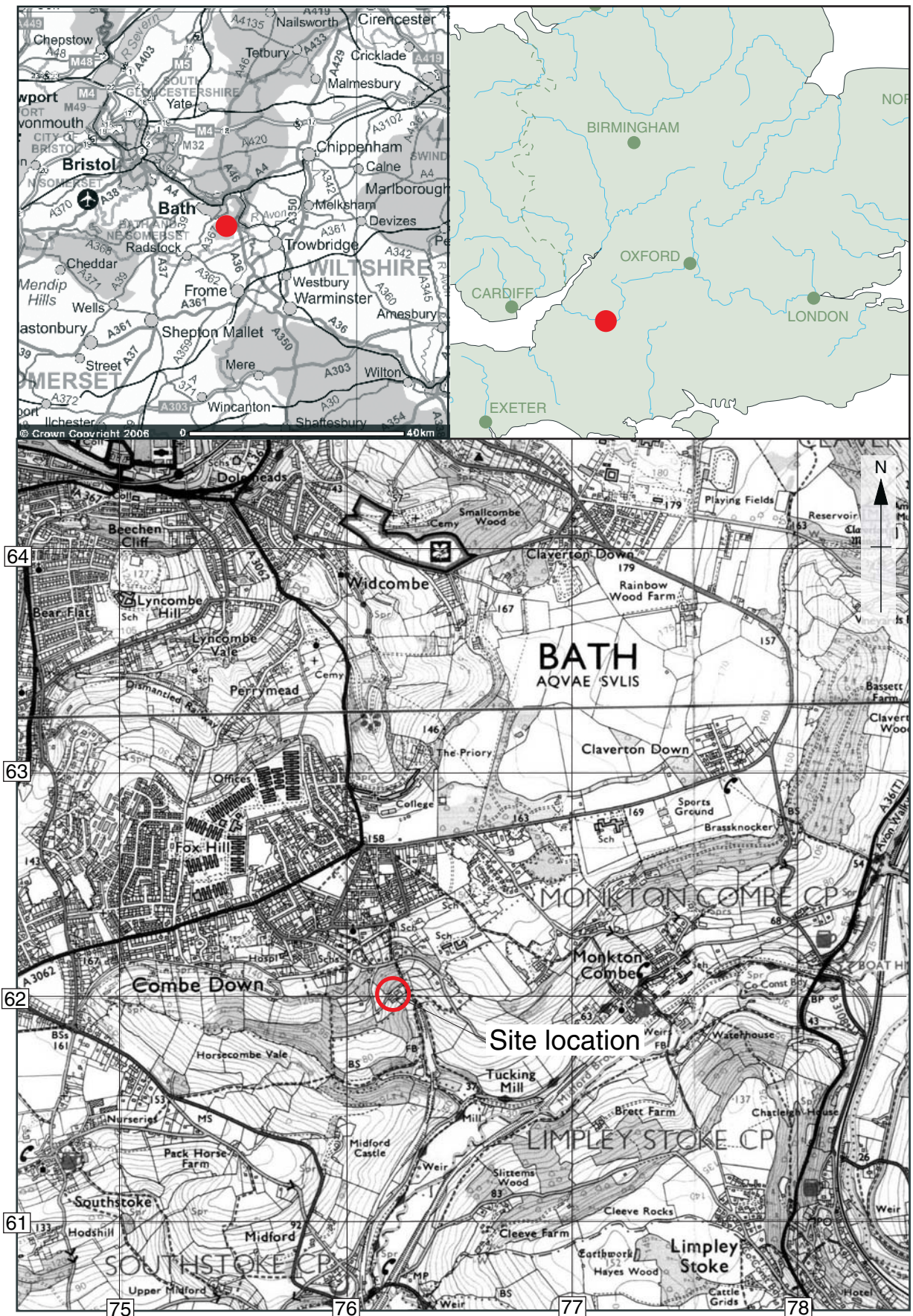
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Issue N^o: Final Report (1)

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Figure 1: Site location

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Signed.....

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Illustrated by Julia Moxham

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DE MONTALT MILL APPRENTICE STORE, BATH***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Scope of work.....	1
1.2 Location, geology and topography.....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	1
2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY.....	2
2.1 Aims.....	2
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3. RESULTS.....	3
3.1. Description of deposits.....	3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....	6
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references.....	6
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	7

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	Site survey plan, showing excavated areas
Figure 3	Selected trench plans and sections

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1	Trench 2 before excavation, showing cobbled surface 204
Plate 2	Trench 2 excavated, showing footings of Building 1c and quarry waste make-up, 206
Plate 3	Trenches 9 and 10 from the north west
Plate 4	Trench 10 from the east showing wear in gutter in front of Waggon store and quality of cobbling
Plate 5	Trench 9 from the west showing robbed out course of gutter 904 and its junction with gutter 403

Summary

Seven trenches for engineering and geotechnical investigations were dug around the outside of the building now known as the Apprentice Store at De Montalt Mill, Bath (ST7622 6200). These were placed against the walls of the building to expose the footings. They were monitored and controlled archaeologically and, in addition, two areas on the north side of the building were cleared archaeologically to investigate the metalled yard believed to have existed here. The trenches showed that the cobbled yard existed and that it postdated the construction of Building 1c, the latest part of the complex on the north side. It was laid on a thick deposit of quarry waste which pre-dated the same building, but post-dated the earlier parts. The footings were typical masonry strip foundations set in a trench dug into the fullers' earth clay, forming the subsoil here. The cleared areas showed that the cobbled yard was quite roughly laid in medium sized cobbles with well-cut pennant sandstone block gutters along side the Apprentice store and running across the yard as well. The gutters showed much wear in front of cart shed doors and where they extended into the central roadway on the east of the Apprentice Store. No dating evidence was found other than 20th century rubbish on or near the surface, which was discarded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 19th and the 21st October 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at De Montalt Mill, Summer Lane, Combe Down, Bath (ST7622 6200). The work was commissioned by Threefold Architects of London acting for Mr and Mrs Ian Cooper in respect of a planning application for conversion of derelict industrial buildings to housing.
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set Charlotte Matthews the acting Planning Archaeologist for Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES). This required that a Watching Brief be maintained during the period of intrusive ground works (ref).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2005). This WSI was a comprehensive one also detailing the work required for a watching brief and evaluation at the main mill building for which a separate report has been compiled.
- 1.1.4 In addition a standing building analysis was required. This has been presented in a separate report.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is situated on a steep, south-east facing aspect c.200m down slope from De Montalt House, on the south-eastern edge of Combe Down village, c.3k south of Bath (Fig. 1). The site is also just below and south of Vinegar Down Quarry, Combe Down being the major quarry and mine area for Bath. The Apprentice Store is sited at the south west edge of the site (Pl. 3).
- 1.2.2 The site occupies an area of roughly x hectares and lies at approximately 90 m OD. The underlying geology is Fullers Earth and Midford sands, just below the spring line where the Jurassic Bath limestone overlies this series.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared in a Desk top assessment by Bath Archaeological Trust in December 2001 (Davenport 2001) and is summarised below.
- 1.3.2 The mill was built in 1804 as a response to the boom in demand for good quality paper in the early 19th century. It was put together by a local consortium of three local business men of whom the technical expert was George Steart.
- 1.3.3 It was named after Baron de Montalt, the landowner. It was powered by water and boasted England's largest wheel in its day, some 56ft in diameter. Some of Britain's finest quality paper and paperboards were produced here. Steart was awarded the RSA's Silver Medal in 1821 for specialised art boards and numbered among his clients such notables as Constable, Turner, Bonington, Cox and Cotman.
- 1.3.4 The main building was unusual architecturally and was greatly extended in 1808 or thereabouts with the addition of steam power (OA 2006a).
- 1.3.5 A series of ancillary buildings lie south west of the main mill buildings and in the original BAT report were numbered 1a to 1d, representing four clear structural phases, the earliest being at least as old as the main mill, and the latest probably shortly after 1875, with later modifications into the 20th century. This numbering has been retained in the current report.
- 1.3.6 This report is concerned with the archaeological monitoring and recording of geotechnical investigations carried out for the owners around these buildings and clearance of top soil as archaeological evaluation north of the building. Major works on the main mill buildings have been reported on in OA2006a.
- 1.3.7 The buildings ceased being a paper mill in 1841 and went through a considerable variety of secondary uses in the 19th century. For much of the 20th century it functioned as a farm and has been derelict since the 1980s (Davenport 2001).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The primary aims of the excavations were to investigate the foundation and ground conditions of the building. The excavations were used to extent the information available from the evaluation clearance.
- 2.1.2 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.3 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that may be truncated or disturbed during intrusive ground works.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted during geotechnical investigations into the foundations of Building 1. A series of 6 trenches were dug around the outside of the building against the exterior wall faces and well below the base of the foundations (Trenches 2-7, Fig. 3). In addition, a trench was dug against the south side of the retaining wall opposite Building 1 on the north (Trench 1), two trenches were excavated against the base of the freestanding industrial chimney *c.*120 metres west (Trenches 8a and 8b) and a small test pit (TP1) was excavated but not recorded in

detail against the retaining wall of the south terrace near to Trench 5.

- 2.2.2 Where archaeological remains were encountered in excavation, the machining was stopped to allow recording. This occurred specifically in Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 7 (e.g. Pl. 1). After recording, the machine excavation continued.
- 2.2.3 As part of the requirements of the WSI, part of the yard north of the building was cleared mechanically under archaeological supervision and the deposits recorded (Trenches 9 and 10 (Fig. 3; Pls. 3-5).
- 2.2.4 A plan of the extent of observed remains in the trenches was maintained (Fig. 3) at a scale of 1:50 and sections of exposed features and sample sections showing the stratigraphy were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 4). All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made following procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).
- 2.2.5 One trench was provisionally planned to the west of the Apprentice Store, depending on the results of the investigations into the flue to the chimney (OA 2005). As these investigations showed that the flue did not pass through this part of the site (OA 2006a) this trench was not proceeded with.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Description of deposits

- 3.1.1. Detailed context descriptions are in the table in appendix 1. All trenches around the building and Tr. 1, reached the light yellow-brown fullers earth and usually were taken down a distance into it. It was generally met with at 1.7-1.9 m down along the north side of Building 1 (209, 307 [Fig. 4] & 409) and in Tr. 1 (105). At the west side of the building in Trenches 6 and 7, it was met with at about 100mm and 600mm respectively, i.e. it was fairly level at the top but the ground surface sloped down above it. At the south in Tr. 5, the same deposit (504) was met with at 900mm down from the modern surface.
- 3.1.2. The levels of the tops of the trenches were as follows:
- Tr. 1, N. end, 91.55 m OD;
 - Tr. 2, S. end, 89.75 m OD;
 - Tr. 3, S. end, 90.00 m OD;
 - Tr. 4, S. end, 89.60 m OD;
 - Tr. 5, N. end, 86.75 m OD;
 - Tr. 6, E. end, 89.10 m OD;
 - Tr. 7, E. end, 89.50 m OD
- 3.1.3. The fullers earth was capped by a similar but darker layer, 400mm to 600mm thick, in Trs. 1, 3 and 5 (104, 306 [Fig. 4] & 503). This also occurs in Tr. 4 (407) but separated from it by a layer of dark clay with charcoal flecks (408). It appears to be the weathered upper facies of the fullers earth.
- 3.1.4. On the north of the building these natural subsoils were capped with a dump of greyish white crushed lime stone (103, 206, 305 and 406). This was as much as 1.1 m thick in Tr 2 (Fig. 4 & Plate 2), only 400mm in Tr. 1 and 600mm in Tr. 3 (Fig. 4). It was also about 1 m thick in Tr. 4, but was cut away by a large pit or scoop (405).
- 3.1.5. This seems to represent a deliberate dump of quarry waste to form the foundations for

the yard north of Building 1. It seems to post-date the construction of the footings of Building 1a and b but is cut through by the footings of Building 1c. This is consonant with the phasing of these buildings (see Davenport 2001 and OA 2006b). The present cobbled yard surface is secondary, however, the original perhaps being the quarry waste.

- 3.1.6. The yard was a roughly laid thickness of cobbles set in a grey brown silty sandy matrix which is merely the result of dirt infiltrating during use (204, 303, 402, 703, Pl. 4). It was separated from the north wall of Building 1 by a gutter made from single blocks of Pennant sandstone (203, 403). This gutter continued about two metres across the yard east of Building 1 but did not appear on the west side of the building.
- 3.1.7. The gutter was quite worn in front of the double doors of Building 1b, resulting from the passage of carts or waggons (Plate 4). The wear was not concentrated where wheel ruts might have been expected, suggesting a lot of foot or animal passage in addition.
- 3.1.8. A gutter of similar design ran north-south across the yard joining this gutter in Tr.9 (904, Fig. 3, Plate 5). It was robbed out for most of its length. The gutter 203 etc did not continue beyond the western edge of Tr. 10. Here it is blocked by 304, the stone slabs marking the east end of a raised, paved platform in front of Building 1a. The gutter may have run around it. In any case it this platform seems to be contemporary with Building 1a and therefore pre-dates the gutter and cobbling.
- 3.1.9. Two areas in front of the Apprentice Store were cleared by machine down to the top of the cobbled surface (Tr. 9 and Tr. 10; Fig. 3 and Plate 3). The cobbling was contemporary with the gutters and therefore postdated the construction of Building 1c and was in use contemporary with the other elements of Building 1.
- 3.1.10. The original function and design of the lean-to across the rear of the building (1d) is unclear but it is set on a terraced above a roughly built retaining wall. Trench 5 seems to show that this retaining wall is probably founded on the top of the fullers earth deposit (504), or the weathered layer above it (503), but in any case, only at about the present ground level.
- 3.1.11. Two small trenches were dug by the engineers at the base of the free standing chimney (Tr 8a on the west and Tr. 8B on the east). These showed that the chimney, despite being about 22 metres high, had quite shallow footings. These were set into the fullers earth at a depth of 600 -800 mm below the present surface. No indication was seen in these trenches of the flue from the mill, but the shaft leading from it can be seen leading up to the left (south) side of the drawing hearth on the east side of the base of the chimney, from inside the fireplace.

3.2. Finds

- 3.2.1. Due to the nature of the excavation very few finds were recovered and none retained. They were all 20th century items in the top soil.

3.3. Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1. It was not part of the WSI to carry out palaeo-environmental sampling.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1. The footings of the standing building

- 4.1.1. The Apprentice Store is clearly of four phases (OA 2006b) and this was apparent in the foundation details seen in the trenches. Building 1a reached 1.3 metres deep in Tr. 7. Building 1b in Tr. 3 and building 1c in Tr. 2 were founded at a similar depth. 1a and 1b predated the dump of white crushed stone or quarry waste,

whereas 1c was cut through it.

- 4.1.2. The footings of the lean-to, 1d, were seen in Trs 6 and 7, where they were much shallower and supported a low, concrete block wall. Tr. 5 revealed the footings of the retaining terrace wall, rather than the footings of Building 1d itself. These were not substantial.

4.2. The cobbled yard

- 4.2.1. The crushed limestone under the cobbled yard may have been the original hard standing, as it has been seen east of Building 1 and forming part of the hard standing leading up to the main access track, west of Building 2. At any rate it predates Building 1c and postdates the construction of the footings of Building 1a-1b. It is assumed to be the cobbling laid down broadly contemporarily with the construction of Building 1c. It could, however, be a little later
- 4.2.2. It now acts as the foundation for the thinner rough cobbling with associated surface gutters in dressed sandstone blocks, which formed the surface for much of the later 19th and 20th centuries, judging from its thin covering of top soil and turf, which must be quite recent (post-1987 end of farming, presumably).
- 4.2.3. The cobbles seem to have a well maintained surface even if not overly neat, and the stone blocks of the drains show considerable wear showing usage was quite intense from time to time at least, which must have required maintenance of the cobbling.
- 4.2.4. The cobbling covered the whole area between the north elevation of Building 1 and the platform in front of the retaining wall opposite. Trench 1 showed that there was no built structure left in this part of the platform, although a small retaining wall is apparent at the east end of the platform and the pig sties (reported on in OA 2006b) occupy its western end.
- 4.2.5. The use of Pennant sandstone for similar gutter blocks and other features in the main mill Building 5 (OA 2006a) may suggests a similar later 19th century date, but is not conclusive in itself.

4.3. General

- 4.3.1. The trenches were dug for geotechnical investigations in the first place and showed the footings of the building to be as one would expect of such a traditional structure in this area: strip masonry wall footings set a traditionally adequate depth into the first reasonably firm strata.
- 4.3.2. Archaeologically they revealed no evidence of any structures or occupation pre-dating Building 1a. The date of 1a is unclear. Davenport 2001 raised the possibility that it predated the mill, but OA 2006a felt this less likely. OA2006b raises the possibility again. In the absence of documentary evidence the question remains unresolved.
- 4.3.3. The present author's view is that there is no evidence that indicates an early phase of activities here, beyond a surprise that there should be pig sties on a mill site. The pig sties (see OA2006b) are undated and may well date to the documented mid 19th century use as a small holding (they are not of 20th century date. *Pers comm* Ms Mann, previous owner). The original form of Building 1a (see OA 2006b) is clearly a freestanding small barn. Small scale field barns are not part of the farming tradition in this area. Applying Occam's razor, the simplest hypothesis in the absence of further evidence, is that Building 1a was built as an ancillary building to the mill and is contemporary with it. It was the beginning of a sequence of alterations clearly visible in the fabric and running from 1804 to the mid 20th century.

- 4.3.4. The observations did confirm the structural sequence recognised in the standing building in Davenport 2001 and refined in OA 2006b, and revealed the effort and investment that went into the construction of a properly drained hard surfaced yard for the whole building in the late 19th century.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/Ht</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
101	layer	300 mm	tr	Moderate to loose very dark grey brown loam	None	C 20th
102	layer	800 mm	tr	Light yellow brown loam with cobbles and pebbles and clay lenses	None	C19th-20th
103	Layer	400 mm	tr	Very light whitish grey sand gravel and pebbles (crushed limestone)	None	C19th
104	Layer	400 mm	tr	Very clean, midbrown sandy clay occ pebble	None	Old subsoil <C18th
105	Layer	>1.2 m	tr	Fullers earth	None	natural
106	Layer	20-50 mm	tr	Leaf litter and roots	None	vegetation
107	Structure	2.4 m		Retaining wall	None	1804-8
108	Cut			Foundation trench for retaining wall		
201	Layer	50mm	tr	Top soil tread over 204	None	C20-21st
202	Structure	25mm	1m x 0.25 m	Lens of concrete	None	C20 th
203	Structure	0.3 m	0.3 m	Gutter of shaped stone blocks	None	Late C19th
204	Structure	0.3 m	tr	Cobbled surface	None	Late 19th
205	Fill	As feature		Mid brown sandy clay Fill of 207	None	Late C19th
206	Layer	1.1 m	tr	Very light whitish grey sand gravel and pebbles (crushed limestone)	None	Early C19th
207	Cut	250 mm		Shallow sloping side flat base cuts 206		C19th
208	Layer	1.1 m	tr	Very clean, midbrown sandy clay occ pebble	None	Old subsoil <C18th
209	Layer	>0.6 m	tr	Fullers earth	None	natural
210	Struct	1.5 m		FT of Apprentice Store 3 rd phase		Later c19th
301	Layer	50mm	tr	Top soil tread over 303	None	C20-21st

302	Structure	25mm	1m x 0.25 m	Lens of concrete	None	C20 th
303	Structure	0.3 m	tr	Cobbled surface possibly fills a continuation of 207	None	Late 19 th
304	Structure	150mm		Low slab revetting wall or kerb to raised platform. Over 203		Later C19 th or early C20 th
305	Layer	0.6 m	tr	Very light whitish grey sand gravel and pebbles (crushed limestone)	None	Early C19 th
306	Layer	0.6 m	tr	Very clean, midbrown sandy clay occ pebble	None	Old subsoil <C18 th
307	Layer	>1.2 m	tr	Fullers earth	None	natural
308	Cut	400 mm	150 mm	Post hole or pipe of driven post in 303	None	Later than 303
401	Layer	20mm	tr	Top soil tread over 303	None	C20-21 st
402	Structure	0.2 m	tr	Cobbled surface less compact than 303	None	Late 19 th
403	Structure	0.3 m	0.3 m	Gutter of shaped stone blocks	None	Late C19 th
404	Fill	1.2 m		Fill of 405	None	
405	Cut	1.2 m		Sloping sided flat bottomed pit or trench cutting 402 & 406		C20 th
406	Layer	1 m	tr	Very light whitish grey sand gravel and pebbles (crushed limestone) cut by 405	None	Early C19 th
407	Layer	0.4 m	tr	Mid brown sandy clay occ pebble oily in places – disturbed?	None	
408	Layer	0.1-0.2 m	tr	Very dirty, oily, loam with charcoal and brick frags	Poss industrial waste etc	
409	Layer	>1.3 m	tr	Fullers earth	None	natural
501	Layer	0.3 m	tr	Dk grey brown loam - top soil	None	Current
502	Structure	1-2 m	tr	Retaining wall to terrace on which App St stands	None	C19 th
503	Layer	0.6 m	tr	Very clean, midbrown sandy clay occ pebble	None	Old subsoil

						<C18th natural
504	Layer	>2 m	tr	Fullers earth	None	
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- OA2006a De Montalt Mill, Combe Down, Bath. Archaeological Evaluation Report ST 7622 6200. Unpublished planning document B&NES SMR
- OA 2006b The Apprentice Store, De Montalt Mill, Bath, Somerset. Historic Building Recording and Investigation. Unpublished planning document B&NES SMR
- OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: De Montalt Mill Apprentice Store

Site code: BAMAS05

Grid reference:

Type of watching brief: Monitoring geotechnical investigations

Date and duration of project: 19th -21st October 2005

Area of site:

Summary of results: The depth of the foundations of the building were ascertained and the fact that they were set into the top of the fullers earth sub soil. A cobbled yard with stone block gutters across it and separating it from the building was uncovered in two areas apart from the trial trenches, against the north front of the building. This was probably contemporary with the Apprentice Store (Building 1c) and was laid over a make up layer that pre-dated it and was contemporary with the earlier phases of the building. 1a-1b.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Roman Baths Museum (should it be the Museum of Bath at Work or copy to them?) in due course, under the following accession

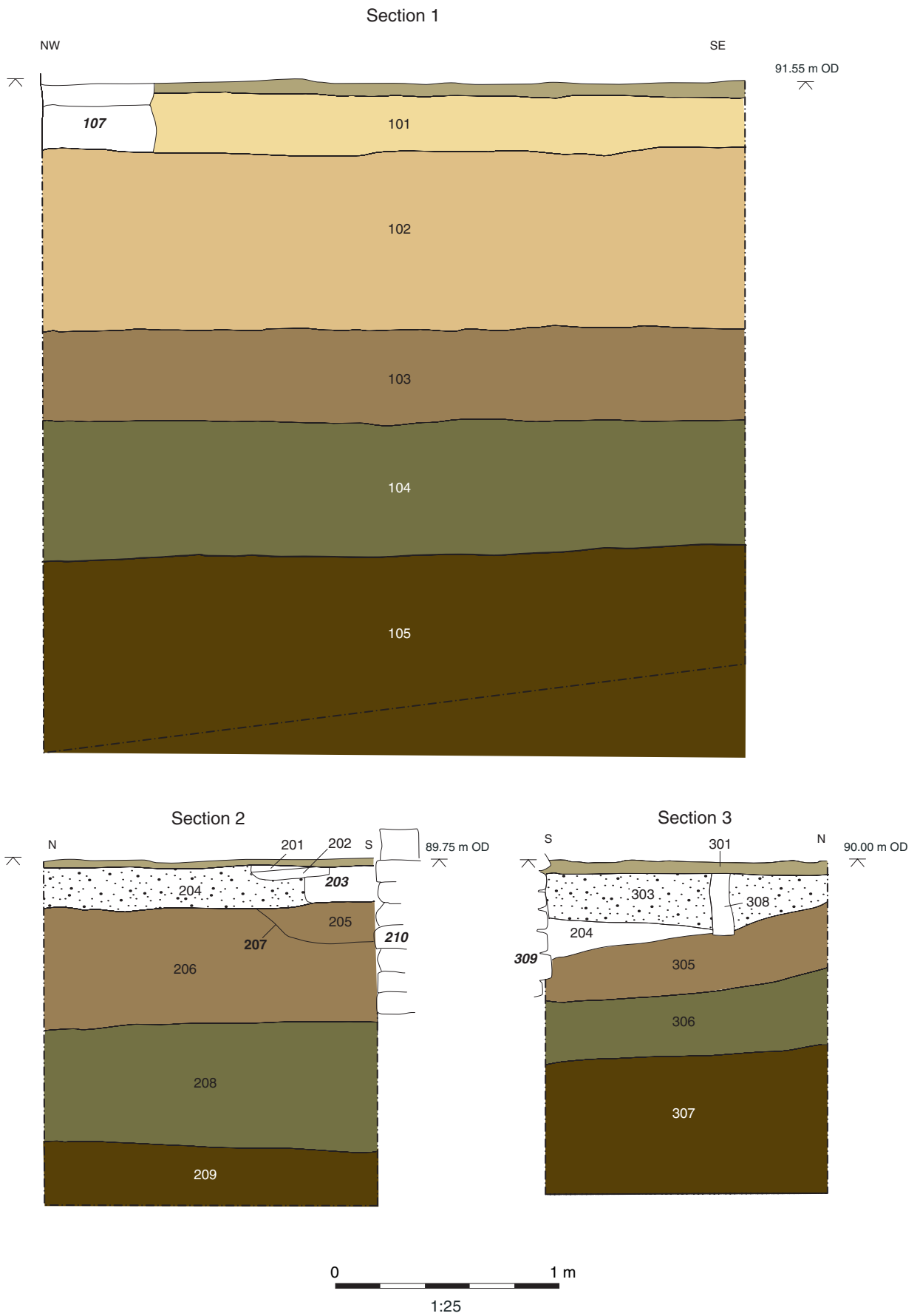


Figure 3: Selected sections (see Appendix 1 for context descriptions)



Plate 1: Trench 2 before excavation, showing cobbled surface 204



Plate 2: Trench 2 excavated, showing footings of Building 1c and quarry waste make-up, 206



Plate 3: Trenches 9 and 10 from the north west



Plate 4: Trench 10 from the east showing wear in gutter in front of wagon store and quality of cobbling



Plate 5: Trench 9 from the west showing robbed out course of gutter 904 and its junction with gutter 403