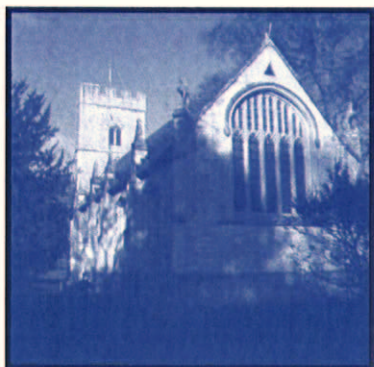


Service Trench
and Ice House
Rycote Chapel
Rycote Park
Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief



April 2007

Client: Bernard Taylor

Issue N^o: 1
OA Job N^o: 3594
NGR: SP 668 047

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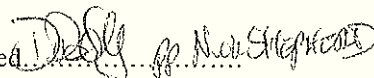
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Service Trench and Ice House, Rycote Chapel, Rycote Park, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In March 2007 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Rycote Chapel, Rycote Park, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 668 047). The work was commissioned by Bernard Taylor in advance of new heating service to the chapel. The watching brief revealed no burials were located around the chapel and late 20th debris from the ice house.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In March 2007 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Rycote Chapel, Rycote Park, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Bernard Taylor in respect of the excavation of a service trench for new heating to the chapel. A survey and monitoring of clearance work in the ice house just to the south east of the chapel.

1.2 Site location and geology

1.2.1 The estate area is situated within the historic parishes of Great Haseley and Albury, and is centred on NGR SP 668 047. The estate lies on land on the south side of the Thame Valley (a tributary of the River Thames), which rises south from the river floodplain (c 60m above Ordnance Datum) to the north-east facing slope of the valley (c1100m south of the river, at c 95 m OD).

1.2.2 The estate area lies over three forms of recorded drift geology: the flood plain includes alluvium and deposits of the First Terrace; the lower slopes of the valley area underlain by grey mudstone of the Kimmeridge Clay Formation; and the highest ground to the south-west is underlain by grey mudstone of the Gault Formation (BGS Sheet 237, 1994). The Kimmeridge Clay Formation includes beds of silt and sand.

1.2.3 The estate area subject to this study comprises c. 92 ha and includes various landforms including woodland, pasture, arable fields, ornamental lakes, gardens, established parkland and the built environment of the Rycote House area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 Rycote Chapel is a Grade I listed building and also Scheduled Ancient Monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. The Chapel was built in the 15th century (consecrated in 1449) by Richard Quatremayne, close aide to Richard, Duke of York, and later, to Edward IV. It was the private chapel for the Palace, and among its many features it has a beautifully carved rood screen, a remarkable 16th and 17th Century wooden fittings and a musician's gallery. In addition, there is a 12th century font, salvaged from an earlier church on this site. The area to the south of the Chapel is the main burial ground.

- 1.3.2 The entry in the Schedule Ancient Monuments Record states that Rycote Chapel is an exceptional example of a Chantry Chapel; this is a type of chapel built and maintained by endowment, often near or within manor houses, castles or high status residences, for the singing of masses for the soul of the founder. The chapel is open to the public and as such forms an important educational amenity.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trench was excavated by a mini excavator fitted with a 0.40 m wide toothless bucket and the work was carried out under archaeological supervision. A quick survey was carried out to look at the ice house situated just to the south-east of the chapel.
- 2.2.2 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

Service trench (Fig. 3)

- 3.1.1 The trench was 0.75 m in depth and 0.40 m wide and ran from the east end of the north side of the chapel around the west end and along the south side to the site of new boiler hut about 18 m to the east of the chapel. The trench cut into the natural along the south side of the chapel of light yellowish brown sand (3), but only the 0.55 m thick light reddish brown silty sand loam (2) sub soil. This had been cut by the foundations of the chapel (4), which were recorded to a depth of 1 m below the surface with the foundations (5) being trench built of rough hewn limestone with a mortar bond (Fig. 3, section 1). These had been abutted by the 0.25 m thick very dark grey brown silty sand topsoil with a 0.10 m deep and 0.90 m wide gravel path (6) around the chapel.

Ice house (Fig. 2)

- 3.1.2 A brief survey was carried out of the ice house during the clearing out of late 20th century debris from the interior as part of works to tidy up and conserve to building.

The ice house was a circular structure about 6 m in diameter which tapered to 2.3 m at about 3.1 m below ground level with a 2.3 m high round brick vault. It was accessed through a 1.8 m high and 0.9 m wide low arched doorway. The ice house was built of hand made bricks 0.22 m x 0.10 m x 0.06 m with a flush finished lime mortar bond dating to late 18th century. The structure was covered in a mound of soil standing about 3 m high from ground level. The door had been replaced in the late 20th century along with the two 1.5 m long and 1.7 m high flanking walls to the doorway.

3.2 **Finds**

3.2.1 No finds were recovered from the excavation of the service trench.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 The service trench did not reveal any evidence of burials next to the chapel building and that all appear to be confined to the area south of the chapel. No evidence of an earlier church or structure was observed and the land appears to have been undisturbed until the building of the chapel in the 15th century. The ice house was a brick built structure located to have natural drainage into the sand with a earth covering to insulate it. The structure dates from the late 18th century with a late 20th century repairs to the doorway.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Layer	0.25 m			Topsoil
2	Layer	0.55 m			Sub soil
3	Natural				sand
4	Cut	1 m			Foundation trench
5	Structure				15th century stone foundations
6	Layer	0.10 m			Gravel path

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992).

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Service trench and Ice house, Rycote Chapel, Rycote Park, Oxfordshire

Site code: RYCOTE 07

Grid reference: NGR SP 668 047

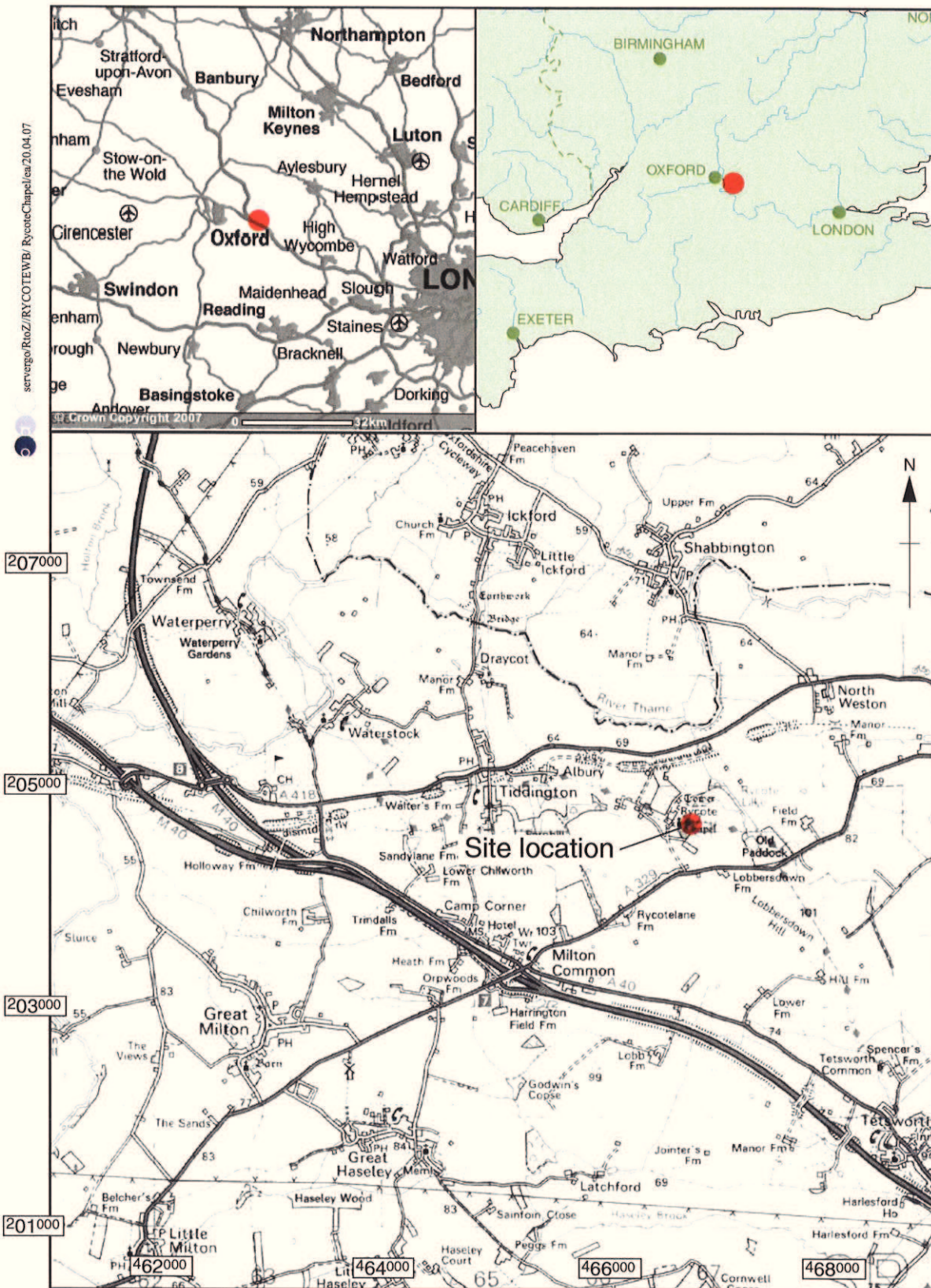
Type of watching brief: Watching brief during excavation of service trench around chapel and survey of Ice house.

Date and duration of project: Two days from the 5th to 6th of March 2007.

Area of site: 92 m long x 0.40 m wide trench

Summary of results: No burials were located around the chapel and late 20th debris from the ice house.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2007.19



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Figure 1: Site location

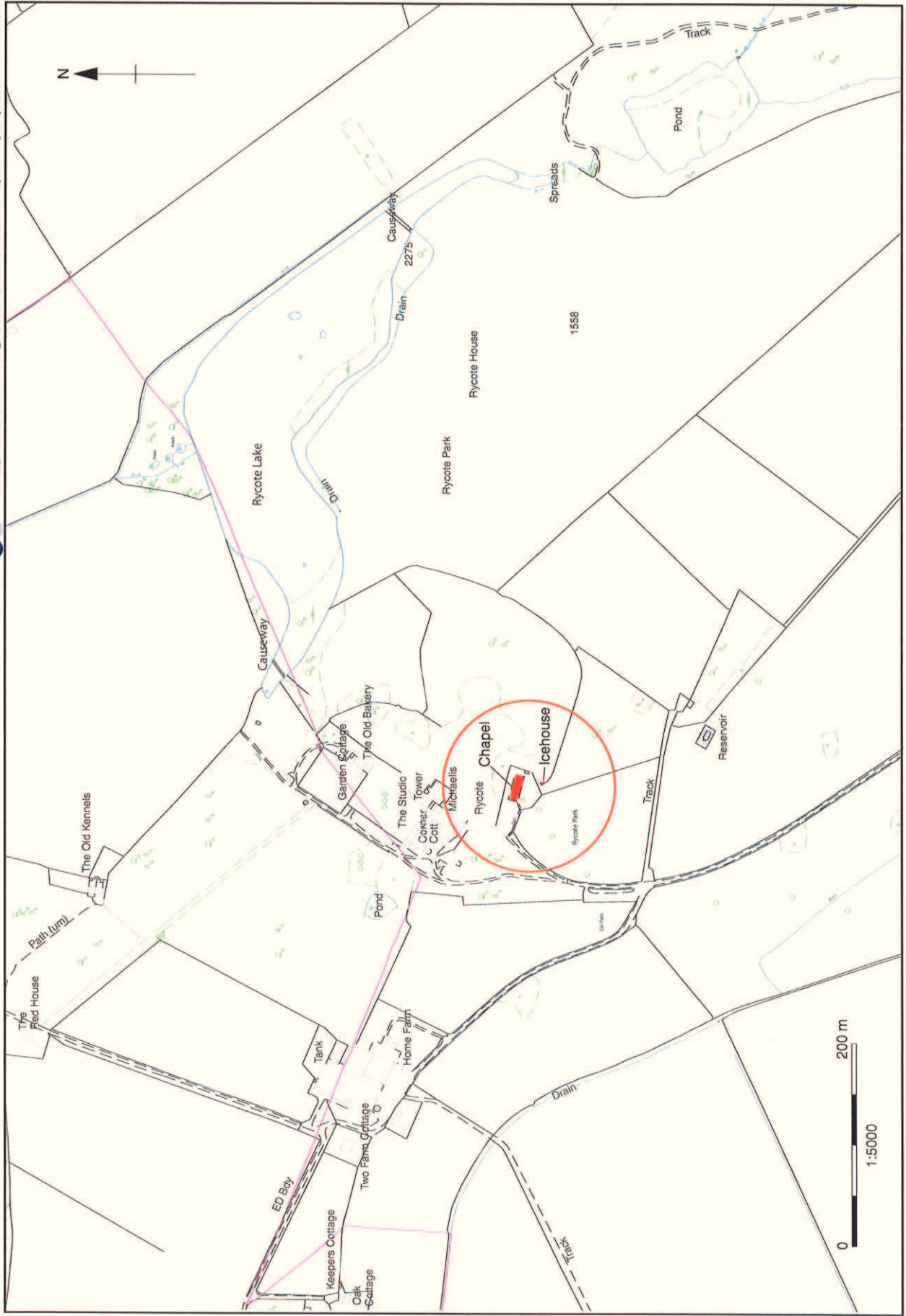


Figure 2: Site plan of area of watching brief

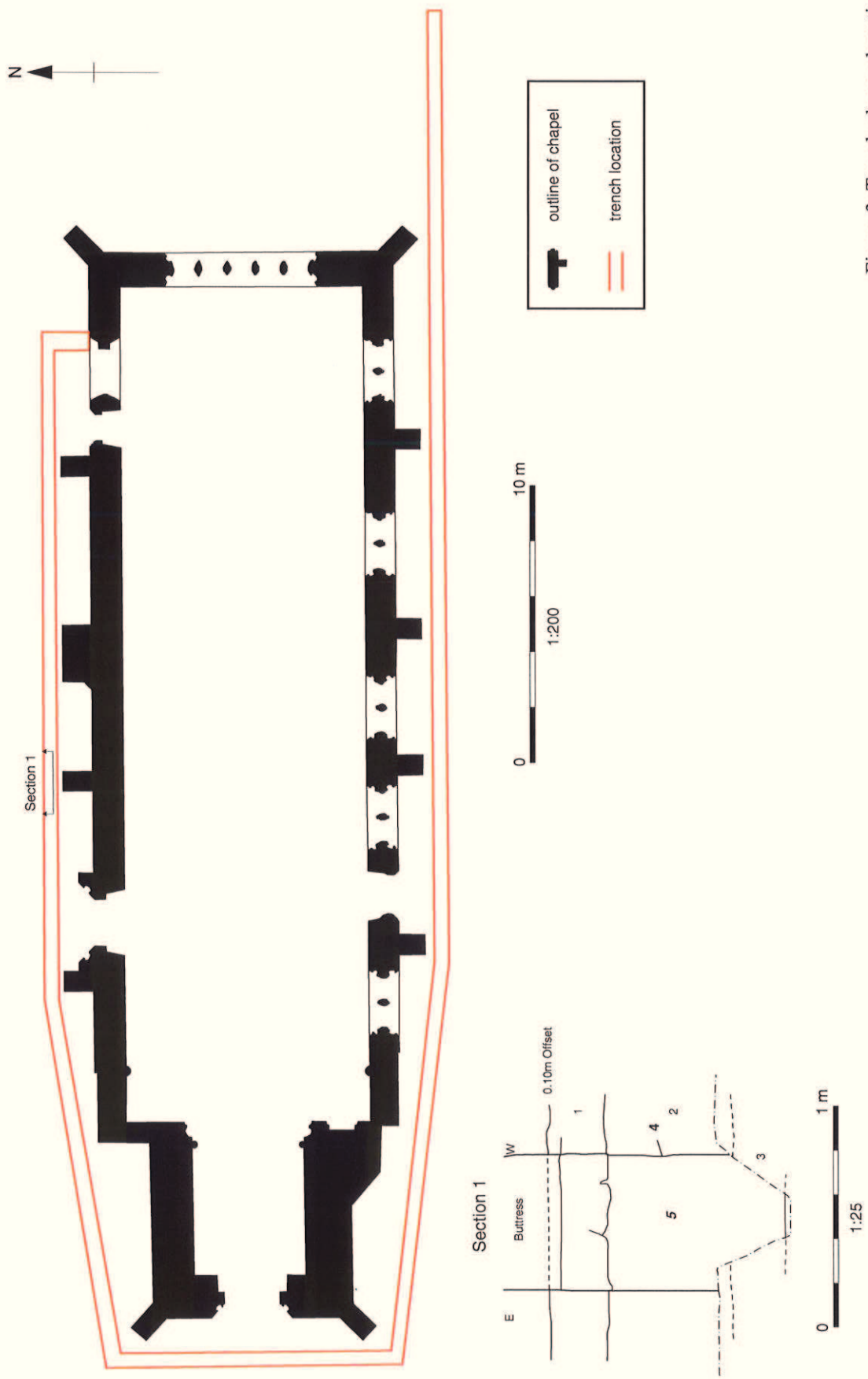


Figure 3: Trench plan and section



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