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Student Castle, Osney, Oxford

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology undertook evaluation trenching for NLP Planning on behalf of Student Castle on the site of proposed student accommodation.

A layer of alluvium was present throughout the trenches and probably derived from alluviation of the Oxford floodplain that was underway by the late Iron Age and continued throughout the Roman period, slowing or perhaps ceasing thereafter before resuming during the late Saxon period.

Pits dating from the mid 13th-14th century were found in Trenches 1, 1a and 2 at the northern end of the evaluation area, which corresponds with the precinct of Osney Abbey as understood from documentary and cartographic evidence. No evidence was found for the abbey church or associated burial ground, which are believed to have extended into the north-western part of the evaluation area, but which evidently did not extend as far east as Trenches 1-2. No features were identified to the south, beyond the abbey precinct, apart from a single possibly modern ditch.

The archaeological features were overlain by modern made ground 1.3-2.42m thick, which was deposited during the construction of the railway during the 19th century in order to raise the ground level of the railway and goods depot above flood level.

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Carl Champness. The fieldwork was directed by Paul Murray and Robin Bashford, who were supported by Mark Gibson, Mike McLean, Chris Richardson and BJ Ware. Digitizing was carried out by Caroline Souday. Thanks is also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Leigh Allen, processed the environmental remains under the management of Rebecca Nicholson, and prepared the archive under the management of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook mitigation trenching for NLP Planning on behalf of Student Castle on the site of proposed student accommodation. Although detailed development plans had not been finalised, current proposals involve the demolition of the 1980s' Business Centre and the erection of three blocks of student accommodation that will be four or five storeys high and incorporate several commercial units and a library.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as part of an evaluation strategy required by a planning condition. Although the local planning authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions with David Radford, City Archaeologist, established the broad scope of the work required. This work followed on from the submission of an archaeological desk-based assessment (OA 2016) and watching brief report (OA 2017), which highlighted the potential for archaeological remains to survive at the site.
- 1.1.3 The previous works established that a thick layer of modern made ground deposits lay across the site to a depth of between 1.2-2.4m, with potentially undisturbed archaeological remains preserved below. Where possible the proposed development has been designed to minimise the impact on the archaeological remains. The trenching was undertaken where impacts could not be avoided.
- 1.1.4 The site is situated over the possible location of the east end of the remains of the medieval Oseney Abbey and may include part of the abbey church and burial ground. The projected extent of the abbey church lies under the new car park, which was not proposed for groundworks, but other parts of the development footprint lay within the projected extent of the precinct and putative remains of structures and burials.
- 1.1.5 The trenches were designed to evaluate the impact of areas of dense pile array and other impacts that will extend beyond the modern made-ground. Ten trenches were proposed in order to investigate and mitigate the impact of the piles on any preserved archaeological remains. In the event, Trench 2 could not be excavated to its full intended length due to the presence of a standing building, and so an additional trench (1a) was excavated.
- 1.1.6 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' 'Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation' (revised 2014) and local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lay to the south of Oseney Lane and was bounded to the west by the mainline railway tracks. The site was occupied by the Oxford Business Centre.
- 1.2.2 The area of the proposed development was divided into two sections; the trenching mitigation only covered the main development area, which was approximately 0.85ha in extent and consisted of industrial units and associated access routes and parking facilities (Fig. 1).

1.2.3 The geology of the area was mapped as Oxford Clay Formation, which is sedimentary mudstone formed approximately 156-165 million years ago during the Jurassic Period. Overlying superficial deposits of alluvial clay were laid down up to two million years ago during the Quaternary period (BGS Online Viewer).

1.2.4 A borehole survey undertaken 1983 and an archaeological watching brief to the north of the site suggested that the site was covered by c 2m of made ground, associated with the construction of the mainline railway.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in a desk-based assessment prepared by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2017) and is only summarized briefly below:

Prehistoric period (10,000 BC-AD 43)

1.3.2 A number of Bronze Age pits and a child burial were found c 220m to the north-east of the site. The presence of domestic waste and the burial are suggestive of settlement activity within the vicinity. A flint blade and a tanged arrowhead of early prehistoric date have also been found c 215m to the west of the site.

Roman period (AD 43-410)

1.3.3 Excavations within the area have identified no archaeological remains of Roman date. Four findspots of Roman pottery and coins were present within a 215m radius of the site. The potential for archaeological remains of Roman date is low.

Early medieval period (AD 410-1066)

1.3.4 The site lies beyond the city limits of Saxon Oxford. However, two previous archaeological excavations within the vicinity identified archaeological material dating to the 11th century and earlier.

Later medieval period (AD 1066-1550)

1.3.5 In the 12th century Osney Island, on which the site lay, was granted for the foundation of an Augustinian Priory. By the end of the 12th century the priory had been upgraded to an abbey and become the wealthiest monastic house in Oxfordshire.

1.3.6 Excavations undertaken between 1975 and 1983 indicate the potential for the eastern end of the abbey church and portions of the 14th-century precinct wall to be within the site. During the construction of the modern cemetery wall, c 16m west of the site, 12 stone coffins were identified. The eastern limit of this activity is unknown and is likely to continue into the development area.

Post-medieval period (AD 1550-present)

1.3.7 The site lay beyond the limit of the Civil War defences of Oxford and is not shown on Hollar's Map of 1643, Loggan's Map of 1675, Taylor's Map of 1750 or Faden's Map published in 1789. During the 19th century the site and its surroundings were used for agricultural land, comprising several small holdings. Development did not occur within

the area of the site until the establishment of the railway and associated goods sheds in the mid-late 19th century.

1.4 Previous Investigations

- 1.4.1 In January 2017, an archaeological watching brief was maintained on geotechnical ground investigations across the site (OA 2017). The watching brief was able to establish natural gravels between 3.4m to 2.6m in depth across the site. This was overlain by alluvial deposits that retained a good potential to contain undisturbed archaeological remains. This sequence was sealed by between 1.2m and 2.4m of modern made ground deposits, dating from the construction of the railway and goods yards.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

General

- i. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means;
- ii. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains;
- iii. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy;
- iv. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape;
- v. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive;
- vi. To accomplish the above within a controlled and methodological way, in line with ClfA guidelines and standards.

Specific aims and objectives

2.1.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- vii. To determine the thickness of the modern make-up deposits across the site associated with the railway;
- viii. To assess the level of truncation to a surviving archaeological remains;
- ix. To identify any remains associated with Osney Abbey, associated church or burial ground.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The archaeological site evaluation strategy was intended to involve the excavation of ten mitigation trenches along areas of dense pile clusters, but in the event Trench 2 could not be excavated to its full intended length due to the presence of a standing building and so an additional trench (1a) was excavated (Fig. 2).

2.2.2 The Main Contractor set out the correct areas and levels to which excavation was conducted and relevant architects and structural engineers' drawings. The trenches were dug with a mechanical excavator fitted within a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. All trenches were taken down to natural gravel and the sedimentary sequences were recorded. Where safe to do so, all archaeological features were investigated by hand excavation.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.
- 3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers, unless otherwise stated e.g. pit 107 is a feature within Trench 1, while pit 205 is a feature within Trench 2.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soil sequence between all trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of gravel was overlain by a layer of alluvium, sometimes with a soil layer, which in turn was overlain by made ground.
- 3.2.2 Ground water was encountered in all trenches except Trenches 1a, 7, 9 and 10, although ingress in Trenches 3 and 6 was only slight. A burst water pipe flooded the south-eastern part of Trench 8, as a result of which recording was restricted to the north-western part. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in Trenches 1, 1a and 2.

3.4 Trench 1 (Fig. 3; Plates 1 and 2)

- 3.4.1 The natural gravel (105) was encountered at 54.85-55.04m aOD and was cut by a single large feature (107). The feature measured 3.60m NW-SE but its shape and full extent could not be established since it extended beyond the limits of the trench. It was 0.30m deep with a flat base, on which lay a layer of stones (106) each measuring c 0.25 x 0.20 x 0.03m (Plate 2). The stones were overlain by a layer of humic, peaty silt (104) that was 0.04m thick and two layers of silty clay backfill (102 and 103). The uppermost fill (102) contained a base sherd from an early Brill jug dated c 1175-1350. The feature was overlain by 0.92m of made ground and a concrete surface.

3.5 Trench 1a (Fig. 4; Plate 3)

- 3.5.1 Gravel was reached at 55.57m aOD and was overlain by an alluvial layer (4) 0.70m thick. This was cut by a possible pit (5) that was 3.0m across. The pit was recorded in plan but was not excavated. It was overlain by 1.30m of made ground deposits (1, 2, 3).

3.6 Trench 2 (Fig. 5; Plates 4-6)

- 3.6.1 Gravel geology was recorded at 55.33m aOD and was overlain by a layer of alluvium (220) 0.30m thick that was cut by three pits (209, 214, 222). The shapes of the pits were uncertain, since they extended beyond the limits of the trench. Pits 209 and 214 were situated only 0.65m apart.

- 3.6.2 Pit 209 measured 1.60m across and 0.90m deep and had steep, near-vertical sides and a flat base. It had a lower fill of dark brown silty clay (224) and a main fill of lighter material (210). A rimsherd from a cooking pot was recovered from fill 210 and sieving of soil samples from each fill produced further small sherds indicating a date of c 1250-1400.
- 3.6.3 Pit 222 had been mostly cut away by pit 214. Pit 214 was 1.20m wide and 1.00m deep, with steep sides and a concave base. It had two fills that were similar to the fills of pit 209. Sieving of a soil sample from the upper fill (213) produced a group of small sherds dated to c 1050-1250.
- 3.6.4 Pit 214 was cut by two postholes (216, 218) that are likely to be modern, since the fills contained clinker and may be associated with the overlying made ground.
- 3.6.5 The pits were overlain by a layer of dark grey sandy silt (207) 0.42m thick, which was cut by a possible pit (205) at the north-western of the trench. The pit was 0.72m deep and appears to have stopped at the surface of the gravel geology. No finds were recovered.
- 3.6.6 Above this lay a further 1.35m of made ground (202-4, 207, 211, 212, 219) that was cut by a foundation trench (200) containing a rubble foundation (201). The wall and made ground were sealed by a concrete surface.

3.7 Trenches 3-10 (Plates 7-14)

- 3.7.1 Trenches 3-10 uncovered a similar sequence of deposits. The gravel geology was not reached in Trenches 3, 7, 8 and 9 but was encountered in the other trenches at 54.23m aOD (Trench 5), 54.91m aOD (Trench 6), 54.98m aOD (Trench 4) and 55.15m aOD (Trench 10). The gravel was overlain by a layer of alluvium that was recorded in all trenches, which varied in thickness from 0.2m in Trenches 5 and 10 to 0.90m in Trenches 4 and 6. In Trenches 7, 8, 9 and 10 the peat was overlain by a humic layer 0.07-0.60m thick that may represent the development of a ground surface. Modern pottery and clay tobacco pipe that was recovered from this layer in Trench 10 is presumably intrusive. A ditch (1005) was recorded at this level in Trench 10. The feature was not excavated but two pieces of modern brick were recovered from its surface (1006). These deposits were buried beneath layers of made ground that were 1.30-2.42m thick, from which modern material including pottery, clay tobacco pipe and ceramic building material was recovered in Trenches 3, 4 and 5.

3.8 Finds summary

- 3.8.1 The artefactual evidence was limited to only small quantities although pottery, clay tobacco pipe, ceramic building material, metal, glass and slag and animal bone were all represented. The assemblage was sufficient, however, to indicate that the pits in Trenches 1 and 2 were medieval and that the made ground encountered in all trenches was 19th century.

3.9 Environmental summary

- 3.9.1 Bulk soil samples taken from the medieval pits for recovery of charred plant material contained only small quantities of charred seeds and grain. During processing it was

noted that two samples contained waterlogged plant remains, from plants typical of marginal areas and disturbed waste ground in a permanently damp area.

- 3.9.2 Only three animal bones were recovered during hand excavation of the pits, from a domestic cattle, a caprine (sheep or goat) and a dog. Bones recovered from the environmental samples included pig and domestic fowl. Principally, however, this material contained an extensive amount of microfauna remains including a large number of amphibians suggesting a damp environment.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The trenches provided a reasonable coverage of the area of the investigation. Due to the presence of standing buildings, it was necessary to re-align Trenches 7 and 9 and to shorten Trench 2, the last being compensated by the digging of an additional trench (1a). These changes had no impact on the reliability of the results.
- 4.1.2 Ground water was encountered in all trenches except Trenches 1a, 7, 9 and 10, although ingress in Trenches 3 and 6 was only slight. In all instances it was possible to establish whether features were present before the base of the trench was covered. A burst water pipe flooded the south-eastern part of Trench 8, as a result of which recording was restricted to the north-western part. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The evaluation succeeded in identifying and characterising the archaeological remains within the site. With the exception of a ditch of possible modern origin in Trench 10 the features were restricted to the northern end of the evaluation area and are likely to be associated with Osney Abbey.
- 4.2.2 The thickness of the modern made ground deposits overlying the archaeological features was established as being 1.30-2.42m, which is almost identical to the measurements recorded in a group of boreholes that were monitored in January 2017 (OA 2017).
- 4.2.3 The area is recorded as having been used for agriculture during the 18th century, which is likely to have resulted in truncation of the upper parts of the medieval features. No ploughsoil layer was identified overlying the features, which were directly overlain by the modern made ground, and this probably indicates that the soil was stripped before the made ground was deposited. This process may have resulted in further truncation.
- 4.2.4 The medieval features were probably associated with the Osney Abbey complex, but they are not obviously associated with the church or burial ground.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 There was no great variation in the level at which the gravel geology was encountered in the various trenches, indicating that no channels were present within the evaluation area and similarly there were no higher gravel islands. The alluvium that overlay the gravel was undated (modern finds from this layer in Trench 10 were presumably intrusive) but the presence of this material is consistent with the model for the hydrology of the River Thames in the Oxford area (Robinson 2003). The model indicates that alluviation was underway by the late Iron Age and continued throughout the Roman period, slowing or perhaps ceasing thereafter before resuming during the late Saxon period.

- 4.3.2 The three pits in Trench 2 and the individual pits in Trenches 1 and 1a represent a discrete area of medieval activity in the northern part of the evaluation area. This corresponds closely with the area that was situated within the precinct of Osney Abbey, as reconstructed by Sharpe from documentary and cartographic evidence. This indicates that the precinct boundary followed a dog-legged alignment across the site that encompassed Trenches 1-3 but excluded the trenches to the south (Fig. 6). The function of the pits is uncertain, although they do not appear to penetrate deep enough into the gravel to be quarry pits. The artefactual assemblage was slight but the pottery suggests a date range focused on the mid 13th-4th centuries. The evidence from the waterlogged plant remains and microfauna suggests they were situated in a permanently damp marginal area with disturbed waste ground. The two seeds from opium poppy preserved by waterlogging in feature 107 may be evidence for a garden growing medicinal plants within the abbey grounds; similar evidence has been noted at Oxford Blackfriars (Robinson 1985, 199).
- 4.3.3 No evidence was found for the precinct wall, which should have passed close to Trenches 1-3. It is possible that the wall does not survive, or that it passed between the trenches. Neither was there any indication of the abbey church or associated burial ground. While it is believed that the eastern end of the church extended into the north-western part of the evaluation area, it evidently did not extend as far east as Trenches 1-2 (Fig. 6). The use to which the part of the precinct east of the church was put is currently unknown.
- 4.3.4 The rubble foundation recorded in Trench 2 may represent the remains of one of a group of farm buildings that were recorded in this location on Badcock's survey of 1829 (Fig. 7). The farm was described as comprising a farmyard, buildings and brickyard leased to Henry Hall and Co. It was evidently demolished before 1845, since the buildings are not shown on an auction plan of that date (OA 2016).
- 4.3.5 The made ground that overlay the medieval features was quite varied in composition, comprising discrete deposits of gravel, sand, clinker and clay, and clearly came from a number of different sources. Pottery and clay pipes securely dated this build-up to the 19th century, when the railway was constructed. It was presumably deposited in order to raise the ground level of the railway and goods depot above flood level.

4.4 Significance

- 4.4.1 The results of the trenching clearly indicated that medieval features are present at the northern end of the evaluation area, which is encompassed by the abbey precinct, and are absent from the area to the south. The function of the features is uncertain but the dating evidence indicates that they were certainly contemporary with the abbey.
- 4.4.2 The location of the abbey church has been identified from historical evidence but has not been confirmed by excavation. The evaluation confirmed that the eastern end of the church does not extend as far east as Trenches 1-2, and neither were any associated burials identified.
- 4.4.3 The presence of waterlogged preservation in the fills of the medieval pits indicates that organic preservation is likely to be good within any surviving remains of the abbey.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained a single large medieval feature, overlain by modern made ground.					Length (m)	5
					Width (m)	1
					Avg. depth (m)	
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.76	Made ground	Pot, clay pipe, cbm	Modern
101	Layer	-	0.16	Made ground		Modern
102	Fill	-	0.12	Fill of 107	Pot	Medieval
103	Fill	-	0.13	Fill of 107		Medieval
104	Fill	-	0.04	Fill of 107		Medieval
105	Layer	-	-	Natural gravel		-
106	Fill	3.60	-	Stones in feature 107		Medieval
107	Cut	3.60	0.33	Large cut feature		Medieval

Trench 1A						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained undated alluvium, a single medieval pit, overlain by modern made ground					Length (m)	16
					Width (m)	1.4
					Avg. depth (m)	2.0
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.30	Made ground (gravel)		Modern
2	Layer	-	0.60	Made ground (sand)		Modern
3	Layer	-	0.40	Made ground (sandy gravel)		Modern
4	Layer	-	0.70	Alluvium		-
5	Cut	3.0	-	Pit		Medieval?
6	Fill	3.0	-	Fill of pit 5		Medieval?

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained undated alluvium, three pits and a possible fourth, overlain by modern made ground.					Length (m)	7.9
					Width (m)	1
					Avg. depth (m)	2.0
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Cut	0.56	1.03	Wall foundation trench		Modern
201	Fill	0.56	1.03	Foundation		Modern
202	Layer	-	0.12	Made ground		Modern
203	Layer	-	0.39	Made ground		Modern
204	Layer	-	0.54	Made ground		Modern
205	Cut	-	0.72	Possible pit		Undated
206	Fill	-	0.72	Fill of poss pit 205		Undated

207	Layer	-	0.42	Made ground		Undated
208	Layer	-	-	Made ground		Modern
209	Cut	1.60	0.90	Pit		Medieval
210	Fill	1.60	0.90	Main fill of pit 209	Pot, cbm	Medieval
211	Layer	-	0.40	Made ground		Modern
212	Layer	-	0.21	Made ground		Modern
213	Fill	1.20	0.70	Main fill of pit 214	Pot	Medieval
214	Cut	1.20	1.00	Pit		Medieval
215	Fill	0.35 x 0.35	-	Fill of posthole 216		Modern
216	Cut	0.35 x 0.35	-	Probable posthole (unexcavated)		Modern
217	Fill	0.35 x 0.35	0.20	Fill of posthole 218		Modern
218	Cut	0.35 x 0.35	0.20	Posthole		Modern
219	Layer	-	0.48	Made ground		Modern
220	Layer	-	0.30	Alluvium		Modern
221	Fill	-	-	Fill of pit 222		Medieval
222	Cut	-	-	Pit		Medieval
223	Fill		0.25	Primary fill of pit 214		Medieval
224	Fill	-	0.18	Primary fill of pit 209	Pot	Medieval
225	Find ref	-	-	Pot sherd from top of pit 209	Pot	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench contained undated alluvium and modern made ground.					Length (m)	6.6
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	2.60
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
301	Layer	-	0.35	Bedding layer for concrete slab		Modern
302	Layer	-	0.20	Made ground (sand and gravel)		Modern
303	Layer	-	0.70	Made ground (clay)		Modern
304	Layer	-	0.15	Made ground (sand and clay)		Modern
305	Layer	-	0.20	Made ground (black silt)	Pot, clay pipe	Modern
306	Layer	-	0.60	Alluvium		-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench contained undated alluvium and modern made ground.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	2.60
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.30	Made ground (concrete and sand)		Modern
401	Layer	-	0.20	Made ground (clinker)		Modern
402	Layer	-	0.70	Made ground (clay)		Modern
403	Layer	-	0.50	Made ground (sandstone rubble)	Pot, clay pipe	Modern
404	Layer	-	0.90	Alluvium		-
405	Layer	-	-	Natural gravel		-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained undated alluvium and modern made ground.					Length (m)	24
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	3.0
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	0.40	Sand make-up, brick surface		Modern
501	Layer	-	1.00	Made ground (clay)		Modern
502	Layer	-	0.60	Made ground (silt)	Pot	Modern
503	Layer	-	0.80	Channel fill		-
504	Layer	-	0.60	Organic silt		-
505	Layer	-	-	Natural gravel		-
506	Foundation	-	-	Foundation for 507		Modern
507	Wall	0.90	0.50	Modern wall		Modern
508	Layer	-	0.20	Alluvium		-
509	Foundation	1.50+	0.40	Modern foundation		Modern

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench contained undated alluvium and modern made ground.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	2.80
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.40	Made ground (concrete, sand and rubble)		Modern
601	Layer	-	0.08	Made ground (clinker)		Modern
602	Layer	-	0.20	Made ground (sandstone rubble)		Modern
603	Layer	-	0.14	Made ground (clinker)		Modern

604	Layer	-	0.88	Made ground (clay)		Modern
605	Layer	-	0.90	Alluvium		-
606	Layer	-	0.22+	Natural gravel		-

Trench 7						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench contained undated alluvium and modern made ground.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	2.34
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
700	Layer	-	0.28	Made ground (concrete and sand)		Modern
701	Layer	-	0.70	Made ground (clinker)		Modern
702	Layer	-	1.04	Made ground (clay)		Modern
703	Layer	-	0.30	Peat/ploughsoil		-
704	Layer	-	0.04+	Alluvium		-

Trench 8						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained undated alluvium and modern made ground.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	1.90
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
800	Layer	-	0.3	Made ground (concrete, rubble and sand)		Modern
801	Layer	-	0.03	Made ground (sand)		Modern
802	Layer	-	0.10	Made ground (clinker)		Modern
803	Layer	-	1.10	Made ground (clay)		Modern
804	Layer	-	0.60	Peat		-
805	Layer	-	0.04+	Alluvium		-

Trench 9						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench contained undated alluvium and modern made ground.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	2.50
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
900	Layer	-	1.22	Made ground		Modern
901	Layer	-	1.20	Made ground		Modern
902	Layer	-	0.18	Soil layer		-
903	Layer	-	0.04+	Alluvium		-

Trench 10						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained undated alluvium, a possibly modern pit and modern made ground.					Length (m)	10
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	2.55
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1000	Layer	-	0.42	Bedding for concrete slab		Modern
1001	Layer	-	1.37	Made ground		Modern
1002	Layer	-	0.07	Soil layer		-
1003	Layer	-	0.22	Alluvium	Pot, clay pipe	-
1004	Layer	-	-	Natural gravel		-
1005	Cut	2.2	-	Ditch (unexcavated)		Modern
1006	Fill	2.2	-	Fill of ditch 1005	cbm	Modern

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

B.1.1 A total of 55 sherds of post-Roman pottery weighing 603g were recovered from 10 contexts. A range of medieval to post-medieval pottery is present. All of this was examined and spot-dated during the present assessment stage. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, 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). Fabric codes referred to for the medieval wares are those of the Oxfordshire type series (Mellor 1994) whereas post-medieval fabric codes are those of the Museum of London (MOLA 2014). The range of pottery is described in some detail in the spreadsheet and therefore only summarised below.

Date and nature of the assemblage

- B.1.2 The assemblage is mostly in a very fragmentary condition with no complete profiles present. However, some sherds are fairly fresh and occasionally fairly large. Ordinary domestic pottery types are represented and all typical of the wares commonly found in central Oxford.
- B.1.3 Fill 213 of pit 214 produced a small, very abraded group of c 1050-1250, the earliest pieces in the assemblage. These included body sherds of Kennet Valley A ware (Fabric code OXBF) and a single sherd of shell-tempered ware - probably late Saxon Oxford shelly ware (OXB, c 775-1050). The abraded and slightly stained condition of this group of sherds, all probably redeposited, suggests they derive from a waterlogged deposit. Made ground context 100 produced an assemblage of 17 fresh sherds of glazed Brill/Boarstall ware jug sherds probably dating to c 1300-1425. However, the same context produced two sherds of post-medieval redware (PMR) dating to c 1580-1800. Other contexts produced a range of commonplace late 18th- and 19th-century wares including tablewares in transfer-printed ware (TPW), a red terracotta flowerpot (PMR), and an ink bottle in English stoneware with Bristol-type glaze (ENGS BRST, c 1835-1900+). No further work on the assemblage is recommended.

Table 2: Charred plant material

Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight (g)	Comments
100	c 1580-1800	19	190	2x post-med sherds (28g) incl 1x post-med redware jar/dish base with int glossy glaze c 1580+, and 1x early PMR/late Brill OXBX (c 1550-1625?). The rest is all fresh medieval Brill/Boarstall ware (OXAM: 17 sherds, 162g), probably c 1300-1425, all jugs incl hard-fired 14/15C sherds. Also includes fresh flat jug base, damaged slashed handle, bodysherds (some small) from 8 strip jugs incl red and white strips
102	c 1175-1350	1	19	Fresh bo early Brill jug (OXAW) with red lattice decoration under yellow glaze
210	c 1250-1400	3	37	2 small sherds OXAM from Sieved Sample (3g) possibly including classic bottle form. Non-sieved: classic squared cooking pot rim in OXAW (c 1175-1400), pinkish. Fairly worn
213	c 1050-1250	5	18	Sieved Sample. All v small, worn and scrappy bodysherds. Possibly stained by waterlogged conditions? 4x sandy bos with sparse flint - probably Kennet Valley A ware (c1050-1250). 1x sherd with abundant crushed fossil shell - probably Late Saxon Oxford shelly ware (OXB, c 775-1050), or less likely St Neots ware (OXR, c 900-1100)?
224	c 1225-1400	2	7	Sieved Sample. Small bodysherds. Probably stained by waterlogged conditions? 1x OXAM jug base floor with rough glaze underside. 1x thin-walled OXAW strip jug with square-rouletted strips and green glaze reduced blackish by soil conditions
225	c 1580-1800	1	7	Bo PMR with greenish reduced glaze int. poss 17C?
305	c 1700-1780	1	4	Nottingham stoneware (NOTS). Bo from cylindrical mug/tankard in light grey fabric with early style dec ext incl raised horiz bands with dense rouletting under an iron-washed salt glaze. Int pale grey
403	c 1835-1900	3	187	Flat base from cylindrical ink-type bottle in English cream-coloured stoneware with Bristol glaze (ENGS BRST). 1x broken Willow Pattern dish rim in transfer-printed ware (TPW, c 1830+). 1x bo large 18C teabowl or bowl in Chinese porcelain (CHPO) with trace of everted rim with dec on the flange, blue floral dec ext and traces of blue roundel/border on int of base
502	c 1840-1900	7	87	1x flat base from cylindrical paste pot in refined white earthenware (REFW) c 1840+. 1x broken chamberpot rim in TPW. 1x bo undec English porcelain (ENPO). 3x Developed Creamware (CREA DEV, c 1760-1830). 1x scrap Staffs white stoneware (SWSG, c 1720-80)
1003	c 1830-1900	13	47	All small scrappy sherds. 6x TPW. 1x 19C flowerpot rim (PMR). 5x Creamware (CREA DEV). 1x bo brown glazed Border ware cup/jug (BORDB, c 1600-1700)
Total		55	603	

B.2 Clay tobacco pipes

By John Cotter

B.2.1 Eight pieces of clay pipe weighing 23g were recovered from four contexts. These have not been separately catalogued but are described below. Pipe bowl forms have been classified by comparison to the published local typology (Oswald 1984) or the London type series (Atkinson and Oswald 1969). No further work is recommended.

- **Context 100. Spot-date: late 18th to early 19th century**
One small stem fragment (1g). Fresh. Slender. Probably late 18th or 19th century.
- **Context 305. Spot-date: c 1650-1730**
One fragment (7g). Fresh. Bowl/stem fragment from Oxford Type B pipe bowl with prominent conical spur and 40mm of stem surviving. Good quality burnish.
- **Context 403. Spot-date: c 1847-1852**
One fragment (8g). Fresh. Complete 19th-century bowl profile of London type AO28 with most of front missing. Prominent spur with moulded maker's mark 'R/R' in small but clear letters. Unusually the right-hand (surname) letter is upside-down. Bowl plain, undecorated. 25mm of stem attached. No Oxfordshire maker with these initials is listed by Oswald (1984) although an 18th-century pipe with these initials (by an unknown maker) is published from St Ebbe's church (*ibid.*, fig. 54.25A), although this is clearly not a good match for the later bowl form here. A pipemaker called Richard Readwin, who was active in Basingstoke (Hampshire) c 1847-1852, appears to be a likely match (Oswald 1975, 173). Possibly the first example by this maker identified from Oxford.
- **Context 1003. Spot-date: mid-19th century**
Five fairly fresh but small fragments (7g). Broadly mid-19th century. Includes 3 bowl fragments including 1 broken spur and 2 decorated pieces. Also 1 very slender 19th-century mouthpiece and 1 slender stem fragment

B.3 Ceramic building material

By John Cotter

B.3.1 Six pieces of CBM weighing 651g were recovered from three contexts. These have not been separately catalogued but are described below. No further work is recommended.

- Context 100. Spot-date: 18th to 19th century?**
 Description: Three pieces (89g). Includes 1 small fragment of ?pan tile in a dense late-looking orange-red fragment with curvature on one side. 1 small worn fragment from a roof tile or ridge tile in a very sandy bright orange version of Oxford tile Fabric 3B with traces of clear brownish glaze (15-16C?). 1 larger worn fragment from the edge of a 13th-14th century flat roof tile in Fabric 3B with a grey core and decayed glaze on the outer surface.
- Context 210. Spot-date: c 1175-1350**
 Description: One piece (7g). From Sieved Sample. Small worn fragment from the crest of a medieval ridge tile in oolitic limestone-tempered Fabric 1B. Orange-brown with traces of decayed glaze.
- Context 1006. Spot-date: 19th to 20th century**
 Description: Two pieces (555g). Corner fragments from two battered/abraded red bricks. Neatly made. One has a thickness of 64mm.

B.4 Glass

By Ian Scott

- B.4.1 There are three pieces of glass probably from a mirror rather than window and a single piece of vessel glass.

Catalogue	
Context 403	(1) 'Torpedo' soda water bottle , distinctive pointed base thick walled base. No extant embossing. Ht extant: 81mm; D extant: 69mm.
	This style of early soda water bottle was made from early to mid-late 19th century.
Context 1003	(2) Mirror glass with chamfered edges . Three fragments, two refitting. One fragment with ground straight chamfered edge (L: 49mm; Th: 3.5mm) with remains of decayed silvering. The two refitting fragments (L: 42mm; Th: 3.5mm) have ground curved edges again chamfered, and probably from a corner of the mirror.
	These fragments are almost certainly from a late 19th or later mirror, which would have probably been set in a frame or other setting since the edges, particularly the curves, are not cleanly ground. The bevelling suggests a high quality mirror.

B.5 Metal objects

By Ian Scott

- B.5.1 The metal finds comprise five small pieces of iron from context 104 and 210. None of the small iron pieces is closely datable.

Catalogue	
Context 104	(1) Tack , short with domed head, possibly a furniture tack. Fe. L: 12mm. Not closely datable. Sample < 7 >
Context 210	(2) Nail , with flat near circular head. Probably complete, encrusted with corrosion. Fe. L: 35mm. Sample < 3 >
	(3) Nail , stem fragment only, encrusted with corrosion. Fe. Not measured. Sample < 3 >
	(4) Strip fragment encrusted with corrosion products. Fe. L: 35mm; W: c 10mm. Sample < 3 >
	(5) Sheet fragment, very small thin fragment. Fe. Not measured. Sample < 3 >

B.6 Slag

By Ian Scott

B.6.1 There 18 mainly small pieces of slag or cinder from four contexts. There is a block of slag from context 100 recovered by hand; all the slag or cinder from contexts 104, 210 and 224 was recovered through sieving of samples.

Catalogue	
Context 100	(1) Iron slag , undiagnostic. Wt: 64g
Context 104	(2) Slag or cinder . Two tiny fragments. Sample < 7 >
Context 210	(3) Slag or cinder , Ten tiny fragments. Five fragments are magnetic; another fragment may be cinder. Sample < 3 >
Context 224	(4) Slag or cinder . Five small fragments, three magnetic, one tap slag, and one cinder. Sample < 4 >

APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental samples

By Sharon Cook

Introduction

C.1.1 Seven samples were taken during the excavations. Samples <1> and <2> were samples taken specifically for snail analysis, in the event that bulk samples from the same context proved rich in Mollusca. The remaining samples were bulk samples taken for recovery of charred plant material (CPR), bones and artefacts. During processing it was noted that two samples contained waterlogged plant remains (WPR) and so the flots for these were kept wet to facilitate preservation of this material.

C.1.2 The samples were taken from pits in Trenches 1 and 2, dated to the medieval period.

Method

C.1.3 The bulk samples were processed at Oxford Archaeology using a modified Siraf-type water flotation machine. The flots were collected in a 250µm mesh and heavy residues in a 500µm mesh and dried. The residue fractions were sorted by eye while the flot material was sorted using a low power (x10) binocular microscope to extract cereal grains and chaff, smaller seeds and other quantifiable remains. Identifications were carried out using standard morphological criteria for the cereals (Jacomet 2006), identification of wild plant remains is with reference to the Digital Seed Atlas of the Netherlands (Cappers *et al.* 2006) and by comparison with modern reference material. Classification and nomenclature of plant material follows Stace (2010).

C.1.4 Sample <4> was processed as above but the flot was kept wet when waterlogged material was noted during processing. For sample <7>, which was evidently waterlogged, 20 litres were processed for the recovery of CPR, bones and artefacts and an additional a 1 litre subsample was processed by hand flotation (washover technique) with the flot and residue both collected in a 250µm mesh and kept wet. A proportion of each was scanned and identified as above (Table 3).

C.1.5 The snail samples were also processed at Oxford Archaeology using hand flotation. The flots and residues were collected in 500µm meshes and air dried.

Results

Charred plant remains

C.1.6 The CPR samples contain a mixture of encrusted charcoal and clinker type material together with a small amount of modern material such as fine roots and modern seeds and insects. Few charred seeds and grain are present, with sample <5> containing the largest amount.

C.1.7 Sample <3>, which was the upper fill of pit 209, also contains occasional dried ostracod fragments. This is interesting as no other waterlogged material was observed in this

flot, although overlying sample <4> did contain anerobically-preserved plant remains (Table 3) and it is probable that this lower fill is the source of the material.

Table 2: Charred plant material

Sample No		3	5	6
Context No		210	213	223
Feature		209	214	214
Trench		2	2	2
Description		Pit fill	Pit fill	Pit fill
Volume (L)		40	40	36
Flot Volume (ml)		10	25	2
Flot scanned		100%	100%	100%
Charcoal				
	>4mm	*	*	
	2-4mm	***	***	*
Cereal grain				
<i>cf. Triticum sp.</i>	cf. wheat	1#	2#	
Cerealia	indet cereal	3#	11#	3#
Legumes, Fruits and Nuts				
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	hazelnut shell		1#	
Wild Species				
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus sp. >2 mm</i>	vetch/vetchling/tare, etc		1#	
<i>Lathyrus latifolius</i>	broad-leaved everlasting pea		1#	
*1-10, **10-25, ***25-50, ****50-100, *****100+				
# Fragmented or missing features				

C.1.8 All three bulk sample flots contain a small amount of charred grain. However, this was very fragmented and slightly clinkered due to mineral precipitate and generally could not be identified further. The small quantity would seem to indicate that these are the result of secondary deposition rather than being the result of a deliberate disposal of cereal processing waste. The charcoal is on the whole small in size and no roundwood is present.

C.1.9 Sample <6>, which came from the deposit below sample <5>, is very similar in character to the fill above but contains fewer charred remains.

Waterlogged plant remains

C.1.10 Sample <4>, which was the lower fill of pit 209, included ostracods which appear to be modern since a live specimen was observed during scanning and may be an indication of fresh water seepage into the feature. Preservation of waterlogged material is fair. The seeds observed within this sample are generally of a robust type, from plants frequently found in marginal areas and disturbed waste ground; less robust seeds may have decomposed. The majority of the flot consists of fibrous plant material, although

wood fragments were common as were occasionally small fragments of charcoal (<2mm) which probably originate from the fill above.

C.1.11 Sample <7> contains large wood fragments as well as fibrous plant material. The range of seeds within the sample is wider than that observed within sample <4> but again the seeds are typical of a flora from waste ground. The opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) is known for its medicinal uses during the medieval period but the small number of seeds noted may indicate that in this case they derive from plants growing wild in the vicinity.

Table 3: Waterlogged plant remains

Sample No		4	7
Context No		224	104
Feature		209	107
Trench		2	1
Description		Pit fill	Pit fill
Volume (L)		36	1
Flot Volume (ml)		200	500
Flot scanned		20ml	20ml
Wild Species			
<i>Papaver cf.somniferum</i>	opium poppy		2
<i>Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus</i>	buttercups	2#	2
<i>Potentilla sp.</i>	cinquefoils		2
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	common nettle	11	2
<i>Brassica sp.</i>	cabbages		1
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	wild radish		1#
<i>Chenopodium sp.</i>	goosefoots		2
Lamiaceae	dead-nettle family	1	
<i>Cirsium/Carduus</i>	thistle	1	
<i>Anthemis cotula</i>	stinking chamomile		2#
<i>Sambuccus nigra</i>	elder	1#	
<i>Eleocharis sp.</i>	spike rushes		1
<i>Carex sp.</i>	sedges (2 sided)	1	1
<i>Carex sp.</i>	sedges (3 sided)		1
Other			
Indet.	seed/fruit	1#	3#
# fragmented or missing features			

Residues

C.1.12 Animal bone was extracted from all seven samples (including the snail incremental samples). Fish bone was extracted from samples <3>, <4>, <5> and <6>, pottery from

<3>, <4> and <5>, iron fragments from <3> and <7> and slag from <3>, <4> and <7> and these are reported separately.

Discussion

C.1.13 The samples were taken from an area to the east of the former Osney Abbey but there is no evidence that the features and samples are related to the abbey itself. The composition of the samples indicates that the features were probably situated at the periphery of the abbey complex and Sharpe's map of 1986 shows the potential site of the abbey farm in the vicinity of these trenches. It is therefore possible that the origin of the domestic material noted in the samples comes from farm activities, although with such a small number of samples and features any interpretation is inevitably tentative. The nature of the waterlogged remains suggests that the features were situated among uncultivated, waste ground in a permanently damp area.

Recommendations for retention/discard

C.1.14 The samples produced only small quantities of charred and waterlogged plant remains of limited interpretable value and unsuitable for further analysis. Consequently, the flots do not warrant retention.

C.2 Animal bone

By Lee G. Broderick

Introduction

A.1.1 A total of 392 animal bone specimens were recovered from the site (Table 4), roughly half (48.8%, NSP=191) collected by hand with the remainder being recovered from environmental samples, which were sieved at 10mm, 4mm and 2mm fractions.

A.1.2 Very broadly, this division also reflects the dating of the assemblage. The environmental samples were all taken from pits dated to the medieval period on the basis of associated ceramic finds, whilst the overwhelming majority of the hand-collected material came from a single context (100) dated to the modern period. This context was described as a make-up layer and, considering the condition of the material, which was brittle and had weathering damage similar to the earlier phase on the site, much of the material may well be redeposited or residual.

Medieval

A.1.3 The hand-collected material from this phase of the site was restricted to just three specimens – a domestic cattle (*Bos taurus taurus*) right tibia fragment, a caprine (sheep [*Ovis aries*] or goat [*Capra hircus*]) left tibia shaft and a dog (*Canis familiaris*) left humerus. The latter was fused distally (the proximal end was absent) and had porous exostoses consistent with age-related joint disease. The caprine specimen had been gnawed by canids, probably dogs.

A.1.4 The material recovered from the environmental samples contained a pig (*Sus scrofa domestica*) canine fragment and a domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus*) left distal ulna, from a juvenile individual. The latter suggests that the birds were being bred or traded for

meat. Principally, however, this material contained an extensive amount of microfauna remains. The large number of amphibians suggest a damp environment and most probably, like the mouse/vole specimens, represent pitfall victims. A juvenile magpie humerus, meanwhile, suggests that these birds were probably nesting nearby.

- A.1.5 A snake vertebra was also recovered. This is a relatively rare find from British archaeological sites, particularly urban ones. Two species of snake are currently extant within the British Isles – the European adder (*Vipera berus*) and the grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) – both of which consume large numbers of frogs and toads. These form a very large part of the diet of the grass snake, in particular, which is often found near water.

Modern

- A.1.6 The modern component featured the same domestic species as the earlier phase, with the addition of horse (*Equus caballus*). It was also possible to identify a sheep humerus among the caprine specimens.

Conclusions

- A.1.7 Given the small size and poor condition of the assemblage it is difficult to draw any further conclusions beyond the presence of domestic animals on the site in a damp environment.

Recommendations for retention

- A.1.8 The assemblage should be considered a low priority for retention and no further work on the assemblage is recommended.

Table 4: Total NISP (Number of Identified SPecimens) and NSP (Number of SPecimens) figures per period from the site.

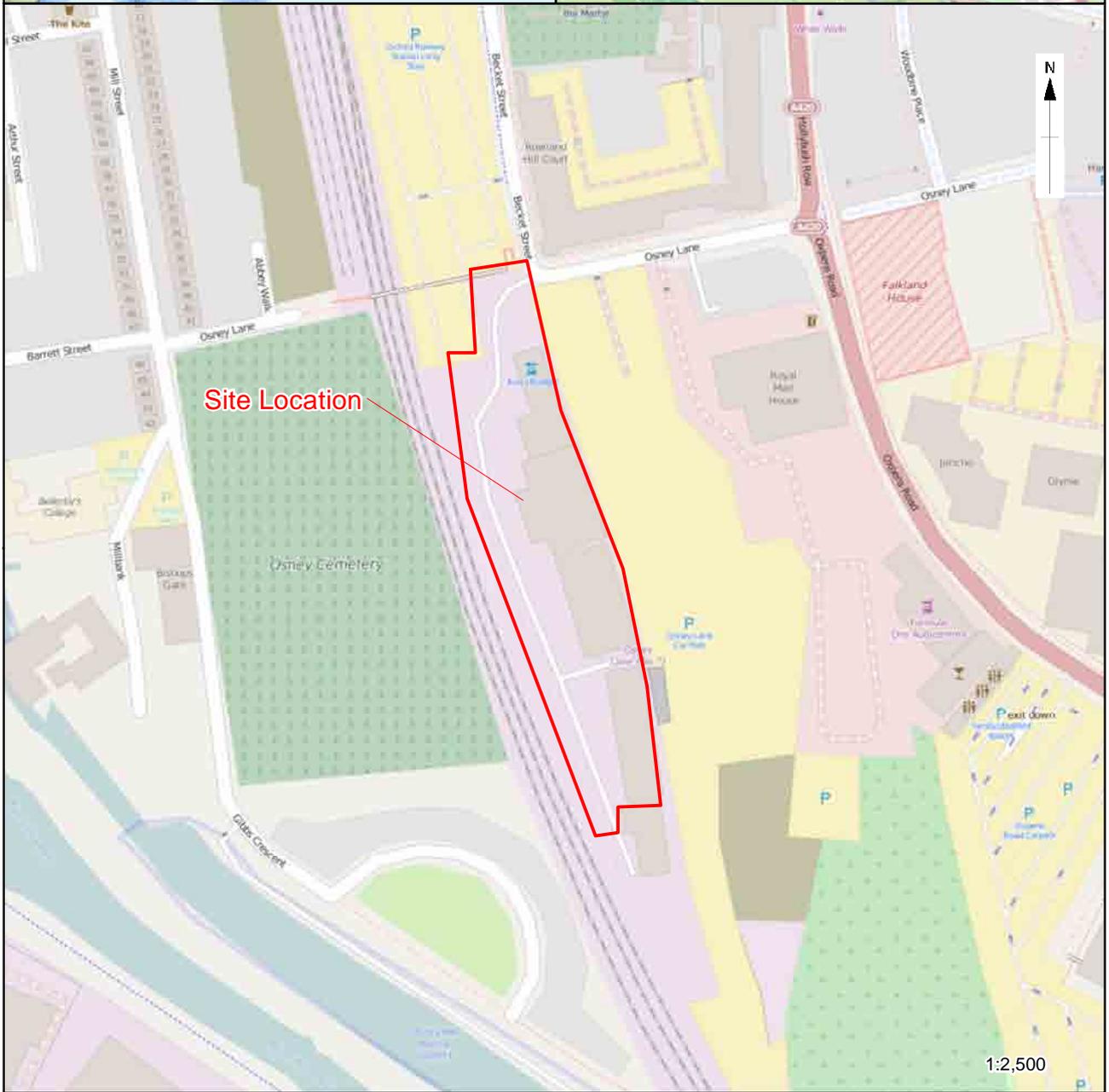
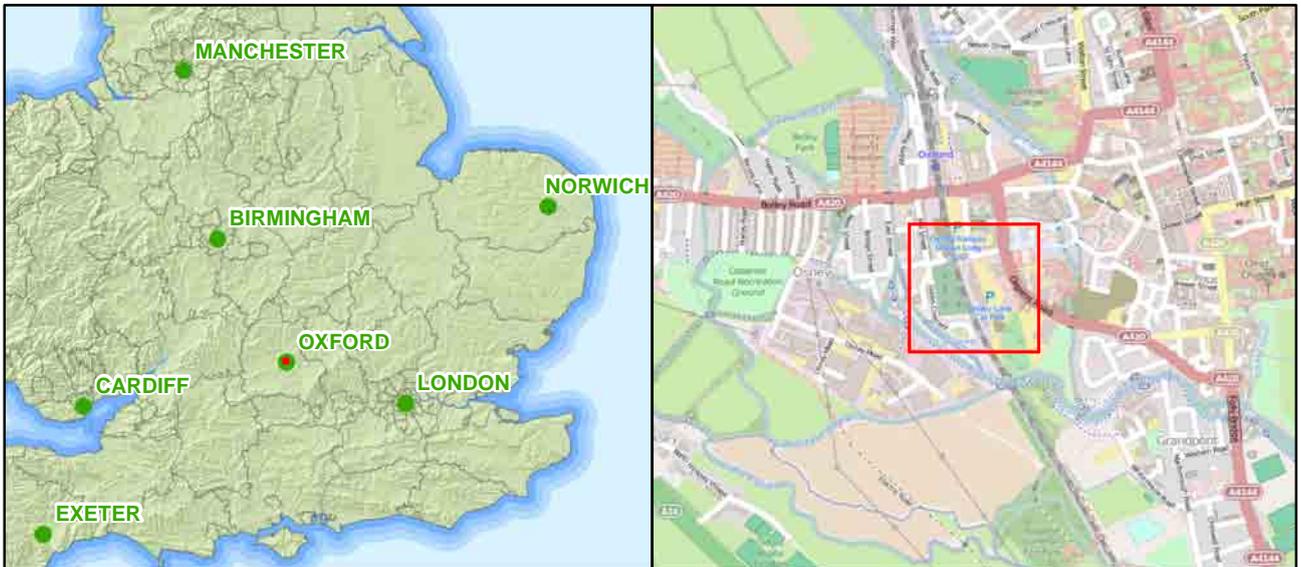
	Medieval	Modern	Undated		Medieval (sieved)
domestic cattle	1	5			
domestic cattle?					1
caprine	1	6	2		2
sheep		1			
pig		3			1
horse		1			
dog	1				
small rodent					3
bank vole/field vole/common vole					1
micro mammal					8
small mammal					1
medium mammal		2			3
large mammal		6	3		1
Total Mammal	3	24	5		21
domestic fowl		2			1
magpie					1
Total Bird	0	2	0		2
amphibian					43
frog/toad					52
common frog					5
Total Amphibian	0	0	0		100
snake					1
Total Reptile	0	0	0		1
Total NISP	3	26	5		124
Total NSP	3	183	5		201

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APPENDIX E SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

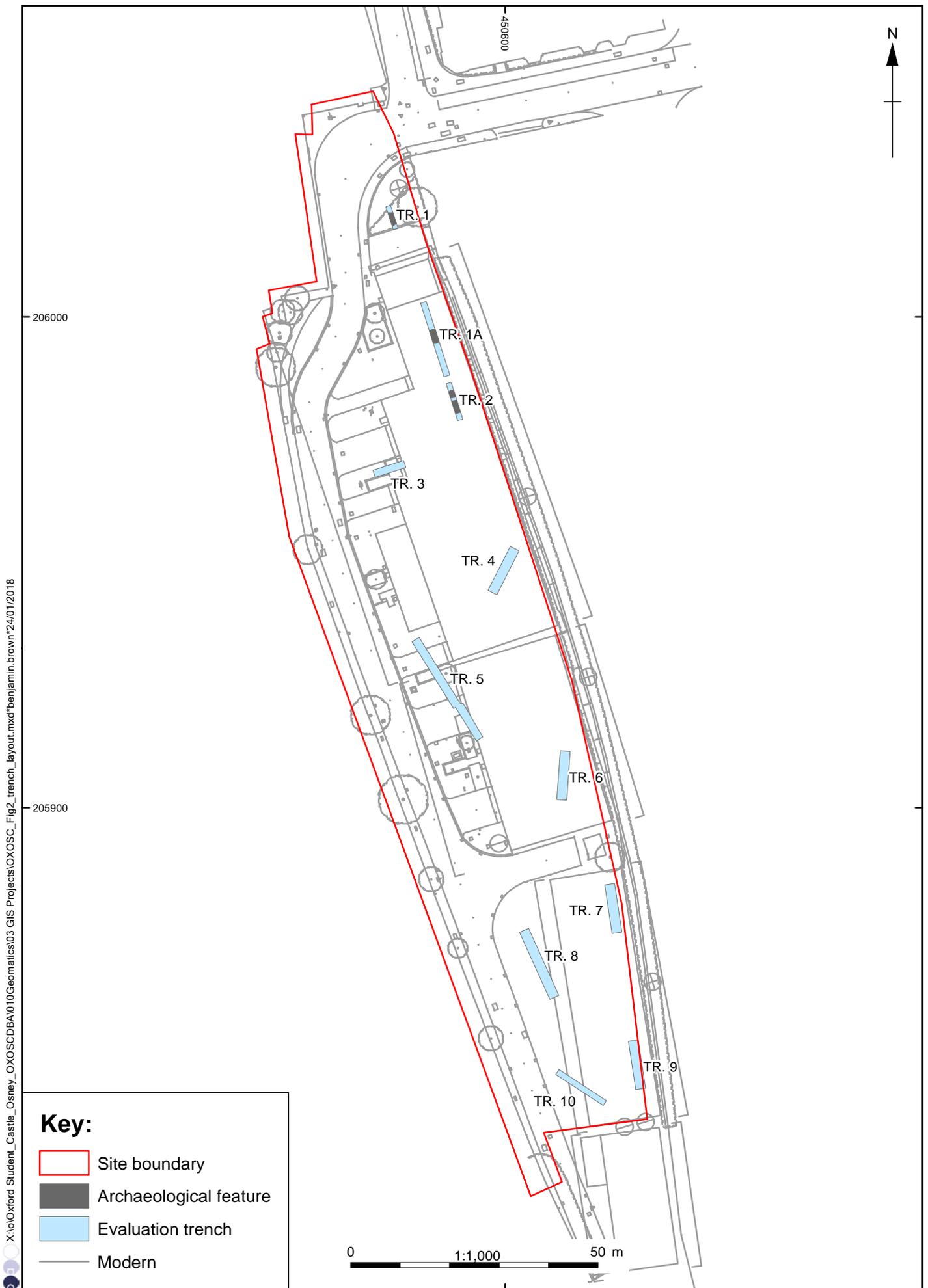
Site name:	Student Castle, Osney, Oxford
Site code:	OXCMS:2017.28 (continued)
Grid Reference	SP 50589 05921
Type:	Evaluation (11 trenches)
Date and duration:	4th-14th September 2017
Area of Site	0.8ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2017.28 cont.
Summary of Results:	<p>A layer of alluvium was present throughout the trenches and probably derived from alluviation of the Oxford area that was underway by the late Iron Age and continued throughout the Roman period, slowing or perhaps ceasing thereafter before resuming during the late Saxon period.</p> <p>Pits dating from the mid 13th-14th century were found in Trenches 1, 1a and 2 at the northern end of the evaluation area, which corresponds with the precinct of Osney Abbey as understood from documentary and cartographic evidence. No evidence was found for the abbey church or associated burial ground, which are believed to have extended into the north-western part of the evaluation area, but which evidently did not extend as far east as Trenches 1-2. No features were identified to the south, beyond the abbey precinct, apart from a single possibly modern ditch.</p> <p>The archaeological features were overlain by modern made ground 1.3-2.42m thick, which was deposited during the construction of the railway during the 19th century in order to raise the ground level of the railway and goods depot above flood level.</p>



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Figure 1: Site Location



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Figure 2: Trench layout

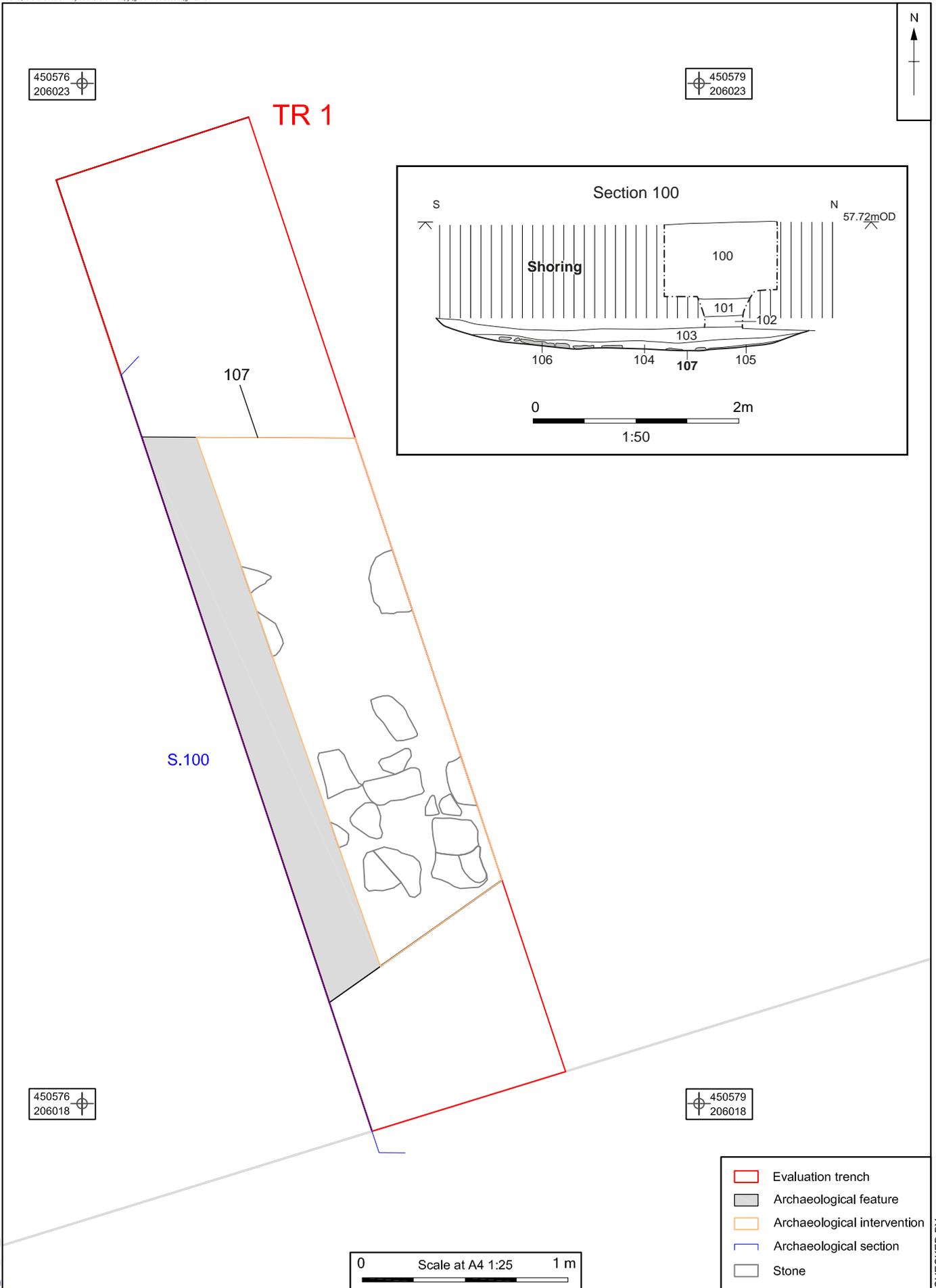


Figure 3 - Trench 1, plan and section

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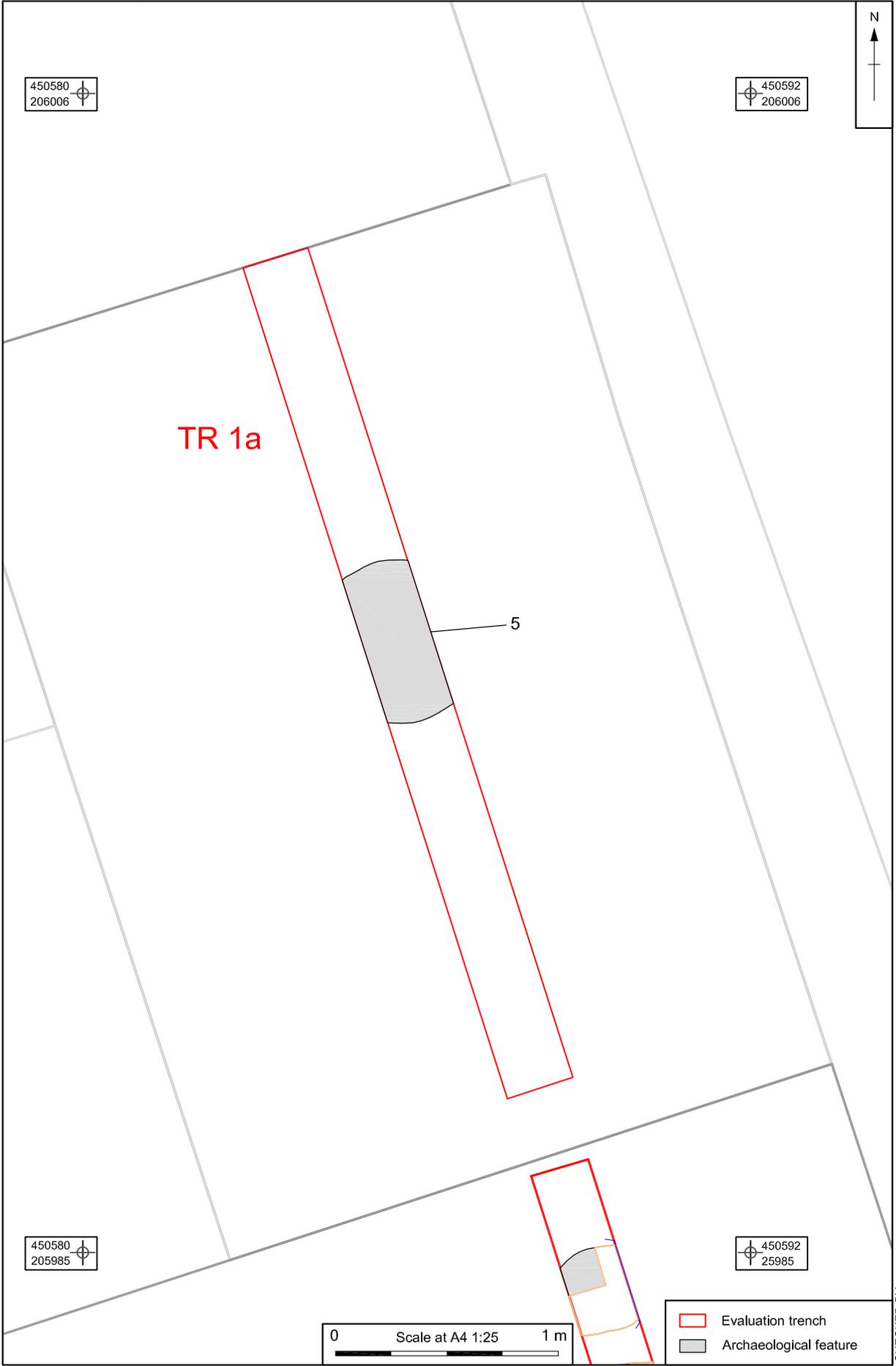


Figure 4 - Trench 1a, plan

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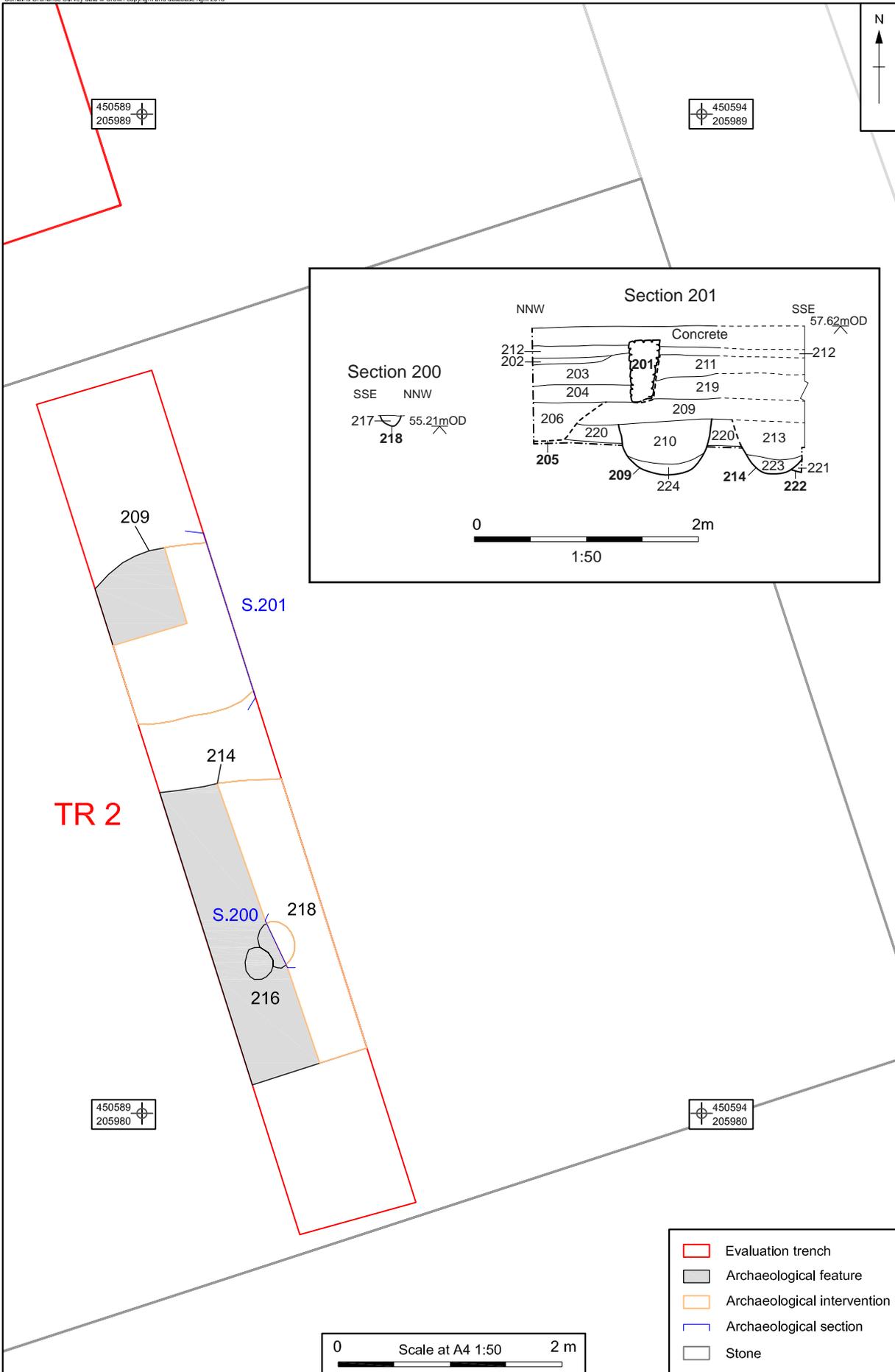


Figure 5 - Trench 2, plan and sections

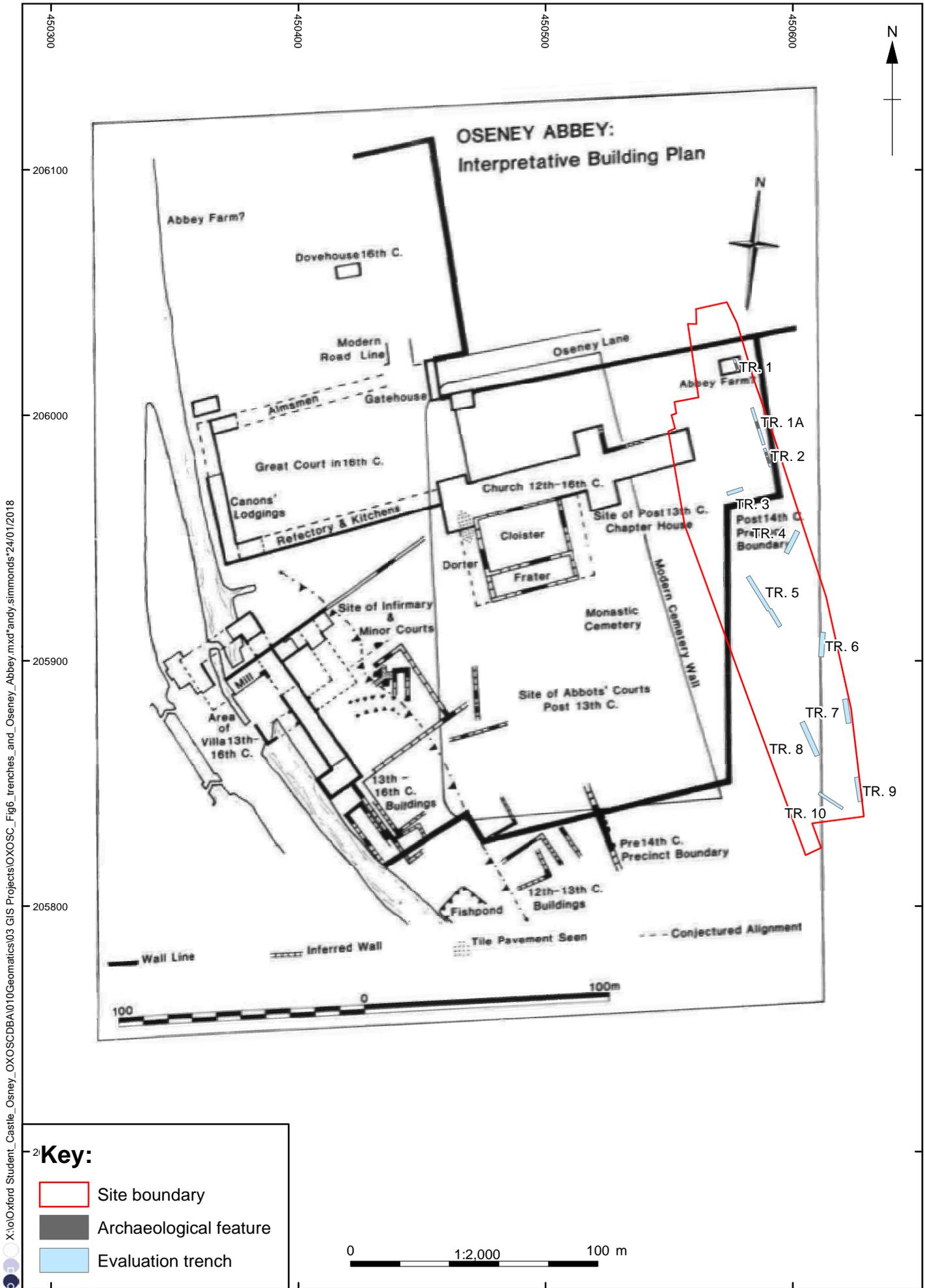


Figure 6: The investigations in relation to Sharpe's map of Oseney Abbey

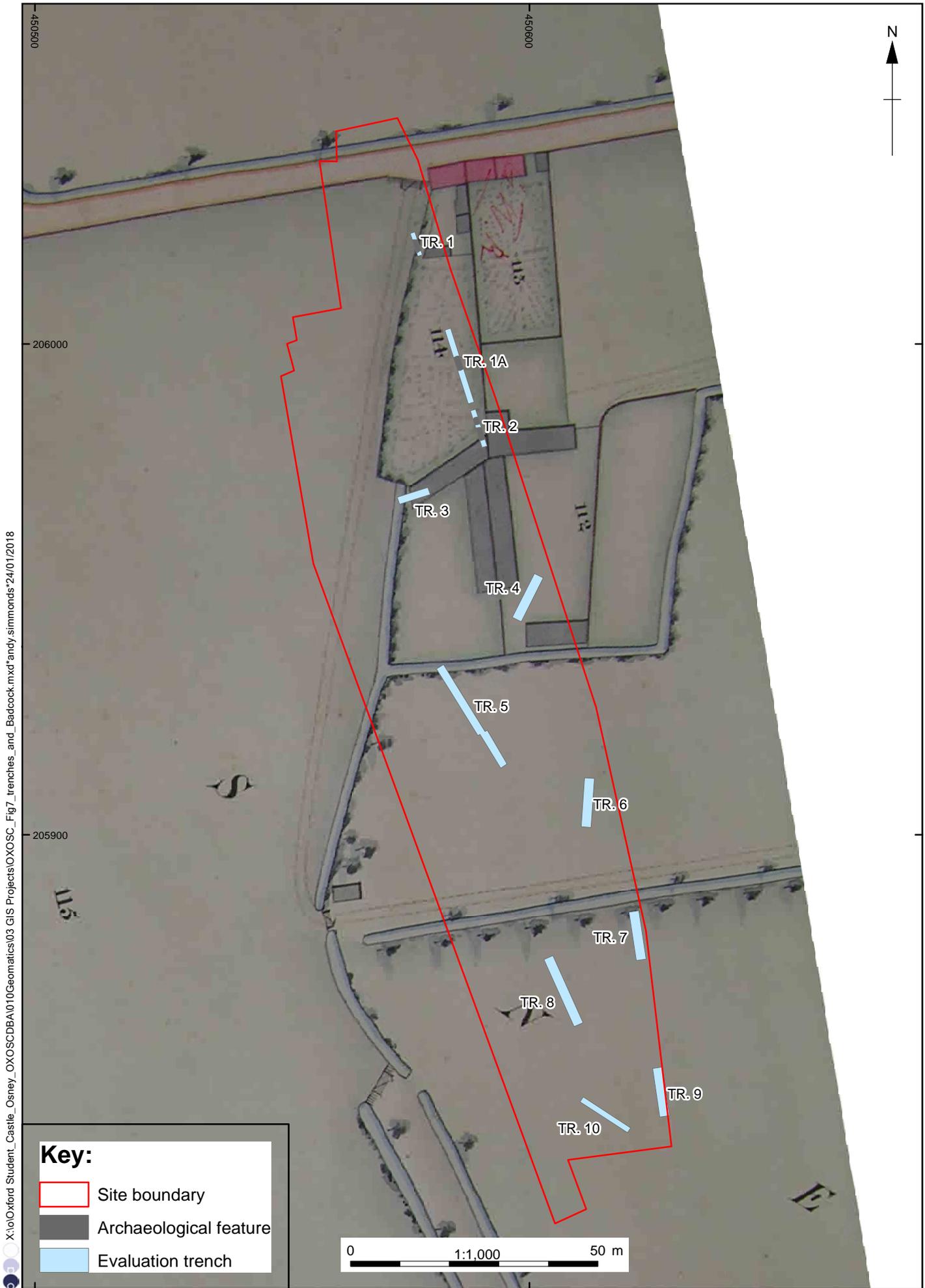


Figure 7: The investigations in relation to Badcock's survey of Christ Church lands, 1829



Plate 3: Sediment sequence in Trench 1a, looking east



Plate 4: Pits in the base of Trench 2



Plate 5: Excavating pits in Trench 2



Plate 8: Trench 4, looking south-west



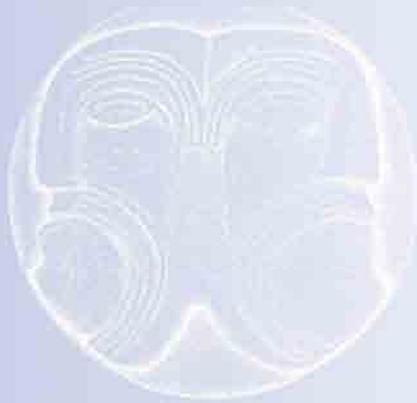
Plate 9: Trench 5, south-eastern end



Plate 10: Trench 6, looking south



Plate 11: Trench 7, looking north-east



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