

Queen's Chapel of the Savoy London WC2



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Queen's Chapel of the Savoy

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by Mike Sims

illustrated by Markus Dylewski

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Summary

On the 20th October 2010, Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief within the gardens to the north-east of the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy during the excavation of two trial pits. Deposits of post-medieval soils were observed over a probable churchyard soil horizon and an undated human inhumation. The burial shows that an unknown number of inhumations relating, probably, to the medieval and post-medieval Savoy hospital survive. Earlier and/or later inhumations may also be present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) was commissioned by Crowther Overton-Hart on behalf of the Duchy of Lancaster to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of two trial pits within the garden to the north-east of the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy (centred on National Grid Reference TQ 3058 8074, see Fig.1).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken in order to inform the Planning Authority in advance of the submission of a planning application.
- 1.1.3 OAS produced a Written Scheme of Investigation setting out the scope and methodology, prior to the fieldwork being undertaken.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The Queen's Chapel of the Savoy is situated in central London 150 m north-west of Waterloo Bridge on the northern side of the Thames.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology of the site is alluvial deposits overlying terrace gravels (British Geological Survey map no. 256, 1994). The site consists of a level lawn at a height of approximately 7 m above OD bounded by the chapel to the south-west and Savoy Street to the north-east.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following information has been taken from British History Online and The Duchy of Lancaster web site (see references), as well as from the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (reference numbers preceded by EL or ML).
- 1.3.2 The only prehistoric evidence from the area consists of a late Prehistoric spearhead from the area of the Savoy (ML023177).
- 1.3.3 Two skeletons with a phial, all thought to be Roman were found to the south of the Queen's Chapel area (ML012173).
- 1.3.4 Two loomweights, a complete pot and a pot fragment, all dated to the middle Saxon period, were reported by Wheeler (ML020733).
- 1.3.5 Other than the above, the earliest records of the area later occupied by the Savoy Palace date to the thirteenth century when the land belonged to Brian de l'Isle, one of King John's counsellors. In 1246 Henry II granted it to his wife's uncle Peter, the future Count of Savoy, who, in 1268 bequeathed it to the monastery of St Bernard, Montjoux, Savoie. Subsequently the land was bought by Queen Eleanor for her son Edmund, who fortified his mansion there called the Sauvoye.



- 1.3.6 Between 1345 and 1370 the mansion was rebuilt by Henry, 1st Duke of Lancaster. The house was said to be without equal in England and the grounds contained stables, chapel, cloister, river gate, a vegetable garden and fish pond in addition to the great hall. We do not know whether the Chapel was on the same site as the later Hospital Chapel.
- 1.3.7 In 1381 the house was attacked by the followers of Wat Tyler in the Peasants Revolt. The great hall was consumed by fire and although many buildings remained standing the palace was no longer usable.
- 1.3.8 In 1505 Henry VII ordered the palace to be rebuilt as a hospital for “pouer, nedie people”. Drawings show that it consisted of a dormitory, dining hall and three chapels. The hospital saw use in both the Civil War and Dutch war before being dissolved in 1702, having suffered poor management.
- 1.3.9 Only the extant chapel survived demolition in the nineteenth century but this too was gutted by fire to be rebuilt in its present form by 1865. Only a section of the outer wall dates to the time of Henry VII. In 1890 it became the first church in London to be lit by electricity and was a fashionable Victorian wedding venue. The chapel ceiling was restored in 2000, and in 2003 the garden was re-designed.
- 1.3.10 No sources bearing directly on the churchyard have yet been identified. It is unknown as to whether this area was a churchyard during the period of the Savoy Palace, but it was clearly a burial place for the medieval and post-medieval hospital. Later burials are also a possibility.
- 1.3.11 It is likely that burials were disturbed / removed during the construction of the existing extension running north-east from the church, and during the re-landscaping of the garden, but no information relating to this has yet come to light.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- (i) To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive. Should remains be found to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard.
- (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The test pits were intended to examine the extent of tree roots. This work was to consist of the excavation of two trial pits each measuring approximately 1 m by 1m. These were originally intended to be expanded into a 7 m long by 1m wide trench but this requirement was subsequently dropped. The watching brief was conducted as a continuous archaeological presence during the excavation of the trial pits. The base and sides of the pits were closely examined for archaeological evidence and the spoil was examined for artefactual remains.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of the excavations and the location of the recorded sections was maintained at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 2). The trench and sections were photographed using colour digital photography and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the OA Field Manual (Wilkinson, 1992).



3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Trial Pit 1

- 3.1.1 This was located adjacent to the southern boundary fence, 3 m east of the chapel and immediately north of a standing grave marker (Fig. 2). It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8 m.
- 3.1.2 A deep deposit of dark brown silty clay loam (1) was encountered at a depth of 0.1 m below the current ground level (Fig. 3, Section 1). This layer could be seen to be in excess of 0.7 m deep within the section and produced fragments of pottery and clay pipe giving a spot date of between the 17th and 19th centuries. The deposit also produced fragments of dis-articulated human bone (charnel). This layer was covered by a 0.1 m deep layer of dark brown silty loam (5), the present day topsoil and turf.

Trial Pit 2

- 3.1.3 This was located 3 m north-west of Trial Pit 1 and 3 m east of the chapel (Fig. 2) and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.6 m.
- 3.1.4 An articulated human burial was encountered at a depth of 1.6 m below the current ground level within the southern edge of the trial pit. At least 10 adult vertebrae could be seen from this burial. The presence and depth of the inhumation was noted but it was not fully exposed. The grave cut could not be determined within the confines of the trial pit. This was overlain by a layer of dark brown silty clay loam (4) which could be seen to be in excess of 0.6 m in depth (Fig. 3, Section 2). This deposit also produced human charnel which was reinterred and not retained.
- 3.1.5 Overlying layer 4 was a 0.2 m deep band of grey-brown silty loam which contained a percentage of small gravel (3). This layer had been cut by a modern service trench containing a salt-glazed waste pipe and a concrete foundation for a subsequently truncated wall (Fig. 3, Plan 2).
- 3.1.6 Both layer 3 and the services were under a 0.7 m deep layer of dark brown silty clay loam (2). This was overlaid by a continuation of the modern topsoil and turf (5).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Fragments of brown glazed earthenware together with fragments of white glazed creamware with painted blue decoration and fragments of clay pipe were recovered from layer 1 giving a date range of between the 17th and 19th centuries. Pieces of human charnel were recovered from layers 1 and 4. The pottery and clay pipe was evaluated on site but not retained, while the charnel was reinterred during the backfilling of the pits.

3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were observed during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The articulated inhumation within Trial Pit 2 suggests that the standing grave markers are in situ and have not been moved.



- 4.1.2 The deposits of dark brown silty clay loam, layers 1 and 4, are consistent with churchyard soils and are probably continuations of the same deposit. They are composed of soil disturbed by incutting graves which produced the charnel observed while making the determination of grave cuts difficult because of the similarity between the backfilled material and the churchyard soil.
- 4.1.3 Layer 3 is a mix of soils and terrace gravel possibly used to form a surface and may be contemporary with the inhumations. This had been later cut by a sewer pipe trench and a foundation trench containing a concrete footing. The wall supported by this footing had been demolished prior to the deposition of layer 2. Layer 2 is a probable landscaping deposit which may have been imported during the construction of the present day formal garden.
- 4.1.4 The overall conclusion is that an unknown number of burials survive, probably from the period of the medieval and post-medieval hospital. Earlier and/or later burials may also exist.
- 4.1.5 No evidence for structures or deposits associated with the former Savoy Palace were observed.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments	Finds	Date
Trial Pit 1						
1	Layer	> 0.7 m	-	Churchyard soil	Pottery, clay pipe, bone	C18th - C19th
5	Layer	0.1 m	-	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th
Trial Pit 2						
2	Layer	0.2 m	-	Landscaping layer	-	C19th - C20th
3	Layer	0.2 m	-	Landscaping layer, possible surface ?	-	C19th - C20th
4	Layer	> 0.6 m	-	Churchyard soil	Bone	-
5	Layer	0.1 m	-	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

British History Online. www.british-history.ac.uk. The Savoy.

British History Online. www.british-history.ac.uk. The Hospital at the Savoy.

Duchy of Lancaster. www.duchyoflancaster.co.uk Savoy Chapel, Strand, London.

Geological Survey of Great Britain. 1994, Sheet 256.

IFA 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

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



APPENDIX C. GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM

1)TYPE OF RECORDING

Watching brief during the excavation of two trial pits to determine the impact of tree root damage upon the structure of the chapel.

2)LOCATION

Borough: Westminster

Site address: Queen's Chapel of the Savoy, The Strand, London

Site Name: Queen's Chapel of the Savoy, London

Site Code: QSV 10

Nat. grid Refs: TQ 3058 8076 to centre of site:

3)ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society: Oxford Archaeology

Address: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 OES

Site supervisor : Ben McAndrews Project manager: David Wilkinson

Funded by: Duchy of Lancaster

4)DURATION

Date fieldwork started 20th October 2010 Date finished: 20th October 2010

Fieldwork previously notified? NO

Fieldwork will continue? Possibly

5)PERIODS REPRESENTED

Post-medieval and ?medieval

6)PERIOD SUMMARIES

The watching brief revealed an articulated inhumation under deep deposits of churchyard soil and later landscaping.

7)NATURAL

Type: Not exposed during excavation

Height above Ordnance datum: N/A



8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES Presently located at Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 OES

a) Please provide an estimate of the quantity of material in your possession for the following categories:

Notes 15	Plans 3	Photos	Ngatives 20
Slides 20	Correspondence	MScripts (unpub reports, etc)	
Bulk finds 0	Small finds 0	Soil samples 0	Other (please specify)

b) The archive has been prepared and stored in accordance with MGC standards and will be deposited in the following location: Museum of London

c) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: Not at this time, but a copy will be made in due course

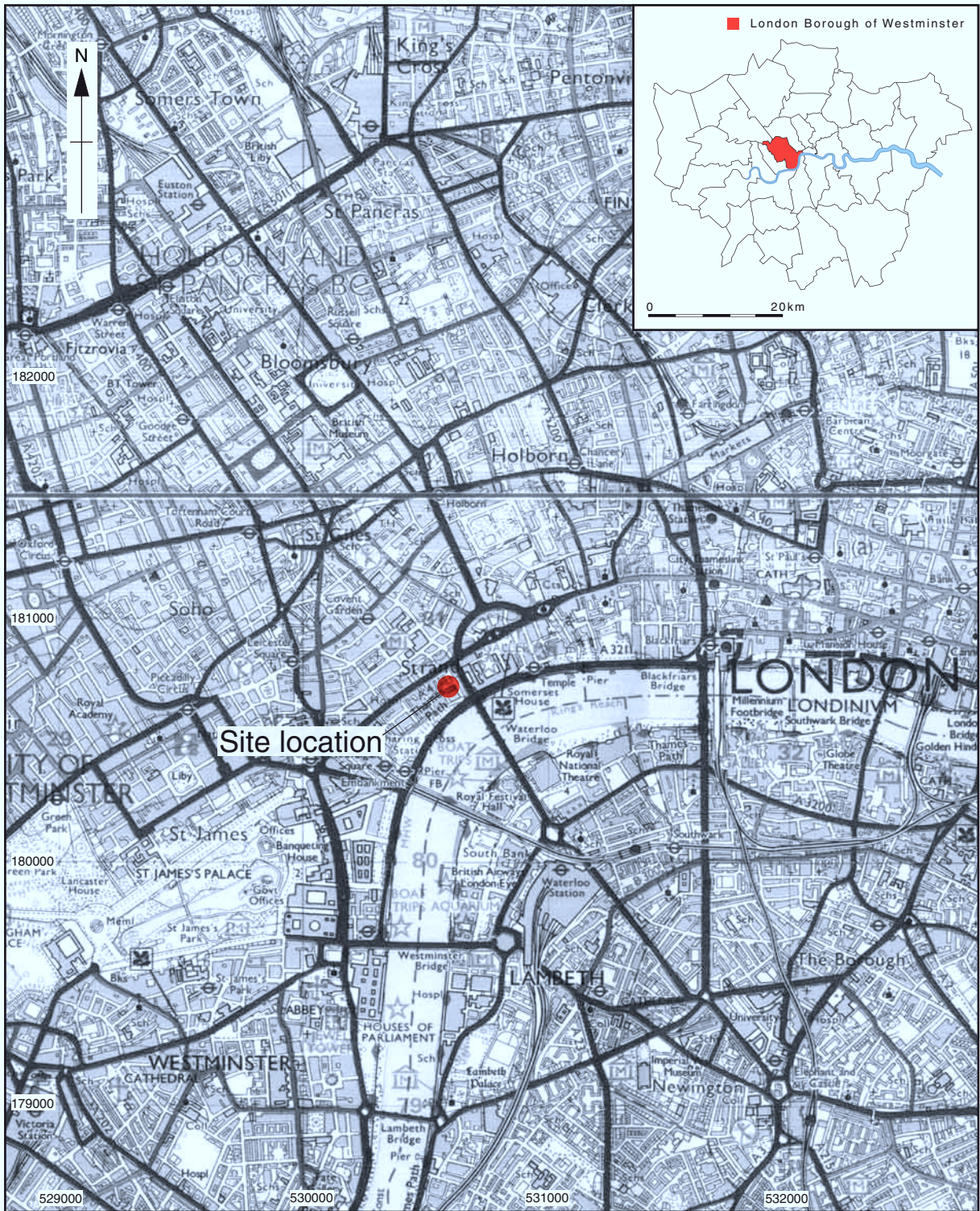
10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

See Appendix 2 Bibliography and References

SIGNED:

DATE: 11th November 2010

NAME (Block capitals): David Wilkinson



Scale 1:25,000

Reproduced from the Explorer 1:25,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
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Figure 1: Site location

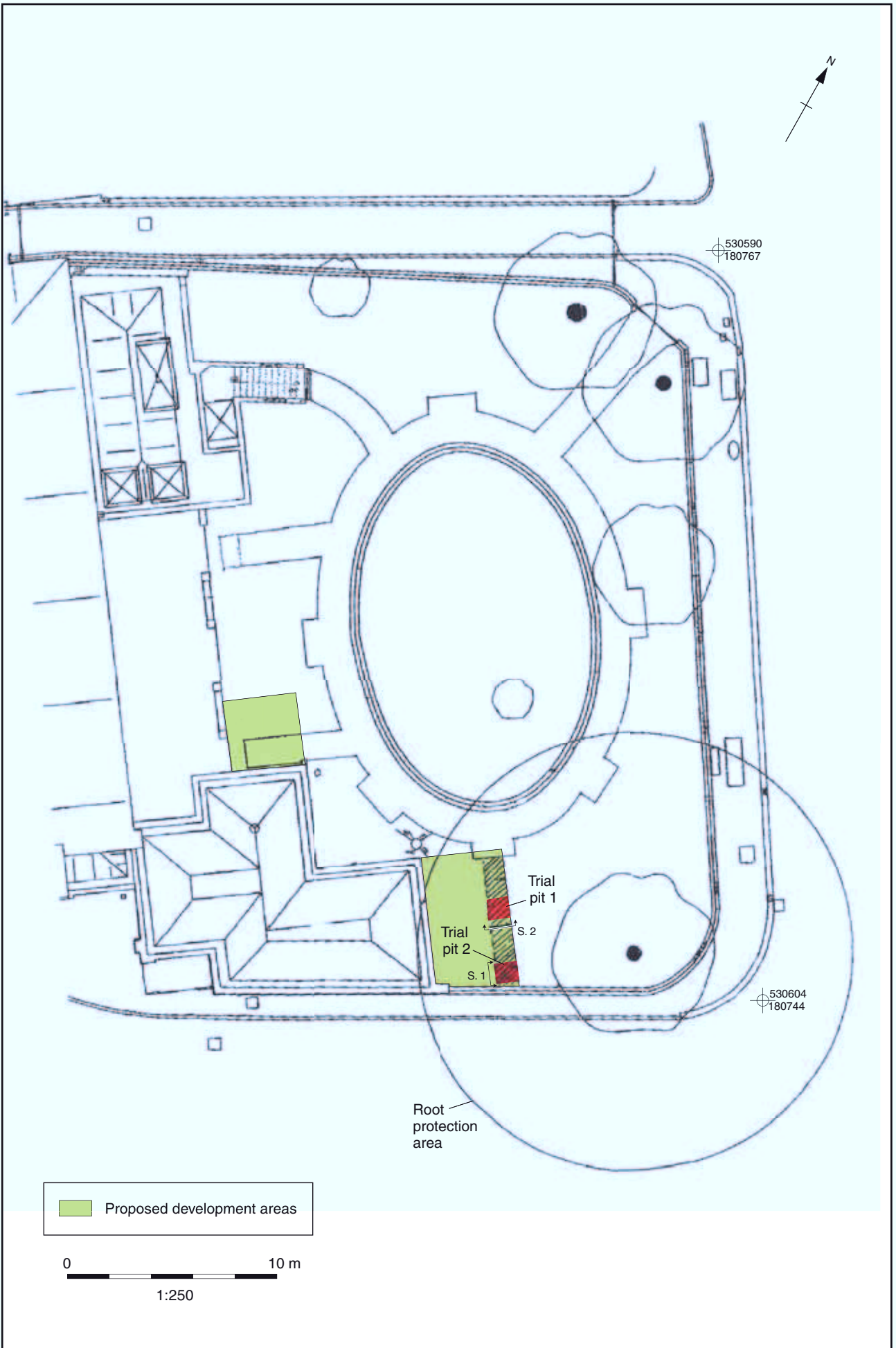


Figure 2: Site plan

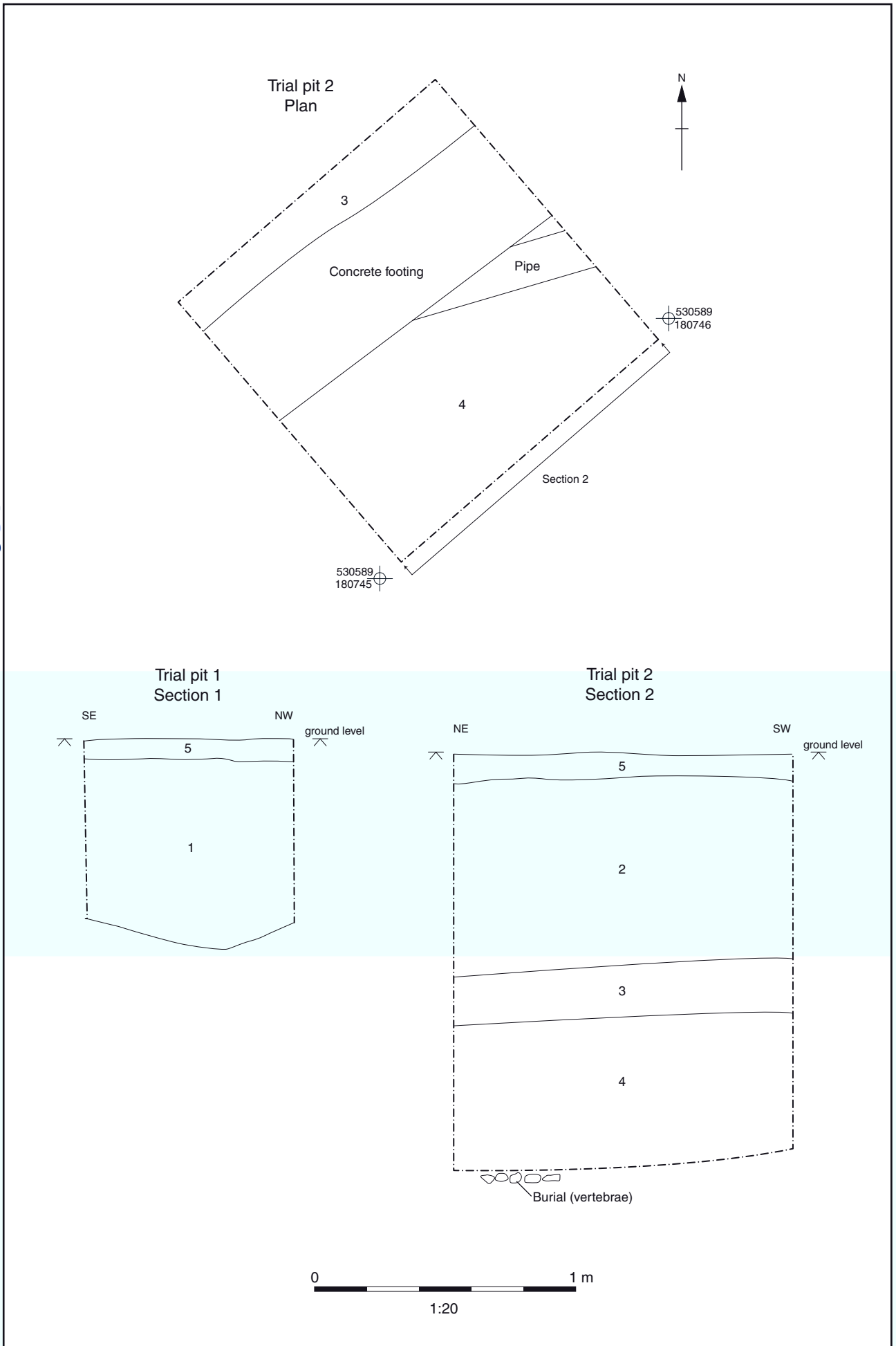


Figure 3: Plan of trial pit 2 and sections 1 and 2



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