

Church of the Holy Rood Ampney Crucis Gloucestershire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Church of the Holy Rood, Ampney Crucis, Gloucestershire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

On September 1st and 4th, 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological excavation and watching brief at the Church of the Holy Rood, Ampney Crucis, Gloucestershire (NGR: SU 0650 0189). The work was commissioned by ASTAM GBC Consulting in advance of the excavation of new drainage trenches and a borehole. The excavations revealed deep deposits of made ground either side of the Transept, the depth of the foundations of the Transept, Nave and Vestry and the presence of inhumations adjacent to the Transept, Nave and Vestry. No evidence for any of the earlier phases of church construction was encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 On 1st and 4th of September 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief and the excavation of two trial pits at the Church of the Holy Rood, Ampney Crucis, Gloucestershire (NGR: SU 0650 0189). The work was commissioned by ASTAM GBC Consulting in respect of the proposed excavation of new drainage trenches and the drilling of a borehole.
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by David Thackray, the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor setting out the standards and specification for the archaeological work (Thackray, D (Dr), 2002).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2006).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is situated on the western edge of the village of Ampney Crucis, 4 km east of Cirencester (Fig. 1). The church is sited at the base of a shallow south facing slope at approximately 102 m above OD and measures 0.25 hectares in area. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay over Forest Marble (Geological Survey of England and Wales Sheet no. 235).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The church contains features of all periods from the Saxon to the 19th century. A Saxon doorway is present in the north wall and early Norman windows can be seen either side. The north transept dates to the 14th century and the church has a 15th

century bellcote and a west tower of the same date. Two restorations were undertaken in the 19th century (Very, 1999).

- 1.3.3 Excavations in the nave uncovered seven inhumations predating the construction of the 15th century tower. A Roman pottery sherd was also found (Gloucestershire SMR). In the area of the new drainage trenches there is a build up of land levels (Thackray, 2002).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To obtain evidence for the depth of foundations for the Nave, North Transept and the Vestry.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The proof hole for the borehole was excavated by the geotechnical personnel and monitored under a continuous archaeological presence while the trial pits were hand excavated by the archaeological supervisor.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the location of the excavations was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and sections were photographed using colour slide 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* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Trial pit 1

- 3.1.1 This pit was located at the corner between the north Transept and the Vestry and measured 0.9 m by 0.9 m. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1 m.
- 3.1.2 The natural bedrock (11) was encountered at a depth of 1.1 m below the base of the concrete gully (Fig. 3, Section 1). This was overlaid by a 0.3 m deep layer of orange-brown silt clay (10). This contained many small weathered limestone fragments and represents a layer of natural clay. Overlying this was a 0.35 m deep layer of yellow-brown silt clay (9) (Fig. 3, Sections 1 and 2). This contained numerous small fragments of limestone and charcoal flecking and may represent a buried soil horizon. This was sealed by a 0.3 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown clay silt (8), a

probable layer of made ground. Cutting this deposit was a vertical sided, north-south aligned cut (7), 0.7 m deep. This contained the articulated skeleton of an adult (6), showing that it was a grave cut. It had been backfilled with a yellow-brown silt clay (5). Sealing this fill was a layer of dark brown clay loam (4), the present day topsoil and turf which measured in excess of 0.4 m deep. It is probable that the foundation cut for the north Transept (13) was cut from this level, however the later insertion of a concrete rainwater gully has destroyed the relationship. This foundation cut extends down to the level of the bedrock (11) and contains the trench built footings for the north Transept (12). Also probably cut from this level was the foundation cut (15) for the Vestry. This only extended down for 0.6 m (Fig. 3, Section 2). Built within this cut were the foundations for the Vestry (14), which could be seen to butt up to the foundations of the north Transept (12). Cut into the top surface of Layer 4 was a 0.2 m deep by 0.5 m wide trench (3), which contained the hardcore base (2) and the concrete gully (1) forming the present day rainwater gully.

Trial Pit 2

- 3.1.3 This was located in the corner between the North Transept and the Nave, measured 0.85 m by 0.85 m and was dug to a maximum of 1.1 m depth.
- 3.1.4 The natural bedrock (30) was encountered at a depth of 1.0 m below the base of the concrete rainwater gully (Fig. 3, Section 4). Overlying this was a 0.25 m deep layer of orange-brown silt clay (32). This contained many small weathered limestone fragments and represents a layer of natural clay, probably a continuation of Layer 10. This was overlain by a 0.4 m deep layer of yellow-brown silt clay (31). This contained numerous small fragments of limestone and charcoal flecking and may represent a buried soil horizon similar to Layer 9.
- 3.1.5 The foundation trench, cut (34), containing the north wall of the Nave (33) had been cut from this level. The base of this wall was trench built, but stepped in at the top with the void filled by a dark grey-brown silt clay (35). Also cut from this level was a very steep sided cut (36), which penetrated down below the surface of the bedrock. The presence of a partial adult skeleton (37) showed this to have been a grave cut. Overlying the skeleton and filling 36 was a grey-brown silt clay (26), the grave fill. Cutting the surface of the grave fill and truncating skeleton 37 was the steeply sloping cut (28), the foundation trench for the west wall of the north Transept (29) (Fig. 3, Section 3). Unlike the east wall this was built on stepped foundations, including roughly dressed stone blocks at the base of the wall. The space between wall 29 and cut 28 had been backfilled by a dark grey-brown clay silt (27). This contained medium sized angular limestone fragments probably waste from the construction. This wall appears to have been tied into wall 33 during its construction. Overlying 26, 27 31 and 35 was a 0.2 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown clay silt (25), a layer of made ground similar to 8. This was sealed by a 0.25 m deep layer of dark brown loam (24), a layer of topsoil and turf, a probable continuation of Layer 4.

- 3.1.6 Cut into this layer was a 0.3 m deep by 0.7 m wide trench (23) which contained modern hardcore (22) and the concrete rainwater gully (21).

Borehole Proof Hole

- 3.1.7 This excavation was sited 3.5 m east of the Vestry door and measured 0.9 m north-south, 0.4 m east-west and 1.2 m deep (Fig.3, Section 5). It was dug in order to locate the existing drainage run in order to avoid damage by the borehole.
- 3.1.8 The natural bedrock (54) was encountered at a depth of 1.2 m below ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.3 m deep layer of red-brown silt clay (53), a natural deposit. Overlying this was a 0.5 m deep layer of orange-brown silt clay (52), a probable colluvial deposit. Sealing this was a 0.2 m deep layer of grey-brown clay silt (51). This contained many limestone fragments and charcoal flecking and represents a layer of made ground. The cut for the existing drain, a 0.1 m diameter clay pipe, had been dug from this level. This was sealed by a 0.2 m deep layer of dark brown clay loam (50), the present day topsoil and turf.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Fragments of charnel were recovered during the excavation of both test pits. This was to be expected within a churchyard environment and was recorded and re-interred during the backfilling of the test pits. Evidence of 2 articulated adult skeletons were encountered during the excavations. Both were aligned with the head to the west. Within Test Pit 1 the inhumation was encountered at a depth of 0.7 m below ground level, suggesting a medieval date, while the inhumation within Test Pit 2 was interred within the surface of the bedrock. This skeleton had been truncated by the foundations for the North Transept showing that it predates the 14th century. Both of the skeletons were left *in situ*.
- 3.2.2 No datable artefacts were recovered during the course of the excavations.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

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

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The excavations have proved that there has been a build up of ground levels around both the north and east sides of the church. This may have occurred as a consequence of hillwash down the slope or more likely as a result of excess spoil from burials being spread about. It can be seen from the sections that the foundations for both the Nave and the Vestry were cut through these deposits, suggesting that they had already accumulated by time of their construction. The Test Pits have shown that the foundations for both the Nave and the North Transept were founded upon the

underlying bedrock, while the foundations for the Vestry were only excavated down to the level of the old topsoil horizon, 0.6 m below ground level.

- 4.1.2 The presence of the inhumations shows that the area surrounding the North Transept had been used as a cemetery, with evidence of burials predating the 14th century construction of the North Transept. It is probable that this area has been extensively used for burials with subsequent problems for both the location and depth of any proposed drainage runs. It is also probable that if this area had been used during the medieval period that human remains may be encountered at relatively shallow depths, typically 0.6 m to 0.8 m, as witnessed by the grave cut within Test Pit 1.
- 4.1.3 No evidence for any of the earlier phases of church construction were encountered during the course of the investigation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/ Height</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
Test Pit 1						
1	Structure	0.2 m	0.7 m	Concrete rainwater gully	-	C20th
2	Layer	0.2 m	0.7 m	Hardcore base	-	C20th
3	Cut	0.35 m	0.7 m	Trench for rainwater gully	-	C20th
4	Layer	0.4 m	-	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th
5	Fill	0.7 m	0.55 m	Grave fill	-	Medieval ?
6	Skeleton	-	-	Articulated adult skeleton	-	Medieval ?
7	Cut	0.7 m	0.55 m	Grave cut	-	Medieval ?
8	Layer	0.3 m	-	Made ground	-	-
9	Layer	0.3 m	-	Buried soil horizon	-	-
10	Layer	0.25 m	-	Natural clay	-	-
11	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Limestone bedrock	-	-
12	Structure	> 1.5 m	-	East wall of North Transept	-	C14th
13	Cut	1.2 m	-	Foundation trench	-	C14th
14	Structure	> 1.0 m	-	North wall of Vestry	-	C19th
15	Cut	0.6 m	-	Foundation trench	-	C19th
Test Pit 2						
21	Structure	0.2 m	0.7 m	Concrete rainwater gully	-	C20th
22	Layer	0.2 m	0.65 m	Hardcore base	-	C20th
23	Cut	0.35 m	0.7 m	Trench for rainwater gully	-	C20th
24	Layer	0.25 m	-	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th
25	Layer	0.2 m	-	Made ground	-	-
26	Fill	0.7 m	0.4 m	Grave fill	-	Earlier than C14th
27	Fill	0.7 m	0.2 m	Backfill of trench 28	-	C14th
28	Cut	0.7 m	-	Foundation trench	-	C14th
29	Structure	> 1.5 m	-	West wall of North Transept	-	C14th
30	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Limestone bedrock	-	-
31	Layer	0.4 m	-	Buried soil horizon	-	-
32	Layer	0.2 m	-	Natural clay	-	-

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/ Height</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
Test Pit 2						
33	Structure	> 1.2 m	-	North wall of Nave	-	Earlier than C14th
34	Cut	1.0 m	-	Foundation trench	-	Earlier than C14th
35	Fill	0.15 m	0.14 m	Backfill of trench 34	-	Earlier than C14th
36	Cut	0.7 m	0.4 m	Grave cut	-	Earlier than C14th
37	Skeleton	-	-	Adult articulated skeleton, truncated by Cut 28	-	Earlier than C14th
Proof Hole for Borehole						
50	Layer	0.2 m	-	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th
51	Layer	0.2 m	-	Made ground	-	-
52	Layer	0.5 m	-	Probable colluvium	-	-
53	Layer	0.3 m	-	Natural clay	-	-
54	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Limestone bedrock	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Thackray, D (Dr) 2005 *Ampney Crucis, the Church of the Holy Rood. Brief for archaeological evaluation and recording.*

Very, D and Books, A 1999 *The Buildings of England, Gloucestershire: The Cotswolds.* Penguin, Harmandsworth

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

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D. Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)*

OA, 2005 *Church of the Holy Rood, Ampney Crucis, Gloucestershire; Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological watching Brief*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Church of the Holy Rood, Ampney Crucis, Gloucestershire

Site code: AMCHR 06

Grid reference: SU 0650 0189

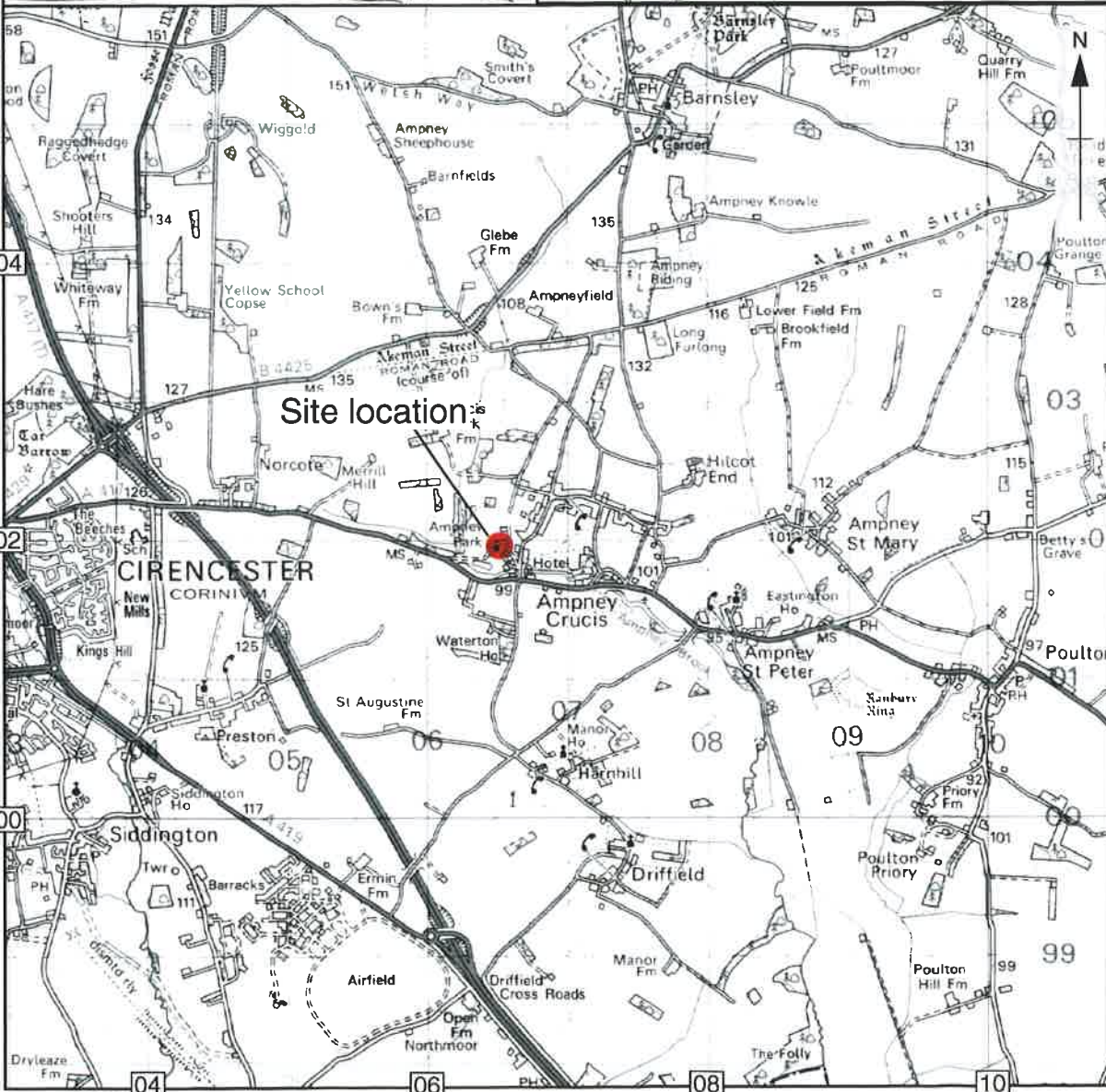
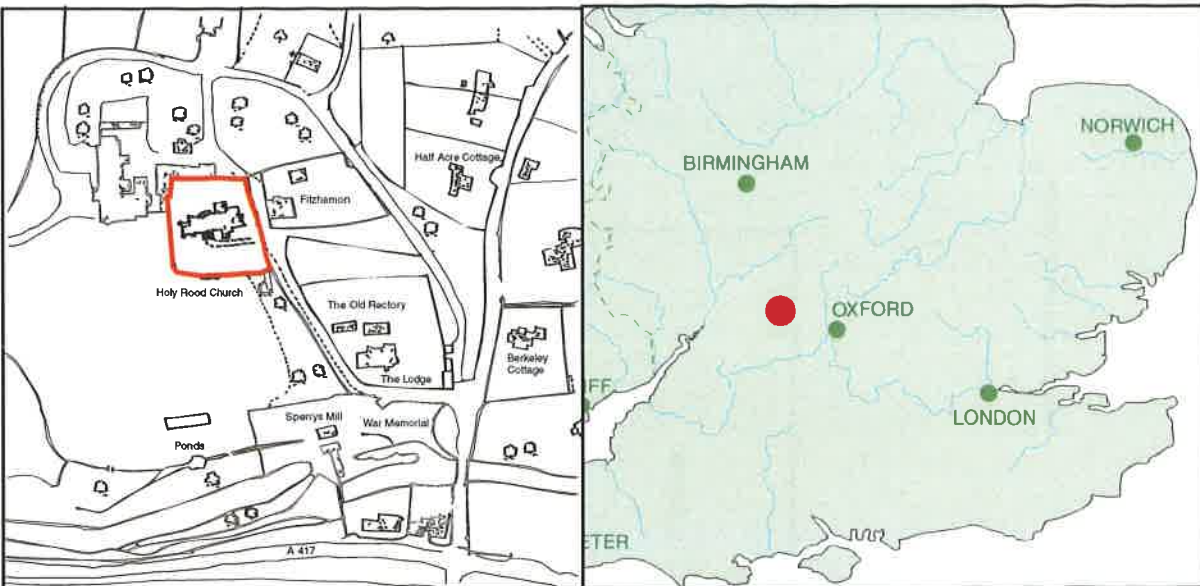
Type of watching brief: Hand excavation of two test pits and a proof hole for a borehole

Date and duration of project: 1st and 4th September 2006, 2 days

Area of site: 0.25 m hectare

Summary of results: The excavations revealed deep deposits of made ground either side of the North transept, and the depth of foundations of the Transept, Nave and Vestry. No evidence for any of the earlier phases of the church construction was encountered.

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



Scale: 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

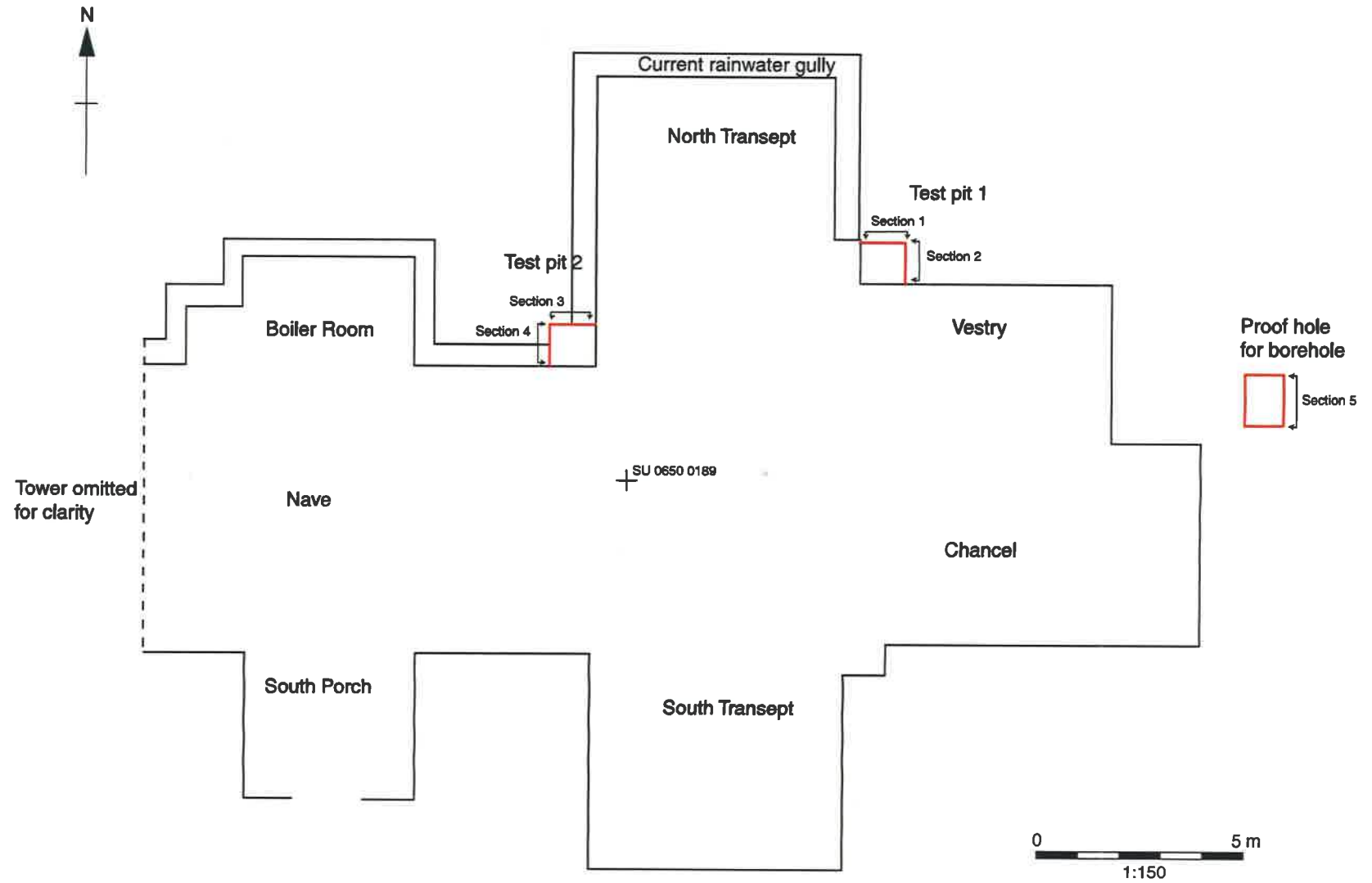


Figure 2: Location Plan for excavation and sections.

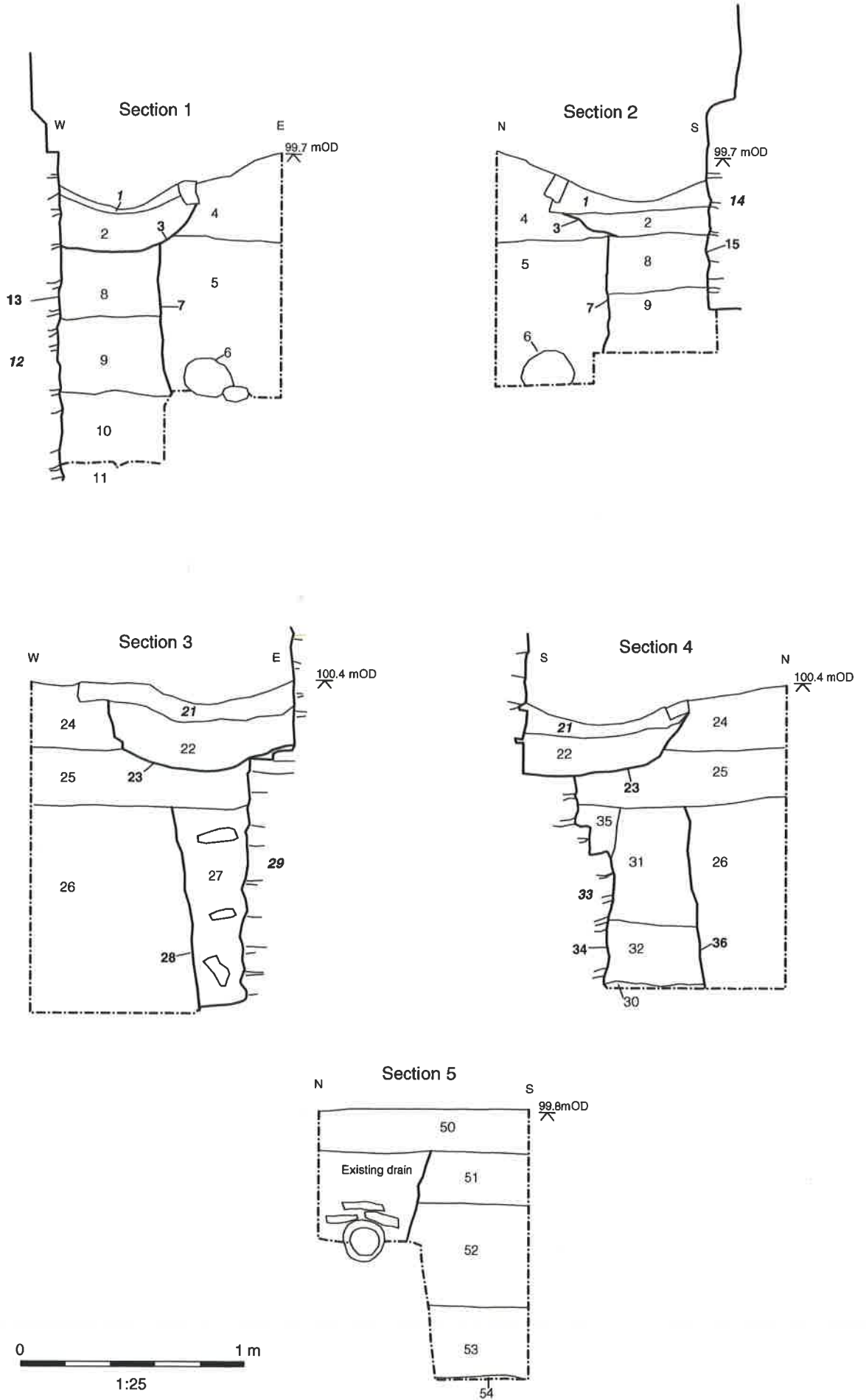


Figure 3: Sections



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