

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY
DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Pont y Cleifion Cardigan

REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

December 1996

Project Record No. 33713

Commissioned by: Lyon, McGee Associated

Report by: I.M.Darke

Dyfed Archaeological Trust
The Shire Hall,
8 Carmarthen Street,
Llandeilo,
Carmarthenshire.
SA19 6AF

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT 1 PONT Y CLEIFION, CARDIGAN

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Summary

The demolition, rebuilding and renovation works at 1 Pont y Cleifion, Cardigan (SN18084609), lie within an area recognised as an extra-mural suburb of the medieval borough of Cardigan, which had developed by 1610. It was therefore considered likely that archaeological deposits relating to the late medieval occupation of this area would be revealed during the course of the redevelopment works.

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the scheme and revealed features relating to the late medieval period which were consistent with known examples of medieval property boundaries - 'burgage plots' - and possible agricultural activity. Pottery sherds found date the features to the 13-16th centuries.

1.2 Planning history

A Planning Application from the Cardigan Youth Project was received by Cyngor Sir Ceredigion County Council on 30/09/96 for demolition, rebuilding and renovation works at 1 Pont y Clefion, Cardigan (Planning application reference number 960905, Grid reference SN18084609). The Director of Environmental Services and Housing for Cyngor Sir Ceredigion, Mr Emrys Lewis, informed the Curatorial section of Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology/Dyfed Archaeological Trust of the proposal. Following receipt of detailed plans for the proposal it was considered likely that archaeological deposits relating to the late medieval occupation would be revealed during the course of groundworks prior to the redevelopment.

The Director of Environmental Services and Housing for Cyngor Sir Ceredigion was then informed by the Curatorial section of Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology/Dyfed Archaeological Trust that, in accordance with national and local policies concerning the treatment and recording of archaeological remains which may be disturbed as a consequence of development, it was recommended that his authority should require the applicant to take responsibility for an archaeological watching brief during the course of the works, and that the watching brief should be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist to the standards laid down by the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

It was agreed with the agent for the Cardigan Youth Project, (Lyon, McGee Associates) that an officer from the Field Operations section of Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology/Dyfed Archaeological Trust would monitor the works. An archaeological watching brief was accordingly carried out on 9-10 December 1996.

1.3 Content and scope of the watching brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during an operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons - normally a development or other construction project - within a specified area where archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

The watching brief will be intended to allow, subject to resources, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits in advance of their disturbance or destruction and to provide an opportunity, if necessary, for the watching archaeologist to alert all interested parties to the presence of an archaeological find for which the resources allocated to the watching brief are insufficient to support satisfactory treatment. The watching brief is not intended as a substitute for contingent archaeological excavation.

The client will be supplied with 3 copies of an archaeological report of the results of the watching brief. The report will be fully representative of all the information recovered. A copy of the report will also be deposited with Dyfed Sites and Monuments Record.

1.4 Purpose and methodologies of the watching brief

The purpose of the watching brief is to undertake as complete a record as possible of any archaeological features affected by the client's scheme of works. In the case of larger archaeological sites it will seldom be possible or necessary to undertake a record of the entire site; the record will be undertaken only on those areas of the site that may be affected.

The primary stage of the watching brief for any scheme involves consultation of the consultation of Dyfed Sites and Monuments Record, which is maintained by Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology/Dyfed Archaeological Trust's Heritage Management Section. The client will normally advise Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology/Dyfed Archaeological Trust's Field Section of any changes in the proposed works of any which may be affected by the scheme. The client will also provide the Field Section with a proposed schedule of works in order that a full field study may be performed on any affected site prior to the commencement of the works.

Work on or around those affected sites will be subject to the watching brief. The work will be closely observed by an archaeologist from the Field Section who will also undertake a full drawn, written and photographic record of any archaeological features which may be disturbed by the scheme, and any artefact or find exposed during the works. Recording will be carried out where necessary and when convenient: it is the Field Section's aim to minimise any disruption to the client's schedule. However, if archaeological features may be lost during the scheme, it may be necessary for the Field Section to request a postponement of the works in order that the archaeology may be recorded. Larger areas affected may require fuller excavation and/or survey.

2.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 Site Location

The medieval town of Cardigan lies on the north bank of the Afon Teifi in the county of Cardiganshire. The site of the proposed redevelopment works at 1 Pont y Clefion (NGR SN 1808 4609) lies half a mile east of the centre of the medieval town in an area recognised as an extra mural medieval development centred on St. Mary's church and the site of the former Benedictine priory. The priory site is now occupied by the Cardigan and District Hospital.

The redevelopment works were situated 7.5m north of and to the rear of the present road frontage on the A484, and encompassed an area measuring 11.9m from north to south x 6.7m from west to east (Figure 6.1).

2.2 Site History

The summary history below is based primarily on four sources: James, 1983, Murphy, 1994, Soulsby and Jones 1976 and Soulsby 1994 (see below, 5.0).

The medieval town of Cardigan grew up on a promontory site on the north bank of the Afon Teifi and near the estuary of the river, hence the origin of its Welsh name Aberteifi.

Cardigan appears to have its origins in 1093, when Roger de Montgomery, the Norman Earl of Shrewsbury, established a castle. This is traditionally associated with the earthwork site known as Din Geraint (or Hen Castell) about one mile west of the present town, nearer the mouth of the river; however, it is more probable that the site of the present castle was used from the first. Gilbert de Clare received Cardigan c.1110 and it is likely that he founded St. Mary's Priory (the present St Mary's church), a Benedictine house, half a mile east of the present castle site. The beginnings of urban settlement probably date from these years.

In 1165 the Welsh under Rhys ap Gruffudd regained the castle and expelled the English monks from the priory, granting it to Chertsey Abbey in Surrey. In 1171 Rhys rebuilt the castle in stone. The castle frequently changed hands, being virtually destroyed in the 1230's, before the English hold was firmly established in the 1240's. The castle was again rebuilt and work begun on the construction of the town walls.

In 1249 Cardigan was granted the privilege of a guild merchant town with the right to levy tolls, and in 1284 it was granted a charter by Edward I. This was clearly a confirmation of existing borough status and associated privileges, as a weekly market had been in existence for over a century, and there were 128 burgages by 1274.

Coupled with the rising importance of Cardigan as a centre of trade, the charter had the effect of increasing the town's growth rate. The prosperity is aptly illustrated in the significant rise in the number of burgages with the total rising from 130 in 1279 to 172 in 1308, some of which may have been located in an extra-mural suburb which had by now probably developed around the priory of St. Mary.

However the town does not appear to have sustained this rate of growth. Writing in about 1600, George Owen describes the town as 'ruinous and decayed'. This is confirmed by Speed's description of the castle stating that 'stormes' had 'impaired her beauty, and time left her carcase a very Anatomie'.

Speed's map of 1610 (Figure 6.2) indicates large areas of open space in the northern half of the walled town, while the extra-mural development in the area around St. Mary's church and the priory (marked on Speed's plan as 'The Colledg') appears to have maintained its status as a substantial suburb.

2.3 Observations (Figure 6.3)

After the demolition and removal of the existing (19/20th century) buildings, the entire site was machined off to a depth of 0.6m, down to the level of the natural orange clay subsoil.

A number of modern features were noted during the excavation. Along the western edge of the excavation, at a depth of 0.3m, ran a brick path associated with the demolished buildings. A modern brick construction of an indeterminate nature was noted and seen to continue eastward beneath the foundations of the adjacent modern building. In the south-eastern corner of the excavation the corner the slate foundations of the neighbouring road frontage building were exposed. In the south-western corner of the excavation a 2.8m x 0.5m length of old slate foundations running from north to south was exposed and, upon removal, a modern culvert was seen to run in an east-west direction beneath it.

The rest of the excavation exposed several features of earlier occupation. These were recorded as soil marks within the orange clay subsoil. The main foundation trenches were then excavated through the subsoil and revealed sections through some of the features.

Feature 1 was located in the south-eastern corner of the excavation. Its northern end was rounded, and it ran south for a distance of 2.0m with an average width of 0.3m before fading out. It was not cut by the foundation trenches and as a result it was decided to hand excavate a 0.5m length of the feature. The resulting section revealed a shallow dish-shaped profile with a depth of 0.06m. The fill of this feature was found to consist of dark brown silty clay loam with 1% charcoal. Three sherds of Dyfed gravel-tempered ware were present within the fill (see 3.0 below).

Feature 2 was located on the western side of the excavation. In plan, the soilmark formed a long cross, the north-south axis, measuring 7.5m with an average width of 0.3m and running out at both ends. The east-west axis measured 4.2m with an average width of 0.35m continuing below the edge of the excavated area to the west and terminating in a rounded end to the east. The sections revealed a dish shaped profile with a depth of 0.05m. The fill of this feature was found to consist of dark brown silty clay loam with 1% charcoal. Six sherds of Dyfed gravel-tempered ware were recovered from the fill.

Feature 3 was located at the northern end of the excavation and ran, from its rounded western end, east for 3.5m before fading out. It was found to have an average width of 0.7m. The section revealed a shallow flat bottomed profile with a depth of 0.03m. The fill was consisted of dark brown silty clay loam with 1% charcoal. Two sherds of pottery were recovered from it, one of which was Dyfed gravel-tempered ware, while the presence of the other, which is of post-medieval date, may be due to disturbance of the fill.

Feature 4 was located at the western edge of the excavation and measured 0.75m east-west continuing beneath the edge of the excavated area. It measured 1.0m from north-south before fading out northwards. The fill was found to be consistent with the other features, comprising dark brown silty clay loam with 1% charcoal. The feature was destroyed by the excavation of the foundation trenches and could not be traced in the trench section.

Feature 5 was located towards the southern end of the excavation. It ran east-west for 1.5m, fading out at both ends. The feature was barely visible in section having a depth of less than 0.01m. The fill was consistent with the other features.

2.4 Conclusions

The features encountered within the soil makeup above the natural subsoil, the brick path, brick construction, foundations and culvert are demonstrably 19th or 20th century.

Those features that cut the subsoil are stratigraphically lower and thus earlier. The depth of these features, i.e. a maximum 0.06m, is deceptive, their upper levels having been truncated; they would originally have been deeper. The truncation occurred either during the redevelopment scheme or during post medieval activity within the area.

The excavated area lies 7.5m back from the road frontage, suggesting that evidence for any medieval building would lie beneath the building that still occupies the road frontage position, and that the features revealed within the excavated area represent agricultural activity towards the rear of a medieval burgage plot.

It is likely that Features 2 and 5 are spade dug trenches, the remains of lazy beds, typical of the garden areas of medieval burgage plots.

Feature 1 is most likely to be a small drainage gully, while the larger Feature 3 bears more resemblance to a drainage ditch possibly denoting the rear boundary of the burgage plot.

The function of Feature 4 remains unclear as insufficient information was obtained.

3.0 THE FINDS

Numerous finds were recovered from the 19/20th century within the modern makeup; these were subsequently discarded.

Of the 11 sherds recovered from within the fills of Features 1 - 4, all but one piece represent Dyfed Gravel Tempered ware demonstrating their medieval origins. The one sherd of post-medieval pottery recovered from Feature 3 may denote later disturbance.

Dyfed Gravel Tempered ware was produced at several sites within West Wales. No type series is as yet available but excavated assemblages occur in association with dateable wares from the 13th to the 16th centuries.

4.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

The archive, indexed according to the National Monuments Record (NMR) material categories, will be deposited with the Dyfed Sites and Monuments Record curated by Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology/Dyfed Archaeological Trust. It contains the following:

A. Copy of the final report

B. Field notebook

L. General admin.

M. Project correspondence

There is no material for classes **C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K** and **N**.

5.0 REFERENCES

Dyfed Sites and Monuments Records, housed with Cambria Archaeology/Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

James, T. 1983. *Excavations at Woolworths, Cardigan, 1978*. Journal of the Ceredigion Antiquarian Society, Vol. 6, No. 4.

Murphy, K. 1994. *Excavations in three burgage plots in the medieval town of Newport, Dyfed, 1991*. Reprinted from Medieval Archaeology Vol. 38, 1994.

Papazian, C. and Campbell, E. 1992. *Medieval and Later Pottery in Wales*.

Soulsby, I. 1983. *The Towns of Medieval Wales*.

Soulsby, I. and Jones, D. 1976. *The archaeological implications of redevelopment in the historic towns of Ceredigion district*.



Figure 6.1 Site Location

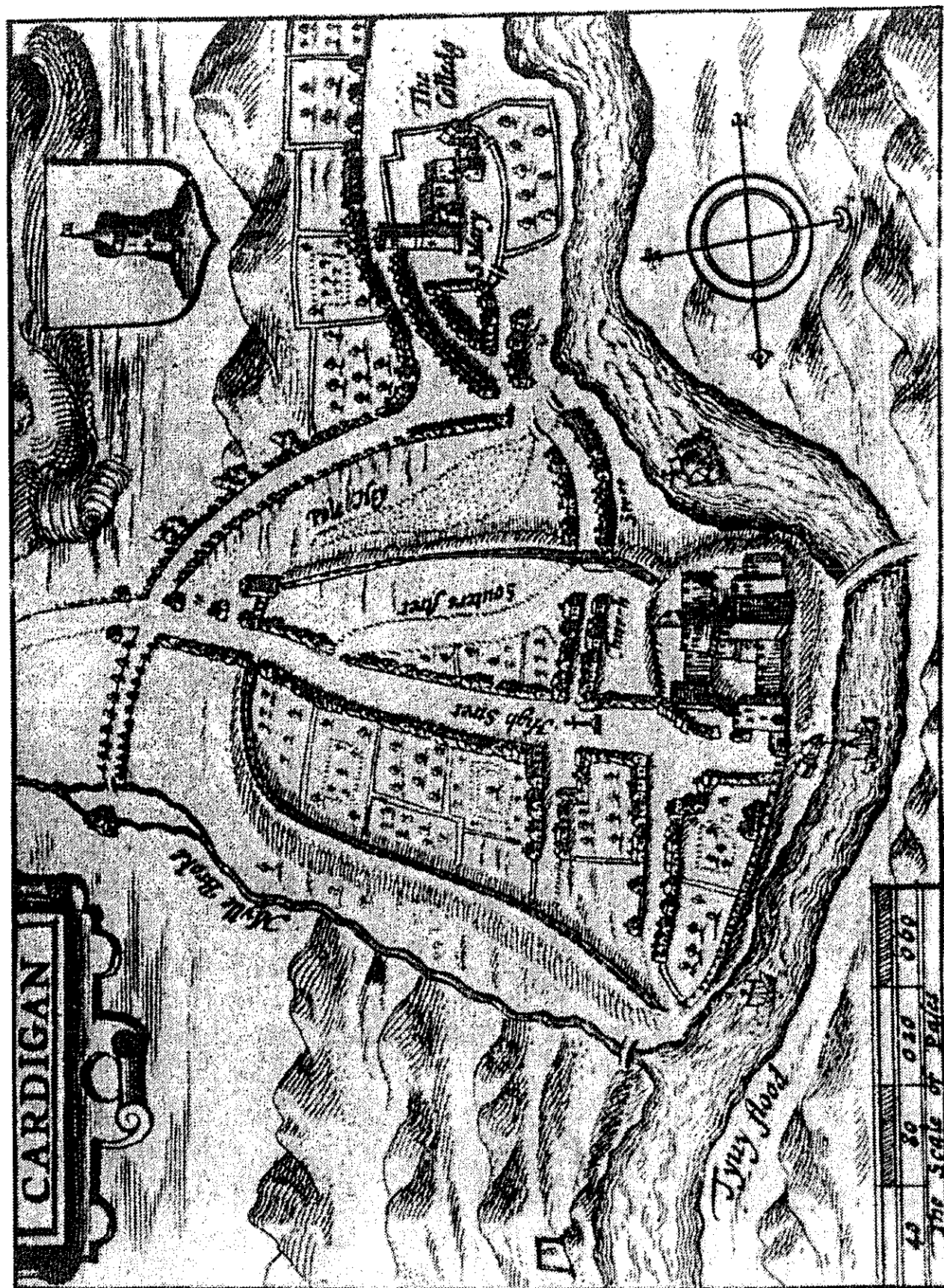


Figure 6.2 Speed's map of Cardigan (1610)

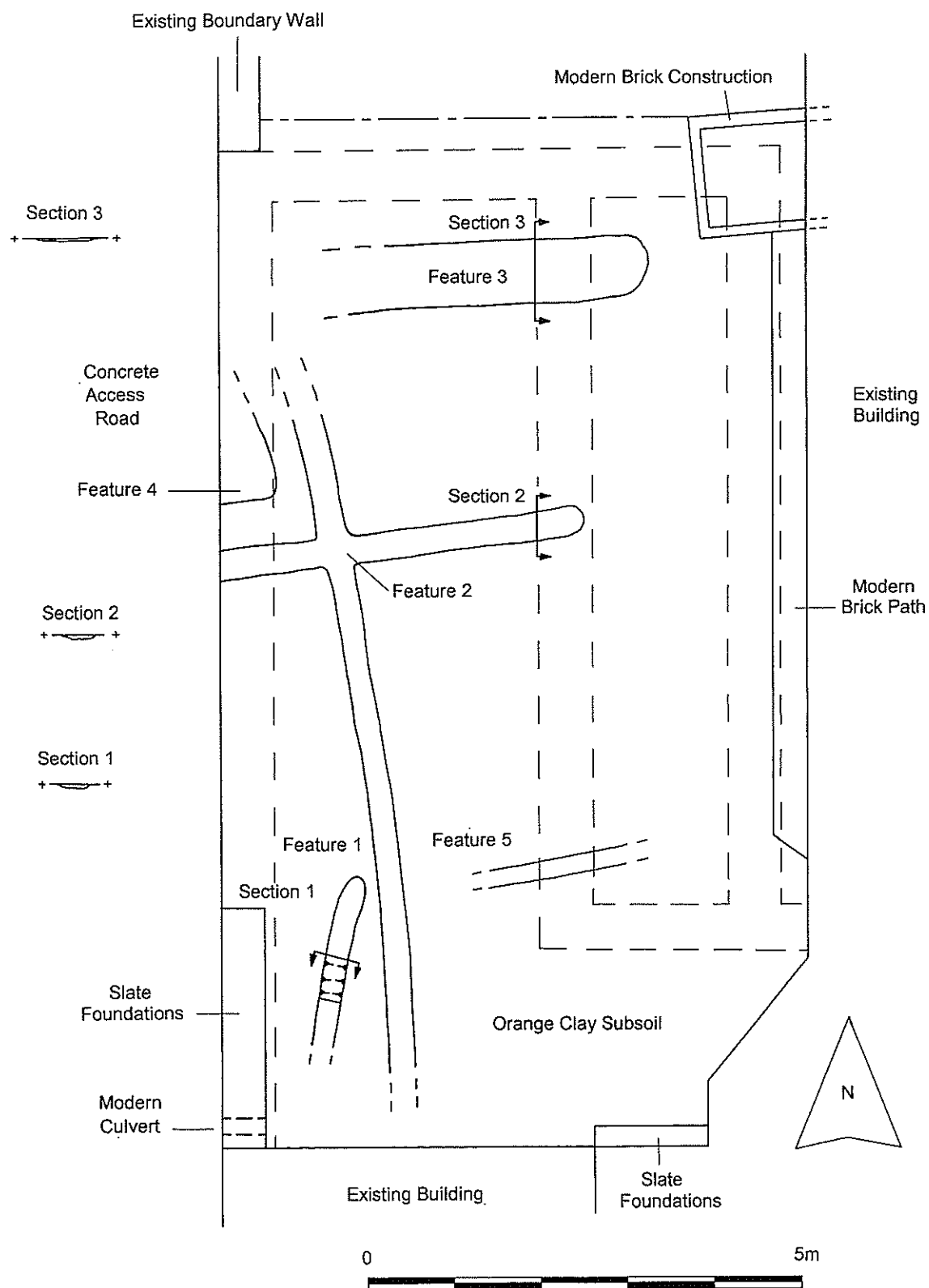


Figure 6.3 Excavated Area