

CAMBRIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS LTD.

Aberglasney Mansion, Llangathen, Carmarthenshire

Archaeological Evaluation



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CAP Report No. 312

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
Aberglasney Mansion, Llangathen,
Carmarthenshire

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**Illustrations By
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**Prepared for:
Aberglasney Restoration Trust**

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Non Technical Summary

This report results from work undertaken by Cambrian Archaeological Projects on behalf of the Aberglasney Restoration Trust as part of a program of development within the house at Aberglasney. The evaluation trenching has revealed further evidence of 19th century partitioning of the Courtyard (Room 4 – Fig. 2) along with fragments of cobbled surfaces. Within the area of the Courtyard an earlier wall was also revealed which could pre-date the Courtyard or be evidence of pre-19th century partition of the Courtyard. Within the area of the South Wing two areas of 19th century cobbled surfaces were revealed. No earlier floor surfaces were encountered and much of the later surfaces appear to have been removed either by the insertion of services or to be used elsewhere.

1 Introduction

1.1 General Introduction and Planning Background (Figs. 1 & 2)

Aberglasney Restoration Trust have been granted Planning Permission (TG/03911) and Listed Building Consent (TG/03912) to undertake a program of development within the house at Aberglasney, Llangathen, Carmarthenshire (NGR: SN5812213 – Fig. 1). The work has been granted consent with the following conditions (3 and 4) relating to archaeological matters:

3. No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a program of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
4. No site works/developments shall be undertaken until the implementation of an appropriate program of building recording and analysis has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

The work to the house will involve ground works for garden beds and the insertion of drainage. Above ground a selection of walls will be reduced in height and areas of the interior roofed over in glass.

A site meeting was held on the 8 April 2004 at Aberglasney House to discuss a suitable archaeological response to the proposed ground works. At the meeting were Lucy Bourne (Development Control Officer, Cambria Archaeology), Kevin Blockley (Director, Cambrian Archaeological Projects) and Graham Rankin (Director, Aberglasney Gardens) and Elwyn Couser (Project Manager, Aberglasney Gardens). It was agreed at the meeting that the best way forward was to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site by trial trenching (Fig. 2).

1.2 Soils and Geology

The underlying geology is a mudstone/shale which shows signs of uplift with the bedding planes now lying vertically (SSEW 1983). The geological deposits are overlain by a series of fluvial deposits that vary from low energy heavily reduced lacustrine/pond clays to unsorted higher energy sand and gravel deposits. The geological inclusions in the fluvial deposits are predominately of a local provenance, consisting mainly of rounded

mudstone/shale fragments, apart from some gravel mixed deposits which contain more intermixed geology, reflecting a larger catchment area (Halfpenny 2002).

1.3 Archaeological Background

Previous archaeological work in the house and gardens is already published (Blockley K and Halfpenny I, *Aberglasney House and Gardens: Archaeology, history and architecture*, BAR, 2002) which identified several phases of development of the house (Fig. 2).

2 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the evaluation trenching was to provide information that will enable a mitigation strategy to be formulated prior to the ground works being undertaken.

The general objectives were as follows:

- To locate any archaeological features and deposits within the study area.
- To assess the survival, quality, condition and significance of any archaeological features, deposits, and structures within the study area.

3 Methodology

The evaluation was carried out by qualified Cambrian Archaeological Projects staff using proven archaeological techniques. The site was open for monitoring by Lucy Bourne.

A single 2m by 1m trench was excavated in each of six rooms and a single 7m by 1m trial trench excavated in the central courtyard of the house. All of the trenches were hand dug and backfilled on completion of the work.

The upper levels in each trench were removed by hand. All archaeological levels were then cleaned, photographed and sampled for dating material.

The following techniques were employed for the excavation of the trench:

- Removal of overburden by hand.
- Planning of all exposed surfaces planned to a scale of 1:20, related to Ordnance Datum.
- Limited excavation of features exposed to ascertain their date, extent and function.

No excavation was undertaken over 1m in depth.

All of the above stages complied with the procedures and guidance contained in *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991), and the *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994).

All trenches were set back far enough from standing walls so that their stability was not adversely affected.

4 The Results of the Field Evaluation Trenching

The numbers that appear in () in the following text refer to context numbers allocated during the field evaluation. A summary of all contexts is given in Appendix II of this report.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3, Plate.1)

This trench measured 2m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.1m. After the removal of the overburden (1.1) the foundations of a 19th century partition wall (1.2) were located running in a north/south direction in the centre of the trench. This wall probably relates to the later 19th century partitioning of the earlier open courtyard. To either side of the wall the natural clay (1.3) was revealed directly beneath the overburden. A small pit filled with masonry waste (1.4/1.5) was located cut into the natural clay in the southeast corner of the trench.

Trench 2 (Fig. 4, Plates. 2 & 3)

This trench measured 2m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.2m. Two rough pitched stone cobbled surfaces (2.2 & 2.3) were located directly beneath the overburden (2.1) at the northern and southern ends of the trench. A wooden beam was revealed abutting the northern set of cobbles in alignment with the northern edge of the doorway to the east, this beam is probably the remains of the staircase depicted in Area 6 – Blockley/Halfpenney 2002 (Fig. 2). To the south of the wooden beam two shallow pits (2.4/2.5 & 2.6/2.7) filled with masonry waste were revealed. Both of the pits contained pottery dating to the late 19th/early 20th century.

Trench 3 (Fig. 5, Plates. 4 & 5)

This trench measured 2m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. After the removal of the overburden (3.1) a rough pitch stone cobbled surface (3.2) was revealed. Excavation of a small section of the cobbles located a fragment of 17th/18th century pottery (North Devon Gravel Tempered Ware) within the bedding material for the cobbles (3.3). The natural clay (3.4) was located directly beneath the cobble bedding medium. At the western end of the trench the cobbled surface and natural clay had been cut (3.6) through and a stone culvert(3.7), dating to the 19th century, constructed at a depth of 0.3m below the present ground surface.

Trench 4 (Fig. 6, Plate. 6)

This trench measured 2m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m. After the removal of the overburden (4.1) a small area of rough pitch stone cobbling (4.2) was revealed along the western side of the trench which is at the same height and of the same style as the cobbles revealed in Trench 3. To the east of the cobbled surface a cut for a modern service trench (4.5) (excavated during archaeological watching brief in 1999) was revealed. Excavation of cut (4.5) revealed that the cobbled surface (4.2) sat directly above the natural yellow clay (4.3) which in turn lay directly above the natural shale bedrock (4.6).

Trench 5 (Fig. 7, Plate. 7)

This trench measured 2m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m. After the removal of the overburden (5.1) a deposit of loose brown/black silty clay with masonry waste inclusions (5.2) was revealed. To the north of the trench a slate flagstone floor slab was visible sat directly on deposit (5.2) indicating that it was probably laid as a hardcore makeup/leveling deposit for the latest floor surface within the room. Excavation of deposit (5.2) revealed three further slate flagstone floor slabs (5.3) in the southern section of the trench 0.2m below the present ground surface. Lying directly beneath the flagstones (5.3) the foundation remains of an earlier wall (5.5) were located on the eastern side of the trench which in turn sat directly on the natural clay (5.6). Patches of charcoal rich mortar (5.4), typical of the 19th century, were located on the upper surface of the foundations (5.5) indicating a 19th century date for the lower set of flagstones (5.3). The foundations (5.5) were composed of large stone slabs covered in a white/pink lime mortar and ran in a north/south direction along the eastern side of the trench. The location of the wall foundations within the area of the original courtyard (prior to its later subdivision), suggests a probable pre-19th century date, without further excavation it is not possible to ascertain the exact extent, nature and date of the wall foundations. On the western side of the trench deposit (5.2) continued to a depth of 0.4m where the natural clay (5.6) was located.

Trench 6 (Fig. 8, Plate. 8)

This trench measured 2m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m. After the removal of the overburden (6.1) a surface of concrete with par-ky wooden floor segments was revealed covering the whole of the excavation area. A small slot (0.2m wide by 1m long) was excavated through the concrete to a depth of 0.4m. A deposit of masonry waste (6.2) dating to the 19th century was revealed directly beneath the concrete. This deposit extended to a depth of 0.35m where a deposit of dark brown silty clay (6.3) was encountered. No archaeological features or dating evidence was revealed during the excavation of deposit (6.3) which in turn lay directly above the natural yellow clay (6.4).

Trench 7 (Fig. 9, Plates. 9 - 11)

This trench measured 7m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. After the removal of the overburden (7.1) a linear cut feature (7.2/7.3) was located at the northern end of the trench. Excavation of (7.2/7.3) revealed two 19th century ceramic drain pipes running in a northeast/southwest direction, the natural clay (7.4) was also revealed at the base of the trench, 0.3m below the present ground surface. 3m to the north of the southern end of the trench the foundation remains of an east/west running wall (7.8) measuring 0.3m wide by 0.6m long and surviving to a depth of 0.5m was located. One fragment of 19th century pottery and a fragment of clay pipe stem were located in the fill (7.7) of the foundation trench for the wall indicating further possible partitioning of the courtyard in the 19th century. Immediately to the south of the wall an area of compact mortar (7.9), containing 2 fragments of late 19th century pottery, and fragmentary remains of a cobbled floor surface (7.5) were revealed. Deposit (7.9) continues beneath the cobbled surface (7.5) and is probably the bedding medium for the cobbled surface which has been largely robbed. Over the majority of the trench the natural clay (7.3) was located directly beneath the overburden suggesting that any courtyard surface that may have covered this area had been removed.

5 Conclusions

The evaluation trenching in the area of the original courtyard revealed further 19th century partitioning of the courtyard area, in Trenches 1 and 7, and fragmentary remains of 17th-18th century cobbled floor surfaces in Trenches 2 and 7. An earlier wall composed of large stone slabs bonded in lime mortar was located in Trench 5 which possibly predates the original courtyard or could be evidence of earlier partitioning of the courtyard. Without further excavation of the wall it is not possible to ascertain its true extent, date and function. The two trenches excavated in the area of the South Wing (Trenches 3 & 4) revealed two areas of cobbled surfaces of the same style and lying at the same height, which are probably the mid 17th/early 18th century floor surface to the whole of the southern wing which was later partitioned in the late 19th century by the insertion of two red brick walls.

Within the area of the proposed development it would appear that the earlier floor surfaces have been removed either to lay later surfaces, by the insertion of services or to be used elsewhere as these areas have gone out of use. However, it is possible that the cobbled surface in the area of the South Wing could be the original flooring as it has been suggested (Blockley and Halfpenny 2002) that the South Wing was constructed during the 17th century.

It is recommended that any areas of the proposed development that will affect the cobbled surfaces in the South Wing should only be undertaken after recording of the surfaces by either photographic and/or drawn records. Any works undertaken on the wall in Trench 5, along with any work to the north and south where the wall may continue, should be undertaken under archaeological supervision so that more details regarding the extent, date and function of the wall can be established.

6 Acknowledgements

Thanks to: The staff of the Aberglasney Restoration Trust for their help and co-operation on site and to Ifan Edwards, Chris Smith and Catherine Rees for their help with the fieldwork. Thanks also to Ifan Edwards for his illustration work.

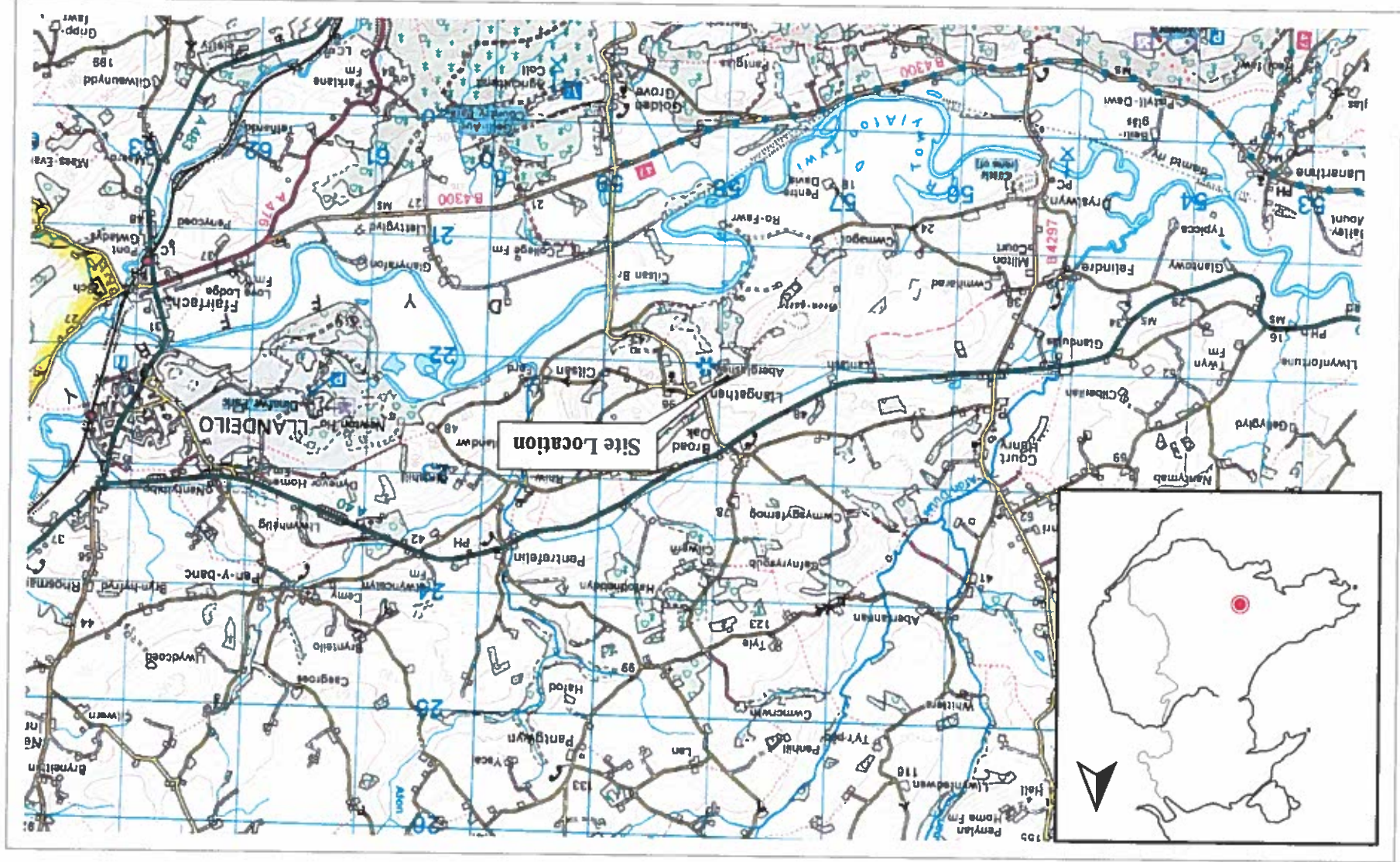
7 Bibliography and References

Blockley, K. 2004. *Specification for an Archaeological Field Evaluation, Watching Brief and building recording at Aberglasney House, Llangathen, Carmarthenshire*. CAP Specification No. 551.

Blockley K and Halfpenny I, *Aberglasney House and Gardens: Archaeology, history and architecture*, BAR, 2002).

Soil Survey of England and Wales. 1983. *Soils of England and Wales: Sheet 2 Wales*. SSEW.

Fig 01: Site Location Plan



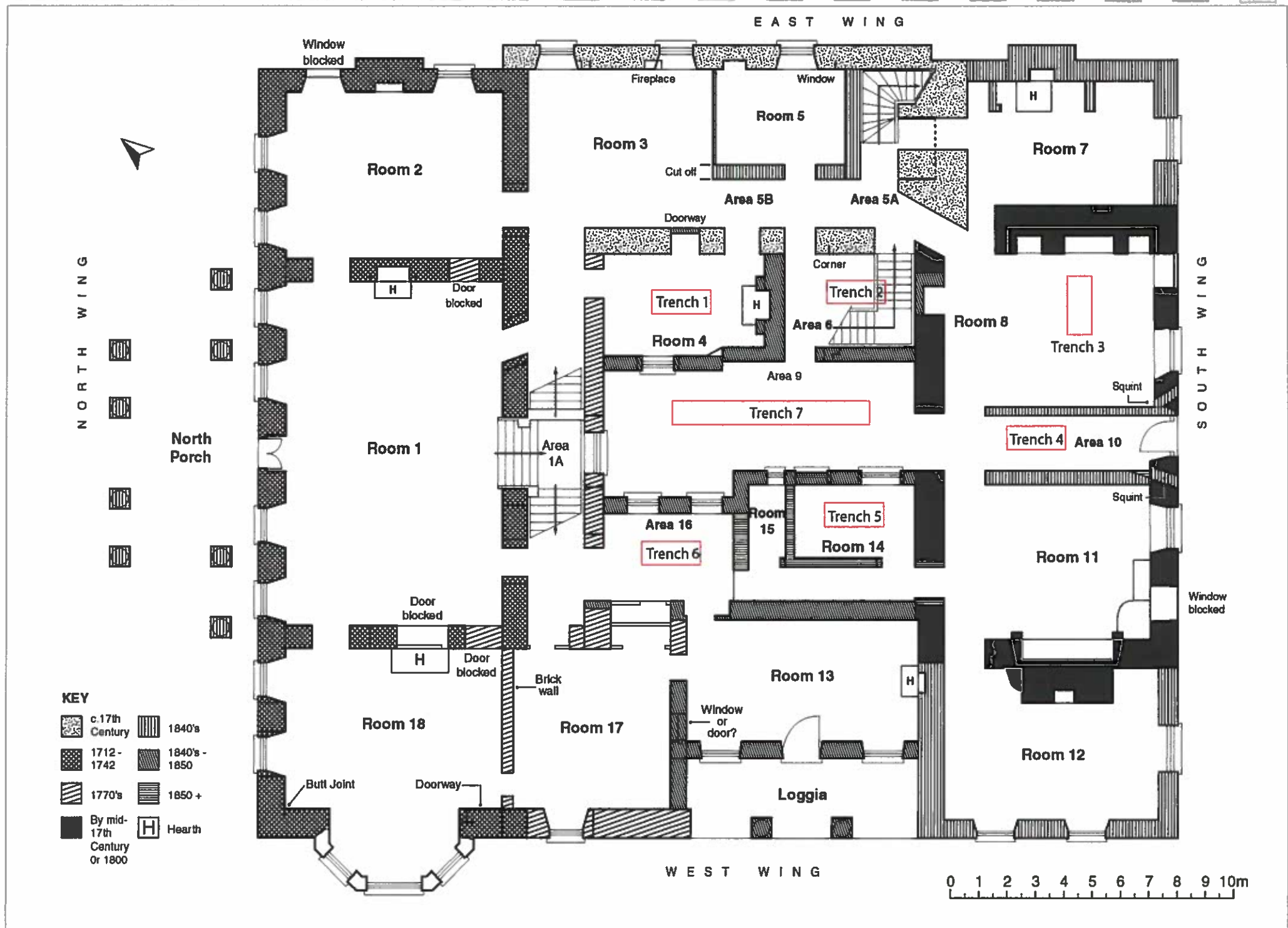


Fig 02: Phased Trench location plan

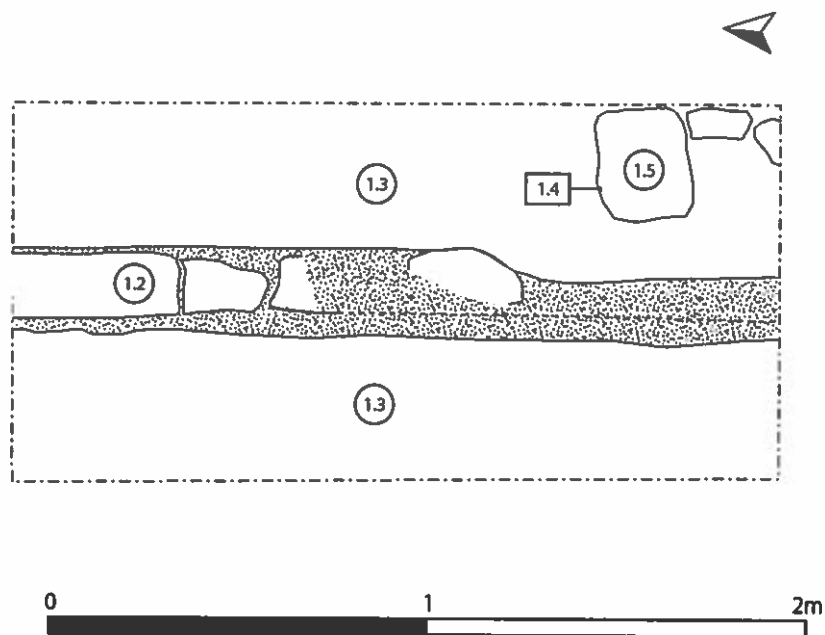


Plate 1: Trench 1, scale 1m
looking south

Figure 03: Trench 1 Illustration

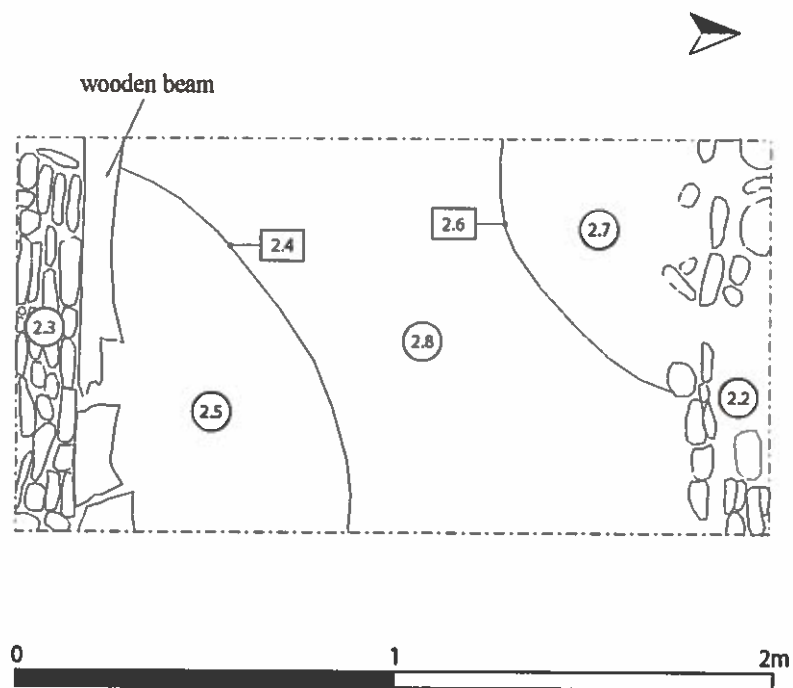
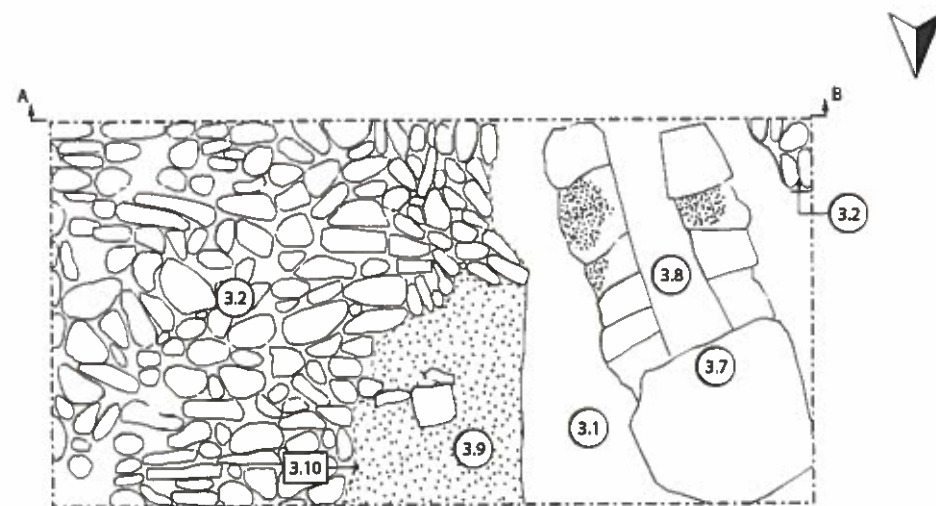


Plate 02: Trench 2 after initial excavation detailing cobbled surfaces and masonry waste pits. 1m scale looking south

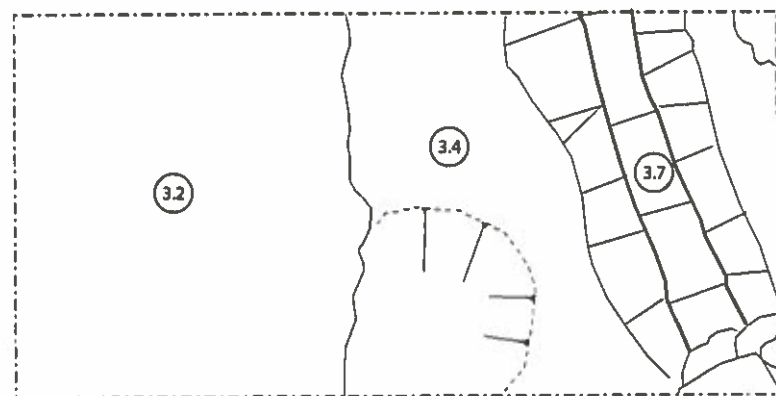


Plate 03: Trench 2 after final excavation, scale 1m looking south

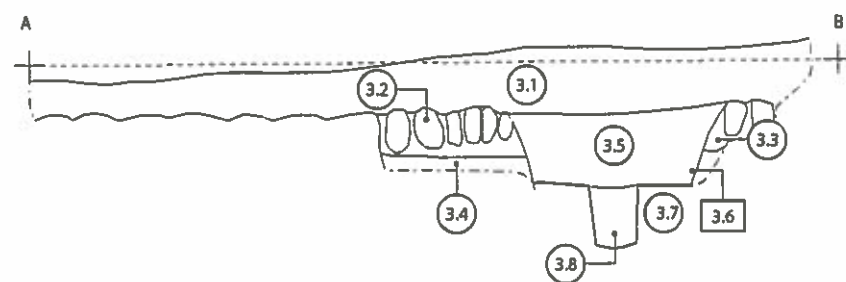
Fig 04: Plan and Plate of Trench 2



Plan of Trench 3 after initial excavation



Plan of Trench 3 after final excavation



Section A-B of Trench 3



Plate 04: Trench 3 after initial excavation, scale 1m



Plate 05: Trench 3 after final excavation, scale 1m looking East

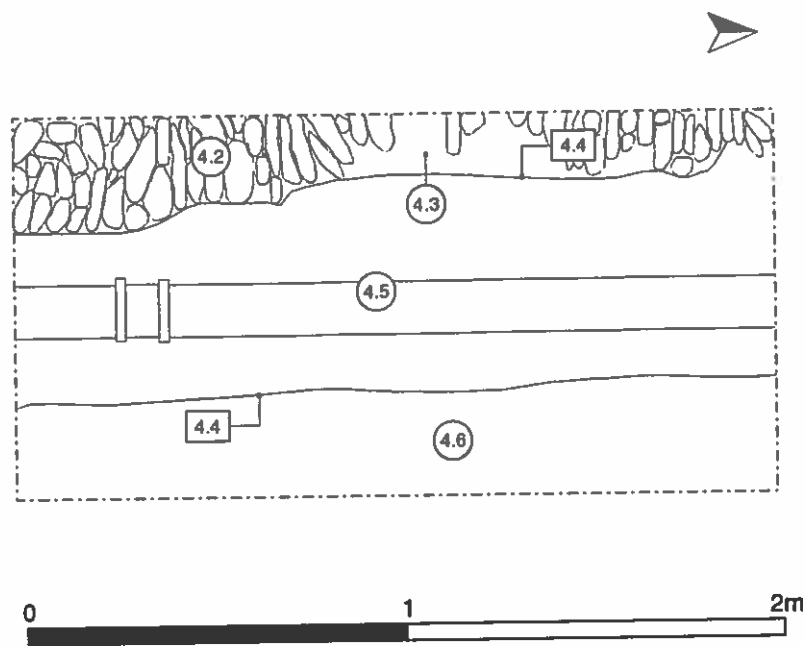


Plate 06: Trench 4 after final excavation, scale 1m, looking north

Fig 06: Trench 4 Illustration

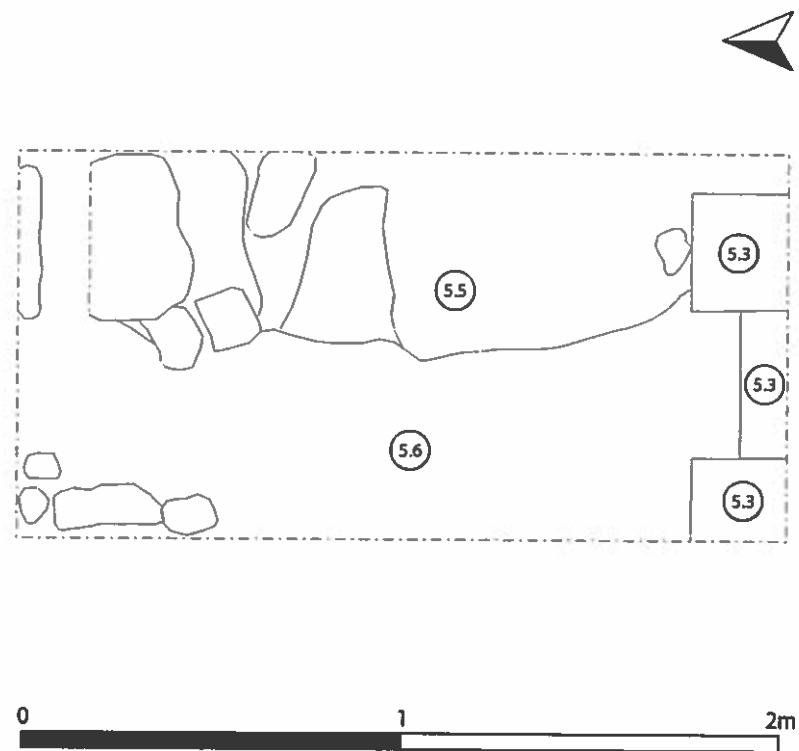


Plate 07: Trench 5 after final excavation, 1m scale looking north

Fig 07: Trench 5 Plan and Plate

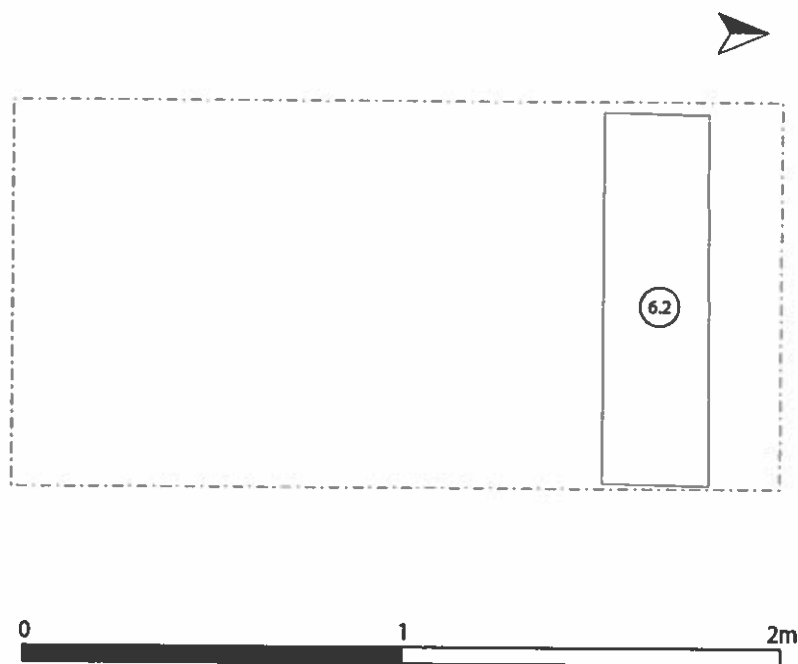
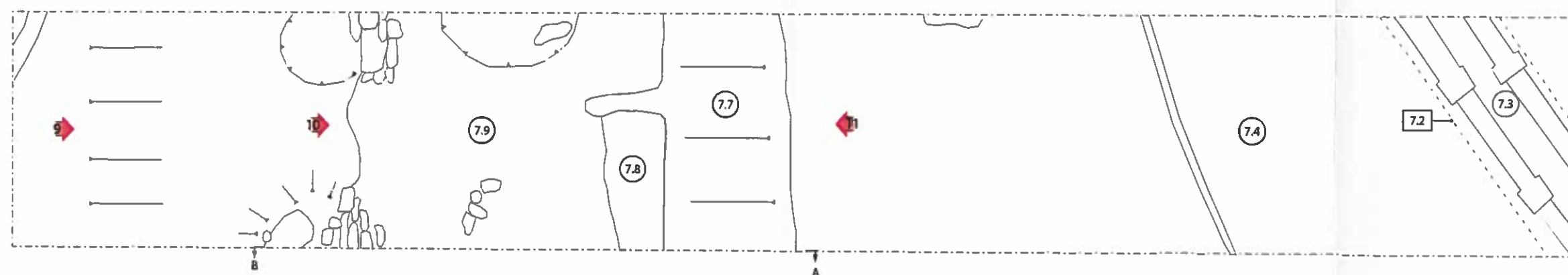


Plate 08: Trench 6 after initial excavation, scale 1m looking south

Fig 08: Trench 6 Plan and Plate

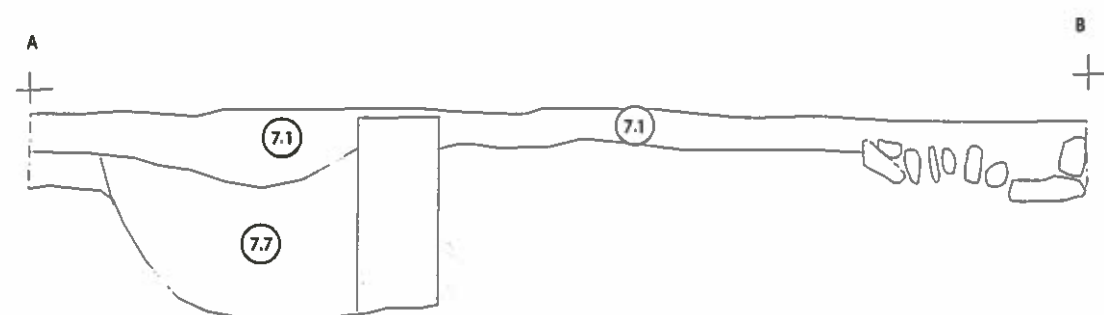
Plan of Trench 7



0 1 2m

Key
Direction of Photograph

West Facing section A-B of Trench 7



0 1 2m



Plate 9: Trench 7 After Final excavation, scales 1 & 2m looking North



Plate 10: Detail of Stone wall and cobbled surface, scale 1m looking North



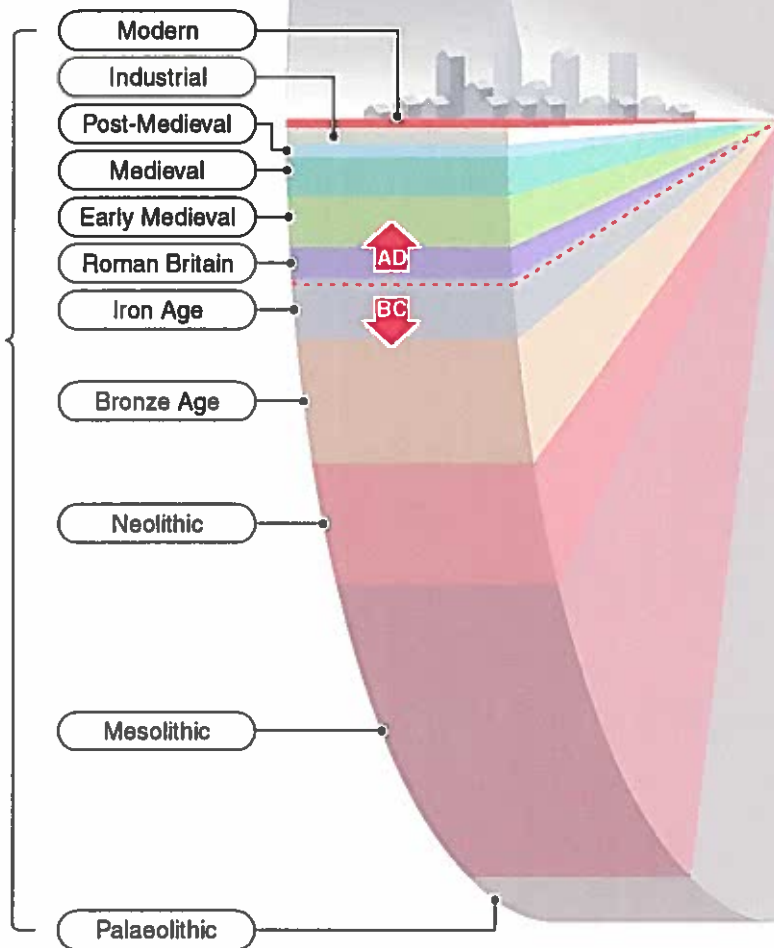
Plate 11: Detail of Stone wall and Foundation cut 7.7, scale 1m looking south

Fig 09: Trench 7 Plan and Section

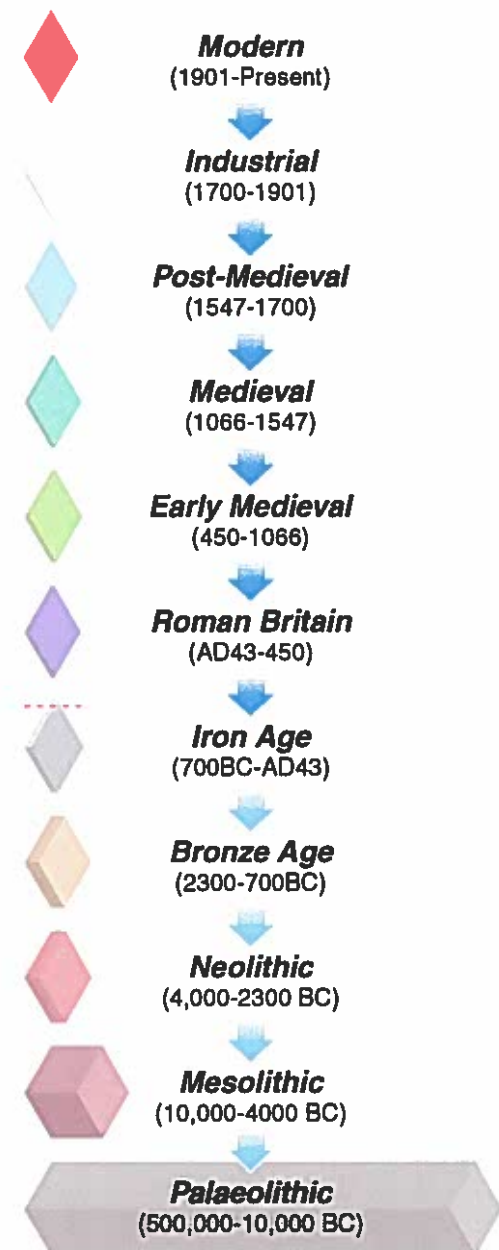


APPENDIX I: **Chronological Divisions**

Archaeological Chronology



Source Information: Council for British Archaeology (CBA)





APPENDIX II: **Context Summary**

Context Register

Trench 1

- 1.1 Overburden
- 1.2 Foundations of 19th Century partition wall
- 1.3 Natural Clay
- 1.4 Fill of masonry pit
- 1.5 Cut for pit filled with masonry waste

Trench 2

- 2.1 Overburden
- 2.2 Cobbled Surface
- 2.3 Cobbled Surface
- 2.4 Cut for masonry pit
- 2.5 Fill of masonry pit
- 2.6 Cut for masonry pit
- 2.7 Fill of masonry pit
- 2.8 Natural clay

Trench 3

- 3.1 Overburden
- 3.2 Stone cobbled surface
- 3.3 Bedding material for cobbles
- 3.4 Natural Clay
- 3.5 Rubble and stone backfill
- 3.6 Cut for culvert
- 3.7 Stone Culvert
- 3.8 Silty fill of culvert
- 3.9 Pit of masonry waste
- 3.10 Cut for pit 3.9

Trench 4

- 4.1 Overburden
- 4.2 Stone cobbled surface
- 4.3 Natural Clay
- 4.4 Cut for Pipe trench
- 4.5 Pipe and sand
- 4.6 Natural shale bedrock

Trench 5

- 5.1 Overburden
- 5.2 Deposit of loose brown/ black silty clay
- 5.3 Flagstones

- 5.4 Charcoal rich mortar
- 5.5 Foundation remains of wall
- 5.6 Natural clay

Trench 6

- 6.1 Overburden
- 6.2 Deposit of masonry waste
- 6.3 Dark brown silty clay deposit
- 6.4 Natural clay

Trench 7

- 7.1 Overburden
- 7.2 Cut for pipe trench
- 7.3 2 ceramic 19th century drain pipes
- 7.4 Natural clay
- 7.5 Cobbled floor surface
- 7.7 Fill of foundation trench
- 7.8 Foundation remains of wall
- 7.9 Compact mortar



APPENDIX III: **Finds Summary**

Finds Summary

Aberglasney Mansions (ABH/04/EVA)

Context 2.3

Post medieval Glazed tile- Delfy ware

Oyster shell

Context 2.4

Post Medieval Nail

Context 2.6

Oyster Shell

Context 3.3

Post Medieval North Devon Tempred Ware, 17th/18th century 1 sherd

Context 7.7

Post Medieval Glazed roof tile

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Site Name:	Aberglasney Mansion
Site Code:	ABH/04/EVA
Other Ref No:	N/A
NGR:	SN 5811822064
Site Type:	Multi Period Historic garden and House
Project Type:	Archaeological Evaluation
Project Officer:	Phil Evans
Project Dates:	May 04
Categories Present:	N/A
Location of Original Archive:	Aberglasney Mansion
Location of duplicate Archives:	N/A
Number of Finds Boxes:	N/A
Location of Finds:	N/A
Museum Reference:	N/A
Copyright:	CAP Ltd
Restrictions to access:	None