

**Archaeological Observation of works carried out within the
Cathedral Close, St David's, Pembrokeshire, by Laing Utilities
for Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water**

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

A total of five trenches were excavated within the Cathedral Close. Limited archaeological remains were identified in trenches CC 1, CC 2 and CC 3. Trench CC 1, located outside the south entrance of the Cathedral on the edge of the graveyard, revealed heavily fragmented human remains. The grave-marker evidence suggested these were probably early 19th century in date. Further evidence of a cobbled surface, previously identified by Border Archaeology, was revealed in Trench CC 2, located outside the wall surrounding the graveyard. The presence of a charcoal deposit in Trench CC 3, situated to the north-west of the main entrance to the Deanery, appeared to indicate Post-Medieval activity.

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March 2003**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Border Archaeology was commissioned by Laing Utilities on behalf of Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water to conduct archaeological observation of groundworks within the Cathedral Close at St. David's, Pembrokeshire.
- 1.2 The works were carried out as part of Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water's programme of water-pipe refurbishment. The watching brief was required in order to observe the excavation of trenches for the laying of a new water main using pipe-bursting techniques.
- 1.3 The purpose of the archaeological observation was to assess the nature of any archaeological remains and to record as appropriate in compliance with the Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent granted on the 24th of February 2003 by the National Assembly for Wales as advised by CADW.
- 1.4 The watching brief followed the usual on-site procedures that complied with standards set by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
- 1.5 Copies of this report will be sent to CADW, the regional SMR, the RCAHM(W) NMR, Aberystwyth, Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water and Laing Utilities.
- 1.6 The programme of archaeological observation commenced on the 24th of March 2003 and was completed on the 28th of March 2003. The provision of archaeological services was managed by Neil Shurety; the on-site watching brief was undertaken by Nicola Hancox (Staff Project Archaeologist).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The history of St David's and the St David's peninsula is long and complex and probably spans some 10,000 years. Although the Cathedral and associated buildings are Medieval, a number of sites within the locality are much earlier.
- 2.2 In 1566, one form of the Welsh place-name was *Dewi o Fyniw*. This became *Ty Dewi* in 1722, a name derived from the Welsh 'Ty' ('house') and the personal name 'Dewi' (David). The name *Mynyw* ('grove bush') came to be used for the diocese during the 12th century (Steane, 1985).
- 2.3 The city, one of the smallest in Britain, contains some of the finest Medieval and Post-Medieval buildings in this part of Wales, including the Cathedral and precinct. The Cathedral, bishop's palace and Medieval canons' houses all stood within a walled enclosure (Nicolaisen et al, 1970). The eponymous saint probably founded a monastery in St David's in 589 AD. A commercial settlement apparently grew around the monastic centre, which is located west of the city centre. The settlement was attacked and destroyed many times between 645 and 1097. In 999 and 1080 the resident bishops of St David's were slaughtered in Viking raids. The city plan is probably Medieval. Late Medieval and Post-Medieval development extended to the east and north.

- 2.4 Construction of the present Cathedral began in 1181; 39 years later, in 1220, the 'new tower' collapsed and an earthquake inflicted further damage in 1247-8. The bishop's palace and rood screen were built between 1328 and 1347. St Mary's college dates from 1365 and the Holy Trinity chapel from 1509-22. In 1648, Parliamentary soldiers destroyed the building and it was not until 1793 that the West Front was rebuilt and 1862-77 when Sir George Gilbert Scott's restoration was undertaken. In 1900-10 the remaining eastern chapels were restored. In 1995 St David's was granted city status.
- 2.5 There are several notable tombs within the Cathedral, including that of Edmund Tudor, father of King Henry VII, the founder of the Tudor dynasty. Also embedded within the wall of the Cathedral is an 11th century grave marker known as the 'Abraham Stone'. This is carved in a Celtic style with the Christian cross interwoven with Celtic knot-work and inscriptions. The stone once marked the graves of the two sons of Bishop Abraham, who was killed in a Viking raid in 1080. The 'Holy Trinity Chapel' has an oak casket that reputedly contains the remains of St David and St Justin. Also within the Cathedral is a pillar stone with an incised Latin cross dating some time between the 7th and 9th centuries. An early excavation reported uncovering 'stone coffins' that may have been the slab-lined graves of early Christian burials.

3.0 GEOLOGY

- 3.1 The solid geology of the area around St David's consists mainly of Lower Palaeozoic rocks in the form of Pre-Cambrian [volcanic] tuffs and Lower and Middle Cambrian flags. Running north to south, through St David's are a series of acid intrusions. The associated soils are a 541h NEATH and a 612b MOOR GATE (Soil Association of England & Wales 1983).
- 3.2 The 541h NEATH soil association is located east of St David's at around NGR SM 784 250 and runs eastwards beyond the village of Solva. These are well-drained, fine loamy soils directly overlying bedrock. There are, within the vicinity, small patches of similar soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging.
- 3.3 The 612b MOOR GATE is located directly west of the 541h NEATH soil association and includes land around the city of St David's. This association consists of well-drained, humose gritty loamy soils. In places there is evidence of thin iron-panning. Along the coastal fringes, the soils are thin and directly overlie [parent] bedrock.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The aim of the programme of archaeological observation was to locate and record any archaeological remains revealed during the course of the groundworks.
- 4.2 Five trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision. Previous disturbance resulting from the laying of modern road surfaces and utility work had disturbed the stratigraphic record and removed any significant archaeological deposits, features or structures. However, CC1, CC2 and CC3 did reveal limited archaeological remains/deposits.

5.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION

- 5.1 The Cathedral Close lies to the west of the modern town centre and incorporates 16 acres of land surrounding the Cathedral and Bishop's Palace. The area is enclosed by a late 13th century battlemented wall. The area encompassed by this report extends from the south entrance of the Cathedral as far as the perimeter wall.
- 5.2 TRENCH CC 1 (SM 75125 25385) was located outside the south entrance of the Cathedral on the edge of the graveyard, approximately 3.30m north-west of the last upstanding grave-marker and 12.60m south-east of the end of the largest section of graveyard.
- 5.3 The trench was excavated manually and measured 2.61m (north-east and south-west facing sections) x 0.80m x 0.76m (south-eastern end of the trench) and 0.86m (north-western end of the trench).
- 5.4 Two contexts were identified. A loosely compacted, medium-brown, sandy turf layer extended to a depth of 0.05m (001). Underlying (001) to the trench base was a loose to moderately compacted, medium-brown, silty-sand (002), with moderately frequent (10-20 per cent) small, angular and sub-angular stone inclusions and slate; occasional pieces of concrete, tarmac and post-Medieval brick; one 19th century green glass bottle-stop (marble-size); and moderately frequent fragments and very small fragments of human bone. No other finds were identified.
- 5.5 The ground had been previously disturbed by the laying of an asbestos water main that ran along the length of the trench and branched off either side. A valve and brick chamber were present at the north-western end of the trench. The scattered and heavily fragmented human remains included a rib, a partial femur, a pelvis fragment, two skull fragments, a vertebra, metacarpal and phalange, one femur (distal end) and several unidentifiable long-bone fragments. Based on grave-marker evidence, these remains are likely to be Post-Medieval, probably early 19th century. The trench and the human remains were photographed. No further recording was considered necessary owing to the nature of the deposits. All human remains were re-deposited within the trench.
- 5.6 TRENCH CC 2 (SM 75097 25396) was located outside the wall surrounding the graveyard, at the main southern gateway, opposite the Deanery. Excavation was initially manual and was completed mechanically (mini-digger). The trench measured 2.40m (north-west and south-east facing sections) x 1.0m x 0.90m.
- 5.7 Four contexts were identified. A tarmacadam road/pavement surface extended to a depth of 0.03m (001). Underlying (001) to a depth of 0.10m was a tarmacadam sub-base (002). Underlying (002) to a depth of 0.63m was a loosely compacted, standard, grey stone/gravel backfill (003) with occasional pieces of concrete and tarmac. The remainder of the section comprised a moderate to well compacted, yellow-brown, silty-sand and stone/slate deposit (004).
- 5.8 The excavation cut across an earlier trench. The water main ran along the length of the trench. At the north-eastern end, a gas main crossed the base of the trench, passing beneath the water main. An electricity cable feeding a street lamp ran across the eastern corner. The ground was therefore much disturbed. The majority of excavated material consisted of a stone/gravel backfill (003), with the remainder being re-deposited silty sand and stone (004). The north-west facing section contained less stone/gravel backfill, forming a sharp diagonal cut [005] with a flat base at 0.31m below the

ground surface, underlying (002). The cut began at 0.28m in from the north-east end of the section and continued for a further 1.62m, leaving 0.50m to the section end. Underlying (002) at each end of the section and underlying the cut, was context (004). A small, well-rounded, cobblestone measuring approximately 110mm x 60mm was identified in context (004), immediately underlying (002) at the south-western end of the north-west facing section, directly abutting the cut. This cobblestone was not in an original context and was the remains of a fragmented cobbled surface identified by Border Archaeology in early 2003 during a previous archaeological observation (Border Archaeology Report No. BA 2003-04-29). Three further cobblestones of a similar size were excavated with the spoil.

- 5.9 TRENCH CC 3 (SM 75093 25388 to SM 75097 25394) was situated to the north-west of the main entrance to the Deanery. The main trench was excavated mechanically and measured 3.85m (east- and west-facing sections) x 1.05m x 1.02m. At its southern end, the trench turned to the south-west and continued for 3.29m. The width and depth were 0.60m. A small extension was excavated off the main trench, 0.70m from its northern end, in order to connect the main to CC 2. The extension measured 1.40m x 1.30m x 0.96m.
- 5.10 The stratigraphy varied within the trench, as did the deposits identified. This is reflected within the context descriptions.
- 5.11 Five contexts were identified within the main trench. A tarmacadam road/pavement surface extended to a depth of 0.03m (001). Beneath this was a tarmacadam sub-base to a depth of 0.11m (002). Underlying (002) to a depth of 0.30m was a well-compacted deposit of small, angular stone hardcore/metalling of local sandstone (003). Underlying (003) to a depth of 0.40m was a moderately compacted, creamy-yellow, sand and stone deposit (004). Underlying (004) to the trench base at a depth of 1.02m was a moderately compacted, grey-brown, silty-sand and stone deposit (005), with occasional, medium, sub-angular stone inclusions, slate, and local sandstone. No finds were identified.
- 5.12 The trench was heavily disturbed due to the presence of the water main running its entire length. The northern half of the trench had been previously excavated and backfilled with a standard, grey stone/gravel; tree/shrub root disturbance was also identified.. The remainder of the main trench however, displayed the stratigraphy described above. At the southern end of the main trench, where it followed the bend in the water main, a high frequency of medium-sized, sub-angular stone inclusions were identified on both sections, along with one large, well-rounded, boulder. The trench appeared to have cut across a concentrated grouping of stone and boulder debris, which was well compacted. and contained within context (005). There was no identifiable structure or order to this deposit and the context had been disturbed and re-deposited. Without further investigation, speculation as to the origins of this material would be unreliable. It should be noted however that the trench lies to the north-east of what was the site of the Archdeacon of Carmarthen's residence.
- 5.13 Nine contexts were identified within the extension to the west-facing section of the main trench.. At the present ground level to a depth of 0.04m was a tarmacadam road/pavement surface (001). Beneath (001) to a depth of 0.12m was a tarmacadam sub-base (002) and, to a depth of 0.21m, a well-compacted deposit of small, angular stone hardcore/metalling of local sandstone (003). Underlying (003) to a depth of 0.33m was a moderately compacted, yellow-brown, silty-sand and stone (006). Underlying this deposit, to 0.45m, was a well compacted, white/light-brown, sandy, gritty

deposit/mortar (007), with frequent, very small charcoal flecks and inclusions of white shell. Underlying (007) to a depth of 0.50m was a moderately compacted, grey-black charcoal deposit (008) over a moderate to well compacted, grey-brown, silty-sand and stone/slate/local sandstone (009), to a depth of 0.68m. Underlying (009) to 0.78m was a moderately compacted, black-dark brown charcoal deposit (010), with very small inclusions of pink-purple and white shell fragments. Underlying this to the trench base (0.96m) was a moderately compacted, yellow-brown, silty-sand and stone deposit (011).

- 5.14 The stratigraphy described above was clearly present on the south-facing section of the trench extension, continuing only partially onto the west-facing section to 0.61m across, but only up to and including context (007). Underlying (007) to the trench base was context (009). The remainder of the trench extension showed the same stratigraphy as that described in paragraph 5.11. This section of the trench appeared to have cut through a series of Post-Medieval (?) deposits, which had in other areas been previously destroyed. This would have been a result of earlier utility activity and previous road surfacing, and also considerable Post-Medieval disturbance throughout this area of the Close. At the base of (009), a pottery fragment was identified, with a dark reddish-brown inner glazing. No other finds were identified.
- 5.15 The stratigraphy varied slightly on the south-east facing section from that of the north-west facing section; both sections are described below.
- 5.16 Six contexts were identified within the south-east facing section of the trench extension running south-west from the north-facing end of the main trench. At the present ground level was a tarmacadam road/pavement surface (001) and sub-base (002) to a depth of 0.09m. Underlying the modern surface and sub-base was a well-compacted deposit of small, angular, stone hardcore/metalling of local sandstone (003) to a depth of 0.36m. Underlying (003) to a depth of 0.64m was a well compacted, medium-brown, silty-sand (012), with occasional (-5%), small, sub-angular stone inclusions. Underlying (012) to a depth of 0.73 was a moderately compacted, black charcoal deposit (013). Underlying (013) to the base of the trench (0.77m) was a moderately compacted, grey-brown, silty-sand (014), with moderately frequent (10%), small angular and sub-angular stone/slate/sandstone inclusions. No finds were identified other than the deposit of charcoal.
- 5.17 Six contexts were identified within the north-west facing section of the trench extension running south-west from the north-facing end of the main trench. At the present ground surface to a depth of 0.03m was a tarmacadam road/pavement surface (001). Underlying (001) to a depth of 0.10m was a tarmacadam sub-base (002). Beneath the sub-base to a depth of 0.39m was a well-compacted deposit of small, angular, stone hardcore/metalling of local sandstone (003). Underlying (003) to a depth of 0.44m was a moderate to well compacted, cream to light-brown, sandy-gritty deposit (015), with moderately frequent, small charcoal and white shell inclusions. Underlying (015) to a depth of 0.47m was a moderately compacted, black charcoal deposit (013). Underlying (013) to the trench base (0.77m) was a moderately compacted, grey-brown, silty-sand (014), with moderately frequent (10%) small angular and sub-angular stone/slate/local sandstone inclusions. No finds other than the charcoal deposit were identified.
- 5.18 The presence of the charcoal deposit would seem to indicate some Post-Medieval activity, the nature of which is not possible to enlarge upon without any dateable artefacts or further investigation.

- 5.19 TRENCH CC 4 (SM 75026 25357) was located to the north-west of the Deanery, outside the side entrance. The trench was excavated mechanically and measured 1.93m (north-west and south-east facing sections) x 0.97m x 0.67m. The trench was abandoned and backfilled as the main was not found.
- 5.20 The stratigraphy varied within the trench, as did the deposits identified. Seven contexts were identified in the north-west facing section. A tarmacadam road/pavement surface (001) and sub-base (002) overlay a well-compacted, dark-grey, silty-sand and stone with occasional post-Medieval red-brick flecking (003). This deposit extended to a depth of 0.12m. Underlying (003) to a depth of 0.18m was a deposit of well-compacted, grey clay and stone (004). Underlying (004) to a depth of 0.28m was a well-compacted, yellow-brown, clayey-silt and stone deposit (005). Underlying (005) to a depth of 0.33m was a well-compacted, grey clay and sandstone deposit (006). Underlying (006) to the trench base was a well-compacted, yellow-brown, silty-sand (007). No finds were identified.
- 5.21 Six contexts were identified within the south-east facing section. Underlying the tarmacadam road/pavement surface (001) and sub-base (002) was a well-compacted deposit of small, angular stone hardcore/metalling of local sandstone (008). Underlying (008) to a depth of 0.26m was a well-compacted, grey-brown, silty-sand and stone (009) with occasional post-Medieval red-brick pieces and flecking. Underlying (009) to a depth of 0.31m was a loose to moderately compacted, light-brown to cream, silty-sand soil (010). The remainder of the section comprised a moderately compacted, grey-brown, silty-sand and stone deposit (011), with tree-shrub root disturbance evident. No finds were identified.
- 5.22 The stratigraphy indicates heavy disturbance throughout the laying of successive metalled surfaces.
- 5.23 TRENCH CC 5 (SM 75018 25320) was located 4.80m inside the wall, close to the site of Porth Padraig. The trench was mechanically excavated and measured 2.45m (north-west and south-east facing sections) x 0.90m x 0.82m.
- 5.24 Three contexts were identified. Underlying the tarmacadam road/pavement surface (001) and tarmacadam sub-base (002) was a moderate to well compacted, medium-brown to grey-brown, silty-sand and stone deposit (003), with tree/shrub root disturbance evident throughout. No finds were identified.
- 5.25 The trench had been previously disturbed as a result of the laying of the original water main and context (003) was re-deposited.

6.0 SUMMARY

- 6.1 The city of St David's is regarded as one of the oldest in Wales. A total of five trenches were excavated within the Cathedral Close. Limited archaeological remains were identified in trenches CC 1, CC 2 and CC 3. Trench CC 1, located outside the south entrance of the Cathedral on the edge of the graveyard, revealed heavily fragmented human remains. The grave-marker evidence suggested these were probably early 19th century in date. Further evidence of a cobbled surface, identified by Border Archaeology in an earlier report (BA 2003-04-29), was revealed in Trench CC 2, located outside the wall surrounding the graveyard. The presence of a charcoal deposit in Trench CC 3, situated to the north-west of the main entrance to the Deanery, appeared to indicate Post-Medieval activity.

7.0 REFERENCES

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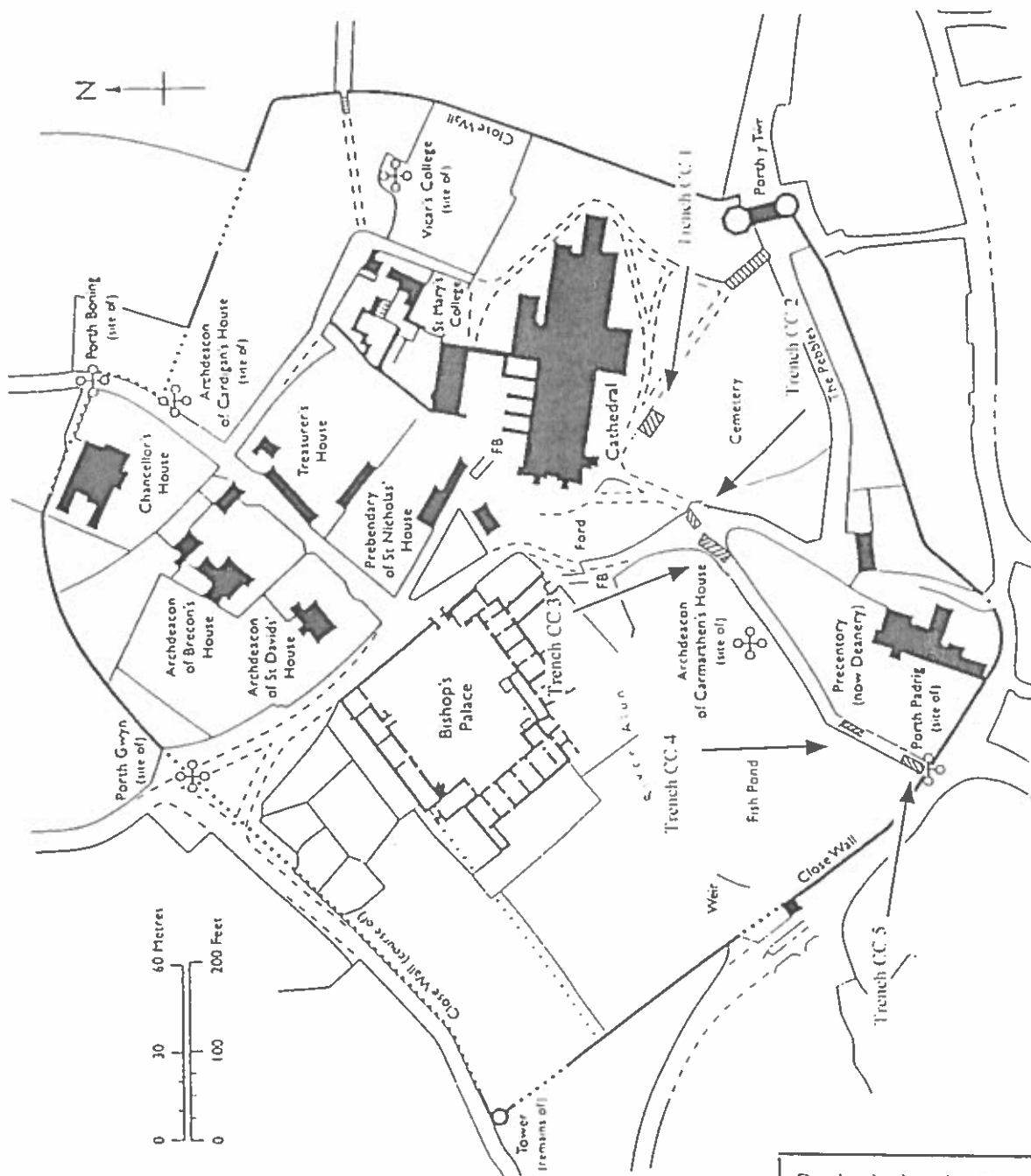
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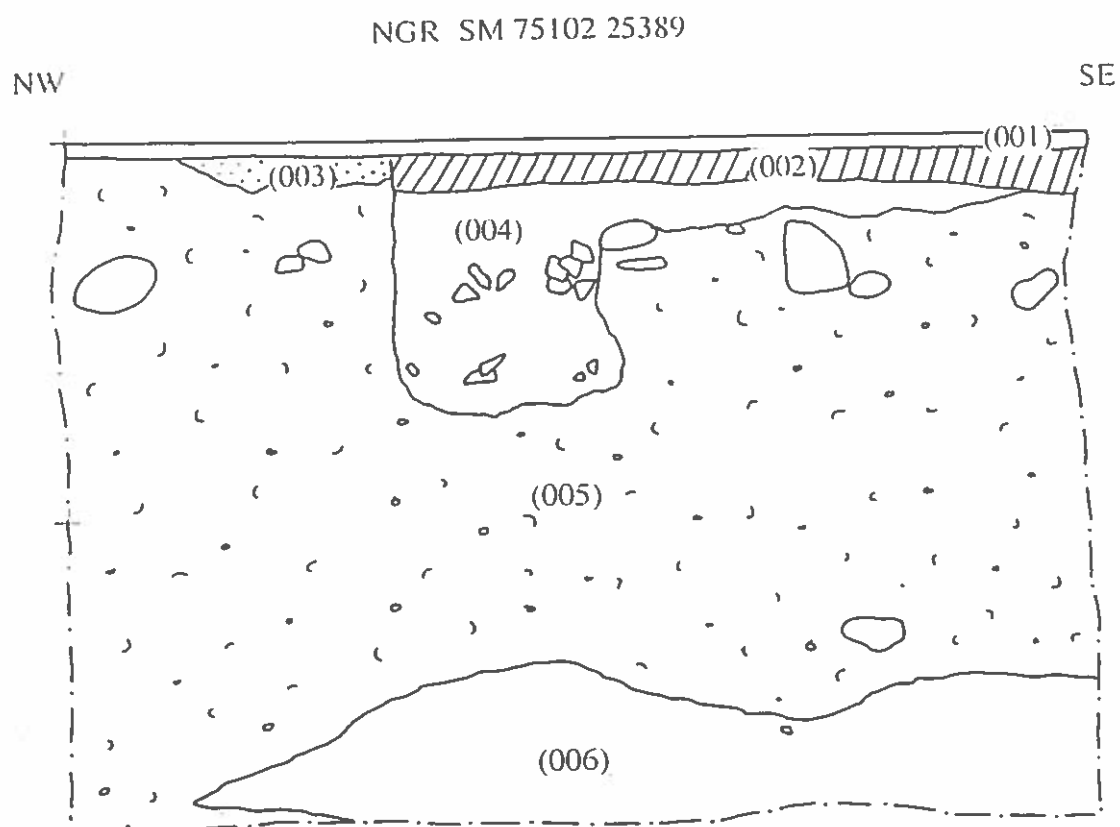
FIGURE 1 LOCATION OF TRENCHES WITHIN THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE



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FIGURE 2 TRENCH CC2 SOUTH-WEST-FACING SECTION

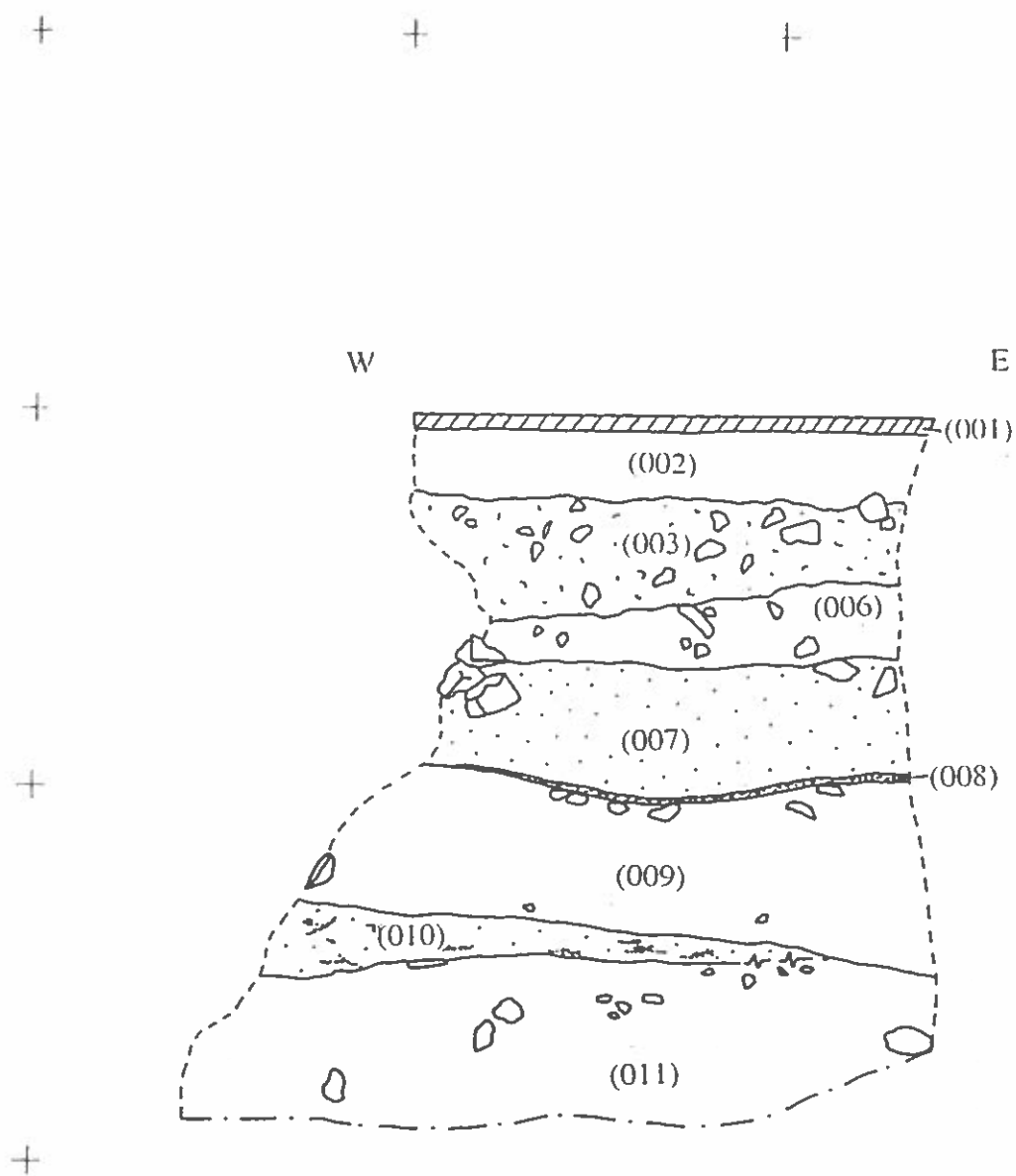


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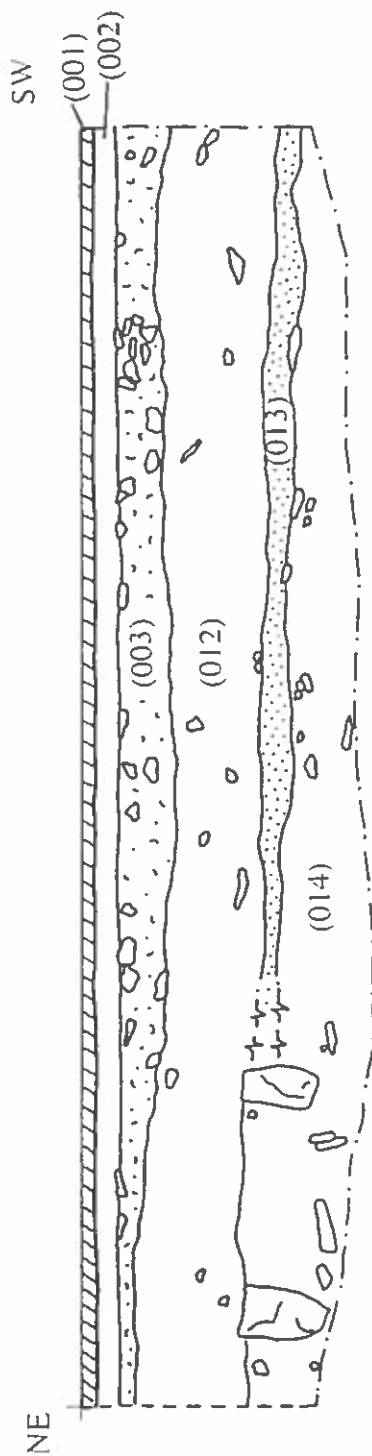


FIGURE 3 TRENCH CC3 SOUTH-FACING SECTION



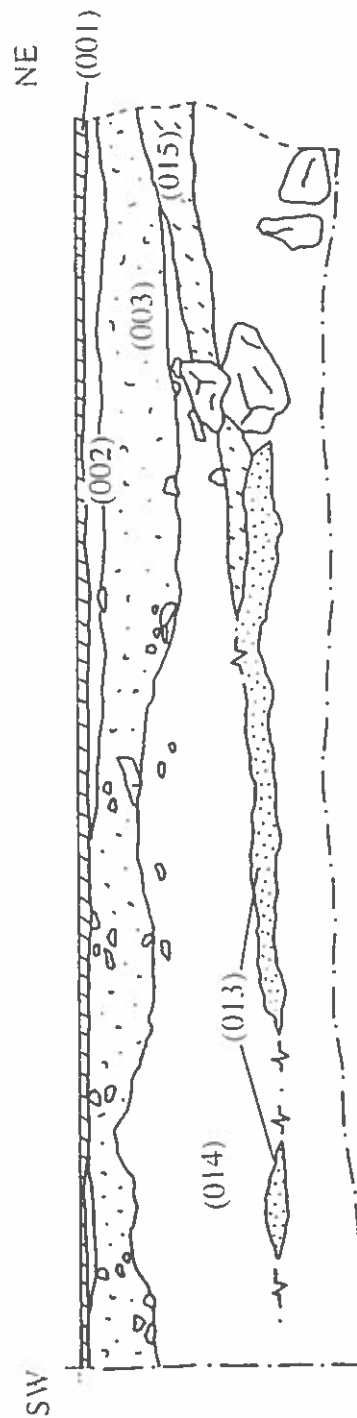
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NGR SM 75093 25388

NGR SM 75097 25395



NGR SM 75097 25395

NGR SM 75093 25388

**FIGURES 4 & 5 TRENCH CC3 (EXTENSION)
NW- & SE-FACING SECTIONS**

1m

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PLATE 1 TRENCH CC1 LOOKING NORTH-WEST



PLATE 2 TRENCH CC5 LOOKING SOUTH-WEST

