

MEMBURY COURT, MEMBURY, DEVON
CHAPEL AND CIDER HOUSE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



STEWART BROWN ASSOCIATES
JANUARY 2007

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by
Stewart Brown Associates

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during excavations for new land drains around the outside of the standing remains of the medieval chapel and late 18th-century cider house to the north of the manor house at Membury Court. The new drains comprise part of a conservation scheme to repair and consolidate the standing structure. The excavations revealed part of medieval cobbled yard to the south-east of the chapel, and stone footings for a later yard enclosure wall dating from the 17th or 18th century. Elsewhere, recent deposits were found to directly overlie natural subsoil.

In addition, an archaeological evaluation trench was opened within the cider house. This confirmed the results of an earlier archaeological evaluation (Brown 2006), and established that no medieval floor levels or other medieval remains survive below ground level within the building.

THE SITE AND PROJECT

The site (OS Grid Reference ST 264 038) is a scheduled ancient monument (No. 418); the standing building is listed Grade II*. The building covers an area of approximately 29m x 10m and is terraced into N-S sloping ground. The building is presently unoccupied and in need of attention. The new drains were needed in order to carry away ground water and help dry out the standing masonry before the main phase of repair and consolidation begins later in the year 2007. The watching brief was commissioned by the present owners of the property, Mr. and Mrs. Denny, and grant-aided by M.A.F.

The local geology comprises Cretaceous Greensand and Gault, with an outlier of chalk nearby. The local subsoil is a light red stony clay with patches of green-coloured sand. The latter probably derives from weathered sandstone boulders.

The report's appendices are as follows: Finds Identification by John Allan, Exeter Archaeology (Appendix 1); Context Descriptions (Appendix 2); Stratigraphic Matrices (Appendix 3); The Project Design (Appendix 4); Archive assessment (Appendix 5).

A photographic record of the excavation trenches is included in the site archive.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

An archaeological and historical account of the standing buildings at Membury Court, including the chapel, was produced by Keystone Historic Building Consultants in 1993 (Report No. **K431**). The chapel is thought to have been built in the late 13th or early 14th century, with a number of alterations made in the late 15th or early 16th century, including a

new roof and the insertion of a chancel screen, together with a first floor to the west of the screen. Its conversion for use as a cider house took place shortly before 1795, when the building is described in a survey as 'The Old Chapel now turn'd into a Cyder House most of it new built'.

An archaeological evaluation of the floor levels within the building was carried out in 2006 by Stewart Brown Associates (Brown 2006). This showed that medieval floor levels no longer survive within the building. Earlier floor levels were removed during the late 18th-century rebuilding of the structure, when a new lower-level floor was inserted.

DESCRIPTION (Figs. 1 and 2)

Trench 6 (Fig. 1)

Trench 6 was opened within the cider house in order to investigate whether footings for the western wall of the medieval chapel still survived beneath the late 18th-century cobbled floors uncovered by the 2006 evaluation. The cobbles had been laid on a bedding layer of yellow sand (83), which produced pottery sherds dating from 1700-1820 together with a brick fragment of the same period. Beneath bedding layer 83 was only natural clay, showing that the reduction in ground level which took place when the floor level was lowered in the late 18th century had removed all trace of medieval wall footings.

Trench 6 also uncovered a late 18th-century wall footing for a partition wall which divided the cider house into two rooms (82). The wall footing comprised a trench 0.35m wide and 0.23m deep which had been filled with loose cobbles. The cobble-filled trench would have provided a dry base for a timber-framed partition wall rising through the ground floor. Excavation of the infilling of the trench produced three sherds of 18th-century pottery and another brick fragment.

Trench 7 (Figs. 1 and 2)

Trench 7 was dug along the outside of the building next to its north wall. The trench uncovered only recent deposits and a land drain (50-52), together with two features dating probably from the late 18th-century construction of the cider house (52-54). At the west end of the trench was a small pit or post-hole filled with two clay deposits (52, 53). Toward the middle of the trench was a 5m-wide pit filled with large loose stone fragments and mid brown clay (54). The stones almost certainly provided hard-standing for carts unloading apples into the loft of the cider house, since the pit aligns very well with the loft's surviving loading bay. Very similar large stone fragments were excavated from alongside the stone footings of the cider house, where they had probably been placed in order to provide some measure of land drainage. Toward the eastern end of the trench there was a ceramic land drain of late 18th- or 19th-century date which had been laid alongside the wall either at the construction of the cider-house or in the 19th century.

Trench 7 also exposed part of the footings of the cider-house wall, which were observed to be stepped out at their base. The remainder of the deposits exposed by the trench comprise natural red clay (55) overlying natural brown gravel (56).

The excavation of trench 7 produced 17 unstratified fragments of 15th- or 16th-century glazed roof ridge tile which have collectively been given context number 84. The broken tiles are very likely to have come from the chapel roof, and to have been discarded behind the building when it was rebuilt as a cider house and re-roofed. Associated with the tiles were a number of broken roofing slates, so there is strong evidence to show that the chapel roof was slated, with ceramic tiles laid along its ridge, up until the late 18th century.

Trench 8 (Figs. 1 and 2)

Trench 8 was dug alongside the east wall of the chapel, then extended toward the south-east in order to connect with an existing modern land drain at the east end of the manor house. The trench uncovered remains of a medieval cobbled surface (68) which was covered over in the 16th century, stone footings for a later yard wall (65, 66), and some recent drains and post-holes (60-64).

The medieval cobbled surface was made up of river cobbles and stones set in light brown claysilt (68). It was poorly preserved and patchy, but probably represents the remains of a yard surface which once extended between the house and chapel. It produced three sherds of early medieval cooking pot dating from the period between the late 10th century and the early 14th century. The latter part of this period is the more likely in the context of Membury Court. A small area of a similar deposit, but with fewer cobbles and stones, was exposed a little to the north (69). This was evidently the northern limit of the yard surface. The deposit is set at a lower level than the natural clay exposed only a short distance to the north (70), showing that the yard must have been terraced into the natural N-S slope of the ground. Deposit 69 produced another sherd of early medieval cooking pot of the same type as those from cobbled surface 68. Overlying the cobbled surface was a dump of light brown clay with many small stones and patches of charcoal and pottery fragments (67). The stony clay may well represent a resurfacing of the yard. The charcoal and pottery fragments probably originated as domestic waste from the house which was tipped onto the area whilst the yard was being resurfaced. The dump produced three glazed jug sherds of mid 15th- to early 16th-century date, one with band of sgraffito combed decoration.

The yard was later enclosed within a yard wall. Wall footings 65 and 66 were built either on top of dump 67 or cut into it. The footings were 0.7 – 0.8m wide and built of large sandstone facing stones with a core comprising chert stones, all set in light brown clay. Wall 65 was aligned E-W and must have abutted the south-east corner of the medieval chapel, whilst wall 66 was aligned N-S and would have abutted the original east end of the house (Fig 1). The walls certainly belong to the post-medieval period but are not more closely datable. They may well have been associated with the construction of the cider house in the late 18th century, and could have replaced an earlier, less substantial, yard enclosure wall.

The trench exposed three late 18th- or 19th-century ceramic land drains, two of which appear in the trench section (62, 63); the third followed much the same line as the new trench so is not shown. There were also two post-holes dating from the 19th or 20th century (60, 64). Overlying these features was a dump of modern topsoil which replaced a concrete yard surface known to have existed in recent times from photographs in the owners' possession. A

dump of clay underlying the topsoil is also probably recent in date (58).

The natural clay exposed at the north end of the trench was the same red clay as exposed in Trench 7 (55). At the south end of the trench, the natural was a clean light brown aerated clay which probably represents a hillwash deposit.

Trench 9 (Figs. 1 and 2)

Trench 9 was dug alongside the south wall of the chapel and cider house. It uncovered a modern topsoil dump (73) which directly overlay a natural clay deposit (75) similar to the hillwash deposit exposed in Trench 8 (72). The only archaeological feature was a stone-lined drain (74), which is doubtless a continuation of the same drain as that uncovered within the cider house by the 2006 evaluation (25, see Fig. 1).

Trench 10 (Figs. 1 and 2)

Trench 10 was dug diagonally across the lawn from the manor house to the west end of the cider house in order to carry pipes associated with proposed under-floor heating for the chapel and cider house. The trench exposed modern topsoil (76) overlying a 19th- or 20th-century pit (79) and a recent post-hole (80), as well as modern stone paving (77) overlying a modern land drain (78). The only archaeological feature was a continuation of the same stone-lined drain as found in Trench 9 (74).

CONCLUSION

The excavations showed that archaeology in the vicinity of the medieval chapel is generally poorly preserved. Remnants of a medieval cobbled yard surface survive below ground to the south-east of the chapel, the surface having probably once covered much of the area between the house and chapel. The yard surface and other archaeological deposits may have been lost when a modern concrete yard surface was lifted from the area in the late 20th century. A cobbled surface which still survives along the north side of the house is set at about the same level as the medieval cobbles, so may represent a survival from that time, although the cobbles could have been repaired or re-laid at a later date. A mid-15th to early 16th-century dump or re-surfacing of the yard also survives to the south-east of the chapel, but not elsewhere. The yard was enclosed within stone walls sometime in the 17th or 18th century, a likely date being in the late 18th century when the chapel was rebuilt as a cider house and extended.

Trench 6 showed that no medieval footings for the original west wall of the medieval chapel now survive. The footings must have been entirely removed when the floor level within the building was lowered in the late 18th century.

The collection of 15th- or 16th-century ridge tiles excavated from alongside the rear of the building supports the suggestion made by John Thorp in his 1993 assessment of the chapel that its roof was replaced in the late 15th or early 16th century. The presence of both ridge tiles and broken roofing slates is strong evidence to show that the roof was slated, with ceramic glazed tiles along its ridge, up until the late 18th-century rebuilding.

Assessment of the surviving archaeological resource

The below-ground archaeology in the vicinity of the chapel is limited to a few surviving areas of medieval and early post-medieval yard surfaces, in addition to stone footings for later post-medieval yard walls. The generally poor preservation of medieval remains is a common feature at farmsteads in Devon, where post-medieval activities have often eroded into or swept away earlier archaeological deposits, especially in farmyards where cattle trample and disturb the ground, and their dung is scraped up for use as a fertilizer on the fields.

ARCHIVE

The site archive will be deposited at R.A.M. Museum, Exeter.

REFERENCES

- Brown, S.W. 2006 'Membury Court, Membury, Devon, Chapel and Cider House, Archaeological Field Evaluation, February 2006'.
- Thorp, J.R.L. 1993 'An archaeological and historical account of the standing buildings at Membury Court, Membury, Devon' *Keystone Historic Building Consultants Report No. K431*.

APPENDIX 1

FINDS (identifications by John Allan, Exeter Archaeology)

Context	sherds	type	date range
67	3	S. Somerset glazed earthenware jug 2 vessels, one with band of sgraffito decoration, one handle frag with applied thumb strip	mid 15 th /early 16 th -cent.
68	3	cooking pot, chert-tempered with limestone inclusions (Exeter fabric 23)	late 10 th -early 14 th cent.
69	1	cooking pot, chert-tempered with limestone inclusions (Exeter fabric 23)	late 10 th -early 14 th cent.
82	1	hand-made brick	18 th -/early 19 th - cent.*
	2	S. Somerset lead-glazed earthenware 2 vessels	18 th -cent.*
	1	Bristol/Staffs yellow slipware	18 th -cent.*
83	2	S. Somerset trailed yellow slipware	1700-1820*
84	17	dark brown, green, and yellow glazed roofing tile (several episodes of tiling)	15 th - or 16 th -cent (samples kept)

2	cider jar Bristol manufacture	late 19 th /20 th -cent*
1	transfer printed earthenware	late 18 th -cent.+*

notes:

1/ The finds require no further specialist attention. * discarded

2/ pottery presently known as 'S. Somerset ware' has recently been found to have been made in the Honiton area rather than S. Somerset (pers comm. John Allan).

APPENDIX 2

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 7

- 50 modern dump of mid brown claysilt with stones, mortar, slate and coal frags.
- 51 18th- or 19th-cent land drain filled with loose stone frags, late med roof tile frags and mid brown silt.
- 52 Mid brown clay with occasional stones and medieval roof tile frags.
- 53 Terrace cut infilled with light yellow brown clay and gravel and stones - possibly re-deposited natural.
- 54 Mid brown clay with large stones – hard standing outside loading bay of cider-house loft, probably early 18th cent.
- 55 Red clay natural.
- 56 Yellow/brown gravel natural.

Trench 8

- 57 modern topsoil.
- 58 Mid brown clay with charcoal, shell frags, pebbles and cobbles.
- 59 Modern man-hole, brick.
- 60 19th- or 20th-cent post-hole filled with dark brown clay with stones and pebbles.
- 61 Dark brown clay with pebbles and stones – associated with post-hole 60.
- 62 19th-cent land drain ceramic pipe.
- 63 19th-cent land drain ceramic pipe.
- 64 19th- or 20th-cent post-hole filled with dark brown clay with stones and pebbles.
- 65 Late 18th-cent yard wall footing 0.8m wide comprising large facing stones (sandstone) and chert cobble infill, in light brown clay.
- 66 Late 18th-cent yard wall footing 0.77m wide comprising large facing stones (sandstone) and chert cobble infill, in light brown clay.
- 67 16th-cent dump of light brown clay with many small stones and patches of charcoal with pottery frags (domestic waste).
- 68 Medieval cobbled surface comprising cobbles and pebbles in light brown claysilt with med pottery frag.
- 69 Light brown clean clay with occasional charcoal and one med pottery frag.
- 70 Red clay natural.
- 71 Light yellow/brown compacted gravel natural.
- 72 Light brown aerated clay – probably hillwash (natural).

Trench 9

- 73 modern topsoil with a few remnant cobbles from a cobbled surface at its base.
- 74 Medieval/early post-medieval stone-lined drain – continuation of feature found inside cider-house in 2006 (drain 25).
- 75 Light brown clay with small stone frags – probably natural hillwash. This overlies a dark brown compacted gravel natural containing many stones and some cobbles.

Trench 10

- 76 modern topsoil. This replaced a modern concrete surface which is shown in photographs of late 20th-cent date.
- 77 Modern flagstone path.
- 78 Modern land drain plastic pipe.
- 79 19th- or 20th-century pit filled with dark brown clay and stones.
- 80 Modern post-hole filled with dark brown clay and stones.
- 81 Light brown clay with many small stones – probably hillwash natural. Some charcoal in this deposit but probably introduced by worms and roots.
- 81A Red clay natural.

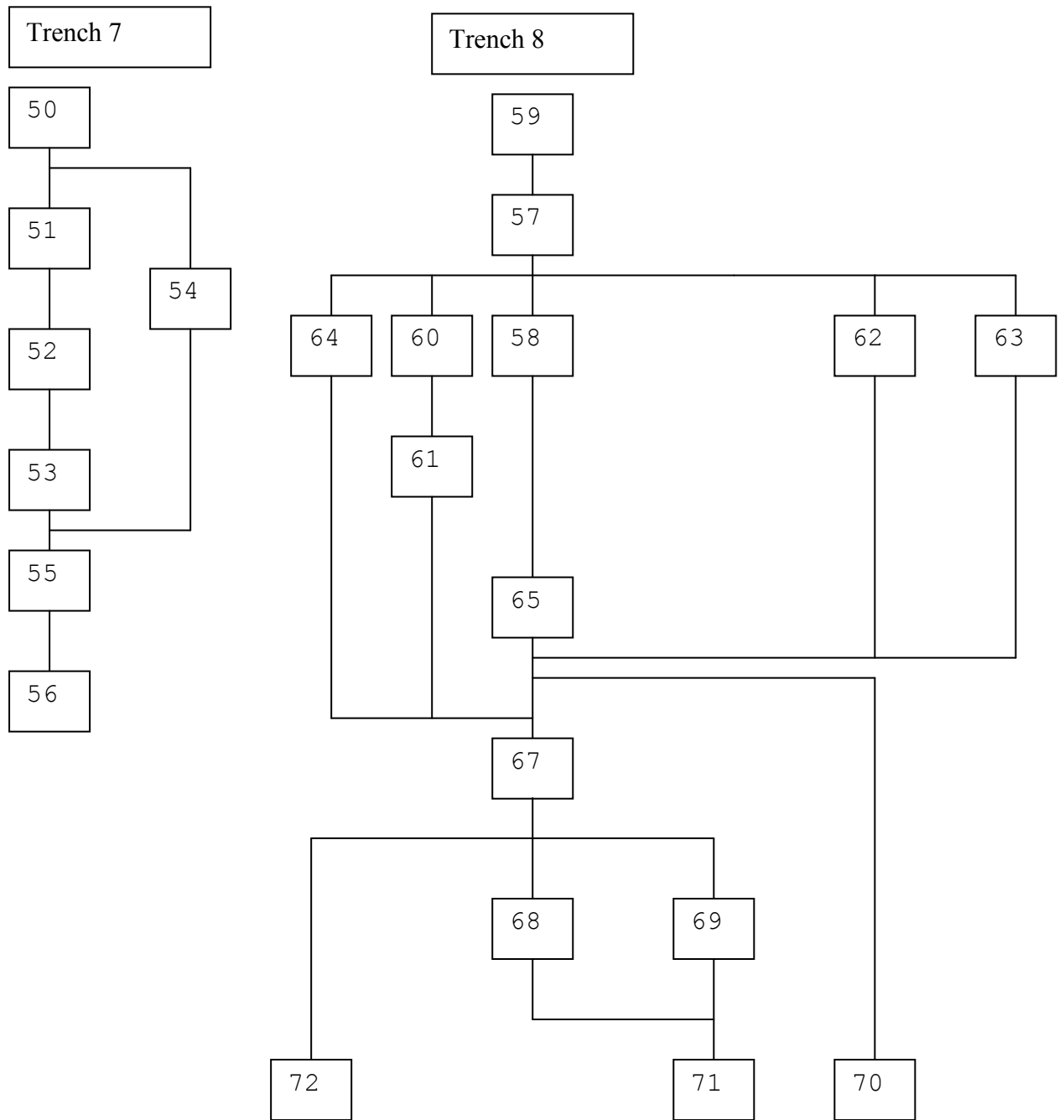
Trench 6

- 82 Late 18th-cent partition wall footing. Trench 0.18m wide filled with cobbles in light brown claysilt.
- 83 Light brown clay and yellow sand bedding for late 18th-cent cobbled surface, contains brick and 18th-cent pottery frags.

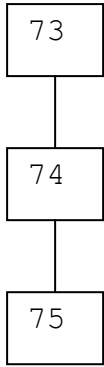
Context number 84 has been used for unstratified finds from the excavation spoil. The finds are mostly 15th-/16th-cent roofing tile frags which came from around the middle of Trench 7. The roofing tiles clearly came from the chapel roof and were discarded when the roof was replaced in the late 18th century rebuilding (ie cider-house).

APPENDIX 3

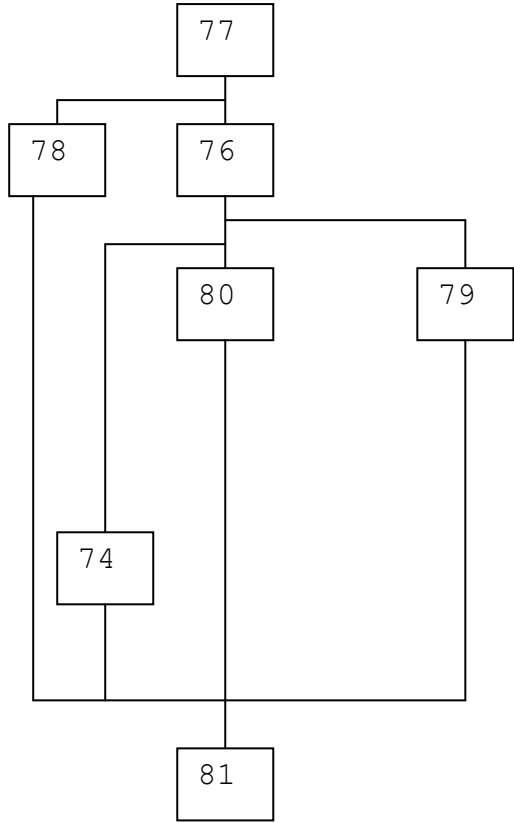
STRATIGRAPHIC MATRICES



Trench 9



Trench 10



APPENDIX 4

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT MEMBURY COURT, MEMBURY, DEVON ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF PROJECT DESIGN

This project design has been produced by S. Brown Associates on behalf of Mr and Mrs Denny, the owners of Membury Court, and their agent John Bucknall, Architect. It sets out a programme for an archaeological watching brief in response to a request received from Jo Hibbert of JBCA. The archaeological watching brief is a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent attached by English Heritage to the development application submitted by Mr and Mrs Denny.

1. THE SITE AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 The site of the proposed works is centred on Ordnance Survey Grid Reference ST 264 038, and covers an area of approximately 29m x 10m. The building is terraced into N-S sloping ground. The local geology comprises Cretaceous Greensand and Gault, with an outlier of chalk nearby.
- 1.2 The building is presently unoccupied and in need of attention.
- 1.3 The proposed development comprises removing modern concrete floors from the interior and digging drainage trenches around the exterior of the building, so that the standing structure can dry out before more extensive repair and consolidation works are carried out in January 2007.
- 1.4 The standing building is listed (Grade II*) and the site is a scheduled ancient monument (No. 418).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND POTENTIAL

- 2.1 An archaeological and historical account of the standing buildings at Membury Court, including the chapel was prepared in 1993 by Keystone Historic Building Consultants (Report No. **K431**). The chapel is believed to date from the late 13th century, and to have been altered in the late 15th century. Its conversion for use as a cider house took place c. 1790.
- 2.2 An archaeological field evaluation comprising five small excavation trenches was carried out within the chapel in February 2006 ('Membury Court, Membury, Devon – Chapel and Cider House', S. Brown, March 2006). The evaluation established that the present floor levels date from the late 18th century or later, and are substantially lower than the original medieval floor levels which have been entirely removed by post-medieval truncation.
- 2.3 The archaeological potential of the chapel site comprises:

- a) the survival beneath the present concrete floors of wall footings for the west wall of the medieval chapel, as indicated in Brown 2006;
- b) the survival of a stone-lined drain dating from before c.1790, part of which was located by the evaluation of February 2006;
- c) post-medieval floor levels and features associated with the building's later use for agricultural purposes and as a cider house;
- d) medieval and post-medieval features and deposits surviving around the exterior of the standing structure, in the area where new drainage trenches are proposed

3. THE SCOPE OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

An archaeologist will be present during all groundworks.

4. AIMS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 The aims of the watching brief are:

- * to observe, investigate, and record any archaeological remains and/or deposits which may be disturbed or destroyed during development of the site
- * to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, the survival of any archaeological remains and/or deposits for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient
- * to inform any planning requirement for future excavation or preservation of remains and/or deposits
- * to assess the nature, extent, and if possible, the date range of archaeological remains and/or deposits affected by the development in the light of the archaeological potential outlined above.

4.2 Limitations:

The purpose of the watching brief and its results, ie report, accompanying illustrations and survey drawings, is solely to provide and make available archaeological information, and not to advise or comment on any matter concerning present or future engineering, construction, repair or other development works.

5. FIELD METHODS

5.1 Site Recording:

The location of excavations associated with the development will be plotted onto the existing plan of the building (Brown 2006, Fig. 1) at an appropriate scale. Archaeological features and deposits will be individually identified and recorded as archaeological 'contexts', each being allocated a unique number for the particular site. Archaeological sections and plans will be drawn wherever appropriate. A

photographic record will be made.

5.2 Finds:

Finds recovered from the excavations will be related to the context from which they were retrieved by a system of coding. Finds of undoubted modern origin will be recorded and discarded on site.

6. AGREEMENT TO ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL CLEANING AND RECORDING

An agreement to allow sufficient time for archaeological cleaning and recording of archaeological remains and deposits will be sought from the works contractors before the start of the watching brief. This may occasionally entail temporary suspension of the works, and should be brought to the notice of, and agreed with the owners of the site. The archaeologist conducting the watching brief will, however, make every effort not to cause unreasonable disruption to the working routines and schedules of other contractors.

7. ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

7.1 Prior notification regarding the start date of the watching brief will be made to Rebecca Child of English Heritage, and provision made for monitoring visits during the fieldwork if required.

8. POST-FIELDWORK PROCESSING AND REPORTING

8.1 Following completion of the fieldwork, the site records (written, drawn, photographic) will be sorted, filed and indexed.

8.2 Finds

Any artefacts recovered will be cleaned, marked, quantified, identified (so far as possible) and stored in suitable containers in order to minimise deterioration. Advice and recommendations concerning further conservation treatment and permanent storage for the finds will be sought if necessary from an archaeological conservator. Should further treatment be required, this will be carried out by the Conservation Laboratory, R.A.M. Museum, Exeter. An inspection of the pottery and other ceramic finds will be made by John Allan (Exeter Archaeology) with a view to identifying types, and assessing probable date ranges for the principal archaeological contexts. Should particular finds merit further specialist identification and/or analysis, this may require additional funding.

8.3 Watching Brief Report:

A report will be compiled which summarises the fieldwork results. This will include:

- * a non-technical summary
- * the context and circumstances of the project
- * the aims and objectives of the project
- * methodology
- * a description of the results, and an interpretation of them
- * conclusions regarding both the value of the results in terms of their local, regional, or national context, and the efficiency and/or limitations of the watching brief
- * archive location
- * appendices containing any relevant tabulated data, and information concerning any recovered artefacts
- * plans and sections at appropriate scales
- * a summary of any recovered dating evidence
- * selected photographs from the photographic record
- * references and bibliography

Circulation:

Two copies of the report will be supplied to the owners Mr and Mrs Denny, and another copy to Rebecca Child of English Heritage. A further copy will be deposited with the Devon County Sites and Monuments Record at County Hall, Exeter within six months of the completion of the sitework.

9. SITE ARCHIVE AND DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE AND FINDS

A project archive will be prepared containing project records and finds in a permanently accessible form within a reasonable time of the completion of works (normally 1 year). The archive, including the finds, will be deposited at R.A.M. Museum, Exeter. Prior arrangements will be made for deposition of the archive and finds with the appropriate curator. Ownership of the archive and finds will pass from the landowner into the hands of the museum at this stage. An arrangement for the transfer of ownership will be sought from Mr and Mrs Denny.

10. STANDARDS

All projects will be conducted in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' 'Code of Practice'.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Prior to commencement of the watching brief, Stewart Brown Associates will discuss and agree health and safety precautions at the site with the works contractors. The developer will be responsible for all general health and safety precautions, eg barriers around excavations and checking for underground services etc. Archaeological work will be carried out in accordance with guidelines issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

12. INSURANCE

Stewart Brown Associates has insurance cover in the following areas: Public Liability, Employers Liability, Professional Indemnity, All Risks, and Personal Accident.

13. ACCESS AND TIMETABLE

13.1 The owners or their agents shall be responsible for obtaining any permissions or consents required to gain access to the site for archaeological purposes.

13.2 The works are due to start on 30th October 2006.

14. PERSONNEL

The watching brief will be carried out by S. Brown, with the help of a site assistant if necessary. S. Brown is a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

APPENDIX 5

ARCHIVE ASSESSMENT

In view of the simple stratigraphy, and the late date of most of the finds collection, it is considered appropriate that the record compiled in the present report is sufficient and that a site archive is not required. All site records have been reproduced in the report, including context descriptions, context flowcharts, and sections showing context numbers. The finds of 18th-century date and later, while useful in providing dating of particular late post-medieval features, are of little value otherwise so have been discarded. The medieval sherds and samples from the collection of late medieval roof tiles have been retained. The finds were identified and assessed by John Allan, a local archaeological ceramics expert.

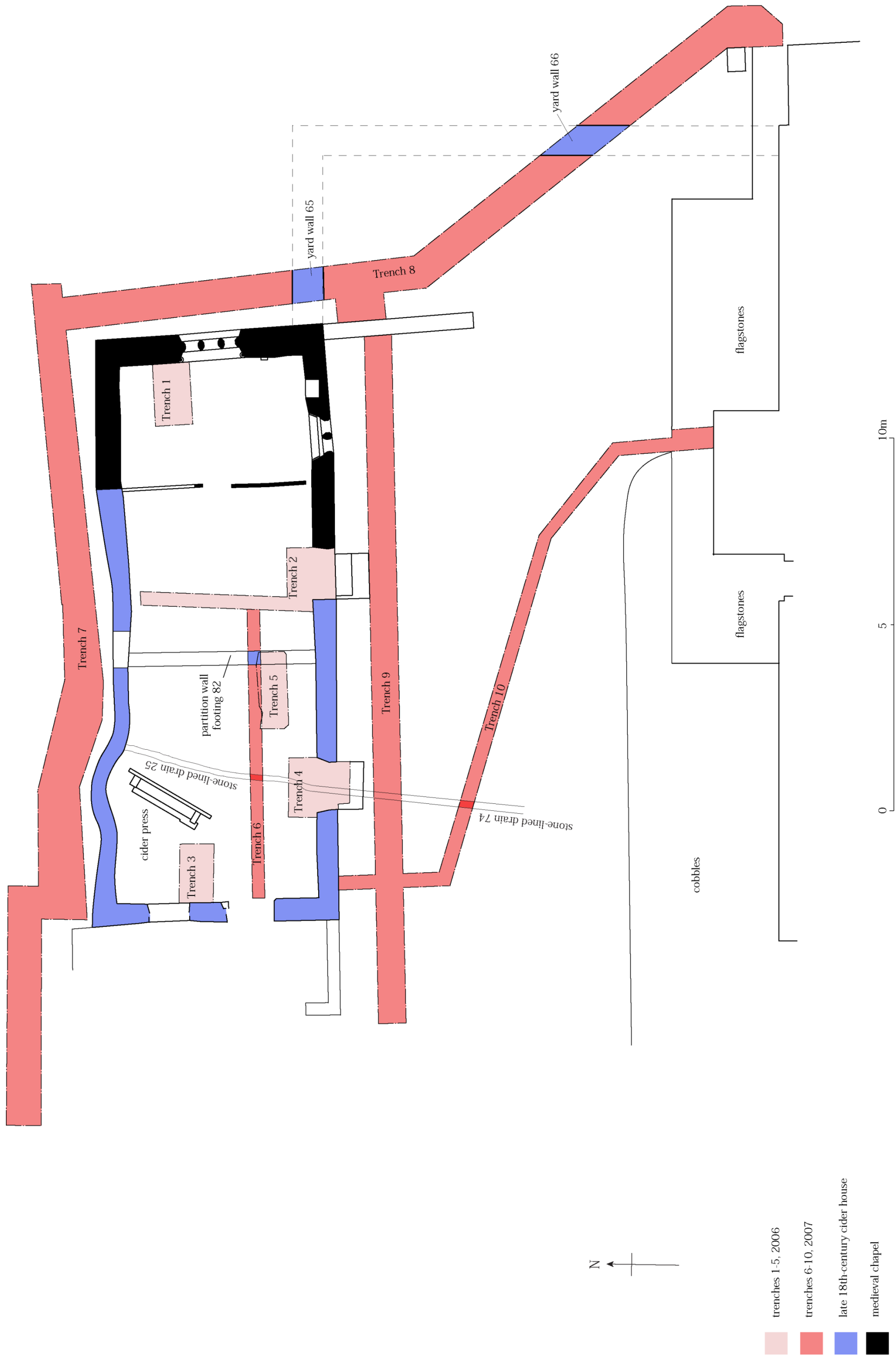


Fig. 1 Plan of chapel/cider house, showing location of archaeological trench 6 and drainage trenches 2007
 (plan after Anthony Brookes Surveys March 2006)

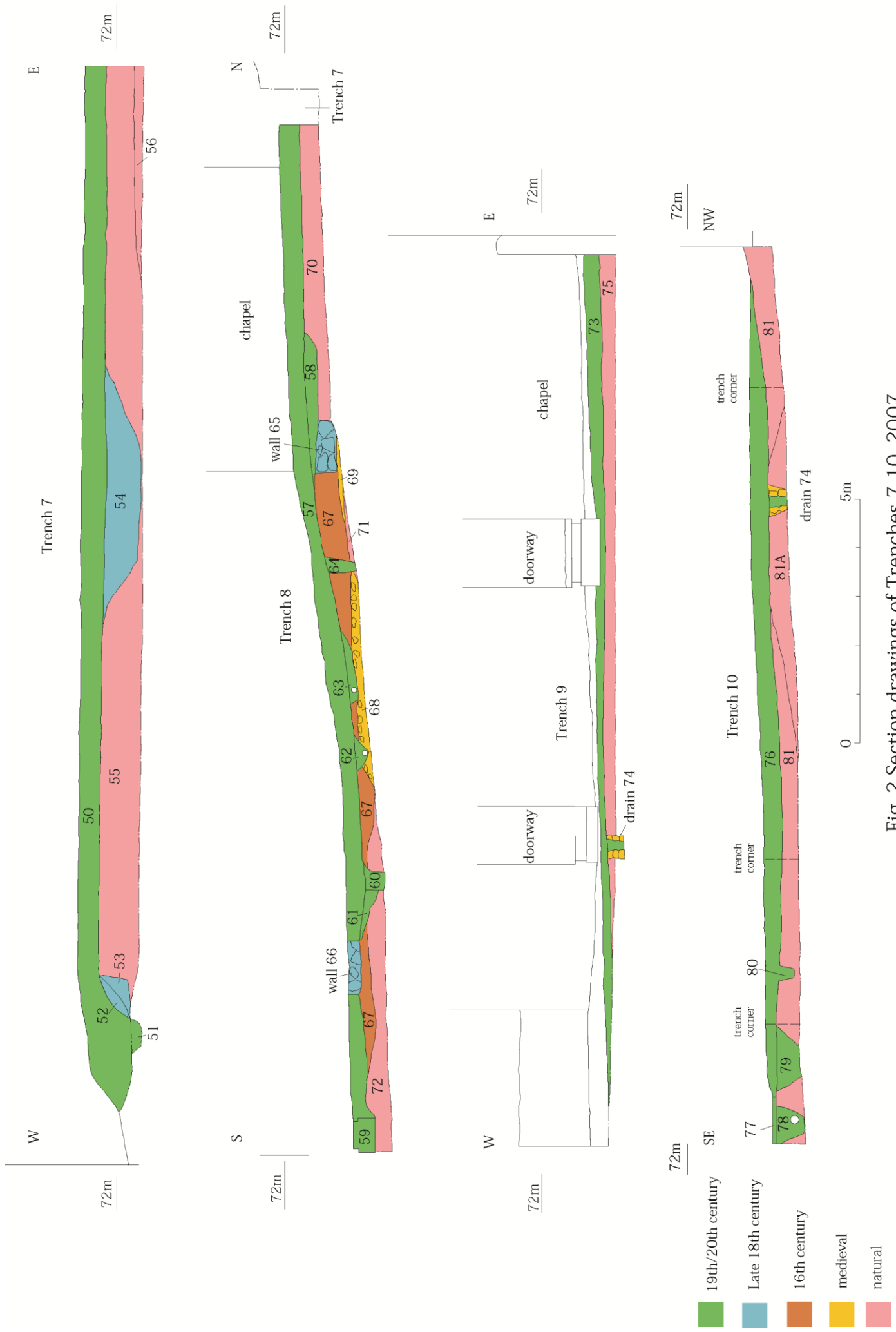


Fig. 2 Section drawings of Trenches 7-10, 2007.