

**EXCAVATION OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF
THE SERVICE WING AT THE PRIORY,
BROMLEY MUSEUM, CHURCH HILL,
ORPINGTON, BR6 0HH**

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ORPINGTON AND DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Executive Summary

The Orpington and District Archaeological Society was asked by Bromley Council to ascertain whether any of the foundations of the Service Wing of the Priory, shown on a 1942 plan made before the wing was demolished in 1959/60, were still in situ. ODAS carried out two excavations; the first found that the East wall of the sunken corridor was still in situ under a concrete raft. The second excavation found that the foundations of the North wall of the service pantry, the base of the fireplace and the North and East walls of the small room off the service pantry were also in situ. However the foundations of the East wall of the service pantry had been destroyed when the wing was demolished and the new library built.

Reason for excavation

The Orpington and District Archaeological Society was asked by Bromley Council to find out whether the East wall to the sunken corridor at the rear of the Great Hall was still intact. Following this excavation the society was asked by Bromley Council to ascertain whether the foundations of the walls to the Service Pantry are still in situ.

Brief History of the Priory

The earliest documentary evidence dates to AD1032 when an estate at 'Orpedingetune' was given to Christ Church Priory in Canterbury. A building on the site is first mentioned in 1270. In 1290 the Great Hall was pulled down and rebuilt, improvements were made in 1471. After the dissolution of Christ Church Priory in 1539 the estate was given to the Hart-Dyke family. The estate passed through other families and the property was used as a private home, with further alterations made. In 1947 it was sold to the Orpington Urban District Council. In 1942, as part of emergency wartime recording the Priory was surveyed by the architect George Rose and plans produced. It was listed Grade II* in 1954. In 1959-60 the service wing was demolished and a new library built on the site. At the same time that the library was being built, the Priory building was 'restored' and the museum opened in 1965.

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Area under excavation

The plan by George Rose dated 1942 shows a sunken corridor immediately behind the Great Hall. This appears to have been inserted in the early 19th century to allow servants access from the Great Hall to the kitchen area without being seen from the Great Hall. Behind the corridor is the service pantry with the kitchen to the South and another room to the North. The service wing, including the service pantry and kitchen, was demolished in 1959-60 to make way for the new library. When the service pantry was demolished a concrete raft 160mm deep was placed on top of the sunken corridor. It is not known whether the roof to the corridor was left intact or demolished and whether the corridor was left as a void within its walls, or backfilled.

The plan by George Rose dated 1942 also shows the service pantry with the kitchen to the South of it and another room to the North of it. ODAS undertook an excavation on 13th April 2014 and determined that the side wall of the sunken corridor to the East of the Great Hall was still intact. While excavating this corridor a wall was found to the East of the corridor which forms part of the Service Pantry. A second excavation was undertaken on 27th April 2014 to determine how far the foundations of the Service Pantry extended.

Excavation Procedures

ODAS carried out two excavations: the first on 13 April 2014, Area A on the site plan, and the second on 27 April 2014, Area B on the site plan. The excavations were taken down to the minimum level needed to answer the questions set by the Council.

The site code is PRI 14.

Both Areas A and B were excavated by hand and backfilled on the same days as they were opened.

A temporary bench mark (TBM) was taken from a point on the nearby buttress and levels taken from this point. This has not been related to the nearest Ordnance Survey bench mark as this is too far away across a busy main road.

Site Plans

Two site plans were drawn on A3 paper, to the scale shown on the plans, and reduced to A4 size for this report.

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Excavation of Area A

Immediately under the turf a brick wall with lime mortar was found. This is on the same alignment as the wall shown on the Rose plan between the service pantry and the small room to the North, and represents the foundations of this wall. Abutting this are the foundations for the fireplace shown on the Rose drawing. Underneath the concrete raft ODAS found the wall to the sunken corridor made of brick with lime mortar which was intact. Only a small area of the wall under the raft, 1.5m wide by 270mm deep, was uncovered. Context 001 is top soil and 002, beneath 001, is slightly darker fill. All of the soil has been disturbed, probably when the service wing was demolished.

Excavation of Area B

Immediately under the turf a brick wall with lime mortar was found running East -West. This is on the same alignment as the wall shown on the Rose plan between the service pantry and the small room to the North, and represents the foundations of this wall. Abutting this wall is the foundation of the fireplace to the West of the cupboard, shown on the Rose plan. The foundations of the East wall of the small room to the North of the Service Pantry were also intact. Only the tops of these foundations were uncovered and no further excavation of the rooms was undertaken. Only the top soil under the grass was excavated, which was disturbed soil probably when the service wing was demolished. Contexts 003-006 were given to distinguish between the various areas being excavated. There were no finds in context 006.

The foundations of the East wall of the Service Pantry itself seem to have been removed when the Service Pantry was demolished.

The Finds

Pottery

A total of 4 pieces of pottery were found, the total weight of which was 51g. Two were Roman grey ware; one was a piece of London type ware dated to the 13th century. The other piece was of Staffordshire-type marbled slipware, with indentations along the rim, dated to the 17th/18th century.

Bone

A total of 27 pieces of pig bones were found weighing a total of 319g. Also 2 sheep teeth and 1 bone from a sheep were also found weighing 34g. All of the pig bones came from Area A; the sheep teeth and bone are from Area B. None of these bones has been cut; they are broken (ie they are not obviously butchered).

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Shell

A total of 14 pieces of oyster shell were found totalling 169g, and 1 cockle shell weighing 1g.

Glass

A total of 27 pieces of window glass were found totalling 128g. Some of this was green and some clear. There were also 23 pieces of bottle glass weighing a total of 18g.

Tile/ Brick/Stone

A total of 82 pieces of roof tile weighing a total of 3,748g were found; 7 had round peg holes (or parts of round peg holes). There were 25 pieces of brick weighing a total of 4,907g, including 3 half-bricks. The bricks in the wall to the service pantry were soft red, had no frogs, and measured 215x110x55mm. These dimensions are typical of 18th century bricks. There was 1 piece of building stone (Rag stone?) weighing 88g.

Metal

There were 6 nails weighing a total of 49g and 2 bolts weighing a total of 205g. There was 1 piece of lead weighing 37g.

Clay pipe

1 piece of clay pipe stem was found weighing 3g.

Plastic

1 plastic top to a tube was found weighing 1g.

Full list of finds:

Pottery

Context	Number of pieces	Weight (grams)	Details
001	1	5	Rim of Roman Grey ware
003	1	6	London type ware with brown glaze
005	1	10	Rim of Roman Grey ware
005	1	30	Rim of Staffordshire-type marbled slipware with small indentations along the rim

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Bone

Context	Number of pieces	Weight (grams)	Details
001	1	4	Tooth –Pig
001	1	30	Proximal end (Thoracic limb) of ulna and radius fused – Pig
001	1	18	Long bone – Pig
001	1	18	Medial Scapula – Pig
001	1	15	Metacarpal 2 –Pig
001	4	25	Ribs – Pig
001	1	19	Distal end of Humerus – pig
001	1	17	Proximal end of Humerus – pig
001	13	70	Unidentified pieces of bone – probably pig
002	1	21	Metacarpal 3 - Pig
002	1	27	Tibial tarsal – Pig
002	1	55	Proximal end of Femur (Pelvic Limb) - Pig
003	1	1	Bone - sheep
003	1	3	Incisor tooth, mandible - sheep
005	1	30	Distal end of Humerus - sheep

Shell

Context	Number of pieces	Weight (grams)	Details
001	1	1	Cockle
001	2	10	Oyster
002	5	88	Oyster
003	5	39	Oyster
005	2	32	Oyster
005	2	32	Oyster

Glass

Context	Number of pieces	Weight (grams)	Details
001	12	55	Window glass
001	1	6	Bottle glass
002	2	11	Window glass
003	3	15	Window glass
003	2	205	Bottle glass
004	2	12	Bottle glass
005	13	115	Bottle glass

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Brick and Tile

Context	Number of pieces	Weight (grams)	Details
001	41	1665	Roof tile
001	3	349	Brick
002	1	59	Roof tile
003	22	1,132	Roof tile
003	8	3,728	Brick
003	3	254	Modern floor tile
004	9	351	Roof tile
004	1	19	Brick
005	9	541	Roof tile
005	9	411	Brick
005	1	88	Stone (Rag?)

Metal

Context	Number of pieces	Weight (grams)	Details
001	1	37	Lead
003	2	205	Bolts
003	4	21	Nails
004	1	19	Nail
005	1	9	Nail

Clay Pipe

003	1	3	Stem
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Plastic

003	1	1	Top of tube
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Acknowledgements

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Map: Sheet Kent XVL 7, scale 25": mile (Ordnance Survey, 1933).

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1. Priory site shown on Andrews, Dury and Herbert map of Kent, 1769



2. Priory site shown on OS map of 1933, scale: 25":mile



3. View of excavation looking West towards Great Hall



4. View of excavation showing wall of sunken passage beneath concrete raft



5. Detail of wall of sunken passage



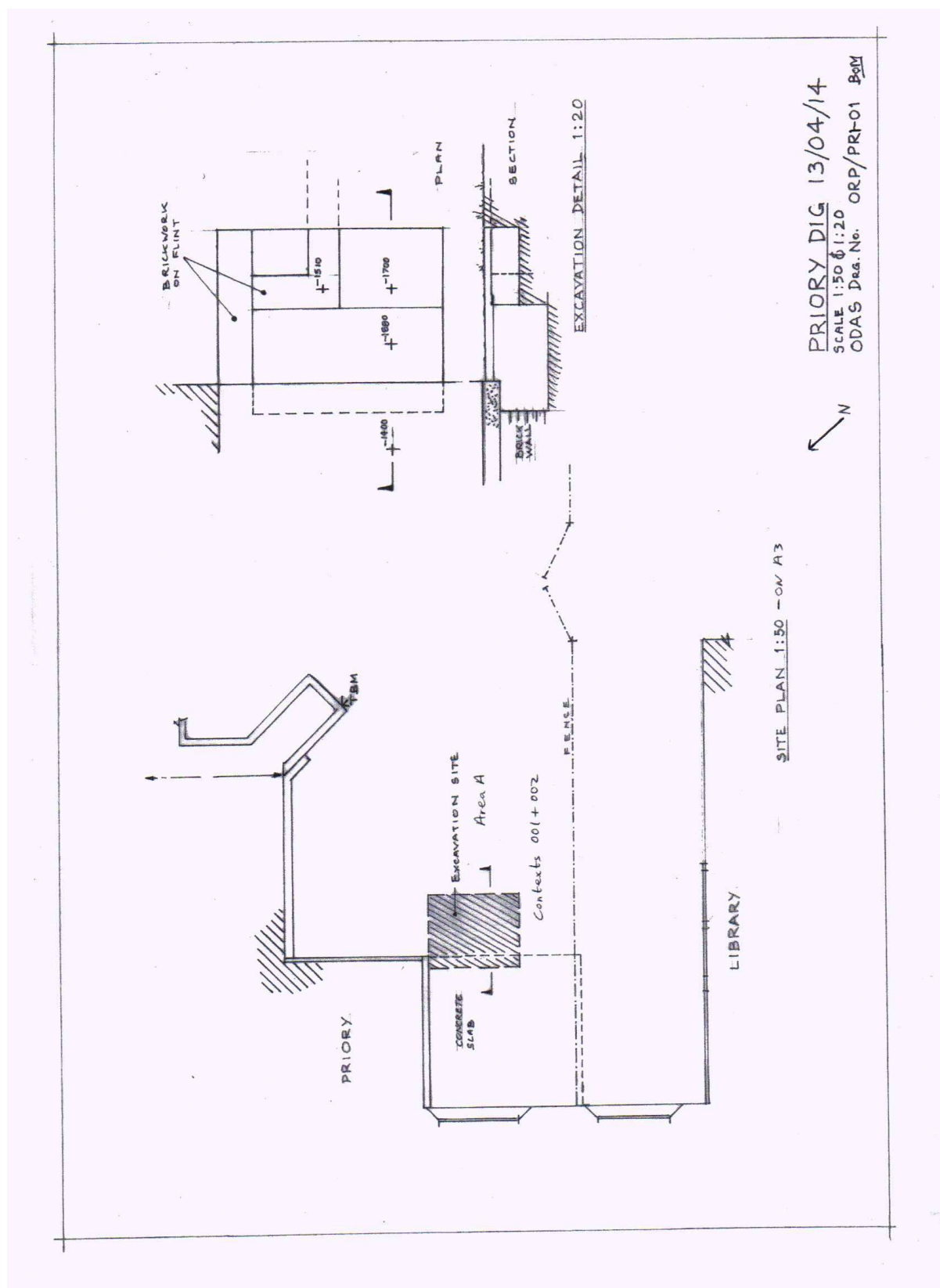
6. View of excavated foundations of presumed north wall of service pantry



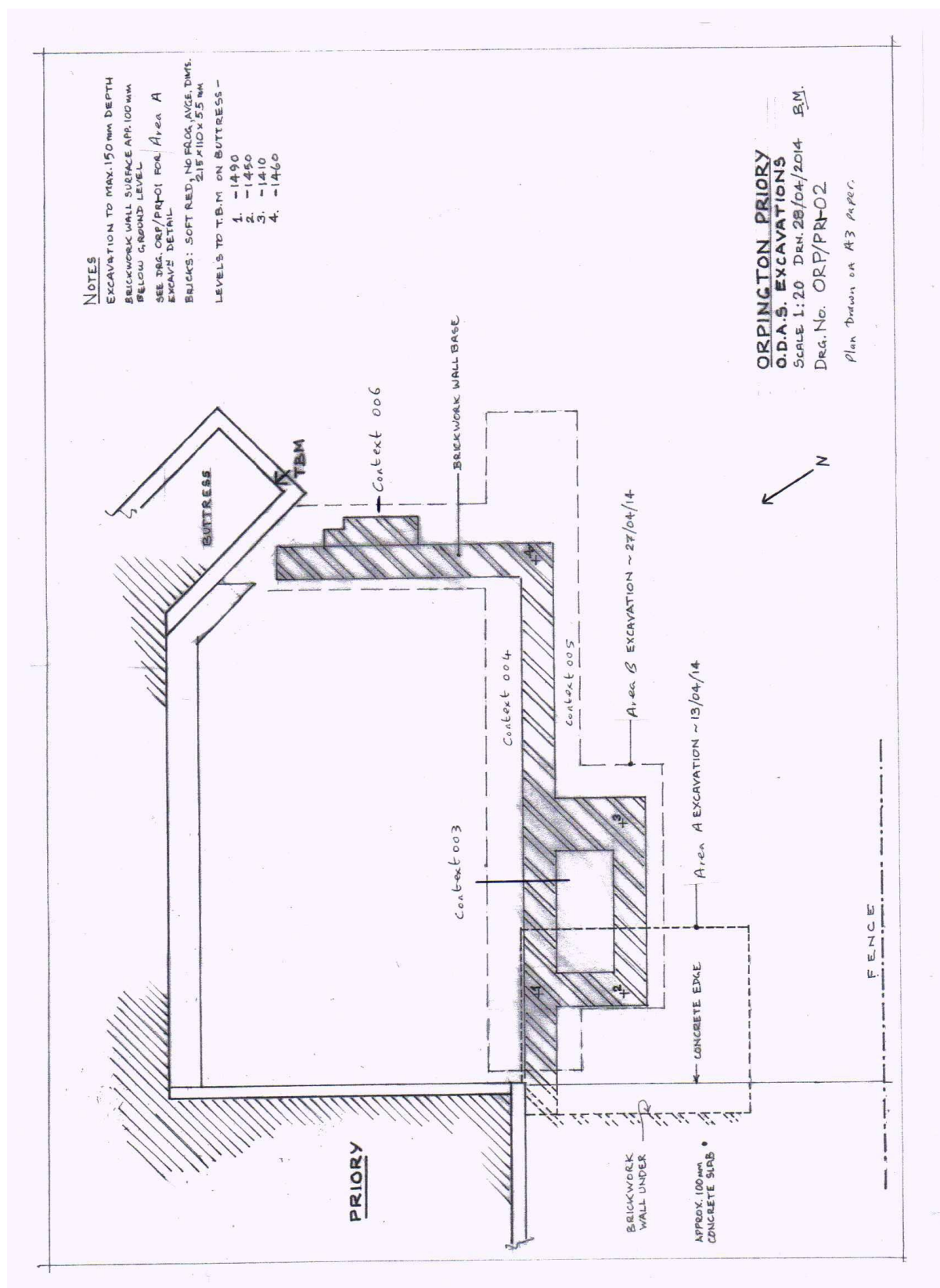
7. View of Room to the North of the Service Pantry (the Service Pantry is to the left of this picture).



8. Pottery from the excavation. L-R: Roman grey-ware rim; London-type ware; Staffordshire-type marbled slipware.



Plan showing position of Area A



Plan showing position of Area B