

Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological evaluation by Test Pits as part of a new Heritage Statement for Barmoor Castle, Barmoor Country Park, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2TR

NCC Reference 21/00358/PREAPP

**by
John Nolan, Northern Counties Archaeological Services**

1 Introduction.

1.1 It is proposed to carry out archaeological evaluation by excavating 16 test pits in the ground floor of Barmoor Castle (HER 1954), a Grade II* listed building (List Entry No.1156023) which has been derelict and on the Heritage at Risk Register for twenty-two years. The proposed Test Pit locations are shown on the attached plan.

1.2 A pre-application planning submission for conversion of the Castle into holiday accommodation was submitted by Spence and Dower LLP in 2021. In response the Local Planning Authority, Northumberland County Council, have required an up-to-date Heritage Statement to support a full planning application.

1.3 The Heritage Statement is to include a deskbased assessment and Historic Buildings Assessment. A draft Deskbased Assessment, and initial Historic Buildings Assessment, has been completed. The Test Pit results will contribute to their finalisation.

1.4 The proposed conversion will involve renewing existing floor surfaces, underfloor heating, and other services. There has been no previous archaeological evaluation or excavation and consequently the potential survival of sub-floor historic features and deposits which might be impacted upon is unknown

1.5 The evaluation is necessary to inform a Historic Buildings assessment as part of a Heritage Statement to accompany a planning application for conversion into holiday apartments. It is also necessary to inform design and mitigation of harmful impacts.

1.6 On advice from Historic England and Northumberland County Council's Conservation Officer, it is not necessary to obtain Listed Building Consent for the Test Pits **provided always** that no historic building fabric is disturbed or removed.

2 Brief historical background.

2.1 Barmoor Castle developed from, and incorporates parts of, a 14th century fortified tower house of the Muschamp family, which may have been preceded by an unfortified manor house on the same site from the 11th century.

2.2 The tower underwent alterations in the 17th and in the 18th centuries, when Barmoor estate came into the hands of a member of the Sitwell family. Floor plans of what was then called Barmoor House were drawn in 1778. An ambitious remodelling in a mixed Gothick/Tudor/Classical style began in 1801 to designs by the Scottish

architect John Paterson, a follower of the Adam brothers. The Sitwell's financial constraints meant Paterson's full design was never realised. Some further alterations were undertaken in 1892.

2.3 The estate declined in the 20th century and with the Castle was sold by W.R.Sitwell to the present owners in 1979. There was extensive intervention in the Castle due to dry rot in the mid-1980s. A Conservation Management Plan and Options Appraisal was compiled by Spence & Dower in 2012, which included a detailed review and assessment of the history and archaeology of the estate and the Castle.

3 Objectives of the Test Pits.

3.1 To investigate the depth at which stratified significant archaeological deposits and/or features survive below the existing cement screed floor levels, all of which are proposed to be lifted.

3.2 To establish, wherever possible, the date and significance of such deposits and features.

3.3 To inform understanding of this complex building, and thereby inform assessments of significance/merit, conversion design, and appropriate mitigation strategies.

4 Excavation methodology.

4.1 For Test Pits 1-6 and 8-11, in cement screed flooring, the extent of the test pit will be marked out and photographed. The cement floor will be cut by Stihl saw and removed, together with the sub-base.

4.2 For TP7 and TP12, the flagstones within and adjacent to the Test Pits will be cleaned, photographed, and drawn. Those within or significantly intruding into the Test Pit area will be numbered in chalk with north point, carefully lifted, and set aside for re-instatement.

4.3 Test Pit 6 and Test Pit 15 are sited over, or immediately adjacent to, areas of existing disturbance for services which are partly backfilled and the cement floor removed (hatched on the accompanying plan). Safety permitting these areas will be re-opened, cleaned, and any deposits or features visible in section recorded.

4.4 All Test Pits will then be manually investigated using hand tools. Excavation will extend only to 'soft' deposits: no structural features will be disturbed or removed. Spoil will retained on plastic sheeting near the test pits for reinstatement.

4.5 If and when undisturbed stratified archaeological deposits are encountered, only sufficient material to ascertain date and significance will be removed. Environmental samples will be taken if and where appropriate. Advice will be sought from Historic England's North-East Science Advisor.

4.6 Deposits and features will be contexted in running number sequences discrete to each test pit. These will be recorded on pro-forma context lists and record sheets, examples of which are appended to this Written Scheme of Investigation.

4.7 A drawn record by plan, section, and elevation where appropriate, will be made on permatrace at a scale of 1:20 for plans, and sections at 1:10. The drawn record will include Ordnance Datum levels.

4.8 A photographic record will be maintained for each test pit using a Sony Alpha digital SLR camera. All photographs will include a north point, metric scale, and context/feature number as appropriate.

4.9 All finds will be recovered and recorded. The provisions of the Treasure Act 1996 will be observed. Of bulk finds such as post-medieval brick/tile debitage only a representative sample will be kept. The finds will remain the property of the client.

4.10 The locations and extents of the test pits as-dug will be recorded with a total station and added to the digital ground floor plan.

5. Detailed reasons and objectives for each test pit.

Most pits are shown on the attached plan as being nominally 4m² but this area may be reduced or the outlines reconfigured, to suit actual site conditions.

TP1. South Wing, external south-west corner.

Justification. It is proposed to form a patio area extending across door [36]. This has the potential both for covering over, and intrusion into, medieval building fabric forming part of the base plinth which is currently the most visible vestige of 14th century Barmoor tower.

Potential to inform. The actual extent and depth of medieval stonework below the chamfer is currently unknown, and there may be stratified archaeological deposits abutting, or related to the tower's construction.

TP2 R1 South Wing

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floor and introduce underfloor heating and services.

Potential to inform. This Test Pit is sited over the inner face of the thick west wall shown on floor plans of 1778 and 1801, which is presumed to be part of the medieval tower. The objective is to evaluate what, if anything, survives of that wall base, occupation deposits, and their depth below existing and proposed floor levels.

TP3 R1 South Wing

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floor and introduce bathroom and service connections.

Potential to inform. The character of sub-floor deposits and features are as yet unknown. Development may intrude into remains of the medieval south wall and chamfered plinth [39], which are of high significance. The Test Pit will also examine

the physical relationship between the east wall, suggested in the 2012 Conservation Management Plan to be a possibly thinned medieval wall but now suspected to belong to the 1801-4 remodelling, and the south wall

TP4. R5 South Wing.

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floor and introduce underfloor heating and services.

Potential to inform. The Test Pit is intended to establish the level and character of any surviving historic features and deposits which might be affected by the proposals. There is potential for the survival of the north return of the medieval chamfered plinth [39] below the floor.

TP5. R6 South Wing.

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floor and introduce underfloor heating and services.

Potential to inform. The north wall of R6 contains visible historic features including the possible truncated treads of the medieval tower's newel stair. Traces of the lower part of that staircase may remain below the existing floor.

TP 6. R2 South Wing

Justification. It is proposed to remove existing cement floor and introduction of underfloor heating and services. There is also a suggestion to form a ramped exit down from R2 into R8 which would require some reduction in floor levels. The Test Pit is sited adjacent to an existing area of sub-floor service disturbance.

Potential to inform. The Test Pit and service trench are within the footprint of the medieval tower, and the surviving floor potentially overlies historic building fabric and deposits. Some stratification is visible in the east side of the service trench. The Test Pit will determine the level and character of any surviving historic features and deposits which might be affected by the proposals. Safety considerations permitting, the infilled service trench can also be re-opened, cleaned and recorded.

TP7. R8 West Range.

Justification. It is proposed to lift and re-lay the existing flagged floor, introduce underfloor heating and services, and form a new partition along the east side.

Potential to inform. It is not known if there are any archaeological deposits beneath the floor. There appears to be an area of subsidence in the coursing of the south wall which suggests the presence of an infilled feature.

TP8. R9 Central Block.

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floor and introduce underfloor heating and services, and to re-opening blocked doorway [60]

Potential to inform. The level and character of any surviving sub-floor historic features and deposits which might be affected by the proposals are currently unknown.

TP9. R10 Gatehouse.

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floor and introduce underfloor heating and services.

Potential to inform. The Test Pit is intended to investigate any surviving evidence of the medieval and later tower entrance. This is the site of the 'vestibule' shown on the 1778 floor plan.

TP10. R18 Central Block.

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floor and to block the passage at a point where a vertical joint and a possible truncated chamfer course are visible in the north wall of the passage.

Potential to inform. It is likely that the west wall of the late 16th/early 17th century North-east wing was breached at this point in 1801-4. The proposals could potentially intrude upon any survival of the truncated wall-line below the existing cement floor.

TP11. R16. North-west Wing.

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floor and introduce underfloor heating and services. The northern end of passage is proposed to be blocked to form a W.C serving a new build in the North Range.

Potential to inform. There is the potential for deposits or features relating to the 'Back Kitchen' shown on the floor plan of 1778 to survive below the existing cement floor. The Test Pit may also reveal evidence for the north wall having been rebuilt, thickened, or breached, in 1801-4.

TP12. R19. North-east Wing.

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floors to earlier partitions at the south end, and to lift and relay the stone flagged floor, for introduction of underfloor heating and services. An en-suite shower-room is proposed for the partitioned area close to the centre of the room.

Potential to inform. It is not known what lies below the cement slabs or the flagging. The en-suite will require services to be introduced with concomitant disturbance to any archaeological deposits surviving below the flagging.

TP13 and 14 R22 and R23 North Range.

Justification. It is proposed to remove the fallen debris and existing floor surfaces (character unknown) and introduce a new build 'house' with underfloor heating and services including an en-suite bathroom.

Potential to inform. The actual depth of fallen debris is, like the nature of the buried floor, unknown. There is potential for pre-1801-4 structures or deposits to survive below the floor level, and for recovering dating evidence for the construction of the south wall.

TP 15. R14. West Range.

Justification. It is proposed to remove the existing cement floor and introduce underfloor heating and services. There is an existing infilled service trench running across this room.

Potential to inform. Although this room lay outside the pre-1801- 4 'House' there is the potential for archaeological deposits or some historic fabric of the west wall to survive in the south-east corner at the doorway to passage R18. The Test Pit is accordingly sited there, and mostly within the existing service trench. Safety considerations permitting the service trench will also be reopened, cleaned, and recorded.

TP16. External, west wall of South Wing.

Justification. It is proposed to open a new doorway – a secondary entrance – in the wall at this point.

Potential to inform. The site of the proposed new doorway will intrude into the medieval chamfered plinth in which a small opening has already been made for electrical services. The Test Pit will demonstrate the sub-surface extent of this existing breach, the extent and quality of surviving medieval masonry, and any associated deposits. This, together with the results of Test Pit 6 and cleaning the existing service trench in R2, will allow fully informed and considered judgements on the appropriateness or otherwise of this new doorway position.

5. Reinstatement

5.1 On completion of excavation and recording each test pit will be lined with plastic sheeting and backfilled with the excavated material. The fill will be manually compacted. With Test Pit 1-5, 8 -11 It is not proposed to reinstate the cement floor surfaces. With Test Pit 7 and 12 the flagstones will be relaid.

6 Post-excavation processing and reporting.

5.1 All finds will, where appropriate, be cleaned and bagged clearly labelled with the site code BCTP22, the Test Pit, and the context number. Finds will then be identified, catalogued and reported upon by an appropriate specialist provisionally identified below:-

Ceramic material (pot, clay tobacco pipe, brick/tile)- Jenny Vaughan and John Nolan
Metalwork – Jenny Vaughan and John Nolan. *Glass* - Jenny Vaughan. *Architectural masonry* – Peter Ryder/Stuart Harrison. *Animal bone* – Louisa Gidney.
Environmental samples – Durham Laboratory. *Conservation* – Karen Barker

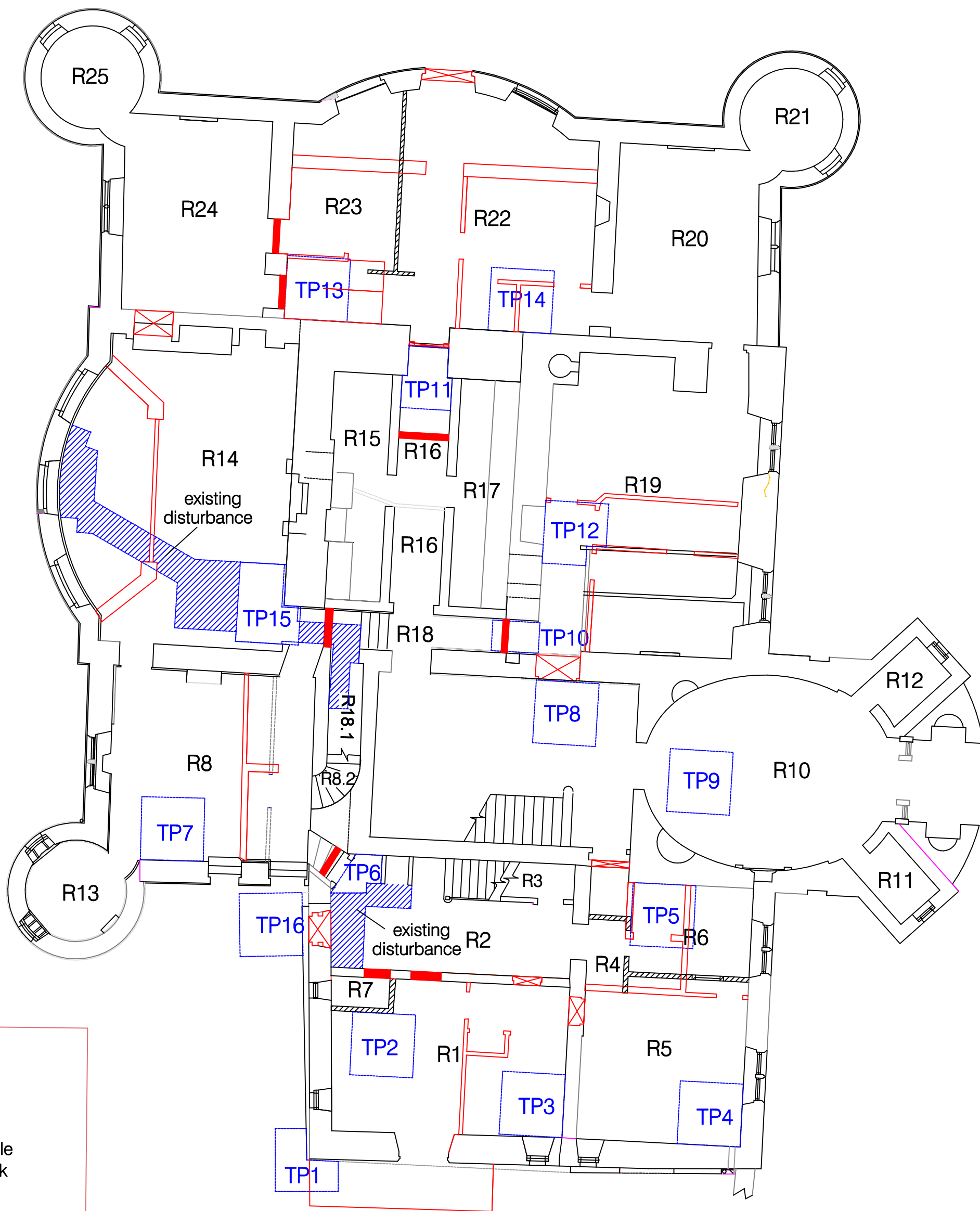
5.1 A written report describing the processes and results of the investigations will be produced, illustrated with photographs, plans, and sections.

5.2 The implications for design issues will be communicated to the consultant architects Spence & Dower LLP and to the client.

5.3 The report will include a location plan, plan(s) of principal excavated deposits and/or features, and at least one section of each Test Pit. The report will include a selection of photographs illustrating the excavation. A Harris matrix and context list for each Test Pit will also be included.

5.4 The report will be included in the Heritage Statement, and the current draft deskbased assessment revised in the light of the findings. An OASIS report form will be completed, and a copy of the report uploaded.

5.5 The finds will be retained by the Client for future use in display and interpretation. The project paper archive will be deposited with Woodhorn Museum.



- proposed blocking of existing opening
- new partitions (red outline)
- TP1 proposed test pits
- X new openings/reopened doors
- existing walls proposed to be removed
- existing services disturbance

Scale 1:200@A3

Barmoor Castle Heritage Statement: Evaluation

Proposed ground-level test pits

Based on survey Drg. 16912-02-P by the Greenhatch Group for Spence & Dower LLP. Addressing proposed alterations from Spence & Dower drg. M681PA1 (April 2021), revisions PA6 (July 2022), and September 2022

NCAS

DEPOSIT RECORD

SITE CODE	AREA/TR	GRID SQS.	CONTEXT
		E N	47
1. COMPACTION			
2. COLOUR			
3. COMPOSITION			
4. INCLUSIONS			
5. THICKNESS & EXTENT			
6. FILL OF			
7. BUTTS			
8. BUTTED BY			
9. SAME AS			
10. METHOD			

STRATIGRAPHIC MATRIX					
CONTEXTS ABOVE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
THIS CONTEXT			<input type="checkbox" value="47"/>		
CONTEXTS BELOW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
INTERPRETATION					

COMPLETED BY		DATE
DRAWING NOS.		
PHOTOGRAPH NOS.		
LEVELS (REDUCED)		

PROVISIONAL DATE		MATRIX NO.
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Sketch overleaf

SCALE DRAWING/DIMENSIONED SKETCH

SITE CODE 177	AREA/TR	GRID SQS. E N	CONTEXT
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COMPLETED BY	SCALE:	DATE
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NCAS

CUT RECORD

SITE CODE	AREA/TRENCH	DRG Nos..	CONTEXT
1. SHAPE IN PLAN			
2. CORNERS			
3. DIMENSIONS (plan)			
4. DEPTH			
5. ANGLE OF SIDES			
6. SHAPE OF BASE			
7. CUTS			
8. CUT BY			
9. FILL Nos.			
10. TRUNCATED?			


STRATIGRAPHIC MATRIX					
CONTEXTS ABOVE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
THIS CONTEXT			<input type="checkbox"/>		
CONTEXTS BELOW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

INTERPRETATION

COMPLETED BY		DATE
PHOTOGRAPH (Y/N)		
FINDS		
PROVISIONAL DATE		

Sketch over

SITE CODE		CONTEXT RECORD	CONTEXT
FURTHER COMMENTS			

SKETCH			
			
GIVE SCALE OR NOTE DIMENSIONS			scale:

NCAS

MASONRY RECORD

SITE CODE	AREA/TR	GRID SQS.	CONTEXT
		E N	16
1. MATERIALS			
2. SIZE OF MATERIALS			
3. FINISH/TOOLING			
4. COURSING/BOND			
5. NUMBER OF COURSES			
6. FORM/DIMENSIONS			
7. DIRECTION OF FACE(S)			
8. BONDING MATERIAL			
9. INCLUSIONS			
10. BUTTS			
11. BUTTED BY			
12. SAME AS			
13. SAMPLES			

STRATIGRAPHIC MATRIX					
CONTEXTS ABOVE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
THIS CONTEXT			<input type="checkbox"/>		
CONTEXTS BELOW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

INTERPRETATION

COMPLETED BY		DATE
DRAWING Nos.		
PHOTO Nos.(Film/neg)		
LEVELS (Reduced)		

PROVISIONAL DATE		MATRIX NO.
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SCALE DRAWING/DIMENSIONED SKETCH

SITE CODE	AREA/TR	GRID SQS. E N	CONTEXT
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COMPLETED BY	SCALE:	DATE
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