

***An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Glebe Farm Barns, Wroxeter,
Shropshire, 2010***

by
H R Hannaford



Archaeology Service Report Number 289
© Shropshire Council
January 2011

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
GLEBE FARM BARN, WROXETER, SHROPSHIRE, 2010

by
H R HANNAFORD MIFA

A Report for
Central Networks Infrastructure Services,
E.ON UK plc

Archaeology Service

Shropshire Archives,
Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ
Tel: (01743) 255352 Fax: (01743) 255355



CONTENTS

	Page No
SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION	2
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	3
3 THE WATCHING BRIEF	4
4 REFERENCES	5

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: The location of the site

Figure 2: The cable trench

Figure 3: a) Glebe House garden, southwest-facing section; b)Glebe Farm Barns garden, southwest-facing section; scale 1:20

Photo 1: The study area, looking north

Photo 2: Deposits in Glebe House garden, looking north

Photo 3: Cobble surface 11 in Glebe Farm Barns garden, looking north

SUMMARY

In November 2010 a watching brief was carried out by the Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council on the excavation of an electricity cable trench associated with the development of Glebe Farm Barns, Wroxeter. The site lies on the line of the southern defences of the Roman city of Viroconium Cornoviorum. The watching brief recorded an area of cobbled surface. No other significant deposits or features were seen in the course of the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Wroxeter is situated in central Shropshire, about 7.5km southeast of the centre of Shrewsbury. The modern village lies on the northeast bank of the River Severn, just to the south of the B4380 road, formerly the A5 London to Holyhead Trunk Road (now by-passed). The modern village lies within the site of the Roman city of *Viroconium Cornoviorum*, the fourth largest walled city in the Roman province. The site of the Roman city is a scheduled Ancient Monument (Shropshire County No. 32, "The site of the Roman Town of Wroxeter [Viroconium Cornoviorum] Shropshire"). Glebe Farm Barns, Wroxeter (NGR SJ 563 081) lies in the core of the modern village, which occupies the southwest corner of the Roman town.

1.2 In 2009-10 Glebe Farm Barns, Wroxeter (NGR SJ 563 081) were converted for residential occupation. Groundworks associated with this development were carried out under archaeological supervision as a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent granted for the scheme (Hannaford, 2010). In November 2010 a service trench was excavated to provide electricity connection to Glebe farm Barns from an existing pole in the garden of Glebe House to a connection box in the northwest corner of the front garden of Glebe Farm Barn via an existing service connection duct excavated in February 2010.

1.3 Scheduled Monument Consent was granted for this work, and it was a requirement of the Scheduled Monument Consent that the trenching was to be carried out under archaeological supervision.

1.6 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned to carry out this watching brief by Central Networks Infrastructure Services, E.ON UK plc. The trenches for the cabling were excavated on 22nd and 23rd November 2010.

1.7 The aim of the programme of archaeological work was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the works.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Glebe Farm Barns lies in a wide flat-bottomed hollow about 30m wide running from east to west just inside the defences on the southern side of the Roman city. The northern edge of the hollow probably marks the edge of the built-up area of the town, the southern edge the tail of the rampart of the later defences. At some stage this hollow had been allowed to fill with water, and waterlogged deposits accumulated. Field drainage probably in the later post-medieval period had dried the upper level and allowed the development of the barns in the 19th century. (Hannaford, 2010)

2.2 Archaeological monitoring of the excavation of lining pits for the re-lining of a 4" water main in this area in 1999 had demonstrated the survival of deposits associated with the Roman ramparts in the field on the west side of the road (White, 2000). In January 2002 the Archaeology Service, SCC, carried out a watching brief on the installation of a new water supply and telephone line to the Old Schoolhouse and the adjoining Parish Rooms. Deposits possibly representing rampart material were seen in the base of the trench beneath the modern road and in the Old Schoolhouse garden (Hannaford, 2002). During a further watching brief at the Old Schoolhouse in January 2009, the reduction of the topsoil for the laying of a new driveway exposed the top of a layer of clay that may have been associated with the city defences. However, no significant deposits or features were seen in the excavation of a number of foundation trenches around the east and north sides of the property.

2.3 In the autumn of 2009 work began on the conversion of barns at Glebe Farm Barns to living accommodation. Archaeological monitoring of the groundworks associated with this development recorded waterlogged or formerly waterlogged deposits over the northern part of the development area. A small group of pits and a linear gully containing a small amount of Romano-British pottery were seen in the southernmost part of the site. No significant archaeological deposits were encountered in the service trench in the front garden of the property. (Hannaford, 2010)

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 The excavation for the cable trench took place on 22nd and 23rd November 2010. The trench was excavated by hand to a width of 0.3m and a depth of 0.6m. The trench ran from an existing pole northwest across the front garden of Glebe House, across the drive to Glebe House and Glebe Farm Barns, to a junction excavated as part of the 2009/10 development in February 2010 (Hannaford, 2010, p5, 2.14 Service trench N). From there the trench was cut across to the northwest corner of the front garden of Glebe Farm Barns.

3.2 In the front garden of Glebe House, the trench revealed natural subsoil at a depth of 0.35m below the ground surface. The natural consisted of a reddish brown sand (Fig. 3a; 4) which became a paler orange brown to the north. This deposit lay beneath a layer of dark greyish brown loam mottled with reddish brown sand (3) 0.25m thick. This deposit had been cut by the trench for a soak-away spreader (6) for Glebe House. These were sealed beneath 0.35m thickness of topsoil (2) and turf (1) layers.

3.3 The southern side of the access drive cut into Glebe House garden. The natural sand (4) lay immediately beneath the pebble surface (7) of the drive. Over the northern half of the drive, the natural sand lay beneath a buried soil layer (8) consisting of a very dark grey sandy silty loam, which deepened to north. This soil layer continued across into the Glebe Farm Barn garden (Fig. 3b; 10), where it lay beneath a garden soil (9) 0.4m deep. In the northwest corner of the garden, the buried soil (10) lay over a surface made up of a compact layer of reddish brown sandy clay (11) with a number of large cobbles. This feature lay at base of the trench; one large cobble was disturbed and removed, but the remainder were left *in situ*.

3.4 No other significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the course of the watching brief.

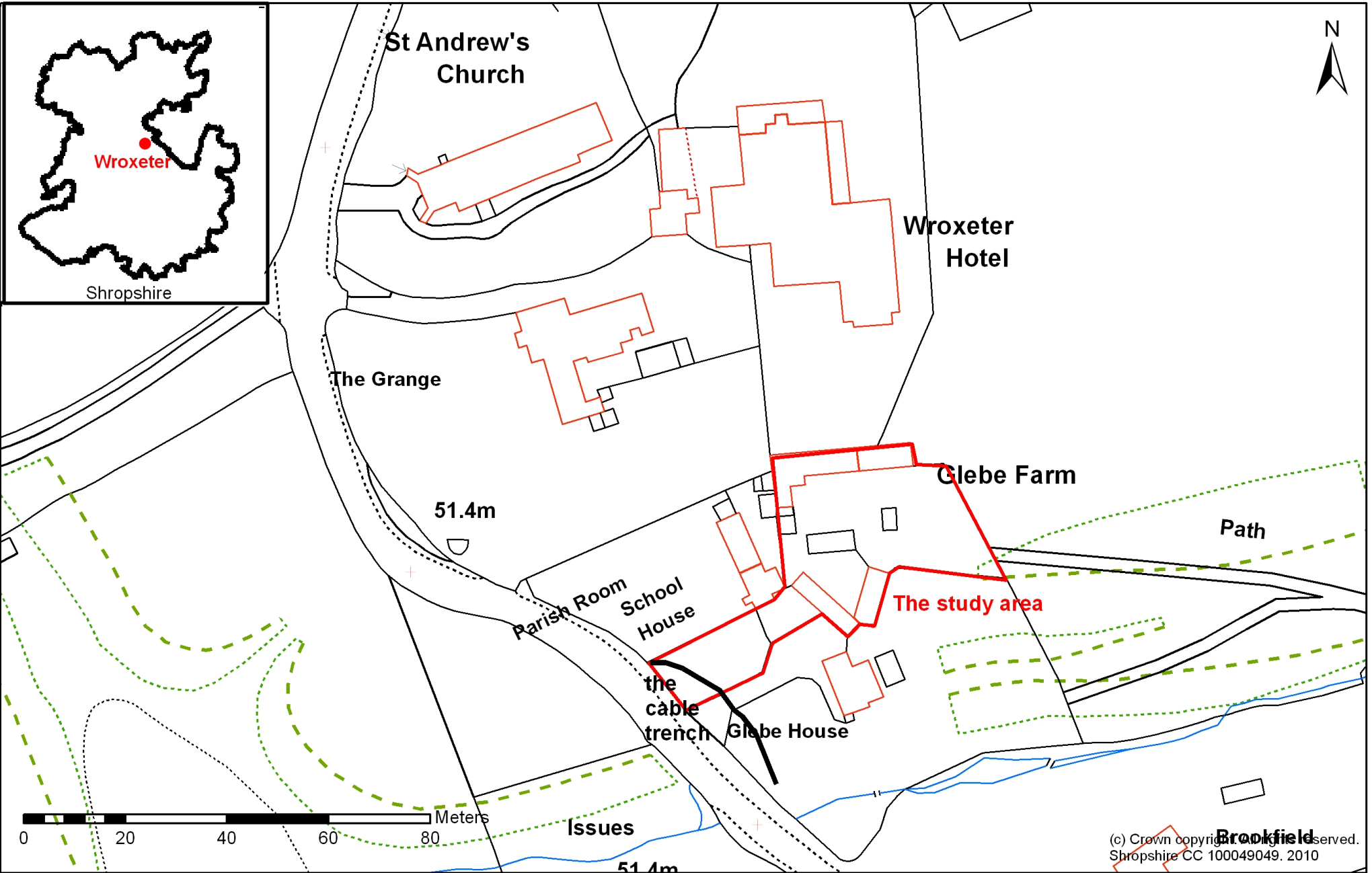
3.5 The cobble surface (11) seen in the Glebe Farm Barn garden is likely to represent a yard surface. It lay at approximately the same depth below the modern ground surface as the cobble and pebble surface seen in the 2002 watching brief on the property to the north (The Old Schoolhouse and Parish Rooms). This latter feature was identified as possible rampart material, but in the light of the results from the current watching brief, an alternative interpretation is that it too may have represented a yard surface. However in each case only a very small area of the top of these surfaces was seen, and no adjacent or underlying associated deposits were exposed, therefore any interpretation of these features must remain tentative.

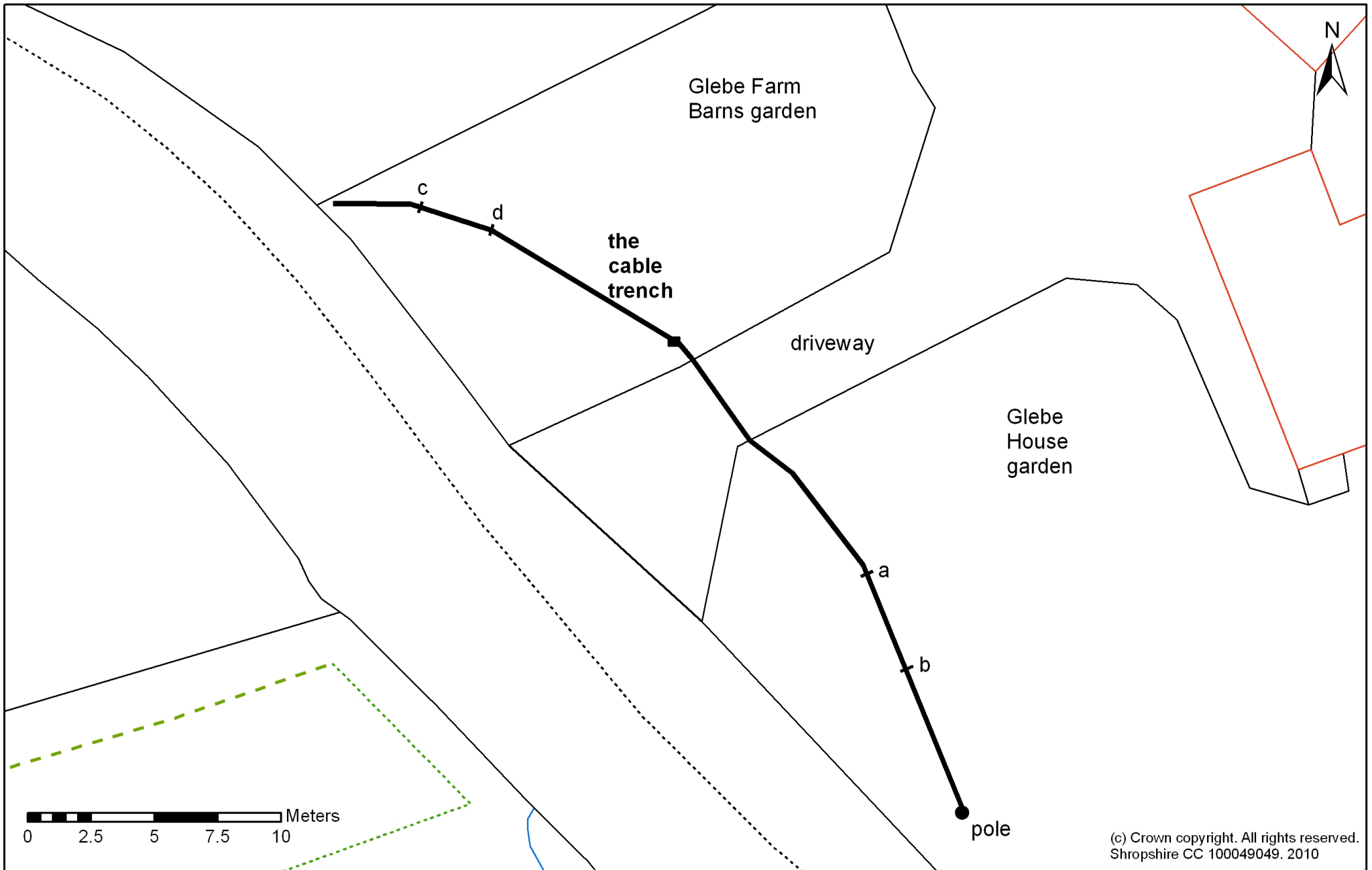
4 REFERENCES

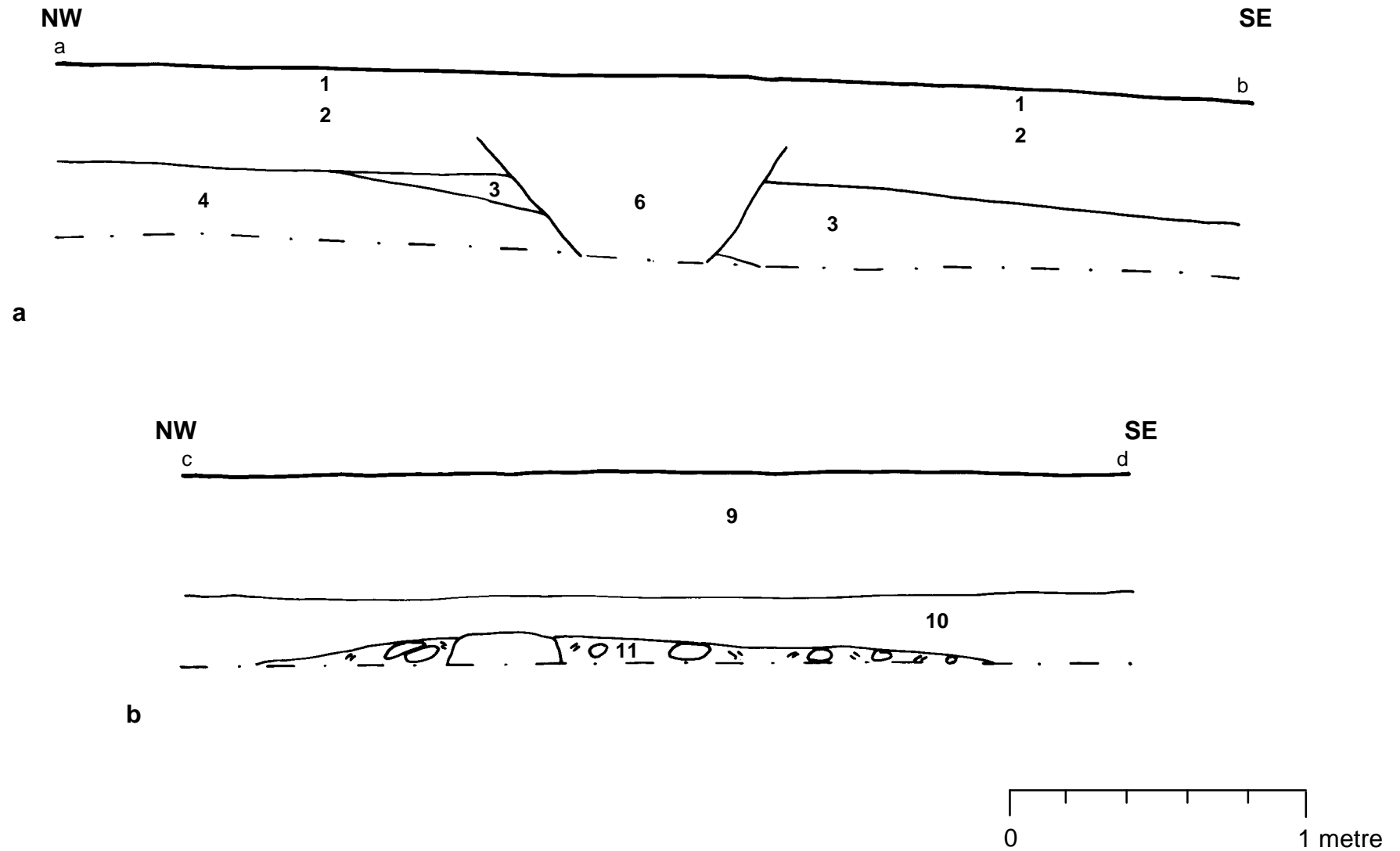
- Hannaford, H R**, 2002: *A Watching Brief at the Parish Room and School House, Wroxeter, Shropshire*, SCC Archaeology Service report No. 206
- Hannaford, H R**, 2009: *An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Old Schoolhouse, Wroxeter, Shropshire*, SC Archaeology Service report No. 262
- Hannaford, H R**, 2010: *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Glebe Farm Barns, Wroxeter, Shropshire, 2009*, SC Archaeology Service report No. 272
- White, R, and Barker, P**, 1998: *Wroxeter: the Life and Death of a Roman City*, Tempus, Stroud
- White, R**, 2000: *Final Report On Excavations In Advance Of Water Main Relining At Wroxeter Roman City, Shropshire*, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit Project No. 462.2

ABBREVIATIONS

- HER** Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council
- OS** Ordnance Survey
- SA** Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
- TSAHS** Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
- TSAS** Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society







GLEBE FARM BARNs, WROXETER, SHROPSHIRE 2010

Figure 3: a) Glebe House garden, southwest-facing section; b) Glebe Farm Barns garden, southwest-facing section; scale 1:20



Photo 1: The study area, looking north



Photo 2: Deposits in Glebe House garden, looking north



Photo 3: Cobble surface 11 in Glebe Farm Barns garden, looking north