

***Archaeological Monitoring of Groundworks at
The Old Schoolhouse, Wroxeter,
Shropshire, 2009***

by
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GROUNDWORKS AT
THE OLD SCHOOLHOUSE, WROXETER, SHROPSHIRE, 2009

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A Report for
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SUMMARY

In January and May 2009 a watching brief was carried by the Shropshire Council Archaeology Service on groundworks at the Old Schoolhouse, Wroxeter. The development site lay on the line of the southern defences of the Roman city. 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. No significant deposits or features were seen in the excavation of the foundation trenches.

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). The Old School House, Wroxeter (NGR SJ 563 081) lies in the core of the modern village, which occupies the southwest corner of the Roman town.

1.2 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 School House 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 School House garden (Hannaford, 2002).

1.3 On 9th January 2009, groundworks were carried out in preparation for the provision of a new driveway to the Old School House. On 22nd May the foundation trenches for an extension to the kitchen and for a new garage were excavated.

1.4 Scheduled Monument consent had been granted for these works, and it was a requirement of the Scheduled Monument Consent for the proposed works that the groundworks for the development were to be carried out under archaeological supervision.

1.5 The Archaeology Service was commissioned to carry out this watching brief by Mrs L Hadley, the owner of the property.

2 AIMS

2.1 The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the excavations for the new driveway and foundation trenches.

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 The Driveway

3.1.1 The topsoil strip for the new driveway was monitored by the Archaeology Service, Shropshire County Council. A depth of between 300mm up to 400mm of dark humic loam topsoil was removed from the line of the new drive. A depth of 100mm was removed from the remainder of the garden, where it was proposed to site a temporary cabin and caravan. The clean topsoil was stored on the line of the drive on the northern part of the site for re-use as garden soil. Running approximately northwest to southeast in the central part of the garden a band of buff to pink silty clay (Figure 2; 2) appeared beneath the topsoil at a depth of 350mm - excavation ceased at the top of this clay, and the clay was not removed. An area of clay about 7m wide northeast to southwest was exposed across the width of the new driveway; the edges of the clay dipped down beneath deeper topsoil to the northeast and southwest. The clay did not appear to be *in situ* natural subsoil. It is possible that this clay may have been associated with the remains of the defences or ramparts at the southwest corner of the Roman town, although the main circuit of ramparts are thought to run some 20m to the south of the Old School House garden.

3.1.2 The 19th-century brick west wall of the garden was partly dismantled to make access for the new driveway. The majority of the brick, with the exception of the capping bricks, was in such poor condition that it could not be reused, and, with some modern 20th century brick, was used as hardcore for the southwestern end of the drive where it joined the road.

3.2 The kitchen extension and garage

3.2.1 The foundations for an extension to the kitchen 1.3m long by 2.7m wide were excavated by machine at the rear of the cottage. The foundation trench was L shaped, and 0.9m wide by 0.6m deep. Natural reddish brown clay subsoil (Fig. 3a; 13) was seen at a depth of c. 0.5m below the ground surface. Above this was a thin layer 0.1m thick of reddish brown clay with some pebbles and cobbles (12) which in turn lay beneath 0.25m of dark greyish brown sandy humic loam buried garden soil (11) and a more recent disturbed black soil (10) 0.1m thick.

3.2.2 The new garage was to be sited at the northwest end of the cottage. Foundation trenches were excavated for its northeast and northwest walls, and for three pillars for its southwest wall. In addition, the water-pipe laid in 2002 ran along the line of the northwest foundation trench and had to be re-excavated. The trenches were excavated to a width of 0.8m and to a depth of 0.95m. The lowest deposit seen was a layer of very dark greyish brown humic sandy clay loam (Fig. 3b; 17) which was seen at the base of the trenches. This lay beneath a deep layer (up to 0.9m deep) of very dark grey disturbed topsoil (16). This deposit had been cut through on the northwest side by the 2002 water pipe trench (15), and by the raft foundation of the former shed and toilet block.

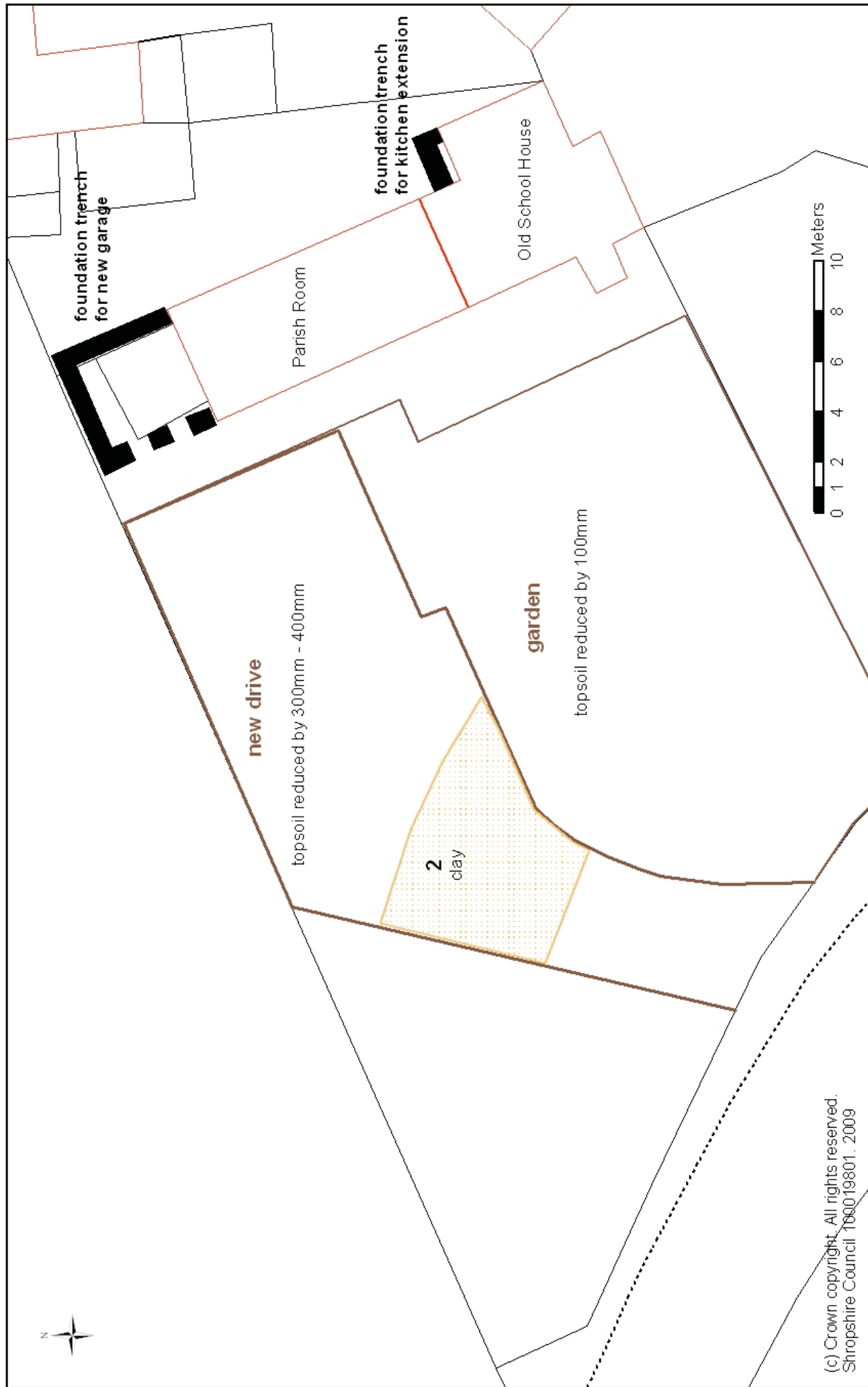
3.3 No further significant archaeological features were encountered during these works. A few sherds of 18th and 19th century slipware pottery and china were recovered from the excavated deposits. There were no finds of Roman or medieval material.

4 REFERENCES

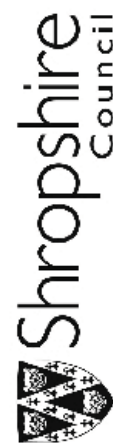
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ABBREVIATIONS

HER	County Historic Environment Record, Shirehall, Shrewsbury
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRO	Public Record Office
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
TSaHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society



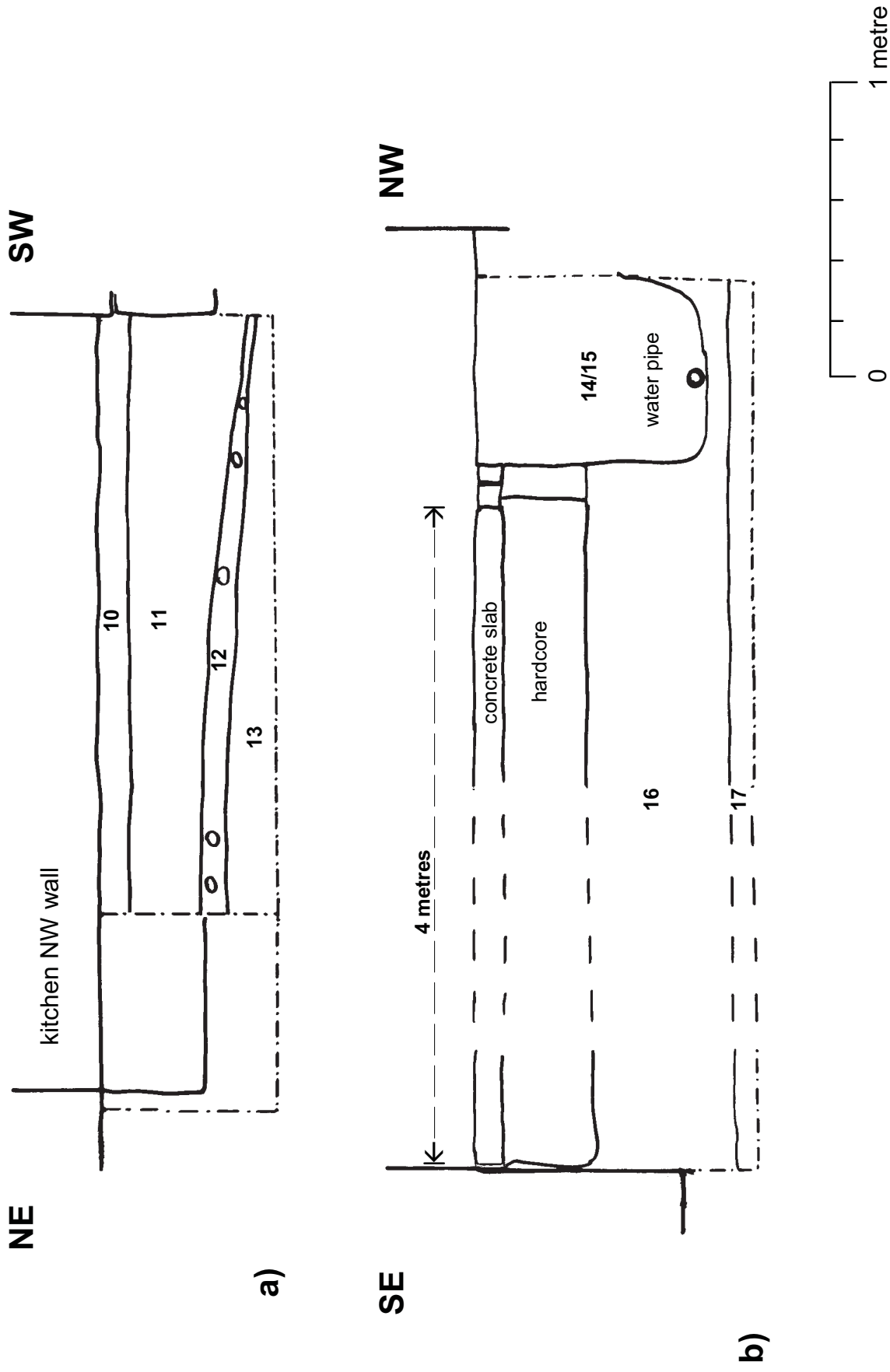
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Figure 2: Location of the new driveway and foundation trenches

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Scale: 1:200



The Old Schoolhouse, Wroxeter 2009

Figure 3 a) section through deposits seen in kitchen extension foundation trench; b) section through deposits seen in garage NE wall foundation trench; 1:20 scale



Photo 1: The clay deposit (2) exposed in the new driveway



Photo 2: The foundation trench for the kitchen extension



Photo 3: The foundation trench for the NE wall of the garage



Photo 4: The foundation trench for the NW wall of the garage along the line of the 2002 water pipe