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**Archaeological Evaluation of
A Proposed Extension to
No. 3 Castle Hill,
Castle Donington, Leicestershire**

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6th August 2007

T&PAT Project Code: Chc.1

Filename: ChcEvalRepInterim.doc

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Summary

- **Background.** This evaluation was carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeology on behalf of Messrs. Tony Brooks and Nicholas Owen, in connection with the proposed construction of an extension to no. 3 Castle Hill, Castle Donington, Leicestershire. The site is located within Scheduled Ancient Monument no. 17096, a medieval castle earthwork.
- **Proposed scheme.** The client proposes to demolish the existing extension to the rear of the property and replace it with a new one, measuring c. 7x3.3m in plan.
- **Archaeological context.** The site lies within the former medieval castle. The castle outer earthworks have been leveled, in the vicinity of the site, since at least the early 20th century.
- **Method.** A single test pit 1x1m in plan was excavated on the site of the proposed extension, outside the area of the existing extension. The aim of the excavation was to establish the depth and nature of archaeological remains at the point of disturbance from the proposed extension, in the area where the best preservation is likely to be found.
- **Conclusions.** Dating from associated pottery suggests that the uppermost 1.0m of the excavation was deposited no earlier than the late post-medieval period. The bottom layer, which extended beneath the excavation depth, contained demolition debris from a stone-walled and stone-roofed, mortared building, of uncertain date.
- **Impact of new build.** A strip footing for the new extension, which would probably cause disturbance of mainly recent dumped deposits over a small area down to an expected 1.2m below surface, might be considered preferable to piling through deposits of unknown character at greater depth. Confirmation of the load-bearing capacity of the currently-exposed strata for strip footings has yet to be obtained from the local building inspector, and this will no doubt be subject to review once the full extent of the footings has been excavated.

1 Project background

Trent & Peak Archaeology was contracted by Messrs. Tony Brooks and Nicholas Owen to carry out an evaluation at 3 Castle Hill, Castle Donington, Leicestershire (Fig. 1), in connection with the proposed construction of an extension to the property (Fig. 2).

The site lies at NGR SK 447 275. It contains an access road, outbuildings and a single brick house, probably of 19th-century date, with a small modern extension to the rear. Behind the house lies an extensive garden sloping steeply down to the west. The site is located within Scheduled Ancient Monument no. 17096, a medieval castle earthwork.

The client proposes to demolish the existing extension and replace it with a slightly larger new one, measuring c. 7x3.3m in plan.

The project design was approved by Richard Clark, Senior Planning Archaeologist Leicestershire County Council, and Angela Simco, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage.

The purpose of the work was to establish whether proposed strip footings for the new building would cut into significant archaeological deposits. The Local Authority building inspector has expressed the view that strip footings excavated to 1.2m below ground, if dug into suitable load-bearing deposits, would be an acceptable design.

2 Method

The evaluation consisted of the excavation and recording of a single 1m-square test pit in the north-west corner of the proposed new building. The fieldwork was carried out on 16th July 2007 by Peter Webb, supervised by Gavin Kinsley.

A single test-pit measuring 1x1m in plan was positioned within the footprint of the proposed building, at its north-west corner, measured in using hand tapes from the existing building, allowing 0.1m of extra width from the proposed wall face for the foundation trench.

The test pit was then excavated to a depth of 1.2m using mattock, spade and trowel, with a clean up being carried out at each change in context to avoid misattribution of finds, and to check for features. The spoil from each context was searched for finds.

The north facing section of the test pit (Fig. 3) was then drawn to provide a record of the contexts present.

3 Results

Six distinct contexts were identified within the test pit, numbered 0001 to 0006.

- 0001: Soft dark brown silty loam
- 0002: Soft mid to dark brown slightly clayey silt with 1% tiny (<1cm) rounded stone inclusions
- 0003: Soft light yellowish brown silty sand with 2% small (<2cm) angular stone inclusions
- 0004: Soft mid yellowish brown silty sand with 2% tiny (<1cm) angular stone inclusions
- 0005: Friable soft mid brown slightly clayey sand with 5% small (<2cm) rounded and angular stone inclusions
- 0006: Loose friable light to mid yellowish brown slightly clayey sand with 80% large (10cm+) angular stone inclusions and 5% large mortar lumps. Some voids were present within the deposit, between the stones.

Within these contexts a number of artefacts were discovered. Within 0001 four pieces of pottery and one fragment of brick / tile were found; 0002 contained nineteen fragments of pottery, five of brick, one of bone, one of clay pipe and one piece of copper piping; nothing was found within 0003, but one fragment of pottery and one of bone were found within context 0004. 0005 contained no finds, whilst 0006 contained a pierced flat stone fragment (probably roof tile), several stone fragments with mortar adhering and a large lump of soft gritty pebbly mortar. The pottery is reported on in section 4.

4 Conclusions

One sherd of the pottery (from 0002) was 20th century in date, the remainder was dateable to the late-18th or 19th century; Contexts 0001-0004 can therefore be dated to the late post-medieval or modern periods.

The stone tile, mortar, and stone with mortar adhering from 0006 clearly together indicate the remains of a demolished building. However the material is not closely dateable, although the medieval or early post-medieval periods are the most likely for a stone building with stone-tiled roof. The debris is unlikely to have been carted a long way, and this is therefore an important discovery in relation to the known history of the castle; however, the date of the formation of the deposit is of course likely to be the date of demolition of the building or later, and certainly not its construction.

No natural ground was found within the test-pit depth of 1.2m, and there was no buried soil between 0006 and the overlying post-medieval

deposits. If 0006 was significantly earlier than the overlying layers (as the contrast in the character of the deposits leads one to suspect), then this suggests that it may have been truncated, possibly at the time of construction of the existing building.

It is not possible to provide any firm or detailed interpretation of the deposits due to the small scale of the work. It is clear however, that the site potentially contains significant archaeological remains, currently not securely dated, but lying at the very bottom of the 1.2m excavation depth.

Given the small area of the proposed extension which lies outside the footprint of the existing building, it is likely to contain a sequence similar to that found in the pit. Strip footings as proposed, excavated at a level of 1.2m below ground, are therefore likely to encounter dumped deposits rather than complex structural remains.

On this basis, the client's preferred option of a strip footing for the new extension is likely to cause disturbance of mainly recent, or undated, dumped deposits over a small area down to an expected 1.2m below surface. This might be considered preferable to piling through deposits of unknown character at greater depth.

Confirmation of the load-bearing capacity (for strip footings) of the strata exposed in the pit has yet to be obtained from the local building inspector; this would no doubt be subject to review if the full extent of the footings were to be excavated.

5 Reference

VCH 1907. *The Victoria History of the County of Leicester* Vol. 1, 256.

6 Pottery report

6.1 Pottery dating archive

by Dr Anne Boyle, Archaeological Project Services

Context	Date	Comments
0001	19th	
0002	19th to 20th	
0004	late 18th to mid 19th	date on a single sherd.

6.2 Pottery archive

by Dr Anne Boyle, Archaeological Project Services

The assemblage contains twenty-four sherds from twenty vessels, weighing one hundred and twenty-seven grammes. Most of the pottery dates to the early modern period though some of the Blackware sherds may predate the 18th century. The assemblage is apparently domestic in nature but is too small for further interpretation. The pottery has been recorded using the pottery codenames for Lincolnshire (Lincs cname); the equivalent Leicestershire code is also listed (Leics Cname). No further work is required on the pottery and all the sherds are suitable for discard.

Contex	Lincs cname	Full name	Leics Cname	Sub fabric	Form type	Sherds	Vessels	Weight	Decoration	Part	Description	Date
0001	BL	Black-glazed wares	EA6	light firing; fine	?	1	1	4		BS	fe slipped; flake	
0001	ENGS	Unspecified English Stoneware	SW		straight sided jar/bottle	1	1	30		base		mid to late 18th
0001	NCBW	19th-century Buff	-		hollow	1	1	5		BS		
0001	PEARL	Pearlware	EA9		cup/tea bowl	1	1	1	internal blue chinoiserie transfer print	rim		
0002	BL	Black-glazed wares	EA6		hollow	1	1	1		BS	flake	
0002	BL	Black-glazed wares	EA6	orange; coarse	ridged jar	1	1	10		BS	internal and external glaze; Staffordshire/Ticknall	16th to 18th
0002	BL	Black-glazed wares	EA6	orange; coarse	bowl	1	1	14		rim	rounded rim; internal glaze; Staffordshire	16th to 18th
0002	BL	Black-glazed wares	EA6	orange + light firing streaks; fine	small hollow	1	1	4		BS	Staffordshire/Ticknall; fe slipped	late 16th to 17th
0002	BL	Black-glazed wares	EA6	light firing; fine	bowl	1	1	9		BS	fe slipped; Staffordshire; internal glaze	
0002	BL	Black-glazed wares	EA6	orange; fine	jar	1	1	4		BS	internal glaze;	

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										Staffordshire ?	
0002	BL	Black-glazed wares	EA6	light firing; coarse	bowl/jar	1	1	4		BS	internal glaze; Staffordshire
0002	CREA	Creamware	EA8		small hollow	5	1	9		base + BS	flakes; same vessel ?
0002	CREA	Creamware	EA8		bowl/dish	1	1	3		rim	worn external rim edge; patchy soot
0002	NCBW	19th-century Buff	-		bowl	1	1	17		rim	
0002	NCBW	19th-century Buff	-		?	1	1	3		base	
0002	PEARL	Pearlware	EA9		cup/tea bowl	1	1	1	internal and external blue chinoiserie transfer print	BS	flake
0002	PEARL	Pearlware	EA9		cup/tea bowl	1	1	1	internal blue geometric design transfer print; brown banded rim	rim	
0002	SWSG	Staffordshire White Saltglazed stoneware	SW4		cup/mug	1	1	1		rim	18th
0002	WHITE	Modern whiteware	-		cup	1	1	5		BS	20th
0004	PEARL	Pearlware	EA9		cup/tea bowl	1	1	1	internal and external under glaze hand painted blue design	BS	

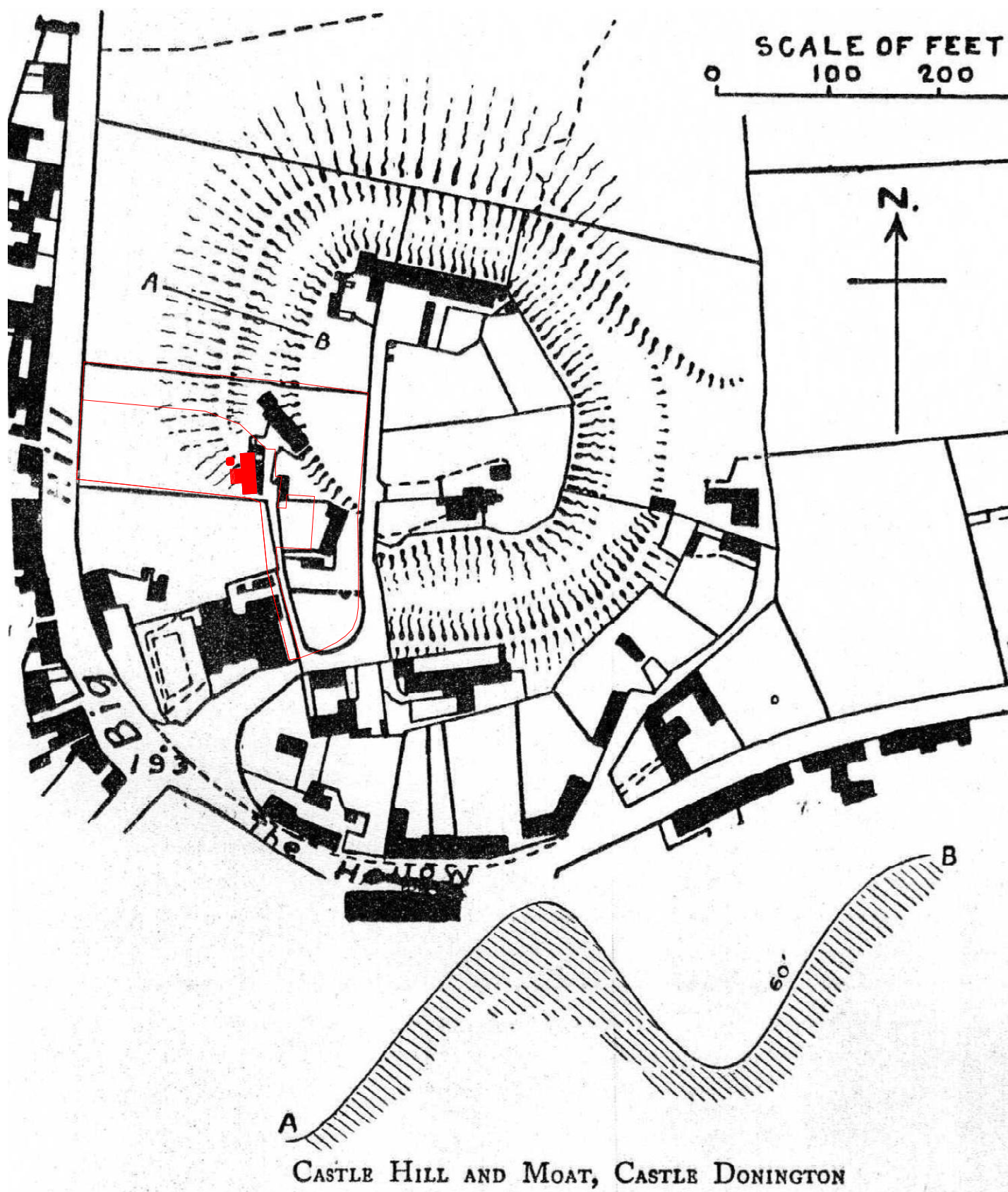


Fig. 1: Plan showing site location and detail traced from Land Registry map (indicating quality of fit) superimposed on VCH map showing castle earthworks at beginning of 20th century

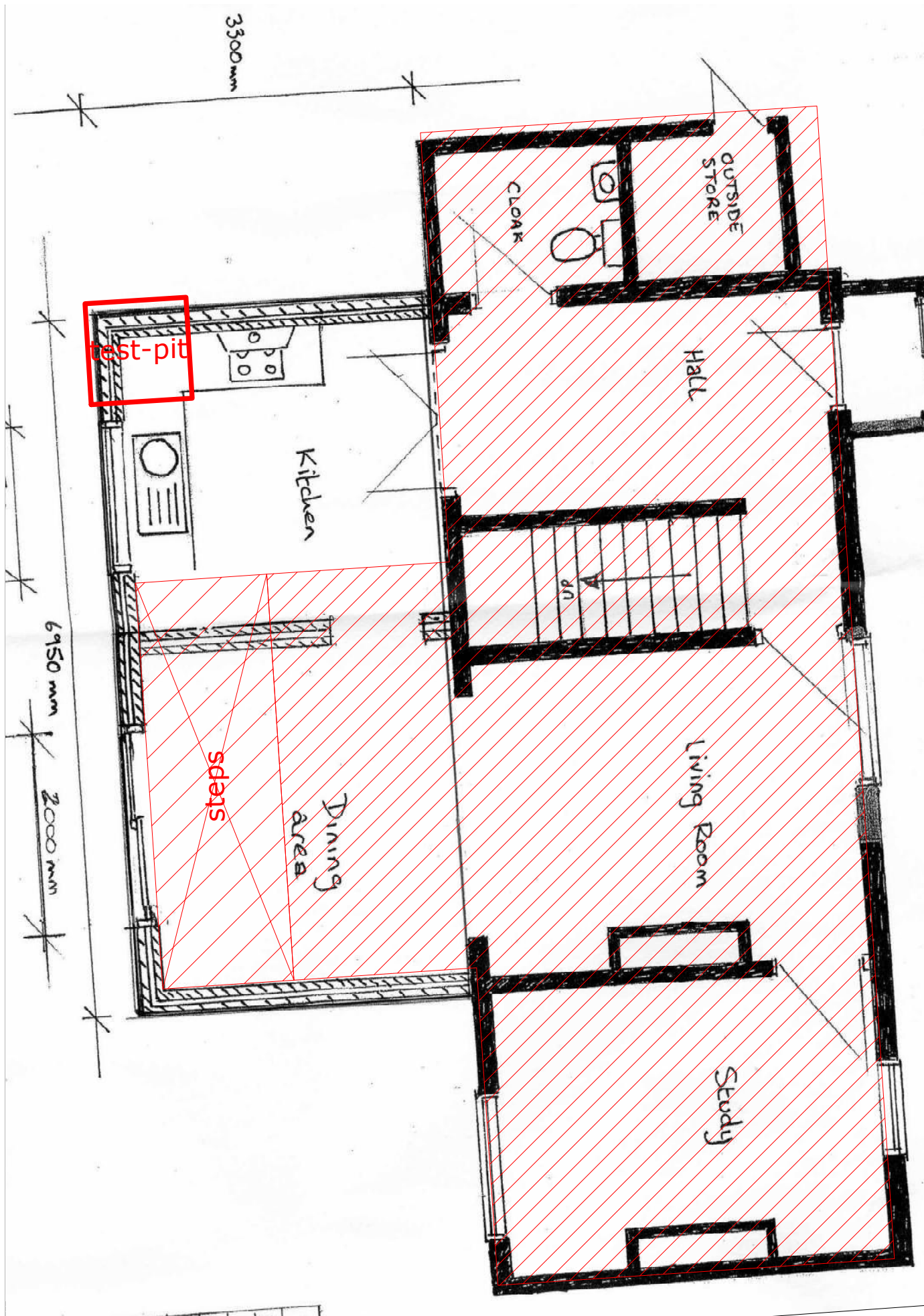


Fig. 2: Plan showing detail of existing building traced to scale from Land Registry map with external steps added from inspection on site (red hatch), and client's map of new extension (black image), with location of proposed test-pit

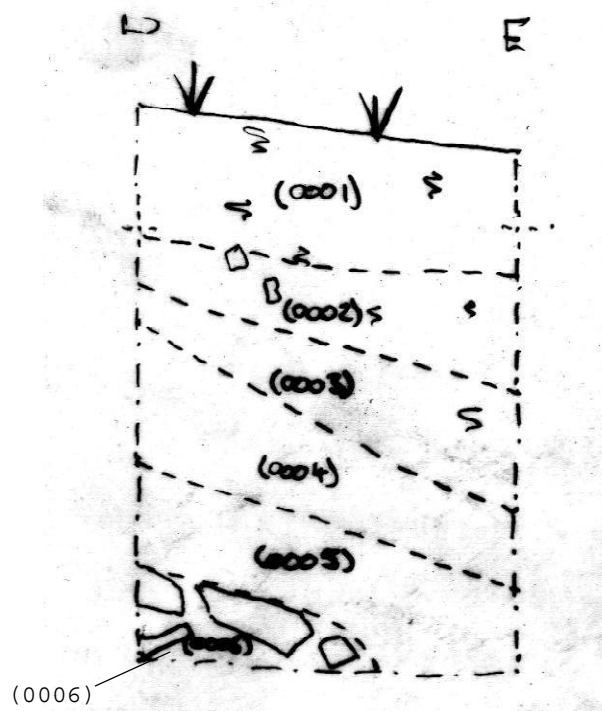


Fig. 3: field-drawing of north-facing section of test-pit, scale 1:20.



Plate I: Test-pit in relation to existing building



Plate II: Test-pit north-facing section



Plate III: Building debris from layer 0006: mortar lump (top left); stone with mortar adhering and pierced stone roof tile (bottom). The roof tile is 197mm long.