

**Report on a Watching Brief
near Sandwich Roman Villa**

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Report on a Watching Brief near Sandwich Roman Villa

In May 1999 a series of foundation trenches was cut for the construction of a new house on a plot of ground located on the northern side of the old Woodnesborough Road, off Poulders Gardens, just outside Sandwich. NGR TR 3195 5737. Overlooking marshland that was once part of the Wantsum Channel, the plot stands at about 11 metres above O.D. and lies close to the site of the Roman villa excavated during the construction of the adjacent Sandwich Bypass in 1978 (Bennett 1978; Parfitt 1980; Parfitt 1981).

The foundation trenches excavated for the new house were observed by members of the Dover Archaeological Group and traces of a short length of Roman ditch were discovered (see plan). The trenches covered an area measuring about 11 by 14 metres. They were 0.50 m. wide, about 1.00 m. deep and totalled some 63 metres in total length. The general soil sequence consisted of a layer of topsoil, some 0.45 m. thick, resting directly on the natural Thanet Beds clay. Two Roman pot-sherds - a small fragment of samian and piece of Upchurch ware - were recovered from the topsoil layer.

In the central sector of the foundation complex a length of ditch was revealed. This was aligned north-east by south-west and was traced for a minimum distance of 5.30 m. It did not appear to extend into the outer trenches, indicating that it could only have formed a short segment, no more than 11 metres in overall length.

The ditch varied in width from 0.84 to 1.10 m. and was between 0.24 and 0.50 m. deep. Wider and deeper at the north-eastern end, its sides were sloping and the base was dished. The filling consisted of a uniform deposit of dark grey-brown clay loam with occasional carbon specks and small flint pebbles. This produced nine pieces of pottery. These were all wall sherds and included six fragments from an Oxfordshire mortarium, datable to the period c. A.D. 250-400. There was also a sherd of late Roman grog-tempered ware and a piece of grey sandy ware, again of third-fourth century date. A larger sherd of early Roman grog-tempered appears to be residual and can be equated with similar early material recovered during the main villa excavations (Parfitt 1980, 240). There were also four pieces of Roman tile contained within the ditch, including three conjoining fragments of *imbrex*. The fabric of these may also be compared to material recovered from the main villa excavations (tile fabric 'b').

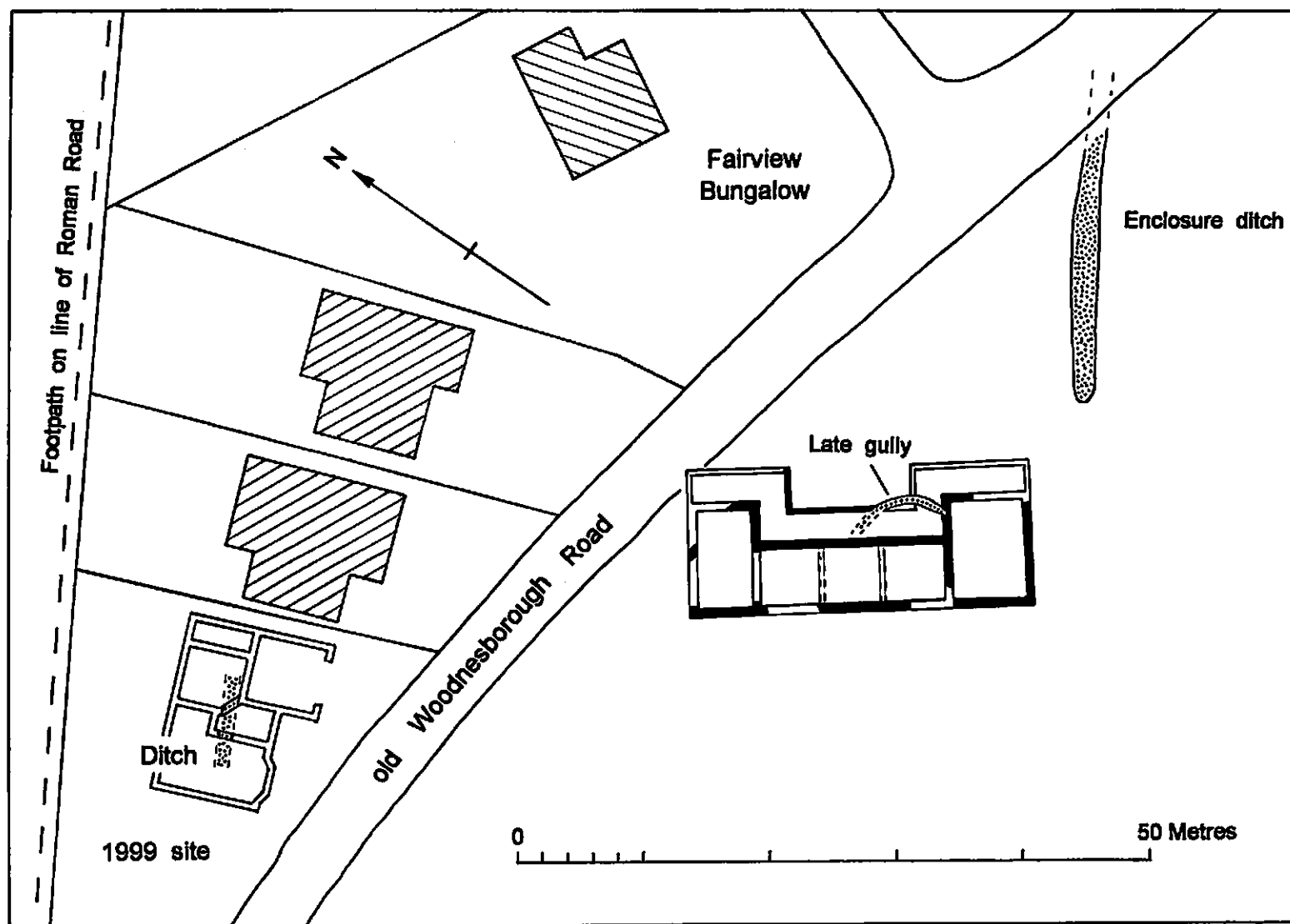
The pottery dating evidence suggests that the ditch was filled sometime during the late third or fourth century. Another feature of this date was recorded in the main villa excavation. This consisted of a curving gully (Feature 1), dug through the foundations of the building (see plan). Based on this evidence, it has previously been suggested that the villa had been abandoned by the late Roman period (Parfitt 1980, 236, 244). The newly discovered ditch, together with the gully previously recorded, now make it clear that Roman activity continued in the area after the villa building had been given up, probably in the later second century.

The north-western side of the 1999 building plot is bounded by a public footpath which Margary has previously suggested formed part of a short Roman road (Margary 101) that ran north-

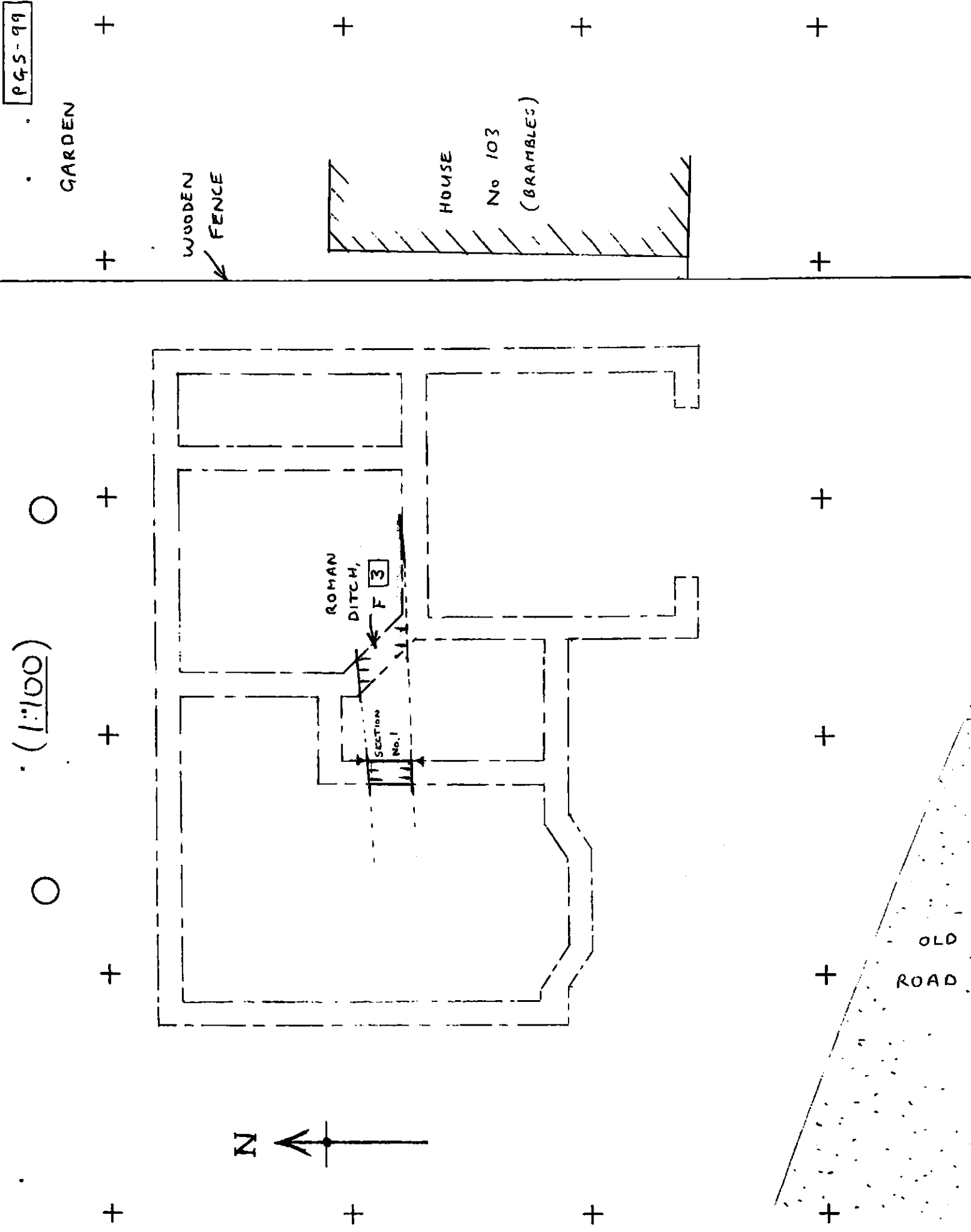
eastwards from Woodnesborough to the old shore-line of the Wantsum at Sandwich (Margary 1948, 131; 1967, 39). The Roman ditch segment recorded in 1999 lies some 12 metres south-east of the modern footpath and roughly parallel to it, suggesting that it could have originally run along the southern side of this road.

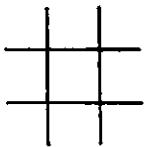
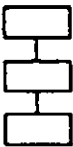
References

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- Margary, I. D., 1948 'Notes on Roman Roads in East Kent', *Arch. Cant.* **61**, 126-132.
- Margary, I. D., 1967 *Roman Roads in Britain* (London, revised ed.).
- Parfitt, K., 1980 'A Probable Roman Villa on the Sandwich By-pass', *Kent Arch. Rev.* **60**, 232-248.
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Plan showing 1999 ditch in relation to Sandwich Roman villa excavated in 1978 and 1980



PLAN/SECTION NO	P1			NOTES	SANDWICH 1999, POULDER'S GARDENS, GENERAL SITE PLAN, 1:100
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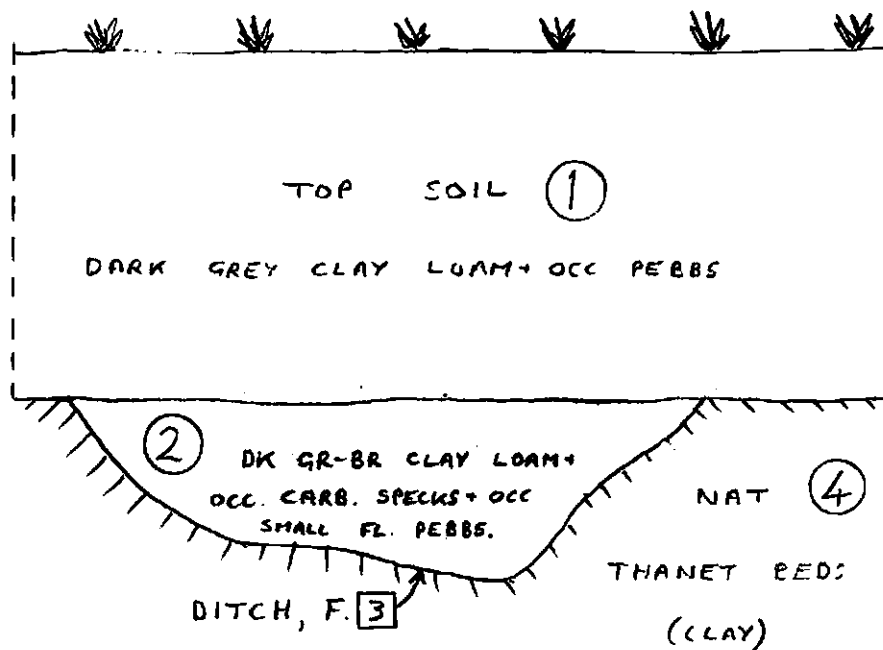
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NORTH

SOUTH



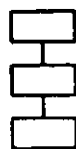
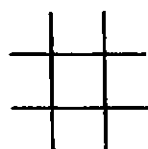
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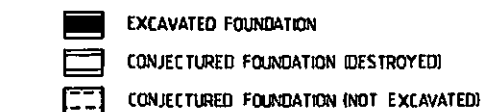


NOTES

SANDWICH 1999,
POULDER'S GARDENS,
SECTION ACROSS DITCH,
FEATURE 3.

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