



Archaeological Services
University of Durham

**1 High Street, Aldborough, Boroughbridge,
North Yorkshire**

archaeological watching brief

on behalf of

Mrs Frances Pride

ASUD Report 1226

March 2005

Archaeological Services

University of Durham

South Road

Durham DH1 3LE

Tel: 0191 334 1121

Fax: 0191 334 1126

archaeological.services@durham.ac.uk

www.durham.ac.uk/archaeologicalservices

1 High Street, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire

Archaeological watching brief

ASUD Report 1226

March 2005

Archaeological Services University of Durham

on behalf of

Mrs Frances Pride

1 High Street, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, York, North Yorkshire, YO15 9ET

Contents

1. Summary	1
2. Project background	2
3. Landuse, topography and geology	2
4. Results	3
5. The finds	3
6. Conclusion and recommendations	8
7. References	9
Appendix: context information	10

1. Summary

The project

- 1.1 This report presents the results of a watching brief conducted during the development at 1 High Street, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire. The site comprised a single building plot, on the site of an existing house. The development had the potential to expose archaeological features relating to Aldborough Roman Town.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Mrs Frances Pride, and conducted by Archaeological Services University of Durham in accordance with a specification provided by North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit.

Results

- 1.3 Topsoil was stripped from the site and the foundations trenches were excavated into the natural subsoil. Roman and modern finds were recovered from the trenches, but no archaeological features were seen.

Conclusion and recommendations

- 1.4 The watching brief has found no evidence of any significant features remaining at the site, but has recovered finds demonstrating the extensive and long-lived Roman occupation of the area. No further work is recommended in connection with this development.

2. Project background

Location (Figure 1)

- 2.1 The site is located at 1 High Street, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire, and centred on grid reference SE 405 662. The size of the monitored area is 84 square metres.

Development proposal

- 2.2 The proposal is to construct a single two-storey extension to the existing property, along with the addition of a designated patio area.

Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the scheme of works is to ensure that any archaeological deposits that may survive under the new building are recorded before they are damaged or destroyed by the proposed foundation and service trenches.

Specification

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with the written scheme of investigation provided by North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Section.

Dates

- 2.5 Fieldwork was undertaken between 22nd February and 1st March 2005. This report was prepared between 2nd March and 8th April 2005.

Personnel

- 2.6 Fieldwork was conducted by Janice Adams. This report was prepared by Janice Adams, with illustrations by Janine Fisher. The Project Manager was Richard Annis.
- 2.7 Specialist analysis was conducted by Dr Steve Willis, of the University of Kent (Roman ceramics), and Louisa Gidney of Archaeological Services University of Durham (animal bone).

Archive and OASIS

- 2.8 The site code is **AHS05**, for **Aldborough High Street 2005**. The site archive is currently held by Archaeological Services and will be transferred to the appropriate repository in due course. The OASIS reference number for this project is archaeol3-7025.

3. Landuse, topography and geology

- 3.1 The geology of the site is undifferentiated Permian and Triassic sandstones, overlain by glacial drift sand deposits.
- 3.2 At the time of the survey the proposed development area was used as a residential property and garden. The site occupies an area of mainly level land situated on the east side of a small hill. The land to the rear of the property

drops away sharply at its northern boundary and gently slopes down to the eastern edge of the property and again to the road. The mean elevation of the site is c.34m OD.

- 3.3 An amount of land appears to be made up ground, hence the sharp drop to the northern boundary. The original slope of land was probably gentler here. The earlier adjacent properties to either side of the site face the road and respect the gradient of the land, which slopes down to the north.

4. Results

- 4.1 The area covered by the watching brief is shown in Figure 2. Within the footprint a number of services were found, including water pipes, electric cables and drains. The range of services ran east-west across the site and north-south to and from the existing property.
- 4.2 The natural subsoil was yellow sand [5] (Figure 3). This was observed to a maximum depth of 1.00m. This was overlain by light yellow-brown silty sand [4], located at a depth of 0.68m. This may represent a hill wash deposit. Above this, at a depth of 0.31m, was a mid-brown sandy silt layer [3], which contained small pieces of red sandstone and rare small sub-rounded stones; other inclusions were small fragments of brick, mortar and rare pieces of shell. Overlying [3], a mid-brown sandy silt [2], lay directly below the topsoil [1] at a depth of 0.18m. Deposit [2] contained frequent cobbles, bricks, pieces of tile, glazed pot and glass. This is likely to have been deposited to level up the site prior to the building of the house. The topsoil [1] was a dark brown silt deposit that varied in depth from 0.18m in the south to 0.30m at the edge of excavation to the north. Layers [1] – [4] all showed signs of root intervention.
- 4.3 On the removal of topsoil in the south-western section of the garden a cobbled wall was located at a depth of 0.18m. This wall traversed the site on an east-west alignment; it remained largely undisturbed by the work and was left *in situ*. The foundation trench for the extension cut the wall (Figure 3); it was apparent that the wall was modern, as it was sited above the cut for the existing water supply.
- 4.4 Several fragments of pottery of Roman and modern date were recovered from the deposits (Figure 3) and from the previous backfilling of the service trenches.

5. The finds

- 5.1 The assemblage of finds recovered comprises 35 pieces of pottery, including a range of blue and white patterned china and other glazed modern material. A fragment of clay pipe, two iron objects, a tin glazed ashtray, two modern glass bottles and a bottle top, a toy ice-cream van and an action figure were also found, as well as a number of animal bones and shells.

Roman pottery

- 5.2 The works produced a small assemblage of 13 sherds of Roman pottery from 13 vessels of various types. Three contexts yielded Roman pottery, while several sherds were also recovered unstratified. This group is interesting in its variety, reflecting both the Roman chronology of Aldborough and indeed the importance of the site in the Roman era when it was a major centre, with wide connections. This pottery is in a good state of preservation.
- 5.3 Although Aldborough has been the site of various archaeological explorations in the past there has been comparatively little work undertaken in recent years. Colin Dobinson's survey of the extra-mural area is noteworthy, while previously unpublished excavations by Dorothy Charlesworth and the RCHME have been written up to modern standards in the past few years (Snape *et al.* 2002) with this paper including a substantive summary of the Roman pottery recovered. Earlier studies of the Roman pottery from Aldborough predated the era of firm knowledge of sources, dates and types. Hence the opportunity to identify and report the present material is a welcome addition to our corpus of knowledge of Roman Aldborough.

The pottery fabrics

- 5.4 Eleven different fabrics are represented amongst the 13 sherds. These are identified and described below.
- 5.5 ***Fabric A.*** The fabric is fired to a pale yellow and pale red; the exterior surface is pale yellow with a burnished finish; the interior surface and the interior and exterior margins are pale red, while the core is pale yellow. This fabric is hard with a slightly rough feel and displays regular fractures. The clay appears well prepared; quartz grains occur in sparse to rare frequency and fine mica plates are readily discernable. This fabric is very likely to be a product of the East Midlands where fabrics of a generically similar nature were employed to produce a range of stylistically Roman forms in the early Roman era; there is a strong probability that this item is from the vicinity of Lincoln. One example.
- 5.6 ***Fabric B.*** The fabric has a cream exterior slipped surface and a red/orange exterior margin; the interior surface can be also red or dark grey, while the interior margin and core are dark grey. The fabric is hard with a slightly rough feel; it is associated here with regular fractures. The clay appears well prepared with few inclusions. Fine/very fine quartz grains occur in sparse to rare frequency and the fabric is somewhat micaceous. This fabric is very likely to be a product of the East Midlands or Vale of York area, indeed there is a strong probability that the sherds represented in this sample are examples of *Eboracum* White-Slipped ware from York (Tomber and Dore 1998, 199-200). Two examples.
- 5.7 ***Fabric C.*** (South East) Dorset Black Burnished Ware 1 (BB1) (Tyers 1996, 182-6; Tomber and Dore 1998, 127). Two examples.

- 5.8 **Fabric D.** Quartz tempered grey ware likely to be Rossington Bridge Black Burnished Ware 1 (Tyers 1996, 186; Tomber and Dore 1998, 202-3). One example.
- 5.9 **Fabric E.** The fabric has a yellow-brown exterior surface, and a reddish brown interior surface; the core and margins are grey. This fabric is hard with a slightly rough feel and displays regular fractures. The clay appears well prepared; very fine quartz grains occur in sparse to rare frequency and fine mica plates are readily discernable. This fabric is undiagnostic, though it resembles so-called 'silty wares' that occur in the *Verulamium*-Hertfordshire region and elsewhere in Yorkshire in the early Roman era. One example.
- 5.10 **Fabric F.** The fabric has a matt black exterior surface and a red exterior margin; the interior surface margin and core are light to mid grey. This is a hard fabric with a slightly rough feel and regular fractures. The fabric has a granular appearance. Fine quartz and other grains occur in moderate to common frequency and the clay is somewhat micaceous. This coarse ware fabric is undiagnostic of source, though it is likely to be a regional product of Roman date. One example.
- 5.11 **Fabric G.** The fabric is black throughout. It is hard with a soapy feel and irregular fractures. Irregular voids occur in the fabric in moderate frequency and indicate the former presence of calcite inclusions that have weathered away. This distinctive fabric is associated here with a handmade vessel and relates to a long-lived regional tradition of handmade calcite tempered vessels that lasts through the Iron Age and Roman period. When only body sherds occur in this ware it is often not possible to assign them to anything other than a broad date range. One example.
- 5.12 **Fabric H.** Crambeck Grey ware (Tyers 1996, 188-9; Tomber and Dore 1998, 197). One example.
- 5.13 **Fabric I.** Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria fabric (Tyers 1996, 123-4; Tomber and Dore 1998, 189). One example.
- 5.14 **Fabric J.** South Gaulish samian ware from La Graufesenque (Webster 1996). One example.
- 5.15 **Fabric K.** *Eboracum* Oxidized Ware, Fabric 1 (Perrin 1981, 58; Tomber and Dore 1998, 199). One example.

Catalogue

- 5.16 The catalogue lists all the sherds from the works. The catalogue adheres to a consistent format. Sherds are listed in context number order, then the following data are given: the number of sherds and their type (ie. whether a sherd is from the rim, base (footring) or body of a vessel), the fabric type of the item, the vessel form, the weight of the sherds in grams, the percentage of any extant rim (ie. the RE figure, where 1.00 would represent a complete circumference) or base (ie. the BE figure) and the rim and base diameters, and

an estimate of the date of the sherd in terms of calendar years (this being the date range of deposits with which like pieces are normally associated).

Context 1, topsoil.

Base sherd, in Fabric B, from a fairly large jar or flagon/jug, 27g, BE: 0.18, Diam. c. 60mm, c. AD 65-200. This sherd has been 'chipped' probably due to having been moved around in the soil following its original breakage/discard.

Context 2, made up ground, disturbed layer.

Body sherd, in Fabric F, from a jar, 17g, c. AD 40-400+. A trace of what may well be calcareous deposits occurs on the interior surface suggesting the vessel had been used to boil water/liquid. This moderate sized sherd is somewhat abraded.

Context 3, buried soil deposit.

Body sherd, South Gaulish samian from La Graufesenque (Fabric J), from a platter of Drag. Form 18, 2g, c. AD 40-100. A high gloss slip is present. The sherd, though small, is in good condition.

Base sherd, in Fabric A, from a large, thick walled, storage jar or flagon/jug, 148g, BE: 0.58, Diam. 70mm, c. AD 50-100/120. This large sherd is in good condition.

Base sherd, in Fabric B, from a large, thick walled, storage jar or flagon/jug, 35g, BE: 0.13, Diam. c. 66mm, c. AD 65-200. This item may have been somewhat over-fired.

Body sherd, Fabric E, probably from a flagon, 21g, c. AD 70-200. The vessel represented appears to have been somewhat over fired and is distorted.

Body sherd, Fabric C, probably from a bowl or dish rather than a jar, 5g, c. AD 115-400+. Cross-hatch scoring is evident on the exterior of this sherd which is characteristic of this fabric. The sherd, though small, is in good condition.

Body sherd, Fabric D, from a jar of cooking vessel type, 18g, c. AD 140-200. A vestige of cross-hatch scoring is evident on the exterior of this sherd which is characteristic of this fabric.

Rim sherd, minus flange, in Fabric I, from a mortarium with internal bead (near vertical) and reeded flange, 154g, RE: 0.17, Diam. 200mm, c. AD 200-300. This large sherd is in a good state of preservation. The trituration grits present are worn indicating a well-used vessel.

Unstratified pottery

Body sherd, Fabric G, from a thick-walled handmade jar, 30g, c. 750 BC – AD 400+. The exterior surface has been carefully smoothed.

Body sherd, Fabric C, from a thin-walled jar, 5g, c. AD 115-400+. Cross-hatch scoring is evident on the exterior of this sherd which is characteristic of this fabric. Carbonized residue lies over part of the exterior surface indicating

that this vessel had been used for cooking with the carbonized residue representing charred food remains.

Rim sherd, Fabric K, from a bowl evidently imitating the Drag. 38 form (Perrin 1981, 80, Fig. 30 No. 368), 6g, RE: 0.12, Diam. 100mm, c. AD 150-250. The sherd is in good condition.

Body sherd, Fabric H, from a beaker or jar (cf. Corder 1989, Fig. 2 No. 3, Fig. 4 Nos 12 and 14a), 13g, c. AD 300-400+. The exterior surface shows decoration comprising neat horizontal impressed bands.

Discussion

- 5.17 The assemblage of Roman sherds from these works is varied in terms of date, sources and forms but this is to be expected since the supply and consumption of Roman pottery at Aldborough will have been large, diverse and sustained over centuries.
- 5.18 Potentially the earliest item is the body sherd in Fabric G which may be Iron Age, though on balance it is likely to be of Roman date. Two items are of early Roman date, these being the sherd of samian and the large vessel in Fabric A. These two items, as with the two examples in Fabric B may well relate to the early Roman military phase at Aldborough. Otherwise the sherds span the Roman era with middle and late Roman items present.
- 5.19 Only one item, the samian sherd, is an import from another province. This item apart the assemblage is largely composed of vessels from major production centres in the province of Britain (ie. the items from Dorset and probably Lincoln) as well as more local sources in the Yorkshire region (Crambeck, York and probably Rossington Bridge).
- 5.20 In terms of vessel forms and functions there is again a variety. The occurrence of three similar large vessels (be they jars or flagons) is noteworthy; they evidently came from York (*Eboracum*). While they may relate to the Roman military presence at Aldborough, if they do not they are further testimony to the Romanized character of Aldborough during the early Roman period.

Animal bone

- 5.21 The animal bones were recovered from context [1] and [2]; pottery from these contexts suggest these bones may be post medieval to modern in date. Only two fragments of bone were located within [3], and these may be Roman in date. The assemblage is described in Table 1, below.
- 5.22 The majority of bones derive from cattle. The fact that most bone shows signs of saw and cut marks indicates that butchery was been practiced

Shell

- 5.23 One oyster shell was recovered from context [2] and a whelk shell from context [3].

Context 1 Cattle	1 tibia 1 ischium fragment (sawn) 1 ilium fragment (sawn) 1 lumbar vertebra, (sawn) 2 rib shafts (sawn) 1 vertebra fragment
Pig	1 tibia fragment
Goose	1 tibia fragment
Deer (juvenile)	1 metatarsal fragment (repeated cut marks)
Context 2 Pig	1 mandible fragment
Cattle	2 rib shaft fragments
Context3 Cattle	2 lumbar vertebra fragments

Table 1: animal bone

Glass

- 5.24 2 clear glass bottles one square shaped and one circular in shape found within the topsoil layer [1]. The later with the words Ripon Wells at the base. The glass bottles are both modern in date were.

Iron objects

- 5.25 Two iron objects were found within the topsoil [1]. These were an iron ring with an external diameter of 80mm and an iron bolt, 150mm in length. They were of modern date and were both found in the topsoil layer.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

- 6.1 The watching brief has found no evidence of any significant features remaining at the site, but has recovered finds demonstrating the extensive and long-lived Roman occupation of the area. No further work is recommended in connection with this development.

7. References

- Corder, P. 1989. A pair of fourth-century Romano-British pottery kilns near Crambeck, in P.R. Wilson (ed.). *The Crambeck Roman Pottery Industry*, The Roman Antiquities Section, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Leeds.
- Perrin, J.R. 1981. *The Roman Pottery from the Colonia: Skeldergate and Bishophill*, The Archaeology of York, Vol. 16: The Pottery, Fasc. 2, York Archaeological Trust and the CBA, York and London.
- Snape, M., Bidwell, P.T. and Croom, A. 2002. Aldborough Roman Town: excavations by Miss D. Charlesworth 1961-73, and by RCHME 1959-60, *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 74, 29-111.
- Tomber, R.S. and Dore, J. 1998. *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: A Handbook*, Museum of London Archaeology Service, London.
- Tyers, P.A. 1996. *Roman Pottery in Britain*, B.T. Batsford, London.
- Webster, P.V. 1996. *Roman Samian Pottery in Britain*, CBA, York



Archaeological Services
University of Durham

**1 High Street, Aldborough
archaeological evaluation
report 1226**

Figure 1
Location map

on behalf of
Mrs Frances Pride

*Reproduced from Explorer 299 by permission
of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller
of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright 2002. All rights reserved.
Licence number AL100002176*

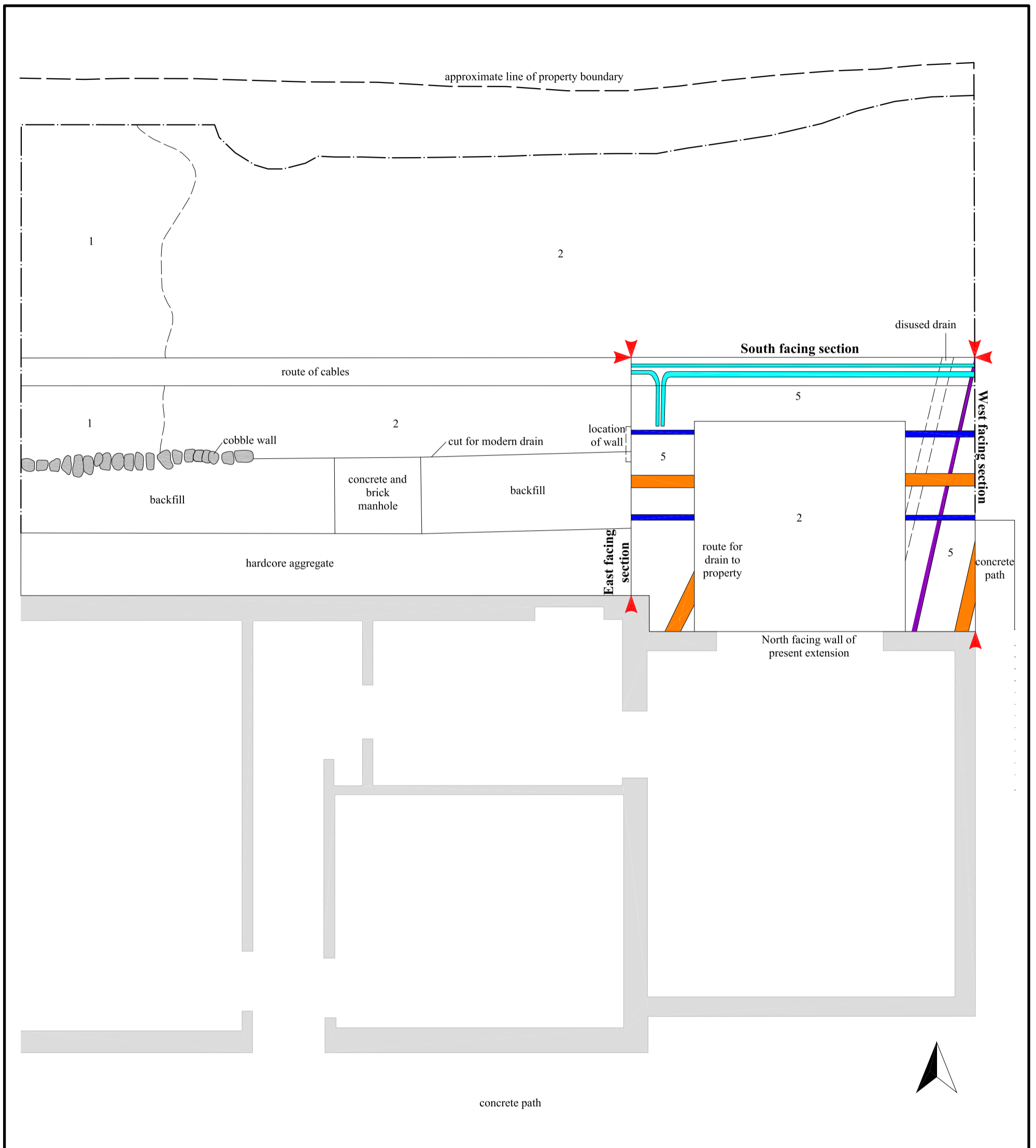


location of 1 High Street,
Aldborough

0 500m



scale 1:10 000 - for A4 plot



Archaeological Services
University of Durham

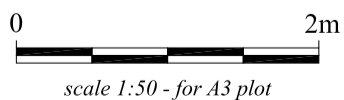
1 High Street, Alborough









archaeological evaluation
report 1226

Figure 2

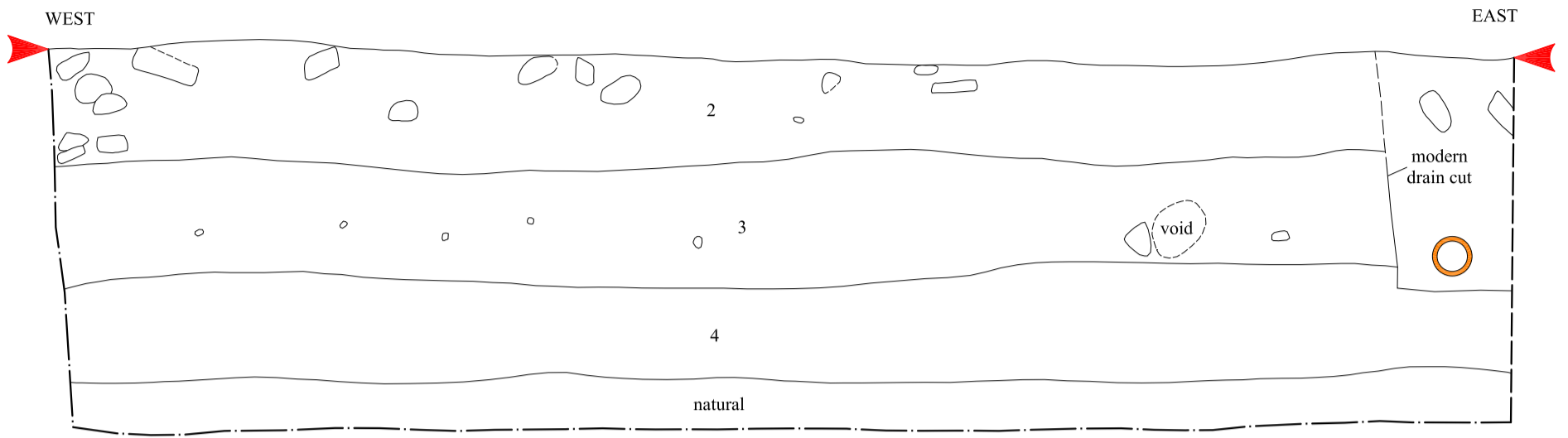
Plan of Trench 1 and outline of present
house walls

on behalf of
Mrs Frances Pride

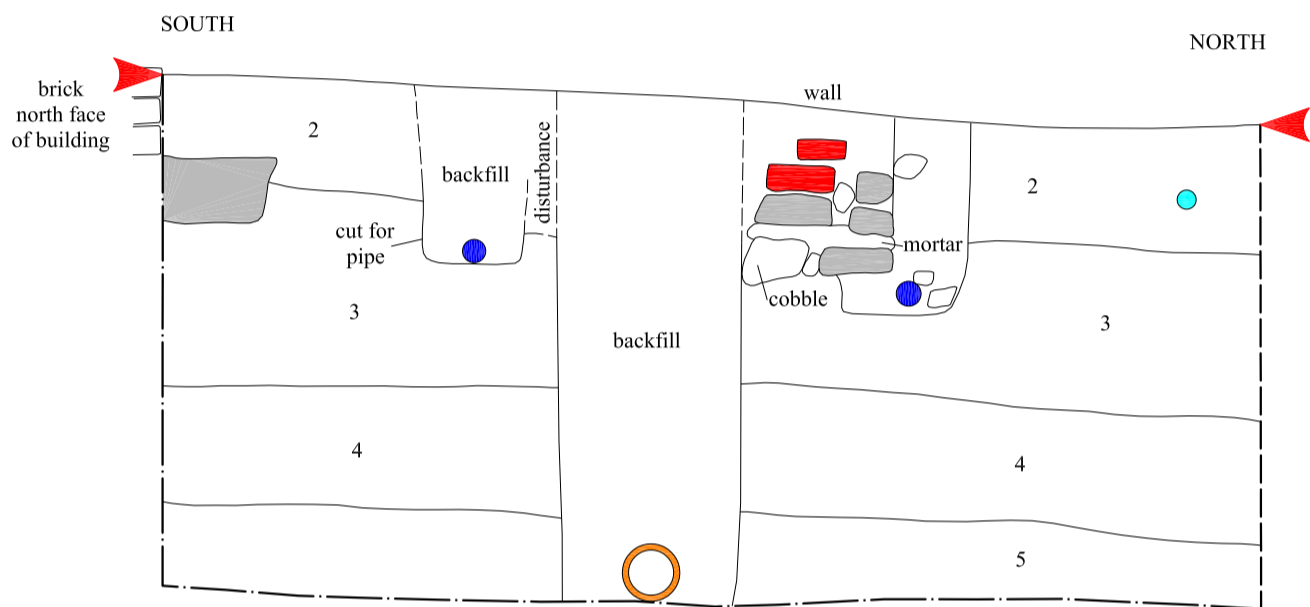


-  extent of excavation
-  extent of section
-  pipes for electric cables
-  acrylic water pipes
-  ceramic drain
-  lead water pipes
-  cobbles
-  outline of present house walls

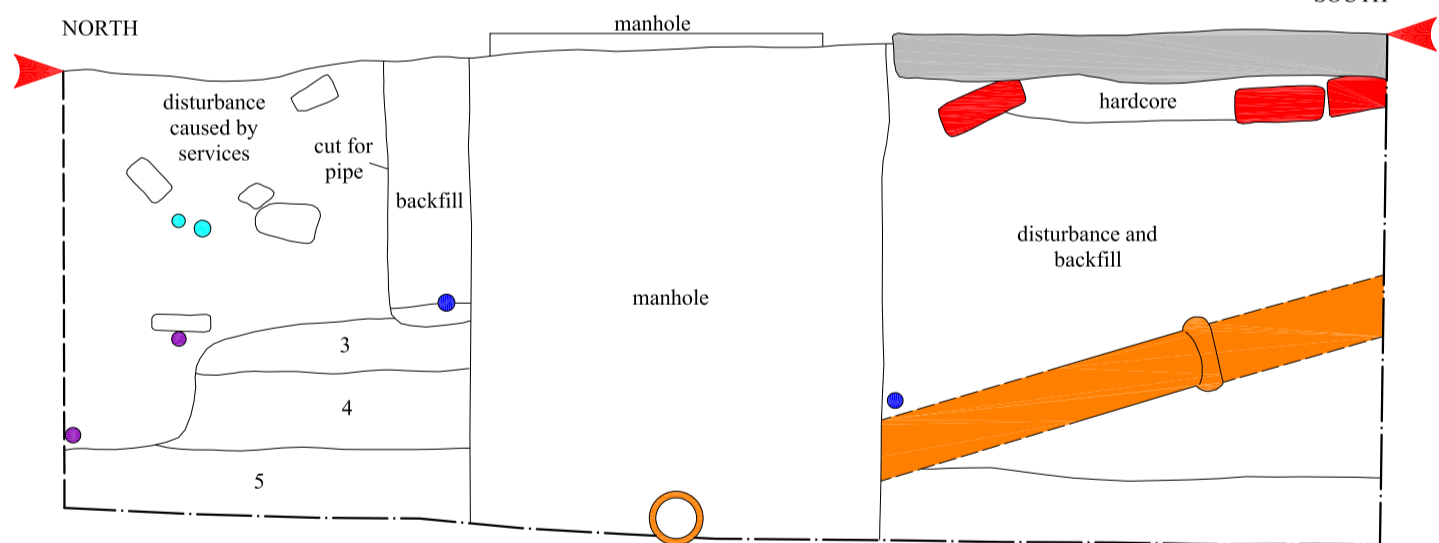
South facing section



East facing section



West facing Section



Archaeological Services
University of Durham

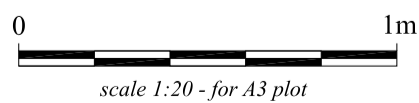
1 High Street, Aldborough









archaeological evaluation
report 1226

Figure 3

Trench 1, sections

on behalf of
Mrs Frances Pride



-  extent of excavation
-  extent of section
-  pipes for electric cables
-  acrylic water pipes
-  ceramic drain
-  lead water pipes
-  concrete
-  brick

Appendix: Context data

Summary list of contexts. The • symbol in the columns at the right indicate the presence of finds within their context.

No	Description	Pot	Bone	Iron	Shell	Glass	Other
1	Topsoil	•	•	•		•	•
2	Made up ground	•	•			•	
3	Buried soil	•	•		•		
4	Sub-soil						
5	Natural (sand)						