



**Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at
Pitlands Farm, Up Marden, West Sussex**

August 2019

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This document sets out the results from an archaeological watching brief carried out by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd, on behalf of the owner, at Pitlands Farm, Up Marden, West Sussex. The works were carried out in May 2019 as a watching brief on landscaping work associated with both the construction of a new summer house and the creation of an access track to an existing ancillary building.

Pitlands Farm overlies the remains of a substantial Roman bath house and other associated structures forming part of a presumed villa complex, which is a Scheduled Monument (No.1015235). An earlier evaluation over the site of the summer house had revealed a north-south running ditch and a series of pits, all of medieval date. The watching brief exposed further pits, probably of a similar date. In the area of the access track the earlier evaluation had revealed a single east-west running ditch, probably again of medieval date. A longer stretch of this ditch was exposed during the course of the watching brief.

BACKGROUND

Topographical Background

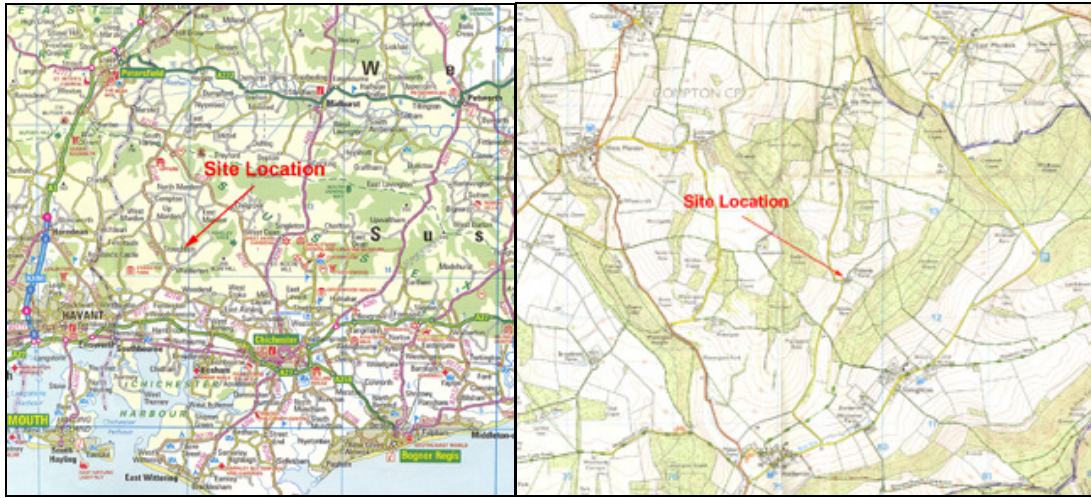


Figure 1 Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

1. Pitlands Farm lies 10km to the north-west of Chichester in the parish of Compton, West Sussex, at 60m aOD, OS grid reference SU 7967 1235. Geologically the site lies on the Newhaven chalk formation.

Project Background

1. Excavations at Pitlands Farm undertaken in the 1960's and 1990's uncovered the remains of a substantial second century Roman bath house and associated aisled building. The site, including the area of the current Farmhouse, was subsequently designated a Scheduled Monument (No.1015235).
2. Mr. P. Huxham received Scheduled Monument Consent for the construction of a new summer house to the rear of the current farmhouse, as well as for a new access track to an existing building lying to the east of the farm. The sites of both these proposals lie either partially or wholly within the Scheduled area. (see Fig.2). Earlier evaluation of both sites had exposed archaeological remains dating to the medieval period (Anelay 2019a), leading to a condition being appended to the Consent requiring an archaeological watching brief during works, to be carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) to be agreed with Historic England (Anelay 2019b). West Sussex Archaeology Ltd was appointed by Mr. Huxham to write the WSI and undertake the ensuing watching brief.
3. This report details the results of that archaeological watching brief, which was carried out on the 7th – 9th & 14th May 2019 by George Anelay of West Sussex Archaeology Ltd.

Historical Background

1. The presence of Roman remains at Pitlands Farm was first noted by the wife of the then landowner in the garden to the rear of the current farmhouse. This led to a series of archaeological excavations carried out between 1965 and 1969 under the supervision of Roy & Sheila Morgan and overall direction of Alec Down (Down 1979). The main trench was positioned over what proved to be a substantial bath building running east-west, to the immediate north-east of the farmhouse, together with traces of an adjoining wall, yard surface and well. Further small-scale trenching was located to the north which revealed two more stretches of wall foundation, which were interpreted as the remains of further buildings, and an undated gully with an associated line of post-holes. The excavated pottery suggested a date range for the villa as a whole from Flavian to the fourth century AD. An alteration to the bath house was dated to some time after the late third century AD. The superior size and construction of the excavated bath house suggested to the excavators that the villa was of greater size and importance than others in the area. Late Saxon and medieval pottery was also found within the trenches, suggesting later occupation on the site. The current farmhouse is 17th century in origin.
2. Further excavations were undertaken in 1992 and 1993 by the Chichester District Archaeological Unit, again under the direction of Alec Down. The purpose of this project was to re-excavate parts of the bath house in order to refine its dating and to investigate a possible building seen as a parch marks in a field to the west. The bath building was dated to the early second century AD on the basis of the *in situ* relief patterned flue tiles. It was suggested that this villa is another example of the early development of masonry villas along the south coast of Sussex (Down 1992). The structure revealed by the parch marks proved to be an aisled building, aligned north-south, divided into at least six rooms and dating to the same period as bath building to the east. Further late Saxon and medieval pottery was recovered from pits cutting the Roman remains. A resistivity survey to the north, while recording some anomalies, failed to reveal anything consistent with any further buildings (Down 1993).
3. Fifteen years later, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd at Pitlands Farm in two phases from 30th January – 13th March 2008 and 10th November 2010 – 18th January 2011. The watching brief was in response to a condition of a planning permission for the re-development of some of the farm buildings which lie to the south of the present farm house, including the southern part of the Meal Shed. The principal result of this archaeological work was to demonstrate that no remains associated with the villa lie under the southern part of the modern farm courtyard. Only two significant archaeological features were found, both pits of uncertain date. In addition a number of unstratified Roman artefacts were recovered; of particular note were two fragments of a Bembridge Limestone slab,

possibly originally from a monumental Roman building, but re-used as a rainwater drain (Anelay 2011).

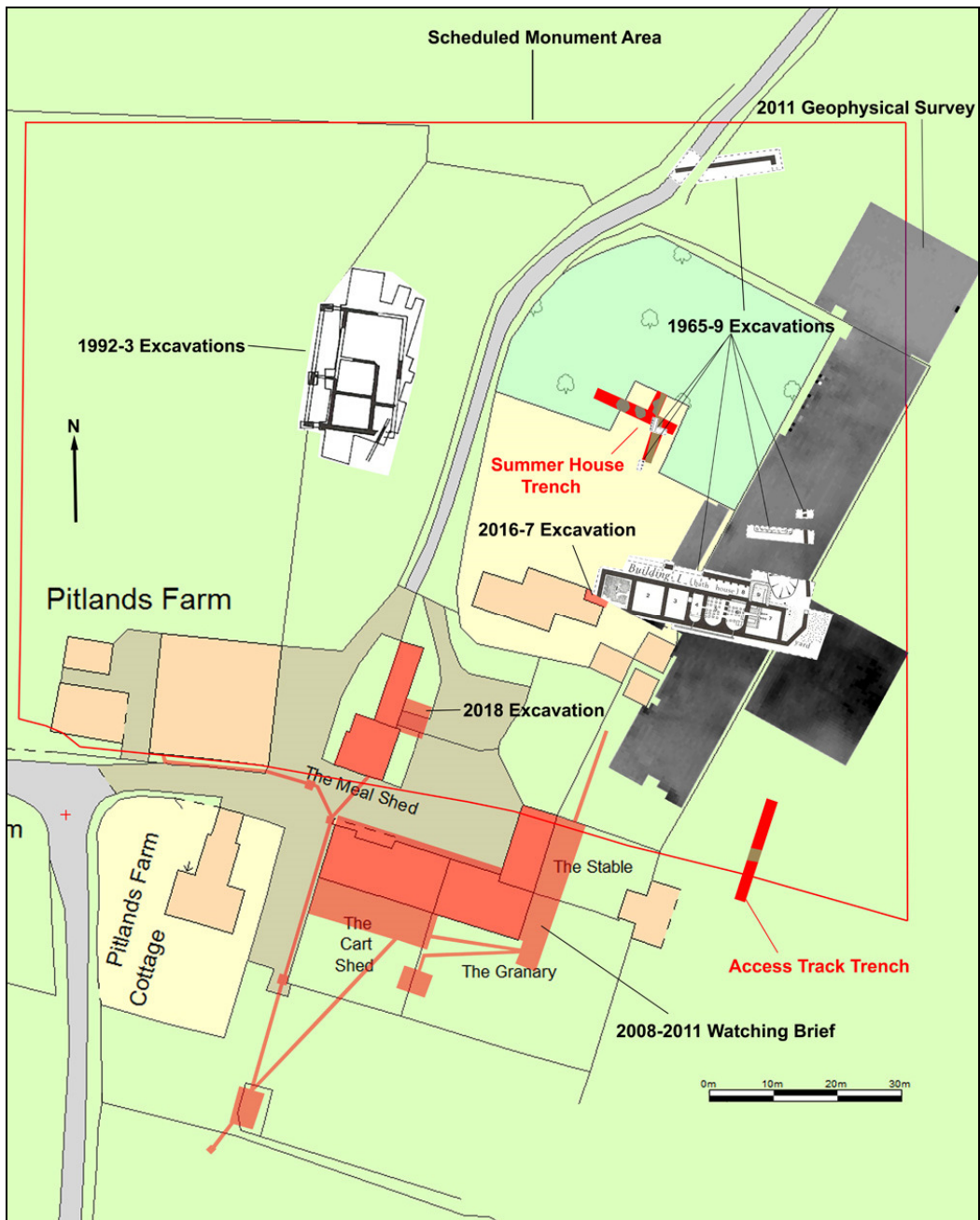


Figure 2 Pitlands Farm showing all the previous archaeological work. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

4. In July 2011 a geophysical survey was carried out by volunteers under the direction of Neville Haskins. While the magnetometer survey proved ineffective, probably due to the geological conditions on the site, a resistivity survey not only confirmed the position of the bathhouse found by the earlier excavations, but also demonstrated that other structures exist beyond the 1960's excavations to the east. Fainter anomalies also suggest further structures may exist to the south and north of the bath house (Haskins 2011).

WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

5. Further archaeological works were carried out by West Sussex Archaeology in 2016 & 2017 in an area to the immediate east of the current farmhouse. These revealed that any Roman remains associated with the bathhouse thought to extend into this location, had been truncated below the surface of the geology, possibly in the 18th or 19th century, but a north-south running ditch was exposed in the north face of the excavated trench (Anelay 2017). Another archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 2018 to the east of the Meal Shed, under the west side of the current farmyard. This revealed that the area had been truncated to the surface of the geology, possibly when the current farmyard was formed (Anelay 2018).
6. In order to inform a decision over the current proposed works, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd in February 2019 which revealed a north-south running ditch and a series of pits, all of medieval date, on the site of the summer house, and an east-west running ditch, probably again of medieval date, on the site of access track (Anelay 2019).

RESULTS

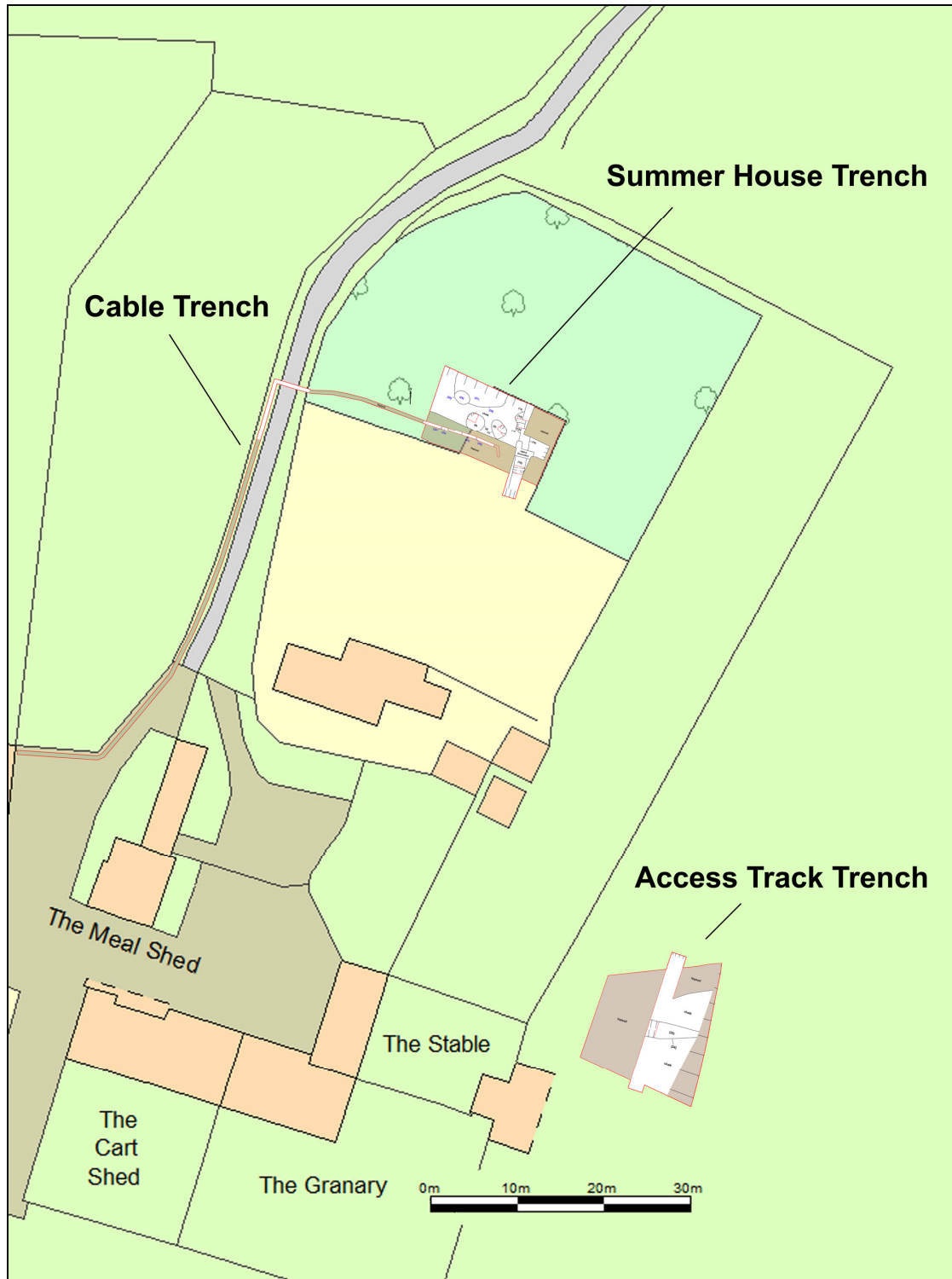


Figure 3 Location plan of the trenches © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

Summer House & Cable Trenches

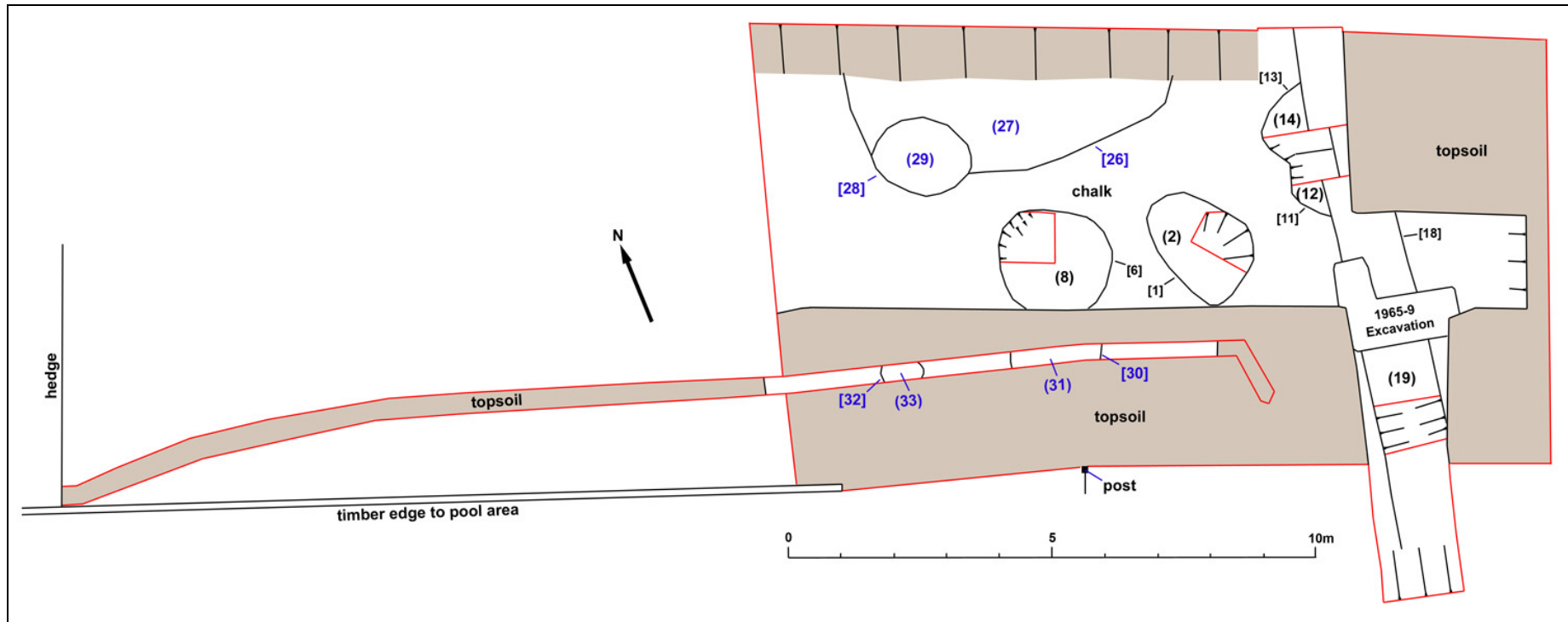


Figure 4 Plan of the summer house watching brief trench (to the right) with the north-east part of the electric cable trench (coming in from the left), showing the pits [1, 6, 11 & 13] and ditch [18] revealed by the February 2019 evaluation, together with the pits [26, 28, 30 & 32] exposed by the May 2019 watching brief

1. The evaluation of the summer house site, carried out in February 2019, had revealed four pits [1, 6, 11 & 13] and a ditch [18] of probable medieval date. The watching brief exposed a further area of chalk to the north in which lay two more pits [26 & 28], with the former cut by the latter. Neither pit was excavated, since their fills lay below the level required for the summer house landscaping. Pit [26] was c.6.25m east-west and over 2m north-south, with its upper fill consisting of an orange-brown clay silt (27) containing frequent flints and chalk, together with a single fragment of abraded Roman tile. Pit [28] was c.1.5m north-south and c.2m east-west, with its upper fill composed of dark brown clay silt (29) with frequent flints and chalk. No artefacts were observed within its upper surface. The remainder of the area subject to the watching brief was not reduced below the level of the topsoil, and consequently no further features were revealed.



Figure 5 The two pits [26 & 28] within the Summer House watching brief trench, looking east

2. Subsequent to the above work, a c.0.3m wide trench was excavated for an electric cable, which ran from the site of the summer house to a large barn, south-west of the farmhouse (see Fig.3). For much of its length this trench did not penetrate below the topsoil, the exceptions being a short stretch within the summer house watching brief trench, and another to the immediate west of the hedge dividing the farmhouse garden from a track to the west. In the latter the chalk was exposed, but no features were observed. In the former, two further probable pits [30 & 32] were observed, but not excavated, since their fills lay below the base of the cable trench. Pit [30] was c.1.75m in diameter, where it lay within the trench, and was filled with a dark brown clay silt (31) containing flint and chalk. Pit [32] was only c.0.8m in diameter and was filled with a yellow-brown clay silt (33), again containing flint and chalk. No artefacts were noted in their upper surface.



Figure 6 The two pits [30 & 32] within the electric cable trench, looking west. The scale lies over the larger eastern Pit [30]

3. Without further excavation, both in exposing the full dimensions of these additional four pits, and in removing their fills, it is not possible to be certain as to their date and function, but it is likely that they are contemporary with the pits revealed during the earlier evaluation. These were suggested to be chalk extraction pits, possibly for small-scale domestic use, such as panel infilling or the formation of ovens, rather than for agricultural purposes.

Access Trench

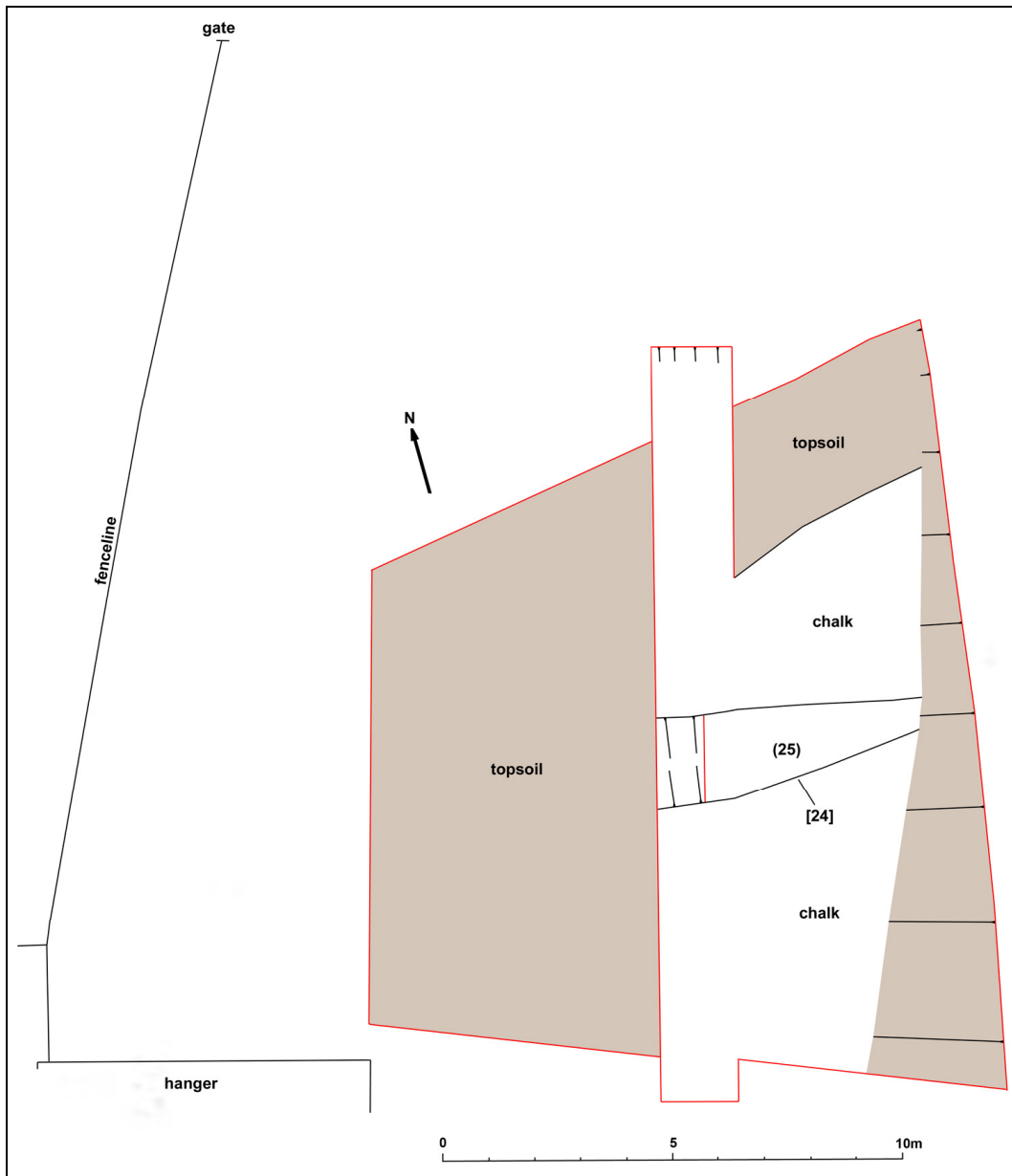


Figure 7 Plan of the access track watching brief trench showing the ditch [24] exposed by both the February 2019 evaluation and the May 2019 watching brief

1. The evaluation of the access track site, carried out in February 2019, had revealed a single ditch [24] of probable medieval date. The watching brief exposed a further area of chalk to the east, revealing the ditch's continuation in this direction. It was not completely excavated, although its upper part, close to the baulk, was truncated as a result of the necessary landscaping associated with the creation of the access track. No artefacts, additional to those recovered from it during the evaluation, were noted, nor were any further features revealed cut into the chalk. The remainder of the area subject to a watching brief was not reduced below the level of the topsoil, and consequently no further features were noted.



Figure 8 Ditch [24], as it continues to the east, exposed in the access track watching brief trench, looking east

CONCLUSION

1. Aside from the exposure of the outlines of a further four pits within the area of the summer house trench, little can be added to the conclusions of the earlier evaluation report (Anelay 2019a, p15-6). The pits and ditch partially excavated then, would appear to all be of medieval date, and it is likely that the four found by the watching brief are of a similar date. This would strengthen the argument that a medieval dwelling is located nearby, probably the predecessor of the current 17th century farmhouse. Once again, no trace was found of any *in situ* Roman remains, confirming the supposition that the presumed principal villa building lies further to the east.
2. As had been suggested in the evaluation report (*Ibid.*, p.16) no additional archaeological remains were found within the footprint of the proposed access track, aside from the continuation of Ditch [24], which would appear to have been a long-lasting boundary feature, probably originating in the medieval period.

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