

Englefield House
Englefield, Berkshire

Watching Brief Report





Wessex Archaeology

**ENGLEFIELD HOUSE
ENGLEFIELD GREEN
THEALE
BERKSHIRE
RG7 5EN**

Watching Brief Report

Prepared for:

Maybank and Matthews Architects Ltd.
216 Tower Bridge Road
London
SE1 2UP

By:

Wessex Archaeology in London
Unit 113
The Chandlery
50 Westminster Bridge Road
London
SE1 7QY

WA Ref: 71410.02

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Maybank and Matthews Architects Ltd (the Client) on behalf of the Englefield Estate to undertake an archaeological watching brief on geotechnical test pits to the rear of Englefield House, Englefield Green, Theale, Berkshire (the Site). The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 462180 171962.

The watching brief observed the hand excavation, by estate staff, of two geotechnical test pits to a depth of between 0.90m and 1.60m below the present ground level. The excavation took place on the 24th March 2009.

The watching brief observed no archaeological deposits or features. All of the archaeological deposits observed contained exclusively 19th century or later material.

The results of this watching brief show that the geotechnical test pits did not have an impact on significant archaeological deposits.

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Acknowledgements

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Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Duncan Coe of West Berkshire Council's Archaeological Unit, for monitoring the works.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Peter Reeves. The fieldwork was undertaken by Gary Evans.

The report was compiled by Gary Evans and Peter Reeves. Illustrations were by Kitty Brandon.

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Watching Brief Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of Project

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Maybank and Matthews Architects Ltd on behalf of Englefield Estates to undertake an archaeological watching brief on two hand-dug geotechnical test pits in advance of the proposed re-development of the Grade II* listed Englefield House, Englefield Green, Theale, Berkshire (the Site). Centred on NGR 462180 171962 (**Figure 1**).

1.2 Fieldwork

1.2.1 The fieldwork programme, which comprised the monitoring of hand dug geotechnical test pits, was requested by the Archaeological Advisor to West Berkshire Council who advised that the Site had the potential for archaeological remains.

1.2.2 This report details the results of the fieldwork that took place on the 24th March 2009.

2 THE SITE

2.1 Site Location

2.1.1 The Site lies 1.5km north-west of Theale on an east – west aligned bluff overlooking the valley of the River Kennet. The bluff marks the scarp side of the valley leading up to the Berkshire Downs (**Figure 1**).

2.1.2 The two geotechnical test pits are situated in the southern corner of a large open courtyard located to the rear of Englefield House.

2.1.3 Test Pit 1 was excavated adjacent to a ca. 3m high buttressed brick and mortar wall. This wall runs northwest-south east along the southern edge of the courtyard and serves as a retaining wall for a large terrace to the south. The test pit was cut into a 3m wide terrace which runs northwest –southeast between the House and a north -south running terrace wall forming the Site's northwest boundary (**Figure 2**). The present ground surface at test Pit 1 is some 1.50 higher than the courtyard.

2.1.4 Test Pit 2 was excavated adjacent to the rear wall of the House (**Figure 2**).

2.2 Topography, Geology

2.2.1 The Site lies at around 66m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology of the area consists of Cretaceous Chalk (British Geological Survey (drift), sheet 268).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 No previous archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken on the Site and it is not part of a Scheduled Monument. However, a number of archaeological finds are recorded in the general area, with dates ranging from Mesolithic to medieval.
- 3.1.2 These include Upper Palaeolithic flint tools from Englefield (Lobb and Rose, 1996, 72-3).
- 3.1.3 A number of Bronze Age ring ditches containing Peterborough Ware and Grooved Ware pottery were excavated some 2km to the south of the Site in Englefield in the 1990s (Lobb and Rose, 1996, 77-78).
- 1.3.1 The river terrace gravels of the Kennet Valley are of established archaeological potential.
- 1.3.2 Extensive crop marks indicative of later prehistoric and Romano-British settlement and field systems are visible on aerial photographs, particularly around Burghfield. Although no crop marks are recorded within the Site itself. Much of this part of the Kennet Valley has been subject to gravel extraction over recent years and numerous archaeological investigations have been undertaken at locations in the wider vicinity of the Site. Many of these sites are described in Butterworth and Lobb (1992) and Lobb and Rose (1996); examples of particular note are summarised here.
- 1.3.3 At Field Farm, Burghfield, ca. 4km to the south-east of the Site, intermittent watching briefs, field walking and excavation over a period of five years recovered material ranging from Mesolithic flint work to a Saxon inhumation cemetery and included a number of Bronze Age cremation burials containing Collared Urns and Deverel Rimbury Urns with associated ring ditches (Butterworth and Lobb, 1992, 5-72).
- 1.3.4 At Anslow's Cottages, Burghfield, excavations in advance of gravel extraction identified a range of river related activities dating from the Bronze Age to Post-medieval periods. The waterlogged deposits preserved worked timbers relating to a series of river and riverside structures, together with environmental evidence in the form of pollen, mollusc and insect assemblages (Butterworth and Lobb 1992, 79-169).
- 1.3.5 An archaeological assessment (evaluation) at the Theale Industrial Site (now developed as the Theale Business Park) produced limited evidence for a timber structure of Saxon date within a former channel of the River Kennet (Butterworth and Lobb, 1992, 2-3, 170-171).
- 1.3.6 Other Saxon remains have been recorded at Theale Ballast Hole some 2km to the southwest of the Site (Butterworth and Lobb, 1992, 2-3, 176).
- 1.3.7 Englefield House itself is a late Elizabethan E –plan house, although roof timbers supposedly found in 1838 suggest a date of ca. 1558. The original house has undergone several phases of remodelling and re-facing, particularly in the 1850s, the last phase saw the demolition of a kitchen in the courtyard behind the house in 1972 (http://www.berkshirehistory.com/castles/englefield_house.htm site visited 23 03 2009).

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1.1 The overall objective of the watching brief was to establish and record, as far as reasonably possible, any archaeological remains that may survive beneath the present ground surface.
- 4.1.2 It sought to characterise the nature, date, depth and state of preservation of any such features and deposits and to retrieve where present, stratified assemblages of finds and ecofacts.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Fieldwork

- 5.1.1 All watching brief work was conducted in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2001), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.
- 5.1.2 The fieldwork strategy comprised the supervised excavation, by hand, of two geotechnical test pits (**Figures 1 and 2**). All works was carried out by workers from the Englefield Estate and all work took place under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist.
- 5.1.3 All archaeological deposits were recorded by means of Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording sheets. A photographic record was made. Plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50 and sections at 1:10.

5.2 Finds Collection and Retention

- 5.2.1 All Finds were treated in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2001), the UK Institute of Conservators' *Guidelines Conservation Guideline No 2* and the Museums and Galleries Commission's *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (1991), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.
- 5.2.2 Where features or deposits were clearly modern finds were examined noted and discarded.

5.3 Environmental Sampling Strategy

- 5.3.1 A strategy for sampling archaeological and environmental deposits was developed in consultation with Wessex Archaeology's environmental manager.

5.4 The Archive

- 5.4.1 The project archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in London under the Wessex Archaeology project code WA 71410.
- 5.4.2 The project archive will be prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage* (UKIC 1990).
- 5.4.3 The resulting archive will be put onto microfiche to the standards accepted by the National Monuments Record (NMR).

- 5.4.4 Following the conclusion of the project and with the permission of the landowner the archive will be prepared for deposition with Berkshire Museum Service.

6 RESULTS

6.1 Depositional Sequence

- 6.1.1 The following section presents a brief summary of the results and an outline of the depositional sequence observed on Site. Detailed summaries of the trenches are presented in **Appendix 1** and full details are available in the project archive. In the following sections context numbers are given in bold.
- 6.1.2 No archaeological features, deposits or related artefactual material other than modern were observed in any part of the Site.

Test Pit 1

- 6.1.3 At the base of Test Pit 1 a 1.25m thick deposit of light yellow grey, stiff clay containing no inclusions was observed. This deposit was probably re-deposited natural geological clay used to construct the 1.50m high terrace into which Test Pit 1 was cut or was the backfill of the foundation trench for the footings of wall (**101**). This deposit was observed beneath wall (**101**).
- 6.1.4 Deposit **105** was sealed by a layer of light yellow grey, coarse sandy clay silt and rubble (abundant red brick fragments as well as rounded pebbles and fragments of chalk (**104**)). This layer was the bedding layer for a red brick floor (**103**).
- 6.1.5 The red brick floor was overlain by a 0.10m thick layer of concrete (**102**) which formed the surface of the modern terrace.
- 6.1.6 Wall **101** was built of red unfrosted brick and white coarse sandy mortar. The wall below ground appeared to contain the same sized bricks and was built in the same bond (English quarter bond) as the wall above ground. At 1.10m below the present ground surface the wall steeped out from the face of the wall 0.10m. The footings were 0.40m thick. Layer **105** was seen to continue beneath wall **101** whose base was observed at 1.50m below present ground level (**Figure 2**).

Test Pit 2

- 6.1.7 The earliest deposit observed in either test pit was a layer of laminated undulating clay sand **205** which was found in the base of Test Pit 2 at a height of 0.90m below present ground level. This possible geological deposit, which comprised brown clayey coarse sand, was observed to continue beneath the foundations of brick wall **201** which formed the outside wall of the House. This deposit contained no artefacts or ecofacts.
- 6.1.8 Deposit **205** was overlain by a 0.70m thick layer (**204**) of mid yellow grey, clayey coarse sand and rubble which contained frequent inclusions of unfrosted red brick, roofing slate, dark grey clay and occasional large fragments of masonry (red brick and mortar). These inclusions almost certainly derived from the demolition of the kitchens which stood on this part of the Site until the 1970s. This deposit was probably a mixture of the backfill of the foundation trench for the wall (**201**) and for a pipe trench dug to put in a ceramic water pipe (**203**).

6.1.9 The demolition layer was overlain by a thin (0.10m thick) layer of tarmac (**202**) which formed the surface of the modern yard.

6.1.10 Wall (**201**) was built of red unfrosted brick and white coarse sandy mortar. The portion of the wall below ground appeared to contain the same sized bricks and was built in the same bond (Stretcher) as the wall above ground. At 0.56m below the present ground surface two courses of the wall stepped out from the face of the wall 0.20m. These footings were 0.30m thick. Layer **205** was seen to continue beneath wall **201**, whose base was observed at 0.80m below present ground level. (**Figure 2**).

6.2 Finds

6.2.1 The only artefacts recovered on Site were modern in origin. These were noted but not retained.

6.3 Environmental Evidence

6.3.1 Due to the absence of suitable deposits, no samples were taken for environmental analysis.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 General

7.1.1 The watching brief observed no archaeological deposits or features.

7.1.2 A possible natural geological deposit comprising clayey sand (**205**) was observed in Test Pit 2 at a height 0.80m below present ground surface. No artefacts or ecofacts were uncovered from these deposits.

7.2 Impact

7.2.1 The results of the watching brief show that the two geotechnical test pits did not have an impact on significant archaeological deposits.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

C. A. Butterworth and S. J. Lobb (1992) *Excavations in the Burghfield Area, Berkshire D. Developments in the Bronze Age and Saxon Landscapes*. Wessex Archaeology Report no 1

S. J. Lobb and P. G. Rose (1996) *Archaeological Survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire*. Wessex Archaeology Report no 9

Institute of Field Archaeologists (2001) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

9 APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT SUMMARY TABLES

Test Pit 1

(In Plan 1m x 0.60m. Depth: 1.60m)

(+) = Base of feature or deposit not reached

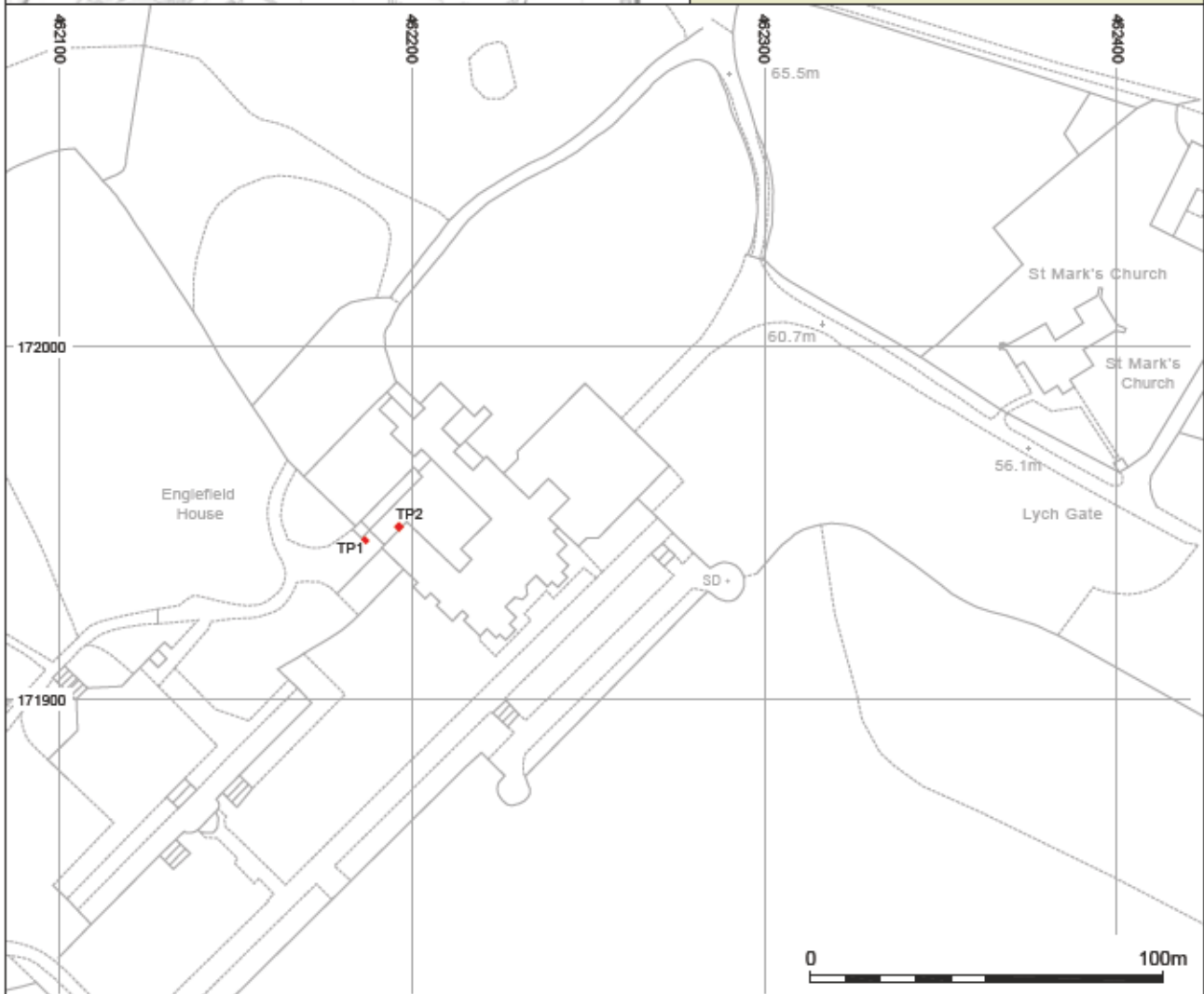
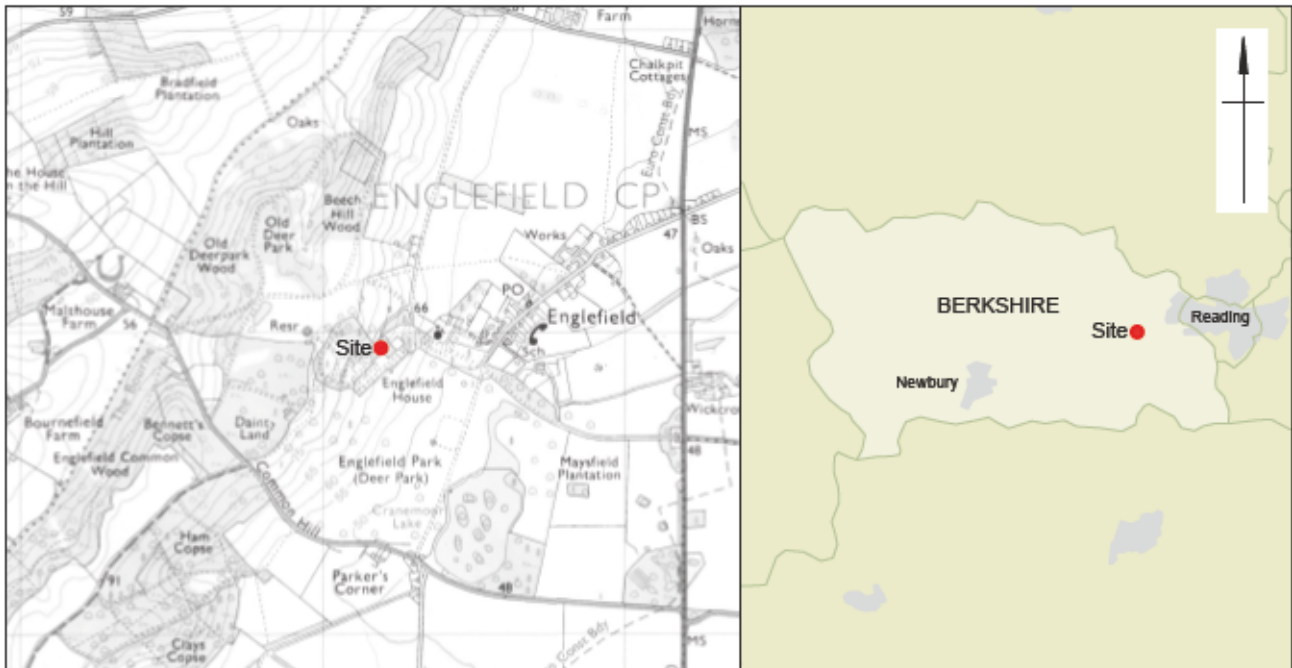
Context no.	Description	Interpretive keywords	Depth below ground level m
101	Brick and mortar retaining wall of terrace. Unfrogged bricks 230mm x 111mm x 65mm in size. Four courses of brick and mortar = 350mm. Lain on bed. Bond= English. Pointing= flush. Wall footing stepped out 0.10m at 1.50m below ground level. NB. Two square brick and mortar built buttresses either side of Test Pit	Construction Retaining/supporting wall of terrace	0.0- 1.50
102	Concrete	Construction yard surface	0.0- 0.10
103	Single course of red, unfrogged bricks. Lain on bed with no bonding material	Construction Former yard surface	0.10-0.19
104	Light yellow grey, coarse sandy clay silt and rubble. Frequent medium fragments of chalk up to 40mm in diameter, well rounded medium pebbles, unfrogged bricks, up to whole bricks (230mm x 111mm x 65mm in size).	Construction. "Made ground" bedding layer or levelling for brick floor 103	0.19-0.35
	Water	Perched? Water table	1.30
105	Light yellow grey, stiff clay sand. No inclusions	Construction Possible re-deposited Natural Geology used as makeup of terrace	0.35-1.60 (+)

Test Pit 2

(In Plan 1.10m x 1.10m. Depth: 0.90m)

(+) = Base of feature or deposit not reached

Context no.	Description	Interpretive keywords	Depth below ground level m
201	Brick and mortar wall of house. Unfrosted bricks 230mm x 111mm x 70mm in size. Four courses of brick and mortar = 360mm. Laid on bed. Bond= stretchers. Pointing =flush. Wall footing stepped out 0.20m at 0.56m below ground level	Construction outer supporting wall of house	0.0- 0.80
202	Black, Tarmac	Construction yard surface	0.0- 0.10
203	Ceramic drain	Construction Modern drain foul water pipe	0.30
204	Mid yellow grey, clayey coarse sand and rubble. Frequent medium fragments of dark grey blue stiff clay up to 60mm in diameter, unfrosted bricks up to whole bricks (230mm x 111mm x 70mm in size) moderate sub-rounded medium pebbles, occasional large fragments of roofing slate And large fragments of masonry (red brick with white mortar adhering	Construction. "Made ground" demolition rubble. possibly fill of foundation trench for wall 201	0.10-0.80
205	Mid yellow grey coarse clay sand No inclusions	Possible Natural Geology	0.80-0.90 (+)



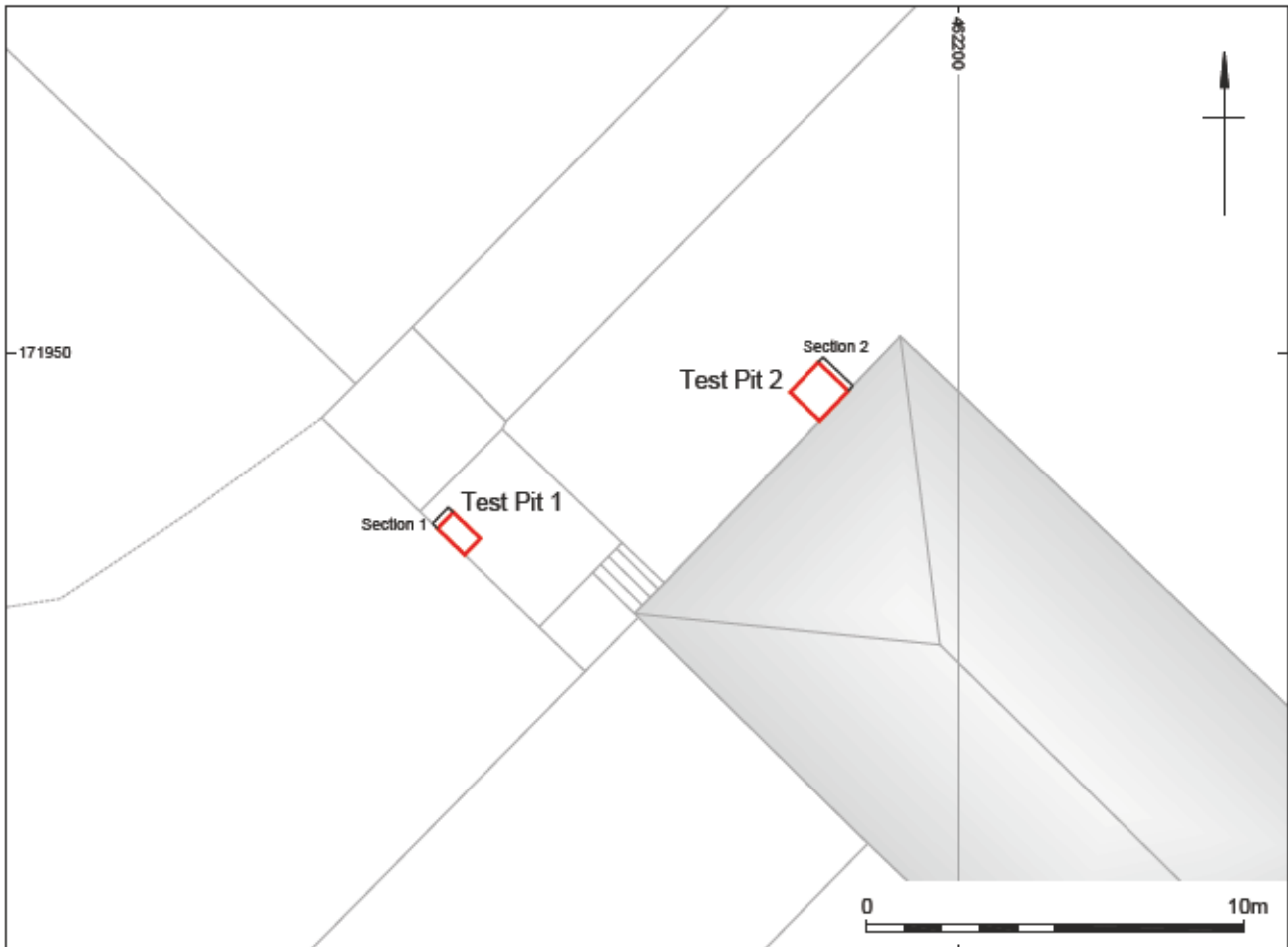
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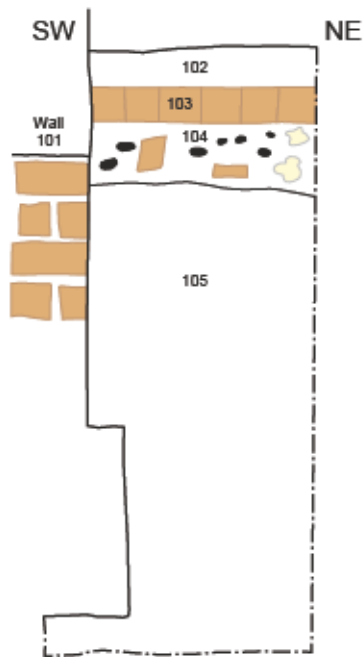


Site location

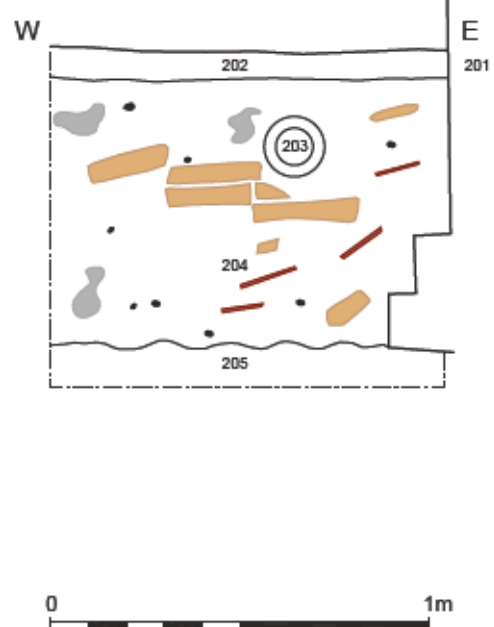
Figure 1



Section 1



Section 2



- Roofing slate
- Brick
- Pebbles
- Concrete
- Chalk



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Test pit locations and sections

Figure 2



Plate 1: Test Pit 1 section



Plate 2: Test Pit 2 section

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WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.

Registered Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

London Office: Unit 113, The Chandlery, 50 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7QY.

Tel: 020 7953 7494 Fax: 020 7953 7499 london-info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

