

**HISTORIC BRICK WALL AT THE SWAN INN
SWAN STREET
SIBLE HEDINGHAM
ESSEX**

BUILDING SURVEY AND RECORD



Essex County Council

Field Archaeology Unit

JULY 2011

**HISTORIC BRICK WALL AT THE SWAN INN
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BUILDING SURVEY AND RECORD

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**HISTORIC BRICK WALL AT THE SWAN INN
SWAN STREET
SIBLE HEDINGHAM
ESSEX**

BUILDING RECORD AND SURVEY

Client: ECC Road Safety and Asset Management Group

FAU Project No.: 2436

OASIS No.: 104733

NGR: TL 7826 3370

Planning Application: BDC 10/01694/FUL

Date of Fieldwork: 15th & 16th June 2011

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A programme of historic building recording was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on a 19th century brick wall associated with The Swan Inn, prior to its demolition to enable works to a nearby culvert, and subsequent rebuilding. The work was commissioned by Essex County Council Road Safety and Asset Management Group and carried out in accordance with a brief issued by the Historic Environment Management team of Essex County Council (ECC HEM), who also monitored the work.

Copies of the report will be supplied to ECC ESH, ECC HEM and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) at County Hall, Chelmsford. The archive will be stored with Braintree Museum. An OASIS online record has been created at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/oasis/index.cfm>.

The wall represents the north-western boundary between The Swan Inn and Swan Chase and lies within the curtilage of The Swan Inn, a prominent grade II-listed 15th century structure that closed in 2002. Based on this survey, it appears to date to the mid-19th century but has been substantially rebuilt in several phases and is now in poor condition.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location and description

The Swan Inn lies along Swan Street on the southern approach road into the village (A1017) at TL 7826 3370. A small brook flows from Alderford Street to the east through a culvert underneath the road at Cobbs Fenn Bridge and along the north-west side of the wall, towards to the west (fig. 1).

The wall forms the north-west boundary to The Swan, extending from the forecourt at the front of the pub to the brick outbuildings behind (fig.1). Beside the wall is a tarmac driveway. A recent Heritage Statement described the wall as being in very poor condition, with bricks missing and containing various repairs carried out over the years.

2.2 Planning background

A planning application for demolition and rebuilding of the wall was passed by Braintree District Council (BDC) in November 2010 (10/01694/FUL). The removal of the wall was required to maintain access to Swan Chase while repairs to the failing culvert under Swan Street are made. Mindful of its curtilage listing with The Swan and its location within the Swan Street Conservation Area, the BDC Conservation Officer requested that a written and measured survey be made to provide a record and ensure the structure can be reconstructed.

2.3 Historical background and development

Cartographic and documentary research was undertaken at the Essex Record Office (ERO) to investigate its origins and development. From the maps, the wall was probably built in the mid 19th century, most likely when the brook was channelled along Alderford Street and Swan Chase. Historic map extracts included in the report as figures 2-5 have been enlarged to provide greater clarity.

Swan Street lies towards the southern end of Sible Hedingham and, along with Alderford Street to the east, formed one of two nuclei of medieval activity in the village, the other being Church Street to the north.

According to the list description, The Swan Inn dates to the 15th century with some 17th century additions and alterations (LBS 409088). Traditionally only the southern half of the building was used as an inn and the rest was a private house known as Swan Cottage up until the mid.1970s.

Chapman and Andre's 1777 map of Essex shows the stream flowing along Alderford Street, across a ford at Swan Street and along Swan Chase (fig.2). This map predates the construction of the wall.

A map of Sible Hedingham from 1797 shows a range of buildings on the north side of The Swan, against the stream and Swan Chase. Although better drawn than the 1777 map, the clarity of the map is poor. None of these structures remain.

By 1840 the range to the north has disappeared and two brick outbuildings have been constructed at the back of the pub, which still stand today, providing stables and garaging (figs. 4 & 1). The wall is not depicted, but the boundary wall with No. 37 to the south is.

It is likely the wall was built between 1840 and 1876 when the brook was channelled along Alderford Street and Swan Chase. This is depicted on the 1876 Ordnance Survey map, which indicates culverts under the road in two places allowing for traffic access along Swan Street and the Chase (fig. 5). It is also a period of expansion for The Swan, with new outbuildings added at the back enclosing the yard. A small group of structures have been built against the end wall of the stable, blocking-off the driveway past Swan Cottage (fig. 5), the back wall of one of which remains as a small patch of cement render. By the early 1920s (OS map not shown) only one of these structures remains and a small yard area has been created by extending a wall across the driveway from one of the former structures.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the historic building record was, as outlined in the brief, to provide a written record of the curtilage-listed wall prior to demolition and produce a drawn and photographic survey to enable the wall to be rebuilt.

As part of the descriptive work, the record was required to address the following: dating and phasing of bricks, coursing, bond and brick type, architectural design, features, openings, repairs and mortars.

The focus of the work was mainly to understand the form and nature of the original wall rather than the more modern and less sympathetic rebuilding phases.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF FIELDWORK

Vegetation around the base and top of the wall was removed to enable the south-east elevation, facing the pub, to be drawn. A string line was set up along the elevation using an old bench mark on the north corner of the building. The wall facing Swan Chase was not drawn because of the proximity to the brook, but was recorded photographically. The elevation was drawn at a scale of 1:50 and a section was drawn across the wall beside the culvert at 1:20.

Written descriptions of the wall were made including five different phases of build and rebuild. A series of photographs (digital and 35mm black & white print) were taken of the wall at the beginning of the work (plates 1-3). Face-on shots were taken of the wall to compliment the drawn record and are reproduced at the back of the report as plates 4-8. Other photographs can be found in the archive.

5.0 THE WALL

The description should be read in conjunction with figures 6 and 7 and plates 4-8.

5.1 General description and character

The wall extends in a south-easterly direction for 18.2m between the outflow of the culvert at the bottom of Swan Chase, to the early 19th-century stables (plates 1-3).

At the base of the wall is a brick plinth at 45.21m OD, built in header bond. Towards the south-west only the top course is exposed, which survives only partially due to later rebuilds and general deterioration (plates 4 & 5). As the ground level decreases, up to four courses of the plinth are revealed whose survival and condition varies from good to poor (plate 6-8). The plinth is 14 inches or 360mm wide and drops a further 660mm on the north-west side, before battering out into the brook (fig.7).

Where the wall is attached to the stables, it stands to a height of 1.75m above the plinth, which is equivalent to 22 brick courses, plus capping bricks. At a point 7.8m further to the north-east, the height of the wall drops to 1.2m above the plinth (15 courses) and continues in this manner until it finishes next to the culvert.

Above the plinth, the wall is built in Flemish bond. Two early buttresses survive, one by the stable (plate 4) and the other roughly central (fig. 6 & plate 6). It is likely there was originally

a third at the north-east end of the wall, which has been rebuilt removing any trace of it. There are the remains of a brick pier close to the stable (plate 4, beside base of scale), though its phasing and purpose are unclear. Other features have less historic interest: the cement-rendered rear wall of one of the utility buildings and evidence for an early 20th century single-skin wall between the boundary wall and pub (plate 5). The top of the wall has brick on-edge coping.

5.2 Phasing

The basic form and extent of the wall has probably not changed since its construction in the mid-19th century. However, successive phases of rebuilding and repair have occurred up to the present time. These phases have little or no historic interest and are dated quite broadly, since as materials become more standardised they become more difficult to date precisely. Five phases are included in the following descriptions based on brick type and bonding material. Lesser phases of repair, patching-in and general maintenance were probably also carried out over time.

Phase 1: Historic phase (c.1850)

Original wall fabric comprises 8¾-9 inch orange-coloured soft red bricks in a gritty lime mortar. Many of the bricks are in bad condition and spalling badly through exposure to the elements. In the centre of the wall it is even possible to see through it to Swan Chase. Mortar joints are fairly neat and narrow, but also badly weathered. As with any old bricks, their dimensions vary, particularly the lengths (220-230mm) and widths (100-120mm), though their depths are fairly constant at c.60mm. Overall, their dimensions and quite gritty under-fired fabric suggests an 18th or early 19th century date (Ryan 1996), though it is likely that this type of brick was still being made locally in the mid 19th century.

Brickwork from the early phase survives in part as the plinth, the two buttresses and much of the middle section of wall but is in poor condition on both sides. There are also the remains of a low brick pier located between the south-east buttress and rendered part of the wall that is built from the same bricks (fig. 6). The feature is 900mm-wide and stands for three courses on top of the plinth (plate 4). Mortar on the top face indicates the feature was reduced in height during the phase 4 modern rebuild (fig. 6), which makes it difficult to date and it is possibly a later feature since it would not have been needed to support the wall at this early stage.

Phase 2: Late 19th century

The upper 4-5 courses of the north-eastern half of the wall were rebuilt around the late 19th century, capped with bricks on edge. These bricks are harder and more regular in size, like standard later 19th and 20th century bricks, and bonded in a hard lime mortar that has been re-pointed in cement, which has now largely blown. Only the area above the central buttress has remained since the other two ends were rebuilt in the modern period (phases 4 and 5 in fig. 6).

Phase 3: Early 20th century (pre-1920s)

An area of cement render represents the later rear wall of one of three minor structures built onto the wall in the mid-late 19th century (1840-76). By the 1920s the structure had been demolished but a single-skin brick wall had been built across the driveway on its north-western side, represented by a scar in the brickwork cement (fig. 6). No sign of the other buildings are visible today and it is therefore likely they were either timber structures that left no mark on the wall or independent structures that were not 'tied-in'.

There are two quite recent, late 20th century phases that are broadly contemporary and probably occurred in the last 30 years or so. It is unclear which is the earliest.

Phase 4: Late 20th century

The south-western part of the wall was rebuilt using a mixture of new and old bricks in a buff-coloured gritty cement (plate 4). The new bricks are hard 8¾-inch reds with sharp arrises and diagonal kiss marks, between wide mortar joints. The upper courses have been discoloured through contact with ivy that was removed before the survey began, but is prolific on the side of the wall and stable.

Phase 5: Late 20th century

The north-eastern end of the wall has a similar mixture of bricks to the phase 4 build but these are laid in English rather than Flemish bond (plates 7 & 8). Most of the bricks are hard reds but there are some phase 1 bricks included as well as odd half bricks and brick fragments, heavily surrounded by a thick sandy-buff cement. Part of the top course of the plinth has been rebuilt as stretchers (plate 8).

6.0 ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

Map and brick analysis shows the wall to be most likely built in the mid-19th century when the brook was contained either side of Swan Street and partially culverted below the main road. Maps show that the brook was not fully culverted under Swan Street until the early 20th century.

The historic wall in its original form was probably the same or similar in height as it is today. It was built entirely of soft red bricks bedded in lime mortar on stepped foundations, with narrow brick buttresses, which is not unusual. Apart from two of the buttresses, the plinth and approximately 10 courses in the middle, there is very little left of the original wall. What remains is in poor condition; the brickwork is extremely worn, with many bricks missing or incomplete, and it is even possible to see through the wall in places. Later repairs, carried out in the late 19th and 20th centuries, have kept the old wall functioning but have detracted somewhat from its appearance and historic character. These new builds highlight the poor state of the original wall fabric, which was built from materials prone to weathering and requiring ongoing maintenance.

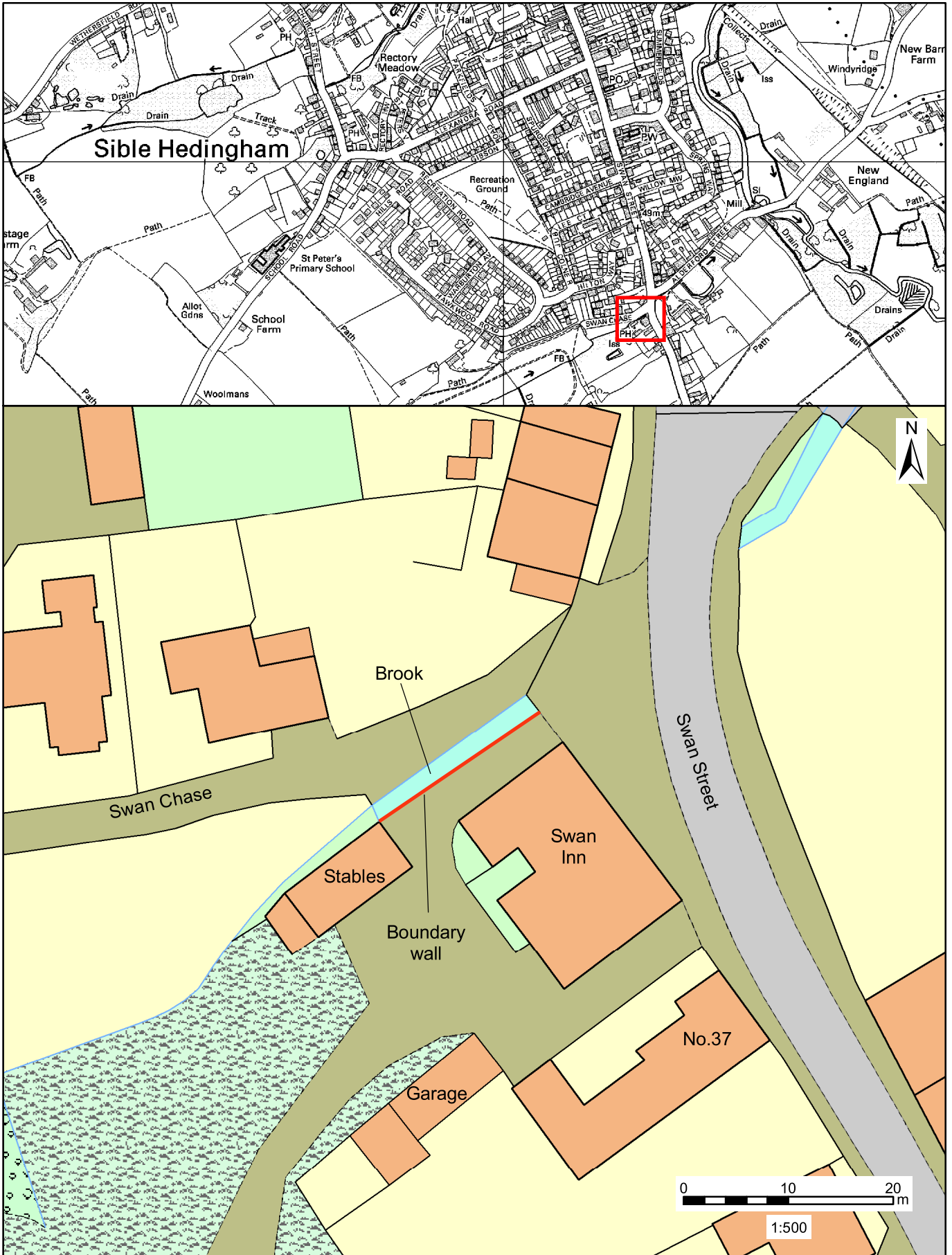
The wall survey at The Swan Inn was designed to record the wall prior to rebuilding. As a 19th century structure the wall has limited historic or architectural interest apart from its curtilage listing and association with the development of the public house. Restoring the wall to its original form using compatible materials will ensure the wall's continuation and augment with the historic character of the Swan Street Conservation Area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to James Kennerley of EEC Road Safety and Asset Management Group for commissioning the works and for supplying the proposed drawings. Thanks also to the Adrian Buckingham, the owner, and staff at the Essex Records Office for their assistance. Survey, recording and photography were undertaken by the author and Trevor Ennis. Illustrations were prepared by the author and produced by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby and monitored by Maria Medlycott of ECC HEM, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.

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| English Heritage | 2007 | <i>Listed Buildings Online</i> http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/lbonline |
| Ryan, P. | 1996 | <i>Brick in Essex from the Roman Conquest to the Reformation</i> , P. Ryan, Chelmsford |



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Fig.1. Location plan



Fig. 2 Chapman and Andre map of Essex, 1777 (plate 3)

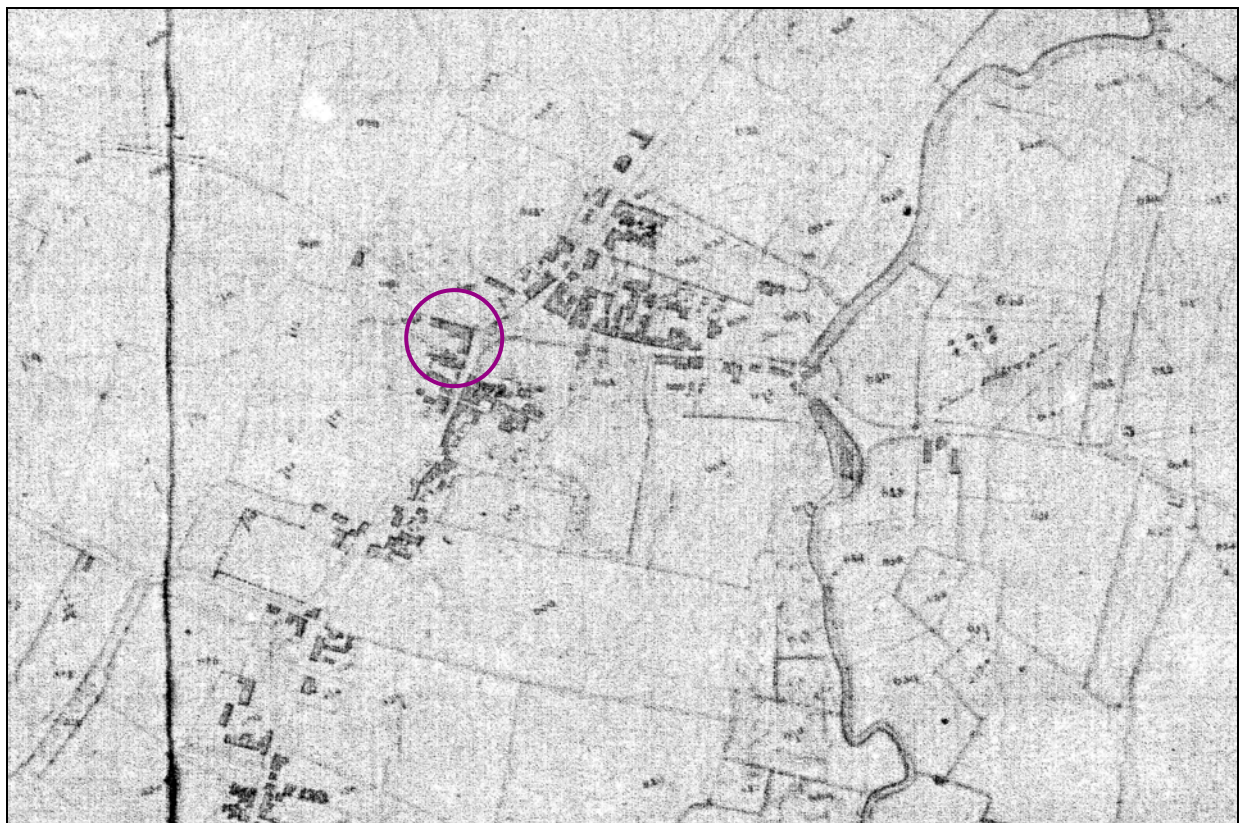


Fig. 3 Map of Sible Hedingham, 1797 (D/DQy 10)

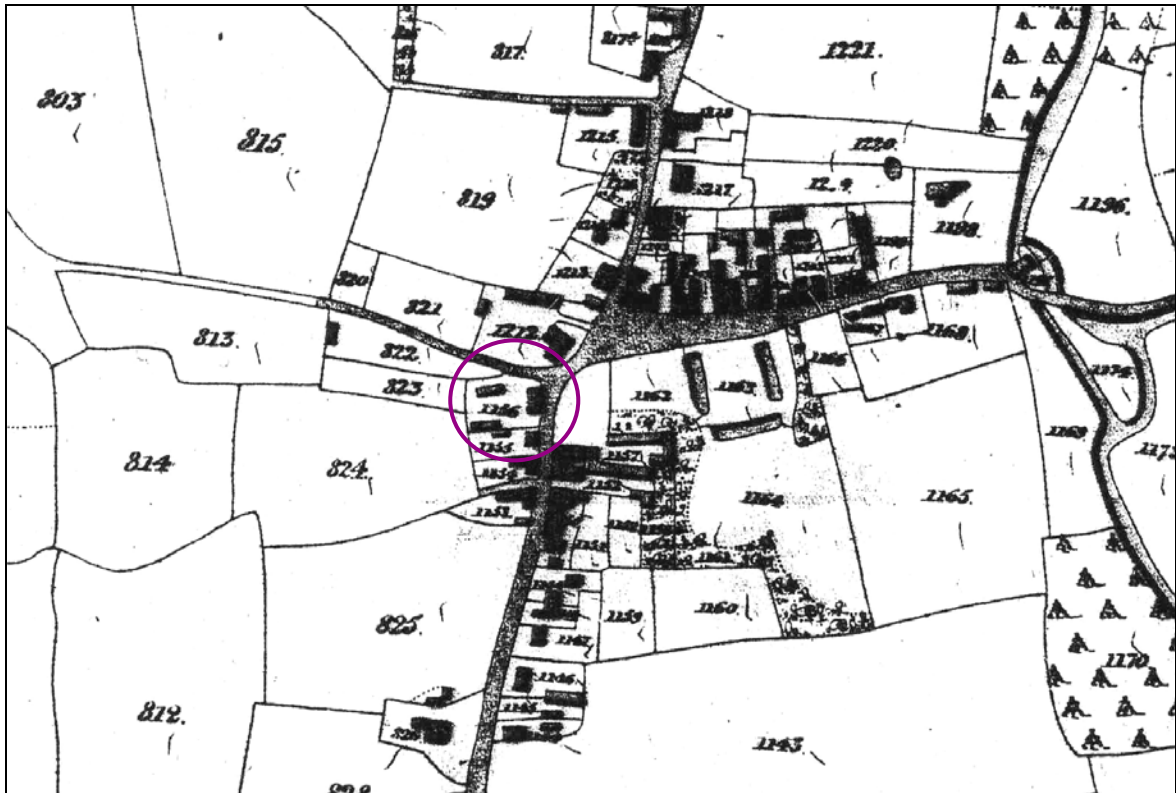


Fig. 4 Sible Hedingham tithe map, 1840 (D/CT 174)

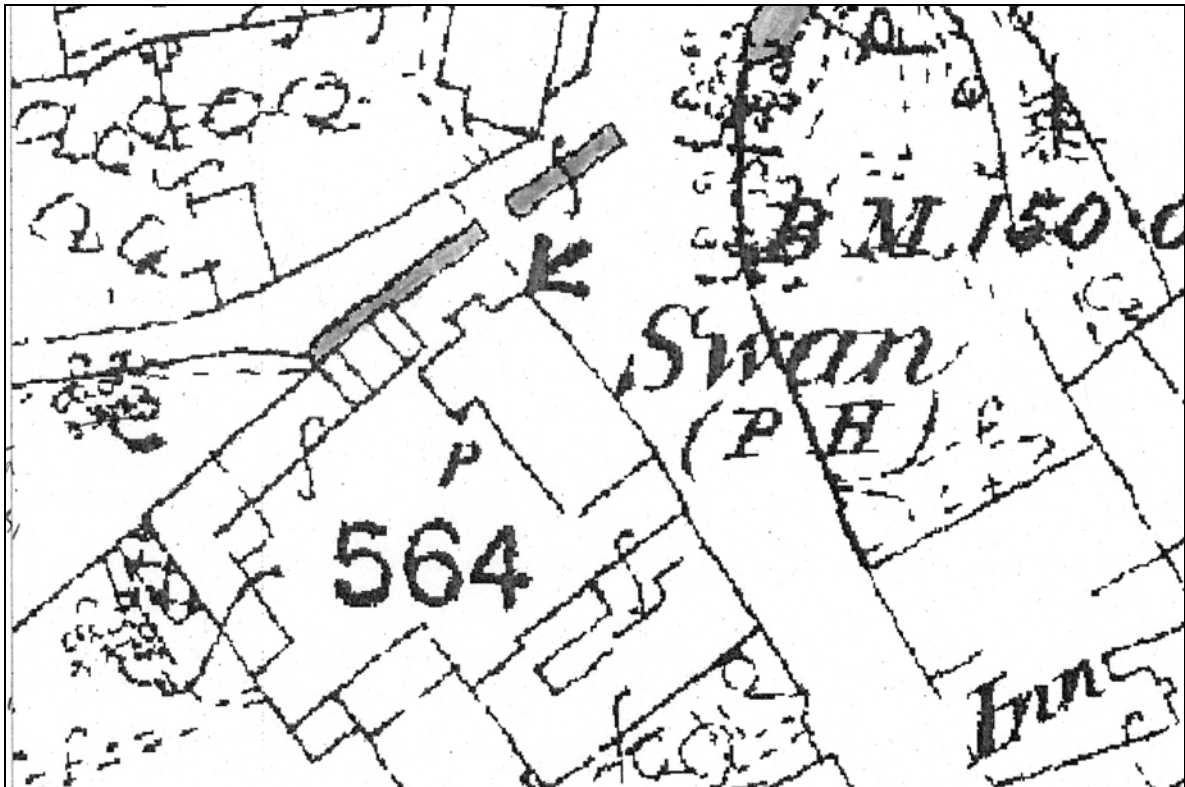


Fig. 5 First edition OS map, 1876 (sheet 16)

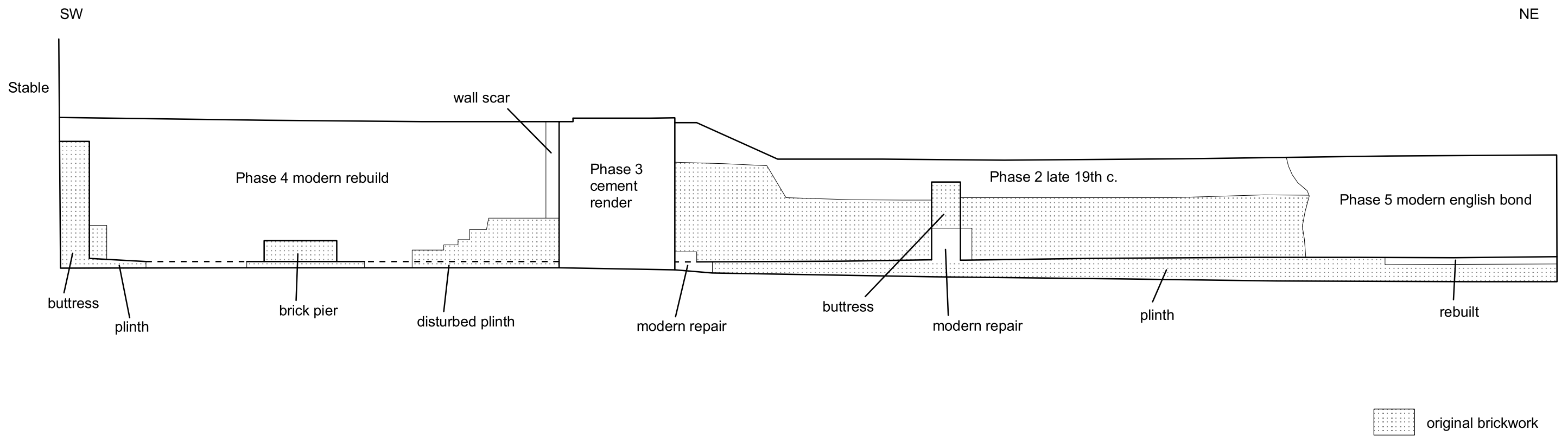
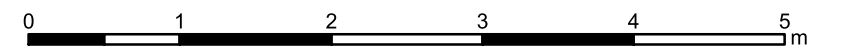


Fig.6. South east elevation of wall



1:50

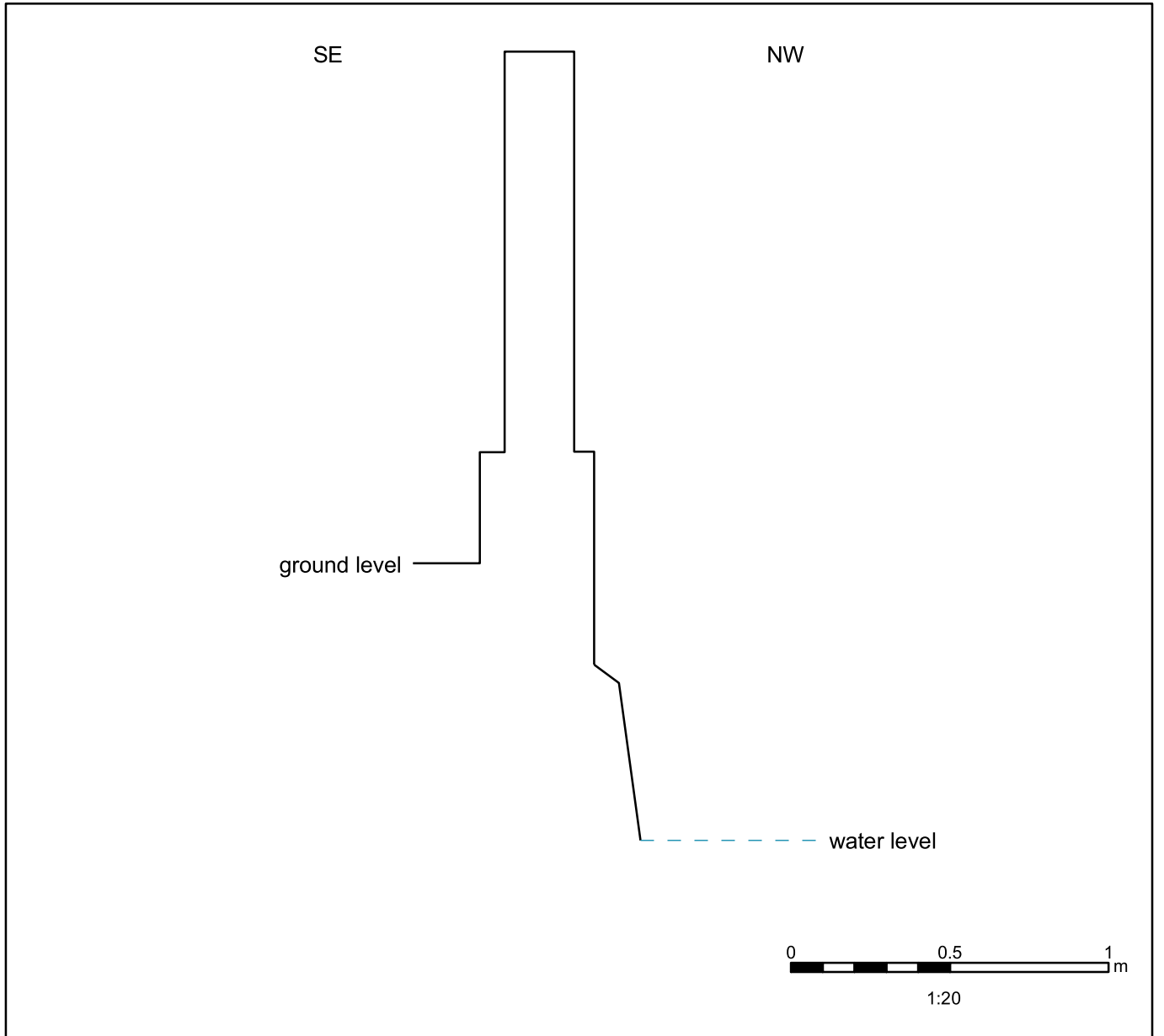


Fig.7. Section through wall



Plate 1 Wall viewed towards Swan Chase (west)



Plate 2 Wall viewed towards Alderford Street (east)



Plate 3 Wall and brook viewed from Swan Chase (towards south-west)



Plate 4 South-west historic buttress, pier base and modern phase 4 rebuild (2m scale)



Plate 5 Evidence of phase 3 structure and modern wall across driveway (2m scale)



Plate 6 Historic phase 1 wall and central buttress below phase 2 rebuild (2m scale)



Plate 7 Historic wall and modern (phase 5) rebuild (2m scale)



Plate 8 Phase 5 rebuild at north-east end (2m scale)

Appendix 1: Contents of Archive

Site name: Brick Wall at The Swan Inn, Sible Hedingham, Essex

Project no. 2436

June 2011

Index to the Archive

Document wallet containing:

1. Research Archive

- 1.1 ECC HEM design brief
- 1.2 ECC FAU written scheme of investigation (WSI)
- 1.3 Two copies of the client report (one unbound)
- 1.4 CD containing digital images, pdf-formatted report, ECC ESH drawings, etc

2. Site Archive

- 2.1 Photographic registers
- 2.2 Photographic record (colour digital & 35mm monochrome prints)
- 2.3 Site notes & drawn survey of wall

Appendix 2: EHER Summary Sheet

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|--|--|
| Site Name/Address: Brick Wall at The Swan Inn, Swan Street, Sible Hedingham, Essex | |
| Parish: Sible Hedingham | District: Braintree |
| NGR: TL 7826 3370 | Oasis ref.: 104733 |
| Type of Work: Building survey & record | Site Director/Group: Andy Letch, ECC FAU |
| Date of Work: June 2011 | Size of Area Investigated: N/A |
| Curating Museum: Braintree | Funding Source: Essex County Council Highways, Sustainability & Environment |
| Further Work Anticipated? No | Related LBS Nos.: LBS 409088 |
| Final Report: Summary in EAH | |
| Periods Represented: Victorian & modern | |
| <p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>A drawn survey and building record was undertaken on a Grade II curtilage-listed brick wall on the boundary between The Swan and Swan Chase, Sible Hedingham, prior to its demolition and rebuilding, to enable work on a failing culvert beneath Swan Street.</p> <p>From the survey, the wall was built from 9-inch soft red bricks in lime mortar some time around the mid 19th century, probably when the brook along Swan Chase was channelled. The original wall was built on a stepped brick plinth and was buttressed along the inside. Subsequent rebuilding phases in the late 19th and 20th centuries have changed the character of the wall and it is now in very poor condition. The wall post-dates two brick-built stables still standing to the rear of the pub.</p> <p>As it stands, the wall has little aesthetic or historic significance and its rebuilding, if done in the correct materials, will improve the area around the former public house and the Swan Street conservation area in general.</p> | |
| Previous Summaries/Reports None | |
| Author of Summary: Andrew Letch | Date of Summary: 30th June 2011 |