

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AT**

**ARLEY HOUSE, DUCK STREET**

**WENDENS AMBO**

**ESSEX**



**Essex County Council**  
**Field Archaeology Unit**

**August 2011**

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AT

## ARLEY HOUSE, DUCK STREET

### WENDENS AMBO

### ESSEX

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***As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.***

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AT  
ARLEY HOUSE, DUCK STREET  
WENDENS AMBO  
ESSEX**

**Client:** Mrs Sarah Hider

**NGR:** TL 5100 3600

**Site Code:** WADS 11

**Planning Application no:** UTT/1444/10

**FAU Project No:** 2330

**OASIS No:** essexcou1-108133

**Date of Fieldwork:** June & July 2011

**SUMMARY**

*Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during groundworks for the construction of a new extension to Arley House, Duck Street, Wendens Ambo, which established the presence of underlying deposits indicative of a former pond or infilled quarry pit, or a wet/ marshy area of ground of unknown date. Due to the depth of the foundation trenches and rapid groundwater ingress at depth further examination was not possible; however, assessment of bulk environmental samples taken from the deposit suggest that it had been contaminated with modern material deriving from previous building works on the site, rendering the otherwise undated samples of little archaeological value. Although the site lies in an area of known Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval interest, no archaeological remains were seen in any of the foundation trenches and the presence of the infilled pond/ quarry pit or marshy ground may explain why residential development along this lower part of Duck Street is of relatively recent date.*

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Archaeological monitoring works were undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on groundworks for a new extension at Arley House, Duck Street, Wendens Ambo, Essex. The work was commissioned by the owner, Mrs Sarah Hider, and carried out in accordance with a brief issued by the Essex Historic Environment

Management team (ECC HEM 2010), who monitored the works on behalf of the local planning authority, Uttlesford District Council.

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

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Site location and description**

Arley House is a modern structure located on the west side of Duck Street at TL 5100 3600, close to the junction with Rookery Lane (fig. 1). Duck Street is an ancient thoroughfare that follows the slope from the village centre and levels off where the lane crosses a stream several metres to the north of the house. There are several natural springs and water channels in the vicinity.

The site of the extension is on level ground previously occupied by a garage that was demolished at the start of works and comprises an L-shaped area between Arley House and the neighbouring Brook House (fig. 1).

### **2.2 Planning background**

An application to demolish an existing garage and replace it with a new extension was submitted to Uttlesford District Council (UDC) in August 2010 (UTT/1444/10). In response to this application, the Heritage Environment Management team of Essex County Council (ECC HEM) recommended an archaeological condition be placed on the application due to the archaeological importance of the area, in accordance with guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment.

### **2.2 Archaeological background**

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring & Excavation (ECC HEM 2010).

Archaeological works undertaken in association with the development and construction of the M11 revealed occupation spanning the prehistoric and Roman periods lying close to the current site. The principal site was that of a Roman villa and associated field system at Chinnel Barn to the west, first excavated in 1853, then again ahead of the M11 construction in 1973-4 and more recently as part of proposals for motorway widening (fig. 1).

The origins of the present day village of Wendens Ambo date back to at least the late Saxon period. The settlement is recorded in the Domesday Book with the church dating to the 11th century. An archaeological evaluation by the ECC FAU (Ennis 2006) and subsequent excavation by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (Whightman 2009) undertaken to the south-west of the site, opposite Rookery Lane, identified extensive stratified remains of Roman and medieval date.

### **3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The main aim was to assess the date, nature and extent of archaeological deposits across the site and their importance. In particular, the character of the site in relation to the evidence for Roman and medieval occupation found on the Rookery Lane site to the east and previous work undertaken on the M11 route and Roman villa complex.

### **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

Site visits were undertaken during the excavation of groundworks by mechanical excavator. Once the nature and extent of the underlying material was established, samples were taken and a record made.

Descriptions of deposits were recorded on pro-forma FAU trench sheets. Scale plans and sections were drawn and finds collected, though mostly consisting of 20th century finds from disturbed deposits.

A series of photographs were taken in monochrome negative and digital format. A representative selection of these is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-2. The remainder can be found in the archive.

### **5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS**

The area of archaeological monitoring encompassed a narrow L-shaped area of c. 5 x 12m. At the start of work, a drainage trench was excavated along the northern boundary fence to link up to an existing manhole in the back garden. This exposed existing service pipes and

the concrete floor and shallow footings of the garage (context 2) which continued into the foundation trench for the new extension. Since the concrete had to be removed, the trench was widened from 0.4m to between 0.6m and 0.8m to encompass the new foundations, and dug to the full required depth of 1.8m.

Below the concrete slab/foundation was a 1.4m thick organic clay deposit (context 3, plate 1). This was an unexpected discovery and was sampled for environmental remains. Below context 3 was a natural grey clay subsoil, located 1.6m below ground level. Excavation continued through this deposit to a depth of 1.8m (fig. 3 & plate 2).

Further monitoring of foundation and service trenches in the back garden confirmed the continuation of context 3 and following advice from the ECC HEM monitoring officer, monitoring works ceased.

## **6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT** by Alan J Jacobs

### **Introduction**

A total of four fragments of tile and pottery weighing a total of 151 grams, were recovered from a single stratified and one unstratified context (3 and 5). All of the material was sorted into type and recorded by count and weight. The finds are described and tabulated in appendix 1, at the end of the report.

### **The medieval and later pottery** by Helen Walker

A single example of medieval pottery (wt 20g) was found unstratified (context 5), comprising a fairly large body sherd of Medieval Coarse Ware, showing external sooting, and providing evidence of activity in the vicinity between c.1200 and the 14th century. Found in layer 3 was a lid or possible dish fragment in modern flowerpot fabric.

### **Other Finds**

Only two fragments of peg tile were recovered from this watching brief. The flat nature of the tile with a circular nail hole in one example supports a medieval date for these fragments.

### **Environmental sampling**

8 Litres of the bulk soil sample was processed by wet sieving with flotation using a 0.5mm mesh and collecting the flotation fraction (flot) on a 0.5mm sieve. The residue was then dried and separated using 2mm and 4mm sieves. All the material larger than 2mm (the coarse



fraction) was assessed by eye. The flot was dried, examined by eye and assessed, the results are summarised below. The remainder of the sample was searched for artefactual evidence.

The environmental sample floated badly since it comprised mostly of heavy grey clay which broke up with difficulty. Within the flot was a considerable amount of organic material weighing 42 grams, containing seeds and organic debris but was heavily contaminated when the garage previously standing on the site was built. The residue weighed 924 grams and contained only fragments of modern pipe and tile as well as a few small pieces of charcoal. Although this is clearly an organic layer with environmental potential the presence of only modern material limits the archaeological value. The feature needs to be sampled where it is not contaminated to gain more valuable results.

### **Conclusion**

The monitoring work produced a very limited finds assemblage offering a broad date range due to modern intrusion. The presence of the residual medieval pottery is not entirely surprising given the proximity of the site to the known settlement remains at nearby Rookery Lane.

## **7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Monitoring works established the existence of a hitherto unknown thick organic deposit beneath the former garage, which was an unexpected discovery. The date of this deposit is unknown but it could feasibly be of any date between the Prehistoric and Post-medieval period and may take several forms, being either a silted-up/ infilled pond or quarry pit, a former low-lying wet/ marshy area associated with the nearby stream or a sequence of floodplain deposits. The thickness of the deposit does however suggest that an infilled pond or quarry pit is perhaps more likely. The deposit extends beneath Arley House and the garden and may explain why residential development along this lower part of Duck Street is relatively recent. Due to previous construction/ demolition works on the site the samples taken were shown to be contaminated by modern material; however, sampling of undisturbed deposits elsewhere in the vicinity, should the opportunity arise, is likely to have more positive results and, depending upon the date of the material, has the potential to shed light on patterns of land-use and environmental change in the area.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Mrs Hider of Arley House for commissioning and facilitating the work and also to the building contractors for their assistance. Site visits and recording was undertaken by the author and Mark Germany of ECC FAU. Illustrations were prepared by the author and produced by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby and monitored by Richard Havis of ECC HEM on behalf of the local planning authority.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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| Ennis, T.     | 2006 | <i>Duck Street, Wendens Ambo, Essex: Archaeological Evaluation</i> (ECC FAU unpub.)  |
| ECC HEM       | 2010 | <i>Brief for Archaeological Monitoring at Arley House, Duck Street, Wendens Ambo</i> (ECC HEM unpub.)  |
| Whightman, A. | 2009 | <i>An archaeological Excavation on land to the west of the junction between Duck Street and Rookery Lane, Wendens Ambo, Essex</i> (CAT unpub.) |

## Appendix 1: Finds data

Table 1 Finds quantification

Context	Feature	Count	Wt (g)	Description	Date
3	Layer	2	118	Tile, fragments of peg tile in a orange sandy fabric, nail hole present.	13th to 16th century
		1	13	Modern flowerpot fabric, fragment of ?lid	20th century
5	U/S	1	20	Medieval coarse ware, large body sherd showing external sooting	c.1200 to 14th century
<i>Total</i>		<b>4</b>	<b>151</b>		

## Appendix 2: Contents of Archive

**Site name: Arley House, Duck Street, Wendens Ambo, Essex**

**Project no: 2330**

**Site code: WADS 11**

### Index to the Archive:

Document wallet containing:

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Client/archive report
- 1.2 Unbound version of report
- 1.3 CD containing digital photographs & copy of report, pdf-formatted

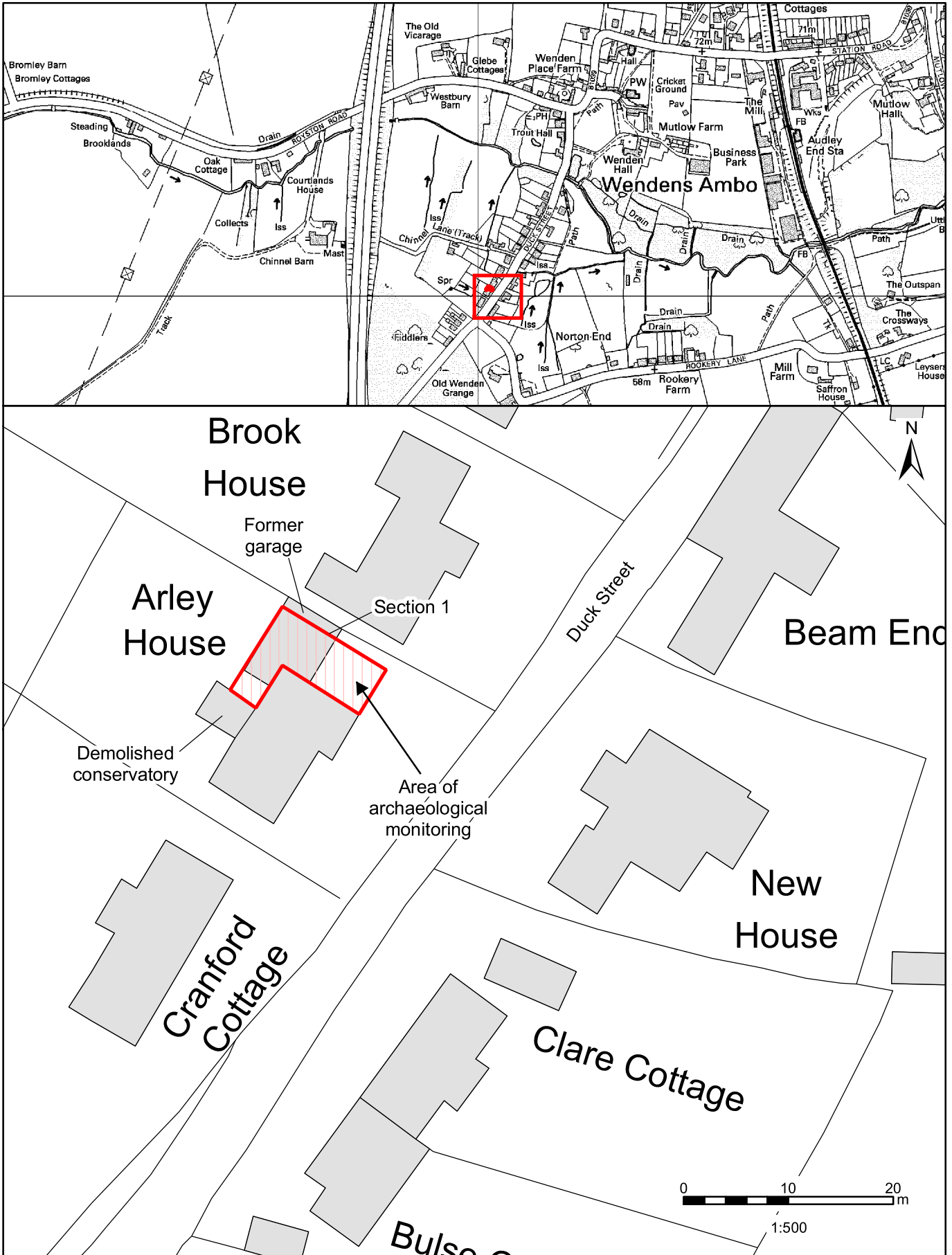
#### **2. Site Archive**

- 2.1 Context sheets
- 2.2 Photographic record (digital images & photographic register)
- 2.3 Site notes and annotated survey drawings

All finds have been discarded

### Appendix 3: EHER Summary Sheet

<b>Site Name/Address:</b> Arley House, Duck Street, Wendens Ambo, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Wendens Ambo	<b>District:</b> Uttlesford
<b>NGR:</b> TL 5100 3600	<b>Site code:</b> WADS11
<b>Type of Work:</b> Archaeological monitoring	<b>Site Director/Team:</b> Andrew Letch ECC FAU
<b>Dates of Fieldwork:</b> June & July 2011	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> 5m x 12m
<b>Curating Museum:</b> Saffron Walden	<b>Funding Source:</b> Mrs S. Hider
<b>Further Work Anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER Nos.</b>
<b>Final Report:</b> Summary in EAH	<b>OASIS ref:</b> essexcou1-108133
<b>Periods Represented:</b> uncertain	
<p><b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b></p> <p><i>Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during groundworks for the construction of a new extension to Arley House, Duck Street, Wendens Ambo, which established the presence of underlying deposits indicative of a former pond or infilled quarry pit, or a wet/marshy area of ground of unknown date. Due to the depth of the foundation trenches and rapid groundwater ingress at depth further examination was not possible; however, assessment of bulk environmental samples taken from the deposit suggest that it had been contaminated with modern material deriving from previous building works on the site, rendering the otherwise undated samples of little archaeological value. Although the site lies in an area of known Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval interest, no archaeological remains were seen in any of the foundation trenches and the presence of the infilled pond/quarry pit or marshy ground may explain why residential development along this lower part of Duck Street is of relatively recent date.</i></p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> Andrew Letch	<b>Date of Summary:</b> 17th August 2011



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Fig.1. Location of archaeological monitoring

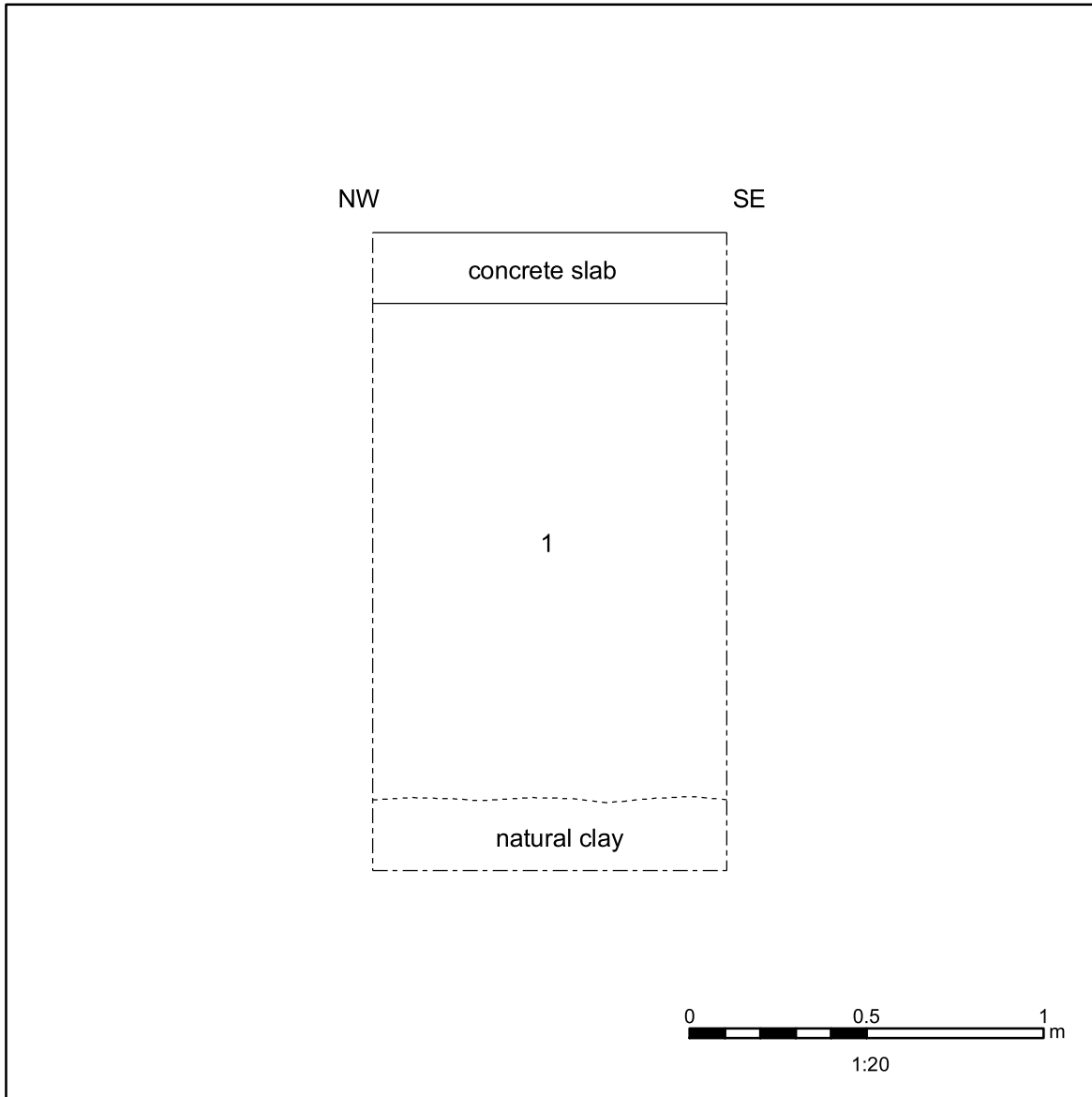


Fig.2. Section 1



Plate 1 Working shot during excavation through organic deposit 3, viewed to north-west



Plate 2 Context 3 in north corner of monitoring trench (1.5m scale)