

BOREHAM HALL

THE CHASE

BOREHAM

ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

SEPTEMBER 2011

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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BOREHAM HALL

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ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & EXCAVATION

Client: The Nicholas Ward Design Practice

NGR: TL 7534 0895

Site Code: BOBH 10

Oasis No.: essexcou1-83415

Dates of Fieldwork: 08th September

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Boreham Hall in advance of the construction of two new extensions to the existing house, revealing remains of probable 13th century date.

Boreham Hall is located to the south of the village from which it takes its name, on the south-facing slope of the Chelmer Valley, surrounded by open farmland. The current house is constructed within a Medieval manorial site that pre-dates Domesday, while a linear body of water to the north of the house suggests that the medieval manor house may have been situated within a moated enclosure. The present house is believed to date from the 16th century, with 17th century and later extensions.

The evaluation comprised two machine-excavated trenches – trench 1 was located within the smaller extension to the south-east of the existing house and trench 2 within the larger extension to the north. As the evaluation was undertaken well in advance of construction work the size and location of both of the trenches was limited by the presence of concrete access paths, garden walls and a large paved patio area.

In trench 1 natural mottled dark brown and orange sand was exposed in a small sondage at an approximate depth of 0.80m, while at the south end of the trench was an east/west aligned concrete footing with the suspected course of a 'live' sewer pipe beyond.

In trench 2, at the south end of the trench, were the truncated remains of an L-shaped brick wall of late 18th or early 19th century date bonded by lime mortar. The west end of the wall

had been truncated by the cut for a ceramic rain water pipe that ran diagonally across the trench. To the north, beneath the topsoil the revealed sequence consisted of mixed modern deposits overlying a pebbly clay silt which sealed two potential feature fills consisting of a dark silt with patches of pale yellowish clay above a deposit of charcoal-flecked dark greyish brown silt. A number of finds were recovered from the latter fill including fragments of animal bone, oyster shell and three sherds of medieval pottery dating to the c. 13th century. No natural deposits were observed in Trench 2 and hand probing suggested that the fill continued at least to a depth of 1.3m below the present ground surface.

It is likely that the fills in Trench 2 infill a large feature such as a pit or ditch. Finds tentatively suggest a 13th century date which would pre-date the construction of the existing house and fits with the theory that the house is built upon the site of a medieval manorial complex. Although the trench locations were limited by existing hard-landscape features and trench depths restricted by the presence of pipes it has been possible to confirm that potential medieval features survive in the area of the proposed extension on the north side of the existing house.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken in advance of the construction of two extensions to Boreham Hall, The Chase, Boreham, Essex. The fieldwork was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) for The Nicholas Ward Design Practice, on behalf of the property owner, in accordance with an archaeological brief prepared by Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (ECC HEM 2010) and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2010).

A planning application (10/00746/FUL) for the construction of two extensions to the existing house, which is believed to be of 16th century origin altered and extended over time, was submitted to Chelmsford Borough Council in May 2010. Due to the location of the site in an area of some archaeological potential the ECC Historic Environment Management team recommended that a condition requiring a programme of archaeological works be attached to any grant of consent, based on the advice given in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment.

The site archive will be deposited in Chelmsford Museum. A digital version of this report will be submitted, along with a project summary, to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>).

2.0 BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

2.1 Topography and Geology

Boreham Hall is located to the south of the village from which it takes its name, on the south-facing slope of the Chelmer Valley, surrounded by open farmland (TL 7534 0895). The area of both extensions currently forms part of the garden to the existing house (Fig. 1).

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (HER), held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford.

The current house is constructed within a Medieval manorial site that pre-dates Domesday, while a linear body of water to the north of the house suggests that the medieval manor house may have been situated within a moated enclosure. The present house is believed to date from the 16th century, with 17th century and later extensions. To the southwest of the house are a number of cropmarks suggestive of trackways and linear features that possibly

relate to activity associated with the manorial site, or may be indicative of earlier settlement or activity pre-dating the establishment of the manorial centre.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General aims

The general aim of the archaeological work was to determine the presence or absence, date, character, condition and significance of any archaeological remains that may be present.

3.2 Research objectives

In the event that significant archaeological remains were encountered this report would have aimed to place the results in context with the research objectives laid out in *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000). As only a limited amount of information was gained about the archaeological remains present, at this stage the potential of the site to contribute to any of the regional research objectives is unclear.

4.0 METHOD

The evaluation comprised of two machine-excavated trenches (Plates 1 and 2), aligned roughly north-north-west/south-south-east, each located within a new extension footprint. Trench 1 was located within the smaller extension to the south-east of the existing house and Trench 2 within the larger extension to the north. As the evaluation was undertaken well in advance of construction work the size and location of both of the trenches was severely limited by the presence of concrete access paths, garden walls and a large paved patio area.

All work was carried out in accordance with IfA (Institute for Archaeologists) by-laws and guidelines and complied with Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003). Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

Trench 1 was 3.5m long by 1.1m wide and 0.80m deep (Fig. 1, Plate 1). Machine excavated overburden consisted of 0.25m of topsoil (1) above 0.25m of mixed mid brown sandy silt (2) with a similar amount of greyish brown sandy clay silt, containing rare fragments of post-medieval tile, below (3). Machining was halted at a depth of 0.75m below the surface due to

the presence of a copper pipe running diagonally across the trench. However, natural mottled dark brown and orange sand (4) was exposed in a small sondage hand-excavated to the south of the pipe at an approximate depth of 0.80m. Revealed beneath the topsoil in the south end of the trench was an east/west aligned concrete footing with the suspected course of a 'live' sewer pipe beyond.

Trench 2 was 3.5m long by 1.5m wide and 1.15m deep (Fig. 1 & 2, Plate 3). Directly below 0.15m of topsoil (5) at the south end of the trench were the truncated remains of an L-shaped brick wall (11). The wall comprised of three courses of late 18th or early 19th century bricks (pers. comm. Pat Ryan) bonded by lime mortar (Plate 2). The west end of the wall had been truncated by the cut for a ceramic rain water pipe that ran diagonally across the trench. To the north of the pipe it was possible to hand excavate a sondage to a depth of 1.15m (Fig. 2 – Section 1). Beneath the topsoil the revealed sequence consisted of 0.25m of mixed modern deposits comprising a deposit of brown sandy silt (6), partially overlying a layer of intermixed gravel and pale mortar (7). Below these was a c. 0.5m thick deposit of pebbly greyish brown clay silt (8) which sealed two potential feature fills consisting of 0.14m of dark silt with patches of pale yellowish clay (9) above a 0.20m-plus thick deposit of charcoal-flecked dark greyish brown silt (10). A number of finds were recovered from the latter fill including fragments of animal bone, oyster shell and three sherds of medieval pottery dating to the c. 13th century. No natural deposits were observed in Trench 2 and hand probing suggested that the fill continued at least to a depth of 1.3m below the present ground surface.

6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE by Helen Walker

Finds were recovered from a single context (10). All of the material has been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context and is presented in tabulated form in Appendix 1. The finds are described by category.

Pottery

Pottery was recovered from a single context, context 10, the probable fill of a large pit or ditch, which produced three sherds weighing 22g. The pottery has been identified as body sherds of medieval coarse ware of probable 13th century date.

Bone

Four bone fragments, weighing a total of 44 grams, were recovered from context 10, comprising two long bones and a rib bone from an immature sheep-sized animal, and a rib fragment from a much smaller animal.

Other finds

Other finds comprise three pieces of oyster shell (wt 23g) comprising one upper and two lower valves, and one heavily-rusted iron object, most likely a nail (wt 4g).

Comments on the assemblage

The finds, all recovered from a single context, appear to indicate medieval activity at the site; however, due to the small quantity of material recovered little can be said beyond inferring a broad 13th century date for the feature from which it derived.

No further work is required on the assemblage. All finds have been retained at this stage, pending further work on site. The finds occupy less than one box.

7.0 DISCUSSION

It is likely that the fills in Trench 2 infill a large feature such as a pit or ditch. Finds tentatively suggest a 13th century date which would pre-date the construction of the existing house and fits with the theory that the house is built upon the site of a medieval manorial complex. Although the trench locations were limited by existing hard-landscape features and trench depths restricted by the presence of pipes it has been possible to confirm that potential medieval features survive in the area of the proposed extension on the north side of the existing house. No archaeological remains were encountered in Trench 1, located within the south-eastern extension, which was shown to be heavily disturbed by services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ECC FAU would like to thank The Nicholas Ward Design Practice for commissioning the work. The evaluation was undertaken by Trevor Ennis of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit, the illustrations are by Andrew Lewsey and the project was managed by Adrian Scruby, who also authored the report. The works were monitored by Teresa O'Connor of the ECC Historic Environment Management team, on behalf of Chelmsford Borough Council.

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Archaeologists | 2001 | <i>Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation</i> (revised) |

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

Context	Trench	Type	Description
1	1	Layer	Topsoil – dry mid brown, fine silt-sand with frequent pebbles (0.25m thick)
2	1	Layer	Subsoil – mid brown silt-sand (0.25m thick)
3	1	Layer	Friable mid brown clay-silt-sand with rare fragments of Post-medieval tile (0.25 – 0.30m thick)
4	1	Natural	Mottled reddish brown to orange sand (> 0.15m thick)
5	2	Layer	Topsoil - dry mid brown, fine silt-sand with frequent pebbles (0.20m thick)
6	2	Layer/ deposit	Mid brown sandy silt (0.10 - 0.15m thick)
7	2	Layer/ deposit	Intermixed gravel and pale mortar (0.04 - 0.16m thick)
8	2	Layer	Pebbly greyish brown clay silt (0.5m thick)
9	2	Layer/ fill?	Dark brown silt with patches of pale yellowish clay (0.14m thick)
10	2	Layer/ fill?	Charcoal-flecked dark greyish brown silt (> 0.20m thick)
11	2	Structure	Brick-built structure/ foundation – 3 courses high in red brick laid in an English bond with lime mortar. Brick dimensions 220 x 105 x 55mm (8.5")

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Context	Feature	Count	Weight (g)	Description	Date
(10)		3	23	Oyster shell, comprising two lower valves and one upper	-
		4	44	Bone fragments, comprising long bones, one from an immature individual, and a rib bone, all from a sheep-sized animal, plus a rib fragment from a much smaller animal	-
		1	4	Iron, heavily rusted but probably from a nail	-
		3	22	Pottery: medieval coarse ware body sherds	Most likely 13th C

APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

SITE NAME: Boreham Hall, The Chase, Boreham, Essex

SITE CODE: BOBH 10

Index to Archive:

1. Introduction

1.1 ECC HEM Design Brief

1.2 ECC FAU WSI

2. Research Archive

2.1 Client Report

3. Site Archive

3.1 Location plan

3.2 Trench Recording & Context Sheets

3.3 A4 plan (Trench 1), A3 plan & section (Trench 2)

3.4 Photographic Registers

3.5 Site Photographic Record (1 set of Black & White prints, 1 Set of digital images on disk)

3.6 Miscellaneous notes/plans

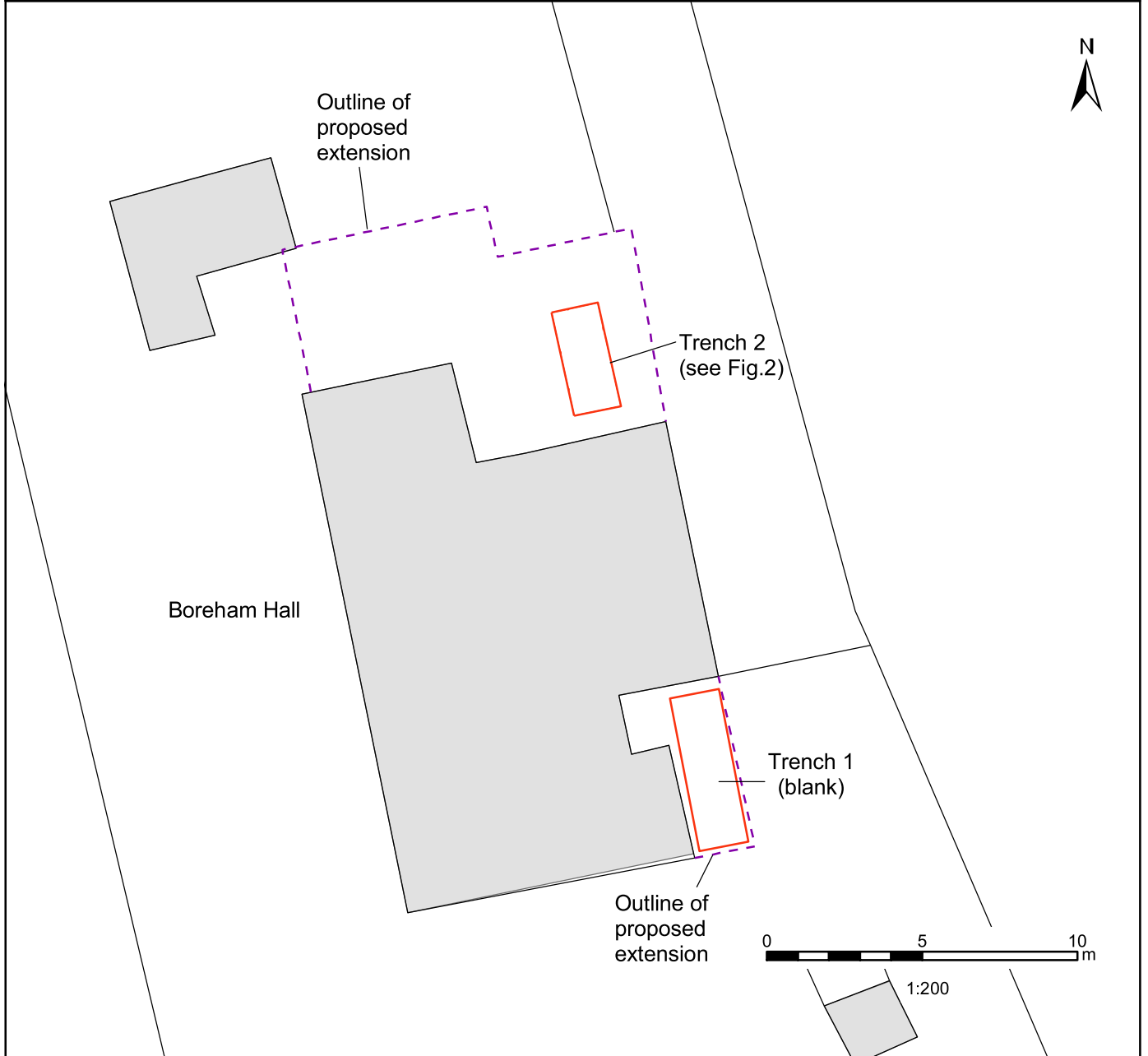
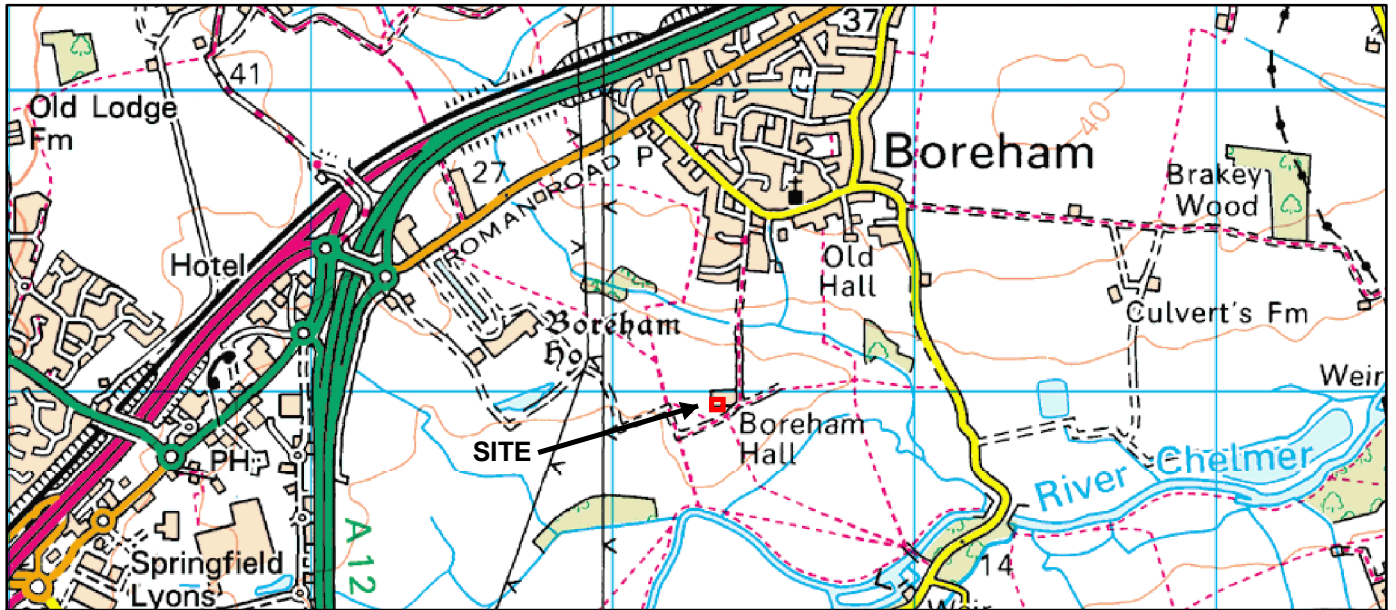
3.7 Finds (n.b the finds occupy less than one box)

APPENDIX 4: HER SUMMARY SHEET

HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: Boreham Hall, The Chase, Boreham, Essex	
Parishes: Boreham	District: Chelmsford
NGR: TL 7534 0895	Site Code: BOBH 10
Type of Work: Archaeological Evaluation	Site Director/Group: T. Ennis, ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Dates of Work: 08 th September	Size of Area Investigated: 9 sqm
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Chelmsford Museum	Funding source: Client – The Nicholas Ward Design Practice
Further Seasons Anticipated?: Yes	Related HER Nos.: 5766, 5767, 5768
Final Report: EAH note	Oasis No.: essexcou1-83415
Periods Represented: Medieval, Post-medieval	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p><i>An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Boreham Hall in advance of the construction of two new extensions to the existing house, revealing remains of probable 13th century date.</i></p> <p><i>Boreham Hall is located to the south of the village from which it takes its name, on the south-facing slope of the Chelmer Valley, surrounded by open farmland. The current house is constructed within a Medieval manorial site that pre-dates Domesday, while a linear body of water to the north of the house suggests that the medieval manor house may have been situated within a moated enclosure. The present house is believed to date from the 16th century, with 17th century and later extensions. To the southwest of the house are a number of cropmarks suggestive of trackways and linear features that possibly relate to activity associated with the manorial site, or may be indicative of earlier settlement or activity pre-dating the establishment of the manorial centre.</i></p> <p><i>The evaluation comprised two machine-excavated trenches – trench 1 was located within the smaller extension to the south-east of the existing house and trench 2 within the larger extension to the north. As the evaluation was undertaken well in advance of construction work the size and location of both of the trenches was severely limited by the presence of concrete access paths, garden walls and a large paved patio area.</i></p> <p><i>In trench 1 natural mottled dark brown and orange sand was exposed in a small sondage at an approximate depth of 0.80m, while at the south end of the trench was an east/west aligned concrete footing with the suspected course of a 'live' sewer pipe beyond.</i></p> <p><i>In trench 2, at the south end of the trench, were the truncated remains of an L-shaped brick wall of late 18th or early 19th century date bonded by lime mortar. The west end of the wall had been truncated by the cut for a ceramic rain water pipe that ran diagonally across the trench. To the north, beneath the topsoil the revealed sequence consisted of mixed modern deposits overlying a pebbly clay silt which sealed two potential feature fills consisting of a dark silt with patches of pale yellowish clay above a deposit of charcoal-flecked dark greyish brown silt. A number of finds were recovered from the latter fill including fragments of animal bone, oyster shell and three sherds of medieval pottery dating to the c. 13th century. No</i></p>	

Site name/Address: Boreham Hall, The Chase, Boreham, Essex	
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Previous Summaries/Reports: None	
Author of Summary: A. Scruby	Date of Summary: September 2011



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Fig.1. Location of evaluation trenches

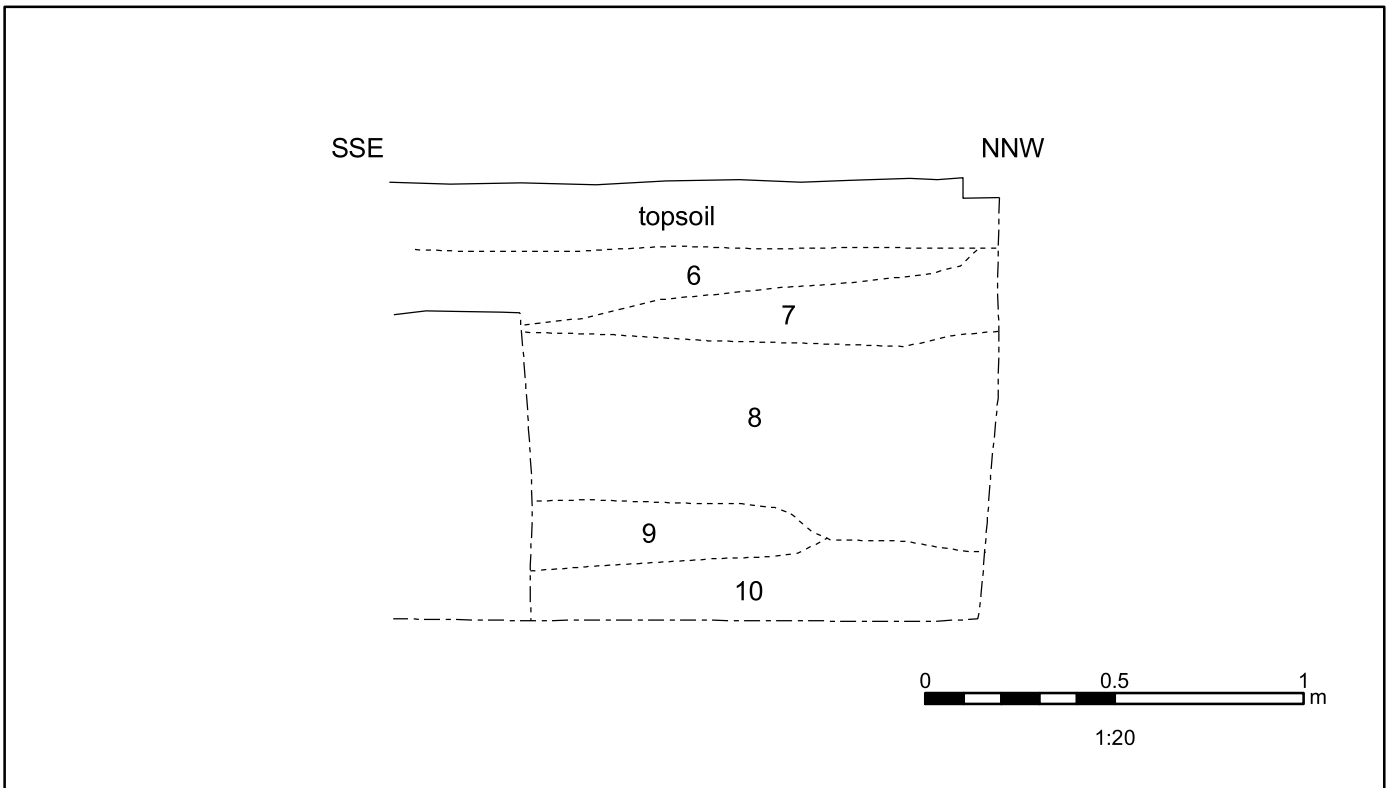
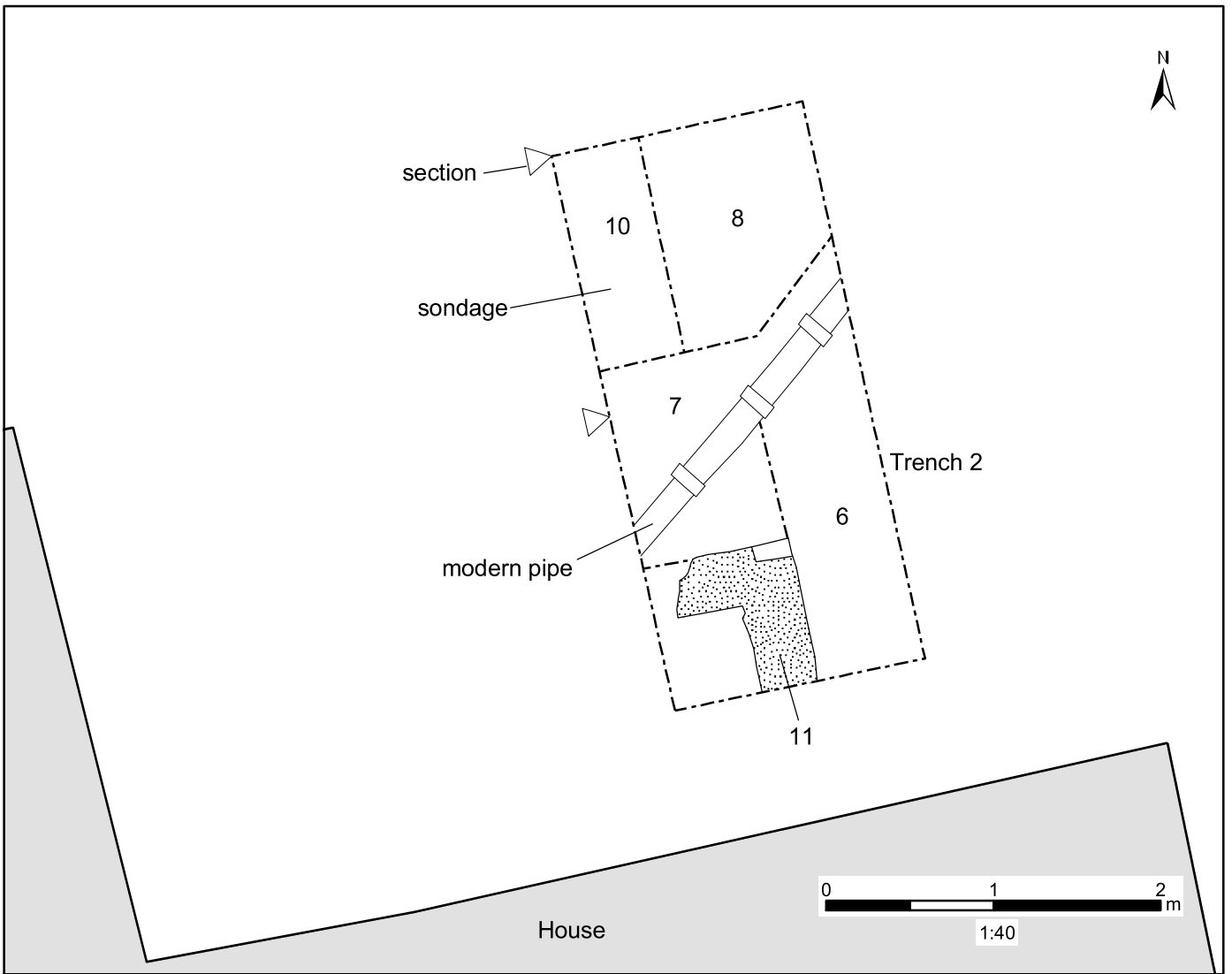


Fig.2. Plan and section of Trench 2



Plate 1: Trench 1 looking south



Plate 2: Trench 2 - wall/ structure 11 (1m scale)



Plate 3: Trench 2 looking south (1m scale)