

**THE CORNERSTONE  
EASTERN SOUTHEND UNITED REFORMED CHURCH  
CENTRAL AVENUE  
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA  
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING**



**Essex County Council  
Field Archaeology Unit**

**DECEMBER 2011**

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ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING**

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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. Please contact the Archaeological Fieldwork Manager, at the

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING**

Client: Matthews Serjeant Architects acting for the Eastern Southend United  
Reformed Church

NGR: TQ 8881 8641

Planning Ref: SOS 09/01107/FUL/M

Site Code: SOUMS: A2011.4

Oasis No.: 86158

Date of Fieldwork: 2nd August 2010 to 19th October 2011

**SUMMARY**

*Archaeological monitoring was carried out at The Cornerstone, Eastern Southend United Reformed Church, Central Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, during groundworks for the construction of a new church and hall complex. Monitoring of the 1841 sq m site was undertaken in two phases between August 2010 and October 2011.*

*Although the site is situated within a landscape that was farmed and settled in prehistoric times no evidence for occupation of this date was found during the monitoring. In particular there were no remains that could be linked to the discovery of five Iron Age urns in the vicinity of Bournemouth Park Road in the 19th century.*

*Other than clearly modern disturbances, the only archaeological features noted were a line of three post-holes along the northern edge of the development area. These were located very close to the boundary and are almost certainly the remains of a former fence line of 20th century date.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This report describes the results of a programme of archaeological monitoring carried out at The Cornerstone, Eastern Southend United Reformed Church, Central Avenue, Southend-on-Sea during groundworks for the construction of a new church and hall complex. The archaeological work was undertaken by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of Matthews Serjeant Architects acting for the Eastern Southend United Reformed Church.

As the works might impact adversely on archaeological deposits a condition was placed on planning consent (planning application ref: SOS 09/01107/FUL/M) requiring that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken in advance of development, following advice given by Southend Museum, based on guidance contained in Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (now replaced by PPS 5: Planning for the Historic Environment).

The investigation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by the ECC FAU (2009) and approved by the planning authority. The redevelopment was undertaken in two phases with the hall demolished in 2010 and replaced by the eastern half of the new complex, which included the new church, meeting rooms, toilets etc, and the old church demolished in 2011 and replaced with a new hall and car park.

Copies of this report will be supplied to Matthews Serjeant Architects, Southend Museum and the Southend-on-Sea Sites and Monuments Record. 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>). The site archive and copies of the report will be deposited at Southend Museum.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Topography and Geology (Fig. 1)**

The site is located to the north of the centre of Southend-on-Sea, in the former Prittlewell Parish, on the corner of the junction with Bournemouth Park Road and Central Avenue (NGR TQ 8881 8641). The site is bounded to the east by Bournemouth Park Road, to the south by Central Avenue, and to the north and west by residential properties. Eastern Southend United Reformed Church, located in the western half of the site, is surrounded by hard standing. The Hall stands in the eastern half of the site and is bordered by a lawn on its north and east sides. The site is flat and at an approximate height of 28m OD.

The underlying superficial geology consists of clay and silt river terrace deposits above clay, silt and sand of the London Clay Formation.

## **2.2 Archaeology and History (Fig. 1)**

Only limited archaeological finds and features have been recovered from the area immediately surrounding the site; however the Southend-on-Sea Sites and Monuments Record (SoSSMR) records five late Iron Age urns found at Bournemouth Park Road in the late 19th century (NGR TQ 888 862). The precise find spot of the urns is not accurately recorded but the provided grid reference indicates they were recovered from the area immediately surrounding the site.

The five Iron Age urns fit into a wider landscape of prehistoric activity. Various investigations associated with the development of Southend Airport c. 3 km to the north-west of the site have found a variety of remains of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age date (EHER 9605-6 and 18227-8; Wardill 1998). An Iron Age hillfort and enclosure were discovered at Shoebury Camp, c. 5 km to the south-east of the site (NMR-TQ 98 SW 3), while some 1.4 km to the north of the site lies the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Prittlewell Camp, the remains of a univalliate hillfort (SAM 29408) of probable later prehistoric (Bronze Age/Iron Age) date. To the east of Prittlewell Camp, an early Iron Age settlement site was excavated, ahead of golf course construction, at Fox Hall (Ecclestone 1995).

Roman and Saxon remains were discovered ahead of construction of the Temple Farm Industrial Estate (EHER 13751-5, 9733-5), 2 km to the north-west, and burials of both Roman and Saxon date were discovered in a cemetery to the east of Priory Park (SAM 418909) in the 1920s. This cemetery, located 1.4 km to the north-west of the site, contained the elaborate grave of a wealthy Saxon male (the 'Prittlewell Prince') excavated in 2003 (Blair 2007).

St. Mary's Church, Prittlewell, c. 1.2km to the north-west of the site, contains an arch probably dating to the 7th century (Taylor and Taylor 1965, 499-500). Prittlewell is the nearest nucleated medieval settlement and is recorded in Domesday Book with sheep rearing, perhaps for dairy produce, being the predominant economic practice (Rumble 1983). Prittlewell Priory (SAM No. 29418) was founded in the early 12th century.

The available cartographic evidence indicates Central Avenue was created between 1895 and 1912, with many residential properties constructed between 1914 and 1924. At this time

the site formed part of a field, remaining vacant until the erection of the current church and hall in the period between 1924 and 1947.

### **3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 Aims**

The specific aim of the archaeological monitoring was to preserve by record any archaeological deposits that would be destroyed by the development.

#### **3.2 Objectives**

The specific objectives of the investigation were to:

- Closely investigate any Iron Age urn inhumations or related finds and features, if present.

### **4.0 METHOD (Fig. 1)**

The existing hall in the eastern half of the site was demolished in Summer 2010. Monitoring was undertaken on topsoil stripping of the undisturbed land to the north, south and east of the hall and in part below the hall itself (see cover photo). Up to 0.50m of topsoil was removed down to a uniform level that partly exposed the underlying natural orange/brown subsoil. The area beneath the former hall was covered by a small amount of modern overburden. Monitoring was then undertaken during the excavation of foundations for the new church in the eastern half of the site (Plates 1 and 2). Once the new church was constructed the existing Church building in the western half of the site was demolished and further monitoring was undertaken, in Autumn 2011, during the excavation of foundations for the new hall building. The foundation trenches varied in width from 0.60m to 0.90m and were on average about 1m deep.

Potential archaeological features were cleaned and hand investigated where practical. Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout. ECC FAU is a Registered Archaeological Organisation with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and all work was carried out in accordance with IfA by-laws and guidelines (IfA 2010, 2008) and complied with Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003).

## **5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Fig 1)**

Three post-holes of modern date were identified along with areas of disturbance associated with the demolished 20th century church and hall. Detailed context information is presented in Appendix 1.

A number of features were investigated during the initial topsoil stripping and later during the foundation cutting, all appeared to be disturbances of modern date. The area directly below the demolished hall was particularly disturbed. During monitoring of the foundations on the north side of the new hall a large robbed-out brick feature was noted (Plate 3). Loose modern brick rubble was noted in the bottom of the feature and the top was infilled with dark grey clay. It was initially thought that this had been part of the foundations of the former church but examination of the site plans showed its location actually to be mid way between the position of the former church and hall. It is likely that the feature was part of a demolished man-hole or storage tank associated with former below ground services.

A line of three post-holes (2, 4 and 6) were identified in section close to the northern edge of the site (Plate 4). All three were cut from directly below the topsoil, had vertical or near-vertical sides and a flat base and were of a roughly similar depth (Fig. 2, Section 1). The fills of post-holes 1 and 6 were similar with both containing mixed grey clay silt with orange/brown clay lenses, whilst post-hole 4 contained re-deposited brown clay, black ash and slag. All three fills contained flecks of coal, while a single sherd from a modern stoneware vessel was recovered from the fill (1) of post-hole 2.

## **6.0 FINDS by Helen Walker**

The only find (context 1) comprises a sherd of modern stoneware (wt 16g) from a cylindrical vessel showing a brown wash and a smooth lead glaze, which dates from the 1820s to earlier 20th century. The sherd has been discarded.



## **7.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS**

Although the site is situated within a landscape that was farmed and settled in prehistoric times no evidence for occupation of this date was found during the monitoring. In particular there were no remains that could be linked to the discovery of five Iron Age urns in the vicinity of Bournemouth Park Road in the 19th century.

Other than clearly modern disturbances, the only archaeological features noted were a line of three post-holes along the northern edge of the development area. These were located very close to the boundary and are almost certainly the remains of a former fence line of 20th century date.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ECC FAU would like to thank Matthews Serjeant Architects for commissioning the work. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Trevor Ennis, Mark Germany and Adrian Scruby of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit. The report was prepared by Trevor Ennis with illustrations by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Ken Crowe of Southend Museum.

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## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions given in metres

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Period</b>
1	Fill of 2	Mixed grey clay silt with orange clay flecks/lenses	Modern
2	Post-hole	0.30m wide x 0.30m deep, vertical sides, flat base	Modern
3	Fill of 4	Mixed brown silty clay with ash & slag	Modern
4	Post-hole	0.32m wide x 0.26m deep, near vertical sides, flattish base	Modern
5	Fill of 6	Mixed grey clay silt with brown clay lenses	Modern
6	Post-hole	0.48m wide x 0.32m deep, vertical sides, flat base	Modern

## **APPENDIX 2: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE**

**Site Name: The Cornerstone, Eastern Southend United Reformed Church,  
Central Avenue, Southend-on-Sea**

### **Index to Archive:**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Written Scheme of Investigation

#### **2. Research Archive**

2.1 Client Report

2.2 Finds Reports

#### **3. Site Archive**

3.1 Context Record Register

3.2 Context Records (1 to 6)

3.3 Section Register

3.4 1 x A4 section sheet

3.5 Location plan

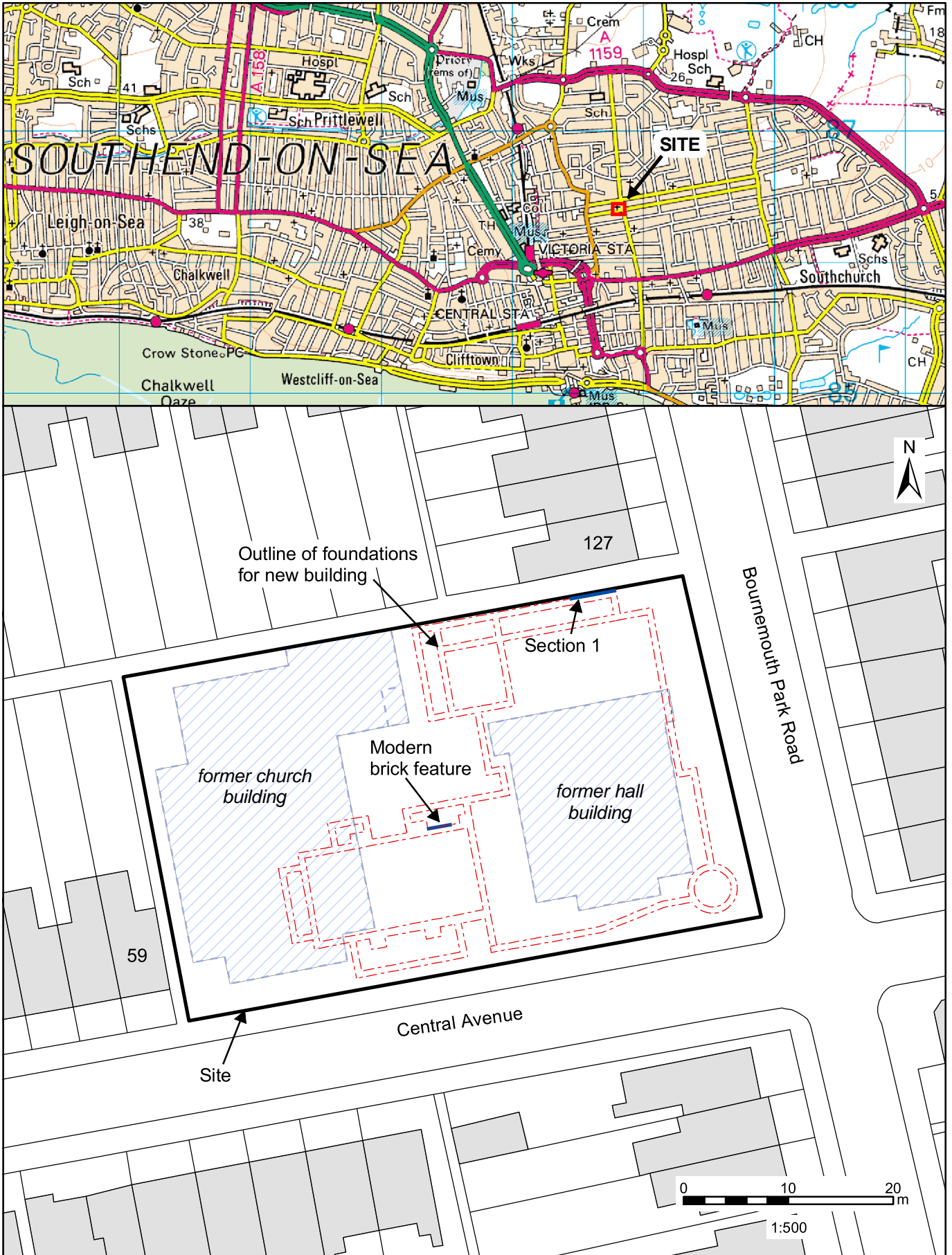
3.6 Photographic Register

3.7 Site Photographic Record (1 set of colour prints, contact prints + 1 set of digital images on cd)

3.8 Miscellaneous plans

### APPENDIX 3: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site name/Address:</b> The Cornerstone, Eastern Southend United Reformed Church, Central Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex	
<b>Parishes:</b> Prittlewell	<b>District:</b> Southend-on-Sea
<b>NGR:</b> TQ 8881 8641	<b>Site Code:</b> - SOUMS: A2011.4
<b>Type of Work:</b> Archaeological Monitoring	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> T. Ennis, ECC Field Archaeology Unit
<b>Dates of Work:</b> 2nd August 2010 to 19th October 2011	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> 1841 sq m
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b> Southend	<b>Funding source:</b> Client
<b>Further Seasons Anticipated?:</b> No	<b>Related HER Nos.:</b> -
<b>Final Report:</b> EAH summary	<b>Oasis No.:</b> 86158
<b>Periods Represented:</b> Modern	
<b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b>	
<p>Archaeological monitoring was carried out at The Cornerstone, Eastern Southend United Reformed Church, Central Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, during groundworks for the construction of a new church and hall complex. Monitoring of the 1841 sq m site was undertaken in two phases between August 2010 and October 2011.</p> <p>Although the site is situated within a landscape that was farmed and settled in prehistoric times no evidence for occupation of this date was found during the monitoring. In particular there were no remains that could be linked to the discovery of five Iron Age urns in the vicinity of Bournemouth Park Road in the 19th century.</p> <p>Other than clearly modern disturbances, the only archaeological features noted were a line of three post-holes along the northern edge of the development area. These were located very close to the boundary and are almost certainly the remains of a former fence line of 20th century date.</p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports:</b> none	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> T. Ennis	<b>Date of Summary:</b> December 2011



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Fig.1. Location of archaeological monitoring

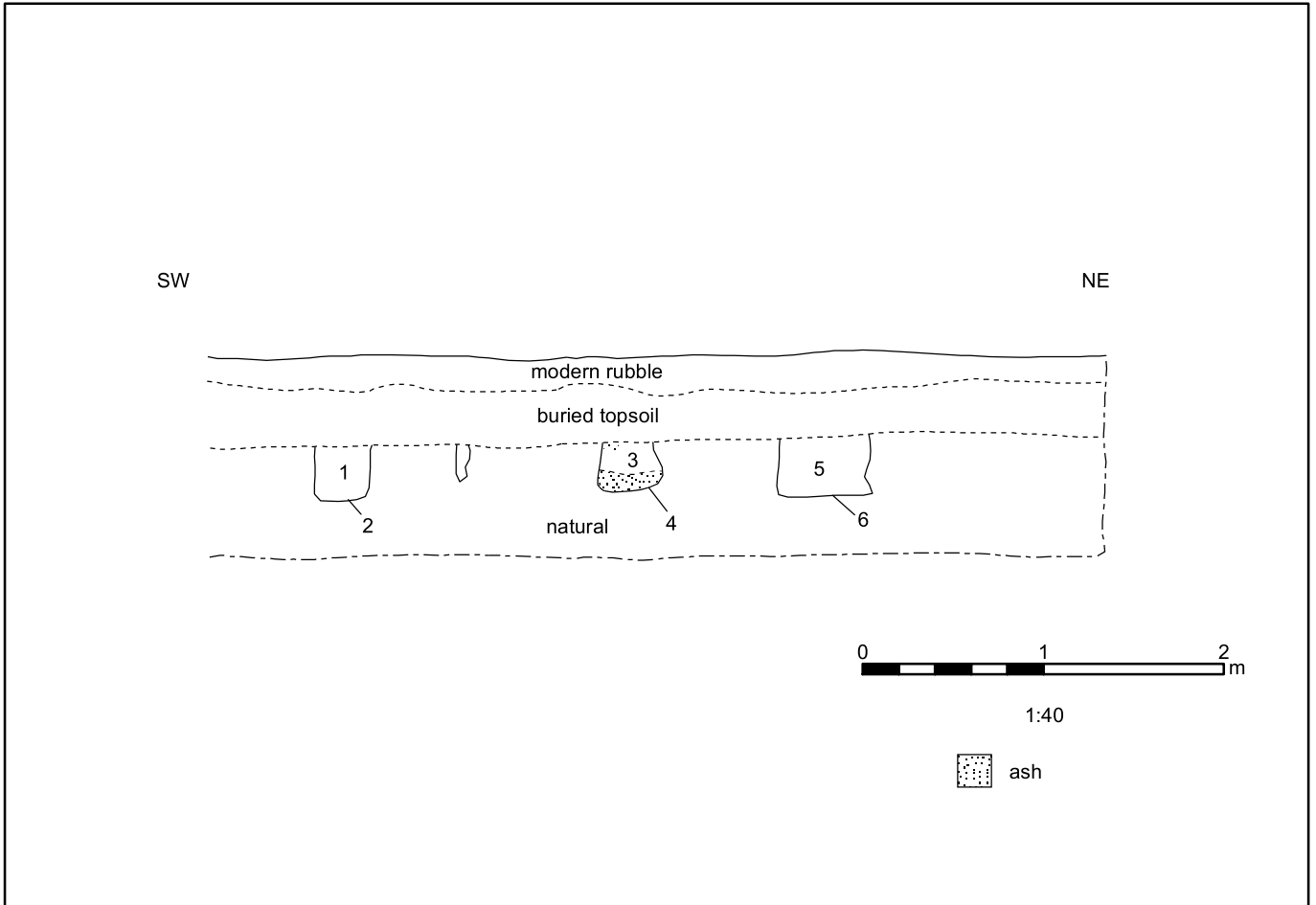


Fig.2. Section 1





Plate 1. Foundation trench for new church looking east



Plate 2. Circular foundation trench looking north-west





Plate 3. Modern brick feature



Plate 4. Modern post-holes (1m scale)