

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane  
Robertsbridge, East Sussex**

**NGR 575440 123740**

**Rother District Council Planning Reference  
RR/2012/756/P**

**ASE Project No: 5624  
Site Code: SSR12**

**ASE Report No: 2012181  
OASIS ID: archaeol6-133086**

**By Simon Stevens BA MIFA**

**With a contribution by  
Susan Pringle**



**October 2012**

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Julian Bluck, on behalf of his client, Charles Wyndham to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for an extension to Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex. The site lies within the former outer ward of Robertsbridge Abbey, the only Cistercian foundation in Sussex.*

*The remains of a feature interpreted as a probable malt-drying kiln were excavated and recorded during the watching brief. Although no firm dating evidence was obtained, documentary sources suggest that that a kiln of this type was in operation at the site in the 1560s.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Mr Julian Bluck, on behalf of his client, Mr Charles Wyndham to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for an extension at Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex (NGR 575440 123740; Figure 1).

### **1.2 Topography and Geology**

1.2.1 Summertree Stud lies in a secluded rural position c.1.5km to the east of the centre of Robertsbridge in the valley of the River Rother, on the southern side of Redlands Lane. The site lies within the former precinct of Robertsbridge Abbey, a Cistercian foundation dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

1.2.2 According to current data from the British Geological Survey (BGS 2012) the underlying bedrock consists of Ashdown Beds Formation. There is no recorded superficial geology, although there are deposits of alluvium originating from the River Rother immediately to the north.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 Planning permission for the erection of the extension was granted by Rother District Council (planning reference RR/2012/756/P). Following consultation between Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council (Rother District Council's advisers on archaeological issues) a condition (No. 2) was attached to the planning consent requiring that:

*“No development shall take place within the area indicated until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and the works shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.”*

*REASON: To enable the recording of any items of historical or archaeological interest as the development is likely to disturb remains of archaeological interest, in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework and Policy GD1 (viii) of the Rother District Plan.’*

1.3.2 A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI; ASE 2012) was duly produced supplied to and approved by ESCC outlining the techniques to be used in the field, and in the production of a report and an archive.

## **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The aims stated in the *Written Scheme of Investigation (ibid.)* were:

### **GENERAL**

- *To record any archaeological remains, finds or features that will be impacted by the excavation of any foundations and service trenches associated with the proposed development. Particularly to define the date, function and character of any such remains*
- *To make public the results of the archaeological work, subject to any confidentiality restrictions*

### **SPECIFIC**

*The specific aims of the investigation are:*

- *Is there any evidence for medieval activity associated with the abbey and its outlying buildings?*
- *Is there any evidence for post dissolution activity on the site (such as smelting or agriculture)?*

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

1.5.1 The current report provides results of the archaeological monitoring of the groundworks at the site in August 2012. The on-site work was undertaken by Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist). The project was managed by Andy Leonard (Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson (Post-Excavation Manager).

## 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The following archaeological sites and findspots held on East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Historic Environment Record (HER) are located within a 1km radius of the site as shown in Figure 1.

No. on Figure 1	ESCC HER No.	OS Co-ordinates	Description
1	MES 2300	TQ 754 238	Above- and below-ground remains of Cistercian Abbey (SAM 1002295)
2	MES 2301	TQ 7522 2308	Post-medieval pond bay
3	MES 2303	TQ 7492 2424	13 <sup>th</sup> century St Mary's Church
4	MES 2307	TQ 750 231	Medieval Farm
5	MES 2309	TQ 750 243	15 <sup>th</sup> century alehouse with 18 <sup>th</sup> century alterations
6	MES 2325	TQ 749 243	Church Farmhouse listed building
7	MES 2338	TQ 7492 2419	Goodgrooms Farm listed building
8	MES 2340	TQ 7582 2436	17 <sup>th</sup> century Grade II listed building
9	MES 2370	TQ 7542 2386	Abbey Building (part of SAM 1002295)
10	MES 2378	TQ 749 242	Medieval abbey building
11	MES 2399	TQ 7514 2314	Medieval farm
12	MES 2400	TQ 7553 2376	Medieval floor tiles findspot
13	MES 3826	TQ 7567 2364	Post medieval forge
14	MES 3866	TQ 7573 2319	Bronze Age Barrow
15	MES 3892	TQ 7555 2335	Medieval kiln
16	MES 3893	TQ 7576 2347	Medieval earthwork
17	MES 3894	TQ 7561 2309	Medieval earthwork
18	MES 3895	TQ 758 231	Post-medieval charcoal hearths
19	MES 8677	TQ 7525 2369	Undated cropmarks forming possible enclosures and droveway
20	MES 19253	TQ 7489 2432	Anglo-Saxon village
21	MES 19263	TQ 7579 2438	Large medieval farm
22	MES 19569	TQ 7524 2382	Remains of bridge to abbey site located in bank of stream
23	MES 19570	TQ 7501 2406	WWII pillbox

Table 1: Summary of ESCC HER data

2.2 The site lies within an Archaeological Notification Area and within the former precinct of Robertsbridge Abbey, in its outer ward, away from the main cloistral buildings, just outside of the scheduled area (SAM No: 1002295). The Cistercian abbey was founded in 1176, the only house of the order to be established in Sussex (Taylor 1999, 46).

2.3 It was dissolved in 1538, and the above-ground remains have been incorporated into the current abbey farm complex. The building now used as the farmhouse was erected c.1250 and is usually described as the Abbott's House or Hall. Most of the abbey and its associated buildings are overgrown and demarcated by low earthworks rather than by standing structures (information from HER entry MES2300 and RoHAS 1985).

- 2.4 After the dissolution an iron-working furnace and forge was established in the Abbey precinct, and this ironworks is known to have supplied cast iron for works at Camber Castle in 1542-3. Although the Robertsbridge furnace ceased operation in 1546 and was used only periodically after that both elements continued in operation well into the eighteenth century (Cleere and Crossley 1995, 125 and Gazetteer C, No. 163).
- 2.5 An archaeological excavation was undertaken at Park Farm in 1988, on the location of a medieval aisled hall, c.500m to the southwest of the site. The hall is thought to have been built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in timber, before being replaced with stone in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was later extended to the south and is thought to have formed part of the Robertsbridge Abbey grange of Park (Gardiner, Jones & Martin 1991).
- 2.6 In 2010 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken in advance of the construction of a detached garden room, approximately 7m to the southeast of the current site. The excavation identified the foundations of a large sandstone wall with an external buttress of possible 14<sup>th</sup> century date, thought to be the remains of a medieval barn. The excavation also identified a number of cut features including a 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century pit, post holes and stake holes (CBAS 2010).
- 2.7 Although the alignment of the medieval wall suggests it would not traverse the current site, the proximity suggested that there was a strong possibility that associated remains might survive in the area affected by the groundworks for the new extension.



### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 Monitored groundworks consisting of the mechanical and manual excavation of strip footings and ground reduction for a new extension. All sections were examined for the presence of archaeological features, and all spoil was scanned for the presence of archaeological artefacts.
- 3.2 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded to accepted professional standards using standard Archaeology South-East context record forms. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.2 A full photographic record of the work was kept and will form part of the site archive. The site archive is currently held by Archaeology South-East at the offices in Portslade, and will be offered to Hastings/Rye/Rother Museum, who have been emailed, in due course. It consists of the following material:

Number of Contexts	12
No. of files/paper record	1
Photograph	34 digital images
Bulk Finds	1 box

Table 2: Quantification of site archive

## **4.0 RESULTS**

(Figure 3)

### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 Groundworks consisting of the mechanical and manual excavation of footings trenches, which were 500mm wide and a maximum of 1.2m in depth, and ground reduction for the construction of an extension to an existing building at the site were monitored on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

### **4.2 The Groundworks**

4.2.1 The removal of a humic mid brown silty clay topsoil [001] and a deposit of made ground consisting of a mixture of topsoil, builder's sand and brick rubble, context [002] in the 500mm wide footing trench and area of ground reduction revealed the surface of the 'natural' brownish orange clay [004].

4.2.2 Part of the stone footing of the standing building [003] was uncovered within the footings trench. It extended 300mm into the footing trench from the base of the wall, and to 810mm below the current ground surface, and consisted of local sandstone blocks, bonded with a sandy grey mortar.

4.2.3 Part of a kiln was encountered in the western footing trench, and was more fully revealed in plan during ground reduction at a depth of 500mm below the ground surface (10.5m OD).

4.2.4 The circular structure was constructed within cut [005] and had a diameter of c.1.7m. The feature only survived at the 'floor' level.

4.2.5 The surviving elements of the structure were well-preserved and consisted of a floor [006] of red, well-fired tiles laid diagonally on edge and bonded with a strong yellow sandy mortar. The tiles showed extensive evidence of burning leading to discolouration and cracking [007]. One part of the floor retained its red colour and was recorded as [008].

4.2.6 A limited component of the superstructure survived at the northern edge of the structure. This consisted of tiles similar to those that made the floor, but laid horizontally in a similar mortar, recorded as [009].

4.2.7 At the southern edge of the feature was evidence of a different construction method as here the kiln wall would have sat partly on top of a block of masonry [010] which itself appeared to have been laid on a bed of mortar, context [011].

<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Max. Deposit Thickness</b>
001	Deposit	Topsoil	230mm
002	Deposit	Made Ground	820mm
003	Masonry	Wall Footing	810mm
004	Deposit	'Natural'	-
005	Cut	Kiln Structure	300mm
006	Masonry	Kiln Structure	300mm
007	Masonry	Kiln Structure	-
008	Masonry	Kiln Structure	300mm
009	Masonry	Kiln Structure	40mm
010	Masonry	Kiln Structure	250mm
011	Masonry	Kiln Structure	130mm
012	Fill	Charcoal lens	30mm

Table 3: Context register

## **5.0 THE FINDS**

### **5.1 The Ceramic Building Material** by Susan Pringle

- 5.1.1 Forty-four fragments of brick, tile and mortar weighing 5.448kg were recovered from the kiln and a further twenty fragments of brick and tile weighing 1.438kg came from unstratified areas of the site. The stratified building material was of only two types; an unglazed tile in a sandy fabric with silty inclusions, thickness range c. 15-19 mm, and a thick tile or thin brick containing only moderate amounts of quartz but with cream silty streaks and blocks and red iron-rich inclusions, thickness range 27-32 mm, also unglazed.
- 5.1.2 A single square-sectioned perforation was noted in four of the thicker tiles; no holes were observed in the thinner type. One of the thicker tiles, from [010], was embedded in mortar with imprints which suggested that it had been part of a tile-coursed structure or feature. Context [007] contained a group of heavily sooted tiles of the thinner type with burnt mortar. Both groups of tiles appear to be kiln or hearth tiles, suggesting that the structure they were found in was heated. They are undated. These probable kiln tiles form an interesting group.
- 5.1.3 The unstratified building materials were more varied. Roof tile fragments included probable medieval peg tile and nib tile and post-medieval hip and peg tile. There were small fragments of post-medieval and modern machine-made brick and red quarry tile, as well as eleven fragments of the thinner type of kiln tile, some sooted.

## 6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The discovery of a kiln structure at the site confirmed the potential of the area for the survival of below ground archaeological remains, previously highlighted in archaeological work in the vicinity (CBAS 2010). It is unfortunate that the feature could not be closely dated from associated artefacts or stratigraphic relationships, and that its form did not immediately suggest a function.
- 6.2 However, the feature is probably a malt-drying kiln, used as part of the process of converting cereal grains to malt, itself part of the practice of brewing (David Martin *pers. comm.*). Most examples of malt kilns come from urban contexts, such as a 17<sup>th</sup> century example from Reigate, Surrey (Williams 1984). Comparison with other rural sites is hampered by the paucity of full publication (Crossley 1994, 221).
- 6.3 This identification is given weight by documentary as well as physical evidence, given the survival of a post-dissolution survey carried out in 1567 which lists a number of buildings in the outer ward of the Abbey, including a malting house. The following is reproduced in RoHAS, 1985:
- '...also one malting howse made of lyme and stone and covered with tyle wherein are one sesterne of lyme and stone to water barley in. One large malting rome belowe and another above and also an hoste to drye malte on'*
- 6.4 It is also possible that the feature formed the base of a brewing tub (David Martin *pers. comm.*). The 1567 survey also lists the presence of a brewhouse in the outer ward, but by that date it was in use for *'the making of steele'*, and given the total absence of ironworking slag in the vicinity of the feature, or adhering to it, it seems unlikely that this is feature in question.
- 6.5 Therefore on the balance of probabilities and based on currently available evidence, it seems likely that the feature recorded during the watching brief was the remains of a *'hoste'* either that listed in the 1567 survey or another similarly located within the outer ward of the abbey.

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**HER Summary Form**

Site Code	SSR12					
Identification Name and Address	Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane, Robertsbridge					
County, District &/or Borough	Rother District, East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	575440 123740					
Geology	Ashdown Beds					
ASE Project Number	5624					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other <i>Extension</i>		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 28.08.2012 – 29.08.2012	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Julian Bluck, on behalf of his client, Charles Wyndham					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other		
<p><i>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Julian Bluck, on behalf of his client, Charles Wyndham to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for an extension at Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex. The site lies within the former outer ward of Robertsbridge Abbey, the only Cistercian foundation in Sussex.</i></p> <p><i>The remains of a feature interpreted as a probable malt drying kiln were excavated and recorded during the watching brief. Although no firm dating evidence was obtained, documentary sources suggest that that a kiln of this type was in operation at the site in the 1560s.</i></p>						

## OASIS Form

### OASIS ID: archaeol6-133086

#### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Julian Bluck, on behalf of his client, Charles Wyndham to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for an extension at Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex. The site lies within the former outer ward of Robertsbridge Abbey, the only Cistercian foundation in Sussex. The remains of a feature interpreted as a probable post-dissolution malt drying kiln were excavated and recorded during the watching brief. Although no firm dating evidence was obtained, documentary sources suggest that that at least one such kiln was in operation at the site in the 1560s.
Project dates	Start: 28-08-2012 End: 29-08-2012
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	5624 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	SSR12 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	RR/2012/756/P - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	KILN Post Medieval
Significant Finds	TILE Post Medieval
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX ROTHER SALEHURST Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane



Postcode	TN32 5NB
Study area	24.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 7544 2374 50 0 50 59 08 N 000 29 59 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 9.00m Max: 11.00m

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#### **Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	East Sussex County Council
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson
Project supervisor	Simon Stevens
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Julian Bluck, on behalf of his client, Charles Wyndham

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#### **Project archives**

Physical Archive recipient	Hastings Museum
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Hastings Museum
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Hastings Museum
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Miscellaneous Material","Notebook - Excavation"," Research"," General Notes","Plan","Report","Section","Context sheet","Unpublished Text"

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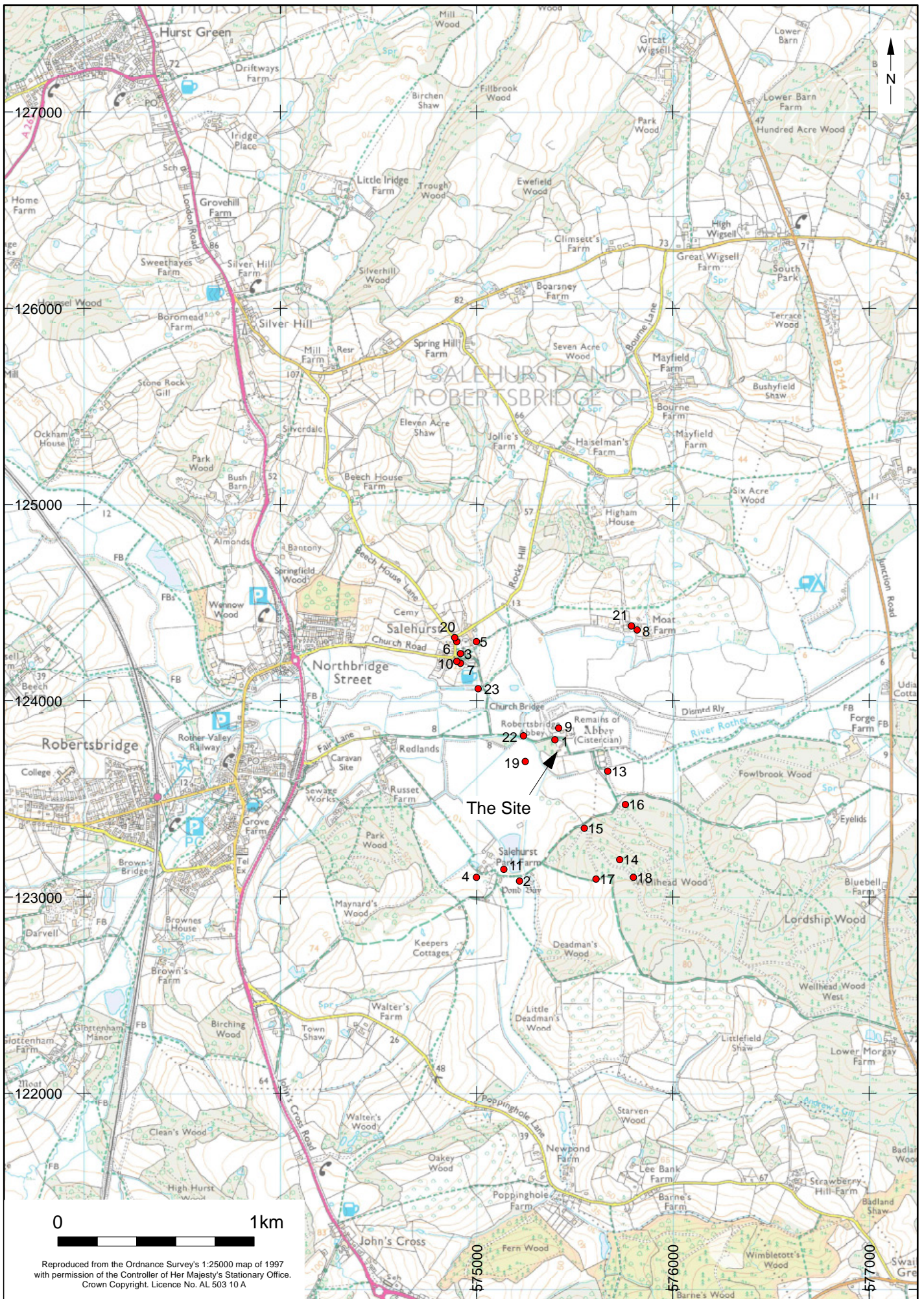
#### **Project**

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**bibliography 1**

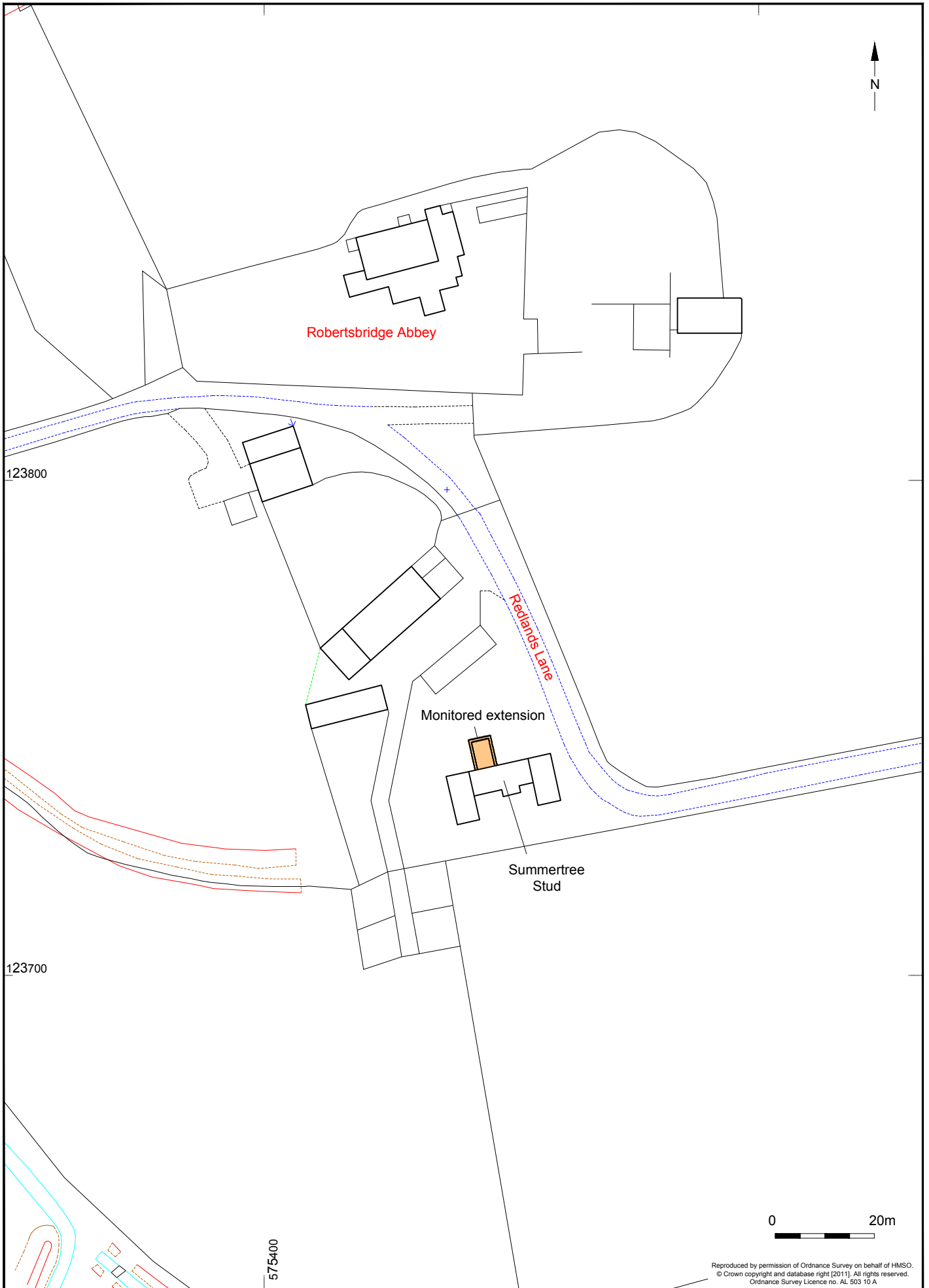
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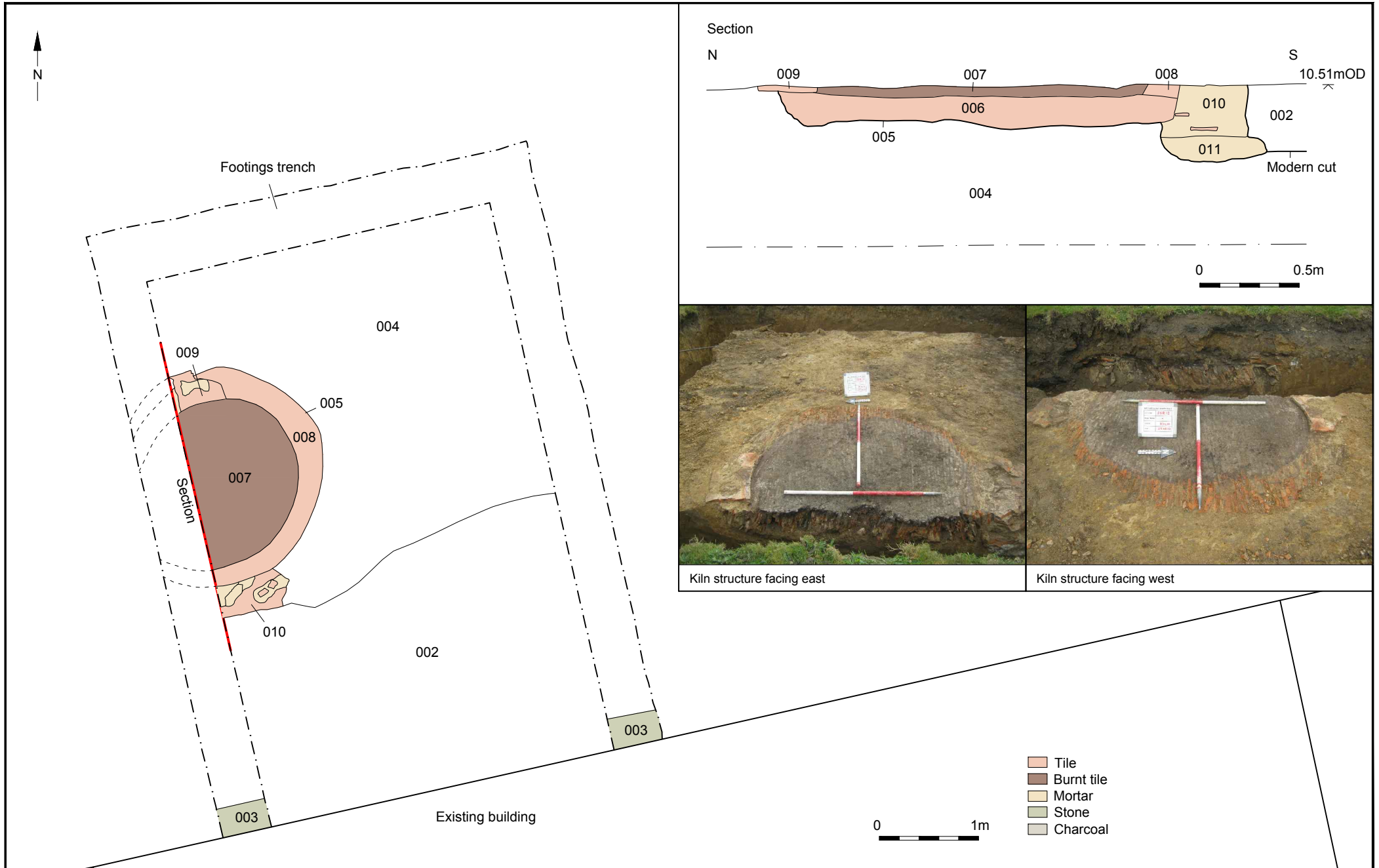


© Archaeology South-East		Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane, Robertsbridge		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 5624	Oct 2012	Site location and HER data		
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© Archaeology South-East		Summertree Stud, Redlands Lane, Robertsbridge	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 5624	Oct 2012	Plan of monitored area	
Report Ref: 2012181	Drawn by: JLR		



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