

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
On Land at Heron Cottage, Westham.**

(NGR TQ 564085 104538)

By

**Alice Thorne
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Maggie Henderson**

Project No. 2449

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PLANNING REFERENCE WD/2005/0715/F, WD/2005/716/LB

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Archaeology South-East

Archaeology South-East is a division of the University College London Field Archaeology Unit. The Institute of Archaeology at UCL is one of the largest groupings of academic archaeologists in the country. Consequently, Archaeology South-East has access to the conservation, computing and environmental backup of the college, as well as a range of other archaeological services.

The Field Archaeology Unit and South Eastern Archaeological Services (which became Archaeology South-East in 1996) were established in 1974 and 1991 respectively. Although field projects have been conducted worldwide, Archaeology South-East retains a special interest in south-east England with the majority of our contract and consultancy work concentrated in Sussex, Kent, Greater London and Essex.

Drawing on experience of the countryside and towns of the south east of England Archaeology South-East can give advice and carry out surveys at an early stage in the planning process. By working closely with developers and planning authorities it is possible to incorporate archaeological work into developments with little inconvenience.

Archaeology South-East, as part of the Field Archaeology Unit, is a registered organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists and, as such, is required to meet IFA standards.

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was maintained during building alterations at Heron Cottage, High Street, Westham, East Sussex (NGR 564085 104538). A spread of material perhaps representing a medieval trampled yard surface was encountered. Below this, in the area of the footing trenches a small feature was partially revealed within the narrow trench and may represent a small pit, or section of a ditch.

As part of the requirements of the watching brief an Historic Building Record was made of fabric exposed to the rear (south) of the property after the removal of a modern extension. The extension had been added to the house around the turn of the 20th century and the removal of the structure revealed earlier alterations and modifications. The rear wall had been added to the property and was constructed of brick and stitched in to the adjacent western structure: where the timber top wall plates abutted, an iron stirrup strap had been added as reinforcement. The brick build had included a window under a slightly arched brick soffit. The window had been blocked also in brick and the western edge truncated by the insertion of a doorway to provide access between the earlier structure and the late extension.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Archaeological Background**
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology**
- 4.0 Results**
- 5.0 Finds by Luke Barber**
- 6.0 Discussion and Conclusions**
- 7.0 Bibliography**

SMR Summary Sheet

Table 1: Levels Information

Table 2: Finds Quantification

Fig. 1: Site Location

Fig. 2: Site Plan

Fig. 3: Site Plan (showing monitored groundwork)

Fig. 4: Section of Foundation Trench, Section of Soak Away

Fig. 5: Site Plan Showing Location of Historic Building Survey

Plates

Plate 1: The straight line join and stirrup strap between the top wall plates

Plate 2: The blocked and truncated window in the later phase of brick construction to the rear of the property

Plate 3: The exposed timber post

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit, was commissioned by John D Clarke and Partners Chartered Architects on behalf of their client to undertake an archaeological watching brief during building alterations at Heron Cottage, High Street, Westham, East Sussex (NGR 564085 104538) (Fig. 1).
- 1.2** The proposed extension is located abutting a later extension to the rear of the original house. The soak away is located within the garden to the east of the property.
- 1.3** The topography of the site is flat. The British Geological Survey map Sheet 319 (Area: Lewes) Solid and Drift Edition (1:50,000 scale) indicates that the site lies at the interface between the Tunbridge Wells sand, and the alluvium of the Pevensey levels.
- 1.4** Due to the archaeological potential of the site, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) advised the local planning authority that an archaeological condition should be attached to the planning consent requiring a programme of archaeological work. The recommended programme was in the form of an archaeological watching brief.
- 15** The groundwork comprised the archaeological supervision of:
- all intrusive external ground works
 - monitoring of the rear wall of the property once exposed
- 1.6** The fieldwork was undertaken by Alice Thorne on the 17th and 18th of May 2006 and the buildings recording by Maggie Henderson on the 4th July 2006. The project was managed by Jon Sygrave (Project Manager) and Louise Rayner (Post-excavation Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The site lies in an area of archaeological potential. It is located less than half a mile from the Pevensey Saxon Shore Fort. This scheduled monument includes under its listing the Late Roman Saxon Shore Fort of Anderita, The Norman Defences, a Medieval enclosure castle and later associated military remains. Westham is likely to lie on the route of the main road to the Late Roman defensive fort, lying immediately west of the landward south-western gateway.
- 2.2** The Medieval church of St Mary, is located immediately east of the site (SMR ES5030). Iron Age, Romano-British and Medieval pottery have been discovered here during an extension to the churchyard. Other finds of

prehistoric and historic pottery, coins and flint work have been identified from around the village; including part of a Roman shale table top (SMR ES5036). Medieval salt working mounds have been identified on Mountney Level to the southeast of the site.

- 2.3** During an evaluation conducted by Archaeology South- East at Pevensey and Westham CE Primary School in 2002 evidence of medieval ditches, gullies and postholes were encountered, showing a medieval system of land division in this area (Stevens, 2002). A later excavation on the site confirmed the presence of several medieval boundary ditches, and evidence for a small timber – framed structure (James and Barber 2004).
- 2.4** Heron Cottage forms the eastern end of the fifteenth century Old Dial House on Westham High Street. This is an example of a restored fifteenth century timber framed house, and is Grade II listed (SMR ES5038).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** The objectives of the archaeological work were to monitor the excavation of new groundwork in order to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the groundwork are recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards. Particular attention was to be made to the character, height below ground level, condition, date and significance of the deposits.
- 3.2** The external groundwork included the reduction of the ground level and excavation of footing trenches for an extension on the rear eastern wall of the property. Two drainage trenches and a soak away located to the west of the property were also monitored (Fig. 2).
- 3.3** Alterations to the existing building were monitored by an Historic Buildings Officer, paying particular attention to the rear wall of the property, which was exposed after the removal of the extension. Additional features exposed during the works were recorded and an existing plan of the building prepared to show the location of the observed fabric.
- 3.4** The external groundwork was excavated using a 1 tonne mini digger. Due to the narrow size of the trenches, in some areas of the site a toothed bucket was utilized. In order to minimise damage to potential deposits, where it was necessary to use a toothed bucket the driver was instructed to keep the sweeps of the bucket as flat as possible.
- 3.5** The spoil from the excavations was inspected to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest.
- 3.6** All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded

according to accepted professional standards in accordance with the Specification using standard Archaeology South-East context record sheets. Deposit colours were verified by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.

- 3.7** The monitored external groundwork was planned at a scale of 1:50 and tied into the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 scale map of the area.
- 3.8** The deposits were levelled to a TBM shown on figure 2. Two benchmarks were recorded in the surrounding area, but neither could be located. One marked on the church may have been lost, as the stonework at the base of the church is heavily weathered. Therefore the TBM had to be tied into a nearby spot height in the roadway of the High Street, and the resulting values can only be considered as approximate. The values are shown in Table 2. Levels were taken to the ground surface of the sections.
- 3.9** A full photographic record of the work was kept (black and white prints and colour slides) and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held at the Archaeology South-East offices at Ditchling and will be offered to a suitable local museum.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Footing Trenches: (Figs. 3 and 4: Section 1)

- 4.1.1** The footing trenches were excavated using a 0.45m wide toothed bucket with the driver keeping the sweeps as flat as possible to minimise damage. These trenches were 0.50m wide by 1m in depth. The stratigraphic sequence noted was as follows:
- A garden soil was encountered first (Context **1**). This was a dark grey- brown clayey silt with frequent rooting, and a general depth of 0.36m. This contained occasional rounded beach pebbles, occasional fragments of tile, brick, clay pipe, blue and white china, animal bone, oyster shell and sandstone fragments. Two fragments of pot recovered from this context returned a mid fourteenth to fifteenth and an eighteenth century date.
 - Below this in the far south western extent of the trench a layer of redeposited clay (Context **2**) was encountered, associated with construction of the rear extension to the house.
 - Throughout the rest of the trench a deposit of rounded flint beach pebbles contained within a mid greyish brown clayey silt matrix (Context **3**) was encountered. This deposit had a maximum thickness of 0.40m, and contained frequent charcoal smears, tile and brick fragments, sandstone fragments and blocks, smears of burnt clay, frequent oyster shells, and occasional cattle bone and occasional mussel and whelk shells. Five sherds of pottery recovered from this context returned a mid thirteenth to fourteenth century

date. Whilst the flint pebbles were concentrated at the top of this deposit, there was no mortar or evidence of regularity in the placement of the pebbles to indicate a deliberately laid cobble surface. However, this deposit, containing dumps of characteristic late medieval to post medieval occupation debris may represent the trample of an old yard surface.

- Below this a dark orangish brown firm silty clay was encountered (Context 4). This had a maximum thickness of 0.38m and contained occasional small fragments of shell and burnt clay. Frequent manganese and iron pan staining was also present. This deposit may represent a possible old subsoil deposit, containing only occasional intrusive artefactual material.
- Below this the bright yellowish- orange alluvial clay natural containing frequent manganese ironstone staining was encountered (Context 5).

4.1.2 In the north – south aligned stretch of the footing trench a feature was encountered (Context 6). This was only partially visible in plan within the narrow confines of the trench. However, it was visible in both sides of the trench sections, and had a concave profile, with a sharp break of slope at the surface of the feature. It was filled with dark greyish brown silty clay, containing frequent charcoal smears and small fragments of tile (Context 7). There was also frequent manganese or iron pan staining present. This feature was cut into the underlying subsoil deposit Context 4. It was sealed by Context 8, a thin layer (0.06m thick) of orangish brown redeposited clay, and underlay Context 3, the possible trampled yard surface. No diagnostic dating evidence could be retrieved, and the limited visible extent of this feature makes interpretation difficult. However, it may represent a relatively early feature, possibly a small pit, or section through a gully or drainage ditch.

4.2 Soak Away Trenches: (Fig. 3)

4.2.1 The soak away trenches were excavated with a 0.25m wide toothed ditching bucket, with the driver keeping the sweeps as flat as possible to minimise damage. These trenches were 0.30m wide and 0.60m deep at the western extent, gradually decreasing to 0.80m depth at the eastern extent where they adjoined the soak away chamber.

4.2.2 The stratigraphy noted for the soak away trenches was largely the same as that noted for the footing trenches. However, the southernmost soak away cut straight through a well established flower bed containing large bushes and small trees. Therefore the garden soil (Context 1) was deeper in this area, reaching a maximum depth of 0.60m, with an irregular horizon to Context 3 (where present), and Context 4 below (See Fig 3 for extent of Context 3).

4.2.3 In the western extent of the southern trench an area of unshaped sandstone blocks, flint nodules and dumps of a light yellowish – cream compact lime mortar was encountered within Context 3 (Context 9). Around a 0.90m wide

spread of this material was exposed in plan. It most likely represents a dump of building material.

4.3 Soak Away Chamber (Figs. 3 and 4: Section 2)

4.3.1 The soak away was excavated with a 0.60m wide flat blade bucket. The pit measures 1.10m in width, by 2.0m in length, and had a maximum depth of 1.30m. The stratigraphic sequence noted was as follows:

- A thick deposit of topsoil (Context **1**) (up to 0.60m), thick overlay a thin (0.12m thick) deposit of mid greyish brown silty clay (Context **10**). It contained frequent charcoal smears, tile fragments, sandstone fragments and blocks, smears of burnt clay, frequent oyster shells, cattle bone and occasional mussel and whelk shells. It also contained occasional rounded flint beach pebbles and iron pan staining. This may represent an easternmost spread of Context **3**, with noticeably fewer beach pebble inclusions. Two sherds of pottery recovered from this deposit are broadly contemporary with the finds recovered from Context **3**, returning a later thirteenth to fourteenth century date.
- This over lay Context **11**, a 0.14m thick slightly greenish- orange firm silty clay containing charcoal smears and iron panning. This deposit may represent the stained surface of Context **4**, (which underlies it), caused by the leaching out of minerals and colouration from the deposits above.
- Context **4** formed a deposit with a maximum thickness of 0.24m, below which the natural alluvial clay Context **5** was encountered.

Level Number	TBM (mOD)	Value (mOD)
1	7.35	5.79
2	7.35	5.89
3	7.35	5.86

Table 1. Levels Information (see Fig.3).

4.4 Historic Building Record (Fig. 5)

4.4.1 A visit to Heron Cottage, Westham was undertaken on the 4th July 2006 as part of the watching brief requirements as detailed in the Method Statement (Sygrave, 2006). The watching brief was undertaken in order to examine two timbers exposed during building works to the rear of the cottage. The historic building record was carried out as a supplement to the full report undertaken in 2004 (Martin D. & B: 2004).

4.4.2 The late nineteenth early twentieth century rear extension to the house had

been removed and as such several features within the fabric of the rear (southern) wall at first floor level could be observed. The doorway between the house and extension was c. 0.80 m wide and had been created by knocking a hole through the elevation. The fabric breached in this way was brickwork laid in English Garden Wall bond, believed to be a probable rebuild of the rear of the house. The features revealed by the removal of the extension included the timber top wall plate, an infilled window and a vertical timber post.

4.4.3 The top wall plate was the continuation of the plate extending from the eastern corner of the property. The plate measured 160 by 170 mm. Where the extension had been removed, the plate could be seen to be abutting the adjacent members to the west, with a straight line join re-inforced with an iron stirrup strap (PLATE 1). Access to the timbers was inhibited by the construction of the framework for the new extension and by the adjacent tile hung part of the house.

4.4.4 The blocked window had been truncated to the west by the creation of the access from the extension to the rear of the property (PLATE 2). The eastern edge was situated some 0.93 m from the edge of the current opening and c. 1.40 m from the eastern corner of the house. The window had been in-filled with brick in stretcher bond. The arched brick soffit over the blocked opening was still *in situ*.

4.4.5 The vertical timber post was 1.02 m from the edge of the doorway from the house to the now removed extension, on the eastern side of the chimney stack. The post was 250 mm wide and only a small area had been revealed. An additional plank had been fixed to the front of the post (PLATE 3).

5.0 FINDS by Luke Barber

5.1 The archaeological work recovered a very small assemblage of finds. These are quantified in Table 2.

Heron Cottage, Westham			(HCW06)	
Context	Pottery	Weight (g)	Burnt clay	Weight (g)
[10]	2	18		
[1]	2	86		
[3]	5	54	3	48

Table 2: Finds quantification (No./weight in grams)

5.2 The majority of the small assemblage of finds consists of body sherds of medieval pottery. These range from small (30mm across) to medium (70mm across) in size though most sherds show some slight signs of abrasion. The

pottery from Contexts 3 and 10 falls within a mid thirteenth to fourteenth century date range and is dominated by medium sand tempered cooking pots, though two sherds from Context 3 are tempered with slightly coarser sand with rare flint inclusions. Context 10 produced the only jug sherd from the site: a fine sand tempered sherd with a sparse exterior green glaze. Context 1 produced a base sherd from a cooking pot or pitcher in a hard-fired fine sandy greyware. This is likely to be of mid fourteenth to fifteenth century date. The same context produced a bodysherd from an eighteenth century glazed red earthenware bowl.

- 5.3** The only other find recovered consists of some amorphous fragments of burnt clay from Context 3.
- 5.4** The current finds assemblage from the site is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis though it should be retained as part of the archive.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

One small feature was identified and partially exposed during monitoring of the groundwork (Context 6). Due to the limited section of this feature available for inspection and the lack of datable finds, interpretation is difficult, but the feature may possibly represent a small pit or section of a ditch. A deposit sealing this feature, Context 3, contains characteristic medieval domestic refuse, and is also characterised by a high quantity of rounded flint beach pebbles. Although not forming a cobbled or laid surface, this deposit may represent a layer of yard trample, located behind and east of Heron Cottage. On the basis of the thirteenth to fourteenth century date returned for the finds recovered this deposit appears to predate the construction of the Dial House.

6.2 Historic Building Record

The majority of the historic building fabric exposed by the removal of the extension to the rear of the cottage was not original to the construction of the cottage itself, but a re-building in brick of the rear wall. The keyhole nature of the record did not allow a full investigation of the exposed timbers, however, the straight line join where the eastern plate abutted that of the western plate in conjunction with the added ironwork suggests that the later brick build of the rear wall was stitched into the adjacent western structure. The subsequent blocking of features within the rebuild and the final breach of the brickwork to allow access between the cottage and the late 19th or 20th century extension provides a picture of a high degree of modifications and developments to the main body of the house from the second half of the 17th

century (Martin D. & B 2004) through to the present day.

7.0 Bibliography

James, R. and Barber, L. 2004 Pevensey and Westham CE Primary School Westham, East Sussex: Post- Excavation Assessment and Project Design. ASE report 1546.

Martin D. & B 2004 An Archaeological Interpretative Survey of Heron Cottage and Old Dial House, Westham, East Sussex ASE report 1918

Stevens, S. 2002. An Archaeological Evaluation (Stage 1) at Pevensey and Westham CE Primary School Westham, East Sussex. ASE Report 1494.

Sygrave, J. 2006 Heron Cottage, Westham, East Sussex Method Statement for an Archaeological Watching Brief. ASE project No 2449

SMR Summary Form

Site Code	HCW06					
Identification Name and Address	Heron Cottage, The High Street, Westham					
County, District &/or Borough	East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR TQ 564085 104538					
Geology	At the interface between the Tunbridge Wells sand, and the alluvium of the Pevensey levels					
Arch. South-East Project Number	2449					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban ✓	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 17 th and 18 th of May 2006.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	John D Clarke and Partners Chartered Architects					
Project Manager	Jon Sygrave					
Project Supervisor	Alice Thorne and Maggie Henderson					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED ✓	PM	Other Modern		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p>An archaeological watching brief was maintained during building alterations at Heron Cottage, High Street, Westham, East Sussex (NGR 564085 104538). A spread of material perhaps representing a medieval trampled yard surface was encountered. Below this, in the area of the footing trenches a small feature was partially revealed within the narrow trench and may represent a small pit, or section of a ditch. As part of the requirements of the watching brief an Historic Building Record was made of fabric exposed to the rear (south) of the property after the removal of a modern extension.</p>						

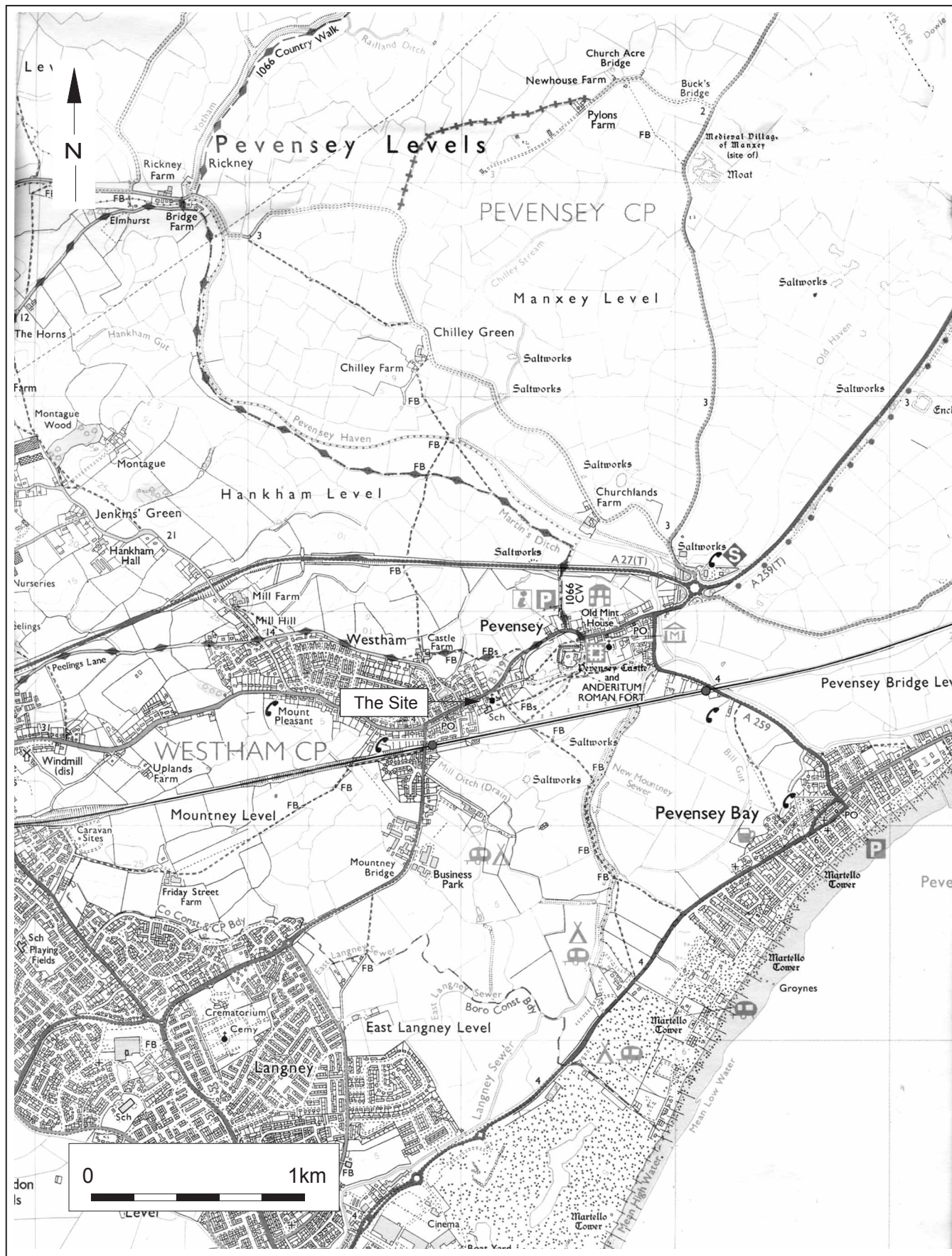
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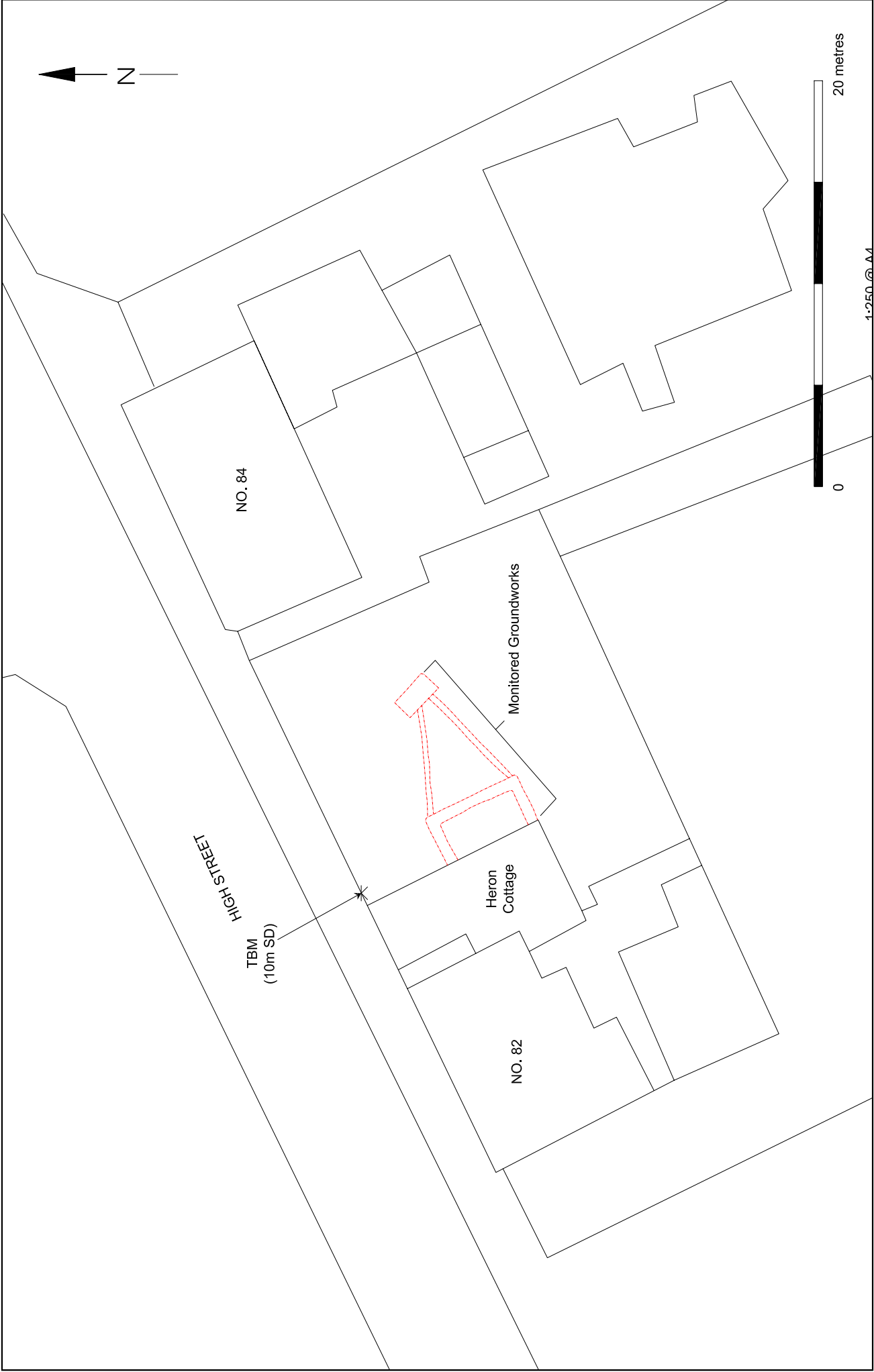
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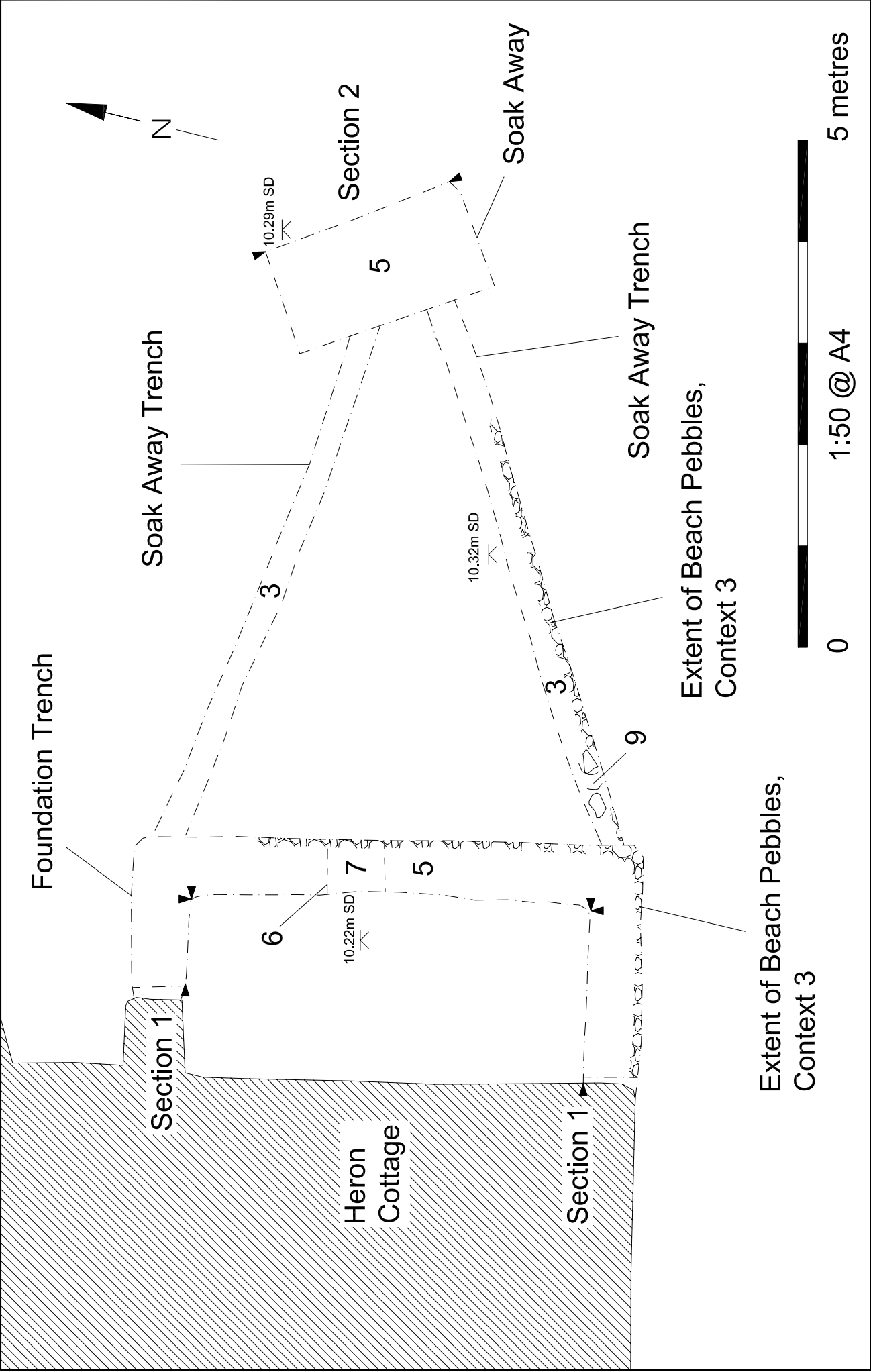
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© ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH EAST			Heron Cottage, Westham	Fig. 1
Ref: 2449	Nov 2006	Drawn by: JLR	Site Location Plan	

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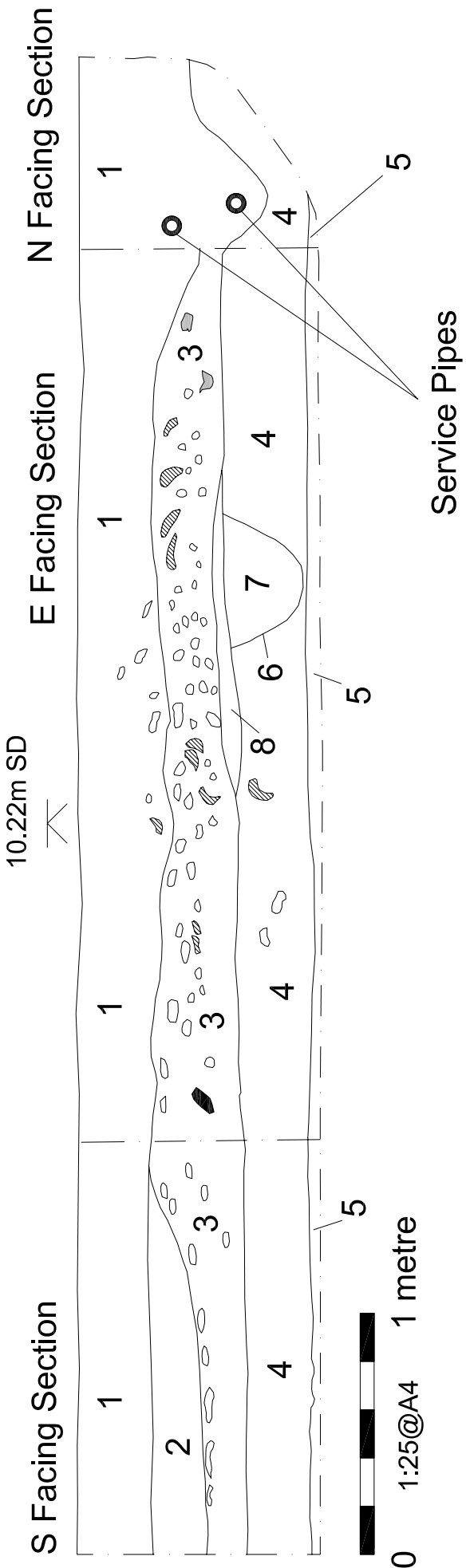


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Ref: 2449	Nov 2006	Drawn by: MST	Site Plan	

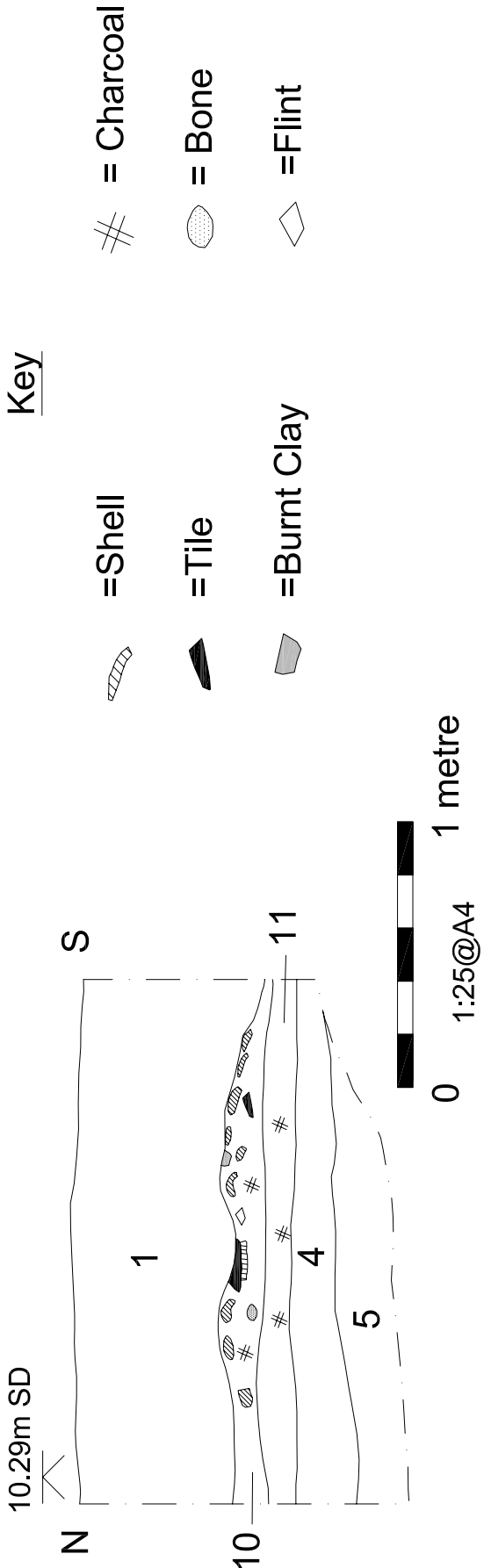


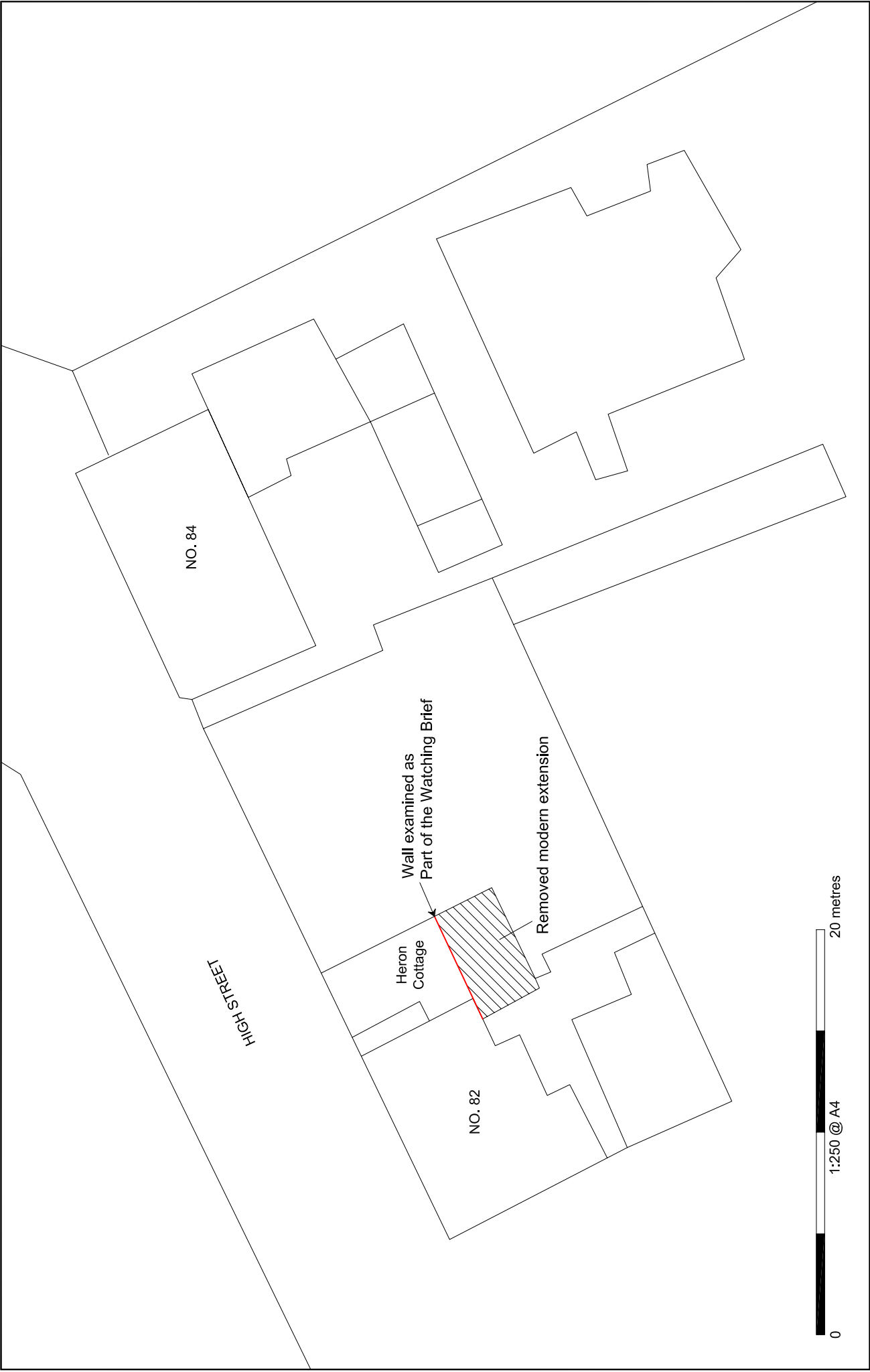
© ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH EAST		Heron Cottage, Westham		Fig. 3
Ref: 2449	Nov 2006	Drawn by: MST	Plan of Monitored Groundworks	

Section 1, Foundation Trench



Section 2, South West Facing Section of Soak Away





© ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH EAST			Heron Cottage, Westham	Fig. 5
Ref: 2449	Nov 2006	Drawn by: MH		
Site Plan Showing Location of Historic Building Survey				

***---Plates**



Plate 1: The straight line join and stirrup strap between the top wall plates



Plate 2: The blocked and truncated window in the later phase of brick construction to the rear of the property



Plate 3: The exposed timber post (scale 1m)