

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT  
THUNDERLEY HALL, THAXTED ROAD  
WIMBISH,  
ESSEX**

**NGR: TL 56018 36026  
Planning Reference: UTT/13/2930**

**ASE Project No: 8201  
Site Code: WMTH15**

**ASE Report No: 2015418  
Oasis ID: archaeol6-245686**



**March 2016**

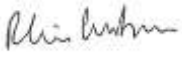
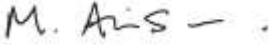
**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road,  
Wimbish, Essex**

**NGR: TL 56018 36026  
Planning reference: UTT/13/2930  
Scheduled Monument No: 1008559  
Scheduled Monument Consent Ref: S00113388**

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Mr Nicholas Luscombe to conduct an archaeological watching brief, at Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex. The site is undergoing extensive alterations including the construction of a garage to the north, outbuildings to the west, a landscape retaining wall on the west side and an extension to the south wing.*

*The current hall was originally built in the 15th century and has later extensions. It is a Grade II listed building situated within a moated enclosure which itself is a Scheduled Monument. The archaeological watching brief was conducted on all intrusive groundworks.*

*The foundation trenches to the garage revealed a brick and flint wall, a brick wall and associated tile floor and two brick drains. To the west in the retaining wall trench a small un-mortared brick wall was also recorded. The works to the south and west revealed further brick structures and a possible backfilled part of the moat. A brick oven base and exterior building were discovered against the south wall of the hall's southern wing.*

*It is concluded that further archaeological remains are present in the vicinity of the hall and that any future works involving significant groundworks should be archaeologically monitored.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Mr Nicholas Luscombe, to conduct an archaeological watching brief at Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex, NGR TL 56018 36026 (figure 1).

1.1.2 Thunderley Hall is a Grade II listed building (List entry number: 1238683) set within a moated site which is a Scheduled Monument (SM Ref: 1008559). The property lies to the west of Thaxted Road and is surrounded by farmland. The house itself is built on a flat terrace set into a slight slope, enclosed on two sides by a moat with a terminus to the south-west of the house. The garden boundary is wooded, as is much of the moat. Prior to construction works the area around the house was mainly grassed garden, with a swimming pool to the south-west and a garden wall to the north-east. At the time of the archaeological works an outbuilding had been demolished to the west of the house. The house itself had been comprehensively gutted and extensive rebuilding works on the roof and walls was underway.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology is Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation (undifferentiated) formed in the Cretaceous Period. Superficial deposits of Lowestoft Diamicton are recorded in the north and east of the site (British Geological Survey, Geology of Britain Viewer accessed 09/11/15).

1.2.2 The site lies at a general level of between 105m OD and 108.60m OD, sloping down slightly to the north-west. The house is constructed on a relatively level platform partially cut into the slope to the east. The ground slopes down towards the moat in the south-west, the base of which is at approximately 104.80m OD.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 The planning policy regarding the site is set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (ASE 2015, Section 1).

1.3.2 Planning permission was granted by Uttlesford District Council in 2013 for the erection of a new garage. (Planning Ref: UTT/13/2930). Planning consent was granted subject to the following archaeological condition:

*“No development/conversion or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted and approved by the local planning authority”*

1.3.3 The area around Thunderley Hall is a Scheduled Monument (SM). Any groundworks were considered likely to impact on important archaeological deposits. A Brief of Works was issued by ECC Place Services – the Historic Environment Advisors for Uttlesford District Council - for a watching brief including the analysis, publication and dissemination of the results (ECC 2014).

1.3.4 A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by ASE, in response to the brief, and was approved by ECC Place Services prior to the commencement of work (ASE 2015a).

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The aims and objectives were set out in the WSI (ASE 2015a, Section 4). The overall aim of the archaeological recording works was to establish whether the intrusive groundworks associated with the development disturbed or truncated archaeological remains associated with the moated site or the hall itself.

1.4.2 The general aims of the watching brief were:

- To define, insofar as possible, the date, character, form and function of any archaeological features observed on site.
- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the site area and to preserve by record any such remains
- To determine the survival, extent and minimum depth below modern ground level of any such remains
- To determine the nature and significance of any archaeological deposits
- To make public the results of the work, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

1.4.3 The specific objective of the project was:

- To determine the presence of medieval activity predating the existing building.

1.4.4 In the event that significant discoveries were made the reporting phase of the project was to place these in the context of any appropriate research objectives, with particular reference to those laid out in: *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties – 2 Research Agenda and Strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000) and *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011).

#### **1.5 Scope of Report**

1.5.1 This report presents the results of the watching brief conducted on the site on the site intermittently between 19th October and the 6th November 2015. It followed the methodology laid out in the WSI (ASE 2015a) and the Method Statement (ASE 2015b).

## 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Historic Environment

2.1.1 The earliest evidence from the locality comprises a findspot of Iron Age and Roman pottery 300m north of the site. The hall is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 as *Tunreslea*, comprising 5 hides, comprising some 600 acres of arable land (Fox 2005). The five-hide unit for this manor, and the place-name, meaning *Thunor's clearing*, suggests that Thunderley has a much earlier, perhaps Middle Saxon, origin (Fox 2005). The probable deserted medieval village of Thunderley has also been recorded close to the site to the south (EHER 1946).

2.1.2 Thunderley Hall is a 15th century building (EHER1953), listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest (List entry number: 1238683). The Grade II listing entry describes it as follows:

#### **Thunderley Hall**

*Timber-framed and plastered building on an L-shaped plan with a C15-C16 wing to the west and a C17 wing to the north. A single storey C18 wing extends to the south. Two storeys, attics and cellars. The north front of the west wing has a jettied upper storey on a moulded bressummer on curved brackets. The windows are modern casements. Roof tiled. There are a number of original doors one of them is battened and nailed and is said to have come from the former Thunderley Church. (Historic England online).*

2.1.3 The hall is situated within a moated site (EHER 1945), itself scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (List entry number: 1008559). It is described as follows:

#### **Thunderley Hall moated site and fishponds**

*The monument consists of two separate areas and comprises a moat and two fishponds situated 100m north-west of New House Farm and 150m north of the site of Thunderley Church. It includes an incomplete quadrangular moated site of which the eastern, southern and southern half of the western arms remain visible. Only the south-western corner of the moat remains waterlogged. The arms are 10m in width and the eastern and the southern ones are 70m in length. A 15th or 16th century house with 19th century additions is situated on the island and extends to cover the western arm of the moat. A small wooden footbridge crosses the southern arm. At the south-western corner is a drain which leads to a fishpond 40m to the west. This pond remains waterlogged and measures 35m north-south by 11m east-west. 25m to the north is another fishpond which is preserved as a marshy area 25m NE-SW by 11m NW-SE. Thunderley is mentioned in Domesday Book as a manor with five beehives, but the separate parish of Thunderley was united with Wimbish in 1425. The house, paths and footbridge are all excluded from the*

*scheduling though the ground beneath them is included.* (Historic England online).



### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Fieldwork Methodology**

3.1.1 The watching brief work as described in the WSI (ASE2015a) comprised archaeological monitoring of all ground excavations as they were carried out. Each area of the works was given a number (only those which revealed archaeological material are shown on figure 2). The schedule of tasks included:

- Area 1: Breaking out the existing concrete path and insertion of land drain against the perimeter of the hall building.
- Area 2: Demolishing existing outbuilding at south end of the south wing and excavating new pile and beam foundation trenches.
- Area 3: Infilling part of the moat and excavating new pile and beam foundation trenches to the south-west of the south wing.
- Area 4: Breaking out the existing slab to the west of, and within, the south wing and excavating new pile and beam foundation trenches.
- Area 5: Breaking out the existing slab to south of the west wing and replacing with consolidated hard core.
- Area 6: Cutting strip footing for landscape steps north of the moat terminal.
- Area 7: Demolishing existing outbuilding to west of the hall and excavating new raft slab foundation trenches.
- Area 8: Demolishing existing outbuilding to west of the hall and excavating new raft slab foundation trenches.
- Area 9: Excavating the strip footing for landscape retaining wall on the west side of the site.
- Area 10: Excavating the strip footing for landscape stair on the west side of the site.
- Area 11: Landscaping the area to the north of the hall.
- Area 12: Excavating the new raft footings for the garage

3.1.2 In the event, the breaking out of the concrete path in Area 1 and the clearance of the slab for the new footings in the areas to the south and west of the hall were not observed by archaeologists as they were not intrusive works.

3.1.3 All new wall foundation trenches were excavated by machine, with the exception of some of the trenches inside the south wing which were inaccessible and dug by hand instead. All trenches were monitored by an archaeologist. Where archaeological remains were found the work was stopped until a full record of the features could be made.

1.3.4 For the garage to the north of the house (Area 12), the retaining wall and the outhouse foundations to the west, no supporting piles were necessary. The foundation trenches were excavated and filled with concrete to form the wall

footings. However, the works in the interior of the south wing, and to the west and south of it, required supporting concrete piles. These were inserted by drilling from the ground surface before forming reinforced concrete piles in the bore. This work was not observed by archaeologists. The trenches in between the new piles were then excavated by machine (except where inaccessible) and completed by hand, monitored by an archaeologist.

- 3.1.5 All foundation trench excavations were examined and cleaned by archaeological staff except where the sides were deep and unstable in Areas 7 and 8. Where archaeological remains were observed in section, the sections were recorded using standard ASE methodologies. Archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the standard context record sheets. The relevant sections were drawn to a scale of 1:10 onto drawing film sheets. The features were planned and levelled also onto drawing film and located by reference to known survey points.
- 3.1.6 A full digital photographic record was maintained throughout the duration of the watching brief.
- 3.1.7 Finds collected from all excavated deposits, where present, were securely bagged and labelled with the appropriate site code and context number on site.
- 3.1.8 The ECC Historic Environment Advisor and Historic England Inspector were kept informed of progress.

## **3.2 Site Archive**

- 3.2.1 ASE informed Saffron Walden Museum prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at Saffron Walden Museum in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	21
No. of files/paper record	1 file
Plan and sections sheets	6
Bulk Samples	0
Photographs	91 (digital)
Bulk finds	1 box
Registered finds	0
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The works were divided into numbered areas in the WSI (ASE 2015a, fig 2), not all of which yielded archaeological remains. For the purposes of this report only those areas which produced results are discussed. Areas 2, 3 and 4 have been combined, including the interior of the south wing, Areas 7 and 8 have been combined and Areas 9, 11 and 12 remain separate. Areas 1, 5, 6 and 10 are excluded as they were devoid of archaeological features.

4.1.2 Contexts [001] (topsoil), [002] (modern made ground) and [003] (natural) occur across all areas and are only discussed in Section 4.2.

### 4.2 Surface material and natural deposits

4.2.1 Topsoil [001] varied across the site. In Area 12 the topsoil was up to 0.35m thick and consisted of mixed, highly rooted garden soil. In Area 11 much of the topsoil had been removed close to the house but was thicker to the west and north at 0.20m–0.30m. In the other areas the topsoil was mostly truncated by concrete slabs or previous buildings.

4.2.2 In Areas 7–12 the topsoil overlay a thick deposit of made ground [002] extending up to 1.60m below ground level. In Areas 9, 11 and 12 these dumped deposits overlay archaeological features and consisted of a mixed silt and clay matrix with inclusions of ceramic building material (CBM), chalk, flint pebbles and cobbles, and concrete fragments in places. The ground level to the north of the hall buildings had therefore been artificially raised in the late post-medieval and modern period. In the remaining areas to the south of the hall buildings the ground was terraced, but the made ground in this general location was much earlier (see the Area 2, 3 and 4 works below).

4.2.3 Underlying the anthropogenic deposits was natural drift geology [003] comprising pale brown or grey/brown clay with frequent chalk fragments and flecks and occasional flint pebbles.

Context	Type	Description	Length m	Width m	Deposit Thickness m
001	Layer	Topsoil	Site-wide	Site-wide	0.10-0.35
002	Layer	Made ground	Site-wide	Site-wide	0.20m-1.60m
003	Layer	Natural geology	Site-wide	Site-wide	n/a

Table 2: List of recorded contexts: Surface material and natural deposits

### 4.3 Areas 2, 3 and 4 (Figures 3 and 4)

4.3.1 In the interior of the hall's south wing and across an exterior area to its south and south-west a series of foundation trenches were excavated for a new building (see photos, figure 8). They were 0.60m deep at the deepest (upslope) point. Natural deposits were recorded only in the north-east corner and on the west side inside the south wing. The general level of the ground surface was at c. 106.8m OD

- 4.3.2 Two features were recorded at the base of the trenches (figure 3). The northernmost foundation trench exposed an oval pit cut [018] measuring 0.40m x >0.40m. It was filled with [019], a charcoal-rich silty clay with fragments of burnt clay and chalk fragments. It was not excavated as it was observed at the base of the trench only. Its function was not clear but it could have been a post-hole.
- 4.3.3 At the south end of the south wing's interior was a very similar burnt silty clay, layer [020], which also contained charcoal, burnt clay and chalk fragments. It was observed to overlie the natural [003] and it sloped down to the west to a depth greater than the foundation trench (figure 3, section 1). The highest point at its east end was 0.30m below the ground surface and it continued down to the west beneath the base of the trench at 0.60m deep.
- 4.3.4 The entire area, interior and exterior to the south wing, was covered with a thick deposit of dumped material [017], consisting of compact light grey/brown to mid grey silty clay with frequent chalk and CBM inclusions and moderate charcoal and pebbles. In most of the foundation trenches it extended deeper than the level required for the works (up to 0.60m) but in the north-west and to the west the natural deposit [003] was observed beneath it. At its shallowest context [017] was 0.30m thick.
- 4.3.5 The brick footing for a small rectangular building [021] was recorded outside the southern wall of the hall's south wing (figure 4), cut into the top of [017]. It was constructed with red bricks of two sizes; the majority were the standard 230mm x 110mm x 60mm, but approximately 5% were 210mm x 110mm x 40mm. The coursing was fairly haphazard with some alternating of headers and stretchers but with no clear regular bond. Many bricks were not whole and had probably been reused. The bonding material was a moderately hard pale cream sandy mortar.
- 4.3.6 This brickwork formed the footings to a small rectangular structure measuring 2.52m e-w x 1.45m n-s and extended more than 0.60m deep. The north side was a single line of bricks built against the south wing footings. An additional north/south interior footing was present towards the west side which was arched underneath and bonded into both the north and south walls of the structure. There was evidence for a stepped base on the south wall where the bottom of the cut for the new foundation trench uncovered part of a line of bricks.

*Areas 2, 3 and 4 Discussion*

- 4.3.7 It was apparent that the whole area beneath the south wing had been raised into a terrace by a major dumping episode. Layer [017] was deposited in order to level off the natural slope of the ground in the medieval period and potentially when the moat and the nearby fish ponds were created. The single pit or post-hole [018] was beneath it and perhaps related to an even earlier structure on the site. Layer [020] could be regarded either as a fire horizon from the clearance of the site prior to building work, or as part of the same sequence as [017], representing a tip line of burnt material in the same phase of deposition.

- 4.3.8 The date of the terracing has been established from the 12th-13th century pottery found in layer [017], consistent with a possible date for the establishment of the moated site. Although no other diagnostic dating evidence for medieval buildings was found, it is likely that such remains are present beneath Thunderley Hall and/or within the grounds.
- 4.3.9 Structure [021] to the south was, in its final use, the footing to an outside toilet (Nick Wilson pers comm). However, this was not its original purpose. It was plainly built with at least some reused bricks of both the 17th and 18th centuries (see 5.3.2 below) making it difficult to date, and it may have been constructed in two different builds. One possibility is that the small north-south arched foundation was the remnant of the footings for an oven, the front of which is present in the standing south wall of the south wing of the hall, although the east wall of [021] did not quite match the position of the east wall of the oven. The arch was bonded into the south wall footing, showing that it was contemporary with this part of the structure (photos, figure 4). Perhaps the most likely scenario is that the oven, and the building to which it belonged, was built along with the south wing in the 18th century, then later demolished to ground level and the footings were adapted for the outhouse construction. Without full excavation it was not possible to determine the full extent of the alterations.

Context	Type	Description	Length m	Width m	Deposit Thickness m
017	Layer	Compact light grey/brown to mid grey clay silt, freq chalk, CBM, mod charcoal, pebbles	Over Areas 2-4	Over Areas 2-4	0.30 - >0.60
018	Cut	Oval pit	>0.40	0.40	Not exc.
019	Fill	Dark grey/black silty clay with charcoal, fill of cut [018]	>0.40	0.40	Not exc.
020	Layer	Compact dark grey silty clay with charcoal, burnt clsay, chalk, CBM and pebbles	>1.35	>0.45	>0.30
021	Masonry	Red brick footings to rectangular structure	2.52	1.45	>0.60

Table 3: List of recorded contexts in Areas 2, 3 and 4

#### 4.4 Areas 7 and 8 (figure 5)

- 4.4.1 The foundation trenches for proposed outbuildings were excavated to the west of the hall. Area 8 and part of Area 7 were outside the scheduled monument boundary. The ground level sloped down from east to west between 106.02m OD to 105.30m OD.
- 4.4.2 In the base of the north foundation trench in Area 7 there was evidence for a large north-south linear cut [013], filled with [014], a firm dark grey to black clay with no observed inclusions. The colouring appeared to have derived from organic staining, potentially indicating a waterlogged environment. Only the west edge was seen and it was more than 3.60m wide to the edge of the footing. Access to the trench was compromised by the depth (1.30m) and the wet and collapsing sides so it was not safe to examine it in detail. However,

the edge of the cut was clear and only visible at the bottom of the trench. It did not extend up the exposed sides, which were dug through modern made ground [002]. It was also not seen in the trench to the south, where the basal limit of the made ground was not reached.

4.4.3 The remains of a red brick wall [012] was recorded in the north section of the south foundation trench in Area 7 (photo, figure 5). The bricks measured 230mm x 110mm x 60mm and the wall was bonded with a coarse pale yellow mortar. The structure was arched and partially collapsed, and would have stood over 1m high, and the highest part of the remaining brick was 0.16m below ground level. The base and part of the arch were still in situ. As with the north trench access was not safe and it was recorded from the top of the trench.

*Areas 7 and 8 Discussion*

4.4.4 Recording in these foundation trenches was difficult due to danger of collapse and poor weather. The unstable sides precluded access into the trenches for safety reasons. However, enough was observed to conclude that the ground level had been made up in modern times from a depth of 1.3m in places. The make-up included concrete fragments.

4.4.5 Cut [013] was evidently part of a large and deep feature filled with a waterlogged clay suggestive of a large ditch or pond. Although there was scant evidence from such a small window of observation, it is possible that it had been part of the original moat or a pond close to the house. The material above it was modern backfill [002], the result of 20th-century landscaping.

4.4.6 The arched wall [012] was part of a possibly 19th-century garden wall, which originally spanned the soft fill of the moat or pond. Because it lay over some of the modern made ground it either fell, or more likely was pushed over, onto the make up when landscaping was being undertaken.

Context	Type	Description	Length m	Width m	Deposit Thickness m
012	Masonry	Arched red brick foundation in section	1.52	Not seen	>1.10
013	Cut	North-south linear cut, only west side recorded	>0.70m	>3.60	Not seen
014	Fill	Firm dark grey/black clay, no inclusions. Fill of [013]	>0.70m	>3.60	Not seen

Table 4: List of recorded contexts in Areas 7 and 8

**4.5 Area 9 (figure 6)**

4.5.1 A new landscape retaining wall foundation trench was excavated on the west side of the development. It was 35m long and joined with the Area 7 foundation trench at its south end. Ground level along its length was at c. 106m OD.

4.5.2 Only one archaeological feature was recorded in Area 9. At the south end the trench did not penetrate modern deposits except in the vicinity of Area 7 where the moat was observed. Towards the north end an east-west linear

brick feature [011] crossed the base of the foundation trench (figure 6, photo). It was constructed of loose, mainly broken red bricks 230mm x 110mm x 60mm laid in courses but haphazardly and without a bonding mortar. It was 0.70m below the ground surface and only two courses were observed. Its extent is unknown, but it did not extend eastward into Area 12.

*Area 9 discussion*

- 4.5.3 The function of the brick feature is not clear. The bricks were 18th century in date but were almost certainly reused. It was evidently not load-bearing nor, apparently, was it a drain. If it was a garden feature the ground level has been built up considerably since its disuse. Possibly it was a temporary dry brick wall to retain the base of a spoil heap during landscape works in the area. The majority of the rest of the foundation trench was too shallow to expose pre-modern deposits, and at the south end the possible moat cut [013] was covered by modern material north of Area 7.

Context	Type	Description	Length m	Width m	Deposit Thickness m
011	Masonry	Line of loose bricks laid in haphazard courses		Not seen	>1.10

Table 5: List of recorded contexts in Area 9

**4.6 Area 11** (figure 6)

- 4.6.1 The topsoil across a large area to the north and west of the hall was stripped and the area landscaped by machine. During the work two brick features were recorded. The level on the surface sloped from 107.40 in the east to 106.20 to the west.
- 4.6.2 A wall [015] ran roughly east-west across the area to the north of the hall (figure 6, photo). It was 12.2m long as recorded but it was plainly truncated at the east end. The bricks were 230mm x 110mm x 60mm and frogged with an oval hollow. Only the top of the wall was observed beneath the topsoil scrape at only 50mm below the ground level. On further examination the bricks appeared to be machine-made and the wall remains continued as an extant garden wall to the east of the house access.
- 4.6.3 Approximately 0.85m to the south of [016] was a single line of bricks laid as stretchers on a screed of mortar 10-20mm thick (figure 6, photo). The bricks were unfrogged and measured 230mm x 110mm x 66mm. They were also found beneath only 50mm of topsoil. The feature was 3.50m long and one brick-width wide.

*Area 11 Discussion*

- 4.6.4 Both of the brick structures recorded in Area 11 were relatively modern garden features. The main garden wall [015] is still partly present to the east. The line of bricks [016] probably delimited a flower bed or border. It was built with pre-modern bricks but they were reused.

Context	Type	Description	Length m	Width m	Deposit Thickness m
015	Masonry	Red brick garden wall footing	12.20	0.23	Not seen
016	Masonry	Single line of red bricks on a mortar screed	3.50	0.11	0.10

Table 6: List of recorded contexts in Area 11

#### 4.7 Area 12 (figures 6 and 7)

- 4.7.1 The foundation trenches for a new garage were excavated in Area 12. They consisted of an east-west trench on the north side for the rear wall, with three north-south trenches extending southwards in an unequal 'E' shape to form two bays. The trenches were up to 1.3m deep and up to 0.85m wide. Five archaeological features were recorded. Ground level in the vicinity of the proposed garage was at 107.07m OD.
- 4.7.2 An east-west wall footing [004] was observed in the eastern trench (figure 7, section 2 and photo). It was constructed of red brick and flint in a light yellow sandy mortar. Few of the bricks were whole, those that were complete measuring 230mm x 110mm x 52mm, and the flint cobbles were up to 0.14m in size. The bricks were dated to the 16th-17th centuries. It was un-coursed and the mortar formed a high percentage of the context. The footing as recorded was more than 0.50m long, extending beyond both trench edges, 0.40m wide and survived to a height of 0.22m from the base of the trench. The top was 1.05m below the modern ground surface. It was not seen in the foundation trench less than 2m to the west.
- 4.7.3 An east-west brick wall footing [005] more than 0.65m long and 0.26m wide was recorded slightly further south in the central foundation trench 0.56m below the ground surface. It stood to a height of 0.37m but was deeper than the base of the trench. It was mainly built with half bricks in courses, set in a soft pale cream sandy mortar, but with no particular standard bond. The bricks were 110mm wide and 52mm thick. Up to five courses were observed and the wall was faced only on the south side, the north side being roughly made and un-pointed. The south side was covered with a very thin white plaster.
- 4.7.4 Wall [005] was associated with a tiled floor [006] (figure 7 photo) constructed with red floor tiles measuring 195mm square and 28mm thick, set onto a soft pale cream sandy mortar very similar to that used in wall [005]. The floor was laid up to wall [005] and extended over 2.50m southwards, the length of the foundation trench and beyond. They were laid in a standard checkerboard pattern, apart from some apparent repair work at the north end, and 12 rows survived in the trench. The western extent of the tiles was a true edge of the floor, with compacted mortar and brick rubble beyond. The top of the floor was at 0.92m below the ground surface.
- 4.7.5 Excavation of the northern foundation trench exposed two brick drains [007] and [009] at the base of the foundation cut. They were very similar in construction, each built with two lines of red bricks laid as headers in at least three un-mortared courses forming a drainage channel 0.17m wide between



them. The bricks in both structures were 230mm x 110mm x 60mm.

- 4.7.6 Drain [007] was orientated NNW-SSE and truncated to the south. It was filled with [008], a light grey/brown clay. Recording of this drain was problematic due to its depth at 1.6m below the surface and therefore beneath the water table. A length of 1.20m was found and it was 0.43m wide. The bricks were dated to the 16th-17th century.
- 4.7.7 Drain [009] was 2m to the west on a different alignment, running WNW-ESE (figure 7 photo). It was also filled with a soft light brown clay [010] and it was 1.50m below the ground surface. It measured 1.54m in length as found and was 0.42m wide. It was not traced further south-east across the other garage foundation trenches. Neither drain was excavated as they were only exposed at the full depth of the foundation trench. The bricks were of the same type and date as those from drain [007].

*Area 12 discussion*

- 4.7.8 Wall [005] and its associated floor [006] were constructed below the contemporary ground level as the wall was plainly built with one fair face to the south and one un-pointed and roughly built face to the north, suggesting it was constructed against an earth section in a trench. The presence of plaster on the inside face of the wall indicates that it was interior, therefore not a garden feature. However, the level of the floor (106.15m OD), which is less than a metre below the current ground surface and the hall floor level, is not deep enough for an underground cellar. Evidently there was an external building in this location. At approximately 12m north of the current hall buildings it is unlikely to be an extension to the hall itself. The bricks of wall [005] were 18th century in date (see 5.3.2 below).
- 4.7.9 Wall footing [004] is potentially an older construction type than [005], using flint and brick, and the bricks dated to the 16th-17th century. It may also represent a previous outbuilding. It has been deliberately dismantled at approximately 1m below modern ground level.
- 4.7.10 The depth below the surface of the two brick drains, neither of which showed evidence of a construction trench, indicates that the modern ground level has been built up considerably at some stage. The drains were c. 0.65m below the level of tile floor [006] and it is possible that they were contemporary and ran to/from its building. Thus an earlier ground surface in the region of 0.4m to 0.5m (c. 106.60m OD) below the current surface could be suggested. The material over all of the features in Area 12, recorded as overburden [002], was composed of dumped soil and rubble.

Context	Type	Description	Length m	Width m	Deposit Thickness m
004	Masonry	E-W wall footing, red brick and flint	>0.85	0.4	>0.5
005	Masonry	E-W red brick wall, rough face to N, plastered to S, bordered tile floor [006]	>0.65	0.26	>0.37
006	Masonry	Red tiled floor, square tiles in checkerboard pattern, assoc	>2.50	>0.45	35mm

		with wall [005]			
007	Masonry	Red brick drain, NNW-SSE, three courses noted	1.20	0.43	Not seen
008	Fill	light grey/brown clay fill of drain [007], not excavated	1.20	0.17	Not seen
009	Masonry	Red brick drain, WNW-ESE, three courses noted	1.54	0.42	Not seen
010	Fill	soft light brown clay, fill of drain [009], not excavated	1.54	0.17	Not seen

Table 7: List of recorded contexts in Area 12

## 5.0 FINDS

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the watching brief at Thunderley Hall, Wimbish. All finds were washed and dried or air dried as appropriate. They were subsequently quantified by count and weight and were bagged by material and context (Table 8). All finds have been packed and stored following ClfA guidelines (2014). No further conservation is required.

context	pottery	weight (g)	CBM	weight (g)	Bone	weight (g)
4			2	3620		
5			2	4484		
6			27	7904		
7			2	4710		
9			2	5382		
11			2	5026		
17	5	44			1	16
21			4	9035		
<b>total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>40161</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>

Table 8: Overview of the finds assemblage

### 5.2 Medieval pottery by Helen Walker

5.2.1 A total of five sherds weighing 44g was excavated, all from Layer [017], and has been catalogued according to Cunningham's typology of post-Roman pottery in Essex (Cunningham 1985, 1-16). The earliest pottery is a sherd of early medieval ware with added grog (crushed fired clay) as well as sand-tempering, which dates to the 11th to earlier 13th centuries. It is however, rather thin-walled for this type of ware, which might indicate a date at the later end of this range. The remaining pottery comprises a sagging base sherd and body sherds of medieval coarseware. This ware spans the later 12th to 14th centuries, although as there is no evidence of wheel-throwing, a 14th century date is unlikely. A date of late 12th to earlier 13th century or later is suggested for the deposition of this layer. No further work is required on the assemblage.

### 5.3 Ceramic Building Material by Isa Benedetti-Whitton

5.3.1 Sixteen pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing a total of 36,542g (36.5kg) were retrieved from seven contexts during the watching brief. Nearly all of the CBM sampled was brick, and these took two main forms: fairly long and thin bricks of an early-post medieval type; and shorter, thicker bricks of a more standard cuboid shape which are likely to be later, c.18th century, when brick dimensions became standardised.

- 5.3.2 Half of the bricks samples from Thunderly Hall are of this long, thin ‘Tudor’ variety (c.16th-17th century), from contexts [004], [007], [009] and [021]. Six bricks, from contexts [005], [011] and [021], are of the larger and most likely later form. In almost all instances – with the exception of [021] – the different forms have been taken from distinct sets of contexts, which might indicate different phases of building work. A sharply formed, c.18th century brick from context [021] had a nearly black glazed stretcher which was largely obscured by a layer of lime mortar, and some other bricks – those from [004] and [021] – had two layers of mortar, one layer of lime and another of a harder, cement-type mortar, which also suggests either the reuse of bricks or further building work having taken place c.18th-19th century when new mortar types were coming into use.
- 5.3.3 Two paving slabs were also recovered from [006]. Although there is no similar typology for paving slabs as there is for bricks, their hand-crafted yet very even form despite being would suggest a c.18th date also for original manufacture. Like the bricks, one of the slabs also has two layers of mortar; one layer of lime mortar and a layer of cement. The paving slabs are made from a very similar fabric to the bricks (T1).
- 5.3.4 The Thunderley Hall CBM is fairly homogenous in terms of fabric, with nearly all the brick classified as B1 (see Table 6). B1 is very similar to the Tudor fabrics identified by the Museum of London as 3033 and 3046, the main distinguishing feature being the presence of very large burnt flint pieces. The fabric doesn’t change as the forms change, suggesting a local sourcing and manufacture.
- 5.3.5 Samples of brick type have been retained.

Fabric code	Description
B1	Post-medieval fabric, common medium and coarse quartz. Moderate-common pebble and flint inclusions up to 30mm. Local version of MoL 3033? Ironstone and oxide inclusions up to 5mm.
T1	Well fired red-orange fabric, sparse-moderate coarse and very coarse quartz; black Fe speckle up to 1mm. Sparse burnt flint up to 14mm; slag-like (iron stone) inclusions up to 7mm.

Table 9: CBM fabric descriptions

#### 5.4 Animal bone by Gemma Ayton

- 5.4.1 A single tooth was recovered during a watching brief at Thunderley Hall, Wimbish. The tooth was recovered from context [017] and has been identified as a cattle third molar. The tooth possesses a reduced hypoconulid, a genetic trait affecting the posterior cusp of the tooth. There is no evidence of butchery, burning or gnawing on the specimen.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Discussion**

- 6.1.1 The watching brief has revealed that the site has been extensively landscaped during its history. The evidence from beneath the south wing of the hall (Areas 2, 3 and 4) shows that natural deposits are higher to the north-east and slope down to the west. The hall is thus constructed on a terrace of made ground which dates to the medieval period, specifically to the 12th or 13th centuries as indicated by the pottery, the materials for which could perhaps derive from the excavation of the moat or the nearby ponds. This gives a potential date range for the establishment of the site as a moated property, but it is certain that the site was occupied by a manor at the Norman Conquest and before. Potentially the post-hole found in Area 4 dates to this phase.
- 6.1.2 To the south of the south wing there is evidence that a small brick extension housed an oven in the 18th century and the foundations were later adapted as a utility room in the 20th century.
- 6.1.3 On the west side of the Hall (Areas 7 and 8) the presence of a substantial cut filled with water-lain material suggests that the moat extended northwards from its present terminus. A post-medieval brick arched foundation recorded in section may have spanned the softer deposits in the moat but it had partially collapsed and the relationship was not clear.
- 6.1.4 To the north of the house (Areas 11 and 12) the made ground is much deeper and more recent. At some point, probably in the late 20th century, a large amount of landscaping was carried out here, including the truncation of masonry walls and the deposition of mixed material including concrete fragments up to 1m deep in places. It was then overlaid with topsoil up to 0.35m thick.
- 6.1.5 The presence of buildings of more than one period and a drainage system to the north of the hall (Area 12) has also been demonstrated, although the size of the trenches precluded interpretation of the features beyond the fact of their existence. Further research of historic maps (beyond the remit of this report), for example Tithe Maps, could shed further light on the size and function of the buildings. The dating of these structures derived from the bricks suggests that they were constructed in the 16th or 17th century and later in the 18th century. However, the materials may have been reused.

### **6.2 Conclusions**

- 6.2.1 Thunderley Hall is clearly a historic location with occupation dating back to the Saxon period. With reference to the project aims set out in section 1.4, the watching brief has shown that below-ground archaeological remains do indeed survive on the site.
- 6.2.2 The limited nature of the trenches preclude detailed analysis and interpretation of the data, but it can be stated that masonry features relating

to the post-medieval occupation of Thunderley Hall remain to the north of the current house buried at a depth of as little as 0.5m to over 1.6m in places, and that other structural survival is present elsewhere.

- 6.2.3 Medieval terracing is present across the area occupied by the hall, potentially dating from the establishment of the moats and ponds, and there is a possibility that earlier remains exist beneath, protected from later landscaping by the medieval deposition episodes. Whether or not this is confined to the moated enclosure is unknown. It is possible that further remains of the west side of the moat are present.
- 6.2.2 In the light of these findings any future significant groundworks undertaken at the hall, both within and beyond the Scheduled Ancient Monument boundary, should be subject to archaeological monitoring.

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The watching brief was undertaken by Robin Wroe-Brown and Angus Forshaw. Thanks are due to Andy Lewsey who produced the figures for this report. Andy Leonard project managed the fieldwork and Mark Atkinson project managed the post-excavation process.



**Appendix 1: HER Summary Form**

<b>Site name/Address:</b> <i>Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex</i>	
<b>Parish:</b> <i>Wimbish</i>	<b>District:</b> <i>Uttlesford</i>
<b>NGR:</b> TL 56018 36026	<b>Site Code:</b> <i>WMTH15</i>
<b>Type of Work:</b> <i>Archaeological Watching Brief</i>	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> <i>Robin Wroe-Brown, Archaeology South-East</i>
<b>Date of Work:</b> <i>19-10-2015 – 06-11-2015</i>	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> <i>1150 square metres</i>
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b> <i>Saffron Walden Museum</i>	<b>Funding source:</b> <i>Landowner</i>
<b>Further Seasons Anticipated?:</b> <i>No</i>	<b>Related HER Nos:</b>
<b>Final Report:</b> <i>EAH roundup</i>	<b>OASIS No:</b> <i>archaeol6-245686</i>
<b>Periods Represented:</b> <i>Medieval, Post-medieval</i>	
<b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b>	
<p>An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex. The site is undergoing extensive alterations including the construction of a garage to the north, outbuildings to the west, a landscape retaining wall on the west side and an extension to the south wing.</p> <p>The current hall was originally built in the 15th century and has later extensions. It is a Grade II listed building situated within a moated enclosure which itself is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.</p> <p>The archaeological watching brief was conducted on all intrusive groundworks. The foundation trenches to a new garage revealed a brick and flint wall, a brick wall and associated tile floor and two brick drains. To the west in the retaining wall trench a small unmortared brick wall was also recorded. The works to the south and west revealed further brick structures and a possible backfilled part of the moat. A brick oven base and exterior building was discovered against the south wall of the hall's southern wing.</p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports:</b> <i>None</i>	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> <i>R. Wroe-Brown</i>	<b>Date of Summary:</b> <i>14-03-2016</i>

## Appendix 2: OASIS Form

<b>OASIS ID: archaeol6-245686</b>	
<b>Project details</b>	
Project name	Thunderley Hall, Wimbish
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was carried out during extensive alterations to Thunderley Hall, including the construction of a garage to the north, outbuildings to the west, a landscape retaining wall on the west side and an extension to the south wing. The current hall was originally built in the 15th century and has later extensions. It is a Grade II listed building situated within a moated enclosure. The archaeological watching brief was conducted on all intrusive groundworks. The foundation trenches to a new garage revealed a brick and flint wall, a brick wall and associated tile floor and two brick drains. To the west in the retaining wall trench a small unmortared brick wall was also recorded. The works to the south and west revealed further brick structures and a possible backfilled part of the moat. A brick oven base and exterior building was discovered against the south wall of the hall's southern wing.
Project dates	Start: 19-10-2015 End: 06-11-2015
Previous/future work	No / No
Assoc project reference codes	WMTH15 - Sitecode 8201 – Contracting Unit record
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING Post Medieval MOAT Medieval WALL Post Medieval LAYER Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval BRICK Post-medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Listed Building Consent
	Planning condition
<b>Project location</b>	
Country	England
Site location	ESSEX UTTLESFORD WIMBISH Thunderley Hall
Postcode	CB10 2UT
Study area	1150 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 56018 36026 52.000264589901 0.273018566736 52 00 00 N 000 16 22 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 105m Max: 105.4m

<b>Project creators</b>	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Essex County Council Place Services
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Robin Wroe-Brown
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
<b>Project archives</b>	
Physical Archive recipient	Saffron Walden Museum
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Saffron Walden Museum
Digital Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
Digital Media available	"Database","Images raster / digital photography","Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	Saffron Walden Museum
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Plan","Section"
<b>Project bibliography</b>	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Wroe-Brown, R.
Other bibliographic details	2015418
Date	2016
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Place of issue	Witham
Description	A4 report
Entered by	Robin Wroe-Brown (r.wroe-brown@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	15 March 2016





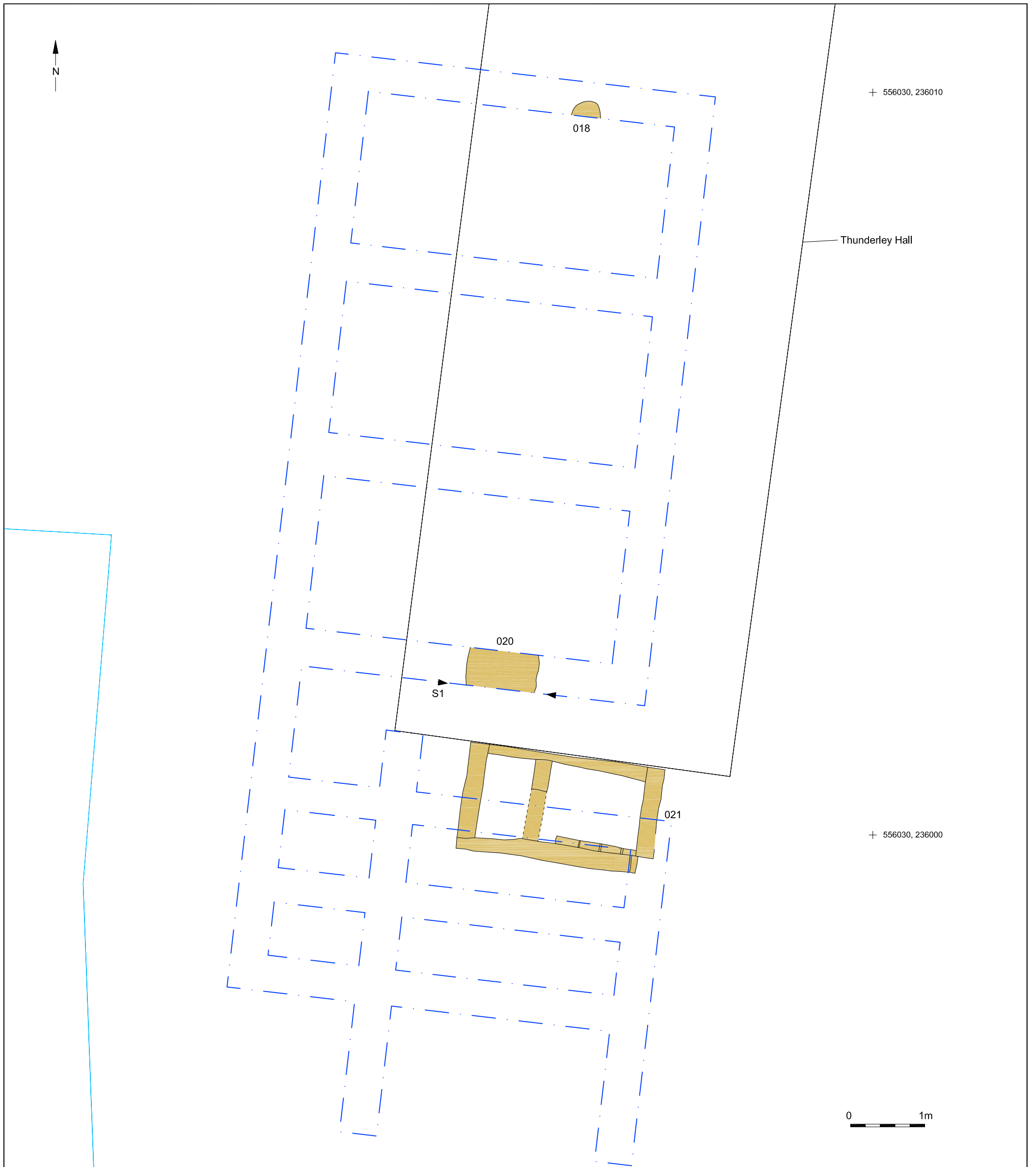
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© Archaeology South-East		Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road, Wimbish	Fig. 1
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Report No: 2015418	Drawn by: APL		

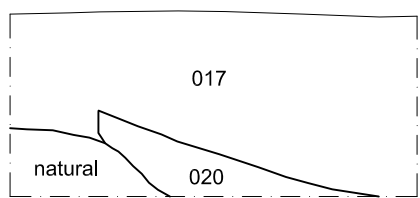


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Project Ref: 8201	Mar 2016	Location of monitored areas	
Report Ref: 2015418	Drawn by: APL		



Section 1  
E W



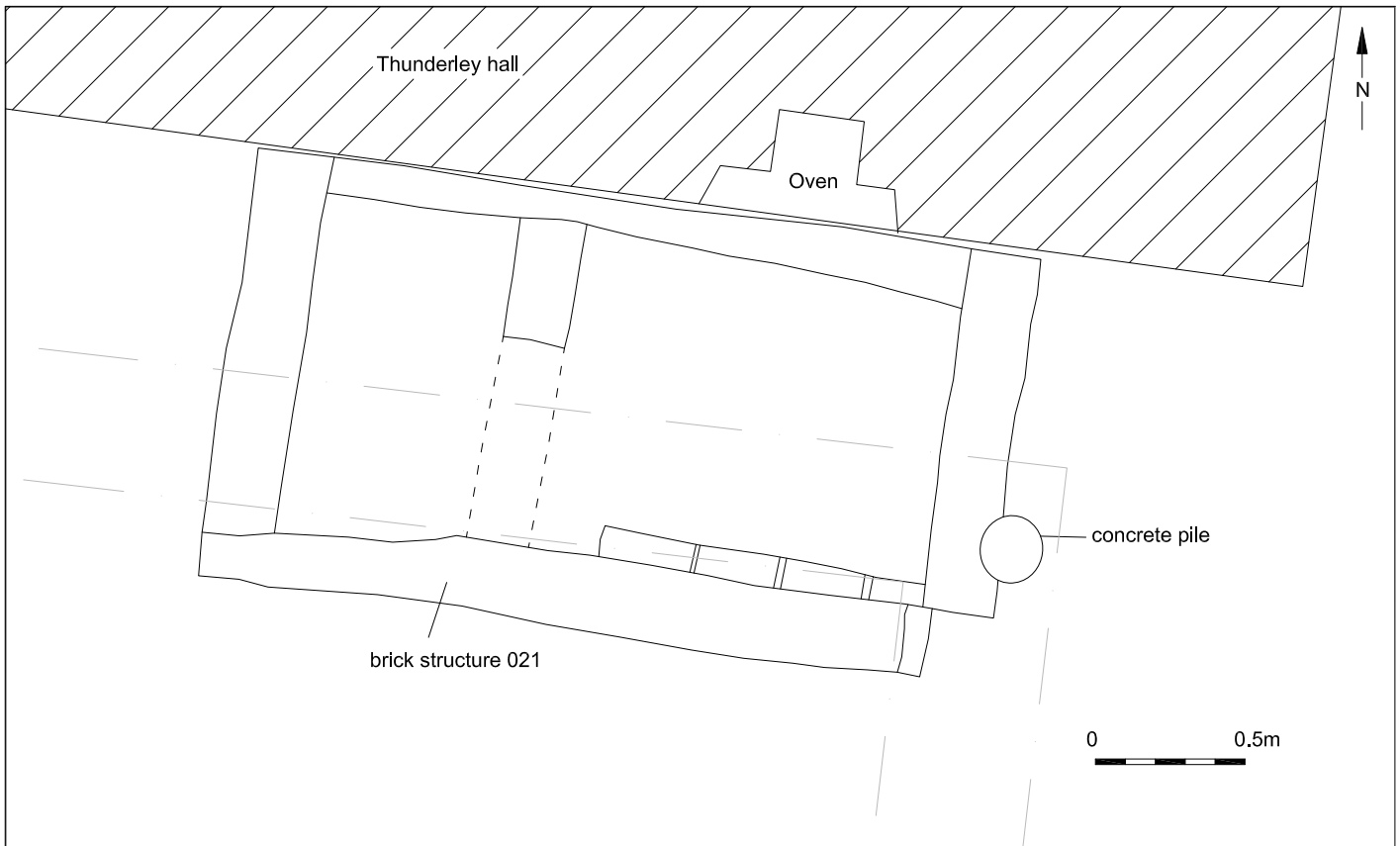
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Pit 018 looking south, 0.5m scale



Layer 020 looking south, 0.5m scale



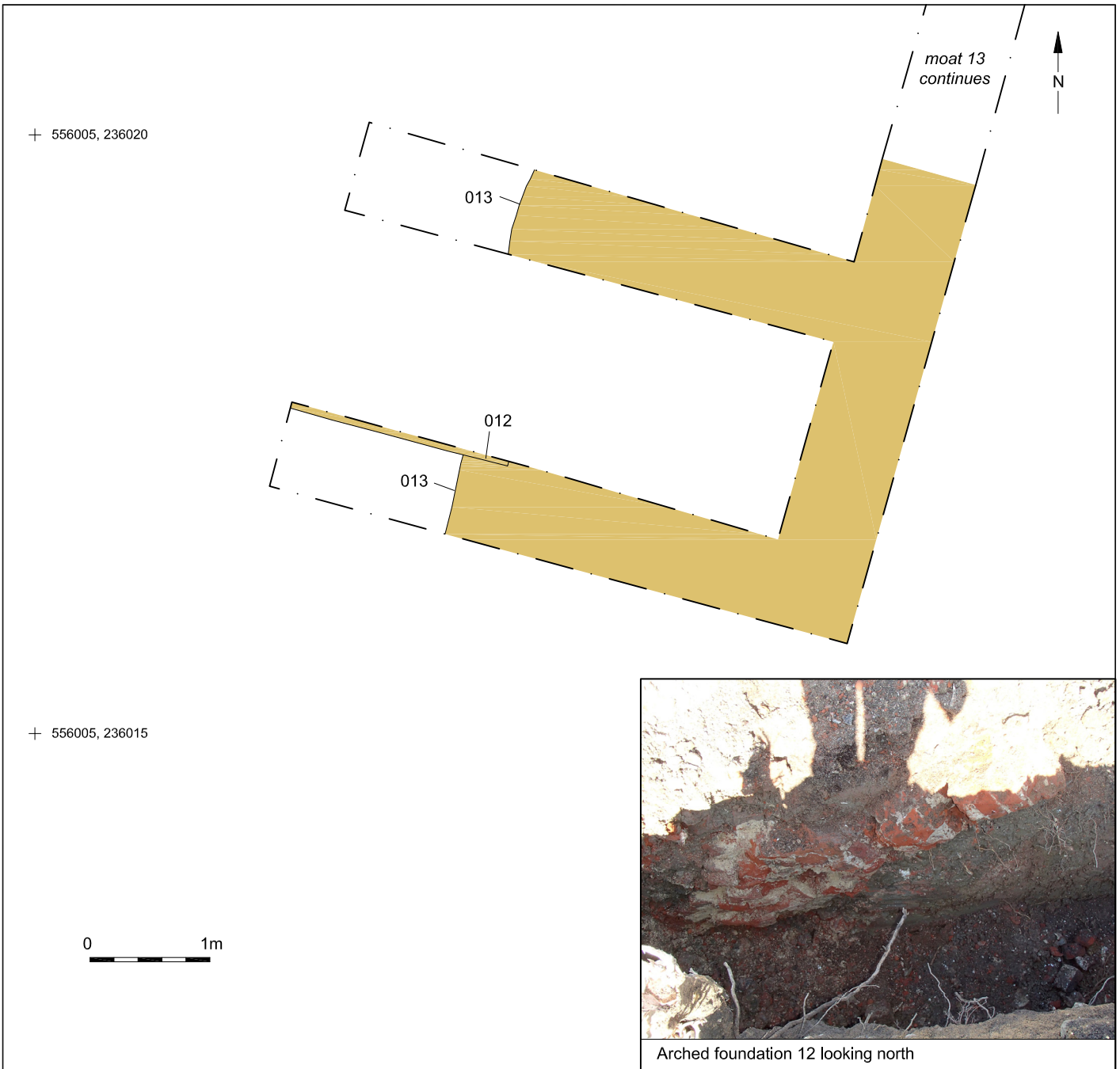
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Structure 021 south looking south, 1m scale

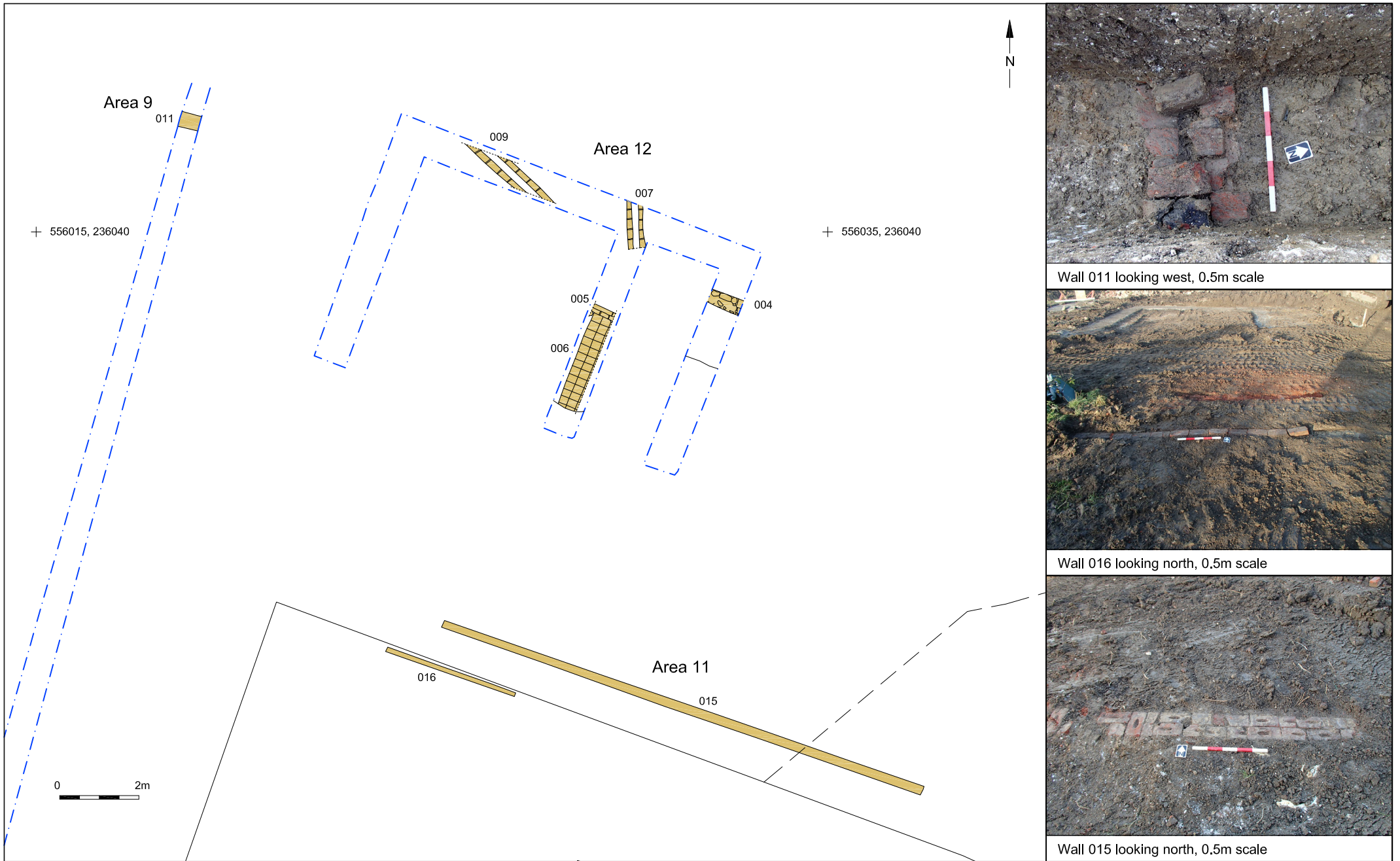
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Project Ref: 8201	Mar 2016	Structure 021 in detail	
Report Ref: 2015418	Drawn by: APL		



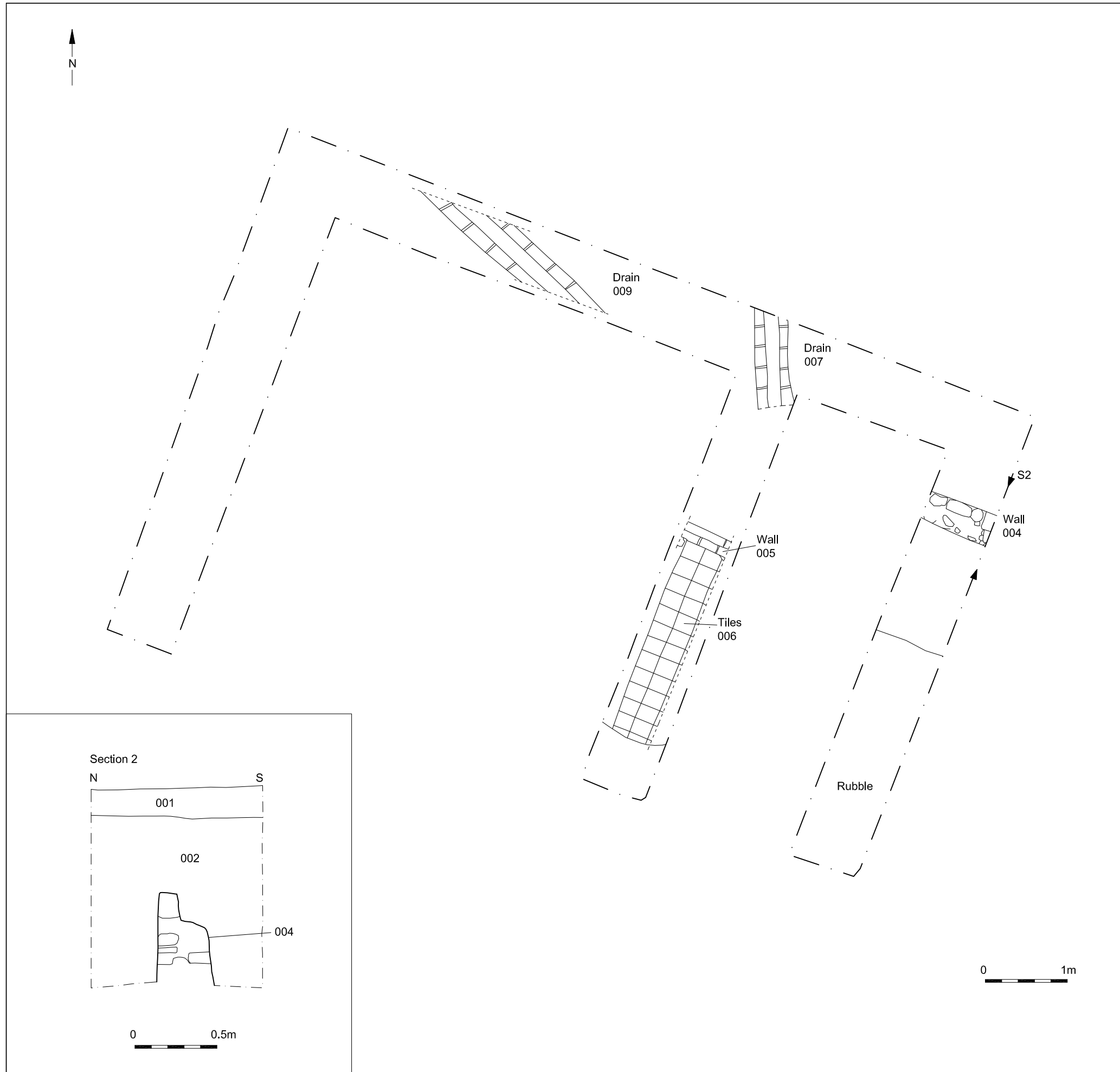


Arched foundation 12 looking north

© Archaeology South-East		Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road, Wimbish	Fig. 5
Project Ref: 8201	Mar 2016	Plan of features in areas 7 & 8	
Report Ref: 2015418	Drawn by: APL		



© Archaeology South-East		Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road, Wimbish	Fig.6
Project Ref: 8201	Mar 2016	Plan of features in areas 9, 11 & 12	
Report Ref: 2015418	Drawn by: APL		



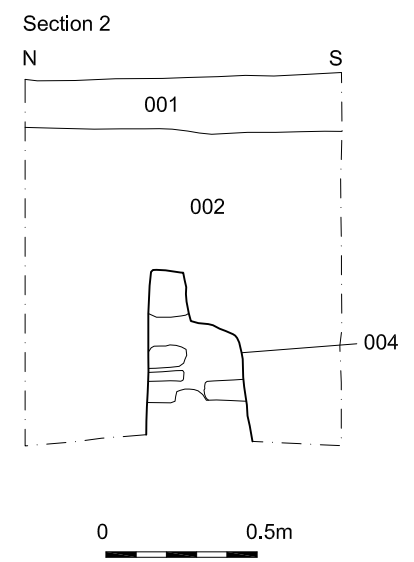
Wall 004 looking east



Drain 009 looking west, 0.5m scale



Tile floor 006 & wall 005 looking north, 0.5m scale





The garden retaining wall foundation Area 9, after filling with concrete looking south-west



The south wing interior works, looking south



The south wing interior works, looking north



The west wing during works, looking north



The south wing during works looking east



The hall, the garage foundations (Area 12) after filling with concrete and general landscaping, looking south



The eastern arm of the moat, looking north



The south-west corner of the moat, looking north-east



Exterior works to the south of the south wing, looking north

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