

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report
Repairs to Buried Water Services
Battle Abbey School
High Street, Battle
East Sussex**

**NGR: 574924 515696
(TQ 74924 15696)**

**Standing Scheduled Monument Consent
ASE Project No: 160616
Site Code: BAS 16
ASE Report No. 2016289
OASIS ID: archaeol6-257662**



By Simon Stevens BA (Hons) MCIfA

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the repair of a buried water service within the grounds of Battle Abbey School.

A test-pit measuring c.1.9m by 1.2m by a maximum of 780mm deep was mechanically excavated to find the source of a water leak.

No archaeological deposits or features were disturbed during the repair to the leaking water service as all excavations were contained within the backfill of the previously excavated service trench. No archaeological finds were uncovered.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake an archaeological watching brief during repairs to a buried water service within the grounds of Battle Abbey School, High Street, Battle, East Sussex (NGR 574924 515696, Figure 1).

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 Water was observed coming to the surface in the gravelled car-park close to the front door of the school. The entire area has been heavily altered during various groundworks at the site (see Section 2.3 and below).

1.2.2 According to current data from the British Geological Survey, the underlying geological strata at the site consists of the Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation (BGS 2016).

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Battle Abbey is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Heritage List for England No.1013226). The work was carried out under the terms of English Heritage's Standing Scheduled Monument Consent (Annex 9) (dated 20th February 2016) which covers maintenance and repair works on services. A condition of all such works is that they are the subject of archaeological monitoring and recording.

1.3.2 A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) outlining the scope of the archaeological work was prepared by English Heritage. The document outlined the methodologies to be used on-site, and during the reporting and archiving of the results (English Heritage 2016).

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The primary purpose of the archaeological monitoring and recording given in the WSI (*ibid.*) was to:

'preserve by record the presence and nature of archaeological deposits encountered during the works, and to signal to interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, the discovery of archaeological material for which the resources allocated to the watching brief are not sufficient to support treatment to a proper and satisfactory standard.

Ensure that only previously disturbed ground is opened-up during the works'

1.5 Scope of Report

- 1.5.1 This report provides the results of the archaeological monitoring carried out at Battle Abbey School on 5th July 2016. The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist). The project was managed by Neil Griffin (fieldwork) and Dan Swift (post-excavation).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Battle Abbey is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Heritage List for England No.1013226). The following information is taken directly from the WSI (English Heritage 2016) with all due acknowledgement.

2.2 General historical and archaeological background of Battle Abbey

2.2.1 Battle lies on a succession of sandstones, siltstones and mudstones of the Hastings Beds (Lower Cretaceous). The abbey buildings lie on the siltstones, mudstones and sandstones of the Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation.

2.2.2 Evidence of prehistoric activity in Battle includes Neolithic flint, Bronze Age horn and Iron Age coins. The location of most of these finds is, unfortunately, not recorded but excavation south of the abbey courthouse in 1994 recovered several flints of prehistoric date. The main street through Battle has been identified as part of a probable prehistoric or Roman trackway running east-west across the Weald. Although Roman iron workings have been discovered in the local area (within 5km of Battle), no evidence of Romano-British activity has yet been found within the town. Similarly, there have been no Anglo-Saxon finds within the town.

2.2.3 The historical development of Battle began in the 11th century. Several early 12th-century accounts (e.g. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, William of Malmesbury and the Brevis Relation de Guilemo nobilissimo comite Normannorum) describe how William I chose to found an abbey on the site of his victory at the Battle of Hastings, locating the high altar of the abbey church on the spot where King Harold fell. This tradition was reinforced by the Chronicle of Battle Abbey, written in c.1180, in which it was stated that William had made a pre-conquest vow to found an abbey if God granted him victory. Current historical understanding is that it is more probable that the foundation of the abbey was the result of penances imposed on William by papal legates in 1070.

2.2.4 Both the abbey's dedication to St. Martin, with his military associations, and the adoption of the name of Battle for the abbey and new settlement convey a probable desire on the part of the king to commemorate his victory as well as do penance for it. Together with the impractical hilltop location of the abbey (away from useful sources of water and requiring extensive terracing to provide platforms for the abbey's buildings) makes it very probable that the abbey was built on the site of the Battle of Hastings.

2.2.5 In 1076 the choir of the abbey church was sufficiently complete to be consecrated, although the church was not finished until 1094, when it was consecrated in the presence of William II. To the south of the church lay the claustral ranges, while a gatehouse into the precinct was constructed to the northwest of the abbey church.

- 2.2.6 The abbey was extensively rebuilt in the 13th century. The church was extended eastwards and a new 7-bay choir constructed. This terminated in a chevet with radiating chapels built over a crypt, following the fashion established by Westminster Abbey. The three claustral ranges were also rebuilt during the 13th century and a guest range constructed on the southern side of the precinct.
- 2.2.7 In 1338 Battle Abbey received a license to crenellate. The precinct wall was strengthened and the Norman gatehouse replaced by the existing structure (which incorporated elements of its predecessor). This work reflected the status of the abbey, the perceived threat of French raids during the 14th century and the active role of successive abbots in local defence. The western claustral range, which formed the abbot's lodging was further rebuilt in the 15th century.
- 2.2.8 Battle Abbey was surrendered to the Crown in 1538 and gifted by Henry VIII to Sir Anthony Browne, a leading courtier and the king's Master of the Horse. The abbey was transformed into a country house, with the former abbot's lodging forming its nucleus. The abbey church was demolished, as was the southern claustral range and cloister. The outer court to the west of the abbot's lodging was levelled using building debris from the demolished structures. The monastic guest range was rebuilt as a two-storey guest wing. In the second half of the 16th century a courthouse was constructed on the east side of the gatehouse.
- 2.2.9 In 1721 the abbey was sold by Sir Anthony Browne's descendents to Sir Thomas Webster, who repaired the former abbot's lodging. His son, Sir Whistler Webster demolished the 16th-century guest range but retained the monastic sub-vault. During the latter half of the 18th century (a period of notable profligacy for the leading scions of the Webster family) the abbey buildings fell into neglect. An attempt at restoring the estate was made by Godfrey, 5th Baronet Webster in the early 19th century, with the abbot's lodging being renovated and the octagonal Gothick dairy and adjacent ice-house being constructed in c.1818. In 1817 the crypt at the east end of the abbey church was excavated and left exposed.
- 2.2.10 In 1857 the estate was sold to Lord Harry Vane, soon to become the 4th Duke of Cleveland. Henry Clutton was employed by the Duke of Cleveland to refashion the abbot's lodging and to add the library wing at the southern end of the building (replacing a Tudor wing). The Clevelands also made extensive alterations to the landscape, replanting part of the Great Park and extending the formal gardens. Wider appreciation of the abbey came as a consequence of the grounds being opened to the public by the Clevelands.
- 2.2.11 The estate returned to the Webster family at the start of the 20th century with its purchase by Sir Augustus, 8th Baronet Webster, with the abbey being placed in the hands of trustees on his death in 1923. By this time the abbey buildings had been leased to the school (which still leases the former abbot's lodgings). In 1929-34 excavations supervised by Sir Harold Brakespear established the form of the eastern arm of the Norman abbey church. The last major structural alterations took place after the abbot's lodgings had been

damaged by a severe fire in 1931, with the restoration of the house overseen by Brakespear. The abbey was used for army accommodation during the Second World War. It came into the ownership of the state in 1976, following which excavation of the east range, including the chapter house and south transept of the abbey church were undertaken.

2.3 Understanding the part of the monument affected by the proposals

- 2.3.1 The water leak is located within the abbey's outer court, to the west of the porch providing access to the abbot's hall in the west claustral range. The liturgical and social heart of the abbey lay in the church and claustral complex at the centre of the monastic precinct. Around this ranged the abbey's Outer Court, the perimeter of which defined the boundary between the monastic precinct and the secular world.
- 2.3.2 The topography of the western medieval Outer Court was different to that which exists today. The southern half of this area is known to have sloped downhill to meet the rear of the cellarer's range beneath the guesthouse. This is demonstrated by the doorways and window openings in the now subterranean rear portions of both the cellarer's range and the connecting link between this range and the west claustral range. The current surface level of the outer court was established shortly after the dissolution of the monastery and the transfer of the property to Sir Anthony Browne in 1538.
- 2.3.3 The location of the water leak is to the immediate west of the porch providing access to the abbot's hall in the west claustral range. The porch is a two-storey structure built in the 13th century, originally consisting of first-floor chapel and ground-floor chamber but with a ground-floor porch created when the abbot's hall was constructed in the 15th century.



- 2.3.4 While the abbot's great chamber block, to the immediate north of the porch, is known to have had western projections (probably a garderobe tower) which were demolished in the mid-16th century, the current footprint of the porch is understood to be that established in the 13th century. There is no evidence to suggest that the area of the leak was ever contained within a structure directly associated with or ancillary to the west claustral range.
- 2.3.5 The outer court has the potential to contain buried archaeological evidence associated with the medieval and post-medieval occupation of the monument. Within the area of the leak the potential for evidence of structures is considered unlikely but cannot be ruled out. There is greater potential for evidence associated with historic treatment of external ground surfaces and the works to alter the topography of the outer court. There is also potential for finds associated with all periods of occupation on the site.
- 2.3.6 The installation of the pipe will have eroded the archaeological potential of the immediate area around it, i.e. the service trench in which it sits. There is, however, no record of archaeological supervision of the original installation.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 Mechanical and manual excavation of a test-hole to locate the source of a water leak was monitored by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.



- 3.1.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the WSI (English Heritage 2016) and relevant standards and guidelines (CIfA 2014a; 2014b, ESCC, WSCC 2015), using standard Archaeology South-East context record forms. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.1.3 The excavation area was planned using Global Positioning System (GPS) planning technology. Features and deposits were described on standard pro-forma recording sheets used by ASE. All remains were levelled with respect to Ordnance Survey datum. A digital photographic record was maintained throughout the watching brief.
- 3.1.4 The spoil from the excavations was inspected by the ASE archaeologist to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest. None were uncovered.

3.2 The Site Archive

3.2.1 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited with English Heritage in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Context sheets	1
Section sheets	0
Plans sheets	0
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	28 images
Context register	1
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	1
Trench Record forms	0

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

Bulk finds (quantity e.g. 1 bag, 1 box, 0.5 box 0.5 of a box)	0
Registered finds (number of)	0
Flots and remains from bulk samples	0
Palaeoenvironmental specialists sample samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides)	0
Waterlogged wood	0
Wet sieved remains from bulk samples	0

Table 2: Quantification of artefacts and environmental samples

4.0 RESULTS (Figure 2)

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the test-pit excavation at the site carried out on 5th July 2016. The test-pit measured c.1.9m by c.1.2m by a maximum of 780mm deep.



4.2 The Stratigraphic Sequence

- 4.2.1 The only deposit encountered was the backfill of the previously excavated service trench in which the rapidly leaking water pipe had been laid. Context [001] was a silty clay varying in colour between mid-greyish brown and mid-brown, with a high concentration of small fragments of local sandstone and fragments of frogged brick. A gas pipe found in the same test-pit suggests more than one service trench has been dug through the area.
- 4.2.2 No archaeological deposits, features or finds were uncovered.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 No archaeological deposits or features were disturbed during the repair to the leaking water service as all excavations were contained within the backfill of the previously excavated service trench. No archaeological finds were uncovered.

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ESCC, WSCC 2015. *Sussex Archaeological Standards*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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HER Summary

Site Code	BST15					
Identification Name and Address	Battle Abbey School, East Sussex					
County, District &/or Borough	Rother District, East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 74924 15696					
Geology						
Arch. South-East Project Number	7416					
Type of Fieldwork			Watching Brief			
Type of Site				<i>Scheduled Monument</i>		
Dates of Fieldwork			5.07.2016			
Sponsor/Client	English Heritage					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary						
<p>Summary</p> <p><i>Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the repair of a buried water service within the grounds of Battle Abbey School.</i></p> <p><i>A test-pit measuring c.1.9m by 1.2m by a maximum of 780mm deep was mechanically excavated to find the source of a water leak.</i></p> <p><i>No archaeological deposits or features were disturbed during the repair to the leaking water service as all excavations were contained within the backfill of the previously excavated service trench. No archaeological finds were uncovered.</i></p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-257662

Project details

Project name Archaeological Watching Brief Report - Repairs to Buried Water Services at Battle Abbey School, East Sussex

Short description of the project Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the repair of a buried water service within the grounds of Battle Abbey School. A test-pit measuring c.1.9m by 1.2m by a maximum of 780mm deep was mechanically excavated to find the source of a water leak. No archaeological deposits or features were disturbed during the repair to the leaking water service as all excavations were contained within the backfill of the previously excavated service trench. No archaeological finds were uncovered.

Project dates Start: 05-07-2016 End: 05-07-2016

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated project reference codes 160616 - Contracting Unit No.

Any associated project reference codes BAS 16 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status Scheduled Monument (SM)

Current Land use Other 15 - Other

Monument type NONE None

Significant Finds NONE None

Investigation type ""Watching Brief""

Prompt Scheduled Monument Consent

Project location

Country England

Site location EAST SUSSEX ROTHER BATTLE Battle Abbey School

Postcode	TN33 0AD
Study area	4 Kilometres
Site coordinates	TQ 74924 15696 50.913586293757 0.488657368771 50 54 48 N 000 29 19 E Point
Project creators Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	English Heritage
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Simon Stevens
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	English Heritage
Project archives Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	English Heritage
Digital Archive recipient	English Heritage
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive	English Heritage

recipient

Paper Contents "other"

Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Miscellaneous Material", "Survey", "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography
1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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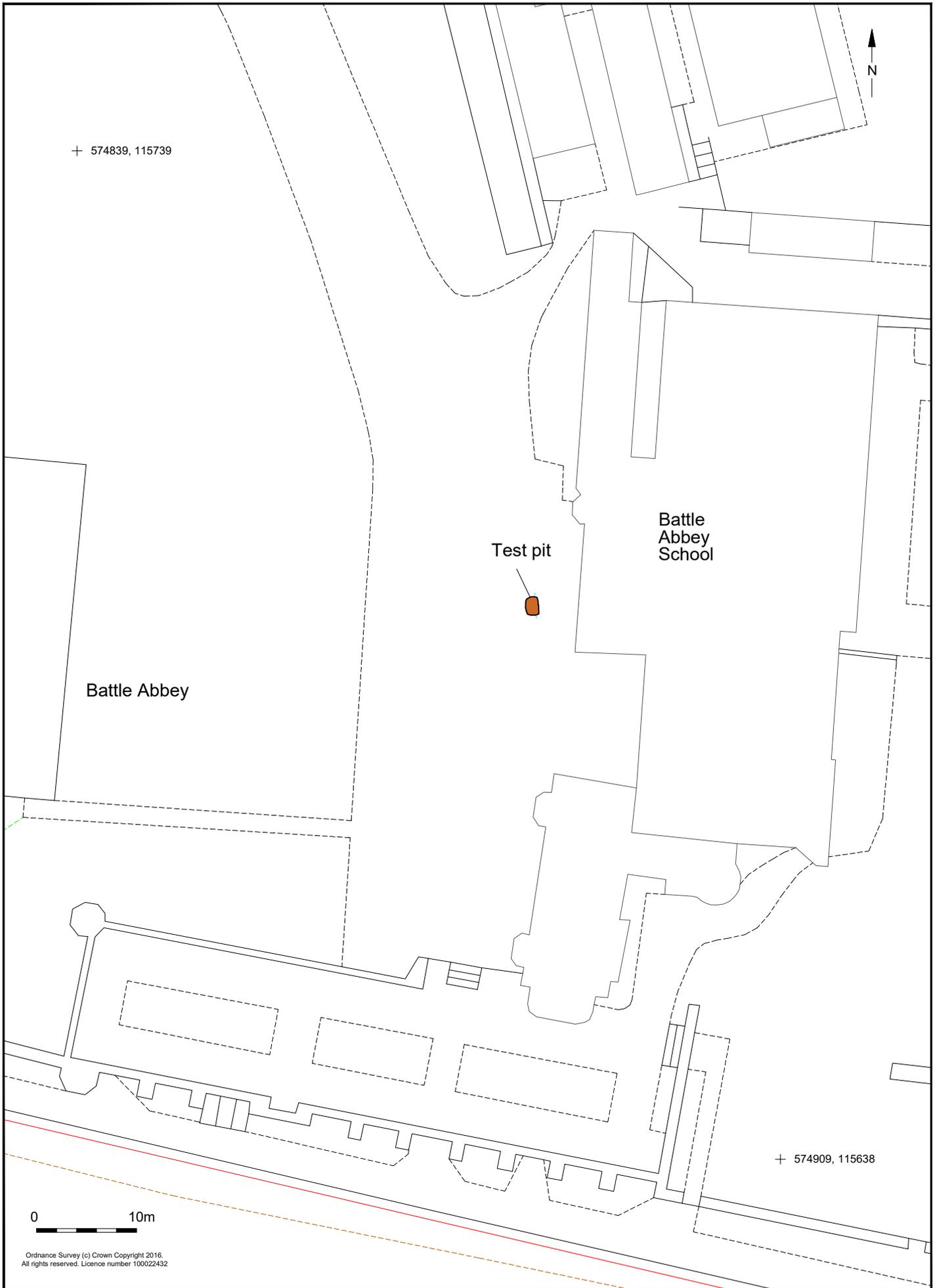
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© Archaeology South-East		Battle Abbey School, Water service	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 160616	July 2016	Site location	
Report Ref: 216289	Drawn by: AR		



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© Archaeology South-East		Battle Abbey School, water service	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 160616	July 2016	Test pit location	
Report Ref: 2016289	Drawn by: AR		

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