

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report
Nymans, Staplefield Lane
Handcross, West Sussex**

NGR: 527000 129000

ASE Project No: 170647

Site Code: NYH17

ASE Report No: 2017298

OASIS id: archaeol6-289151





By Odile Rouard

**Archaeological Report
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Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by the National Trust to record deposits and masonry uncovered during groundworks at Nymans, Staplefield Lane, Handcross, West Sussex (centred on NGR 527000 129000).

The work was undertaken on the 26th of June 2017. All features within the drainage trench were recorded and this report contains the photographic, written and drawn record of the trench and masonry exposed within it.

Two walls, possibly belonging to earlier buildings were identified as well as a water collector, a drain and the existing foundation wall which was exposed at the bottom of the trench.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by the National Trust to undertake an archaeological recording at Nymans, Staplefield Lane, Handcross, West Sussex (centred on NGR 527000 129000; Figure 1).

1.2 The Works

1.2.1 The core of the property comprises a nationally significant 20th century garden set around a ruined mansion.

1.2.2 The recorded exposure consisted of a single trench along the footings of the north-western wall of the main house in order to install a drainage system to prevent damp.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

1.3.1 The general objective of the archaeological work is to ensure that any exposed deposits, features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest are recorded, interpreted and reported on to appropriate standards.

1.3.2 The specific research aims of the project were drawn from the forthcoming South-East Research Framework (SERF):

- The impact houses of the royalty/gentry had on the local landscape, economy and social structure.
- Any material culture/environmental deposit that can be tied down to an individual household is of national importance.

1.3.3 Since the archaeological features exposed may have belonged to the original building, it might be possible to match older plans with the actual remains identified on site.

1.4 Scope of Report

1.4.1 This report presents the findings of the recording undertaken at the site on the 26th of June 2017. The work was undertaken by Odile Rouard (Archaeologist). The project was managed by Neil Griffin (fieldwork), and Dan Swift (post-excavation/editing). All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists standards and guidance (CIfA 2014a; 2014b) and the *Sussex Archaeological Standards* (WSSC, ESCC 2015).

2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

(Based on Rumley 2007)

- 2.1 The Nymans property has been inhabited since the medieval period. Nicholson refers to the discovery of medieval masonry during the rebuilding of the west front of the house in 1928, extending in height up to the lintel of the ground floor window – Peter Rumley found no evidence for this during his brief survey of the building in 2007, and suggested a possible confusion between *in situ* medieval work and salvaged material brought from elsewhere (Rumley 2007).
- 2.2 The first definite reference to a house on the site occurs in a 16th century map, indicating a gabled structure with a central chimney situated towards the north-eastern corner of the Nymans plot, in a location now at the foot of a steep slope within the Arboretum – the reliability of the map is unclear, and the indicated location may be a convention by the surveyor to allow him to fit a substantial annotation within the indicated plot. However, it is worth noting that other buildings on the map (identifiable as Hill House and Chodd's Farmhouse) are in approximately their correct locations as shown on later OS mapping. By 1818, a house is shown located adjacent to the northern edge of the Nymans plot, with a group of other buildings (probably farm buildings as they are shown in black) occupying the site of the present house. The accompanying schedule is frustratingly uninformative. By 1843, the only buildings marked within the curtilage of Nymans are shown on the site of the present house. Thus, the historic mapping implies either a remarkable amount of settlement shift within the Nymans plot within the space of two centuries, with three separate locations identified for the early house, or the mapping is inaccurate. The 16th century and 1818 locations also contradict the as-yet unconfirmed physical evidence for a medieval structure beneath the modern house.
- 2.3 The house that stood on the site when the Estate was bought by Ludwig Messel was built in the late 1830s or early 1840s, probably by George Harrington. He demolished the existing structure and replaced it with a substantial stuccoed brick villa. Ludwig Messel replaced this with a North-European inspired mansion with a later Italianate tower in the 1890s, to be succeeded in turn by the present Tudor style manor house, built between 1923 and 1928 by Leonard and Maud Messel. This structure still stands today, although half the house was destroyed by fire in 1947.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 A fieldwork risk assessment and method statement was prepared by ASE prior to the commencement of the work and was followed throughout the project.
- 3.1.2 A groundworks trench, located along on the base of the north-western wall of the main building, measuring 10.70m in length x 0.50m in width x 0.80 to 0.85m in depth was recorded.
- 3.1.3 All deposits, features and finds were recorded in accordance with accepted professional standards (ClfA 2014a; WSCC 2015) using *pro-forma* context record sheets. Adequate time was made available for appropriate recording of the remains.
- 3.1.4 Contexts were numbered sequentially from 001. A digital photographic record of the work was made and forms part of the site archive.

3.2 The Site Archive

- 3.2.1 ASE informed Crawley Museum prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated. Crawley Museum is not currently accepting archaeological archives and doesn't issue accession numbers. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	7
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	1
Bulk Samples	None
Photographs	13
Bulk finds	1
Registered finds	None
Environmental flots/residue	None

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

(Figures 2 and 3)

The recorded trench measured 10.70m in length x 0.50m in width x 0.80 to 0.85m in depth.

4.1 The stratigraphic sequence

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
001	Masonry	Water collector	0.44	0.40	0.30
002	Masonry	Foundation wall	0.65	0.42	0.30
003	Masonry	Drain	0.23	0.08	0.30
004	Masonry	Foundation wall	1.10	0.38	0.18
005	Masonry	Wall	5.60	-	-
006	Masonry	Foundation wall	10.70	-	0.16 to 0.22
007	Masonry	Wall	5.10	-	-

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

- 4.2 Several walls and drainage features were identified within the trench.
- 4.3 Contexts (002) and (004) may represent the remains of foundation walls belonging to earlier buildings.
- 4.4 Water collector (001) and drain (003) had fallen into disuse (probably when the extension to the main house was built) and lay buried under the bricks of the courtyard.
- 4.5 Walls (005) and (007) represent two different phases of the main building with (007) possibly representing the earliest phase.
- 4.6 Foundation wall (006) was visible in almost the whole section and jutted out by about 0.08m under the walls of the main building (005) and (007).

5.0 THE FIND

5.1 The metalwork by Trista Clifford

- 5.1.1 Within context (003) a fixed pulley consisting of an iron bracket enclosing a copper alloy wheel was recovered. Mineral preserved organics on the reverse of the bracket suggest that it was attached to a wooden rather than masonry structural element. The presence of screws rather than iron nails suggests a modern date.
- 5.1.2 Its modern date could correspond to the date of the extension of the house which is early 20th century. Further analysis would be required in order to confirm this hypothesis.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Archaeological recording of a trench along the north-western wall of the main building exposed the foundations of previous buildings as well as a water collector and drain that fell out of use when an extension was added to the house.
- 6.2 Walls (002) and (004) appear to be the oldest features in the trench and could represent the remains of foundations belonging to earlier buildings. No detailed plan could however be matched and the walls could not be identified with any certainty.
- 6.3 The water collector (001) had fallen into disuse and was covered by the bricks of the courtyard. It was abutting the foundation wall of the main building (006) and was adjacent to another possible building extension visible because of the straight joint that came down the wall.
- 6.4 The drain (003) was also abutting the foundation wall of the main building (006) and probably fell into disuse when the house was extended. It was then covered by the bricks of the courtyard.
- 6.5 The wall of the main building consisted of foundation wall (006), that jutted out about 0.08m under the original wall (007) made of bricks on the eastern side and the extension wall (005) made of stone on the western side.
- 6.6 One single find was retrieved from context (003) and was identified as being a fixed pulley (see 5.1 above).
- 6.7 Several modern features consisting of modern drains and pipes had been added to walls (005) and (007) of the main building. As truncation was thus quite extensive, it was difficult to interpret the other remains and set them in their original context.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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HER Summary

Site Code	NYH17					
Identification Name and Address	Land at Nymans, Staplefield Lane, Handcross, West Sussex					
County, District &/or Borough	WestSussex					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 527000 129000					
Geology	-					
Arch. South-East Project Number	170647					
Type of Fieldwork	Watching Brief			Recording		
Type of Site				Other Residential		
Dates of Fieldwork	26 th of June 2017					
Sponsor/Client	National Trust					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Odile Rouard					
Period Summary	Post-Medieval					
<p>Summary</p> <p>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by the National Trust to record deposits and masonry uncovered during groundworks at Nymans, Staplefield Lane, Handcross, West Sussex (centred on NGR 527000 129000).</p> <p>The work was undertaken on the 26th of June 2017. All features within the drainage trench were recorded and this report contains the photographic, written and drawn record of the trench and masonry exposed within it.</p> <p>Two walls, possibly belonging to earlier buildings were identified as well as a water collector, a drain and the existing foundation wall which was exposed at the bottom of the trench.</p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-289151

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Nymans, Staplefield Lane, Handcross, West Sussex
Short description of the project	<p>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by the National Trust to record deposits and masonry uncovered during groundworks at Nymans, Staplefield Lane, Handcross, West Sussex (centred on NGR 527000 129000).</p> <p>The work was undertaken on the 26th of June 2017. All features within the drainage trench were recorded and this report contains the photographic, written and drawn record of the trench and masonry exposed within it.</p> <p>Two walls, possibly belonging to earlier buildings were identified as well as a water collector, a drain and the existing foundation wall which was exposed at the bottom of the trench.</p>
Project dates	Start: 26-06-2017 End: 26-06-2017
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	NYH17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	HOUSE AND GARDEN Post Medieval
Significant Finds	PULLEY Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	WEST SUSSEX MID SUSSEX ANSTY AND STAPLEFIELD Nymans
Postcode	RH176EB
Study area	10 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 527000 129000 50.894787136295 0.171565275307 50 53 41 N 000 10 17 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 10m Max: 11m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	National Trust
Project design originator	National Trust
Project	Neil Griffin

director/manager

Project supervisor Odile Rouard

Type of sponsor/funding body National Trust

Name of sponsor/funding body National Trust

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Crawley Museum

Physical Contents "Metal"

Digital Archive recipient Crawley Museum

Digital Contents "Metal","Stratigraphic"

Digital Media available "Database","Images raster / digital photography","Text"

Paper Archive recipient Crawley Museum

Paper Contents "Stratigraphic"

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

Project bibliography 1

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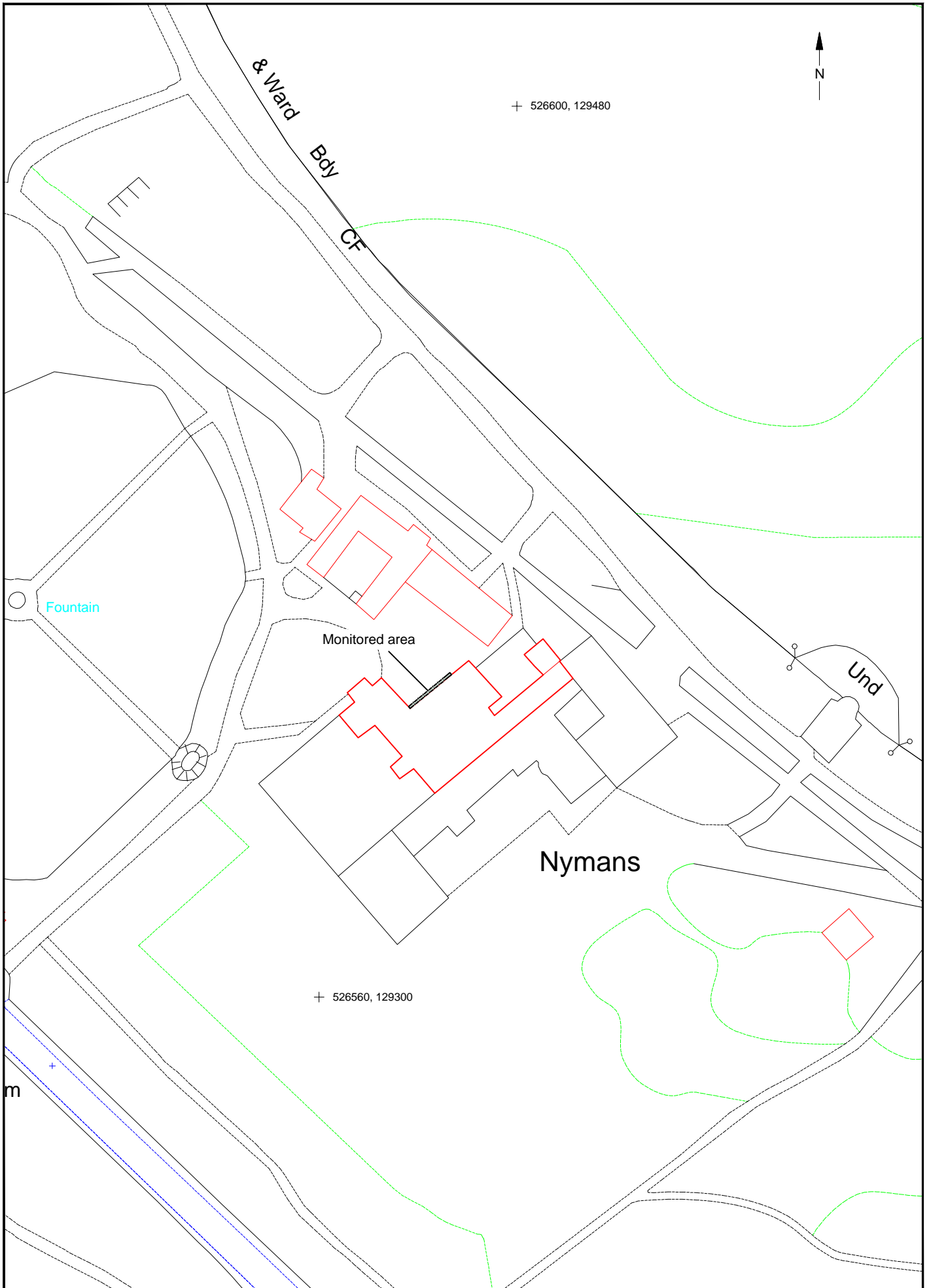
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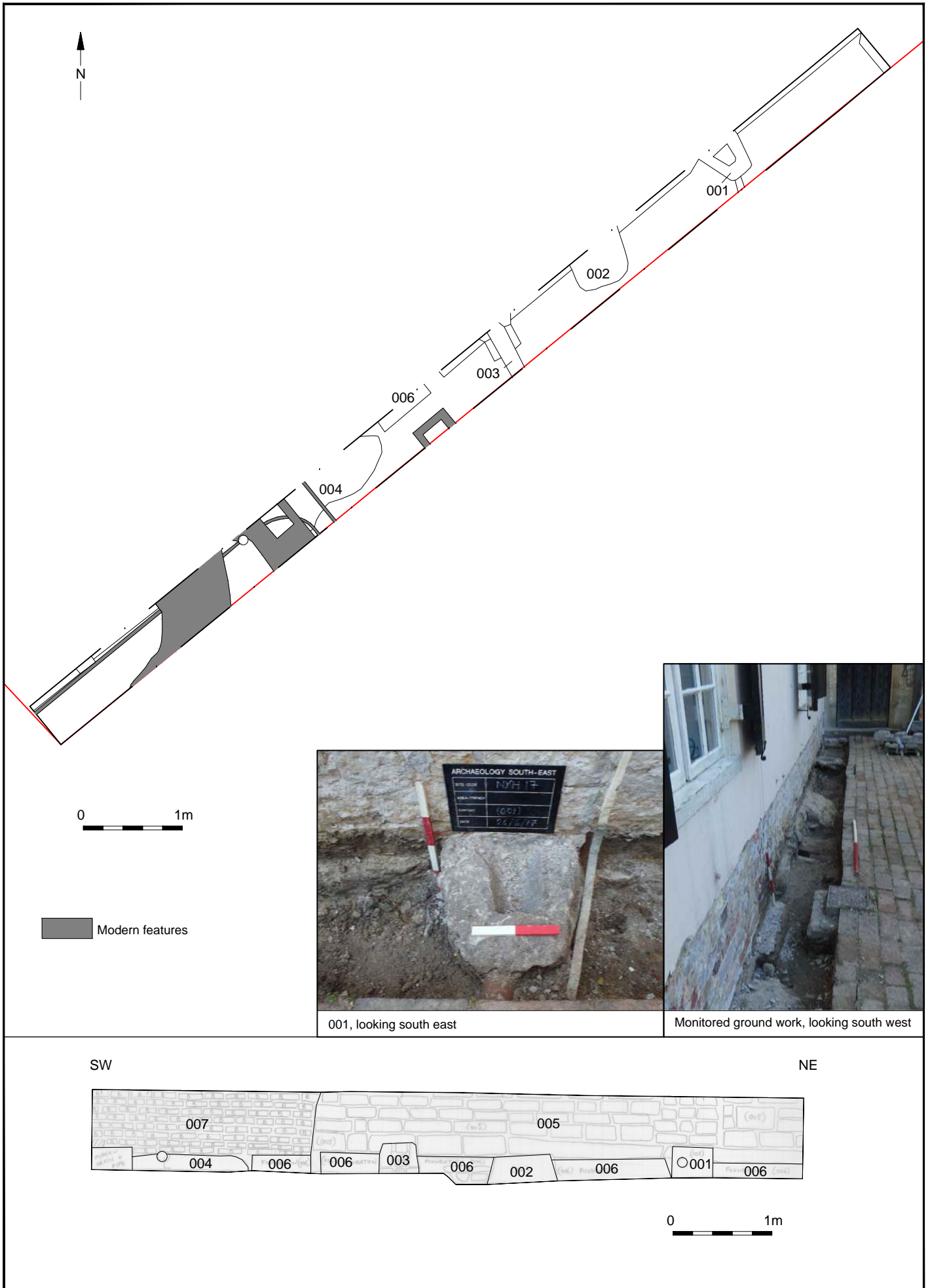
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© Archaeology South-East		Nymans, Staplefield Lane, Handcross, West Sussex	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 170647	July 2017	Site location	
Report Ref: 2017298	Drawn by: AR		



© Archaeology South-East		Nymans, Staplefield Lane, Handcross, West Sussex	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 170647	July 2017	Location of monitored area	
Report Ref: 2017298	Drawn by: AR		



© Archaeology South-East		Nymans, Staplefield Lane, Handcross, West Sussex	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 170647	July 2017	Monitored area, plan, section and photographs	
Report Ref: 2017298	Drawn by: AR		

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