

**An Archaeological Evaluation at Sissinghurst Castle, Sissinghurst, Kent.**

**NGR 580702 138296**

**Project No:3474  
Site Code: SIS08**

**ASE Report No. 2008091  
OASIS id: archaeol6-44063**

**Sarah Porteus  
With contributions by  
Elke Raemen and Gemma Driver**

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**Archaeology South-East  
Units 1 & 2  
2 Chapel Place  
Portslade  
East Sussex  
BN41 1DR**

**Tel: 01273 426830  
Fax: 01273 420866  
Email: [fau@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)**

Abstract

This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken at Sissinghurst Castle. Two trenches, measuring 6.5m by 1.2 metres and 5m by 1.2 m, were excavated on the lawn opposite Castle Farmhouse, in advance of the installation of LPG storage tanks. A single demolition deposit dating from the 20<sup>th</sup> century was identified in Trench 2 and a deposit possibly dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century identified in Trench 1. No evidence was found for buildings depicted in 18<sup>th</sup> century illustrations of the site. No significant archaeological features or deposits were identified. Undisturbed natural geology (Tunbridge Wells Sand) was encountered at 0.3m-0.5m below the present ground surface.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology (UCLCAA), undertook an archaeological evaluation at Sissinghurst Castle, Sissinghurst, Kent (NGR 580702 138296), henceforth known as the site (Fig. 1), on behalf of the National Trust.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 The site lies on Tunbridge Wells Sand (BSG Sheet 304). The site was located in an area of lawn.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 The works were undertaken in advance of the installation of two in-ground LPG storage tanks. The National Trust Territory Archaeologist stipulated that evaluation trenches should be excavated in the footprint of the proposed gas tanks, to establish whether any archaeological features, finds, or deposits would be damaged or destroyed during installation works. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by ASE and approved by the National Trust's, Territory Archaeologist (ASE 2008).

### **1.4 Scope of Report**

1.5.1 This report represents the findings from the excavation of the evaluation trenches based upon the evidence recorded by Sarah Porteus (Archaeologist, ASE) and John Woodall (Assistant Archaeologist, ASE). The work was undertaken on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2008

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** The archaeological background to the site was detailed in the WSI (ASE 2008) and is summarised below.
- 2.2** The site lies within the grounds of Sissinghurst Castle and Gardens. The existing listed buildings on site, believed to date from around the 16<sup>th</sup> century, were restored and developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is thought that a moated manor house dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, demolished in 1490, was replaced by a Tudor mansion (Nicholson 1999).
- 2.3** Geophysical resistivity and magnetometer surveys were undertaken in the Orchard, Tower Lawn and Courtyard in 1991 and showed weak anomalies which appeared to coincide with the location of an Elizabethan house (Bartlett 1991).
- 2.4** Probable demolition deposits were identified during a watching brief undertaken close to the present site. Broken tile fragments may have been related to a smaller building identified on an engraving of 1760 and an 18<sup>th</sup> century prisoners drawing (Johnson 2001)

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Aims and Objectives**

##### **3.1.1** The WSI (ASE 2008) outlined the aims and objectives for the evaluation:

The overall aim of the evaluation was to:

- Ascertain the character, quality, and degree of survival of archaeological remains on the site and the potential impact of development upon them and to record all archaeological features that will be impacted by the scheme.

The specific objective of the evaluation was to:

- Ascertain whether there is any evidence of structural remains associated with the structures depicted on 18<sup>th</sup> century illustrations in front of the west entrance range of Sissinghurst Castle.

**3.2** The central point of each end of two trenches were marked out by National Trust staff. These trenches were then located in relation to fixed points by ASE staff. Both trenches were positioned close to the hedgerow on the lawn opposite Castle Farmhouse (Fig. 2).

**3.3** Each trench was scanned using a CAT scanner to identify any buried services prior to the commencement of excavation. None were present.

**3.4** Each trench was de-turfed by hand and the turf then stored to the side of the trench and reinstated following completion of the work. Advice from the National Trust gardeners was sought during this process.

**3.5** Following the removal of turf, the trenches were excavated mechanically using a 5-ton mini-excavator, equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Excavation was undertaken in spits of no more than 0.20m to the top of the underlying natural substrate, or to the top of archaeological deposits, whichever was higher.

**3.6** The trenches were levelled relative to a Temporary Bench Mark (TBM) established on site because the Bench Mark in the vicinity of the site was inaccessible. The TBM was located on a water valve cover and was given an arbitrary value of 0.0m

**3.7** Spoil heaps and trench bases were scanned using a metal detector and by eye, for unstratified artefacts.

**3.8** All deposits were recorded using ASE standard context sheets, with colours recorded using visual inspection and not using the Munsell Colour chart. Each trench was recorded on plastic drawing film at a scale of 1:50.

**3.9** Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately on plastic sheeting to the side of the trench to prevent damage to the lawn surface.

**3.10** On completion of the excavation backfilling and compaction was undertaken

by machine with the turf re-laid by hand.

Number of Contexts	7
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	1
Bulk Samples	0
Photographs	27 Digital shots, Slide, Film
Bulk finds	1 box
Registered finds	14
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

## 4.0 RESULTS

**4.1** Both trenches were located in the grassed lawn area, close to the hedgerow opposite Castle Farmhouse, in the footprint of proposed LPG tanks. Trench 1 measured 6.5m by 1.2m and ran in a west east direction, Trench 2 measured 5m by 1.2m and also ran in a west east direction parallel with the hedge.

### 4.2 Trench 1 (Figs 3-5)

#### 4.2.1 List of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Deposit Depth	Depth below surface level
1/001	Deposit	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.07m	0m
1/002	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	0.30m
1/003	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.23m	0.07m

#### 4.2.2 Summary

Natural geology, comprising firm yellow clayey Tunbridge Wells sand, [1/002], was encountered at a depth of 0.30 metres below surface level. Overlying this at 0.07 metres below surface level, was a subsoil deposit of 0.23m thickness comprising a friable mid orange yellow silty clay, [1/003], which contained occasional CBM, animal bone and glass. This deposit was in turn overlain by a topsoil deposit [1/001] measuring 0.07 metres in thickness and comprising a loose mid grey brown clayey silt with occasional CBM, slag and modern metal inclusions. No archaeological features were present.

### 4.3 Trench 2 (Figs 3-7)

#### 4.3.1 List of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Deposit Depth	Depth below surface level
2/001	Deposit	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.10m	0m
2/002	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	0.45m
2/003	Deposit	Demolition deposit	Tr.	Tr.	0.22m	0.10m
2/004	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.20m	0.25m

#### 4.3.2 Summary

Natural geology, comprising firm yellow clayey Tunbridge Wells sand, [2/002], was encountered at a depth of 0.45m below surface level. Overlying this deposit, at 0.25m below ground surface, was a mid orange yellow silty



clay subsoil, [2/004], 0.20 metres thick, containing occasional CBM fragments. Overlying this, at 0.10m below surface level, was a mid blackish grey sandy silt demolition deposit, [2/003], measuring 0.22m thick and containing moderate amounts of CBM, glass, metal and occasional modern plastics and builders rubbish. Overlying context [2/003] was 0.10m of topsoil, [2/001], comprising a loose mid greyish brown clayey silt with occasional CBM, slag and modern metal inclusions. No archaeological features were present.

**5.0 THE FINDS** by Elke Raemen

**5.1** All pottery, glass and animal bone were washed and marked with the appropriate site code and context. Ceramic and other building material will be identified, counted weighed and discarded.

**5.2** Ceramic and faunal finds were identified by specialists within ASE.

**5.3** A small assemblage of finds was recovered from the evaluation. A summary can be found in Table 2.

Context	Pot	wt (g)	CBM	wt (g)	Bone	wt (g)	Stone	wt (g)	Fe	wt (g)	Glass	wt (g)	CT P	wt (g)
U/S											1	400		
1/003	4	68	15	2068	4	276	1	<2			2	14	1	<2
2/001	1	4	9	410	4	10			5	54	7	250		
2/003	3	36	5	430					6	214	2	128		

Table 2. Finds Quantification

**5.4** In addition, a total of 14 finds have been assigned an individual Registered Finds number (RF <00>). These objects are tabulated below.

CONTEXT	RF No	OBJECT	MATERIAL	WT (G)	PERIOD
1/003	1	KNIF	IRON	50	PMED
1/003	2	UNK	IRON	26	PMED
1/003	3	TOOL	IRON	14	PMED
2/003	4	LID	IRON	4	PMED
2/003	5	TOOL	IRON	378	PMED
2/001	6	COIN	COPP	12	PMED
2/003	7	MINI	CERA	14	PMED
2/001	8	WIRE	IRON	10	PMED
2/001	9	BOLT	IRON	96	PMED
2/001	10	TOOL	IRON	10	PMED
2/001	11	BOLT	IRON	30	PMED
2/001	12	STAP	IRON	4	PMED
2/001	13	KEYH	COPP	13	PMED
1/003	14	MINI	CERA		PMED

Table 3. The registered finds.

**5.5 The Pottery**

**5.5.1** Three contexts contained pottery, most of which dates to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Included are sherds of white china, [1/003], blue, green and black transfer printed china [2/003] and [1/003] and glazed red earthenware [1/003]. A china handle fragment was produced as well [2/003]. An oxidised sherd in a fine sand-tempered fabric with black ?organic inclusions is of uncertain date [2/001].

**5.5.2** In addition, the site produced two miniature pieces, probably for doll houses.

Context [2/003] contained a miniature china jug with painted yellow decoration, (RF <7>), and a miniature white china lid, (RF <14>), was recovered from [1/003].

## **5.6 Ceramic Building Material**

5.6.1 All ceramic building material (CBM) is of 19<sup>th</sup>- to early 20<sup>th</sup>- century date. The five peg tiles from [2/003] are slightly earlier and date to the mid 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. A total of 23 roof tile fragments was recovered from three different contexts, [1/003], [2/001] and [2/003]. Most of these are high fired and in a sparse fine sand-tempered fabric with occasional iron oxide inclusions to 2 mm. Four tiles from [2/003] contain additional occasional chalk inclusions to 4 mm. Three fragments, [1/003], [2/001] and [2/003] exhibit a diamond-shaped peg hole.

5.6.2 Context [1/003] contained five brick fragments, one of which measuring 64mm high and 99mm wide. All pieces are high fired with sparse fine sand-tempering and occasional iron oxide inclusions to 3mm.

5.6.3 A single land drain fragment in a high fired sparse fine sand-tempered fabric with occasional iron oxide inclusions was recovered from [1/003].

## **5.7 Glass**

5.7.1 The earliest piece of glass on site consists of an unstratified green glass wine bottle fragment of 18<sup>th</sup>-century date. Wine bottle fragments were also recovered from [1/003] and [2/003]. All are of 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century date. A clear glass small bottle with the words "AMAMI WAVE SET" embossed on the body has been recovered from [2/001]. The bottle would have contained women's hair product for waves and curls, which was common during the 1940s to 1960s.

5.7.2 A clear glass jar fragment of 20<sup>th</sup>-century date was recovered from [2/003], as well as a clear glass dried flower holder.

5.7.3 In addition, a single clear glass vessel/sphere fragment with crudely finished rim/edge and of unknown function was recovered from [1/003].

## **5.8 Metalwork**

5.8.1 Metalwork is all of 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century date. Ten iron general purpose nails were recovered from two different contexts [2/001] and [2/003]. A single cast iron sheet fragment, probably from a brazier or fire grate, was recovered from [2/003]. Other ironwork includes a possible penknife fragment (RF <1>), a possible sugar crusher fragment (RF <3>), two bolts (RF <9> and <11>), a U-staple (RF <12>) and a rod handle from a (cranking) tool (RF <5>).

5.8.2 The only copper alloy piece recovered from the site consists of a 20<sup>th</sup> century lock plate (RF <13>).

## **5.9 Other Finds**

5.9.1 A single coal fragment was recovered from [1/003]. The same context also produced a plain clay tobacco pipe (CTP) stem fragment of 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

Context [2/001] contained a florin dating to 1948 (RF <6>).

## **5.10 Animal Bone** by Gemma Driver

5.10.1 A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from two contexts. The bone is in a good condition with little surface weathering. Context [1/003] contains four fragments of bone including the shaft from a cattle femur. The shaft has been sawn in half and one fragment displays a large, horizontal cut mark. The context also produced two fragments of cattle sized pelvis. Context [2/001] contains four rib fragments, three of which are cattle sized and one of which is sheep sized. A fragment of cattle sized rib has been sawn off at one end.

## **5.11 Potential**

5.11.1 The assemblage has no potential for further analysis. No further work is required.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION**

- 6.1** The probable demolition deposit, [2/003], identified in Trench 2, appears to be modern in date and may relate to a phase of redevelopment work undertaken in one of the neighbouring buildings, close to the trench. The finds collected from this deposit are mostly consistent with household items from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This deposit appears to have been spread across the open area.
- 6.2** The subsoil deposit present in both trenches, (contexts [1/003] and [2/004]), contained small amounts of CBM and glass with some cut cattle bones in Trench 1. The finds are of a post medieval date and are indicative of a general domestic assemblage accumulated over time, probably originating from the nearby buildings. Another possibility is that the subsoil deposit was created during levelling work for the adjacent roadway causing the CBM and other material to become incorporated into redeposited natural subsoil.
- 6.3** No archaeological features were identified in either trench with the natural Tunbridge Wells undisturbed subsoil occurring between 0.30m and 0.45m below the current ground surface.

**7.0 CONCLUSION**

**7.1** The general aim of the evaluation, as outlined in the WSI has been fulfilled. It has been possible to indicate that there are no archaeological features present. There is unlikely to be the result of truncation of the archaeological horizon, which appeared undisturbed.

**7.2** Regarding the specific objective outlined in the WSI, no evidence was found to relate any of the deposits with buildings identified on the 18<sup>th</sup> century illustrations. It is most likely that the location of the current site occupies ground previously in use as an open space.

**7.3** It is therefore unlikely that the insertion of LPG tanks in this location will impact upon archaeological remains.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Johnson, C. 2001. *Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at Sissinghurst Castle Gardens, Sissinghurst, Kent*. ASE Project Report No. 1288

Nicholson, N., 1990 *Sissinghurst Castle: An Illustrated History*. National Trust 1999.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The co-operation and assistance of National Trust staff is greatly appreciated.

**SMR Summary Form**

Site Code	SIS08					
Identification Name and Address	Sissinghurst Castle, Sissinghurst					
County, District &/or Borough	Kent					
OS Grid Refs.	580702 138296					
Geology	Tunbridge wells sand					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3474					
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. 21 <sup>st</sup> -22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2008	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	The National Trust					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Sarah Porteus					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other Modern ✓		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p>Two evaluation trenches measuring 6.5metres and 5 metres in length were excavated in the lawn in front of Sissinghurst Castle in advance of the insertion of LPG tanks. A modern demolition deposit was uncovered in one trench. A post medieval deposit was present above the natural in both trenches possibly relating tot the road levelling. No other features or deposits were present. No evidence was found for buildings shown on 18<sup>th</sup> century maps.</p>						



OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-44063**

**Project details**

Project name	an Evaluation at Sissinghurst Castle
Short description of the project	This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken at Sissinghurst Castle. Two trenches measuring 6.5 metres by 1.2 metres and 5 metres by 1.2 metres were excavated on the lawn opposite Castle Farmhouse, in preparation for the installation of LPG storage tanks. A single demolition deposit dating from the 20th century was identified in trench 2 a deposit possibly dating to the 18th century identified in trench 1. No evidence was found for buildings depicted in 18th century illustrations of the site. No significant archaeological features or deposits were identified with undisturbed natural soil being encountered at 0.3 to 0.5 metres below the present ground surface.
Project dates	Start: 21-05-2008 End: 22-05-2008
Previous/future work	Not known / No
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	National Trust land
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Insertion of LPG tanks
Prompt	Close to listed buildings on National Trust Land
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

**Project location**

Country	England
Site location	KENT TUNBRIDGE WELLS CRANBROOK Sissinghurst Castle

Postcode	TN17 2AB
Study area	12.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 580702 138296 50.9016920568 0.248276281289 50 54 06 N 000 14 53 E Point

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### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
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Project brief originator	National Trust
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Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
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Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
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Project supervisor	Sarah Porteus
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Type of sponsor/funding body	National Trust
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Name of sponsor/funding body	National Trust
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### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
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Physical Archive recipient	n/a
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Digital Archive recipient	National Trust
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Digital Contents	'other'
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Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	National Trust
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Drawing','Unpublished Text'

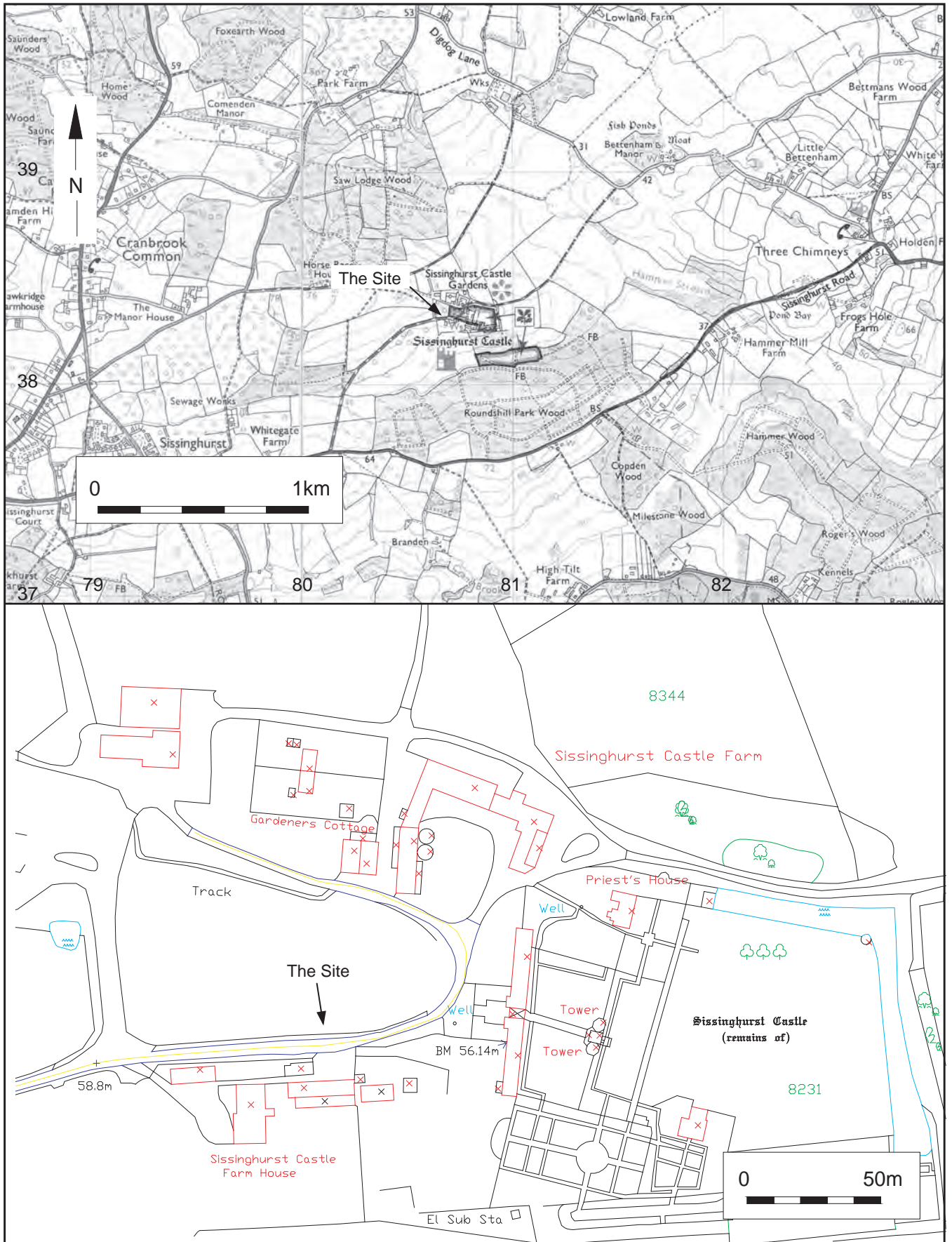
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Entered by	Sarah Porteus (s.porteus@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	17 June 2008

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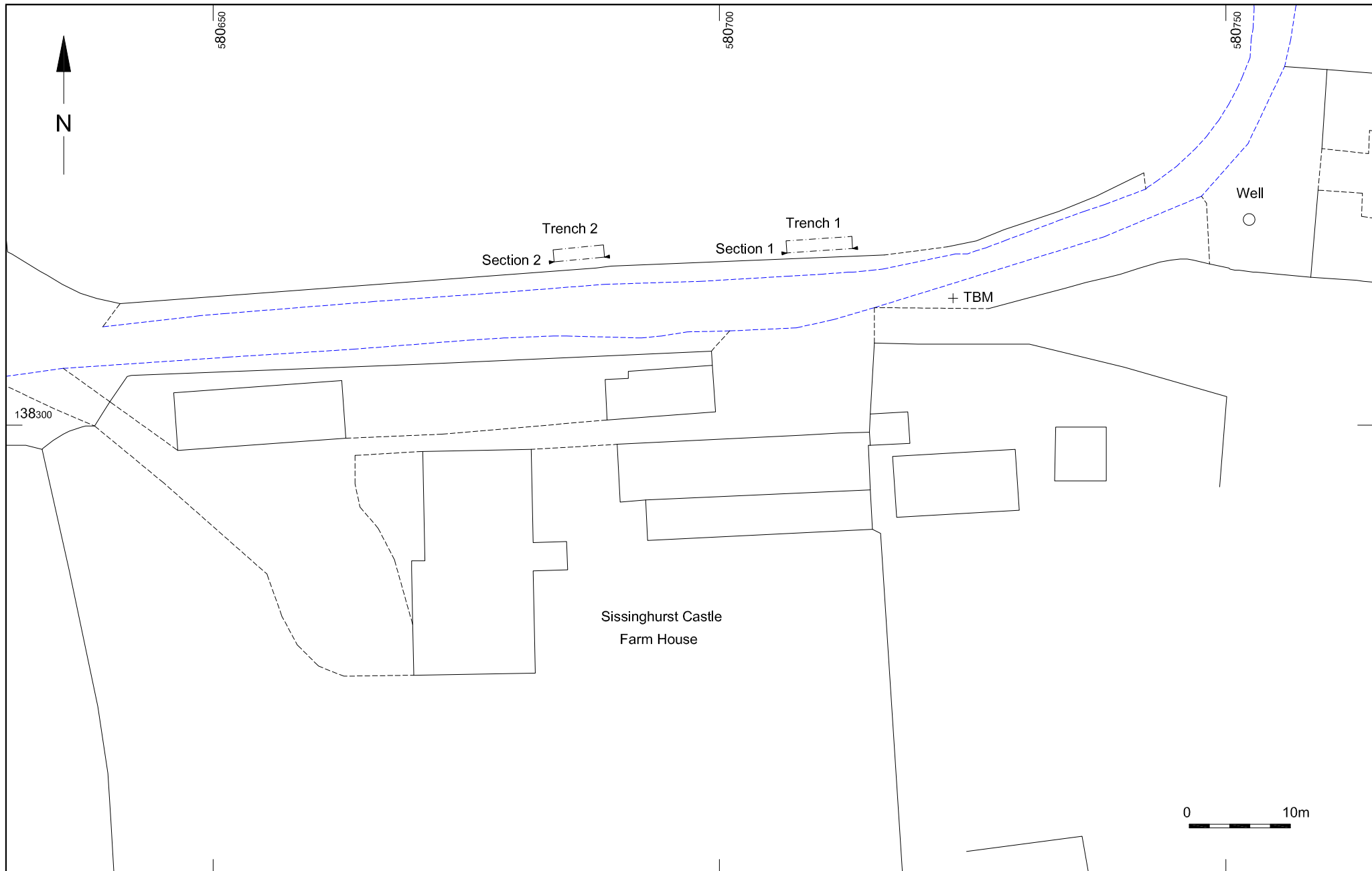
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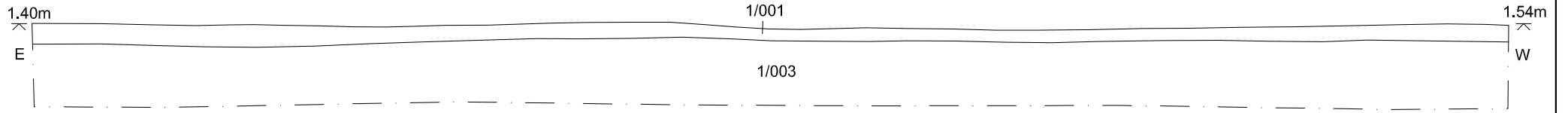
<b>Archaeology South-East</b>		Sissinghurst Castle	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 3474	June 2008	Site Location Plan	
Report Ref: 2008091	Drawn by: JLR		

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© Archaeology South-East		Sissinghurst Castle	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 3474	June 2008	Trench location	
Report Ref: 2008091	Drawn by: JLR		

Trench 1 Section



Trench 2 Section

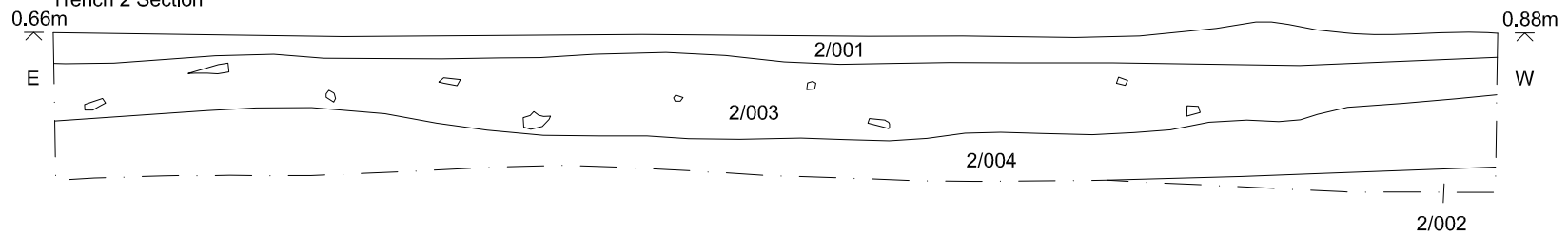






Fig. 4: Trench 1



Fig. 5: Section of Trench 1

<b>Archaeology South-East</b>		Sissinghurst Castle	Figs. 4 & 5
Project Ref: 3474	June 2008	-	
Report Ref: 2008091	Drawn by: JLR		



Fig. 6: Trench 2



Fig. 7: Section of Trench 2

<b>Archaeology South-East</b>		Sissinghurst Castle	Figs. 6 & 7
Project Ref: 3474	June 2008	-	
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