

**GARDEN STRUCTURE TO THE REAR OF SCHOOL HILL HOUSE,
HIGH STREET, LEWES**

(NGR TQ 4166 1005)

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING



**Commissioned by
Ian Ford on behalf of Southern Housing Group**

Report No. 2008112

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Project No. 2984
Report No. 2008112

July 2008

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ABSTRACT

In July 2008 Archaeology South-East (ASE) (a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, UCL) carried out a programme of historic building recording of a garden structure on land to the rear of School Hill House, High Street, Lewes. The structure was the subject of an earlier assessment (Martin and Greig 2003) undertaken in an attempt to clarify whether the building could accurately be described as an ice house, as it had been referred to in previous documents. The assessment concluded that it was unlikely to have been constructed or used as such.

The building forms two distinct, but inter-linked structural elements, representing two different phases of construction. The basic function of the building seems to have been to allow passage between formal and domestic garden areas, but the degree of embellishment that has been afforded it suggests that it also served as a garden feature, popular in high status 18th/19th century gardens.

A sub-surface chamber was added in the later part of the 19th century and is most likely related to a greenhouse shown adjacent to it on a 19th century Ordnance Survey map. It may have served a function related to the heating of the greenhouse, such as a coal store, while the cool, dark nature of the structure would have been well suited to the storage of bulbs or other roots. It is conveniently located between two main garden areas so may also have served as a store for tools.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In July 2008 Archaeology South-East (ASE) (a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, UCL) carried out a programme of historic building recording of a garden structure on land to the rear of School Hill House, High Street, Lewes (Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Ian Ford on behalf of Southern Housing Group.
- 1.2 The structure has been subject to a previous assessment by ASE (Martin and Greig 2003; Appendix 1) which was undertaken in order to confirm, if possible, whether the building could accurately be described as an ice house (as it has been described in various documents), and to make recommendations for its future management. A desk-based assessment has also previously been carried out for the site (Greatorex 1999).

2.0 SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

The aim of the project was to create a full record of the structure and to attempt a fuller understanding of its purpose. The site was visited by Amy Williamson and Maggie Henderson on 14th and 15th July 2008 in order to compile the description of the building and undertake the drawing and photographic work. A full drawn record comprising a plan, sections and elevations was created and is included in the report as (Figs 4-6). The photographic record was made using traditional 35mm black and white, and colour slide photography in addition to digital photography. A full catalogue of the photography is included in the archive, whilst a selection of the digital photographs are reproduced as plates to illustrate the report, together with location plots (Fig. 7).

3.0 THE SITE

- 3.1 The site is located within the former garden of School Hill House which is situated on High Street, Lewes (Fig. 2). School Hill House is Grade II* listed (Appendix 1.1) and described as having an early-mid 18th century façade with a possible late 17th century core. Its former gardens extend southwards down to the rear of properties located on Lansdown Place which follows the course of the old town wall. The gardens are bounded on the west side by a narrow lane and on the east by Church Twitten (formerly known as Church Lane), both of which extend between High Street and Lansdown Place. The gardens are enclosed by high flint and brick walls which are Grade II listed, although the east wall is listed separately as part of the walls of Church Twitten (Appendix 1.2). The garden is subdivided into two roughly equal areas by a high flint wall. The 1874 Ordnance Survey map of Lewes (Fig. 3) shows that this wall formed a clear division between the formal garden to the north, and the domestic garden to the south.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE STRUCTURE

The structure is located on the north side of the garden partition wall, in the angle created between it and the west wall of Church Twitten. It lies beneath an artificial mound of earth, effectively making it a below-ground structure. It comprises two distinct, but interlinked parts: a small, relatively ornate vestibule which is entered from a doorway in Church Twitten and which has doors leading to the north and south areas of the garden, and a less elaborate chamber which adjoins the vestibule on its west side (Figs 4 and 5).

4.1 Exterior

- 4.1.1 Owing to the sub-surface nature of the structure only a limited amount of wall fabric is visible from the exterior, namely the entrance from Church Twitten, the entrance from the north garden area, and the entrance on the south face which is located within the garden dividing wall (Fig. 6). The doorway from Church Twitten forms the principal entrance to the structure (Plate 1). At this point the boundary wall is broken by a small parapet defined by brick quoining to the north corner and limestone and brick quoining to the south. To either side of this the wall has been raised above its original height so that it is now level with the parapet which stands at c. 3.5m. The wall is formed of roughly coursed flint with brick bands (Plate 2). The bricks are orange, relatively creased and appear 18th century in date. They measure on average 215-225mm x 100-105mm x 55-60mm (8½-8¾" x 4" x 2¼"). The mortar joints measure up to 15mm/½", although the original mortar is rather indistinct as this area has been repointed in hard cement with scored lines. The doorway (Plate 3) is dressed with limestone and has moulded jambs and a four-centred arched head. It has been suggested (Lewes District Council, as cited in Martin and Greig 2003, 13) that this masonry (together with two other doors in the structure) has been reused from Lewes Priory. The door itself is framed, boarded, ledged and braced and is of 20th century date (Plate 4).
- 4.1.2 The doorway on the north side of the structure is reached by a series of eight steps leading down from the north garden (Plate 5). It has a similar four-centred arched head in limestone, but contains no door (Plate 6). The doorway is framed by a small parapet constructed of roughly coursed flint bedded in a cement mortar. The east end of this wall incorporates a few early orange bricks some of which are slightly over-fired, are very creased and appear hand-made; they measure on average 220mm x 120 mm x 50mm (8½" x 4¾" x 2"). The west end has brick quoining in 19th/20th century orange brickwork. The steps are rendered in cement and have a retaining wall on either side. The retaining walls abut the flint wall and appear to post-date it; especially since the west wall also partially obscures the west jamb of the ornate doorway. The west retaining wall is constructed of orange brickwork including some over-fired bricks laid in Flemish bond in a cement mortar (Plate 7). The bricks are relatively creased and measure 220mm x 100mm x 55mm (8½" x 4" x 2¼"). On this side there is also an iron hand rail and decorative iron stanchion (Plate 8). The brickwork of the east retaining wall is of a slightly

different fabric, although the brick dimensions are very similar. The bricks are orange with a pink-purple hue, with some over-fired headers, are slightly creasy and some have horizontal skintles (Plate 9). They are laid in a variable bonding pattern.

- 4.1.3 The south doorway is located within the wall dividing the two garden areas. This wall is constructed in roughly coursed flint with a few limestone quoins just visible at the east end. There are no brick dressings, although a few ?18th century bricks are included within the fabric towards the west end. The wall fabric is partially obscured with vegetation (Plate 10), the only visible features being located towards the east end where there is the door into the structure and a small blocked aperture adjacent to its west (Plate 11). The doorway is similar to the previous two in that it is dressed with limestone, but is simpler, having a round-arched head and only a simple chamfer to the opening (Plate 12). The blocked aperture measures c. 1.3m by 0.9m and appears to be a later insertion (Plate 13). It is now infilled with late 19th/20th century orange-red brick. A cast iron rainwater hopper and down-pipe are attached to the wall at this point.

4.2 Interior

- 4.2.1 From the twitten, there is a small step down into the vestibule. The vestibule is aligned approximately north to south (Plates 14 and 15) and is ceiled by a segmental arched vault, which together with the walls is covered with ashlar-lined cement render (Plate 16). The walls are further embellished by small chamfers to all apertures. The floor is of brick (Plate 17).
- 4.2.2 Doors to the north and south (described in Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3) lead into the gardens on either side. The west wall of the vestibule contains a doorway to the chamber (Plate 18) and adjacent to its north, a round-arched blind window aperture (Plate 19). A small test hole was inserted within the recessed face of the blind window to determine whether a second chamber existed behind. It revealed a single skin of hand-made orange bricks measuring 50mm/2" thick x 110mm/4¼" in depth (length undetermined) laid in a crumbly mortar (Plate 20), behind which there is limestone rubble bedded in a similar mortar. It was not possible to extend the test hole any further than a depth of c. 200mm owing to the presence of large limestone blocks, and it is not absolutely clear whether the limestone rubble represents the core of the wall, which is properly faced on the reverse side or whether it forms the backfill of a construction cut which would indicate that the structure post-dates the mound.
- 4.2.3 The doorway into the chamber is surrounded on its east face by a pegged wooden door-frame, although its 20th century framed, boarded, ledged and braced door has been detached from the frame, but remains within the structure. The aperture has a round-arched head and is rendered as the rest of the vestibule, although some of the render has been removed from the north jamb revealing orange bricks of the same dimensions as those seen within the test hole (Plate 21). Through the doorway, four steps lead down

into the chamber (Plate 22). The chamber is aligned approximately east to west and is divided into two unequal sections by a brick wall. The south and north walls of the chamber differ in their construction, suggesting that they represent two phases of construction. The south wall is constructed of coursed limestone/clunch rubble, with a band of orange brick five courses high; the bricks measure 220mm x 110mm x 65mm (8½" x 4¼" x 2½") (Plate 23). At the east end of this wall is a segment-headed aperture formed of similar brickwork (Plate 24). The brick arch does not extend the full depth of the wall, but does roughly coincide with the smaller blocked aperture seen from the exterior which is offset slightly to the east. The smaller aperture has clearly been inserted into the wall and has been finished with a hard cement render. The infilling is of orange-red brickwork of late 19th/20th century date, average dimensions 230mm x 115mm x 65mm (9" x 4½" x 2½"). At the lower level (below the exterior ground level) is a smaller opening, also now infilled with similar brickwork (Plate 25). At this point the south and wall appears to be of two phases, although it is not clear which is the earlier it is probably the case that flint wall (south face) is the earlier of the two and that the limestone/brick (north face) represents a later re-facing.

- 4.2.4 The west return wall of the chamber is similarly constructed, having a limestone and flint rubble panel above orange brickwork (Plate 26). There is also quoining in orange brickwork in the south-west corner. It was not possible to examine this wall closely as the floor within the west section of the chamber had a substantial covering of debris. However, the brickwork at the north end of this wall appears to be slightly different, seemingly matching that of the north wall.
- 4.2.5 The brickwork of the north wall is somewhat indistinct but is essentially orange in colour and is laid in a cement-based mortar in a variable bonding pattern. The bricks measure 220mm x 110mm x 65mm (8½" x 4¼" x 2½"). Also constructed in the same brickwork are: the west partition wall which incorporates two timber bearers – one at half height and one forming the lintel to the doorway (Plate 23); the roof over the chamber which is formed by a segmental barrel-vault; and a curved brick buttress supporting an area of limestone rubble to the south of the entrance to the chamber.
- 4.2.6 The brickwork at the east end of the north wall does not finish flush with the rear wall of the vestibule, but instead abuts an irregular area of limestone rubble, similar to that seen within the test hole in the blind aperture (Plate 27). This may suggest (together with the limestone rubble to the south of the entrance now supported by the brick buttress) that it represents the backfill of a construction cut, or even perhaps the remains of an associated structure pre-dating the chamber. A crack in the north wall at the junction of the two builds has been repaired with cement and is inscribed 'E. A. 1955' (Plate 28).
- 4.2.7 Two test pits were excavated into the top of the mound. Test Pit 1 was excavated over the end wall of the chamber to establish whether this represented the true end wall of the structure. A concrete slab was encountered on the east side of the test pit at a depth of c. 0.3m. This

appears to mark the end wall of the structure, beyond which no further structural remains were seen. Test Pit 2 was excavated to the west of the blind aperture, to establish whether a further chamber existed behind. The pit was excavated to a depth of 0.9m without encountering any structural remains. A road iron was inserted at the lowest point to establish whether a hard surface representing a ceiling was present below this depth, but no resistance was met.

5.0 INTERPRETATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.1 The building appears to represent two main phases of construction. The earliest element comprises the vestibule, which appears to be of the 18th or possibly early 19th century; although not enough of the internal wall fabric is visible to give a more accurate estimation of date. At a basic level it serves as a means of entrance to the garden from Church Twitten and a link between the two main garden areas. However, the degree of embellishment afforded to it elevates it above the level of a simple means of passage and suggests that it served as some sort of garden feature. One of the favourite pastimes of polite society of the 18th and 19th centuries was to take a tour of the garden, which was often enhanced by places to stop-off along the way. The garden circuit often included features such as gazebos where afternoon tea or after-dinner coffee could be enjoyed, places to stop and sit, or simply statues or structures that could be admired. As is seen within house interiors of the time, the doorways within the structure appear to be a reflection of social ideals, with the more elaborate four-centred arched doorways being reserved for use at the Church Twitten entrance and the entrance to formal garden area, whilst the simpler round-arched doorway leads south into the domestic garden to the south.
- 5.2 The barrel-vaulted chamber is a later 19th century addition and its construction is most likely related to the greenhouse which is shown on the south side of the wall on the 1874 map. The blocked aperture within the wall coincides with a small square feature which is shown on the map at the east end of the greenhouse, its most likely function being related to the heating of the greenhouse. The chamber may therefore have served as a store for coal, although no direct evidence for this was found. The chamber's sub-surface nature means that it is cool and dark, and well suited for the storage of bulbs or other roots. Being conveniently located between the two main garden areas, it may also have served as a tool store. In agreement with the earlier assessment (Martin and Greig 2003) it is thought highly unlikely that the structure was ever used as an ice house.
- 5.3 Some issues remain unclear, principally whether the mound covering the structure was created at the time the chamber was constructed or whether it pre-existed. If the mound is a later feature, the vestibule would originally have been a more visible feature within the garden and would presumably not need to have been accessed by several steps down. The retaining walls on either side of the steps appear to be a later addition, which suggests the steps and

therefore the mound might be later. If indeed it is later, then the door leading west into the chamber would presumably originally have led out into the garden again, continuing the garden circuit. However, during the survey it was not possible to ascertain whether the west wall of the vestibule was properly faced, and the irregular line of rubble seen in the north wall of the chamber at the junction of the two builds may represent a construction cut, which would indicate that the mound was pre-existing, or alternatively may represent the remains of a structure pre-dating the chamber. This might only be resolved by observation during demolition.

6.0 SOURCES CONSULTED

Greatorex, C. 1999 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of the Lewes House Site, High Street, Lewes, East Sussex*. Archaeology South-East

Martin, R. and Greig, I. M. 2003 (updated 2004) *An Assessment of a Structure to the rear of School Hill House, Lewes, East Sussex*. Archaeology South-East

Appendix 1 List Descriptions

Source: Listed Buildings Online

Web address: [http://lbonline.english-](http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk/BuildingDetailsForm.aspx?id=293125&search=y)

[heritage.org.uk/BuildingDetailsForm.aspx?id=293125&search=y](http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk/BuildingDetailsForm.aspx?id=293125&search=y)

Date accessed: 25th July 2008

1.1 School Hill House

Building Details:

Building Name: SCHOOL HILL
HOUSE 33

Parish: LEWES

District: LEWES

County: EAST SUSSEX

Postcode: BN7 2LU

Details:

LBS Number: 293125

Grade: II*

Date Listed: 25/02/1952

Date Delisted:

NGR: TQ4164610141

Listing Text:

TQ 4110 SE LEWES HIGH STREET
10/143 (south side)

25.2.52 No 55 (School Hill House)

GV II*

House, now offices and surgery. Early-mid C18 front to possibly late C17 core.

Grey headers with red brick quoins, dressings and moulded cornice bands over all

floors. Cornice and panelled parapet hiding roof with various stacks. 3

storeys; regular 5 window front, glazing bar cashes on all floors, all with

rendered triple keystones. Cut brick gauged heads to first floor windows, plain

gauged heads above. Doorway in place of second window from right. Eared

architrave surround with triangular pediment over; panelled door with transom-

light over. West front of red brick with grey headers with tall round-arched

stair-window. Garden-front of mathematical-tiles covered with render.

Interior: Hall: mid-C18 fielded panelling with early C18 moulded raised and

fielded panelling over, large eared fire-surround with reverse bolection moulding to rectangular central panel and moulded cornice-mantel.
Ground-floor rooms to School Hill: Raised and fielded early C18 panelling. Eared egg and dart decorated fire-surround with marble staff-moulded inset and variant Greek key frieze to cornice, very similar to fire-surround in No 103, High Street.
2-flight return stair with columns balusters without square knops, 3 per tread, stepped. Corniced tread-ends and carved cheek-pieces, Corinthian newels.
Ramped dado panelling and unramped flattish rail with ridge.
First-floor rooms now much altered but to rooms to School Hill have early C18 raised and fielded panelling and other rooms have early C19 panelling.
Ground floor room to rear has C18 inlaid marble flushwork fire-surround with pseudo-fluted pilasters. Back stairs with early C18 spiral balusters from first floor up.

Listing NGR: TQ4164810133

1.2 Church Twitten Walls

Building Details:

Building Name: WALLS ON EAST AND WEST SIDES
Parish: LEWES
District: LEWES
County: EAST SUSSEX
Postcode:

Details:

LBS Number: 293017
Grade: II
Date Listed: 24/01/1984
Date Delisted:
NGR: TQ4171510047

Listing Text:

TQ 4110 SE LEWES CHURCH TWITTEN
10/38
Walls on east and west sides
24.6.84
GV II

Walls. Probably C18, much repaired since. Flint with red and blue brick bands and brick parapet of slightly altering form along length of both walls.
Circa 10 feet high. Wall to west circa 350 yards long, wall to east circa 210 yards.

Listing NGR: TQ4171510047

Appendix 2 OASIS Form

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download_by archaeol6
oasis_id archaeol6-46530
created 05-Aug-08
created_by Ron Humphrey
last_edited 05-Aug-08
edited_by Ron Humphrey
status Waiting for Contractor to complete

project_details complete No
validated No
project_name GARDEN STRUCTURE TO THE REAR OF SCHOOL HILL HOUSE, HIGH STREET, LEWES
project_desc Building recording of an 18th and 19th century garden building to the rear of School Hill House, Lewes
project_dates start 15-Jul-2008 **end** 05-Aug-2008
work prev Yes **fufr** Yes
assoc_id type Contracting Unit No. **id** 1118
project_type type Building Recording
method Measured Survey
method Photographic Survey
method Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG15

status Conservation Area
landuse Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
landuse
monument type GARDEN BUILDING **period** Post Medieval
artefact type NONE **period** None

project_details
project_location complete No **validated** No
location
country England
county EAST SUSSEX
district LEWES
parish LEWES
sitename Garden Structure to the rear of School Hill House, High Street

location
area size 50.00 **units** Square metres
grid_refs mapcode TQ **easting** 4166 **northing** 1005 **type** Point
full_easting 541660
full_northing 110050
latitude 50.8719925571
longitude 0.01356683155990
latitude_string 50 52 19 N
longitude_string 000 00 48 E

project_creators complete No **validated** No
organisation Archaeology South-East
pb_originator Archaeology South East
pd_originator Archaeology South-East
director Ron Humphrey
supervisor Amy Williamson
funding Client
funder_name Southern Housing Group

project_archives complete No **validated** No
digital

arch_recipient Lewes Museum

contents

media Images raster / digital photography

media Survey

digital

paper

arch_recipient Lewes Museum

contents none

media Drawing

media Map

media Photograph

media Plan

media Report

media Section

paper

project_archives

project_bibliography id 25316 **type** Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript) **complete** No **validated** No

title Garden Structure to the rear of School Hill House, High Street, Lewes

author Williamson, A

other_bib 2008112

date 2008

publisher Archaeology South-East

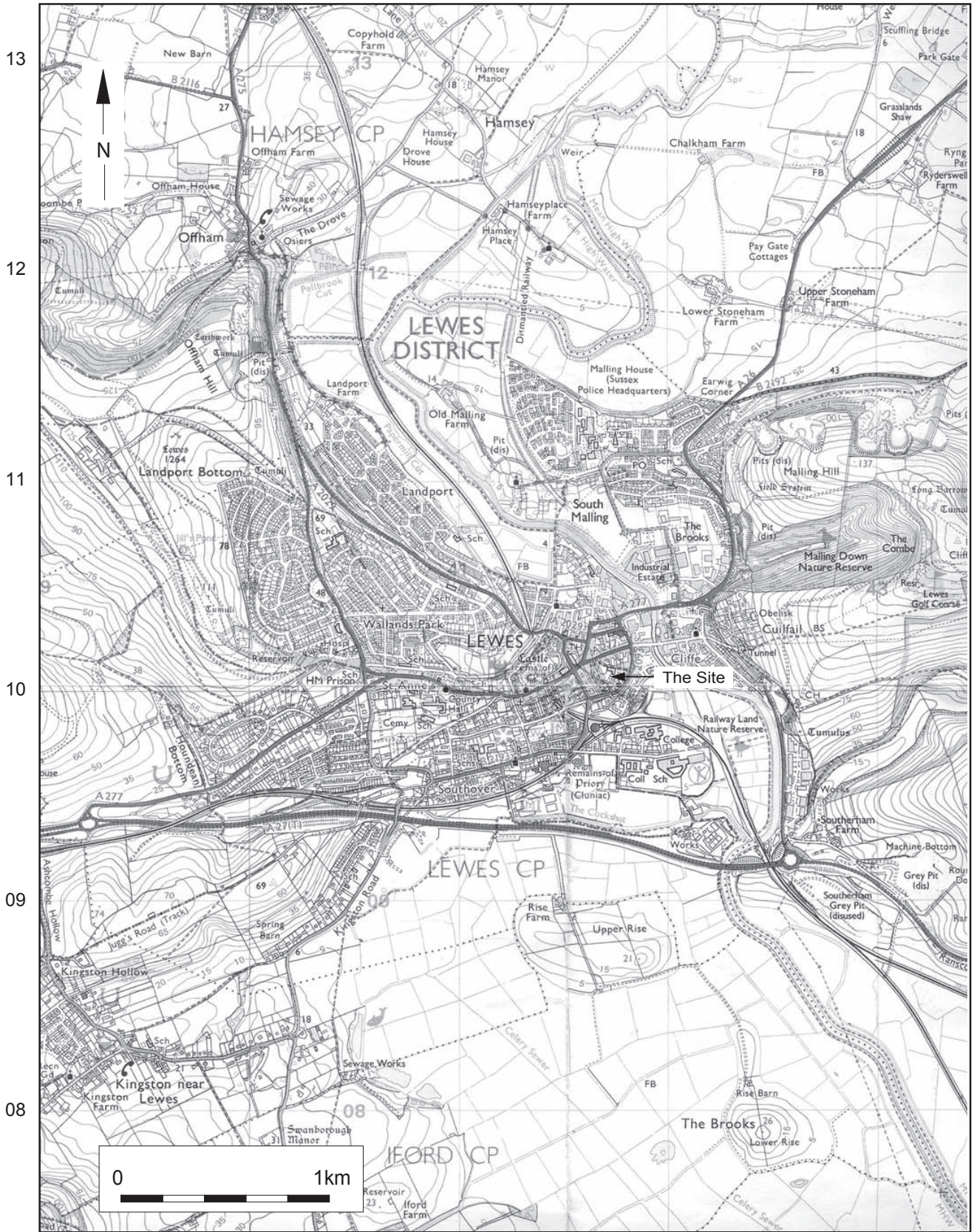
place Archaeology South-East

desc Client report - bound with text, illustrations and plates

project_bibliography

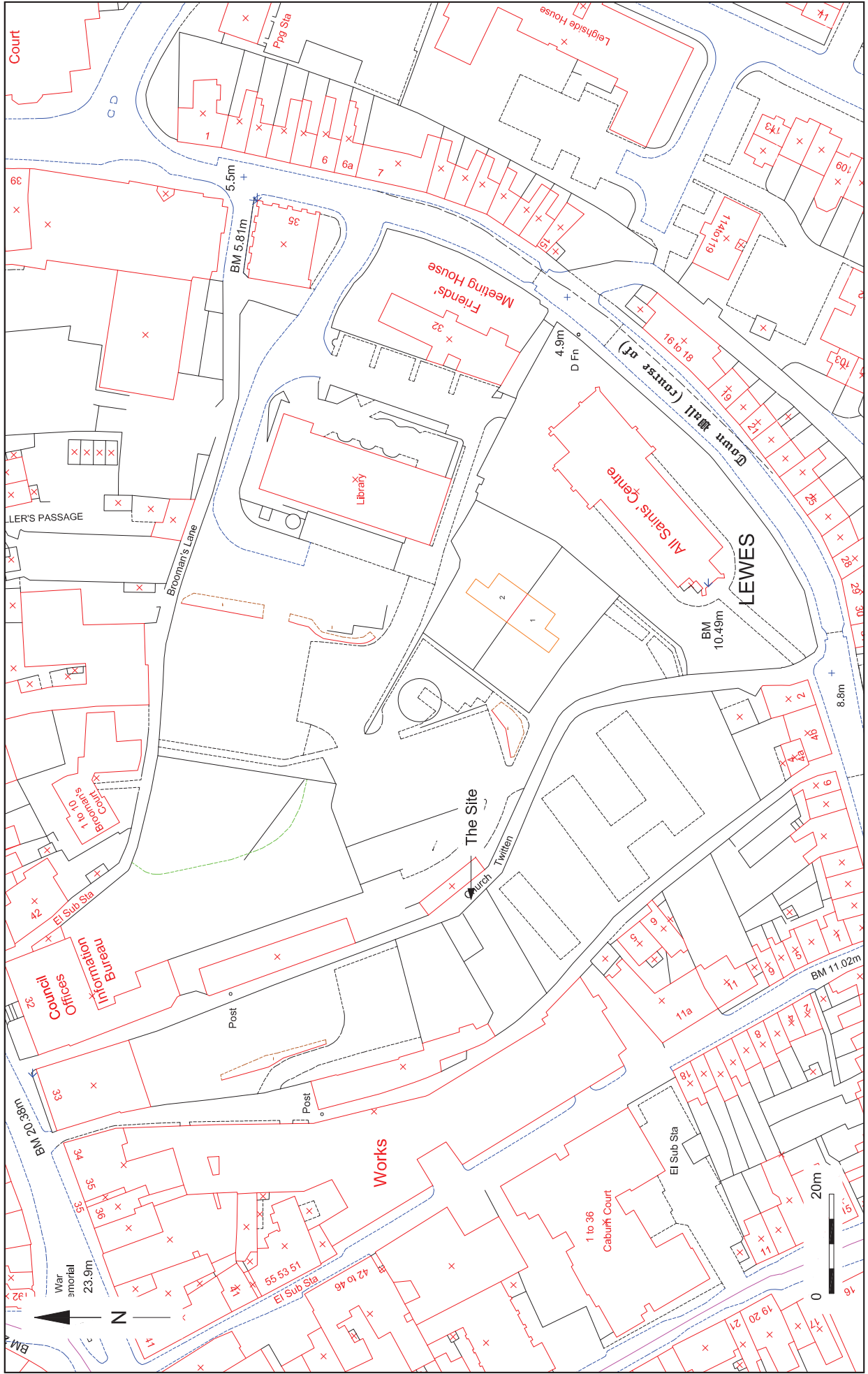
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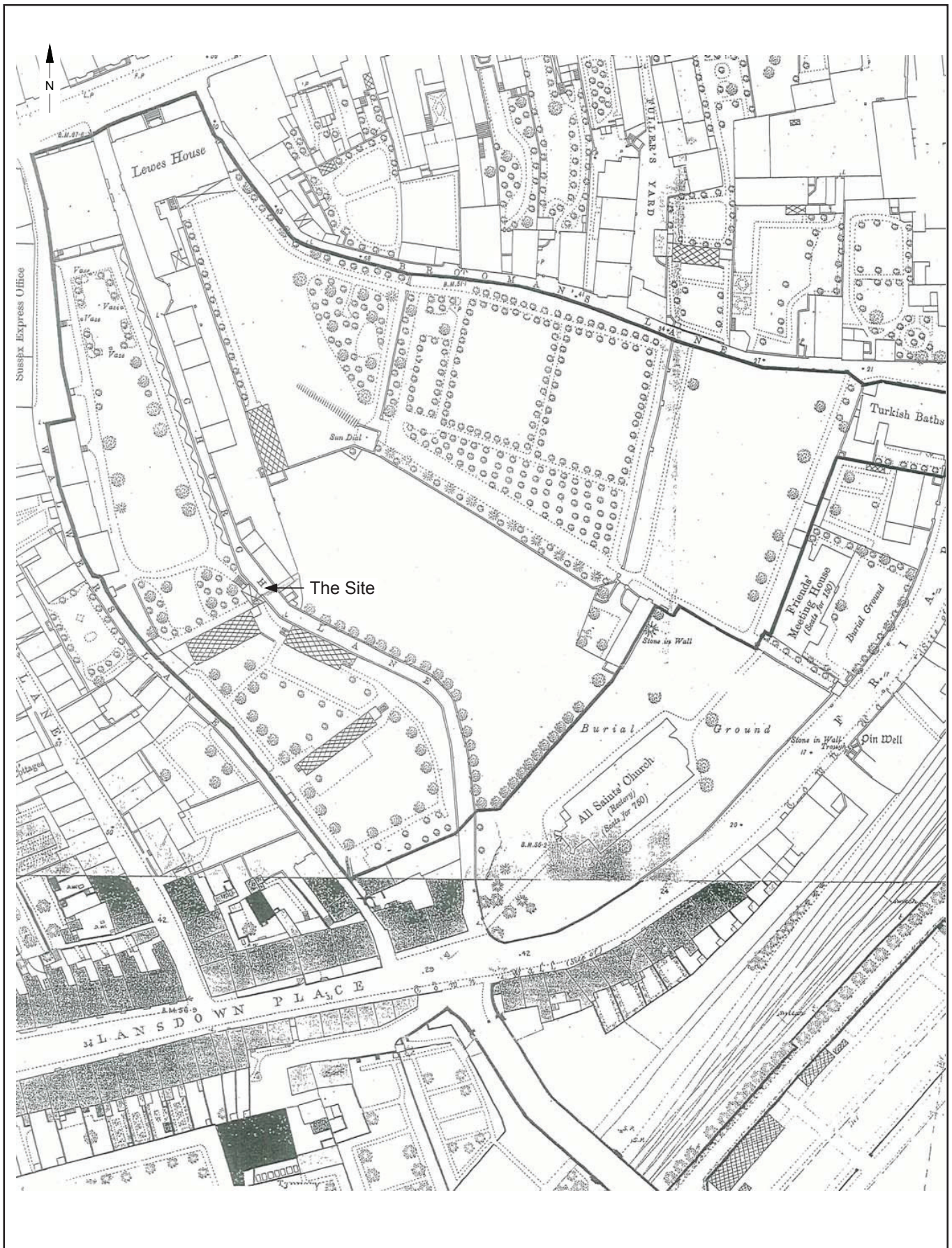
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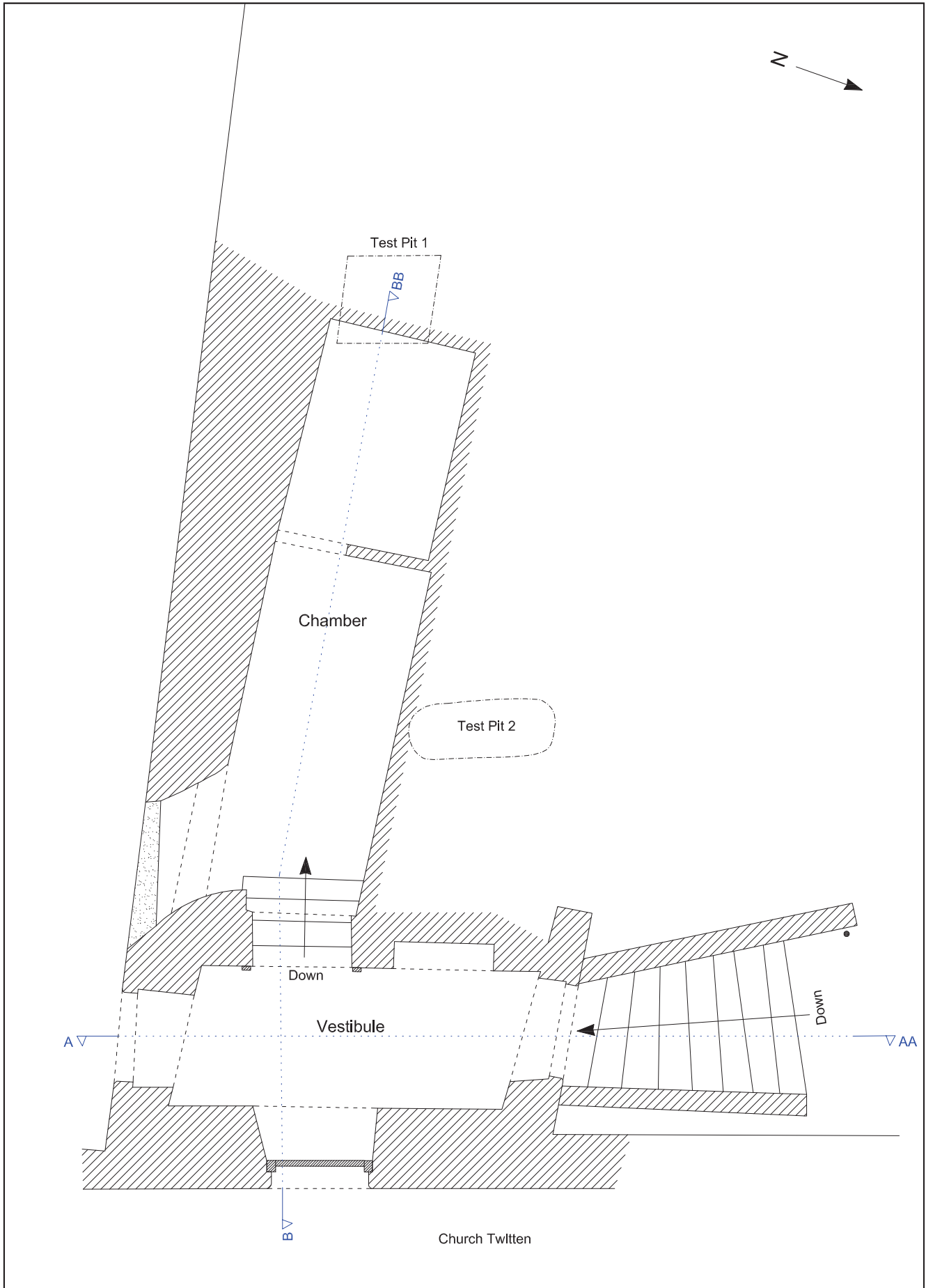
© Archaeology South-East		Lewes Icehouse	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 2984	August 2008	Site Location Plan	
Report Ref: 2008112	Drawn by: JLR		

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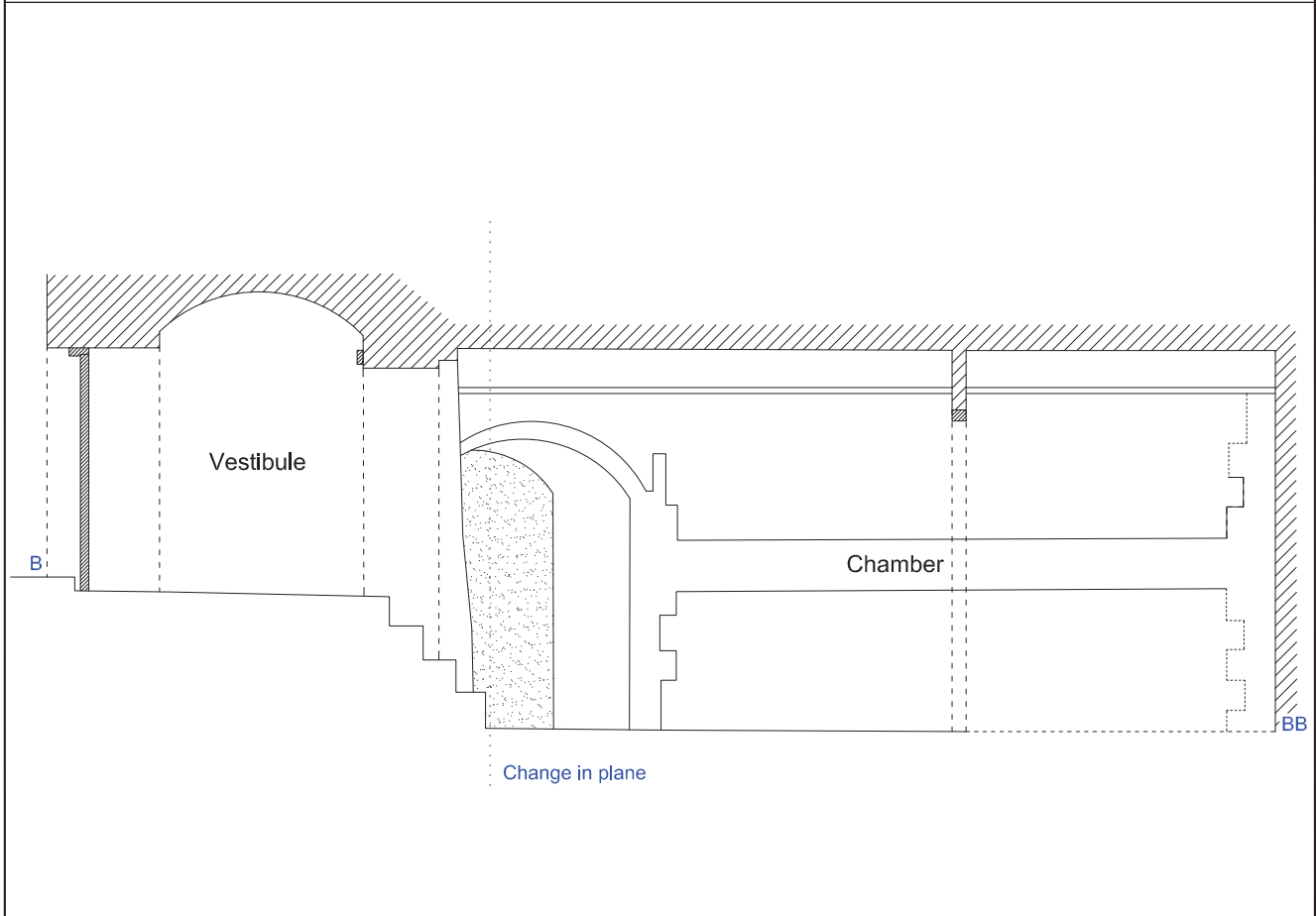
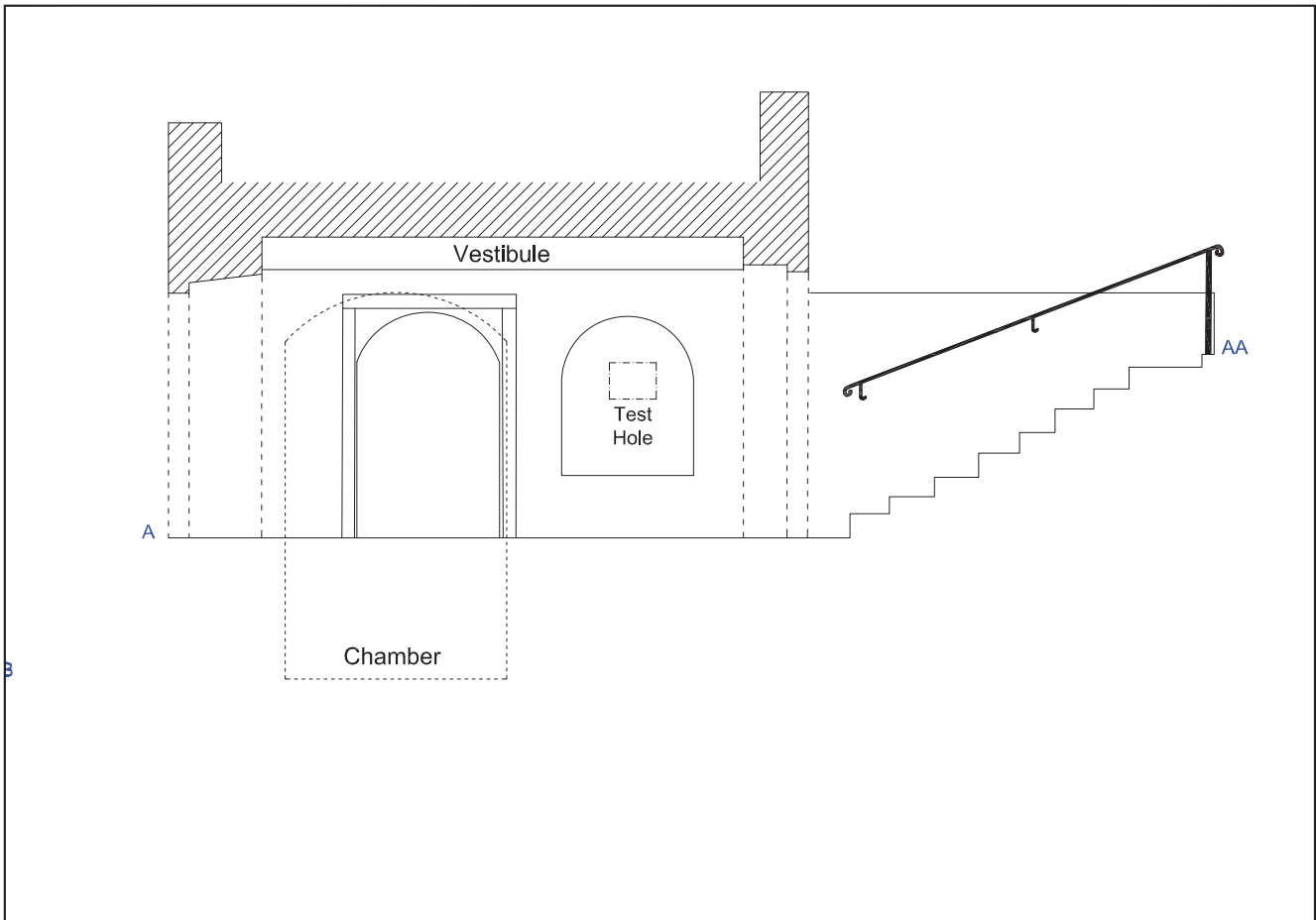




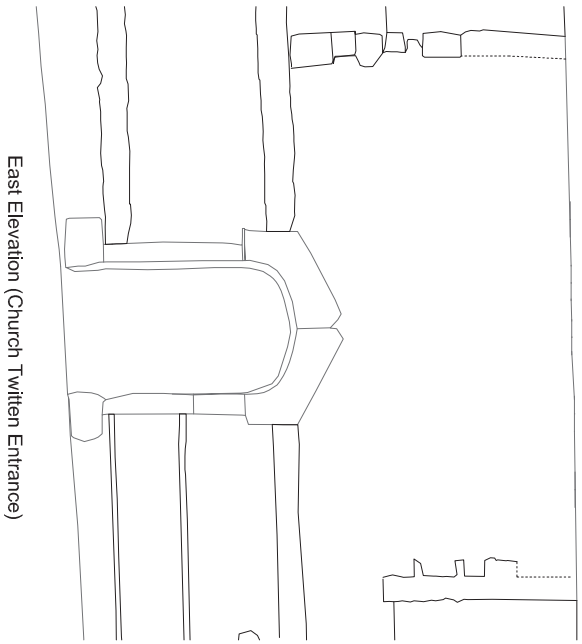
© Archaeology South-East		Lewes Icehouse	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 2984	August 2008	1874 OS map 1:500	
Report Ref: 2008112	Drawn by: SM		



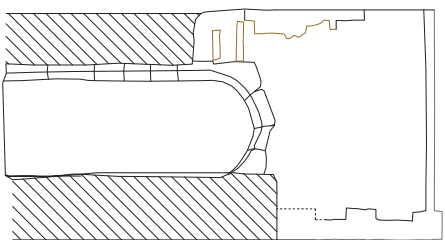
© Archaeology South-East		Garden Structure to the rear of School Hill House, High Street, Lewes	Fig. 4
Project Ref: 2984	July 2008	Plan (1:50)	
Report Ref: 2008112	Drawn by: AW		



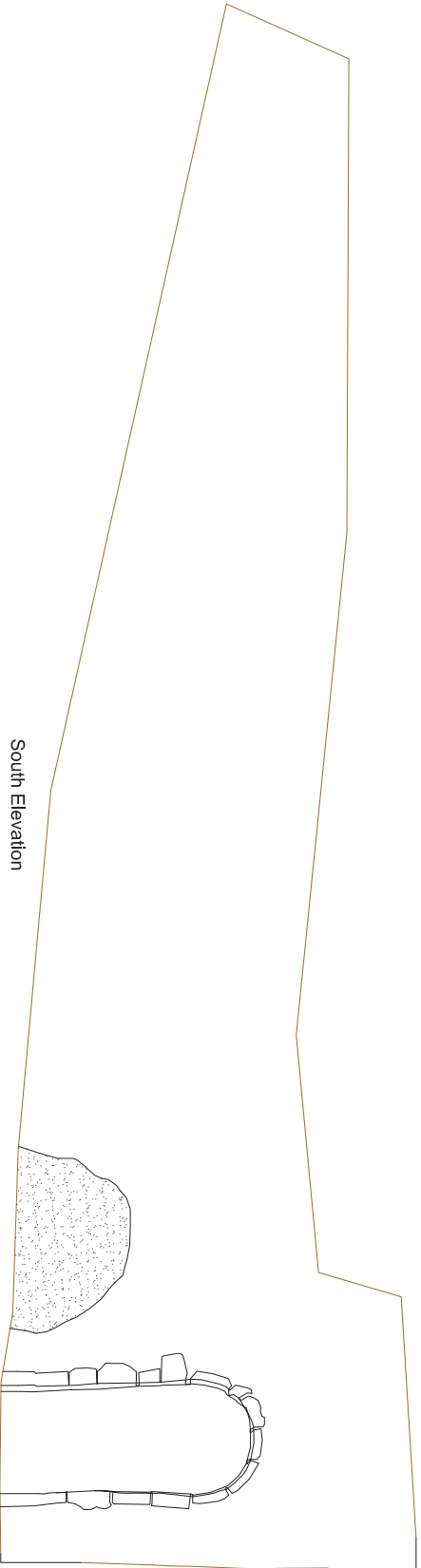
© Archaeology South-East		Garden Structure to the rear of School Hill House, High Street, Lewes	Fig. 5
Project Ref: 2984	July 2008	Sections (1:50)	
Report Ref: 2008112	Drawn by: AW		



East Elevation (Church Twitten Entrance)

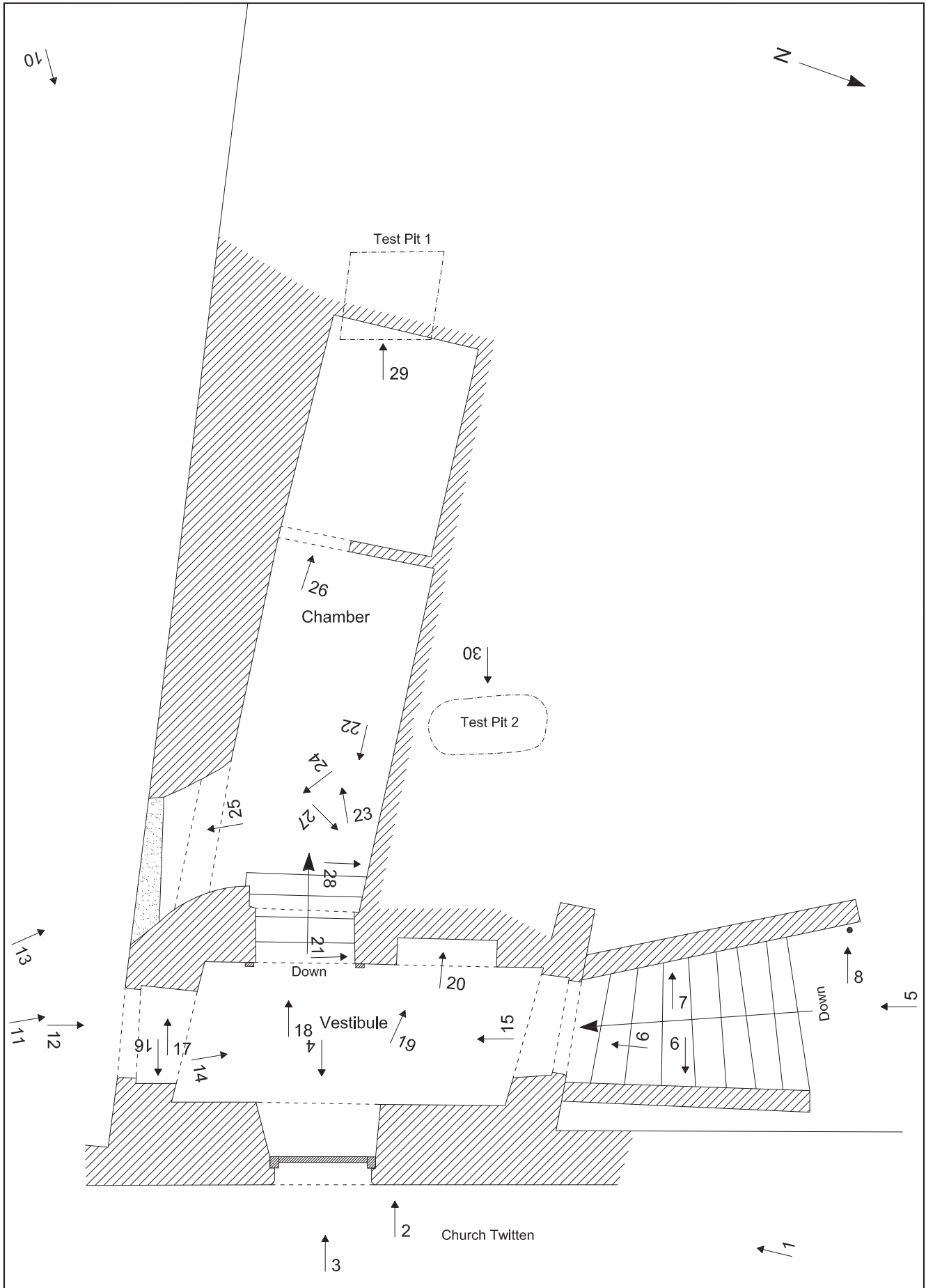


North Elevation



South Elevation

© Archaeology South-East		Garden Structure to the rear of School Hill House, High Street, Lewes	Elevations (1:50)	Fig. 6
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© Archaeology South-East		Garden Structure to the rear of School Hill House, High Street, Lewes	Fig. 7
Project Ref: 2984	July 2008	Photographic Location Plan (1:100)	
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Plate 1

View of the Church Twitten entrance to the structure, taken from the north



Plate 2

Detail of wall fabric at Church Twitten entrance, taken from the east



Plate 3

Church Twitten doorway, taken from the east



Plate 4

Rear face of door at Church Twitten entrance, taken from the west



Plate 5

North entrance to the structure, taken from the north



Plate 6

North doorway, taken from the north



Plate 7

Detail of brickwork of west retaining wall, taken from the east



Plate 8

Iron stanchion and hand-rail on west retaining wall, taken from the east



Plate 9

Detail of brickwork of east retaining wall, taken from the west



Plate 10

Flint wall dividing the north and south garden areas, taken from the south-west



Plate 11

South entrance to the structure, taken from the south



Plate 12

South doorway, taken from the south



Plate 13

Blocked aperture in south wall, taken from the south-east



Plate 14

Interior of the vestibule, taken from the south



Plate 15

Interior of the vestibule, taken from the north



Plate 16

Detail of ashlar-lined render to walls of vestibule, taken from the west



Plate 17

Brick floor of vestibule



Plate 18

Door leading to chamber, taken from the east



Plate 19

Blind aperture in west wall of vestibule, taken from the south-east



Plate 20

Test hole within blind aperture, showing brickwork with limestone rubble behind, taken from the east



Plate 21

Brickwork revealed on north jamb of doorway to chamber, taken from the south



Plate 22

Steps leading from vestibule into chamber, taken from the west



Plate 23

Interior of chamber showing south wall (left) and partition wall, taken from the east



Plate 24

Arched aperture within south wall of the chamber, taken from the north-west



Plate 25

Small infilled opening within blocked aperture in south wall of chamber, taken from the north



Plate 26

West wall of chamber, taken from the east



Plate 27

Area of limestone rubble at junction between north wall of chamber and west wall of vestibule, taken from the south-west



Plate 28

'E. A. 1955' on cement repair to north wall, taken from the south



Plate 29

Test Pit 1, taken from the east



Plate 30

Test Pit 2, taken from the west

Head Office
Units 1 & 2
2 Chapel Place
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