

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Northeast Manor School, Lewes,  
East Sussex**

**Planning ref: LW/09/0259**

**Centred NGR 541027,106537  
(TQ 41027 06537)**

**Project No: 3909  
Site Code: NMS 09**

**ASE Report No: 2009088  
OASIS id: archaeol6-59997**



**Andrew Margetts BA  
& Maggie Henderson MA**

**May 2009**

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## **Abstract**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the excavation of a footing trench and the removal of a window and supporting wall situated within a projecting former entrance to a building currently known as 'Tudor Hall' at Northeast Manor School, near Rodmell, Lewes, East Sussex.*

*Works included a c.4m long by 0.45m wide footing trench as well as monitored demolition. Site visits were made to monitor ground works on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May 2009.*

*Excavations encountered no archaeological features or finds and more detailed analysis of the standing building would be required in order to confirm the current interpretation of the date of the building.*

*A late 16<sup>th</sup>/early 17<sup>th</sup> century date was however suggested for the entrance bay.*

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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), were commissioned by Barker Shorten Architects on behalf of their client Northeast Manor School to undertake a programme of archaeological work at Northeast Manor School, Lewes, East Sussex, henceforth referred to as 'the site' (Figure 1; NGR TQ 41027,06537).

1.1.2 The site lies c. 3km to the south of the historic town of Lewes on the western edge of Ouse Valley. The site is bounded to the north east by the Lewes Road and to the west by the western edge of the Ouse valley as it rises onto the South Downs.

1.1.3 Planning permission was granted by Lewes District Council (Planning Reference LW/09/0259) for the replacement of a window with a window and doorway and the construction of a flight of steps for access (ASE 2009). The site has archaeological potential (see below) and the following condition (Condition 6) was attached to the planning consent:

"No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has first been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Work shall be carried out only in accordance with such approved details.

Reason: The site lies within an archaeologically sensitive area and the building to be converted is Grade II listed.

### **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

1.2.1 The general aim of the archaeological work was to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest that were affected by the groundworks were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.

1.2.2 The specific aim was to ascertain whether there is any evidence of the development of Northeast Farm, conformation, if possible, of the current interpretation of the date of the building and evidence relating to the previous use of the site from the prehistoric period to present.

### **1.3 Geology and Topography**

1.3.1 The site lies at the foot of rising ground at the edge of the River Ouse floodplain. The underlying geology according to the Ordnance Survey geological survey of Great Britain, scale 1:50,000 (Sheet 319 - Lewes), is part of the Seaford Chalk Formation overlain in parts by alluvium and colluvial head deposits.

## **1.4 Scope of Report**

- 1.4.1 This report aims to outline the findings of the archaeological watching brief. A Written Scheme of Investigation for these works was produced by Archaeology South East (ASE 2009) and was subsequently approved by the County Archaeologist, ESCC.
- 1.4.2 The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Margetts on the 19<sup>th</sup> and by Maggie Henderson on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2009. The project was managed by Jon Sygrave (Project Manager) and Dan Swift (Post-excavation Manager).

## **2.0 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The site has potential for archaeological finds/deposits from the prehistoric to post-medieval periods. The development of the present farm buildings is illustrated by the historic maps and SMR information reproduced on Figure 1 and Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Two Acheulian, Lower Palaeolithic (c. 500,000 to 150,000 BC), Hand Axes (SMR MES1929) were recovered from the site in the 1960s during excavation works associated with a farm building and after ploughing, they appeared to not have been water rolled.
- 2.3 A Mesolithic (c. 10,000 to 4,000 BC) tranchet hand axe was also recovered from the site.
- 2.4 The recovery of these Lower and Middle Stone age tools on the western edge of the Ouse valley is of interest as the edges of such valleys have potential for in *situ* tool manufacture.
- 2.5 SMR point (MES 1932) refers to a crop mark thought to represent some form of undated enclosure. This may represent later prehistoric activity, or later.
- 2.6 The place name Northeast was first recorded in 1121AD in reference to a Hamlet, though the precise location of the hamlet is unknown.
- 2.7 Northeast Farm contains several flint faced grade II listed buildings (Building no.s 416773, 416774 and 416775) thought to date from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It is believed that the buildings were converted in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century for use as a school.
- 2.8 The building in question appears to be a large aisled barn with a midstrey or wagon entrance now containing a large 12-pane window over a low flint wall. The original entrance would probably have had a pair of double doors, allowing wagon access to the interior of the barn. The usual form is for another set of doors immediately opposite which would facilitate the control of draughts when the midstrey was in use as a threshing floor.
- 2.9 SMR point 7655 refers to a pillbox situated to the west of the Lewes road and represent evidence of the defenses set up in the region during WWII.

### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Archaeological mitigation works comprised the following:

3.2 ***Footing trench for steps***

A watching brief was maintained on the footing trench for the proposed steps. No further intrusive ground works took place and no changes were made to the scope of the works.

3.3 ***Flint Wall to be Demolished***

The section of flint wall to be demolished was examined and recorded (written and photographic) prior to its removal by a qualified historic building specialist.

3.4 All ground works excavations undertaken were monitored at all times by an archaeologist until/unless it became clear beyond reasonable doubt that no archaeological remains were present (e.g. once excavation reached undisturbed natural subsoils, below which there would be no archaeological remains present - after the recording of any significant remains if present at higher levels). All excavations were undertaken by hand and comprised a single shallow trench (c. 0.45m deep) to accommodate the step footings.

3.5 Where new excavations revealed archaeological remains, hand excavation by contractor's staff ceased. In the event that archaeological deposits revealed would not be affected by the groundworks, excavation was limited to minimal sampling of features. Where groundworks threatened archaeological deposits, these were then hand excavated and recorded to archaeological standards by the archaeologist in attendance. Exposures were hand cleaned by the archaeologist as necessary to clarify the presence/absence and nature of features. Adequate time was made available for appropriate archaeological excavation by hand to identify and record the remains as far as possible within the limits of the works in order to extract archaeological and environmental information, as this proved necessary.

3.6 This enabled any archaeological deposits and features, disturbed during the proposed works, to be adequately recorded in line with the advice given in PPG16 (the Government's advice on *Archaeology and Planning*).

3.7 The spoil from the excavations was inspected to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest. A metal detector was used at regular intervals to scan spoil derived from the excavations.

3.8 The ESCC Archaeological Officer was kept informed of progress so that he could monitor the archaeological work from the outset of ground works.

3.9 All archaeological features were recorded according to standard UCLCAA practice. Where practicable, all features were planned at 1:20 and section drawings were at 1:10, unless this is impractical in which case an alternative would be agreed with the National Trust Territory Archaeologist. Drawings were made on plastic draughting film. Features and deposits were described on standard pro-forma recording sheets used by ASE. All remains were levelled with respect to Ordnance Survey datum wherever practicable. A photographic record was made in digital format, monochrome and colour transparency.

#### 4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS (Fig. 2)

Number of Contexts	3
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	1
Bulk Samples	0
Photograph	c.40 digital
Bulk finds	0
Registered finds	0
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Quantification of the site archive

- 4.1 As discussed in section 3.0 above, a watching brief was carried out during the excavation of a footing trench and the removal of a window and supporting wall situated within a projecting former entrance to a building currently known as 'Tudor Hall'.

##### 4.2 *Footing Trench*

The ground works (Figure 2) excavated for the new steps comprised a c.4m long by 0.45m wide footing trench. This was dug to a total depth of c.0.2m. The deposits revealed during the contractors excavations consisted firstly of c.0.1m of roughly worked flint cobbles and decorative bricks onto a mortar and sand bedding context [1]. This surface overlay c.0.1m of made ground context [2]. This comprised variable mid black grey sandy silt with frequent inclusions of chalk fragments and CBM as well as occasional inclusions of angular flint nodules and plastic. Directly Beneath this made ground deposit the natural horizon comprising solid chalk was reached context [3].

##### 4.3 *Demolition Watching Brief*

- 4.3.1 The building in question appears to have originally been an aisled barn with a possible midstrey or wagon entrance projecting out towards the northeast within which the (now removed) modern window and wall were situated.
- 4.3.2 The projecting possible former entrance is central to the current full extent of the former barn which is a typical location for a midstrey. The projecting bay has a gabled roof (Figure 3) which is currently under thatch and is weatherboarded to the front from apex to plate. The window was situated below the weatherboarded area, the timber frame of the window extended down from a plate parallel to and at the same height as the *in situ* arcade plate within the barn, to the top of the supporting wall. The wall stood to a height of 590mm from the present interior floor surface. The sides of the window frame directly abutted brick quoins which extended from the base of the gable to the ground level. A clear straight joint was visible between the added buttress to the northwest and the quoins of the former opening.
- 4.3.3 The 12-pane window was arranged in three rows of four, with each pane incorporating lead strips to create the appearance of leaded lights. The majority of the panes were fixed with the exception of two side hung casement to the outer edges of the bottom row. The glazing was set within a



timber frame with broad ovolo moulded detail to frame and glazing bars, indicating a modern, c. mid - 20th century origin.

- 4.3.4 The wall was constructed with a cavity at 90mm wide between two separate brick skins giving an overall width of 410mm (Figure 4). The bricks utilised in the construction were pale pinkish fabric with dimensions of 230mm by 110mm by 70mm, bedded on a hard cement mortar. The outer face of the north-eastern skin, facing onto the lawn and entrance to the property had been faced in flint in the same style as the fabric of the surrounding buildings; the skin on the interior of the structure had a thick cement-based render 30mm thick. The two skins were tied back to each other using metal cavity wall ties and at the top of the wall, occasional breeze blocks bonded into each skin and bridging the cavity between (Figure 5). Upon removal of the wall it was clear that the base stood upon a lead capped foundation just below the level of the interior of the former barn (Figure 6).

## **5.0 THE FINDS**

- 5.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION**

- 6.1 The underlying geology encountered during the course of the ground works was chalk.
- 6.2 No archaeological features or finds were encountered during the watching brief. The removed cobbled surface was probably post-medieval in date and finds of modern rubbish such as plastic in the underlying made ground may indicate fairly recent re-working of this feature.
- 6.3 Although the excavation area was very small and thus difficult to draw conclusions from the fairly shallow depth of the overburden, lack of archaeology and noted solidity of the underlying chalk may indicate truncation possibly from terracing into the hill-slope in this part of the farm complex.
- 6.4 It is not possible to ascertain if the location of the window and supporting wall, set within the projecting bay was the original entrance to the barn, opening out on to a threshing floor and providing a wagon entrance to the interior of the barn. The location, central to the full length of the present building is the usual location for such an entrance. Detailed analysis of the full building would be necessary to determine if this had indeed been the midstrey, however, if that had indeed been the case, the opening would probably have had a pair of double doors, allowing wagon access to the interior of the barn. The usual form is for another set of doors immediately opposite which would facilitate the control of draughts when the midstrey was in use as a threshing floor. The visible interior details of the barn construction observed after the window and wall were removed showed the substantial principal oak posts of three bays of the structure, with a further, enclosed area to the northwest. The substantial scantling of the posts each of which had swelling jowls, in addition to the complete set of arched braces and an edge-halved scarf joining to lengths of the arcade plate within the entrance bay may indicate a date of origin in the c. late 16th/early 17th century. However as no access to roof construction was necessary or indeed to the remainder of the structure, during this programme of works, the date should be regarded as provisional.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The Watching Brief succeeded in its general aim of recording and interpreting the archaeological remains affected by ground works and demolition however the more specific aim of ascertaining whether there was any evidence of the development of Northeast Farm proved limited. As discussed in section 6.4 above, confirmation of the current interpretation of the date of the building would require a more detailed analysis, however, a c. late 16th/early 17th century date for the entrance bay has been suggested. In addition to the limitations of the building recording the restricted nature of the ground works failed to produce any artefacts or features relating to the previous use of the site from the prehistoric or any other archaeological period and must thus be regarded as negative evidence.

## 8.0 APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: HER data

No	HER No.	NGR (TR)	Description
1	MES 1929	TR 4111 0641	Two Lower Palaeolithic handaxes found in 1967
2	MES1932	TQ 411 062	Various rectangular and circular cropmarks
3	MES1948	TQ 410 065	Mesolithic axe found in Rodmell
4	MES1948	TQ 410 065	Tranchet axe found in Rodmell
5	MES7655	TQ 41180 06710	Type 24 Pillbox

### Acknowledgements

ASE would like to thank Barker Shorten Architects for commissioning the work and their client Northeast Manor School.

### Bibliography

ASE 2009, A Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Works at Northeast Manor Farm, Lewes, East Sussex, unpublished report

## SMR Summary Form

Site Code	NMS09					
Identification Name and Address	Northeast Manor School, Lewes, East Sussex					
County, District &/or Borough	East Sussex, Lewes					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR TQ 41027,06537					
Geology	Seaford Chalk					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3909					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure ✓	Survey	Other
Type of Si	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other Garden and building ✓		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 19 <sup>th</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> May 2009	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Barker Shorten Architects					
Project Manager	Jon Sygrave and Dan Swift					
Project Supervisor	Andrew Margetts and Maggie Henderson					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other Modern		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p>Archaeological Watching Briefs' were carried out during the excavation of a footing trench and the removal of a window and supporting wall situated within a projecting former entrance to a building currently known as 'Tudor Hall' at Northeast Manor School, near Rodmell, Lewes, East Sussex. Works included a c.4m long by 0.45m wide footing trench as well as monitored demolition. Site visits were made to monitor ground works on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May 2009. <i>Excavations encountered no archaeological features or finds and more detailed analysis of the standing building would be required in order to confirm the current interpretation of the date of the building. A late 16<sup>th</sup>/early 17<sup>th</sup> century date was however suggested for the entrance bay.</i></p>						

## OASIS FORM

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-59997**

### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Northeast Manor School, Lewes,
Short description of the project	Archaeological Watching Briefs' were carried out during the excavation of a footing trench and the removal of a window and supporting wall situated within a projecting former entrance to a building currently known as 'Tudor Hall' at Northeast Manor School, near Rodmell, Lewes, East Sussex. Works included a c.4m long by 0.45m wide footing trench as well as monitored demolition. Site visits were made to monitor ground works on the 19th and 26th May 2009. Excavations encountered no archaeological features or finds and more detailed analysis of the standing building would be required in order to confirm the current interpretation of the date of the building. A late 16th/early 17th century date was however suggested for the entrance bay.
Project dates	Start: 19-05-2009 End: 26-05-2009
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	NMS09 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	BARN Post Medieval
Significant Finds	ENTRANCE BAY Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Planning condition
<b>Project location</b>	
Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX LEWES RODMELL Northeast Manor School
Postcode	BN7 3XX
Study area	8.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 41027 06537 50.8405729679 0.00322152500415 50 50 26 N 000 00 11 E Point

Lat/Long Datum      Unknown

Height OD / Depth      Min: 0m Max: 10.00m

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation      Archaeology South East

Project brief originator      Archaeology South-East

Project design originator      Archaeology South-East

Project director/manager      Jon Sygrave

Project supervisor      Andrew Margetts

Project supervisor      Maggie Henderson

Type of sponsor/funding body      Client

Name of sponsor/funding body      Barker Shorten Architects

**Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?      No

Digital Archive Exists?      No

Paper Archive Exists?      No

**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type      Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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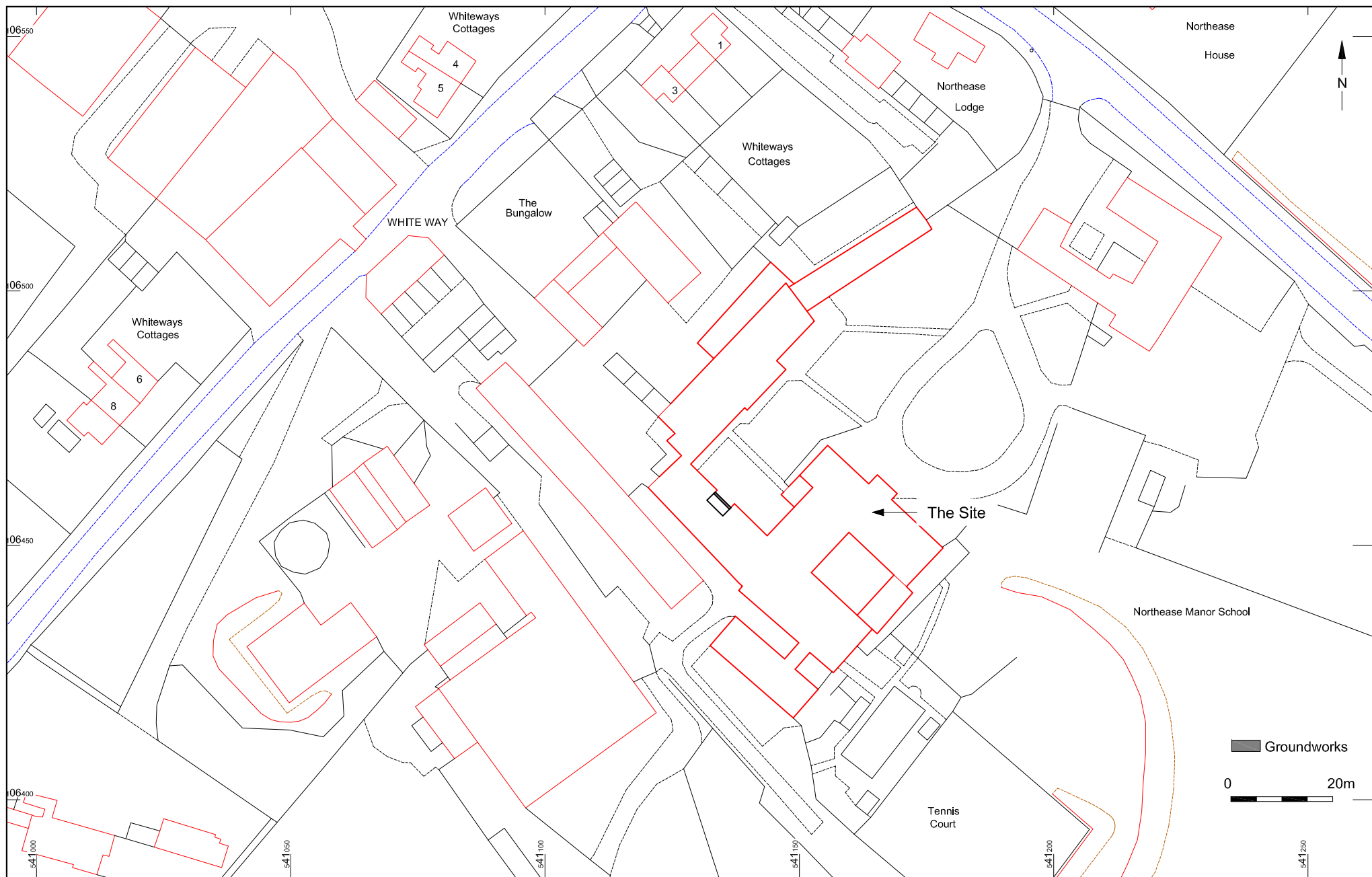
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Northease Manor School

Site Plan

Fig. 2



Figure 3: Detail of the top of the opening after the removal of the window.



Figure 4: view of the wall during demolition showing the flint facing of the outer (northeastern) skin and exposing the brickwork of the inner (southwestern) skin.

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Figure 5: Detail of the wall construction from the top, just prior to demolition. View shows the two skins and the breeze block bridges.



Figure 6: The lead lining to the foundation of the wall exposed after demolition

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