

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
New Tavern Fort Gardens, Gravesend, Kent**

NGR 56529 17427

Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent Ref. HSD/9/2/14202

**Project No. 4103
Site Code NTF 09**

**ASE Report No. 2009195
OASIS ID: archaeol6-73099**

By

Simon Stevens BA MIFA

With contributions by

**Luke Barber, Sarah Porteus, Elke Raemen
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March 2010

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Abstract

An archaeological evaluation by mechanically excavated trial trenches was undertaken within the historic Thameside fort in advance of a programme of restoration. Although no features predating the foundation of the fort in the 18th century were uncovered, deposits and structures relating to use of the fort were revealed and investigated. The most notable discovery was that of a 'secret room' close to one of the magazines. Unfortunately this could not be investigated on grounds of Health and Safety.

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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) was commissioned Gravesham Borough Council to undertake an archaeological evaluation at New Tavern Fort Gardens, Gravesend, Kent (NGR 56529 17427) (Fig. 1).

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 New Tavern Fort lies on the southern bank of the River Thames, close to the modern commercial centre of Gravesend. It is bounded to the west by Milton Place and Commercial Place, and to the south by Khartoum Place. A rowing club and children's playground lay between the fort and the river, and the Gordon Pleasure Grounds (which include a substantial lake) lie to the east.

1.2.2 According to the British Geological Survey 1:50 000 map of the area (Sheet 271, *Dartford*) the site appears to straddle the local boundary of Upper Chalk and Alluvial deposits.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Gravesham Borough Council are seeking to restore and enhance the Fort and Gardens (Gravesham Borough Council 2005). There is a requirement for limited below ground investigation work to be undertaken at this stage of the process in order to clarify various issues. To this end, Gravesham Borough Council drew up a specification for archaeological work at the site (Gravesham Borough Council, 2009), which included a pattern of ten evaluation trenches sited to investigate various aspects of the buried archaeology of the fort.

1.3.2 Scheduled Monument Consent was sought by the Gravesham Borough Council for this work and was duly granted in a letter from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport dated 25th August 2009 (ref. HSD 9/2/14202).

1.3.3 In accordance with the terms of the consent, a *Written Scheme of Investigation* was produced by Archaeology South-East outlining the methodologies to be used during the archaeological evaluation of the site (ASE 2009).

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The overall aim of the archaeological evaluation given in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2009) was:

'to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest that will be affected by the proposed groundworks are recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards'

1.4.2 More site-specific aims were also listed:

- *to identify the extent and survival of buried archaeology in the interior of the fort*
- *to understand further the development of New Tavern Fort*
- *to investigate and record any remains of prehistoric, Roman and early medieval date encountered*

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 The current report provides results of the archaeological evaluation of the site undertaken during late November and early December 2009. The on-site work was undertaken by Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist), Liane Peyre (Archaeologist), Claire Gannon (Archaeological Assistant) and Rob Cole (Archaeological Surveyor). The project was managed by Jon Sygrave (Project Manager) and Darryl Palmer (Senior Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson (Post-excavation Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 New Tavern Fort is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Monument No 24358). The general archaeological background was given in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2009) and is reproduced below.

2.2 Kent is rich in finds of Palaeolithic material. Most of this material, which comprises isolated artefacts, usually handaxes, is derived from secondary contexts mainly found in the major river valleys, particularly the Thames and its tributaries the Cray, Darent and Medway. Fragments of a human skull and associated hand axes were recovered from gravel quarries at Barnfield Pit, Swanscombe, around three and a half miles to the west of the site. These finds date to around 400,000 years ago, in the Lower Palaeolithic, and are amongst the earliest of their kind in Europe. An extensive Middle Palaeolithic assemblage was recovered during quarrying at Baker's Hole, Northfleet about a mile and a half west of the site. It is uniquely dominated by the production of single flakes from substantial 'tortoise' cores. A floor of Upper Palaeolithic material was excavated at Springhead, Southfleet and contained a large number of long blades and several large blade cores.

2.3 The Mesolithic period can be fairly elusive in the archaeological record. The few *in situ* settlement sites known from Kent are either rock shelters, such as High Rocks, near Tunbridge Wells, and low-lying riverine sites, such as Lower Halstow. Most Mesolithic sites are represented by concentrations of flintwork, which often form clusters that may correspond to discrete activity zones. Much of the evidence focuses on the Wealden forests and coastal marshlands, which are both areas of high resource potential. Earlier Mesolithic finds in Kent have been found, for instance, between Dartford and Gravesend, near Greenhithe and Northfleet, and at Higham, Cliffe Creek and Erith, where tools of antler and bone were discovered. Later Mesolithic material is more common, with core axes, such as that from Gravesend, and the more prestigious maceheads being amongst the finds.

2.4 The Neolithic witnessed increasing temperatures and more settled human occupation, which allowed for the development of more permanent farming systems. This picture is amplified by the results of pollen and mollusc studies, which indicate forest clearance. The latter is of greater importance in Kent due to the typically poor preservation of pollen within its calcareous soils. Evidence for Neolithic settlement in Kent is limited, with many suitable locations in coastal and floodplain areas likely to be buried deeply beneath later deposits. A similar situation may exist in the chalkland dry valleys, such as those to the south of Singlewell - similar valleys in the South Downs have been found to contain Neolithic settlement evidence, including Beaker material, buried by thick deposits of colluvium. The possible causewayed enclosure at Chalk about a mile and a half east of the site is one of six known in Kent. These enclosures, defined by ditch segments and their corresponding internal banks, are believed to have been centres for periodic ritual gatherings. This would suggest that the Gravesend area was settled in the Neolithic to some degree, as would the finds. Polished flint axes and fine-grained rock axes have been found in Gravesend, as has Late Neolithic Impressed/Decorated Ware. The Ebbsfleet (Northfleet) assemblage, excavated during the 1930s, is a major later Neolithic type-site for southern and eastern England. This pottery tends to consist of large, well-made, thin walled and simply decorated vessels.

- 2.5** The Early Bronze Age is characterized by the introduction of metals, generally associated with Beaker pottery. New forms of ceremonial sites were constructed, notably round barrows that often form linear cemeteries on ridges. The Middle and Late Bronze Age saw a shift in emphasis away from ceremonial and monumental landscapes towards the development of large-scale agricultural landscapes, typified by blocks of field systems associated with scattered settlements. There is a concentration of metalwork, settlement and regulated farming in and around the vicinity of Gravesend and Dartford. The metalwork tends to be isolated finds of the Late Bronze Age, although hoards of this date have been found on the outskirts of this area.
- 2.6** The Iron Age is characterised by increasing evidence for field systems and the development of defended sites. It witnessed stronger influences from the Continent, with evidence in the later Iron Age for contact with Belgic tribes in Gaul. In 54 BC Caesar commented that the coastal plain was home to an 'extremely large' population, being 'thickly studded with homesteads'. However, recent fieldwork over the last two decades indicates that the river valleys were just as densely occupied, both on the downland areas and claylands. In this part of Kent, Early and Middle Iron Age settlements and finds are largely restricted to the Darent valley, although there is an Early Iron Age settlement just outside Strood, another further up the Medway near Chattenden and a Middle Iron Age hillfort close to Cliffe Wood, all of which are around five miles to the east of the Site. The Late Iron Age sees greater activity closer to the Site, with a possible religious site at Springhead in Southfleet about three miles south-west of the site, a cemetery/burial site and settlement at Northfleet, and two further settlements at Chalk.
- 2.7** As the nearest part of Britain to the Continent, Kent was in contact with Rome from an early date, first through trade and then conquest. It was only in AD 43 that southern Britain was brought firmly into the Empire; Claudius had succeeded where Caesar, Augustus and Gaius Caligula had failed previously. The initial invasion route was along the Kentish coastal plain, which was later heavily settled along the major Roman road (now Watling Street) that linked Richborough, Canterbury, Rochester and London and runs east to west about two miles to the south of the site. The excavated posting-station of Springhead also lies along this route. With its temple precinct, it was a religious centre (based on the springs at the source of the Ebbsfleet), just as it was in the Late Iron Age. An abundant number of villas are located in West Kent, particularly in the Darent valley, such as at Lullingstone and Darenth, and in the Medway valley, such as at Eccles. There were, however, villas closer to the site near Chalk, where pottery and salt were produced, and at Northfleet.
- 2.8** There is potential in the area for Saxon and medieval remains. Kent was one of the first areas to be heavily settled by Germanic peoples, who tended to favour the more tractable soils of the coastal plain and river valleys. The densest occupation in the early Anglo-Saxon period seems to have been in northeast Kent, the heartland of the kingdom of the *Cantware*, which is protected to the west by the Medway and to the southeast by the Weald. The Anglo-Saxons established their own pattern of estates, many of which were controlled by the king and his family. Early territories developed north of the Downs at places like Faversham, Teynham, Newington and

Northfleet. Northfleet was the centre of the Jutish non-royal estate of Ebbsfleet. Being a spring-head estate, it was not based on rivers, but associated with the springline at the foot of the chalk. Its outlying pastureland stretched up into the Downland valleys to the south. By the 10th century, the multiple estates characteristic of Kent had begun to fragment into smaller units, and it is from this process that the separate parishes probably derive. In this instance, the Ebbsfleet estate was divided into Northfleet and Southfleet along the line of the springs.

- 2.9** Anglo-Saxon society was hierarchical, as deduced from the early law codes and from cemetery studies. This would be reflected archaeologically, with a hierarchy of sites of differing status. Little is currently known of early and mid Saxon occupation in rural areas. However, late Saxon settlement is likely to have consisted of nucleated settlements around churches and along the main river valleys and some tributary dry valleys. Such settlements would have been surrounded by a more dispersed pattern of hamlets and isolated farmsteads, together with areas of former open sheep and cattle pasture. Gravesend has several Anglo-Saxon cemetery sites or burials located within it or nearby, which date between 450 and 700 AD.
- 2.10** The Domesday Book is a record of the great survey of England, executed for William I of England so as he could administer the country. Having been completed in 1086, it is a window into Late Anglo-Saxon life. Gravesend and Northfleet are both mentioned.
- 2.11** In the North West corner of the fort itself is Milton Chantry, a fourteenth century building, originally the chapel of a medieval hospital. The Chantry has undergone a variety of uses; in the sixteenth century it appears to have been extended and converted for residential use. By 1697 the site was used as a tavern and in 1776 a group of buildings on the site was known as New Tavern. The area to the south and east appears to have comprised farmland and gardens. The Crown purchased the land in 1781.
- 2.12** New Tavern Fort was constructed around 1783 to provide cross fire with Tilbury Fort on the other side of the Thames. The fort originally consisted of a battery on two faces forming an angle towards the river, with a rampart joining it to a smaller battery defended by a ditch and palisade. The rear of the fort to the south and west was originally open and unprotected, but before the end of the century a brick wall with gun loop holes was constructed. The Chantry and adjacent buildings were used as a barracks.
- 2.13** The armament of the fort was updated at intervals throughout the nineteenth century. In the 1840s the fort was modernised, including the reconstruction of the older gun emplacements, the construction of two new magazines for powder, and the creation of several ancillary buildings. The gun emplacements were rebuilt in the 1860s and 1870s, along with new magazines. The basic plan of the fort was retained throughout the improvements. The fort is perhaps best known for its association with General Charles Gordon, who lived here from 1865-71 and was later killed at Khartoum. The foundations of his house survive within the fort.
- 2.14** By the end of the nineteenth century changes in naval warfare meant that New Tavern Fort had lost some of its strategic importance. In 1905 new

concrete gun emplacements with a walkway and separate magazine beneath were constructed.

- 2.15** The fort's strategic importance continued to decline and in 1930 it was purchased by Gravesend Corporation and laid out as public pleasure gardens. During the Second World War the 1905 magazine was used as an air raid shelter but the site has continued as a public park.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** A pattern of ten trenches was produced by Gravesham Borough Council. The trenches were located at various points within the fort to access the impact of proposed restoration and enhancement work (Fig. 2). The Scheduled Monument Consent imposed restrictions on the depth to which some of the trenches could be excavated. While no restrictions were applied to Trenches 8 and 10, all other trenches could only be excavated to a maximum depth of 650mm.
- 3.2** All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded to accepted professional standards using standard Archaeology South-East record forms.
- 3.3** A full photographic record of the work was kept and will form part of the site archive. The site archive is currently held by Archaeology South-East at the offices in Portslade, and will be offered to a suitable local Museum in due course. The archive consists of the following material:

Number of Contexts	78
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	4
Bulk Samples	-
Photographs	1 B&W film 1 colour slide film c.50 digital photos
Bulk finds	1 box
Brick Samples	1 box
Registered finds	3 items
Environmental flots/residue	-

Table 1: Quantification of Site Archive

RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1 (Figs. 2 and 3)

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
1/001	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	130mm
1/002	Deposit	Sand	170mm
1/003	Deposit	Made Ground	>400mm
1/004	Cut	Cable	n/a
1/005	Fill	Cable	n/a
1/006	Masonry		not known
1/007	Masonry		not known
1/008	Deposit	Brick Rubble	not known
1/009	Cut	Cable	n/a
1/010	Fill	Cable	n/a
1/011	Deposit	Backfill	not known
1/012	Deposit	Brick	150mm
1/013	Deposit	Flagstones	110mm

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 was located towards the eastern side of the fort, adjacent to an existing gate, in order to assess the potential impact of works to improve site access. Its position was slightly altered to avoid buried services and a local tree. It was excavated to a length of 8m. The Scheduled Monument Consent stipulated that the trench could only be a maximum of 650mm deep. Although the area had been disturbed during the laying of services, masonry remains survived.
- 4.1.2 The most significant remains encountered in the trench consisted of disturbed masonry at the north-western end. There was a substantial, 490mm wide yellow brick foundation, wall [1/012], apparently incorporating a step down onto a concrete surface, context [1/007], onto which a number of yellow bricks had been stacked (recorded as context [1/008]). The south-eastern extent of the concrete floor was marked by a 180mm wide concrete kerb, context [1/006], which ran north to south across the trench. Unfortunately the exact nature of the structure(s) could not be ascertained owing to the spatial limitations of the trial trench, and disturbance during the laying of a CCTV cable, context [1/010], in a c.200mm wide trench, cut [1/009].
- 4.1.3 Further investigations to the south-west of wall [1/012] were also hampered by the presence of the CCTV cable, but the area had been backfilled with a loose deposit of asphalt of unknown depth, context [1/011], which had been topped with flagstones, context [1/013] and bricks, context [1/012]. The surface deposit in this part of the fort (and the entire length of the trench) was loose black asphalt, context [1/001], which was a maximum of 130mm in thickness, through which the flagstones and brickwork was clearly visible in places at a height of 7.29mAOD.
- 4.1.4 To the north-east of concrete kerb, [1/006], there were further problems with services. A cable, contexted as cut [1/004], filled by context [1/005] ran at a right angle to the kerb. However it was possible to excavate the northern end of the trench down to a maximum depth of 550mm (6.32mAOD).

- 4.1.5 The earliest deposit at this end of the trench was context [1/003], a deposit of dark greyish brown topsoil mixed with brick rubble and sand, which was more than 400mm in thickness. It was overlain by a levelling deposit of yellow sand, context [1/002], which was a maximum of 170mm in thickness, onto which the surface asphalt, context [1/001] had been laid.

4.2 Trench 2 (Figs. 2 and 4)

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
2/001	Deposit	Made Ground	250mm
2/002	Masonry	Wall	-
2/003	Deposit	Made Ground	>250mm
2/004		NOT USED	-
2/005	Masonry	Wall	-
2/006	Deposit	Made Ground	not known
2/007	Masonry	Wall	-
2/008	Masonry	Wall	-
2/009	Masonry	Concrete	-
2/010	Masonry	Brick Structure	-
2/011	Deposit	Made Ground	>400mm
2/012	Fill	Post-Hole	150mm
2/013	Cut	Post-Hole	150mm
2/014	Deposit	Made Ground	not known
2/015	Masonry	Wall	-
2/016	Fill	Foundation	not known
2/017	Cut	Foundation	not known
2/018	Masonry	Wall	-
2/019	Masonry	Wall	-
2/020	Fill	?Well	not known
2/021	Fill	?Well	not known
2/022	Masonry	?Well	-
2/023	Cut	?Well	-
2/024	Deposit	Rammed Chalk	130mm
2/025	Deposit	Made Ground	>250mm

- 4.2.1 Trench T2 was also located towards the eastern edge of the site, adjacent to an existing gate, in order to assess the potential impact of works to improve site access. The Scheduled Monument Consent stipulated that the trench could only be a maximum of 650mm deep. The Yorkstone paving forming the surface deposit in the area was removed prior to the excavation of the trial trench. Masonry remains were encountered in the trench, and were manually cleaned and recorded

- 4.2.2 Mechanical excavation was halted at the south-eastern end of the trench owing to the presence of masonry encountered at a height of 7.83mAOD. At its shallowest point, 490mm below the surface of the flagstone surface, wall [02/005] consisted of a single thickness of red bricks bonded with a grey mortar which ran across the trench from north-west to south-east. No foundation cut was visible at the level at which the bricks were encountered. Wall [2/007] ran parallel to wall [2/005] and was of similar character. It is possible that the two features, which were 500mm apart, formed a drain, filled by context [2/006], a mid-brown garden soil mixed with brick rubble.

- 4.2.3 Immediately to the north-east of wall [2/007], a separate brick structure was

recorded. Structure [2/010] consisted of red bricks and was of uncertain dimensions.

- 4.2.4 Another wall was located further to the north. Wall [2/008] was also made up of a single thickness of red bricks on an identical orientation to walls [2/005] and [2/007]. This masonry appeared to butt up against a possible concrete footing, context [2/009] laid on a similar alignment, but slightly offset from forming a continuation of wall [2/008]. In the immediate vicinity there was a modern post-hole, which still contained part of a timber post set in concrete. Cut [2/013] was 600mm in diameter and 150mm deep. The fill consisted of a wooden post set in concrete (complete fill recorded as context [2/012]).
- 4.2.5 To the north there was a concentration of masonry remains. Walls [2/015] and [2/019] appeared to form the foundations/lower courses of a rectangular structure, and consisted of a double thickness of red bricks bonded with a strong grey mortar. The foundation trench of the structure was identifiable to the south as [2/017], but was of unknown extent and depth, although the backfill between the edge of the trench and wall [2/015] was visible at this level and was recorded as context [2/016], a dark brown silty clay of unknown thickness.
- 4.2.6 Further masonry including a part of a wall of similar construction to walls [2/015] and [2/019] was present within the fill of the structure, context [2/014], a greyish brown silty clay of unknown thickness. This deposit also sealed the walls. Wall [2/018] appeared to be *in situ*, and contained both red and yellow bricks bonded with a grey mortar, but further investigation of the structure would be needed to clarify this and to gain any meaningful insight into the exact nature of the masonry as a whole.
- 4.2.8 The relationship between wall [2/019] and another masonry feature, wall [2/022] was unclear. This masonry appeared circular in plan with a diameter of c.1.5m, and lay partially under the north-eastern baulk of the trench, in a construction cut of unknown dimensions, (cut [2/023]). The backfill between the edge of the construction cut and the masonry was identified and recorded as context [2/021], a chalky loam of unknown thickness. The fill within the masonry was context [2/020], a dark brown loamy possible garden soil of unknown depth.
- 4.2.9 The remaining c.1.15m of trench was excavated to a depth of 650mm (7.03mAOD), below the surface level of the paving. The earliest deposit at that end of the trench was context [2/025], which was partially truncated by cut [2/023]. It was a light brown clayey silt, which was more than 250mm in thickness. It was overlain by context [2/024], a deposit of 130mm thick rammed chalk, which was overlain in turn by context [2/001], the sand and asphalt levelling deposit for the removed paving slabs, which was a maximum of 250mm in thickness.
- 4.2.10 Other deposits were encountered and recorded in the section of the trench to the south. Context [2/011] was a dark brown silty clay, which was a more than 400mm in thickness. It directly overlay wall [2/022] and context [2/014]. It was directly overlain in turn by context [2/001], and was not present in section to the south of concrete [02/009].

4.2.11 At the southern end of the trench, the earliest deposit was context [2/003], a dark brown garden soil, which contained a small quantity of brick rubble. It was more than 250mm in thickness. It was overlain by context [2/001] and was partially truncated by an uninvestigated area of concrete, context [2/002] at the extreme southern end of the trench.

4.3 Trench 3

4.3.1 Trench 3 was located adjacent to the Chantry to investigate an area of raised paving in order to assess options for access and management in that area of the fort. It could not be excavated owing to the potential for damage to the foundations of the Chantry building.

4.4 Trench 4

4.4.1 Trench 4 was located in a sloping shrub bed at the western end of the Battery, in order to identify buried structures and assess their construction and state of repair. This trench could not be excavated as there was no means of safe access by machine, and it was thought unwise to auger a hole into deposits known to overlie a roof.

4.5 Trench T5 (Figs. 2 and 5)

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
5/001	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	140mm
5/002	Deposit	Sand/Gravel	270mm
5/003	Deposit	Made Ground	350mm
5/004	Deposit	Surface	90mm
5/005	Deposit	Made Ground	550mm
5/006	Deposit	Made Ground	>90mm

4.5.1 Trench 5 was located to the south of the Battery in an area of hard surfacing, in order to assess the character of underlying surfaces, with a view to lowering the existing hard surface to potentially alleviate flooding in the Battery. In order to avoid buried services, the trench was split in two (Trenches 5a and 5b), Trench 5a was 3m long and Trench 5b was 1.6m long; both of were excavated to a depth of 650mm.

4.5.2 The earliest deposit encountered in Trench 5a was context [5/003], a friable dark brown silty clay deposit, containing brick rubble, which was more than 350mm in thickness and continued below the level at which the excavation was halted (3.81mAOD). It was overlain by context [5/002], a yellowish grey mixture of sand and flint gravel, which was a maximum of 270mm in thickness. The surface deposit was context [5/001], a deposit of tarmac/asphalt which was a maximum of 140mm in thickness.

4.5.3 The earliest deposit encountered in Trench 5b was context [5/006], a dark brown silty clay containing brick rubble, of which only 90mm was exposed at the base of the trench, which was halted at 3.99mAOD. It was overlain by context [5/005], a creamy deposit of chalk and brick rubble, which was a maximum of 550mm in thickness. The surface deposit was context [5/004], a 90mm thick, light brown silty clay mixed with gravel.

4.6 Trench 6 (Figs, 2 and 6)

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
6/001	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	50mm
6/002	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	60mm
6/003	Deposit	Sand/gravel	250mm
6/004	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	170mm
6/005	Deposit	Rubble	not known
6/006	Deposit	Concrete	not known
6/007	Deposit	Drain	not known
6/008	Deposit	Drain	not known
6/009	Deposit	Brick Surface	not known
6/010	Deposit	Wall	not known
6/011	Deposit	Mortar	not known

- 4.6.1 Trench 6 was located close to the Battery with similar aims to that of Trench 5. It was shortened from the planned length to 3.8m to avoid buried services. Masonry was encountered at a depth of 480mm (4.66mAOD) adjacent to the standing building and at a depth of only 270mm (4.91mAOD) at the opposite end of the trench.
- 4.6.2 The masonry closest to the wall of the Battery consisted of a cast concrete slab, context [6/006], incorporating a semi-circular feature against the wall which had been backfilled with brick and tarmac rubble, context [6/005]. To the south-west of the concrete slab there was a 210mm deep, 200mm wide open drain, with concrete kerb stones on both sides, context [6/007]. Next to that there was a 400mm drain, which was topped with flagstones, context [6/008]. To the south-west, there was a laid brick surface, context [6/009], and then the masonry stepped up 140mm in the form of a yellow brick construction wall [6/010]. The wall was bonded with, and partially overlain by a deposit of yellow sandy mortar, context [6/011].
- 4.6.3 Much of the masonry was sealed by a layer of tarmac/asphalt, context [6/004], which overlay all of the masonry except wall [6/010] and the associated mortar, deposit [6/011]. It was a maximum of 170mm in thickness. It was overlain by context [6/003], a deposit of yellow sand and gravel, with a maximum thickness of 250mm, which directly overlay wall [6/010] and deposit [6/011]. It was overlain by context [6/002] a layer of tarmac/asphalt, which was a maximum of 60mm thick. The surface deposit was context [6/001], a 50mm thick layer of tarmac/asphalt.

4.7 Trench 7 (Figs. 2 and 7)

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
7/001	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	50mm
7/002	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	50mm
7/003	Deposit	Made Ground	70mm
7/004	Deposit	Made Ground	250mm
7/005	Deposit	Made Ground	300mm
7/006	Deposit	Made Ground	150mm
7/007	Deposit	Made Ground	60mm
7/008	Deposit	Made Ground	300mm
7/009	Masonry	Brickwork	-
7/010	Masonry	Concrete	-
7/011	Deposit	Crushed Chalk	>230mm
7/012	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	40mm
7/013	Masonry	Flagstones	70mm
7/014	Deposit	Made Ground	40mm
7/015	Masonry	Kerbstone	-

- 4.7.1 Trench 7 was located close to the Battery with similar aims to that of Trenches 5 and 6. It was shortened to a length of 6.5m from the planned length to avoid buried services. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 650mm. Masonry was encountered directly below the current 50mm thick asphalt/tarmac surface at a height of 5.09mAOD.
- 4.7.2 An apparently freestanding structure made up of yellow and red bricks bonded with a strong grey mortar, context [7/010], was encountered on the northern side of the trench. The exposed part was c.1.5 wide, and ran under the northern section of the trench. The masonry was constructed on a substantial concrete foundation, context [7/009]. There was no obvious construction cut.
- 4.7.3 The earliest deposit encountered in the trench was a layer of crushed chalk, context [7/011] encountered at the end adjacent to the Battery. It was more than 230mm in thickness. It was overlain by context [7/008], a mid-brown clay containing brick rubble, which was a maximum of 300mm in thickness. To the north-east of the encountered masonry it was directly overlain by context [7/012], a 40mm thick layer of tarmac/asphalt. The overlying deposit to the south-west of the masonry was context [7/007], a 60mm thick layer of greenish clay. It was in turn overlain by context [7/006], a layer of mid-brownish yellow clay, which was a maximum of 150mm in thickness.
- 4.7.4 The upper layers at the south-western end of the trench consisted of context [7/004], a mid-greyish brown clay containing brick rubble, which was a maximum of 250mm in thickness and overlay context [7/006]. Context [7/005], a deposit of tarmac and brick rubble, was a maximum of 300mm in thickness overlay context [7/004] and was in turn overlain by context [7/003], a layer of mid-brownish yellow clay containing brick rubble, which was a maximum thickness of 70mm at that end of the trench. Overlying this was [7/002], a 70mm thick layer of tarmac/asphalt. The surface layer was context [7/001], a 50mm thick layer of tarmac/asphalt.

4.7.5 The later stratigraphic sequence at the north-east end was only slightly different. Context [7/012] was overlain by context [7/004], which was 150mm thick at that point. It was directly overlain by context [7/003], which was 30mm thick and by the tarmac/asphalt deposits, contexts [7/002] and [7/001].

4.7.6 At the extreme north-eastern end of the trench, context [7/012] was overlain by a 40mm thick layer of brick rubble levelling, context [7/014], on to which a 70mm thick flagstone pavement, context [7/013], had been laid. This was overlain by a 40mm thick kerbstone, context [7/015], which was in turn overlain by the tarmac/asphalt surfacing, context [7/001]

4.8 Trench 8

4.8.1 Trench 8 was located with a raised shrub bed close to one of the existing emplacements in order to investigate the underlying masonry. This trench could not be excavated, owing to the danger of undermining the adjacent walkway.

4.9 Trench 9 (Figs. 2 and 8)

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
9/001	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	70mm
9/002	Deposit	Made Ground	300mm
9/003	Deposit	?Surface	Not known
9/004	Cut	Wall	-
9/005	Masonry	Wall	-
9/006	Masonry	Drain	-
9/007	Deposit	Made Ground	not known
9/008	Cut		-
9/009	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	not known
9/010	Deposit	Sand	not known

4.9.1 Trench 9 was located on the ramp leading up from the interior of the fort towards one of the magazines, in order to assess the potential archaeological implications of the introduction of a 'bench' to allow access for the disabled. It was excavated to its planned length of 12m, and to a depth of 260mm (8.82mAOD) at south-eastern end and to 460mm (7.45mAOD) at the north-western end.

4.9.2 Masonry in the form of a wall foundation was encountered at the south-eastern ('higher') end of the trench. The remains consisted of a 500mm wide construction trench, cut [9/004], which contained yellow bricks bonded with a yellow sandy mortar (context [9/005]). The wall had been cut into a deposit of crushed chalk and reddish brown clay, context [9/003]. Machining was halted at the surface of this deposit. A sondage was excavated near the masonry and this deposit was found to be more than 650mm in thickness.

4.9.3 Context [9/003] had been heavily disturbed at the north-western end. Cut [9/008] was a disturbance of unknown size which had been partially backfilled with a dump of sand, context [9/010] on which a layer of tarmac,

context [9/009] had been lain. At the north-western end of the trench the tarmac also appeared to overlay a deposit of dark greyish brown topsoil mixed with brick rubble, context [9/007]. Contexts [9/010] and [9/007] appeared to partially overlay a 220mm wide concrete drain, context [9/006].

- 4.9.4 All of the deposits encountered in trench were overlain by a mid-brown silty clay deposit containing brick rubble, context [9/002], which was a maximum of 300mm in thickness. It formed the make-up layer for the 70mm thick tarmac surface, context [9/001].

4.10 Trench 10 (Figs 2 and 9)

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
9/001	Deposit	Asphalt/Tarmac	50mm
9/002	Deposit	Concrete	60mm
9/003	Deposit	Made Ground	300mm
9/004	Deposit	Made Ground	650mm
9/005	Deposit	Made Ground	90mm
9/006	Deposit	Concrete	40mm
9/007	Deposit	?Surface	not known
9/008	Masonry	Wall	-
9/009	Masonry	Metal Door	-

- 4.10.1 Trench T10 was located adjacent to the Magazine in order to investigate the underlying deposits, with a view to creating a sloped access to the structure, which is currently only accessible by steps. It was shortened to 2.8m avoid unnecessary damage to a buried structure.
- 4.10.2 The earliest deposit encountered in the trench was context [10/007]. The exact characteristics of this deposit could not be ascertained owing to difficulties in recording a deposit encountered at a depth which made entering the trench unsafe, but it appeared to consist of a rammed orangey brown silty clay with brick rubble, perhaps making up a surface. It was encountered at a depth of 1.77m (4.74mAOD). It was partially overlain by context [10/006], a 20mm to 40mm thick layer of concrete forming a hard surface.
- 4.10.3 These deposits were overlain by context [10/005], a c.900mm thick deposit of brick rubble. This was overlain by context [10/004], a more crushed brick rubble, which was a maximum of c.650mm in thickness. This was in turn overlain by context [10/003], a c.300mm thick layer of loose, ashy silt. This was overlain by context [10/002], a 60mm thick layer of concrete, which was overlain by the 50mm thick surface deposit of Yorkstone paving slabs (context 10/001).
- 4.10.4 However, the most significant discovery was that of a brick wall at the western end of the trench, which contained a door, apparently leading to a previously unrecorded room. The depth of the trench and danger of collapse negated the opportunity to record the structural elements in detail. The wall, context [10/008] consisted of yellow bricks laid in an English Bond pattern, bonded with a strong grey mortar, and incorporated a number of air bricks. There was also a doorway with a hinged metal door, context [10/009].

5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 A small assemblage of finds, mainly consisting of ceramic building material (CBM), was recovered during the archaeological work. An overview can be found in Tables 2 and 4.

Context	Pot	Wt (g)	CBM	Wt (g)	Bone	Wt (g)	Shell	Wt (g)	Stone	Wt (g)	Fe	Wt (g)	Glass	Wt (g)	CTP	Wt (g)
T1	4	42	4	1532			1	2	1	4					1	<2
1/008			2	4232												
T2	12	212	7	2950	4	168	1	<2			1	26	1	2	2	6
T5A	3	114	2	50	3	30	1	10							40	98
T5B			6	11896												
T9			2	1644												
T10			2	2214												
Total	19	368	25	24518	7	198	3	12	1	4	1	26	1	2	43	104

Table 2: Finds Quantification

5.2 The Pottery by Luke Barber

5.2.1 The archaeological work recovered three small unstratified assemblages of post-medieval pottery. Despite this the material often consists of relatively large (to 50mm across) sherds of unabraded pottery suggesting the assemblage has not been subjected to repeated reworking. The entire site assemblage can be placed between c.1780 and 1830.

5.2.2 Trench 1 produced single sherds of glazed buff earthenware, unglazed earthenware flower pot, pearlware and transfer-printed pearlware, the latter with a blue Chinese style landscape.

5.2.3 Trench 2 produced more material of similar types. These include single sherds from an unglazed earthenware flower pot and a glazed red earthenware storage jar along with three sherds of transfer-printed pearlware (again with blue Chinese landscape design). This trench also produced seven fragments of creamware, including pieces from plates (side/dinner) and a small preserve jar.

5.2.4 Trench 5A produced only three sherds: two glazed red earthenware jar fragments of later 18th- century type and a small piece of pearlware

5.3 The Ceramic Building Material by Sarah Porteus

5.3.1 A total of 25 fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing a total of 24484g were recovered, all but two brick samples from context [1/008] were unstratified. The material was all of post-medieval date (Table 3).

5.3.2 Fabric types were identified with the aid of a binocular microscope and compared with the Museum of London (MoL) fabric type series where possible. The CBM was recorded on standard pro forma recording forms

and transferred to an Excel database for the archive.

- 5.3.3 The brick is entirely of post-medieval date with a range of fabrics identified. The earliest bricks present are the MoL3032 and MoL3035 bricks. MoL3032 is a dark red brick containing domestic rubbish such as bone and ash. The examples from New Tavern Fort are frogged, suggesting a mid 18th century or later date when frogs became more common in bricks. The red bricks are likely to have been made at brickfields near London. The MoL3035 bricks are yellow Kentish 'stock' bricks and came into production after 1770 and cease to be produced in 1950.
- 5.3.4 Brick in fabric MoL3038 from context [1/008] is a with coarse chunky silt fabric with occasional fine calcareous inclusions and sparse iron rich inclusions and is of probable 20th century production. Provisional brick fabric B1 is a with coarse chunky silt fabric with occasional fine calcareous inclusions and sparse iron rich inclusions. Brick in fabric B1 is very dense with vitrified stretcher on one side perhaps indicating use within a structure exposed to high temperatures. Provisional fabric B2 is red fine sandy fabric with fine cream silt inclusions, the bricks are far thinner than standard bricks with an abraded upper surface suggesting flooring bricks.

Trench	Context	Fabric	Date Range	Size	Comments
1	U/S	MoL3035	1770-1950	?x110x68	Very shallow frog.
1	1/008	MoL3035 MoL3038	1770-1950 1900+	215x111x68 216x104x64	Well formed frog 'EASTWOOD FLETTON 27' stamped in frog.
2	U/S	MoL3035	1770-1950	?x104x67	Shallow frog
5B	U/S	B1 B2 MoL3035	1800+ 1800+ 1770-1950	?x135x62 215x104x39 233x102x68	Vitrified stretcher, very heavy brick Abraded upper surface, possible floor brick Shallow frog with 'l' stamped in frog.
9	U/S	MoL3032 MoL3035	1750-1950 1770-1950	?x108x66 ?x ? x ?	Shallow poorly formed frog Shallow poorly formed frog

Table 3: Brick samples with date by trench and context

- 5.3.5 Other CBM recovered from site included a small quantity of unstratified peg tile was recovered from trenches 1, 2 and 5A. The peg tile is all of post-medieval date and the fabrics have been recorded as part of the archive. A single fragment of salt glazed earthenware pipe of 19th or 20th century date and a fragment of probable porcelain tile were recovered from Trench 2.

5.4 The Clay Tobacco Pipe by Elke Raemen

- 5.4.1 A total of 46 clay tobacco pipe (CTP) fragments were recovered from four different trenches. All pieces are unstratified. Bowls were classified according to the London 'Chronology of Bowl Types' by Atkinson and Oswald (1969, 177-180).
- 5.4.2 Of these, 39 consist of plain stem fragments, the earliest two pieces dating to the second half of the 17th century (Trench 5A). Fragments dating to the late 17th to mid 18th century were recovered from Trench 2 and 5A. All other pieces are of mid 18th- to 19th-century date.
- 5.4.3 Three bowls were recovered, as well as four small fragments. The latter four (Trench 5A) represent a minimum of two bowls, one of which is of 18th- and the second of 19th-century date.
- 5.4.4 Three further bowls were assigned unique Registered Finds numbers (RF

<00>) as all contained maker's marks (Table 4). The earliest of these (RF <1>) is of 18th-century date (?AO25; c. 1700-70) and retains the initials "RS" on the spur. These may refer to Richard Sutton (1699-1731) who worked in Gravesend (Oswald 1975, 176).

- 5.4.5 RF <2> consists of a bowl (c 85% surviving) with maker's initials on heel. The bowl is an AO27 (c. 1780-1820). The initials "TW" are likely to refer to Thomas Webb who was registered in Rochester c. 1780 (Oswald 1975, 176; Williams 1979, no. 11 for an identical pipe).
- 5.4.6 Finally, RF <3> consists of a stem with surviving heel. The piece is probably an ?AO25 (c. 1700-70). Maker's initials on the heel are present but illegible.

Trench	RF No.	Object	Material	Wt. (g)	Period	Date	Form	Maker's Marks
5A	1	PIPE	CERA	14	PMED	1700-70	?AO25	RS
2	2	PIPE	CERA	6	PMED	1820-60	AO27	TW
9	3	PIPE	CERA	6	PMED	1700-70	?AO25	Illegible

Table 4: Summary of the Registered Finds.

5.5 The Animal Bone by Gemma Ayton

- 5.5.1 A total of seven fragments of animal bone were recovered from trenches 2 and 5A. The assemblage consists primarily of sheep-sized and cattle sized rib and long bone fragments. One fragment of unfused cattle femur was also recovered. The femur had been sawn mid-shaft indicating that the bone is the remains of butchery waste. No other signs of butchery, burning, gnawing or pathology were recorded.
- 5.5.2 The assemblage is small and unstratified and therefore holds no potential for further analysis.

5.6 Other Finds by Elke Raemen

- 5.6.1 A single piece of pale green window glass dating to the 19th to early 20th century was recovered from the topsoil in Trench 2. The same trench also contained an unstratified heavy duty iron nail of undeterminable date. A Welsh slate fragment was recovered from Trench 1 (unstratified).
- 5.6.2 Three shell fragments were also recovered. All consist of oyster shell, with an upper valve from Trench 1, an undiagnostic fragment from Trench 2 and an immature lower valve from 5A. All are unstratified. The latter valve exhibits some minor parasitic activity.
- 5.6.3 In addition a small quantity of metalwork recovered from the overburden of Trench 10 was retained by Victor Smith of Thames Defence Heritage.

6.0 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The evaluation of the site by mechanically excavated trial trenches led to the identification of a number of buried archaeological deposits, all post-medieval in date. A range of remains of masonry structures was identified, often close to the current surfaces within the fort.
- 6.2 Although no features that could be positively dated before the foundation of the fort in the 18th century were encountered, a small assemblage of residual clay pipes dated to the 17th century could arguably be linked with the presence of the contemporary tavern from which the site takes its name.
- 6.3 However, all of the encountered masonry and associated deposits date from the utilisation of the site for military purposes, supported by the date range of c.1780 and 1830 given for the pottery. Although much the recovered material would not be out of place in a more domestic setting, this is to be expected given the garrison's need for food, drink and shelter, and the paucity of evidence of military activity which is the norm on sites such as aerodromes, medieval castles or Roman forts (de la Bedoyère 2000, 135).
- 6.4 Much of the evidence is somewhat enigmatic. The function of the block of masonry encountered in Trench 7 remains a mystery, as does the raised brick area in Trench 6. It was also noticeably higher than the paving and drains in the same trench. Similarly the purpose of the wall found in Trench 10 remains obscure. The deposits at the northern end of this trench are also somewhat baffling, perhaps suggesting some form of ?subsidence, backfilled with sand, tarmac and soil.
- 6.5 The remains encountered in Trenches 1 are perhaps more easy to interpret, given that structures in this part of the site are visible in an aerial photograph of the 1950s and in cartographic sources (ACTA 2009, Fig. 5 and Fig. 12). It would appear that the buildings were demolished in the late 1960s (*ibid.* 15). A plan of 1909 (also reproduced in ACTA 1909, Fig. 3) shows the buildings in the vicinity in some detail, and the masonry encountered in Trench 1 appears to be part of a structure containing a kitchen and living room, and perhaps an associated yard.
- 6.6 The structures encountered at the northern end of Trench 2 are also shown in the 1909 plan, and the area of the trench containing the parallel walls found to the south lay in the garden of *Fort House* at that time. Hence the walls and/or drain might be features associated with the ornamental garden.
- 6.7 An intriguing discovery was that of the 'secret room' in Trench 10. Although it is unfortunate that it could not be investigated owing to the depth of the overburden adjacent to it, it is nevertheless a find of some significance. The room appears to have been sealed by the 1950s (Victor Smith *pers. comm.*) and may offer an intriguing example of the so-called '*Pompeii premise*' (Binford 1981), by providing evidence of an abandoned, sealed location, literally stopped in time.
- 6.8 Unfortunately the issues arising from the location of a number of the

trenches, and the limitations in terms of area and depth of those that could be excavated, limits the conclusions that can be drawn. Clearly a range of masonry remains survive at the site at a comparatively shallow level below the current surface (in fact, some encountered in Trench 1 form part of the current surface).

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1** The partial evaluation of the site by mechanically excavated trial trenches was shown to be an appropriate methodology and lead to the identification of a number of buried archaeological features.
- 7.2** As part of Archaeology South-East's continuing commitment to Widening Participation and Public Engagement, an Open Day was held at the site on Saturday 5th December.

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The input of Alison Nailer, Project Manager, Gravesham Borough Council at all stages of the project is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks are also due to Victor Smith and other members of Thames Defence Heritage for their hospitality and for the provision of valuable information and about the fort and its environs.

SMR Summary Form

Site Code	NTF 09					
Identification Name and Address	New Tavern Fort Gardens					
County, District &/or Borough	Gravesham Borough, Kent					
OS Grid Reference.	NGR 56529 17427					
Geology	Upper Chalk/Alluvium (not encountered)					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4103					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. ✓	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other <i>Scheduled Ancient Monument</i>		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. Nov. 2009 – Dec. 2009	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Gravesham Borough Council					
Project Manager	Jon Sygrave/Darryl Palmer					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other		
100 Word Summary.						
<p>An archaeological evaluation by mechanically excavated trial trenches was undertaken within the historic Thameside fort in advance of a programme of restoration. Although no features predating the foundation of the fort in the 18th century were uncovered, deposits and structures relating to use of the fort were revealed and investigated. The most notable discovery was that of a 'secret room' close to one of the magazines. Unfortunately this could not be investigated on grounds of Health and Safety.</p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-73099

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at New Tavern Fort Gardens, Gravesend, Kent
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation within the historic Thameside fort uncovered evidence relating to previous use of space within the enclosed area, and a small number of post-medieval artefacts. The most notable discovery was that of a 'secret room' close to one of the magazines. Unfortunately this could not be investigated on grounds of Health and Safety.
Project dates	Start: 23-11-2009 End: 02-12-2009
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	NTF 09 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	4103 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	FORT Post Medieval
Monument type	FORT Modern
Significant Finds	STRUCTURE Modern
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Building refurbishment/repairs/restoration
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent
Position in the planning process	Pre-application

Project location

Country	England
Site location	KENT GRAVESHAM GRAVESEND New Tavern Fort
Postcode	DA12 2BH

Study area	1.00 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 6529 7427 51.4427401109 0.378667306734 51 26 33 N 000 22 43 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 5.00m Max: 7.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Gravesham Borough Council
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Jon Sygrave
Project supervisor	Simon Stevens
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Gravesham Borough Council

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	local museum
Physical Contents	'Ceramics','Metal'
Digital Archive recipient	local museum
Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	local museum
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Drawing','Map','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Publication type

Title An Archaeological Evaluation at New Tavern Fort, Gravesend, Kent

Author(s)/Editor(s) Stevens, S

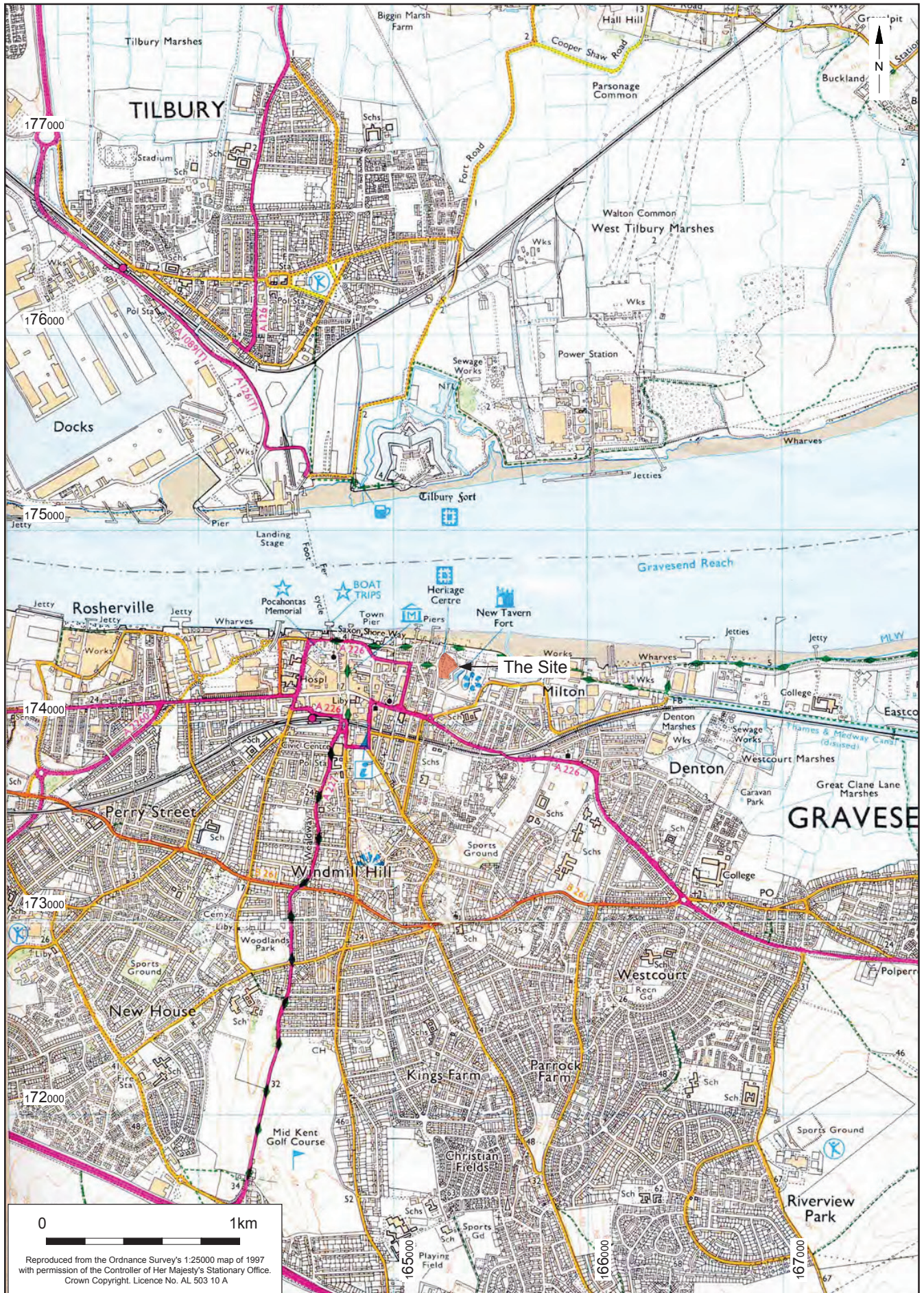
Other bibliographic ASE Report No. 2009195
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Date 2010

Issuer or publisher Archaeology South-East

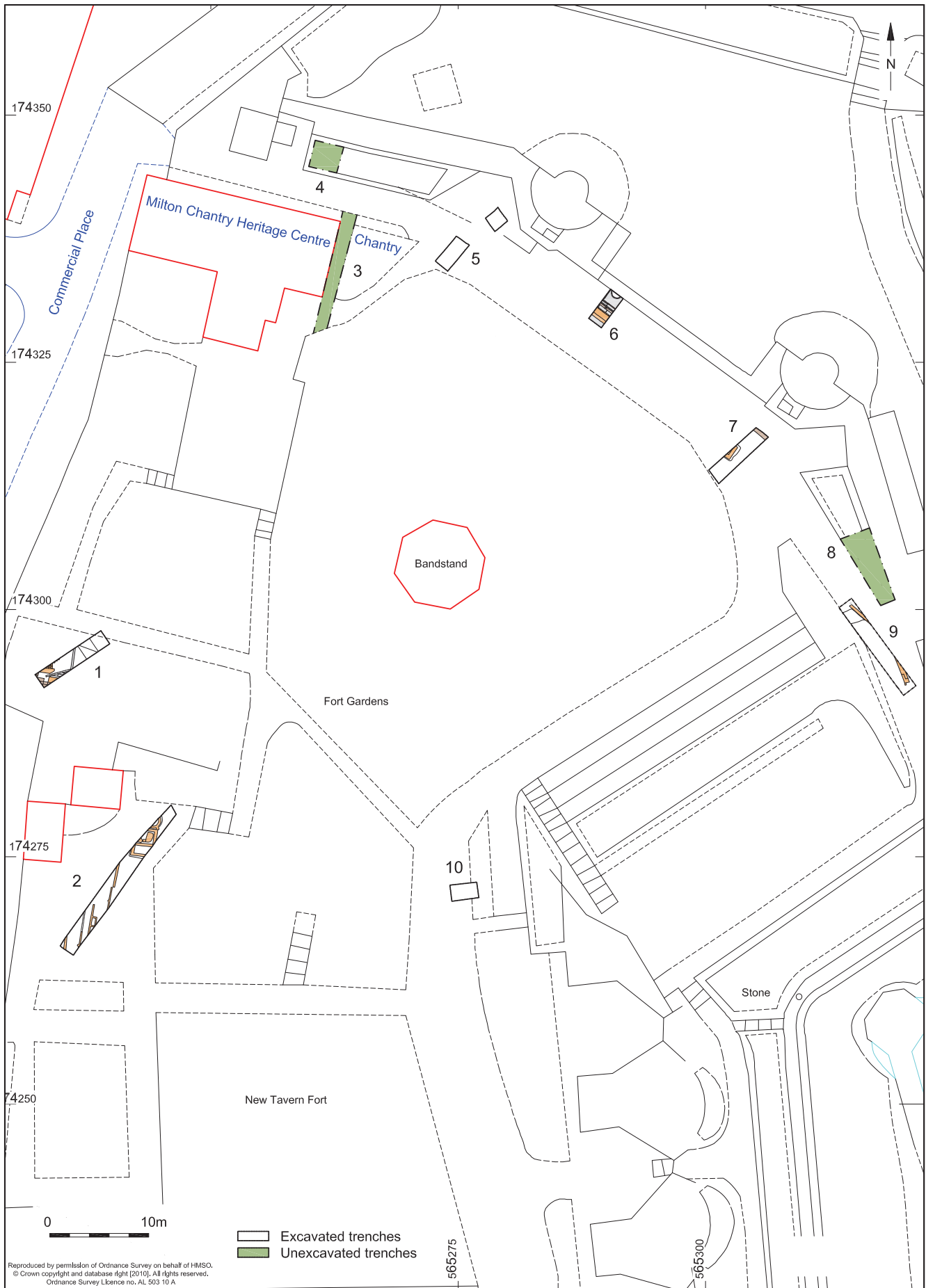
Place of issue or Portslade, East Sussex
publication

Description Standard ASE Client Report - A4-sized with cover logos.

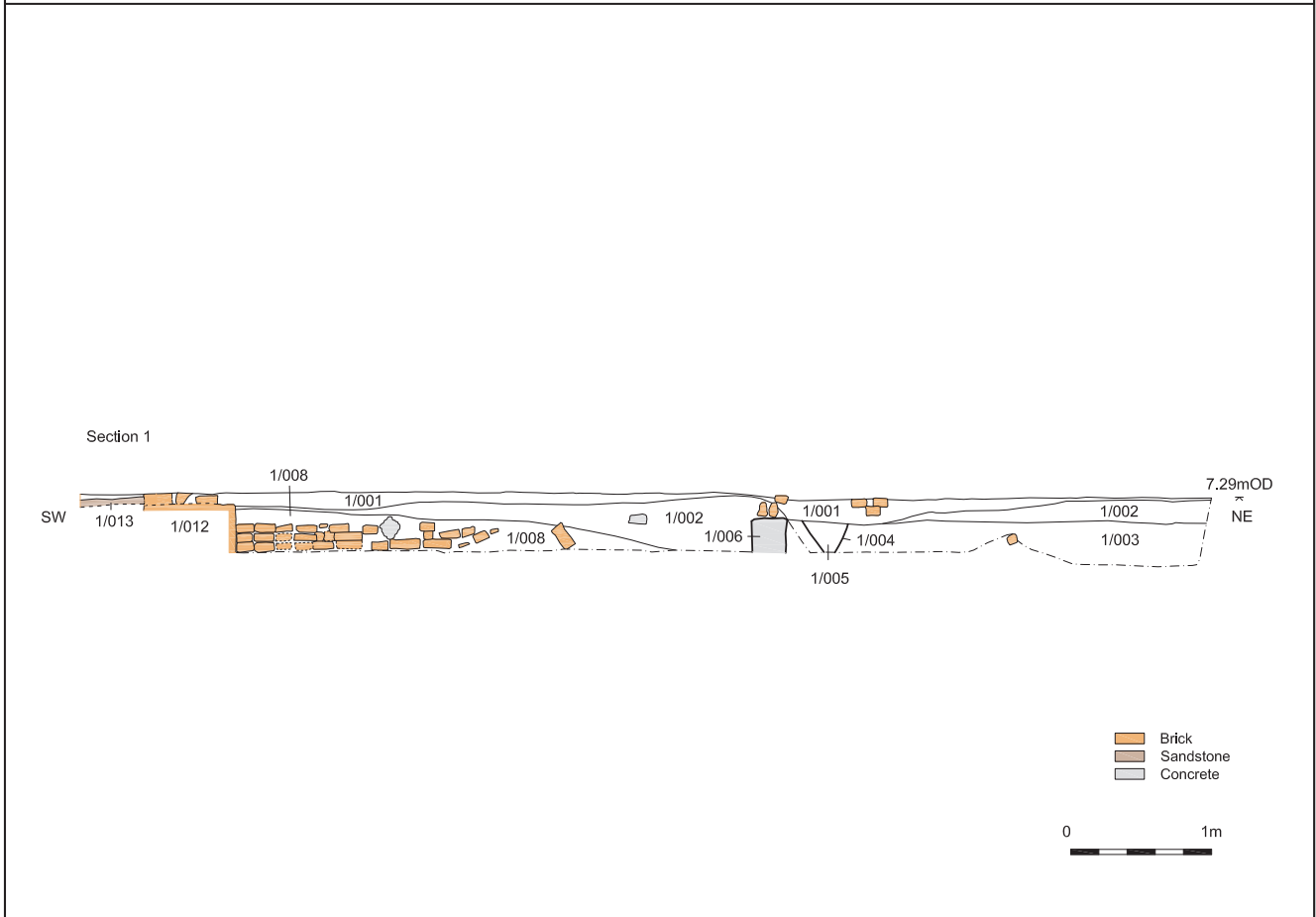
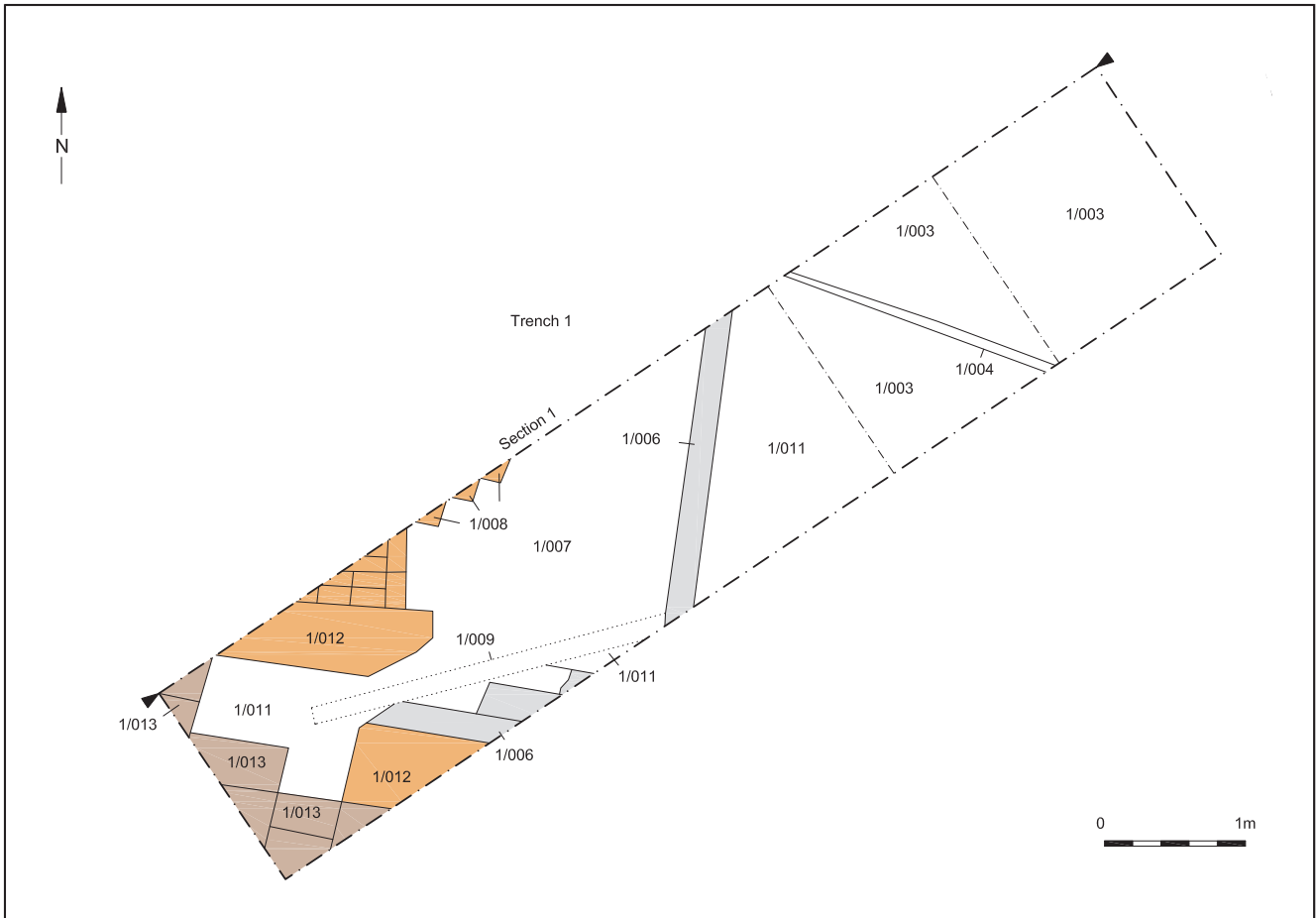


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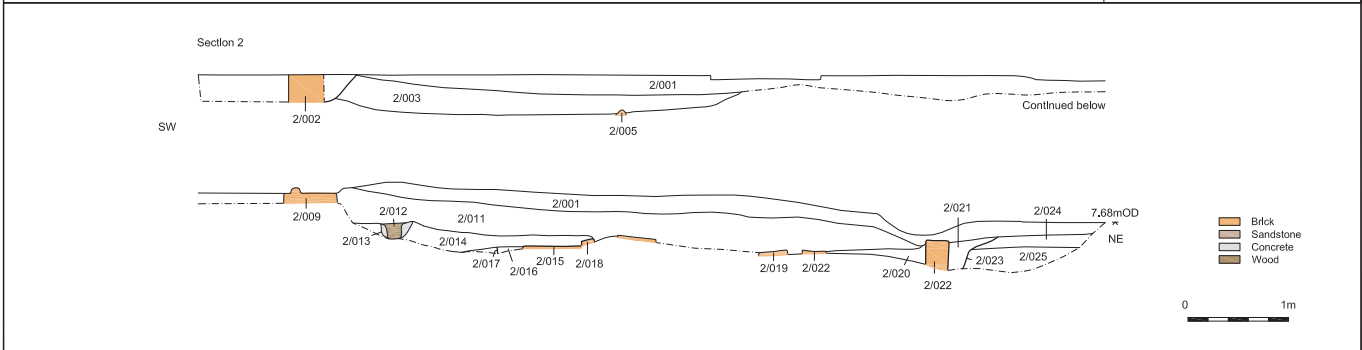
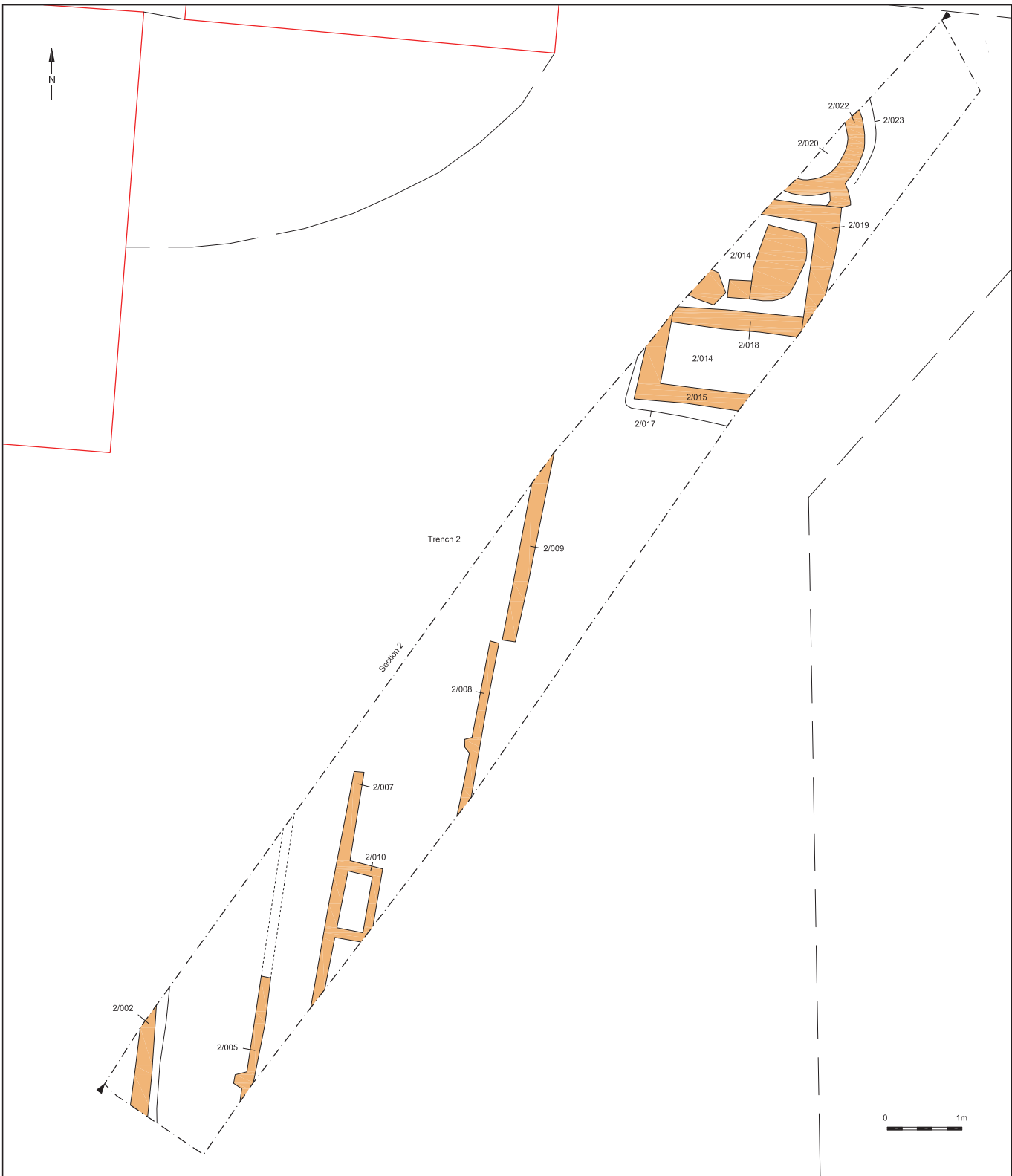
© Archaeology South-East		New Tavern Fort Gardens, Gravesend		Fig. 1
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Report Ref: 2009195	Drawn by: JLR			

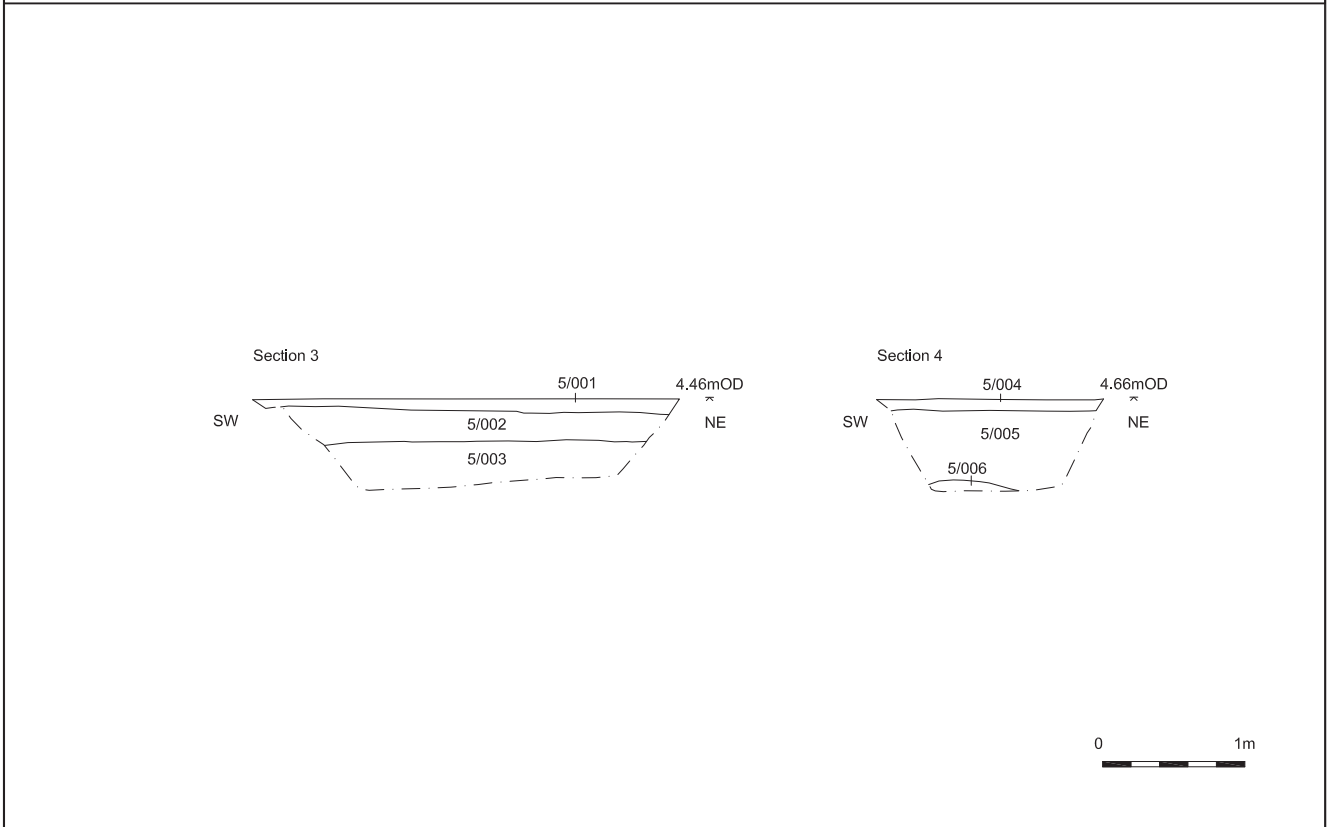
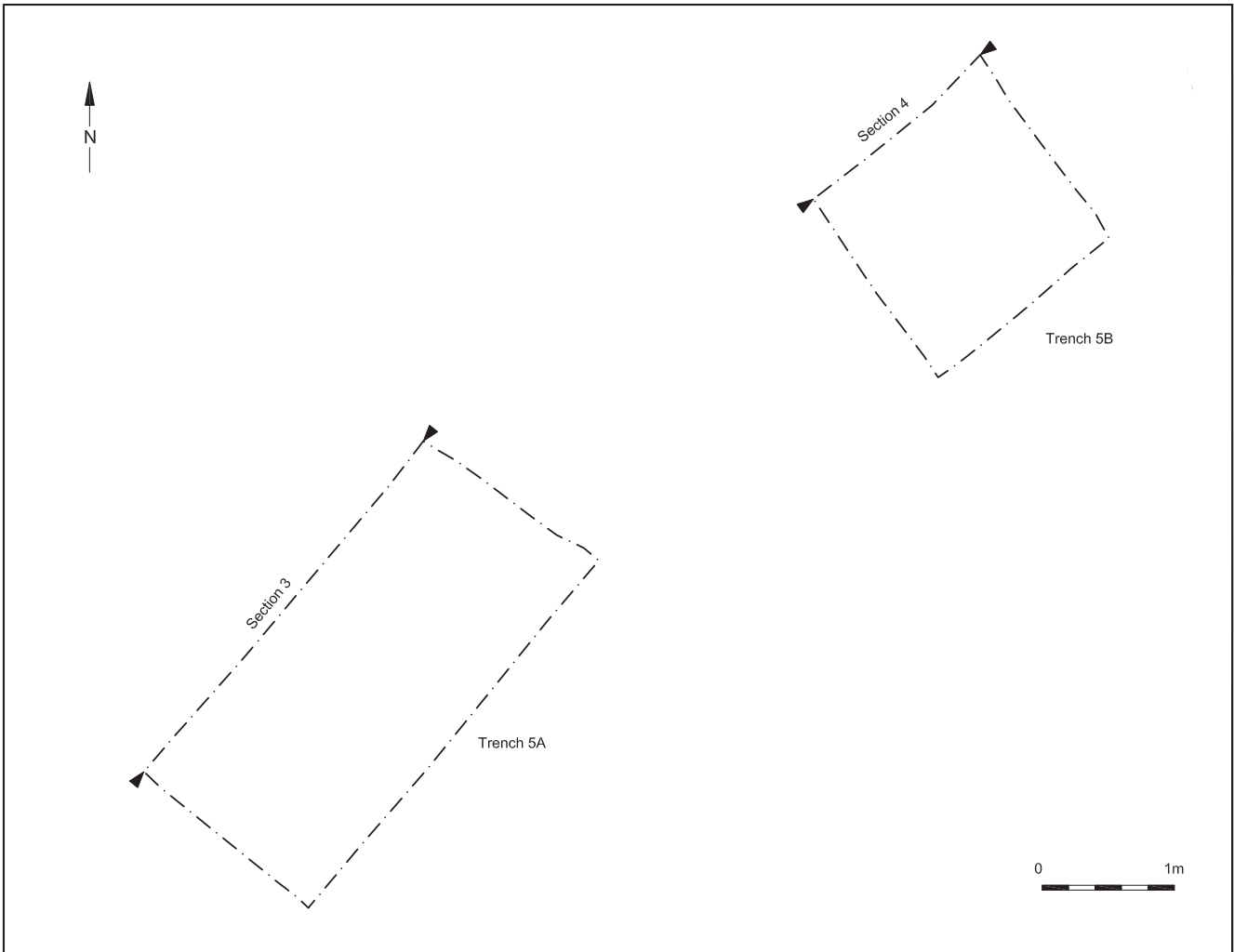


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Report Ref: 2009195	Drawn by: JLR			

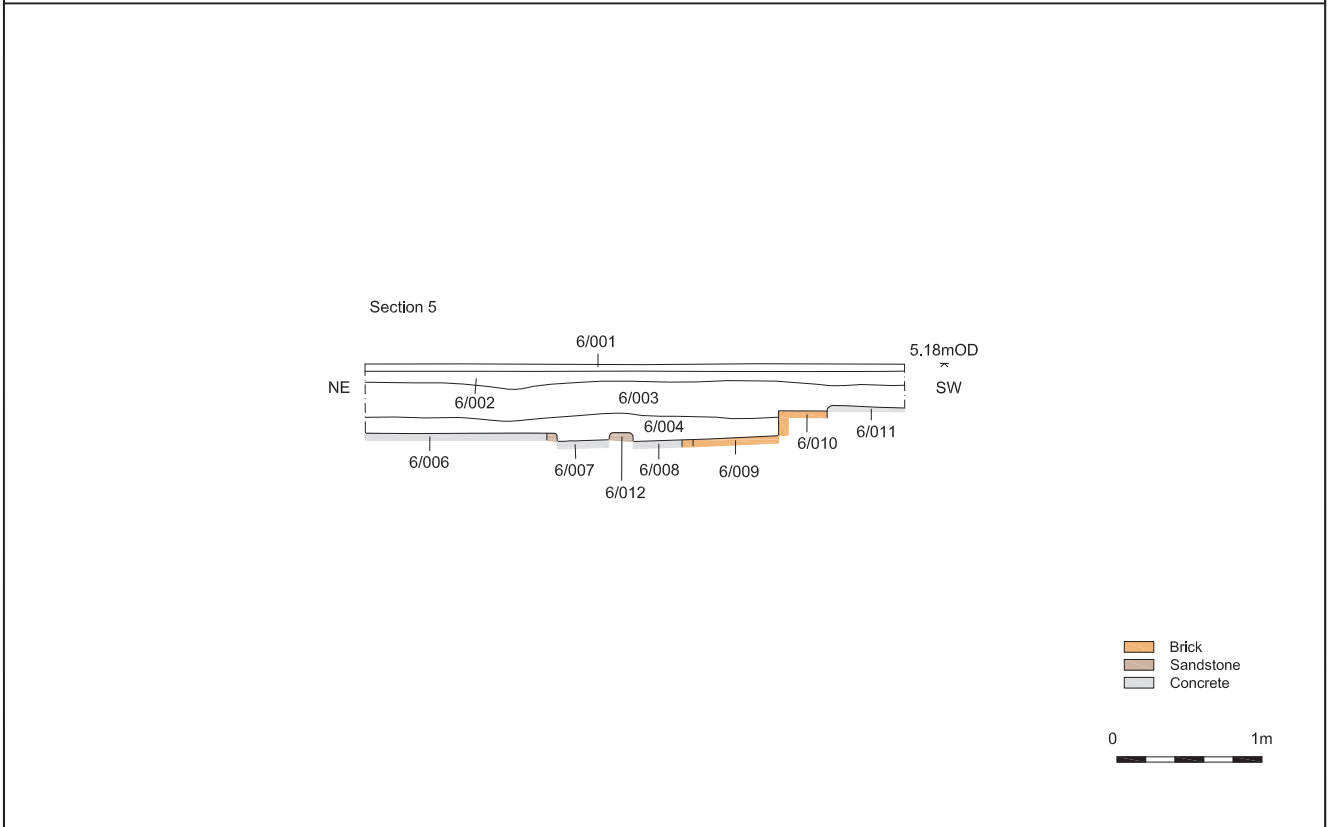


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Project Ref: 4103	March 2010	Trench 1: Plan and section		
Report Ref: 2009195	Drawn by: JLR			

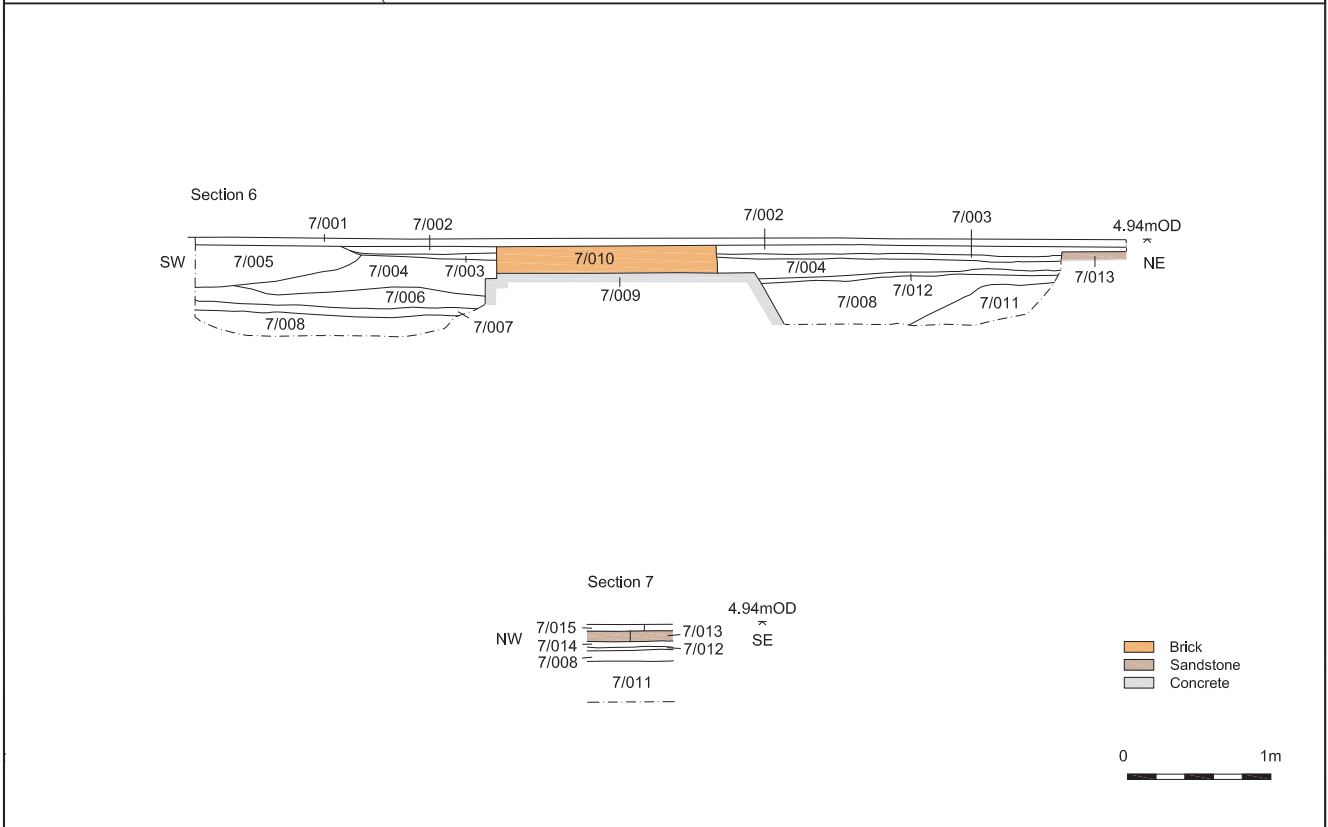
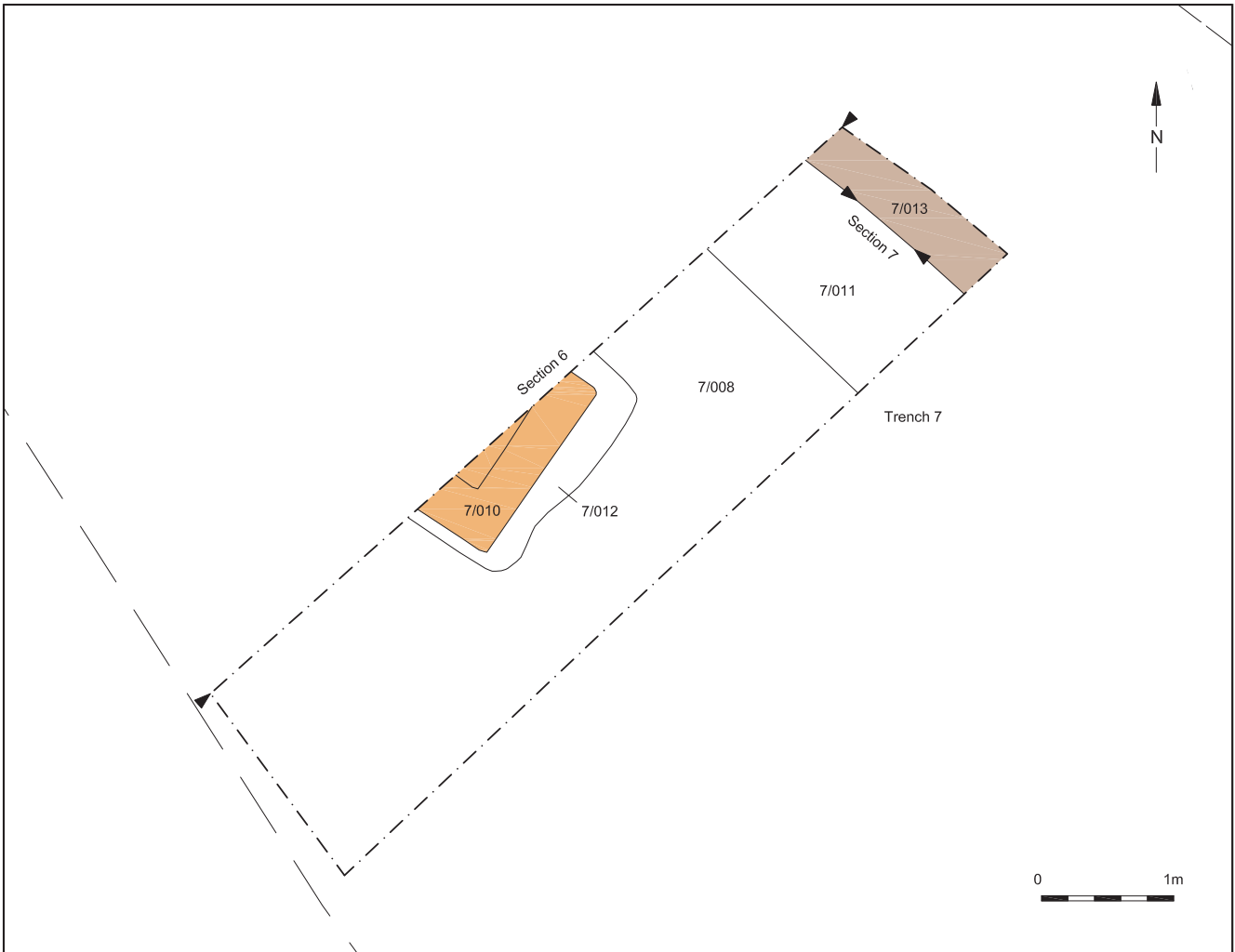




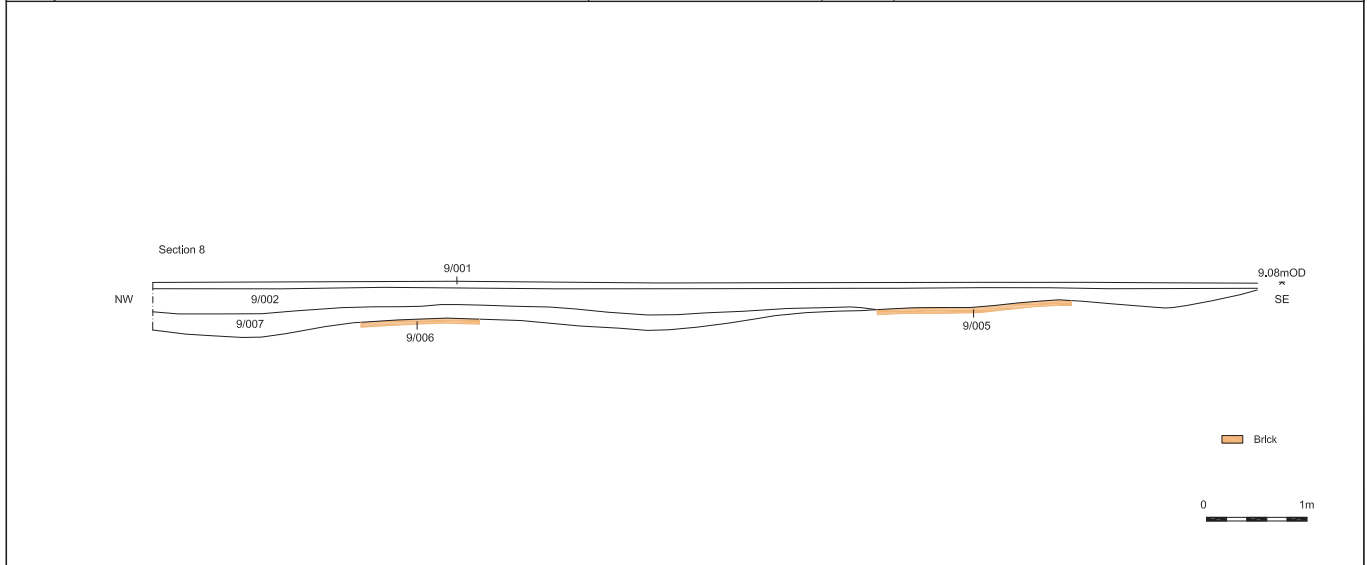
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Project Ref: 4103	March 2010	Trench 5: Plan and sections		
Report Ref: 2009195	Drawn by: JLR			

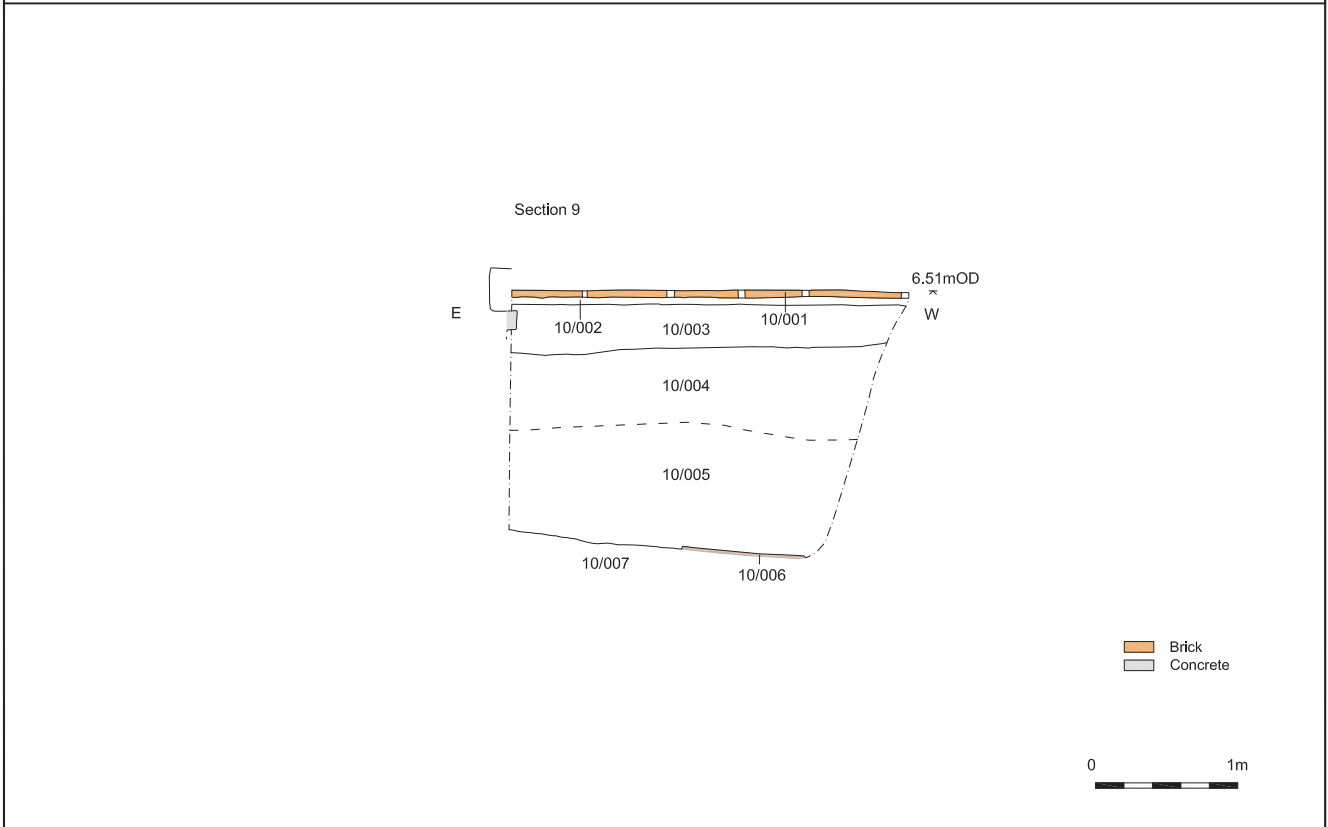
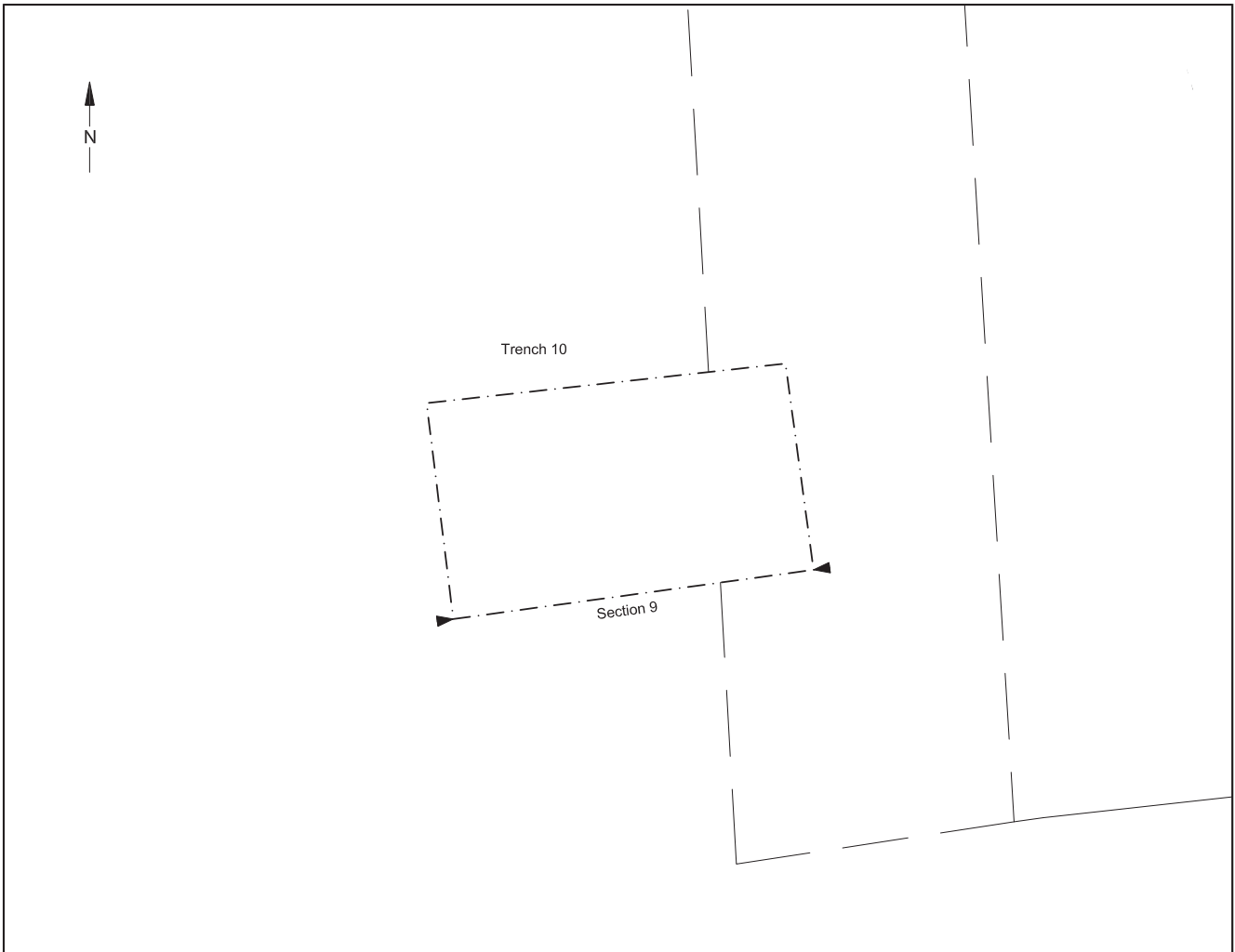


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Report Ref: 2009195	Drawn by: JLR		



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Project Ref: 4103	March 2010	Trench 7: Plan and sections	
Report Ref: 2009195	Drawn by: JLR		





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Project Ref: 4103	March 2010	Trench 10: Plan and section	
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