

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Rodmell Primary School,
The Street, Rodmell, East Sussex**

NGR 542126 106236

**Project No. 4488
Site Code: RPS 10**

Lewes District Council Planning Reference LW/10/0300

**ASE Report No. 2010114
OASIS ID: archaeol6-80650**

**by
Simon Stevens BA MIFA**

August 2010

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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with the erection of an extension to the existing school building. Mechanical and manual excavations of strip footings were monitored. No significant archaeological deposits, features or finds were encountered.

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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 by Flece and Guy partnership Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the erection of an extension to Rodmell Primary School, The Street, Rodmell, East Sussex (NGR 542128 106236) (Fig. 1).

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The school lies on the south-eastern side of The Street, (from which it is approached by a narrow passageway), to the south of St. Peters Church in the heart of the settlement of Rodmell. It is bounded by properties fronting onto South Farm Close to the south, and by *Charmes Cottage* to the west. There are open fields to the east, and the current course of the River Ouse lies c.1km in that direction.

1.2.2 According to the British Geological Survey 1: 50 000 map of the area (sheet 319, *Lewes*), the underlying geology at the site consists of River Terrace Deposits associated with the River Ouse.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Planning permission was granted by Lewes District Council for the erection of a single storey extension to the existing school building (planning reference LW/10/0300). Following consultation between Lewes District Council and East Sussex County Council (Lewes District Council's advisers on archaeological issues) a condition (No. 3) was attached to the permission requiring that:

'No development shall take place within the area indicated (this would be the area of archaeological interest) until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has/have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, including a timetable for the investigation, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be carried out in accordance with that approval.'

Reason: To enable the recording of any items of historical or archaeological interest, as the development is likely to disturb remains of archaeological interest, in accordance with requirements within PPS5 'Planning for the Historic Environment' and Policy BE6 of the South East Plan: Regional Spatial Strategy for the South-East'

- 1.3.2 A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was duly produced by ASE. This document outlined the methodologies to be used during monitoring at the site, and in the subsequent reporting and archiving of the results (ASE 2010).

1.4 Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The objectives and aims given in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2010, 2) were 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.'

1.5 Scope of Report

- 1.5.1 The current report provides results of the archaeological monitoring of groundworks at the site carried out during late July and early August 2010. The work was undertaken by Giles Dawkes, Greg Priestley-Bell and Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologists), and by Kathy Grant (Archaeologist). The project was managed by Andy Leonard (Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson (Post-Excavation Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The village of Rodmell is thought to have Anglo-Saxon origins, although the Old English name *red-melde* (meaning *red earth*) may be reference to the survival of Romano-British saltworking in the vicinity, which can leave mounds of reddened material (Thorburn 2009, 3). Eleven salthouses were in operation in the parish by the time of the Domesday survey of 1086 (*ibid.*).
- 2.2 By the time of the Subsidy Roll of 1332, there were 42 tax payers in Rodmell. (*ibid.*).The village apparently continued to prosper, despite plague and war, perhaps partially based on the saltworking industry, and by 1598 there were 36 dwellings, 19 gardens and 11 barns (*ibid.*). Surveys of 1829 and the Tithe Map of 1839 (both partially reproduced in Thorburn 2009) show the village much as it is today, although the current site of the school was not occupied. The original school building at the site was erected in 1856 at a total cost of £150, and is a Grade II listed building. There have been substantial additions to this building during the twentieth century. (The Conservation Studio, 2007, 7-9)
- 2.3 Virtually no reported archaeological work has been undertaken in the village, and recent work at Monk's House to the north-west of the current site did not produce definitive evidence of material predating the 18th century. However, arguably the recovery of daub, although undated, may suggest the presence of buildings of some antiquity in the immediate vicinity (ASE 2009).
- 2.4 There are 35 listed buildings in the village. All are listed Grade II (including the original building at the site), except for St. Peter's Church, which has a Grade I listing (The Conservation Studio, 2007, 13).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Mechanical and manual excavations of the foundations of the new structure were monitored. All sections were examined for the presence of archaeological features, and all spoil was scanned for the presence of archaeological artefacts.
- 3.2 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded to accepted professional standards using standard Archaeology South-East context record forms. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 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	13
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	1
Bulk Samples	-
Photograph	20 digital images
Bulk finds	1 bag
Registered finds	-
Environmental flots/residue	-

Table 1: Quantification of Site Archive

4.0 RESULTS (Fig. 3)

Context Number	Type	Description	Thickness (mm)
1	Layer	Tarmac	50
2	Cut	Modern Services	600+
3	Fill	Backfill of modern service trench	600+
4	Layer	Mixed Garden Soil	100
5	Deposit	Light brownish grey silt with flint rubble	500+
6	Deposit	Light brownish grey silt	500+
7	Cut (not seen)	Foundation cut for wall [8]	-
8	Masonry	Flint with occasional brick and tile	400-500
9	Natural	Orange brown silt clay	-
10	Cut	Modern disturbance	600+
11	Layer	Modern paving slabs	50
12	Layer	Concrete	80
13	Layer	Modern Brick rubble	300

Table 2: List of recorded Contexts

- 4.1 The mechanical and manual excavation of the single foundation trench was monitored. It was 600mm wide and a maximum of 1.1m deep, and was located on the eastern side of the existing school building. The surface deposit for the northern and eastern trenches was a 50mm thick layer of tarmac, Context [01]. This directly overlay a 100mm thick deposit of brick rubble mixed with ?garden soil, Context [04], forming a levelling/make-up layer for the tarmac.
- 4.2 There was considerable disturbance from recently laid services and thick roots in the northern trench, which was 600mm in depth. Close to the junction of the northern and eastern trenches Context [04] overlay a light brownish grey silty deposit, Context [06], but further to the west this material contained a high concentration of flint rubble, (recorded separately as Context [05]). There was no mortar adhered to the flint, suggesting it did not form part of a wall. The junction between these two clearly different deposits was obscured by thick roots. Both of the deposits extended to the base of the trench.
- 4.3 A service trench, Cut [02], which contained live services had been excavated through Contexts [04] and [06] down to the base of the trench at the junction of the northern and eastern trenches. Its full extent was unclear, and it had been backfilled with 'Type 1' material, Context [03]. The disturbance from services in this area was also recorded as Context [10].
- 4.4 The foundation trench which ran north to south furthest from the existing building contained the remains of the footings of a demolished wall. The upper deposits were similar to those encountered in the northernmost trench (i.e. Context [01], tarmac and Context [04]). Masonry [08] was encountered below Context [04] at a depth of 150mm below the existing surface. It consisted predominantly of flint, but with occasional inclusions of brick and tile (see Section 5.0 below) bonded with a strong lime mortar. The masonry ran the entire length of the trench, but protruded less than 100mm into the eastern edge of it. It was 400mm - 500mm in thickness. The construction cut

for the masonry, Cut [07] could not be detected in the narrow confines of the trench, but it had apparently been excavated into the underlying orangery brown silty clay 'natural', Context [09]. The trench was a maximum depth of 900mm.

- 4.5 The western section of north to west trench and the trenches closer to the school building all displayed a straightforward stratigraphic sequence, as the area had apparently been stripped down to the surface of the 'natural' prior to the laying of the modern surface. Closer to the building the surface was made up of 50mm thick paving slabs, Context [11], which overlay a 80mm thick layer of concrete, Context [12], which in turn overall a 300mm thick layer of brick rubble, Context [13]. This directly overlay the 'natural', Context [09]. The 'natural' had been disturbed in a number of places by the laying of services. The trench was a maximum depth of 1.1m.

5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 The Ceramic Building Material by Sarah Porteus

A total of three fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing 90g were recovered from context [8]. A fragment of brick in a sandy fabric with moderate rounded quartz inclusions, rounded rose quartz and moderate fine black iron rich inclusions had one vitrified surface and white sandy lime mortar adhering to it. This is of broad post-medieval date. Two fragments of peg tile in a pale cream fabric with fine black speckling and sparse very coarse red iron rich inclusions are most likely of 17th to 19th century date.

6.0 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 No significant archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were recovered during the archaeological monitoring of the groundworks at the site. The wall footing encountered clearly represents the original alignment of the wall forming the western boundary of the passageway that originally led to the church and now serves as access to both St. Peter's and the school.
- 6.2 The wall, which survives to the north, and arguably to the south, appears to have been demolished during building work at the site, possibly as early as 1856 (The Conservation Studio, 2007, 1873 Ordnance Survey map reproduced on p.9). The wall is shown on the maps of 1829 and 1839 (see Paragraph 2.2 above), but the inclusion of brick and tile in the footing suggest a late post-medieval date.
- 6.3 Clearly the disturbance caused by substantial roots and the laying of services has caused considerable mixing of deposits and coupled with the apparent stripping of overburden during previous building at the site, it was hardly surprising that no *in situ* archaeological deposits of any antiquity survived. Hence, it can be concluded with certainty that the monitored groundworks did not lead to the disturbance of any significant archaeological deposits.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The implementation of an archaeological watching brief at the site was a condition of the planning process and would have resulted in the identification, recording and publication of any significant archaeological remains, had they been encountered at the site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Thorburn, M. 2009. *Mostly Rodmell A Parish in the Lower Ouse Valley Sussex.* Privately published.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The input of Greg Chuter, Assistant County Archaeologist, East Sussex County Council at all stages of the project is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks are also due for the co-operation and hospitality of Roger Ellis and the groundworkers from R. P. Ellis Construction Ltd.

HER Summary Form

Site Code	RPS 10					
Identification Name and Address	Rodmell Primary School, The Street, Rodmell					
County, District &/or Borough	Lewes District, East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	542126 106236					
Geology	River Terrace Deposits					
Project number	4488					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field ✓	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. July - August 2010	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Flece and Guy Partnership Ltd.					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p>An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with the erection of an extension to the existing school building. Mechanical and manual excavations of the strip footings were monitored. No significant archaeological deposits, features or finds were encountered.</p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-80650

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Rodmell Primary School, The Street, Rodmell, East Sussex
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with the erection of an extension to the existing school building. Mechanical and manual excavation of strip footings were monitored. No significant archaeological deposits, features or finds were encountered.
Project dates	Start: 26-07-2010 End: 04-08-2010
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	RPS 10 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	4488 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX LEWES RODMELL Rodmell Primary School
Postcode	BN7 3HF
Study area	20.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 4210 0620 50.8372809031 0.01832221143390 50 50 14 N 000 01 05 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 10.00m Max: 20.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	East Sussex County Council
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson
Project supervisor	Simon Stevens
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Flece and Guy Partnership Ltd.

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	local museum

Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	local museum
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet', 'Miscellaneous Material', 'Report'

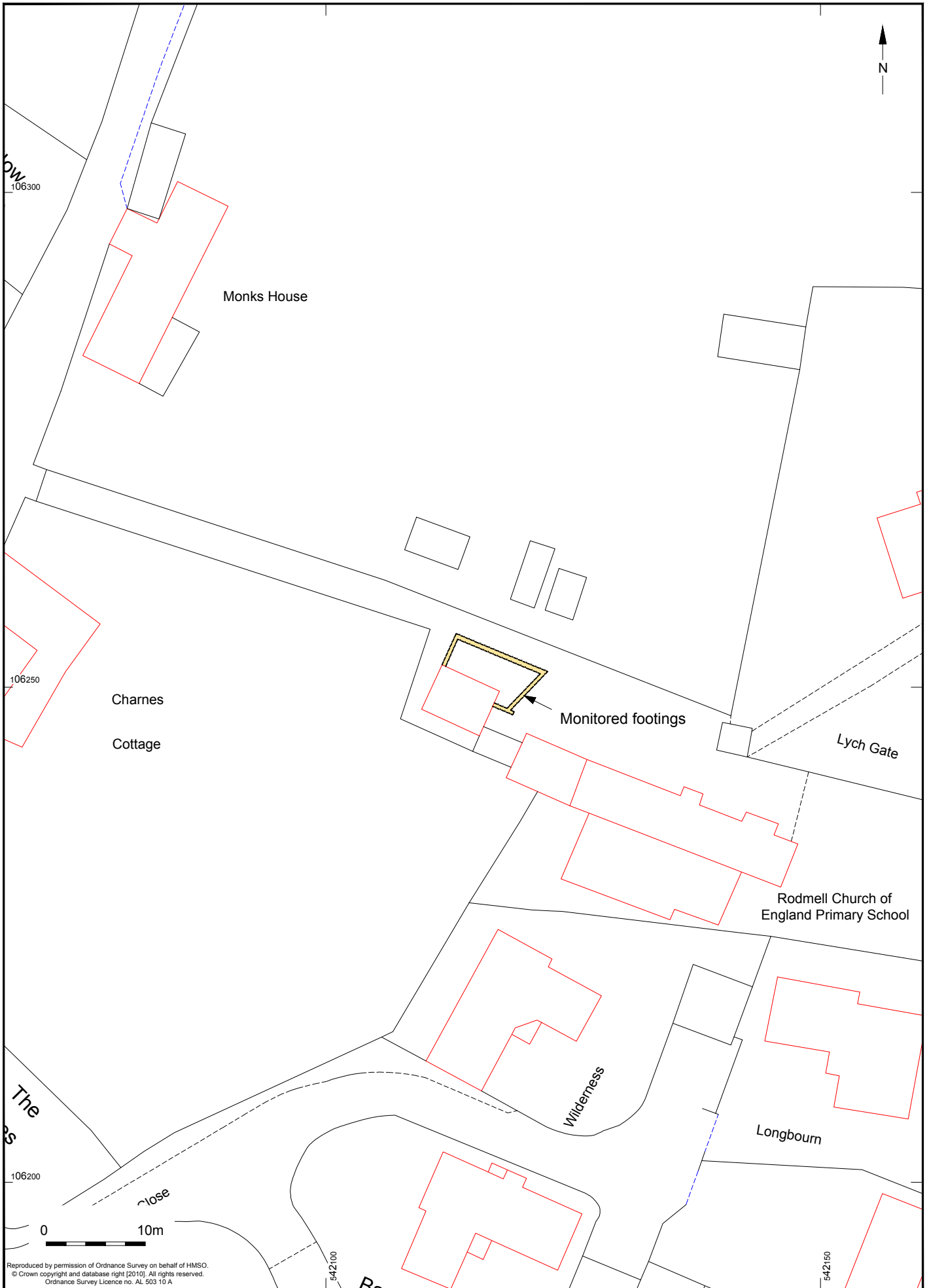
Project bibliography

1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Rodmell Primary School, The Street, Rodmell, East Sussex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Stevens, S.
Other bibliographic details	Report No. 2010114
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Description	Standard ASE Client Report- A4-sized with logos



© Archaeology South-East		Rodmell Primary School	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 4488	Aug 2010	Site location	
Report Ref: 2010114	Drawn by: HLF		



© Archaeology South-East		Rodmell Primary School	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4488	Aug 2010	Site plan	
Report Ref: 2010114	Drawn by: JLR		

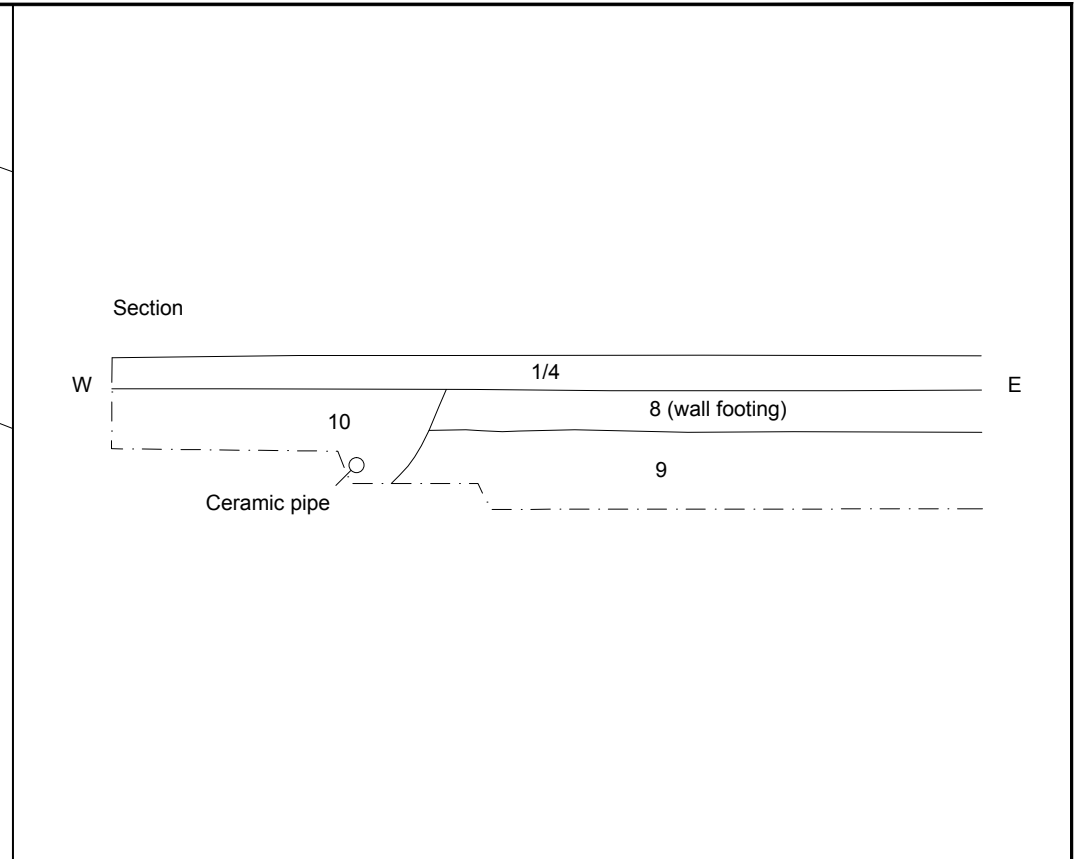
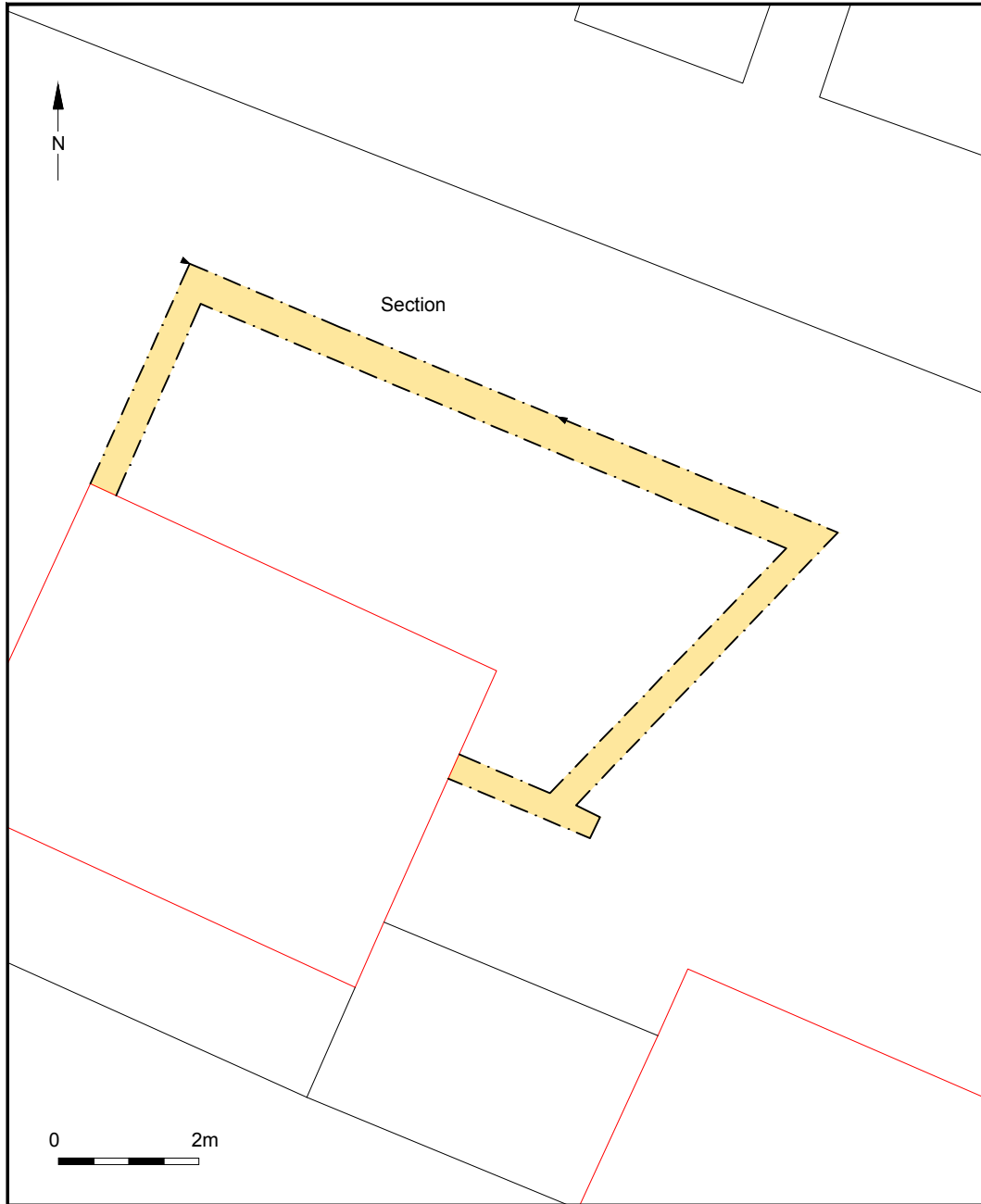


Fig. 3.1: Wall footing 008, looking north-west



Fig. 3.2: Wall footing 008, looking north

© Archaeology South-East		Rodmell Primary School	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 4488	Sept 2010	Monitored trenches, section and photographs	
Report Ref: 2010114	Drawn by: JLR		

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