

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Battle Abbey School, Battle, East Sussex**

**NGR 574900 115700**

**Scheduled Monument Consent No. S00005668**

**Project No: 4463  
Site Code: BAS 10**

**ASE Report No. 2010216  
OASIS ID:archaeo16-90188**

**Simon Stevens BA MIFA**

**With contributions by  
Elke Raemen, Luke Barber, Sarah Porteus  
and Gemma Ayton**

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**January 2011**

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**Abstract**

*An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the manual excavation of a test-hole and trench associated with the installation of a replacement gas pipe at Battle Abbey School, Battle, East Sussex. The trench closely followed the alignment of the previous gas pipe trench and hence no significant archaeological deposits were encountered. A small assemblage of artefacts which had become incorporated into the backfill of this trench was recovered.*

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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 Russell Haggerty, Estates Manager at Battle Abbey School, to undertake a watching brief during installation of a replacement gas pipe at the school (NGR 57490011570), (Fig. 1).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 The location of the gas pipe lay within the grounds of Battle Abbey, and ran from the Abbey gatehouse into a part of the complex now occupied by Battle Abbey School (Fig. 2). The northern part of the pipeline ran across a path and the southern part ran through an area of grass adjacent to a hedge, following the alignment of a previously installed pipe. This part of the Abbey lies at a height of c.80mAOD.

1.2.2 According to the British Geological Survey 1: 50 000 map of the area (Sheet 320/321 *Hastings and Dungeness*) the route of the pipeline is situated on an outcrop of Tunbridge Wells Sand, with Wadhurst Clay to the north, west and south, and Ashdown Beds to the east.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 The route of the pipeline lies within the grounds of Battle Abbey, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (No 20105). Hencean archaeological condition was attached to the Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC No. S00005668) which stated that:

*'No groundworks shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by English Heritage.'*

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The stated aims given in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2010,3) were to:

*'Monitor the trench excavations in order to ensure that any deposits and features, artefacts and ecofacts of archaeological interest, are recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards'.*

### **1.5 Scope of Report**

1.5.1 The current report provides results of the monitoring of the groundworks carried out by Sam Whitehead (Archaeologist) and Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist) during visits to the site between October and December 2010. The project was managed by Andy Leonard (Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson (Post-Excavation Manager).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The known history and recorded archaeology of the site of Battle Abbey have been given full coverage elsewhere (e.g. Hare 1985; Coad 1994). In summary the Abbey was founded in 1070 on the site of the Battle of Hastings as an act of penance for the bloodshed during the battle and the subsequent Norman Conquest of England. The Abbey was consecrated in 1094 and became one of the richest Benedictine houses in the country. It was dissolved on the orders of Henry VII in 1538 and the buildings passed into the ownership of the King's Master of Horse, Sir Anthony Browne. The church and other buildings were demolished and the west range was converted into country house. This building was leased to Battle Abbey School in the 1920s.
- 2.2 Owing to the historical and hence archaeological significance of Battle Abbey and the town that grew up at its gate, numerous archaeological projects have been undertaken within the Abbey precinct and within the town as a whole (a full list is provided in Harris (2009).
- 2.3 Archaeological work in the vicinity of the route of the pipeline includes unpublished work by English Heritage carried out between 1990 and 1994, which uncovered evidence of the foundations of the gatehouse and courthouse at the northern end of the route (*ibid.*). An evaluation to the south-west of the gatehouse in 2004 also uncovered masonry (ASE 2004a) and during a subsequent watching brief on the groundworks associated with the construction of the new Battle Abbey Visitor Centre, further masonry and a stone-lined well were recorded (ASE 2008). Other archaeological work is routinely undertaken during the laying of services and other construction and maintenance work on the school buildings (e.g. ASE 2004b).

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 Personnel from Archaeology South-East monitored the manual excavations of groundworks associated with the installation of a new gas pipe trench, examined all sections for the presence of archaeological features, and scanned all spoil for archaeological artefacts. The route closely followed that of a previously laid gas pipe.
- 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	7
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	2
Bulk Samples	-
Photographs	c.30 digital photos
Bulk finds	1 box
Registered finds	3 clay pipe fragments
Environmental flots/residue	-

Table 1: Quantification of Site Archive

## 4.0 RESULTS

4.1 A total of seven contexts were recorded during the works and these have been tabulated below.

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Deposit Thickness (m)
01	Fill	Pipe trench Backfill	Tr.	Tr.	-
02	Cut	Pipe trench	Tr.	Tr.	-
03	Deposit	Made ground/backfill	Test Pit	Test Pit	1.50 +
04	Deposit	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.06
05	Deposit	Re-deposited natural	Tr.	Tr.	0.05
06	Fill	Pipe trench backfill	Tr.	Tr.	-
07	Cut	Pipe trench	Tr.	Tr.	-

4.2 The initial archaeological monitoring on groundworks associated with the laying of the new gas pipe was undertaken adjacent to the gatehouse complex. The alignment of the existing pipe trench of unknown dimensions (Cut [02]) was followed by a trench 300mm in width, which showed that the original pipe trench had been backfilled with a mid-brown gravelly sandy silt, Context [01] close to the existing meter cupboard. This deposit also formed the gravel surfacing in the area.

4.3 A test-pit was also excavated on the opposite, eastern side of the meter cupboard. It measured 2.4m (northwest to southeast) by 1.5m (northeast to southwest), by 1.5m deep. The only encountered deposit was Context [03], a yellowish brown gravelly sand deposit which contained abundant brick rubble, and a limited assemblage of artefacts. No further groundworks were undertaken in this area.

4.4 The excavation of the main part of the trench began at the southern end and ran close to the alignment of a mature hedge following the previously laid service. The trench was 300mm in width and the gas pipe was encountered at a maximum depth of 950mm below the current ground surface. The surface layer along the length of the hedge was a 60mm thick mid-brown humic topsoil, Context [04].

4.5 The exact dimensions of the original pipe trench, (Cut [07]), were not ascertained but it had been backfilled with a 50mm thick layer of redeposited 'natural' grey and yellow Wadhurst Clay, Context [06] immediately above the cast iron pipe. The main backfill of the trench was Context [05], which was a mid-greyish brown silty clay with occasional concentrations of local sandstone. A small assemblage of artefacts was recovered from this layer.



## 5.0 THE FINDS

### 5.1 Introduction by ElkeRaemen

5.1.1 A small assemblage was recovered during the archaeological work, mainly from context [05]. A summary is given in Table 2. Finds have all been washed and dried or air dried as appropriate. They were counted, weighed and bagged by context and by material and are stored according to IFA guidelines. Three objects required unique registered finds numbers (RF <00>; Table 3). They have been discussed within their functional types.

Context	Pot	Wt (g)	CBM	Wt (g)	Bone	Wt (g)	Shell	Wt (g)	Stone	Wt (g)	Glass	Wt (g)	CTP	Wt (g)	Slag	Wt (g)	Mortar	Wt (g)
03	1	108	3	58											1	194	2	24
05	19	276	177	16742	12	314	5	140	10	486	16	834	4	18				

Table 3: Quantification of the Finds

### 5.2 The Pottery by Luke Barber

5.2.1 The archaeological monitoring recovered a small assemblage of pottery from two individually numbered contexts. Sherd sizes vary from small (less than 30mm across) to large (over 60mm across) but most show no/little sign of abrasion. Although this would suggest the material has not been subjected to repeated reworking, most of the pottery is of hard-fired fabrics naturally resistant to abrasion.

5.2.2 Context [03] produced a single large sherd of oxidized hard-fired earthenware of mid 15<sup>th</sup>- to mid 16<sup>th</sup>- century type. The piece is from the sagging base of a strainer with numerous small stabbed holes. These were stabbed from the outside of the vessel before firing.

5.2.3 Context [05] produced a larger assemblage that shows a wide chronological range. The earliest material is again of the mid 15<sup>th</sup> to mid 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and consists of three large fresh sherds (166g) of oxidized hard-fired earthenware. One of these is from a heavily knife-trimmed jar/pitcher base with the other feature sherd coming from the rim of a lid-seated jar. The context also produced two early post-medieval sherds consisting of a base from a brown glazed white Border ware (9g) and a tin-glazed ware handle (8g). Both suggest some activity between the mid 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The largest group from this context is of late post-medieval date. The earliest of this group consists of two creamware plate sherds (7g) and four (10g) transfer-printed pearlwaresherds, one of which is from a bowl with floral pattern, of later 18<sup>th</sup>- to early 19<sup>th</sup>- century date. The remaining sherds are of later 19<sup>th</sup>- to early 20<sup>th</sup>- century date. These include three pieces from unglazed earthenware flower pots, three pieces of refined white earthenware, including a plain pot lid, and the body sherd of a refined redware vessel with internal white slip and external yellow transfer-printed decoration.

### 5.3 Other Material by Luke Barber

- 5.3.1 Context [03] produced a single piece of dark grey/black blast furnace slag (iron smelting) of post-medieval date while context [5] produced a bakelite ?electrical insulator sphere with four perforations and stamped 4/T. An early 20<sup>th</sup>- century date is probable.

#### **5.4 The Ceramic Building Material by Sarah Porteus**

- 5.4.1 A total of 177 fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) with a combined weight of 16742g were recovered from context [05], the backfill of a gas pipe trench. The assemblage consisted of material ranging in date from the medieval to modern periods.

- 5.4.2 The material has been examined with the aid of a x10 binocular microscope and a provisional fabric type series has been drawn up. The material has been recorded on pro-forma recording form and in an Excel database for archive, items of interest and fabric samples have been retained, the bulk of the post-medieval roof tile has been discarded.

##### ***Floor Tile***

- 5.4.3 Twelve fragments of floor tile were recovered of probable 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century date. One complete example in an orange fabric with abundant fine quartz and sparse coarse quartz, coarse fabric with reduced core had dimensions of 170mm square by 26mm thickness. The tile had a reduced core and was unglazed. It is possible the tile was intended for use in flooring to provide heat-proofing around stoves. The remainder of the floor tile had typically knife cut bevelled edges and clear lead glaze with abraded upper surfaces, and was in an orange sandy fabric with moderate fine quartz and some white quartz.

- 5.4.4 The majority of these examples were glazed over the plain surface giving a greenish appearance to the tiles. They measured between 25mm and 30mm thick and one complete width of 115mm was recorded. Amongst the clear plain glazed tiles was one which had been cut to form a triangle, it retained one knife cut edge but appeared to have been scored pre-firing and broken post-firing to give a shaped tile, possibly to fit as part of a mosaic floor design. A single larger floor tile example was present with a width in excess of 190mm and thickness of 36mm. This tile also had a knife cut bevelled edge and clear glaze, although this time laid over cream slip to give a yellow appearance to the surface. Such tiles would have been used to tile the floors of monastic and other high status buildings during the later medieval period often in a chequer board design. It is likely these tiles originated from one of the abbey buildings.

##### ***Brick***

- 5.4.5 Two brick fabrics were identified. One was an orange fine sandy fabric with sparse black iron rich inclusions and one was a pale orange fabric with abundant coarse angular inclusions of cream and red silt. Some of the brick may be of later medieval or early post-medieval date with one fragment having a thickness of 45mm. All the brick was unfrosted. Some examples with sharper arises and more hard fired had grey vitrified edges. These fragments are probably of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

**Roof Tile**

- 5.4.6 Peg tile was recovered in three fabrics the earliest of which was a pale brownish orange fabric with abundant fine quartz. Fragments in this fabric had a reduced core and are of probable later medieval or early post medieval date. The remainder of the assemblage was represented by post-medieval peg tile of 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date in either an orange fabric with moderate fine quartz and sparse black iron rich inclusions, or a pale orange fabric with cream and red silt streaking. The vast majority of the material was in the former of the two fabrics and had well formed diamond peg holes. Two examples of nibbed peg tile were recovered of later medieval or early post-medieval date.

**Other**

- 5.4.7 A fragment of 20<sup>th</sup> century porcelain wall tile and a fragment of black glazed curved tile of 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century date were also recovered.
- 5.4.8 The assemblage, whilst not from structural contexts, appears to contain a sample of some of the ceramic building materials used in the abbey buildings during the medieval period. The quantity of ceramic building material within the trench suggests that perhaps the material originated from a phase of repair or refurbishment of the nearby structures, possible during the early 20<sup>th</sup> or late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**5.5 The Glass** by ElkeRaemen

- 5.5.1 The glass assemblage, consisting of 16 fragments weighing 834g, was entirely recovered from context [05]. The earliest piece consists of a shaft and globe bottle body sherd dating to the mid 17<sup>th</sup> to mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The majority of the assemblage however dates to the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Included are ten fragments representing five different vessels. Three conjoining beer bottle fragments display a partial embossing "TRADE MARK" and "MAIDSTONE".
- 5.5.2 Another partial embossing survives on a beer bottle body sherd: "(...)Y(...)". Two wine bottle fragments are represented including two conjoining base fragments. An aqua mineral water bottle body sherd was recovered as well. Examples of 20<sup>th</sup>-century date include a cylindrical clear glass dairy bottle, a green glass mineral water body sherd and a cylindrical jar lid embossed "(...) NOEL L<sup>TD</sup>".

**5.6 The Clay Tobacco Pipe** by ElkeRaemen

- 5.6.1 A small clay tobacco pipe assemblage consisting of seven fragments (weighing 46g) was recovered from context [05]. Included are four plain stem fragments, three of which date to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and with a fourth of mid 18<sup>th</sup>- to early 20<sup>th</sup>-century date.
- 5.6.2 Three marked or decorated bowl fragments were recovered as well (Table 3). Bowls have been classified according to the London 'Chronology of Bowl Types' by Atkinson and Oswald (1969, 177-180). RF <1> consists of a type AO25 (ca. 1700-1770) and displays makers' marks ?BG moulded in relief on the sides of the heel. No known maker with these initials worked in Sussex at this time. The second marked pipe of the same type contains the initials "IH"

moulded in relief on the side of the heel, which possibly refers to John Holness, recorded between 1770 and 1798 in Hastings (Oswald 1975, 195).

- 5.6.3 In addition, RF <2> consists of a type AO30 (1850-1920), displaying moulded leaf decoration on the seams. The spur has been replaced by a small cylinder with rounded ends.

Context	RF No	Object	Material	Period	Wt (g)
05	1	Pipe	Ceramic	P-med	14
05	2	Pipe	Ceramic	P-med	10
05	3	Pipe	Ceramic	P-med	6

Table 4: Summary of the Registered Finds

## 5.7 The Geological Material by Elke Raemen

- 5.7.1 Ten Welsh slate roof tile fragments were recovered from context [05]. Included is a fragment with a circular nail hole (diameter 7mm) surviving.

## 5.8 The Animal Bone by Gemma Ayton

- 5.8.1 The small assemblage containing just 11 fragments of animal bone has been recovered from context [05]. The assemblage contains eight fragments of cattle and cattle-sized bone including a proximal humerus, rib and veterbrae. The proximal humerus shows signs of canid gnawing around the articulation. The remaining fragments are sheep-sized long bone shafts including a radius and a femur. No evidence of butchery, pathology or burning has been noted.

## 5.9 The Marine Shell by Elke Raemen

- 5.9.1 A small assemblage consisting of five oyster valves (*Ostreaedulis*) was recovered from context [05]. Included are one undiagnostic fragment as well as two left valves and two right valves. Traces of light infestation were apparent on one left and one right valve. Represented are a minimum of three individuals.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION**

- 6.1 The archaeological monitoring of the manual excavation of the pipe trench and other associated groundworks was a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent granted for the laying of the new gas pipe (SMC No. S00005668). Given that the alignment of the new pipe closely followed that of the old one, there was no disturbance to significant archaeological deposits.
- 6.2 Therefore none of the small assemblage of artefacts recovered during the monitoring was from a deposit of any great antiquity (the date of the laying of the original gas pipe remains unclear but is clearly late post-medieval). Hence the group of finds consists of a somewhat random collection of material of varying dates accidentally incorporated into the backfill of the trench.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 No significant archaeological deposits were encountered. Given the provenance of the assemblage of artefacts, all recovered from the backfill of a service trench or from a deposit of made ground, they are arguably of only limited value in furthering the understanding of the archaeological remains of Battle Abbey.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**HER Summary Form**

Site Code	BAS 10					
Identification Name and Address	Battle Abbey School					
County, District &/or Borough	Rother District, East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	579400 115700					
Geology	Tunbridge Wells Sand					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4463					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other <i>Scheduled Monument</i>		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 18.10.10 – 06.12.10	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Battle Abbey School					
Project Managers	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED ✓	PM ✓	Other		
100 Word Summary.						
<p><i>An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the manual excavation of a test-hole and trench associated with the installation of a replacement gas pipe at Battle Abbey School, Battle, East Sussex. The trench closely followed the alignment of the previous gas pipe trench and hence no significant archaeological deposits were encountered. A small assemblage of artefacts which had become incorporated into the backfill of this trench was recovered.</i></p>						

## OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-90188**

### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Battle Abbey School, Battle, East Sussex
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the manual excavation of a trench for the installation of a replacement gas pipe at Battle Abbey School, Battle, East Sussex. The trench closely followed the alignment of the previous gas pipe trench and hence no significant archaeological deposits were encountered. A small assemblage of artefacts which had become incorporated into the backfill of this trench was recovered.
Project dates	Start: 18-10-2010 End: 08-12-2010
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	4463 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	BAS 10 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	ABBEY Medieval
Significant Finds	TILE Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX ROTHER BATTLE Battle Abbey School
Postcode	TN33 0AD
Study area	100.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 7490 1570 50.9136295323 0.488318180414 50 54 49 N 000 29 17 E Point



Height OD / Depth Min: 75.00m Max: 85.00m

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### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	English Heritage/Department of Environment
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	Battle Abbey School

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### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	local museum
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	local museum
Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	local museum
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','MiscellaneousMaterial','Report','Unpublished Text'

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### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Battle Abbey School, Battle, East Sussex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Stevens, S.

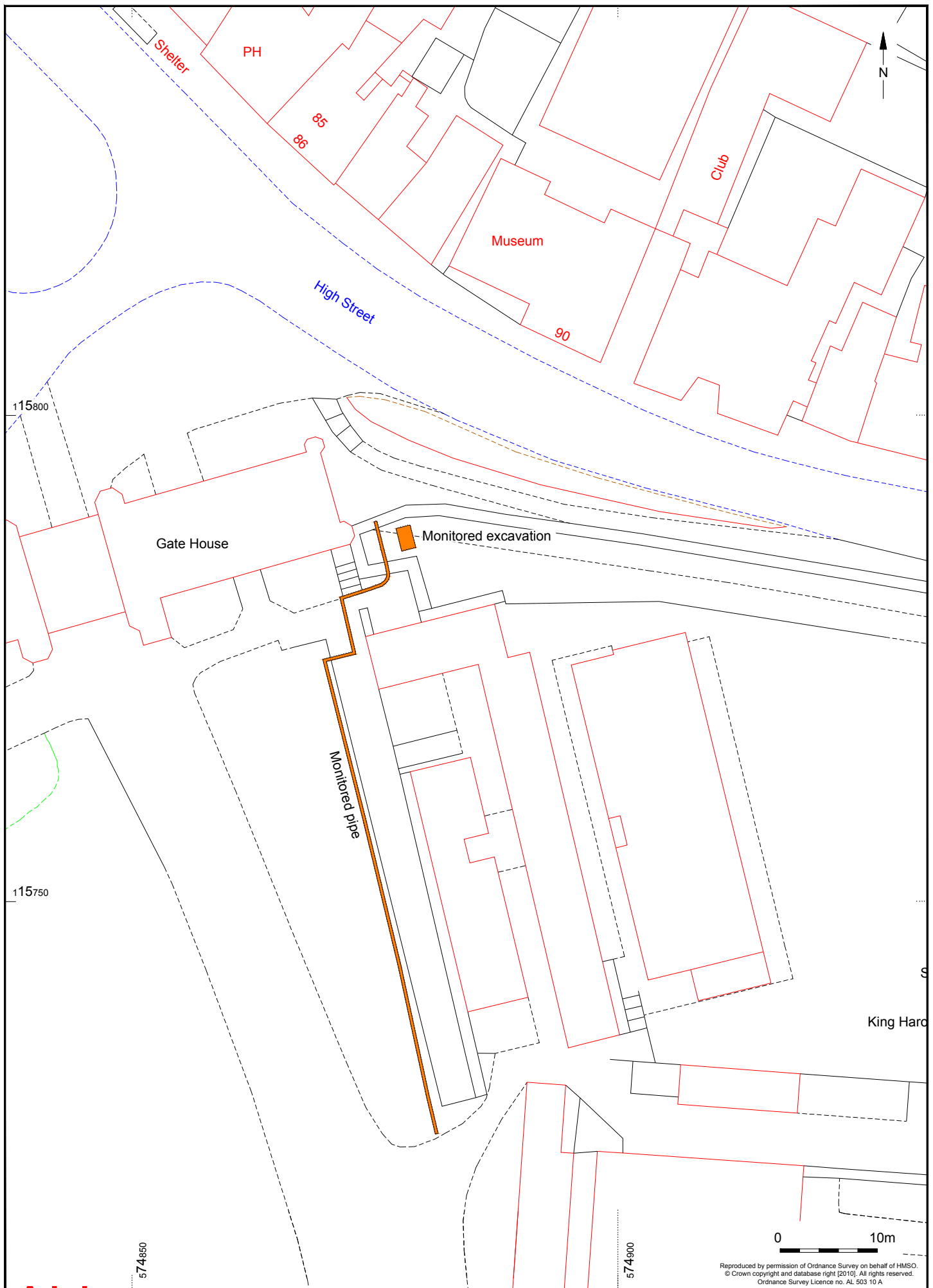
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Description	Standard ASE Client Report - A4-sized with cover logos



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© Archaeology South-East		Battle Abbey School	
Project Ref: 4463	Feb 2011	Site location	
Report Ref: 2010216	Drawn by: JLR		

Fig. 1



© Archaeology South-East		Battle Abbey School	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4463	Feb 2011	Location of monitored works	
Report Ref: 2010216	Drawn by: JLR		

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