

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

S O U T H

**5 Brecon Cottages, Church Road,
Rotherfield, East Sussex**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Sean Wallis

Site Code: BCR12/54

(TQ 5550 2972)

**5 Brecon Cottages, Church Road,
Rotherfield, East Sussex**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Andy Garrett

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code BCR 12/54

August 2012

Summary

Site name: 5 Brecon Cottages, Church Road, Rotherfield, East Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 5550 2972

Planning reference: WD/2011/2747/F

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 15th August 2012

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: BCR 12/54

Area of site: c. 260 sq m

Summary of results: No archaeological features were recorded during the monitoring of footings for the new rear extension. This area had been heavily disturbed by the footings of an earlier garden room. A late 19th- or 20th-century pit was encountered at the front of the property, in the footing trench for the new porch.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Lewes Museum, in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 22.08.12
	Steve Preston ✓ 21.08.12

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Report 12/54

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 5 Brecon Cottages, Church Road, Rotherfield, East Sussex (TQ 5550 2972) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the property owner, Mr Andy Garrett.

Planning permission (WD/2011/2747/F) had been gained from Wealden District Council to enlarge an existing front porch at the property, and construct a new two-storey rear extension. The permission was subject to a standard condition (3) relating to archaeology, which required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. Mr Greg Chuter, Assistant County Archaeologist with East Sussex County Council, who acts as archaeological adviser to the District Council, advised that this should take the form of a watching brief, to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5, 2010), and the District Council's policy on archaeology. It is acknowledged that PPS5 has now been superseded by the recent *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012). The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the East Sussex County Archaeological Officer. The fieldwork was undertaken by Sean Wallis on 15th August 2012, and the site code is BCR 12/54. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Lewes Museum, in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the village of Rotherfield, which is situated within the High Weald, on the east-west Forest Ridge. The upper reaches of the rivers Ouse and Medway lie close to the village (Fig. 1). The site itself is located on the south side of Church Road, and is accessed via a small private road (Fig. 2). The site is currently occupied by a semi-detached cottage with front and rear gardens. A former single-storey garden room to the rear of the property had been demolished shortly before the watching brief took place. The ground generally slopes up towards the east, and this is particularly noticeable in the rear garden. As a result, the site generally lies at a height of approximately 153m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Ashdown Beds (sandstones and siltstones) (BGS 1971), and this was confirmed

during the watching brief as a mid orange-brown clayey sand with patches of degraded sandstone being observed lower down.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site primarily stems from its location close to the historic core of Rotherfield and, as such, it lies within an Archaeological Notification Area. The village is mentioned in Domesday Book, as *Reredfelle*, indicating that it had been established by the late Saxon period (Mills 1993). However, there is very little archaeological evidence of activity in the area prior to the Saxon period, although this may merely reflect the lack of archaeological fieldwork within the village. A Mesolithic flint blade was found in a field, about 100m west of the present site. A monastery is thought to have existed in the village during the Saxon period although no traces of such an establishment have been found. Indeed, many of the documents relating to the monastery are believed to be medieval forgeries. The parish church, dedicated to St Denys, is the earliest surviving building in the village, with many elements dating from the 13th century. Other medieval buildings have been identified within the village, usually hidden behind post-medieval facades (Harris 2008).

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the watching brief were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to include the monitoring of footing trenches for the new extension and porch, along with any areas of ground reduction and any associated service runs. Sufficient time was to be allowed within the developer's and groundworker's schedules to record any archaeological features revealed.

Results

The small porch at the front of the property had recently been demolished. The footings for the new porch were monitored, although it was clear that the area had been significantly disturbed in the past by the footings for the cottage and various services (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 2). Nevertheless, despite this truncation a probable pit (1) was observed within the footing trench. The footing trench itself was 0.3m wide, and was initially dug by hand to a depth of about 0.7m.

Pit 1 was only partially visible within the trench, but appeared to be sub-rectangular in plan, measuring at least 0.9m by 0.17m. The feature was at least 0.4m deep, and was seen to truncate the subsoil (51) and underlying natural. The pit was observed beneath approximately 0.3m of modern topsoil (50), and had a single

fill of dark greyish brown sandy silt (52). The only find from the pit was a single sherd of pottery, dating from the late 19th or 20th century.

The area to the rear of the property around the proposed extension had been largely stripped of topsoil (50) prior to the watching brief commencing (Pl. 1). The removal, by machine, of the remnants of the topsoil and the digging into the subsoil (51) and natural clayey sand were monitored. It was clear that much of the area had previously been truncated when the former garden room was constructed, some time in the 20th century. This structure had recently been demolished, and its footings were visible. To the east of the former garden room, the stratigraphy generally consisted of 0.4m of modern topsoil (50), above 0.2m of subsoil (51), which lay directly above the natural geology. This largely consisted of mid orange brown clayey sand, although patches of degraded sandstone were observed, particularly lower down in the new footing trench.

No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this area.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

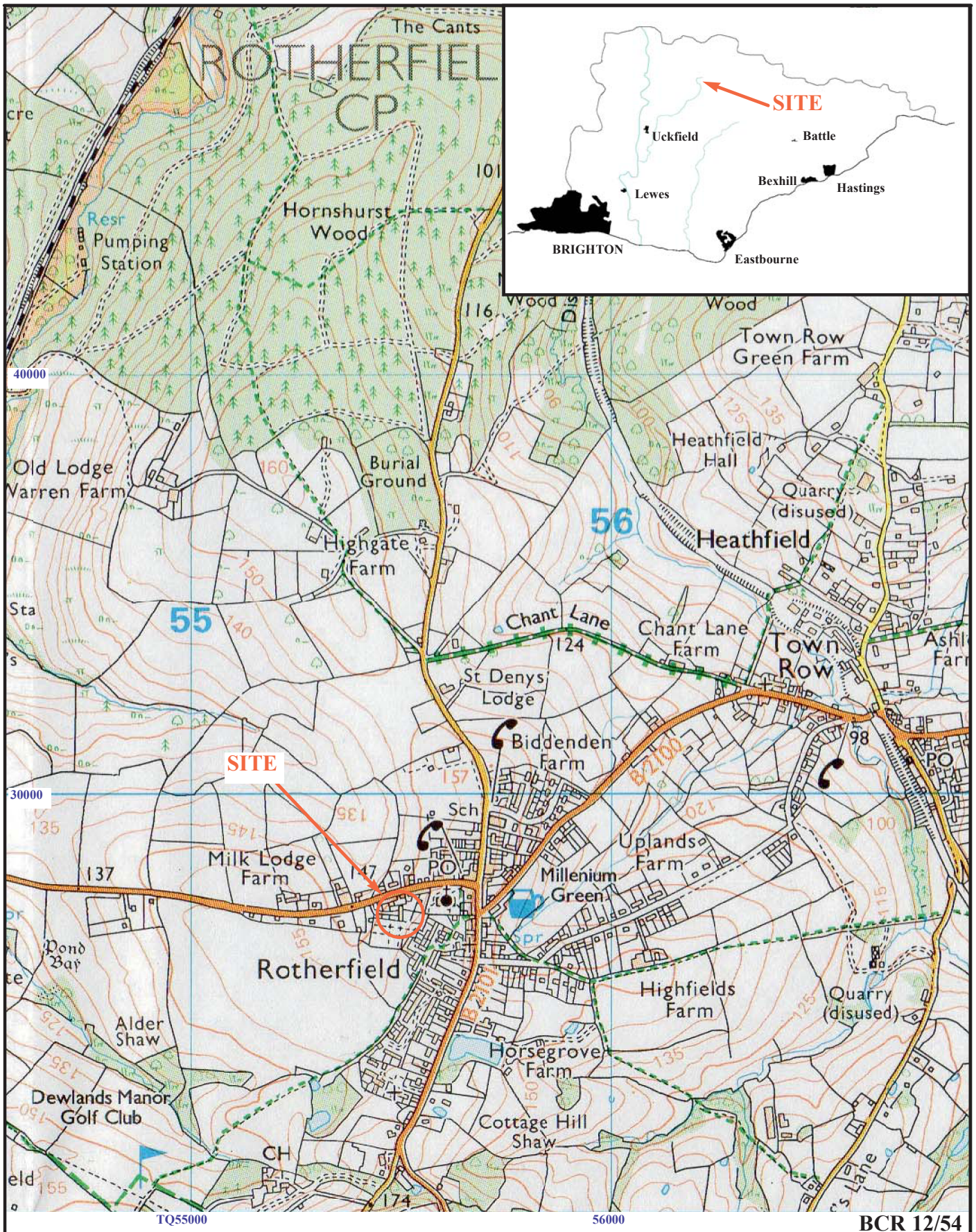
A single sherd of pottery weighing 5g was found within the fill of pit 1 (52). It is a body-herd in refined white earthenware, and is of later 19th to 20th century date.

Conclusion

The watching brief successfully examined those parts of the site which were to be most affected by the new extension and porch. The area to the rear of the property had been heavily truncated in the past, and no archaeological features were recorded. A pit, dating from the late 19th or 20th century was observed at the front of the cottage, in the footing trench for the new porch.

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 303, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Harris, R B, 2008, *Rotherfield : Historic Character Assessment Report*, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey
- Mills, A D, 1993, *English Place-Names*, Oxford
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)
- PSS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, Department of Communities and Local Government Planning Policy Statement 5, London (TSO)

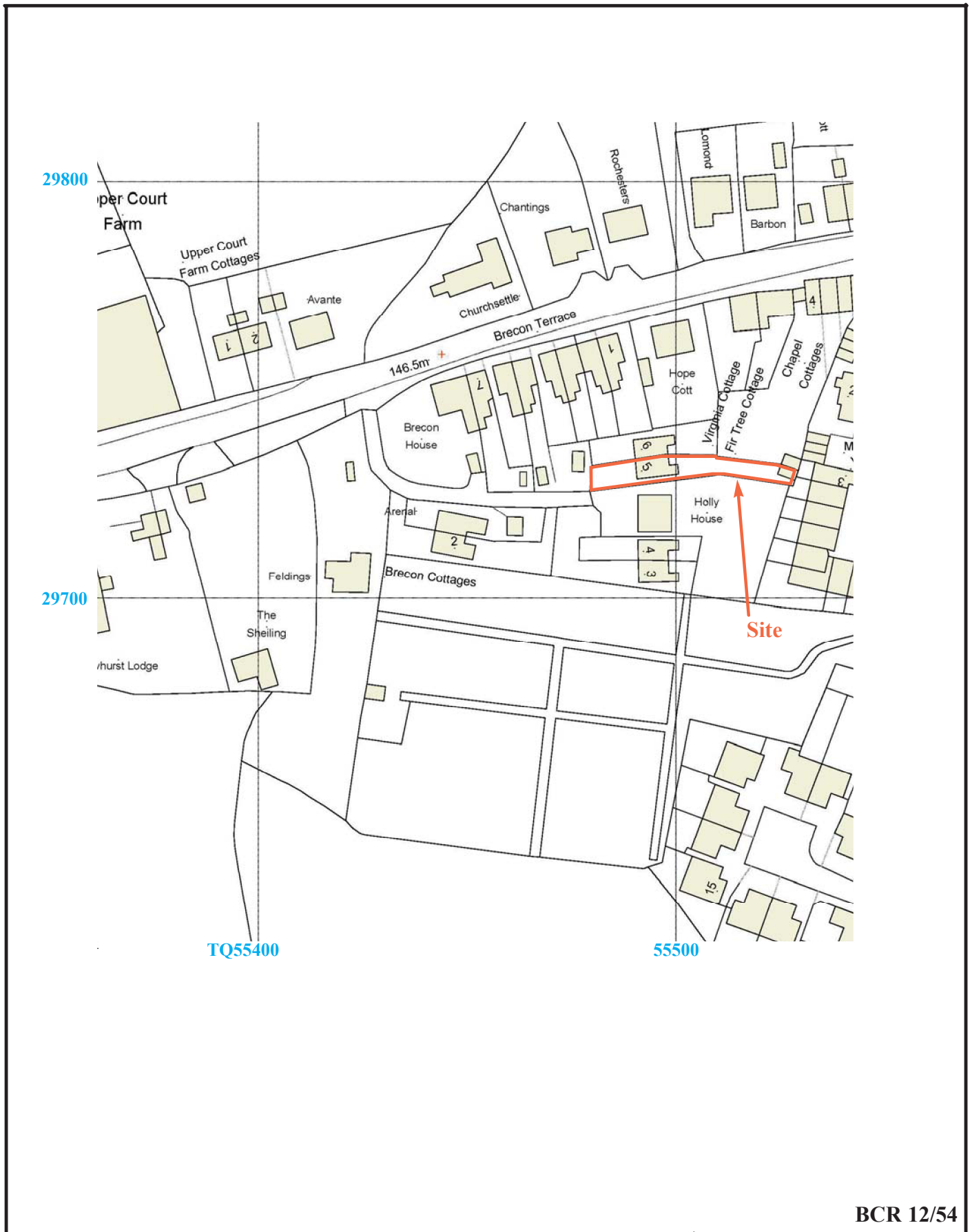


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Figure 1. Location of site within Rotherfield and East Sussex.

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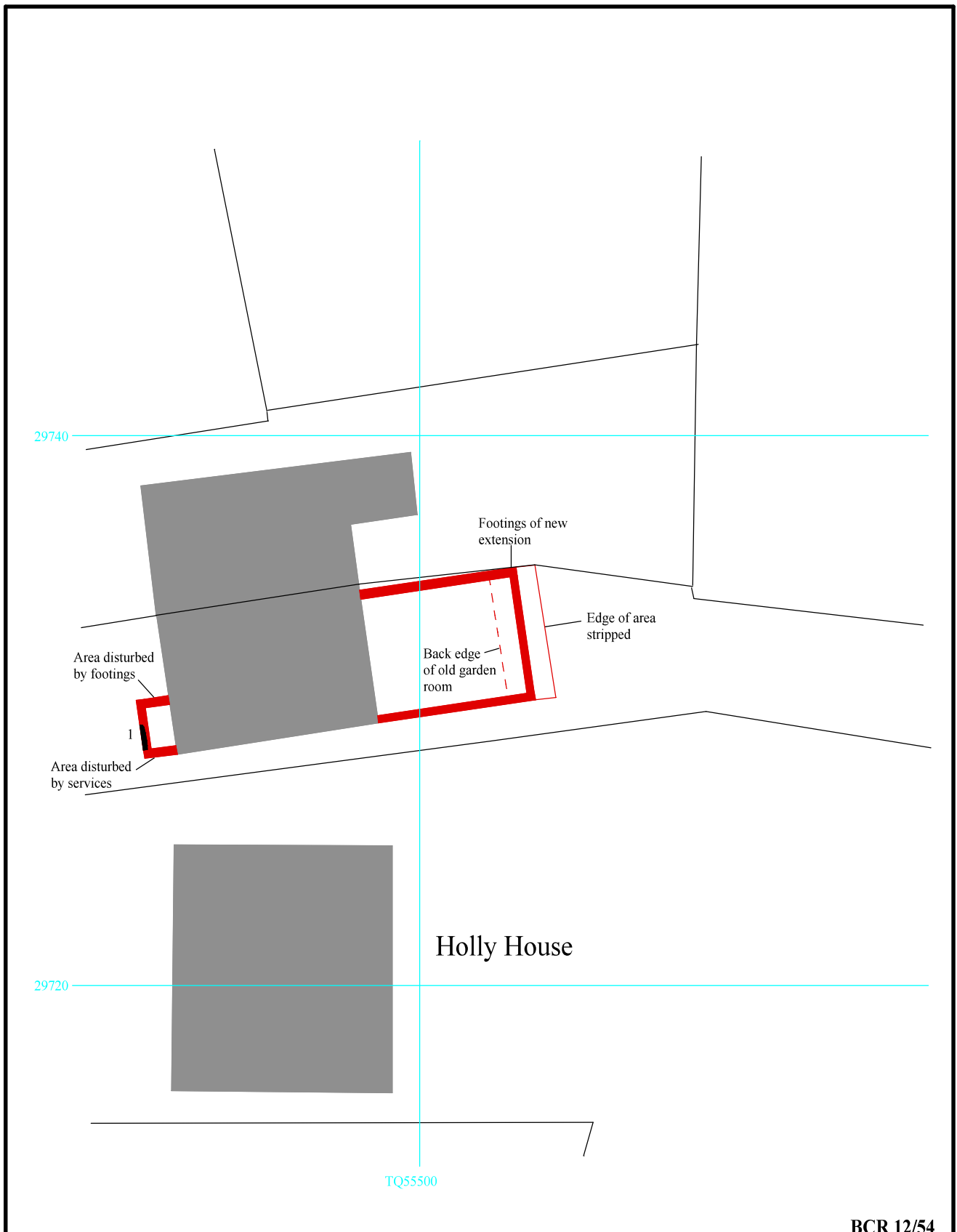
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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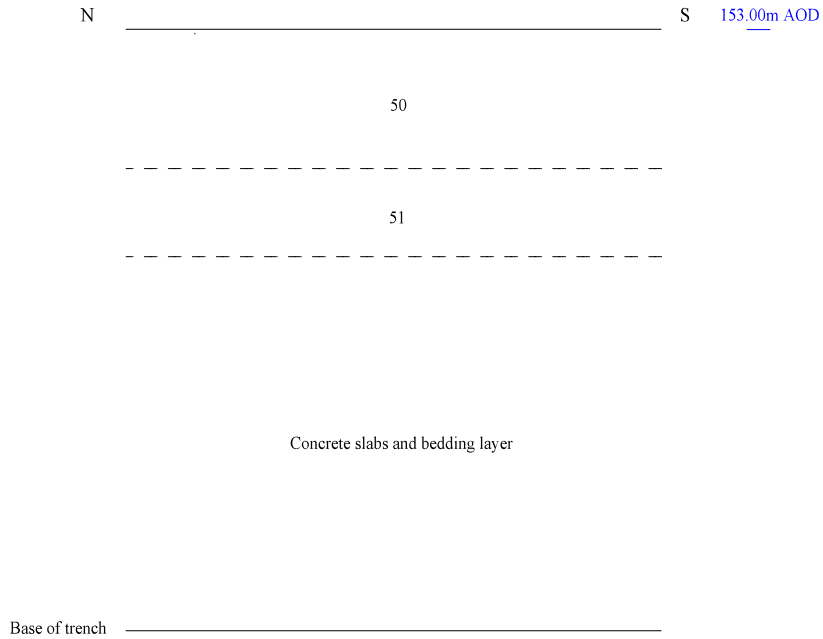
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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.

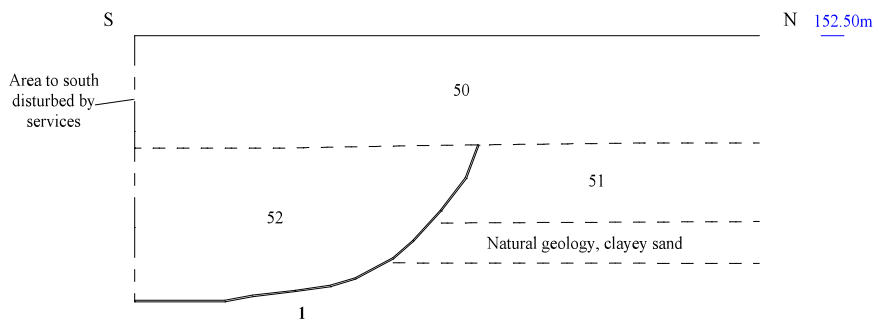


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General stratigraphy at rear of cottage



Footing trench for new porch



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Figure 4. Representative sections.





Plate 1. General view of rear area, looking east, Scales: 0.5m.



Plate 2. Porch footing trench, looking south west, Scale: 0.5m.

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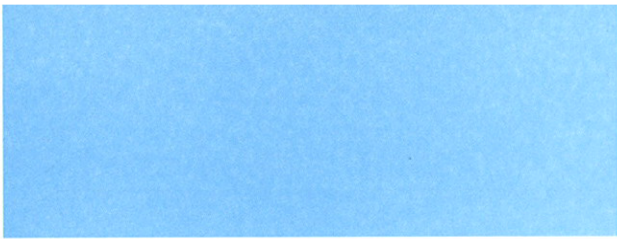
Plates 1 and 2.

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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