

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
BEACHENDON FARM
EYTHORPE, NEAR STONE
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

on behalf of the Waddesdon Estate



by
Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA

June 2004

ASC: 569/SBF/02

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	SFF	<i>Project no:</i>	569
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire		
<i>District:</i>	Aylesbury Vale		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Near Stone		
<i>Parish:</i>	Waddesdon (AP)		
<i>NGR:</i>	SP 758-135		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	305m sq. (barn area)		
<i>Present use:</i>	Agricultural barn (disused)		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Barn conversion / extension to farmhouse		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	124m sq. (area B of barn)		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	99/0741 & 99/0740		
<i>Client:</i>	The Waddesdon Estate The Waddesdon estate Office Queen Street Waddesdon Aylesbury Bucks HP18 OJW		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Alan Lesurf Esq		
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Internal Quality Check

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Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

During the early summer of 2004 Archaeological Services & Consultancy undertook a watching brief on Area B of a 19th century barn at Beachendon Farm, Eythorpe near Stone, Buckinghamshire. The work recorded the state of the floor of the barn prior to it being removed and the character of the ground after the level had been reduced. This revealed the contemporary drainage pattern and two undated linear features which possibly predated the barn.

1 Introduction

1.1 During early June 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief on a site at Beachendon Farm near Stone in Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 758-135: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Alan Lesurf on behalf of the Waddesdon Estate, and was carried out according to a brief (Radford 2004) prepared by the Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service (BCAS) on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA) *Aylesbury Vale District Council*, and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ASC (ASC:569/SBF/01).

1.2 *Reason for Work*

The work was required to record any features contemporary with, or predating the barn prior to its conversion into an office or dwelling.

1.3 *Setting*

1.3.1 The site is part of an isolated farmstead known as Beachendon Farm set within a mixed agrarian landscape. It lies about 4 km west of the conurbation of Aylesbury and 1.4 km west of Eythorpe Park (NGR SP 758 135). Beachendon Farm is part of the Waddesdon Estate whose centre lies about 4 km to the north west. It lies in the parish of Waddesdon in the administrative district of Aylesbury Vale.

1.3.2 The site is located on a ridge (*c.* 100m AOD) just over 30m above the river Thames which lies 500m to the south and flows E-W. The terrain is gently undulating and the soils are derived from Jurassic and Cretaceous clay. These are classified as belonging to the Denchworth Association which are '*Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils with similar fine loamy over clayey soils*' (Soil Survey 1983, 712b). As would be expected these soils have been truncated and the sub soils are a fine, mostly stoneless, olive yellow clay.

1.3.3 Access is gained from the north and the south sides of the building with pedestrian access from the east and western sides. Apart from various drains there is an electric cable which passes N-S on the eastern side of the central passageway. The barn lies on the south side of the farm complex which is primarily a dairy farm

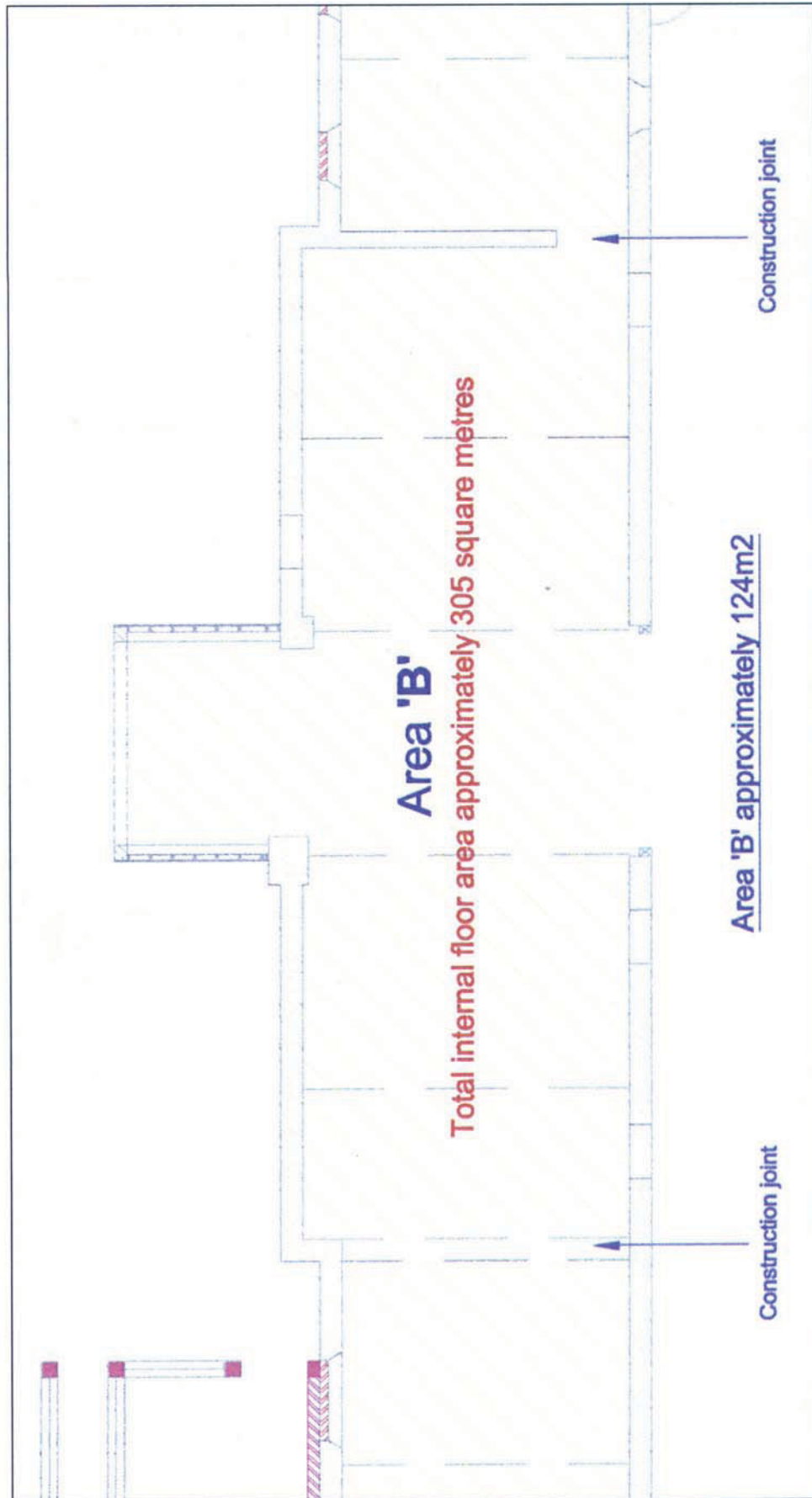


Figure 2: Site plan (not to scale)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the brief, the aims of the watching brief were to:

- Attempt to establish the date and character of any occupation deposits and identify and record any archaeological remains revealed by groundworks.
- determine their relationship to the historic buildings or earlier occupation on the site.

2.2 *Methods*

The work was carried out according to the brief, which required:

- A detailed watching brief. An archaeologist to be present during all works which may affect archaeological remains.

2.3 *Standards*

The work conforms to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric & Roman periods *(before 600BC to AD c. 410)*

A number of prehistoric and Roman sites are known in this part of the parish, including a major Roman, now known as Akeman Street, which ran c. 2km northeast of the site. However, there is no evidence for these periods within the immediate vicinity of the site.

3.2 Saxon *(c.450-1066)*

The name of Beachendon certainly derives from the Anglo-Saxon period when, according to the Domesday Book survey it was held by *Brictric*'s man and *Azor* who were probably freemen, possibly 'housecarls' (Morris 1978). The name derives from the personnel name 'Bica' (Mawer & Stenton 1925, 138)

3.3 Medieval *(1066-1500)*

At the time of the Domesday Book survey Beachendon ('*Bichedone*') was held by the Bishop of Bayeux and Miles Crispin (Morris 1978). At that date (1086) it amounted land for 2 ploughs and one virgate valued at 30/-. Interestingly, the virgate was 'valued' at 5/- per annum while the two ploughlands were valued at 25/-. That is, it was valued at one fifth of the overall value of Beachendon when in fact its notional size would be equal to one ninth of the whole. The size of the holding probably amounted to somewhere between 300-400 acres (122-162 ha). The meadow land was sufficient to feed the two plough teams (16 oxen) and almost certainly lay in the Thame valley to the south. No other resources were mentioned (Morris 1978, 4,24; 23,13). It is not known whether the present day site of Beachendon was occupied in the medieval period, or whether the name was simply transferred to it from an adjacent site. There is a moated site in the valley 600m to the south west of the Beachendon Farm.

3.4 Post-Medieval *(1500-1900)*

It is not known when the medieval village of Eythorpe, 1.6 km to the east of Beachendon was abandoned. It is shown on Saxton's map of 1574 but thereafter disappears from view. Beachendon Farm became part of the Waddesdon estate in the second half of the 19th century when the Rothschild family acquired it (Pevsner & Williamson 1994, 92).

3.5 Modern

The building was last used some 35 years ago (*Lesurf pers com.*)

4 Results

- 4.1 In order that the archaeology could be placed within the context of its setting a series of photographs were taken of the interior prior to the level being reduced (Plates 1-6). Much of the floor was recorded as found still partly obscured with straw and other detritus. The building had clearly been used for the stabling of cattle and the remains of concrete drainage channels could clearly be seen (Plates 3-5; see scaled sketch on reverse of sheet for June 7th in Appendix 1).
- 4.2 The building was a five bay barn and had an internal measurement of 18.66m x 5.44m and 3.3m high to the eaves. There was a central N-S passage 4.2m wide, three blocked doorways and the whole structure rested on a brick base 1.14m high composed of reddish brown bricks (225mm x 114mm x 64mm). Above this were lain blocks of crudely cut limestone or cornbrash. There were four square windows (1.04m wide) and set 2.15m up from the floor. The walls were pierced by brick built air-vents on the south side of the barn.
- 4.3 The floor of the barn was reduced by approximately 0.5m in two stages. The eastern and western ends were excavated first and then the central portion. This revealed a series of drains on the northern and eastern ends of the barn (Appendix 1). The drains consisted of semi-circular tiles each 290mm wide (internal width of 230mm) and of unknown length. All ran into what appeared to be small brick built junctions (0.3m sq. approx). The drains all emptied on the down slope, i.e. south side. One of the drains cut an earlier N-S linear feature which was 0.86m wide and filled with a grey brown clay. A possibly even earlier feature lay on the north west side of the barn. It was filled by a darker clay. It was over 6m long and 0.4m wide. No dating was recovered,



Plate 1: Setting



Plate 2: South facing external elevation



Plate 3: Interior of barn before work commenced



Plate 4: Interior view west



Plate 5: Detail of ground looking east



Plate 6: North facing elevation



Plate 7: Reduced level of west end



Plate 8: West section showing detail of excavated horizon



Plate 9: Working shot



Plate 10 : Central reduced area



Plate 11: Detail of drains



Plate 12: Detail of roof

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The programme of monitoring and recording revealed that most of the features during the reduction of the ground level were contemporary with the use of the barn. It is not certain they were laid before the barn was erected and could conceivably post-date the construction of the walls. If so then they were later inserts. The bricks, although broadly similar in terms of size compared with those used in the walls, were 'frogged'. It is not known whether those used in the walls were frogged or not.
- 5.2 There were two features which appeared to pre-date the drains. One of these, the N-S linear feature would appear to be contemporary with the use of the building, though this is by no means certain. The E-W linear shown on the sketch of June 10th looks to pre-date the barn but as no datable material was obtained it is impossible to ascribe a date to this feature.
- 5.3 To judge by the height of the barn and the presence of windows it would seem that the structure was probably, originally, used as a hay barn which was flanked by cattle stalls at either end. This was later converted to hold stock as indicated by the two concrete built drainage channels and what could have been the brick foundations for some sort of feeding troughs or passageway.
- 5.4 There was good opportunity to observe the ground reduction phase. While there is a high degree of confidence in the identification of the earlier features, there is less certainty regarding their dating.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to the Alan Lesurf, who on behalf of the Waddesdon Estate, commissioned this report. Thanks are due the Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service for their advice and to Brian Jinks, for his co-operation during the ground works phase. Finally, my thanks to bob Zeepvat for editing this report.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:


1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site Monitoring Sheets
6. List of photographs/slides
7. Colour slides
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. Original specialist reports and supporting information
10. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum.

8. Bibliography

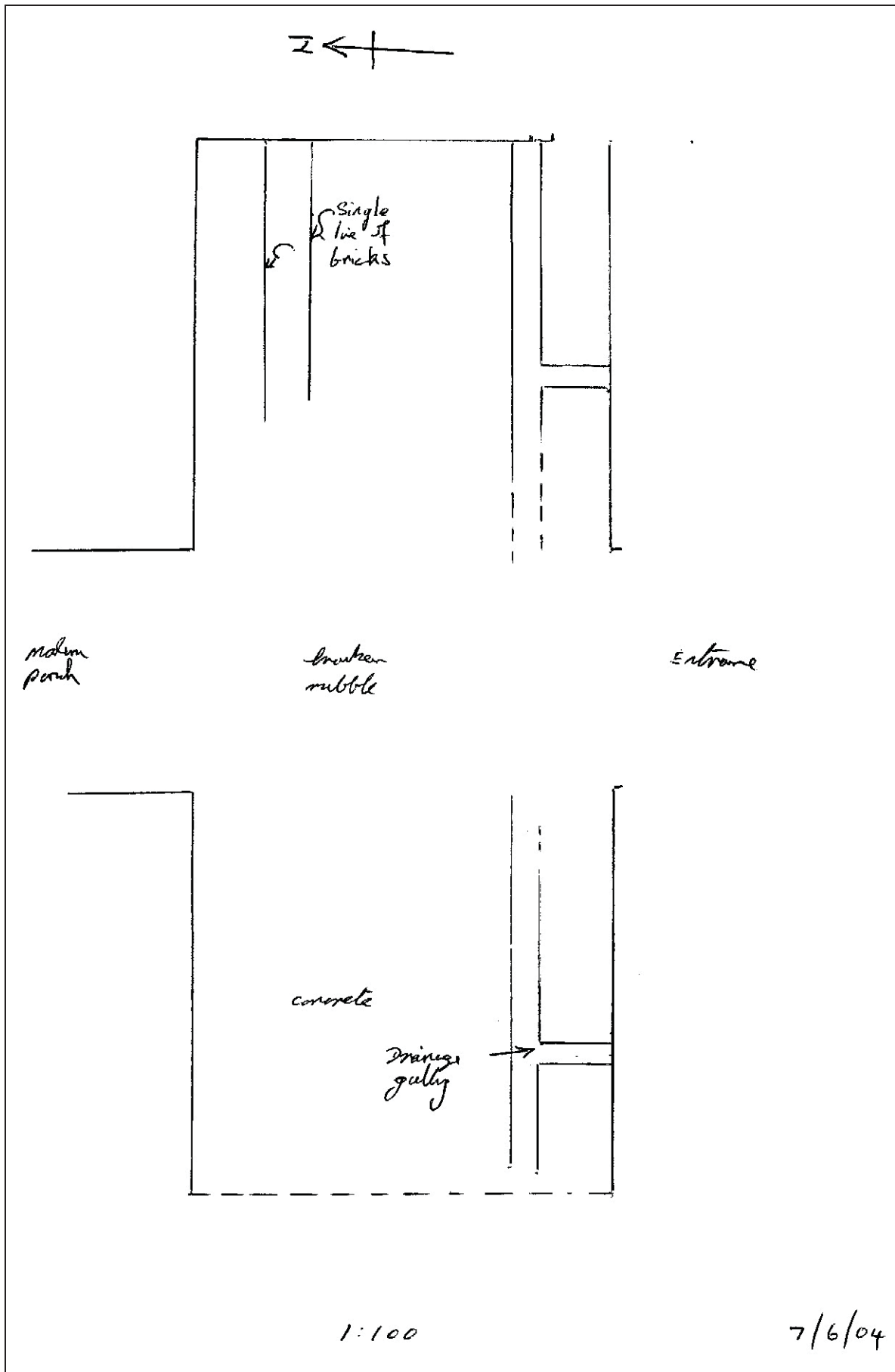
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition*. English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.
- Mawer A & Stenton F M. 1925: *The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire*. English Place Name Society . Cambridge university Press (Cambridge).
- Morris, J. 1978: *Domesday Book: Buckinghamshire*. Phillimore (Cirencester).
- Pevsner, N. & Williamson, E. 1994: *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*. Penguin Books (London).
- Radford, D. 2004: *Beachendon Farm, Eythorpe, Waddesdon. Brief for Archaeological Watching brief*. Buckinghamshire County Council.
- RCHME 1996 *Recording Historic Buildings: a Descriptive Specification (3rd Edition)*.
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).

Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

 A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD			
Project Name: <i>Beachendon Farm</i>		Project Code: <i>SBF 569</i>		Date of visit: <i>7/6/04</i>	
Location: <i>nr Stone</i>					
Client/Developer: <i>Waddesdon Estate</i>					
Architect:					
Site Manager/Owner: <i>Brian Jinks</i>			Phone: <i>07721-785227</i>		
Development Type:					
Foundations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Other:
Site conditions (weather, ground condition, etc) <i>Dry and Sunny.</i>					
Observations made: (e.g. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil descriptions, archaeological features)					
<p><i>Reduced phase got to start but several hand dug holes had been dug in order to locate an electricity cable. The barn is built partly of brick and part stone. Brick work to 1.14m high and the stone. This part of the barn is orientated ENE-WSW. Interior 5.44m x 18.66m x 3.3m to roof line. There is a central passage 4.2m wide. The walls are pinnacled by three blocked doorways 1.97m x 1.20m. There are four windows 2.15m from ground and approx. 1.04m sq. There are also several air vents (brick built) 0.14 x 0.22. The eastern end wall is built of brick (Flemish bond) 225mm x 114mm x 64mm. The floor which is about to be removed is made up of concrete and brick and in some places broken stone rubble. There are concrete built channels for drainage - see over for sketch.</i></p>					
<i>W. end is open.</i>					
<i>External wall end wall of E is timber framed which inside is pure brick</i>					
Comments:					
<i>5 bay barn</i>					
Completed by: <i>SRA</i>					

For sketch plan, use reverse

ASACFM26, revised 1999



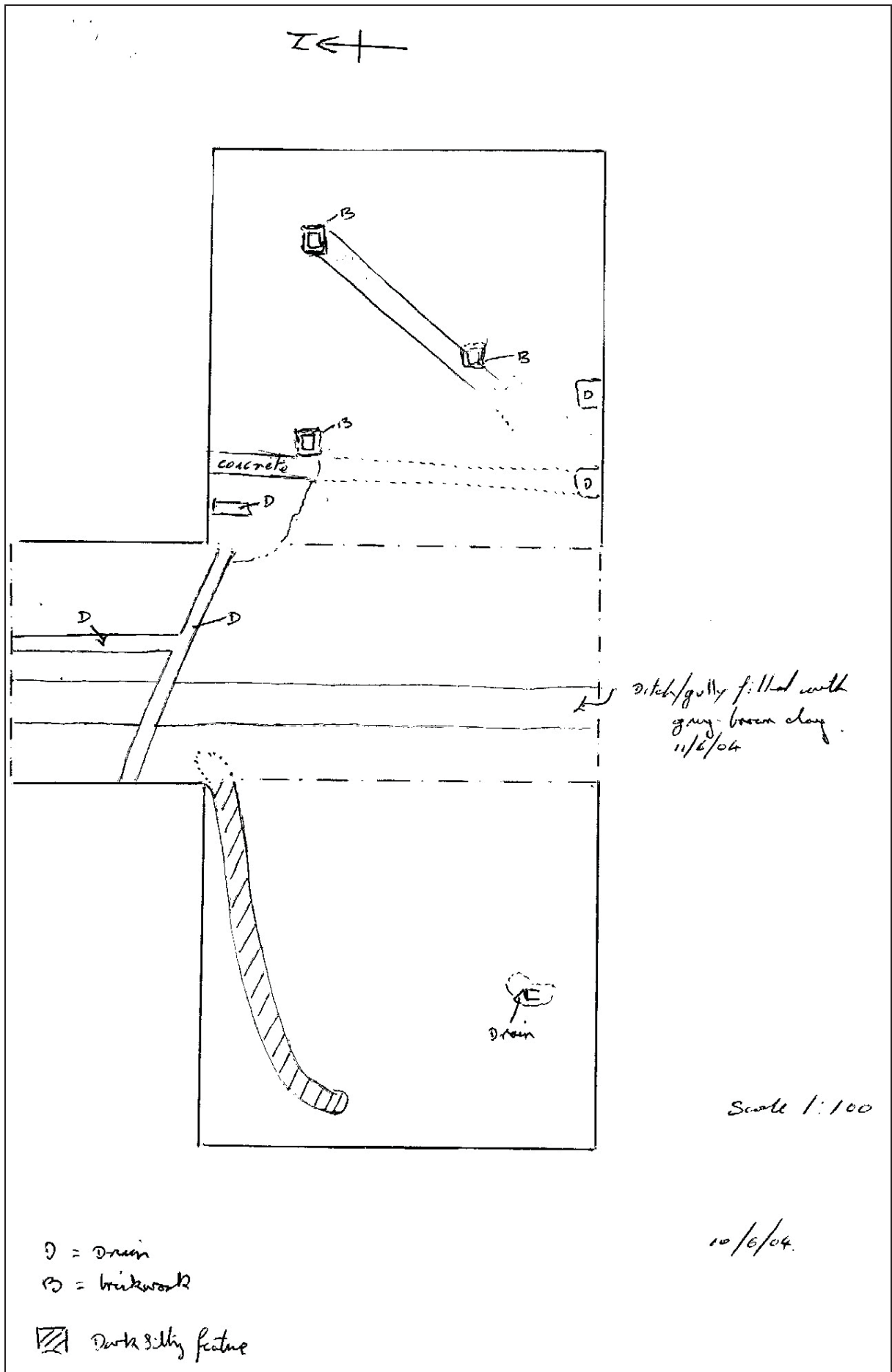


A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project Name: <i>Beachendon Farm</i>		Project Code: <i>SBF 569</i>		Date of visit: <i>10/6/04</i>	
Location: <i>nr Stone</i>					
Client/Developer <i>Woodlorton Estate</i>					
Architect:					
Site Manager/Farmer: <i>B. Jinks</i>			Phone: <i>07721-785227</i>		
Development Type:					
Foundations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Other:
Site conditions (weather, ground condition, etc) <i>Overcast and dry.</i>					
Observations made: (e.g. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil descriptions, archaeological features) <i>Observed both the eastern and western ends of barn - the central area is under excavation (concrete broken removed) The level has been restored by approximately 0.5m The foundations are only two courses of brick. Most of the ground is a surface sandy clay. The only certain features are some drainage runs, although there is a single lower feature distinguished by a darker silty fill (6m x 0.4m approx.) situated on the western side of barn (see sketch)</i>					
Comments: <i>Only central area remains to be seen. The remainder is mostly not ground with drainage features present.</i>					
Completed by: <i>JRA</i>					

For sketch plan, use reverse ASACFM26, revised 1999





A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project Name: <i>Beachendon Farm</i>		Project Code: <i>SBF</i>	Date of visit: <i>11/6/04</i>
Location: <i>nr. Stone</i>			
Client/Developer: <i>Woodford estate</i>			
Architect:			
Site Manager/Farmer: <i>B. Jinks</i>		Phone: <i>07721-785227</i>	
Development Type:			
Foundations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Other:
Site conditions (weather, ground condition, etc) <i>Dry, overcast, over Sun.</i>			
Observations made: (e.g. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil descriptions, archaeological features)			
<p><i>Saw the central area is pathogeway removed. This exposed the natural clay. The only features cutting the natural were drains and single linear feature that was 0.86m wide and orientated roughly N-S. It appears to have been cut by the drains. It's fill consisted of a mixed dark grey and brown clay with occasional areas of darker clay, possibly burning. For a sketch of these features see reverse of sheet for June 10.</i></p> <p><i>Drains had a maximum width of 290mm (interior 230mm).</i></p>			
Comments: <i>See sheet for June 10.</i>			
<i>No artifacts recovered.</i>			
Completed by: <i>JRAH</i>			

For sketch plan, use reverse

ASACFM26, revised 1999