

# **An archaeological watching brief at 57 Church Street, Harwich, Essex August 2006**

**report prepared by  
Kate Orr**

**commissioned by  
Hilary Brightman, Conservation Architect  
on behalf of Mr Jamie Shrive**

CAT project ref.: 06/8g  
Colchester Museums accession code: COLEM 2006.110  
NGR: TM 2606 3264



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**CAT Report 389**  
October 2006

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Fig 3 Footings trench at the rear of the building:  
north-facing section and elevation.

## 1 Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the excavation of two footings trenches at 57 Church Street, Harwich, Essex, which is a 16th-century building. At the rear of the property, part of the southern wall was seen to be of stone construction. The excavation of the footings trench at the rear of the building revealed the foundation to this wall which was 750mm deep and consisted of septaria chips set into lime mortar and clay. Beneath the foundation was a possible occupation layer pre-dating the current building.

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief carried out at 57 Church Street, Harwich, Essex, next to the Stingray public house at no 56. The property is located in the centre of Harwich and centred at National Grid Reference TM 2606 3264.
- 2.2 The groundworks were part of a renovation project on the building to convert it into a restaurant for the Stingray public house.
- 2.3 The work was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between the 21st and 22nd of August 2006.
- 2.4 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a specification agreed with the Archaeology Officer of Essex County Council's Historic Environment Management (HEM) team. This report mirrors standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CM 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (CM 2003), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

## 3 Archaeological background

No 57 is a Grade II listed 16th-century timber-framed house with an early shop front. A detailed review of the archaeology of Harwich may be found in the Essex County Council's *Harwich historic town assessment report* (Medlycott 1999). Key points relating to the site are noted below. Church Street was one of the main thoroughfares within the historic centre of Harwich, a town founded in the early 13th century which developed into a thriving port. Past excavations and watching briefs in the vicinity have produced worthwhile results with good levels of archaeological survival.

## 4 Aim

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to identify and record any archaeological remains that were exposed.

## 5 Methods (Figs 2-3)

- 5.1 Trenches were hand-dug by contractors.
- 5.2 Potential archaeological deposits which were exposed were cleaned by hand.
- 5.3 Two section drawings were made at a scale of 1:10.
- 5.4 Colour photographs of the footings trenches were taken with a digital camera.

## 6 Results (Figs 2-3 and Plate 1)

The watching brief was carried out in response to planning permission which was granted to erect an extension at the rear of the existing building. The extension was built on a raft foundation which involved a ground-level reduction. Two visits were made by Stephen Benfield of CAT to carry out the watching brief on two footings trenches. One was dug at the rear (east) of the existing building and a second footings trench for a partition wall was dug inside the building. However, the second trench was shallow (570mm deep) and did not reveal anything of archaeological significance.

At the rear of the building, part of the southern wall was exposed and seen to be of a septaria stone construction, partly patched with modern brick. The excavation of a 1m-deep trench for new footings gave an opportunity to expose and record the foundation of this stone wall. Where the wall and the foundation met, there was a facing of modern and post-medieval brick. The foundation was seen to be 750mm deep and its upper part consisted of a large septaria block faced by peg-tile and cobbles. This block had been set into a white lime mortar containing septaria chips. Underlying this was a dirty clay with septaria chips. At 750mm below ground-level, a clean yellow brown clay was observed. This appeared to be part of the foundation because, although it underlaid the septaria chips, it also faced them. The yellow clay sealed a dirty grey clay with stones and charcoal, starting at 850mm below ground-level. This deposit was clearly not natural clay and may have been a previous occupation level, pre-dating the existing building. Unfortunately there was no dating evidence from this layer.



**Plate 1 Footings trench at the rear of the building, view south-east.**

## 7 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code COLEM 2006.110.

## 8 Acknowledgements

CAT is grateful to Hilary Brightman for commissioning the work and Mr Jamie Shrive for funding it, and to David Stenning from Essex County Council who monitored the project. The watching brief was carried out by Stephen Benfield.

## 9 References

- |              |      |  |
|--------------|------|--|
| CM           | 2002 | <i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i>   |
| CM           | 2003 | <i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums</i>   |
| EAA 3        | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>3</b> , ed by J Glazebrook                    |
| EAA 8        | 2000 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>8</b> , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14       | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>14</b> , ed by D Gurney  |
| IFA          | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i>  |
| IFA          | 2001 | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>  |
| Medlycott, M | 1999 | <i>Harwich historic town project assessment report</i> , Essex County Council  |
| MoRPHE       | 2006 | <i>Management of research projects in the historic environment</i> (English Heritage)  |

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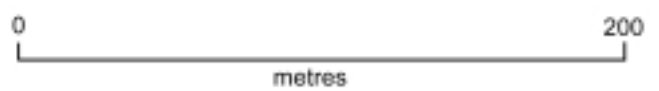


Fig 1 Site location.

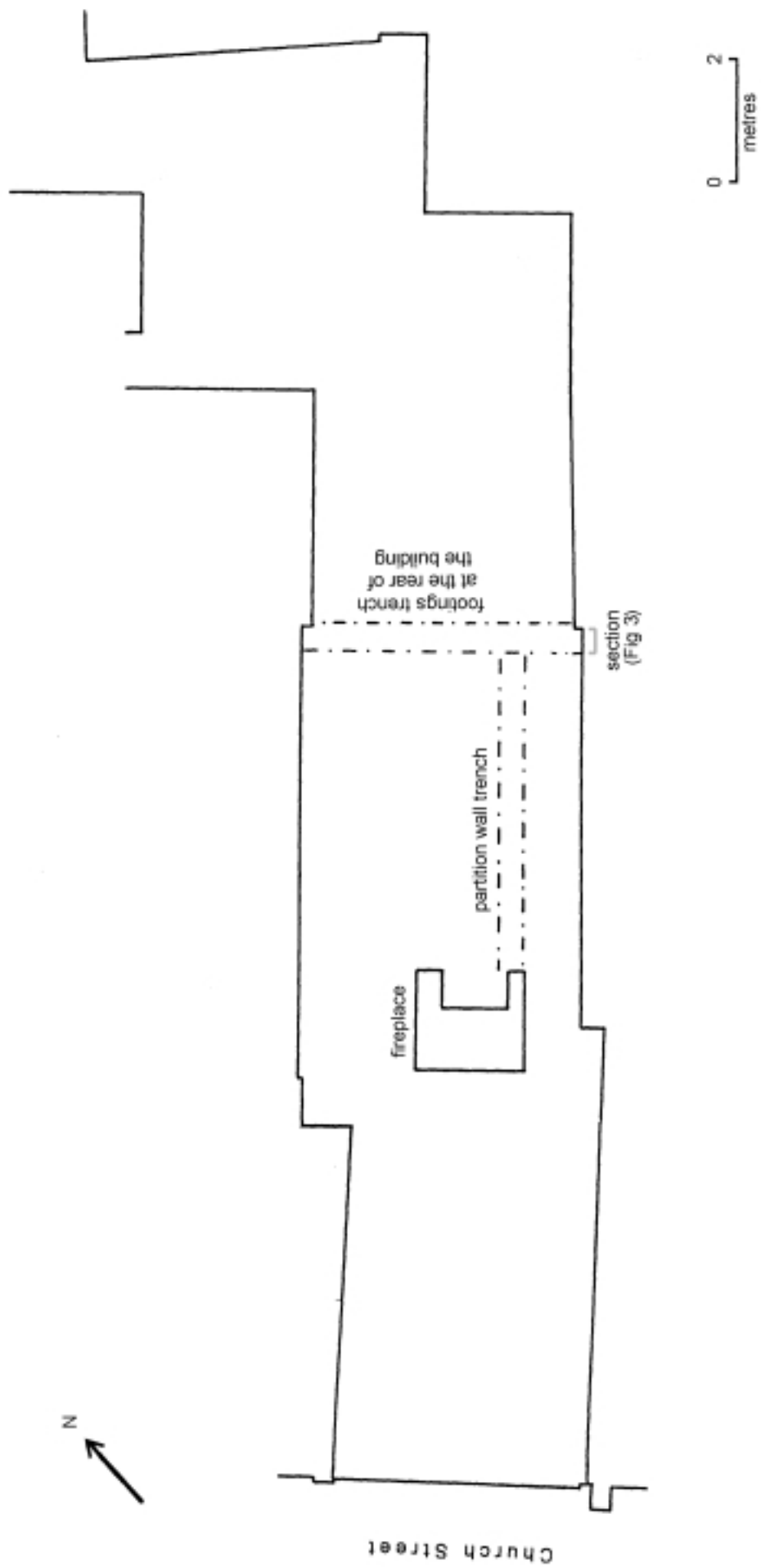


Fig 2 Ground-plan showing the trenches monitored.



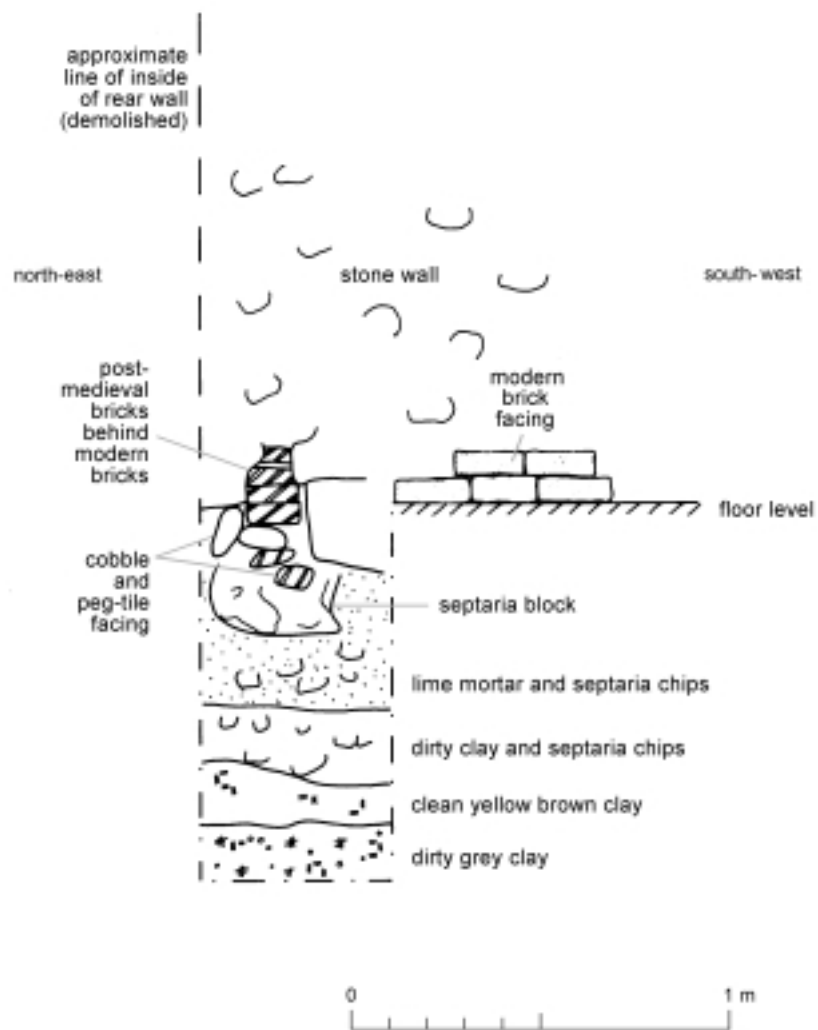


Fig 3 Footings trench at the rear of the building:  
north-west-facing section and elevation.

# Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

## Summary sheet

<b>Site address:</b> 57 Church Street, Harwich, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> St Nicholas	<b>District:</b> Tendring
<b>NGR:</b> TM 2606 3264	<b>Site code:</b> Museum accession code 2006.110
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> August 2006	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 2 short footings trenches
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Owner
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER nos:</b>
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 389	
<b>Periods represented:</b> medieval, post-medieval	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  <i>An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the excavation of two footings trenches at 57 Church Street, Harwich, Essex, which is a 16th-century building. At the rear of the property, part of the southern wall was seen to be of stone construction. The excavation of the footings trench at the rear of the building revealed the foundation to this wall which was 750mm deep and consisted of septaria chips set into lime mortar and clay. Beneath the foundation was a possible occupation layer pre-dating the current building.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Kate Orr	<b>Date of summary:</b> October 2006



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Pat Connell  
Archaeological Officer  
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17/4/07

Dear Pat,

## **57 Church Street, Harwich 2006.110**

On the 20th of March 2007 I was called out to monitor the second phase of work at the rear of 57 Church Street, Harwich. Following on from the internal footings that were dug and monitored last August (CAT report 389), they had reduced the ground level in the yard by 400mm -500mm. The ground was somewhat trampled by the time I got there but they seemed to have got down to a dirty clay layer. I observed a number of unfroged post-medieval bricks and peg-tiles lying on the reduced ground surface as well as a small amount of pottery. The two sherds retrieved were 16th-17th century post-medieval red earthenware (fabric 40, Cotter 2000; Andrew, Milton and Walker 1990, 86). The finds have now been discarded. The ground reduction had exposed the brick foundations of the surrounding buildings and boundary walls.

In the south-west corner of the yard a small hole was dug to expose a drain. This was approximately 400mm deep i.e. the bottom of the hole was 800mm below the former ground level. Possible occupation layers and make up layers were seen in the section of the hole as follows; 40mm of yellow brown clay overlaid 100mm of greyish brown clay with flecks of charcoal and mortar. In turn this sealed 260mm of yellow brown clay containing red patches and daub (presumably from burning). Natural ground was not reached but this was to be expected as excavations elsewhere on Church Street have found natural to be 1.8m below ground level (Andrews et al, 1990, 64). Unfortunately there was no datable material such as pottery from any of the layers at no 57 Church Street. However a comparison with the other sites along Church Street where archaeological levels have been recorded may give pointers for dating. From 1.8m below ground a succession of occupation layers divided by thick layers of make up material dating from the 13th century to the present day have been recorded (Andrews

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*Chairman:* Mark Hassall M.A., F.S.A.      *Company Secretary:* Nick Wickenden M.A., F.S.A., A.M.A.

*Director of Archaeology:* Philip Crummy M.A., F.S.A., M.I.F.A.

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et al, 1990, 57-91). The layers seen at no 57 are probably not deeply stratified enough to belong to the 13th century but they may pre-date the existing building (which is 16th century). Several stone cobbles had been retrieved from the hole and were piled up on the side. Without having seen them in situ I can only guess that they may have been part of a cobbled surface such as a courtyard.

A modern-looking square brick rainback/cistern for catching rainwater was seen on the south-east side of the yard, next to the boundary wall. This had been partly machined away and what remained was filled in with brick rubble.

On the north-east side of the yard, the ground reduction had exposed the head of brick arch. The modern extension to the adjacent property (on Kings Head Street) had been built over it. With such a small area exposed it was not possible to see what the arch was for. It seems to be in the wrong place for a cellar to either to 57 Church Street or the property on Kings Head Street, being in the middle of the two properties. Another rainback seems probable and a brick vaulted parallel has been recorded at 50 Church Street (Andrews et al 1990, 69). Alternatively it could be a brick well that had been capped off with a domed vault. Something similar was recorded at the Methodist Church site on Church Street (Andrews et al, 1990, 69).

The attached plan shows the areas I am referring to. I hope this will do as a report but if you would like me to write a proper report I will be happy to do so.

The references are:

Andrews, D, Milton, B and Walker, H, 1990, 'Harwich; its archaeological potential as revealed in excavations at George Street and Church Street' in *Essex Archaeology and History* Vol 21

Cotter, J, 2000, *Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85*, Colchester Archaeological Report 7

CAT Report 389, 2006, *An archaeological watching brief at 57 Church Street, Harwich, August 2006*. Unpublished CAT report by Kate Orr

Yours sincerely

Kate Orr

cc Jamie Shrive, Site owner  
Dave Stenning, ECC  
Essex Historic Environment Record, ECC

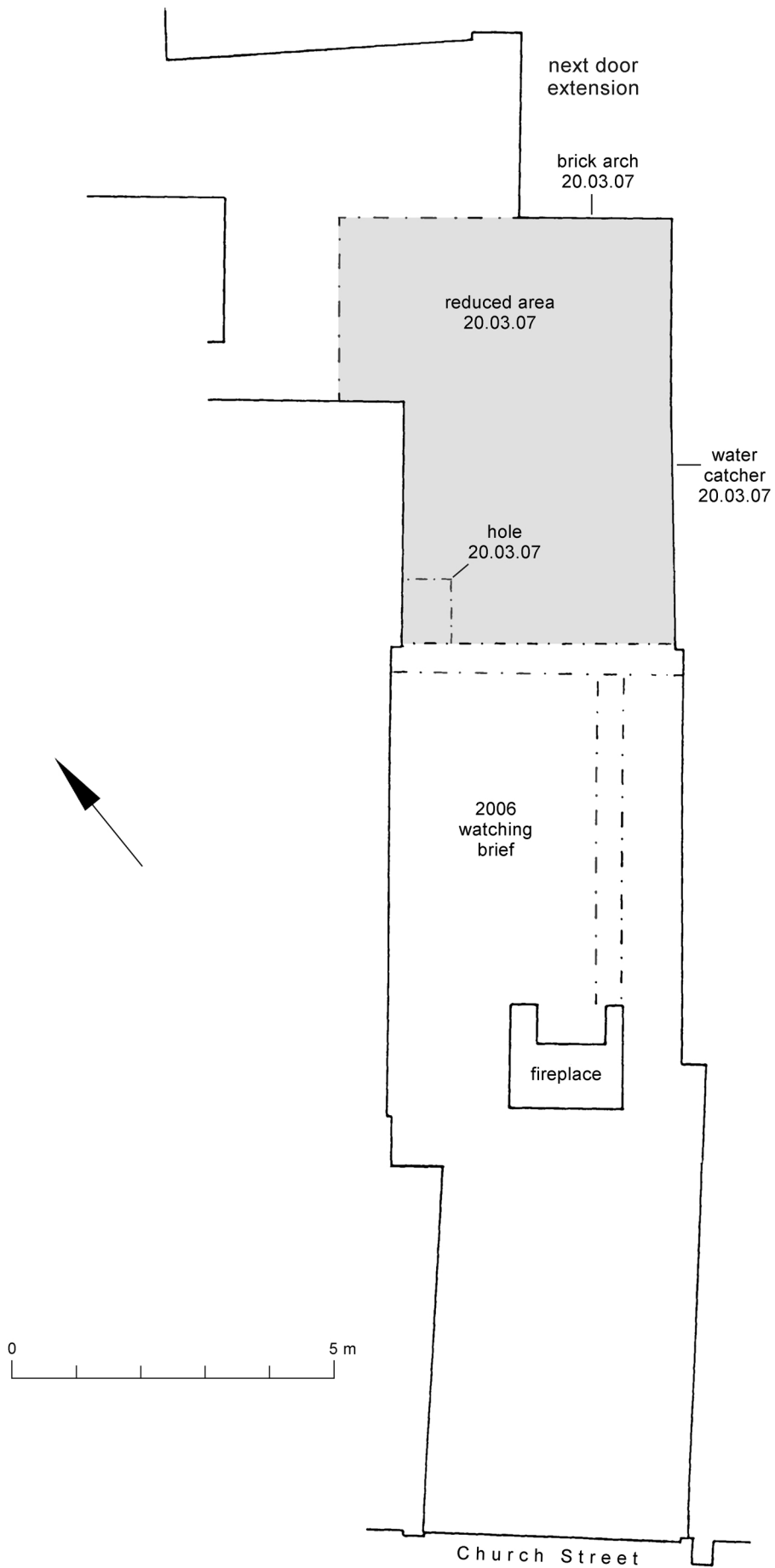


Fig 1 Ground plan showing trenches monitored in 2006 and area monitored March 2007.