



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION**

**AT**

**DE LA BECHE, ALDWORTH,**

**WEST BERKSHIRE**

**SP 5544 7836**

*On behalf of*

*Cathy Yeulet*

**FEBRUARY 2009**

**REPORT FOR**

Cathy Yeulet  
c/o Voonwong & Bensonsaw  
Unit 3d Burbage House  
83 Curtain Road,  
London,  
EC2A 3BS

**PREPARED BY**

Clare Stott & Gwilym Williams

**EDITED BY**

John Moore

**ILLUSTRATIONS BY**

Eoin Fitzsimons

**FIELDWORK**

19<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> August 2008

**REPORT ISSUED**

19 February 2009

**ENQUIRES TO**

John Moore Heritage Services  
Hill View  
Woodperry Road  
Beckley  
Oxfordshire  
OX3 9UZ

Telephone/Fax: 01865 358300

*Email: [info@jmheritageservices.co.uk](mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk)*

**Site Code;**  
**JMHS Project No:**  
**West Berkshire Museum**  
**Accession No.**

AWDLB 08  
1957

NEBYM: 2008.88

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b><i>SUMMARY</i></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	2
<b>2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3 STRATEGY</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Research Design	4
3.2 Methodology	6
<b>4 RESULTS</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1 First Occupation Phase	6
4.2 Second Occupation phase	8
4.3 Third Occupation Phase	12
4.4 Undated later medieval features	14
4.5 Post-use Phase: Demolition and Abandonment	14
<b>5 FINDS</b>	<b>15</b>
5.1 Medieval Pottery <i>by Paul Blinkhorn</i>	15
5.2 Tile Report <i>by Clare Roberts</i>	16
5.3 Architectural Fragments Report <i>by KA Rodwell</i>	17
5.4 Other Finds	17
5.5 Environmental Remains	18
<b>6 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>7 ARCHIVE</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>8 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	
Field Work Report for resistivity survey in De La Beche Garden <i>By Andrew Hutt (Berkshire Archaeological Research Group)</i>	<b>23</b>
<b>FIGURES</b>	
Figure 1 Site location	3
Figure 2 Plan of earlier deposits and features	5
Figure 3 Plan of second phase building	7
Figure 4 Sections	9
Figure 5-8 Photographs	11
Figure 9-11 Photographs	13

## **Summary**

*An archaeological excavation was carried out at De La Beche, Aldworth following an evaluation, which had previously identified the remains of a possible building. The excavation revealed two phases of buildings dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Little of the earlier building survived. The later building had two internal surfaces: a beaten-earth floor and a cobbled area, both of which were probably roofed over. In addition, a apparently external drain, parallel to the walls, was investigated. Berkshire Archaeological Research Group carried out a resistivity survey with inconclusive results. The second structure excavated was probably an ancillary building to the manor complex built in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and which was then demolished at an unknown point in the course of probably the 14<sup>th</sup> or possibly 15<sup>th</sup> century.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

De La Beche is located east of Haw Lane to the south of the village (NGR SU 5544 7836). The geology is clay with flints. Prior to work commencing the site was laid to lawn and cultivated as part of the garden.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

An application for planning permission (08/00885/HOUSE) at De La Beche was granted by West Berkshire Council. Due to the presence of archaeological remains West Berkshire Council Archaeology Service (WBCAS) issued advice in respect of an archaeological excavation. This was following a pre-determination archaeological evaluation that established the presence of significant archaeological remains.

The archaeology service advised that, as development would result in the destruction of archaeology present, the works were to be accompanied by a programme of archaeological investigation and recording to ensure that any archaeological remains and historic structures were adequately investigated, recorded, analysed and published. These matters were covered by condition 3 of the planning permission granted:

*3. No development shall take place within the application area until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

This was in line with PPG 16 and Policy OVS2 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

WBCAS prepared a Brief for the archaeological investigation. Accordingly a Written Scheme of Investigation for the archaeological recording was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services and approved by WBCAS.



### 1.3 Archaeological Background

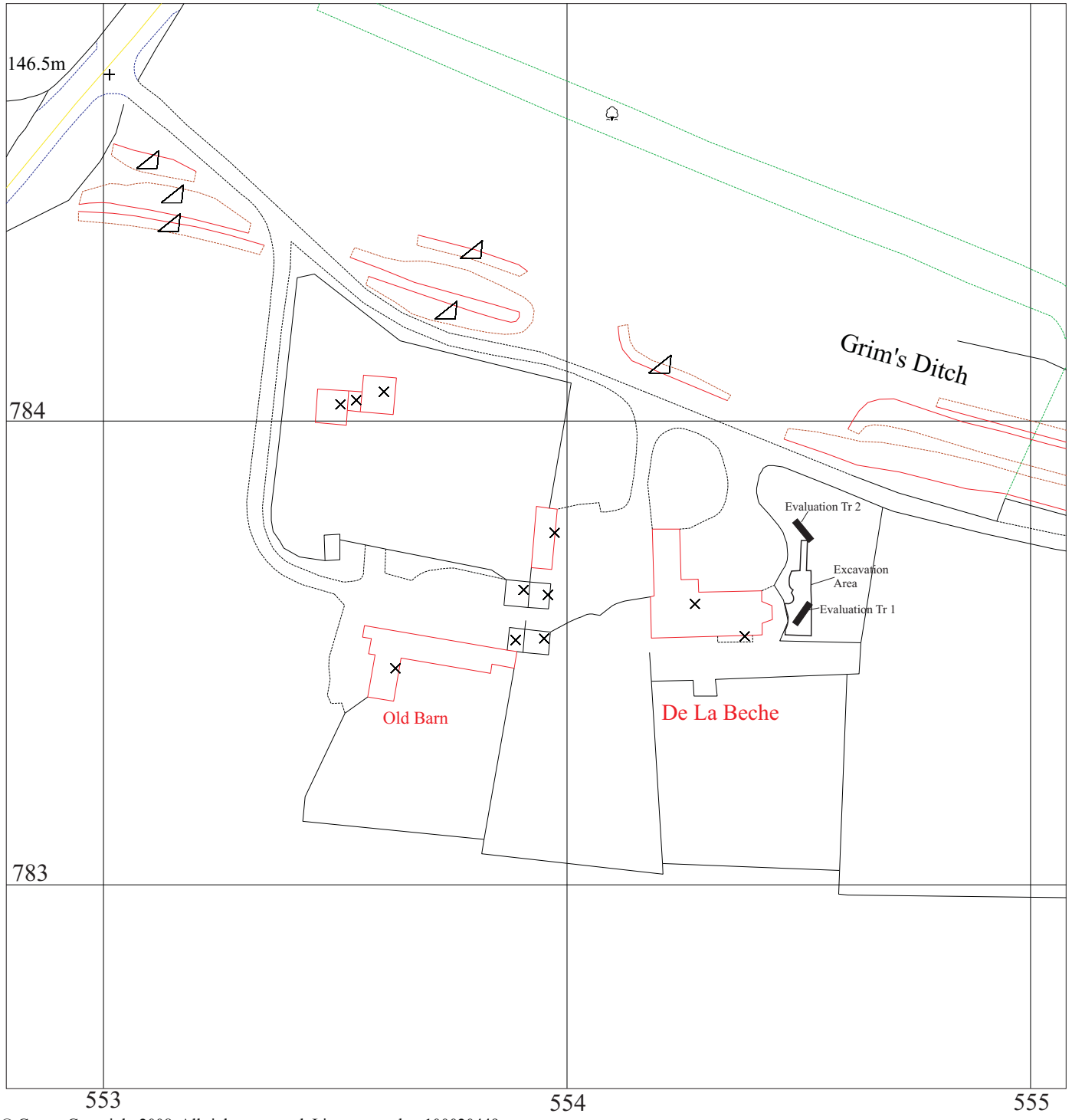
De La Beche Farm is located in Aldworth on the Berkshire Downs, and takes its name either from 'Ealda's enclosure' or the 'the old enclosure'. The latter may well refer to the Grim's Ditch which lies just to the north of the manor and the excavation site. Grim's Ditch is a linear earthwork that runs across a large part of Berkshire in several stretches. The exact nature and date of the bank and ditch are uncertain. Roman finds have been excavated from the ditch approximately one mile east of De La Beche. It is of national significance, and several parts (including those near De La Beche house) were scheduled in the 1960s.

De La Beche takes its name from the De La Beche family who came from Sussex, acquiring land at Aldworth during the 13<sup>th</sup> century. "In 1261 Robert de la Beche conveyed a messuage and land in Aldworth to John de la Beche, probably his son, reserving a life interest for himself." (Page & Ditchfield, 1924). This may well be the point at which the De La Beche family built the new house for the manor of De La Beche. John De La Beche appears to have had part of the manor of Aldworth, in addition to De La Beche, as he was granted a right of free warren for both in 1316, with further rights being granted in 1335. Seventy years later Robert's great-grandson, Nicholas, obtained licence to crenellate the manor house in 1338, at the same time as he was also granted licence to impark the woods at De La Beche (*ibid*).

Following Nicholas' death in 1345 his widow was abducted to Shinfield, where she was married to John De Dalton. At this point the manor appears to have passed to Nicholas' brother Edmund, Archdeacon of Berkshire, who held it until 1364, when he died. It passed by settlement to Thomas Langford, who seems to have been a brother-in-law of Nicholas and Edmund, married to an unnamed sister (*ibid*).

When Thomas de Langford died in 1390 the manor passed to his son William, who in turn died in 1411. Edward – William's son – is recorded as leasing De La Beche and other manors in 1470; he died in 1474. His son, Thomas, was succeeded by John de Langford who died in 1509 leaving the manor to his daughter Anne, who married William Stafford of Bradfield, and held the manor in 1534. Their son Thomas settled the manor in 1571, and was succeeded by his son Reade in 1584. Reade died in 1605. Although the manor is well-documented after that, the post-medieval history of the place is of no relevance to the archaeology uncovered during the excavation.

A suggestion has been made that the house lies on the site of a fortified manor. There is brief reference to an excavation in the 1930s when the foundations of part of a wall were revealed, and comparison was made with early 14<sup>th</sup> century castles (Anon., 1934, 213); equally, Nicholas De La Beche's licence to crenellate may have been over-interpreted. By the later middle ages crenellation was a matter of taste and fashion rather than military necessity; therefore, to describe the manor house as fortified may not be entirely accurate. The location of this excavation is unknown. Additionally, medieval encaustic tiles and a silver seal matrix have been found in the area; the latter bearing the De La Beche crest and owned by Isabella De La Beche, wife of John De La Beche, and dating from the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Both pieces of evidence are indicative of a high-status site. Reference to a group of bank and ditch features, which could have formed the northern boundary of a deer park, is



© Crown Copyright 2008. All rights reserved. Licence number 100020449

Figure 1. Site location

made in the Brief (WASB, 2008). No evidence for this group of features was observed during the excavation.

An archaeological evaluation carried out by John Moore Heritage Services in June 2008 (Gilbert, 2008) revealed a major wall footing comprised of large flint nodules bonded by a lime mortar. Associated with this wall footing were roof tile fragments that were provisionally dated to the late medieval period. The nature of the wall footing and the presence of late medieval roof tile was a strong indication that this feature was part of the manor house complex.

Some of the above information on the archaeological background has been provided by West Berkshire Archaeology Service.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* were as follows:

- To identify, investigate and record any archaeological remains within the site to an appropriate level.
- To confirm that the previously identified remains are part of the medieval manor.

Particular research questions comprised the following:

- Can any deposits/features found help us understand the scale and character of the later medieval activity?
- Can the date and function of the wall recorded in the evaluation be more firmly established?
- Does palaeo-environmental evidence survive on the site that might assist with landscape reconstruction and building an understanding of the use of the site in the medieval period?
- Is there any evidence for the decline of the medieval site? The evaluation suggests demolition and clearance, can this theory be supported?
- Does evidence relating to the construction and use of Grim's Ditch survive on the site? Do deposits that might help date this linear monument exist?

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) agreed with West Berkshire Archaeology Service. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record throughout, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

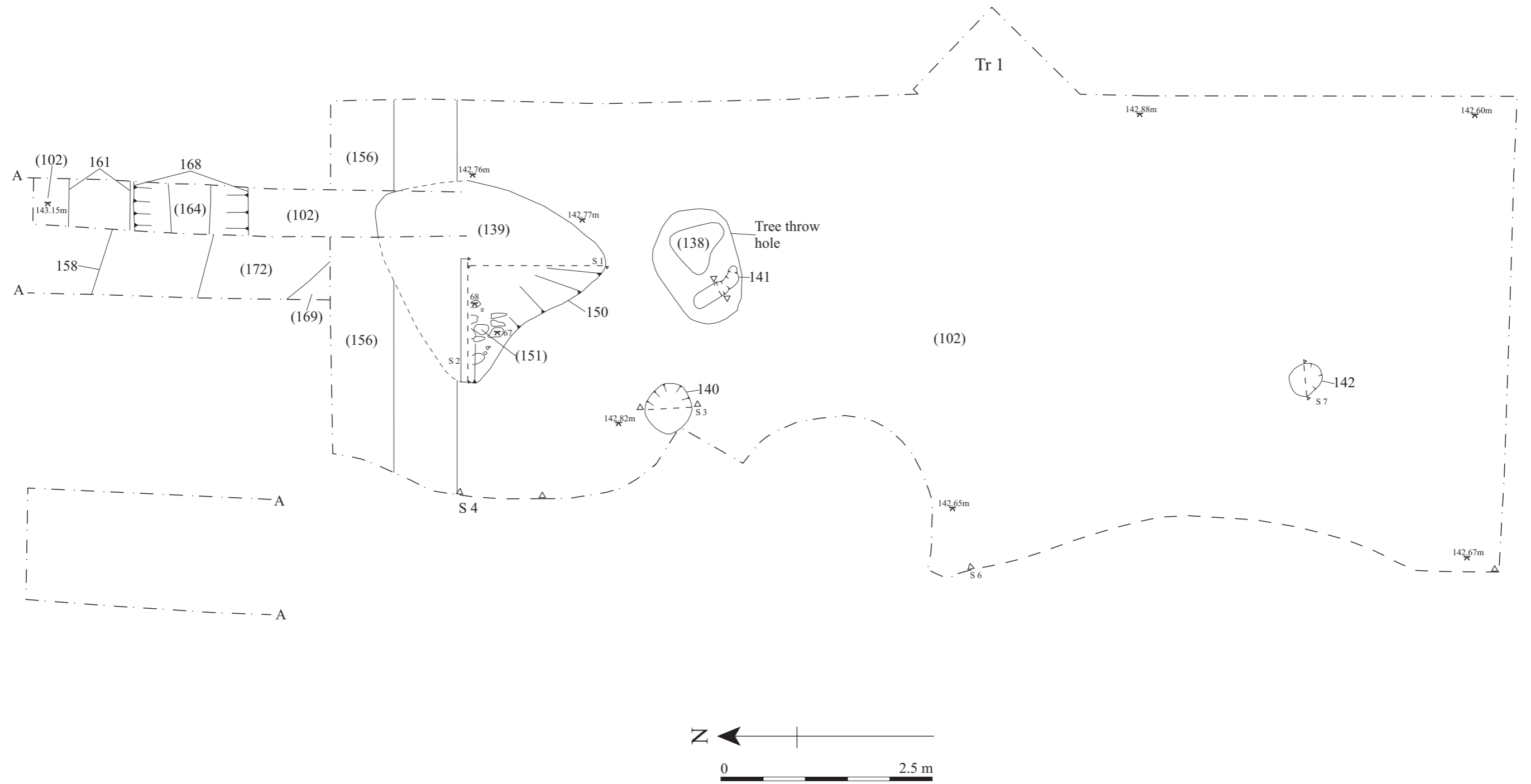


Figure 2. Plan of early deposits and features

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

### **3.2 Methodology**

The investigation involved the mechanical excavation of an area 6m wide (east to west) by 12m long to the uppermost archaeological horizon (Figs. 2 & 5). The archaeological horizon was hand cleaned and features were planned. Hand excavation took place to define lines of walls. These were planned, as was a spread of flint packing comprising a floor-surface. Subsequently, the flint surface – referred to in the WSI as rubble, and known to exist in the area – was removed by 1½ tonne mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. Underlying archaeological horizons were hand cleaned. All archaeological deposits were sample-excavated by hand.

## **4 RESULTS (Figures 2-11)**

All archaeological features were assigned individual context numbers. This number covered both the feature cut and fill, unless the feature was sample excavated by hand. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. A general description of the feature fills is given where appropriate.

### **4.1 First Occupation Phase (Figures 2 - 4)**

The natural yellow clay with flint and chalk (102) had probably been levelled prior to the construction of the earliest phase, although part of this could have happened prior to the second phase of occupation. To the south and west of the site the ground level increases by c. 1m. To the east of the site, the ground is level, with a break of slope beyond the eastern garden wall. To the north the ground level meets the slope of the drive into De La Beche, although in the northwest corner it appears that the ground has also possibly been terraced.

Towards the northern limit of the excavation was wall [164] within construction cut [163]. The construction cut was only observed in the narrow slot dug along the trench edge and its full extent is unknown. The cut measured 1.45m wide north/south and was observed to a depth of 0.36m (Fig. 4, S.5). The north side of the cut was steep and convex at c. 60°, whereas the south side of the cut was shallow at c. 20°. The wall [164] was set into the base of the cut [163] at the northern end, and was made of rough flints, of average size 100mm x 100mm but up to 150mm x 150mm, bonded with red clay; no coursing was apparent. It was 0.8m wide and survived up to 0.3m high. With the wall being laid onto the apparently irregular base of the construction cut the result was that the base of the south face of the wall was 0.1m higher than that of the north face. Either side of this wall was backfilled with a grey sandy fill (168) with much mortar through it. It was not possible however to date the wall [164], nor to say whether it is significantly earlier than the other observed walls [103] and [124] to the south. In terms of construction it is a similar size to the other walls, although the bonding material is clay rather than sandy mortar. Although the wall [164] did not yield any dating material it was sealed by further contexts, which did yield pottery dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 3. Plan of second phase building

The wall [164] and the backfill (168) were truncated by the cut [178] which was filled with redeposited natural (167); this cut may well have been to rob stone from the wall. The deposit (167) did appear to fill the southern edge of cut [163], although given the limited view within the trench this may well be deceptive. The fill (167) was overlain by the deposit (157), an extremely stony deposit, described as cobbling during excavation. It may equally represent a spread of stone from the robbing of the wall [164]. The deposit (157) was cut by [176], which itself cut a 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century layer – (170) – and was sealed by similarly dated layers – (156) and (155).

Wall [164] was sealed by deposits which abut the wall [124] to the south, and therefore must have gone out of use prior to the building of the structure to the south. The walls [124] and [164] were *c.* 2m from one another.

An undated irregular shaped pit [150] cut the natural (102); this is interpreted as a treebole (Fig. 2; Fig. 4, S.1 & S.2). The treebole [150] was observed to extend north of the later wall [124]; it was partially truncated by the cut [177], although not to the same depth as observed south of [124] (Fig. 7). To the south feature [141] and the fills (137) and (138) were also identified as treeroots. A single posthole [140], filled with (136), was observed in the central part of the excavation area, under the later cobbling (Fig. 4, S.3). It is possible that this posthole may be associated with the construction of the building in the second phase of occupation.

#### **4.2 Second Occupation Phase (Figures 3 - 7)**

Both walls [103] and [124] were set onto an area of terraced natural (102) (Fig. 4, S.4 & S.6; Figs. 6 - 8). There was no construction cut apparent for either wall, in contrast with earlier wall [164]. At the south end of the excavation the sequence was characterised by deposits of sandy material and compacted internal surfaces; the central area by a cobbled surface (134); and the northern part of the intervention yielded a sequence of dumps sealing the wall [164], which were cut by a later, undated drain [160].

Sealing treebole [150] was an east/west oriented wall [124] (Fig. 3; Fig 4, S.4), which was parallel with wall [103] to the south and the earlier wall [164] to the north. Wall [124] measured 0.68m wide and stood to a maximum height of 0.6m; it was observed for 4.6m extending beyond both east and west edges of excavation. The wall [103] was 0.6m wide and survived to 0.3m high. It too extended beyond the east and west edges of excavation although was observed to extend for 5.2m.

Both walls were similarly constructed in rough-worked flint and were bonded with yellow sandy mortar, although the coursing in [103] was not so pronounced as it did not stand to the same height as [124]. Dating recovered from the wall [124] yielded a date after the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

To the south of the wall [103] was an area 4.9m wide with what appeared to be internal floor surfaces. These were only poorly preserved and sealed by later demolition rubble. No south wall was observed within the excavation area, although clearly the presence of sandy mortar floor levels indicates that a south wall existed. It is possible that the south wall of the present garden may well be the line of the

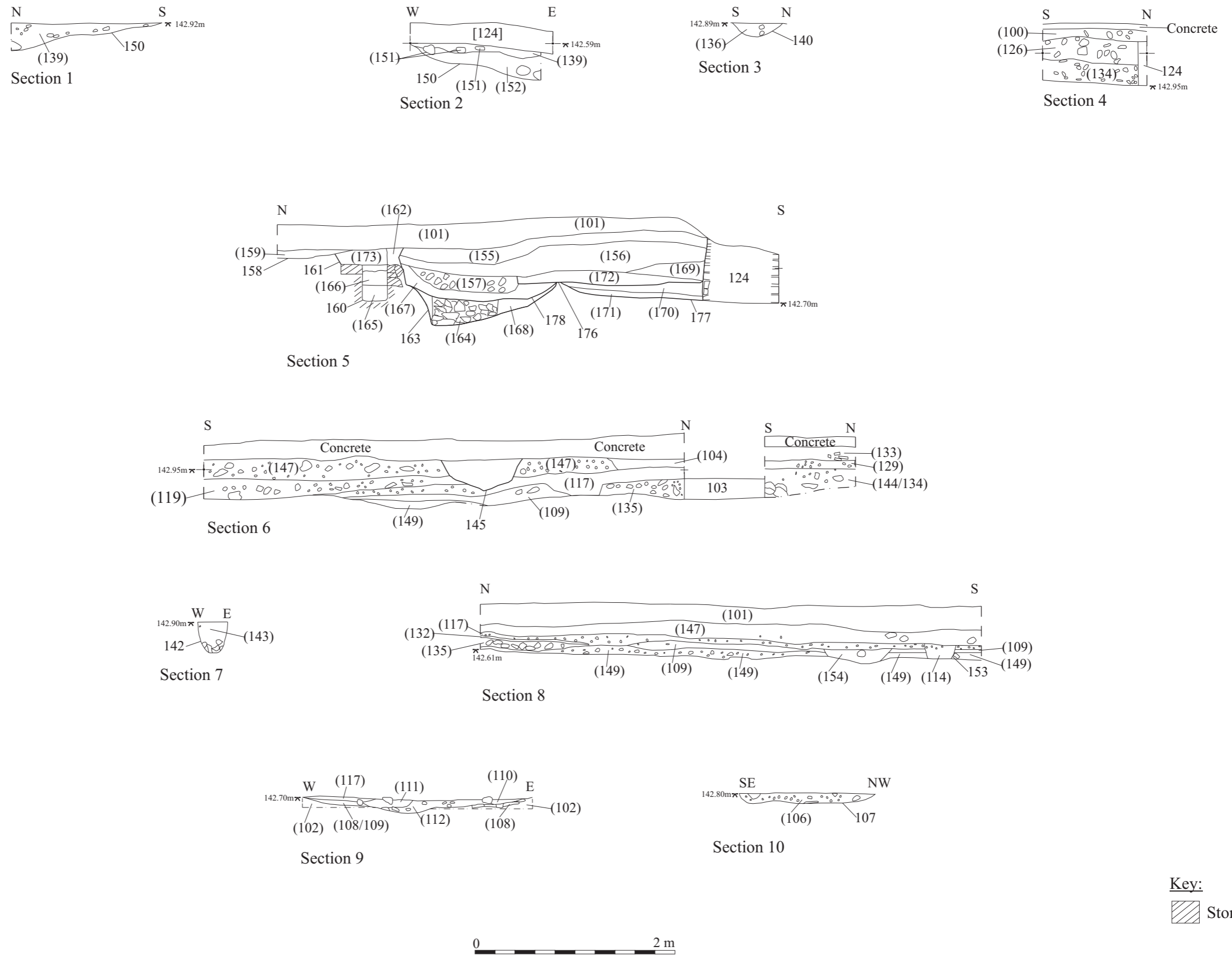


Figure 4. Sections



original south wall, approximately 7m south of [103]. The walls [103] and [124] were spaced 6.7m from one another. They were separated by an area of cobbling (134).

It is not possible to assert whether the walls [103] and [124] were part of a single storey stone structure or a two-storey timber-framed building. Pottery from the wall matrix [124] indicates a post-12<sup>th</sup> century date for its construction. No dating was recovered from the wall [103]. The southern part of the excavation area had been stripped to the natural (102) as part of the terracing and a layer of reworked charcoal-rich clay (149) was laid as a bedding deposit (Fig. 4, S.6 & S.8). Cut through this deposit was a posthole [142], filled with (143) (Fig. 2; Fig. 4, S.7). The posthole measured 0.3m across and was 0.3m deep; stone packing was in the base of the cut. This posthole was sealed by the deposit of yellow silty sand (108)/(109) which seems to have formed part of the floor make-up within the south part of the building (Fig. 4, S.8). The bedding deposit (108)/(109) extended from just south of the stone structure [135] to beyond the edge of excavation to the south. Probably also contemporary with (108)/(109) was the stone structure [135], although no direct relationship could be established.

The stone structure [135] (Fig. 9) was located hard against the south face of the northern wall [103]. It comprised a single course of packed roughly or unworked flint nodules with some sandy mortar through it and also partly sealing it (132) (Fig. 4, S.8). It was 0.55m – 0.6m wide. This group of deposits was observed during the evaluation (01/05), where it was interpreted as the fill of a construction trench. The excavation did not indicate its exact function; it may have formed a drain, or equally the compacted flints may have been to provide a base or support, which would not be susceptible to subsidence along the north wall of the room. Elsewhere within the room repairs to and patching up of the floor (116)/(117)/(110)/(01/04) were observed.

The floor (116)/(117)/(110)/(01/04) extended from the south face of [103] to beyond the edge of excavation to the south. It was a compacted clay surface with notable chalk flecking through it. Visible along the entire east section, apart from where it was truncated by a possible beam slot [153] (see below), the deposit, which measured c. 0.1m thick, thinned out on the western edge, particularly in the southwest corner. The floor (117) also partly ran over the top of support [135] (Fig. 4, S.7). The presence of Surrey Whiteware, which has a date range from the mid 13<sup>th</sup> to mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, in floor (116) suggests that it was in use from the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

Due to use the floor was patched, evidenced by deposits (111), (112) (Fig. 4, S.9) and (115)/(154). An undated sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from (112).

North of the wall [103] and sealing the early posthole [140] and the treeboles was a cobbled surface (134)/(144); the context number (134) will be used for all description and discussion of the surface (Fig. 6). The cobbled surface (134) butted both [103] to the south and [124] to the north; to both east and west it extended beyond the edges of the excavation area. It comprised mixed flints in the size range 50x50x20mm to 150x150x40mm, occasional pieces of chalk as well as fragments of limestone rubble; both of which were in the same size range as the flint. Some burning was noted on the northeast side of the investigation area. The surface was c. 0.2m thick. No finds were recovered from within it.



Figure 5. Excavation area looking north after stripping; Evaluation Trench 1 visible cutting demolition rubble (147), wall [103] and cobbling (134).



Figure 6. Excavation area looking south; wall [124] is located under North arrow, cobbling (134) and wall [103] are to the south, while floor (116)/(117)/(110) is being cleaned



Figure 7. Wall [124] and treebole [150]



Figure 8. Wall [128] looking east; rubble and limestone architectural fragment to north and rubble to south

Set into the surface was a large flat piece of limestone, oriented east/west and measuring 0.3x0.45m; its maximum thickness was c. 0.1m although this was only on one of the long sides, the opposing side was c. 0.05m thick. It was located 2.5m north of the wall [103] and would appear to have been a post-pad for either an upper storey over the cobbled area or for the roof structure, although the former is perhaps the more likely.

North of the stone post-pad was a patch of mortar laid into the top of cobbled surface (134); this too was oriented east/west and measured 0.4x 0.6m. It was located 2.9m north of the stone post-pad and 0.55m south of wall [124]. It is, of course, possible that rather than functioning as supports for an upper storey that one or both of these post-pads were for the uprights for stalls or similar sub-divisions of space within the cobbled area. Clearly, the limited view afforded by the excavation precludes unequivocal identification of the internal layout of the building.

The natural geology, south of the wall [124], was at 142.6m OD; north of the wall [124], the base of the levelling cut [177] was at 142.75m OD. The wall [124] was laid into the base of [177]. On the south side the cobbling (134) was laid hard against the south face of the wall [124], whereas north of the wall [124] the cut [177] was backfilled with clay silt fills (Fig. 4, S.5): the earlier fill (171) was characterised by the high presence of mortar. The upper of these two fills (170) yielded pottery dating from after the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and which in urban contexts had ceased to be used by the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, while a mid-13<sup>th</sup> century date is late for the pottery – Ashampstead ware – it is in keeping with the historical date for the founding of De La Beche manor. The presence of mortar in the earlier deposit may well be associated with the construction of the building.

The deposit (157), perhaps associated with the robbing of earlier wall [164], was cut on the south side by a shallow cut [176] of unknown function, which was filled with (172) a charcoal rich deposit running at an oblique angle across the trench from northwest to southeast and partially abutting wall [124] (Fig. 4, S.5). This was sealed by a sequence of deposits (169), (156) and (155), which were described as demolition layers during excavation. As these layers abut the wall [124], they may well represent dumps of construction, or indeed occupation rubbish associated with the building. Tile, charcoal and bone were observed within the deposits. Dating from both (156) and (155) yielded Ashampstead ware which is given a 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century date-range. Clearly, in this context, a mid to late 13<sup>th</sup> century date is likely for the pottery. The pottery from the matrix of wall [124] is perfectly in keeping with the material from these dumps. Nonetheless, this earlier pottery assemblage may well point to an earlier settlement in the immediate vicinity, which was replaced by the construction of De La Beche. It is clear that the presence of Ashampstead ware is late for a new build, and equally it may have been brought in during the construction.

### **4.3 Third Occupation Phase (Figures 3 & 4)**

In the southern part of the investigation area, following the patching of the floor with (111), it appears that a beam-slot [174] oriented north/south was laid, with the possibly associated post-pad [175] at the north end of the beam slot. Analysis of this architectural fragment of coping (Rodwell, this report) indicates a date after the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is not possible to say whether there were further post-pads to the north as Trench 1 of the evaluation was located north of the post-pad [175].





Figure 9. Wall 103 with stone feature 135 and floor (117) to south.



Figure 10. Post-medieval pit 107



Figure 11. Drain 160

Parallel with the southern edge of excavation was a further beam-slot [153] oriented east/west (Fig. 4, S.8). It measured 0.3m wide and *c.* 0.2m deep and was filled by clay silt (114); a sherd of pottery was recovered from fill, which was dated roughly as late medieval.

The cobbled surface (134), to the north, was sealed by (128), a thin occupation deposit of trample, which yielded pottery with a 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century date.

#### **4.4 Undated later medieval (Figures 3, 4 & 11)**

To the north of the wall [164], and cutting the northern extent of deposits (167), (156) and (155) was a cut [161] for a stone-lined drain [160], which was cut into the natural (102) (Fig. 11; Fig. 4, S.5). The cut was not fully examined given the physical and time constraints. The top of the cut was *c.* 0.55m across and more than 0.5m deep: the thickness of the basal slabs of the drain [160] is unknown. The slabs were roughly worked limestone with an internal facing and bonded with yellow mortar. The construction cut [161] of the drain was backfilled with sandy grit (162), and the drain itself was filled with grey sticky clays (165) and (166), indicating that it had silted up.

The drain appeared to be parallel with the north wall [124] of the building, and clearly post-dated the wall [164]. The drain did not appear to have been capped, although the limited view afforded by the intervention means that it cannot be precluded, and is probably more than likely. Deposit (173) and part of the top of cut [161] may be robbing of the drain cover. The drain is also more than likely associated with the building, although its exact relationship was not established.

#### **4.5 Post-use Phase: Demolition and Abandonment (Figures 3, 4 & 10)**

At the southern end of the site the beam-slots, [174] and [175], was sealed by a dump of rubble (148), which was present only patchily on the west side, and by (118)/(147) which extended across the whole area (Fig. 4, S.7 & S.8). The demolition deposit (148) was characterised by mortar and tile in a sandy silt soil matrix. The deposit clearly represents the removal of the roof and initial cleaning of the walls to get to the flint. Deposit (118)/(147) which was largely chalk and flint, must represent the remains of the walls of the building following demolition.

Patches of mortar (130) and demolition debris, comprising flints and sand as well as silty clay and chalky material – (122), (120), (126) and (129), overlay the cobbled surface (134) (Fig. 4, S.4). These discrete spreads were between 0.05m and 0.25m thick and irregularly deposited across the top of (134). It is clear that these are related to the same demolition phase as (118)/(147) to the south.

A burnt area (121) in the northeast corner of the cobbled area as well as a dump of tile (133) located in the southwest corner of the cobbled area, and further demolition rubble (119)/(123) postdate the flint and chalky rubble deposits (Fig. 4, S.6). Pottery from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards was recovered from (119), possibly indicating that the former structure was used to dump and burn rubbish from De La Beche. Within this dump an undated broken internal quoin and a window head were recovered. The window head has been identified as a secular rather than ecclesiastical piece of work with a 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century date range, although could be as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Rodwell, this report).

This would seem to indicate a high status building, which was pulled down or partly rebuilt leaving piles of demolition rubble as well as structural remains lying about. A date after the 14<sup>th</sup> century for the demolition (119) is perfectly appropriate and in keeping with the dates from elsewhere in the structure. There are no known historical records from this period for the construction or demolition of structures at De La Beche manor.

By the 16<sup>th</sup> century the building at De La Beche had been abandoned, and probably razed, to be used only for the occasional disposal of rubbish, as evidenced by the pit [107] (Fig. 10; Fig. 4, S.10) containing pottery dating from after the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century (106).

To the north of the drain [160] was a linear cut [159], filled with (158), which cut the final backfilling (173) of [161] above the drain (Fig. 4, S.5). This extended to the north and was not investigated further. Further to the north the evaluation Trench 2 found a compact layer of pale grey clay with moderate amounts of flint rubble and small quantities of ceramic tile (2/02) overlying the natural clay with flints.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Medieval Pottery *Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 24 sherds with a total weight of 246g. It consisted almost entirely of medieval wares, suggesting that there was activity at the site from the 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Fabric types present were:

**COT: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350** (Mellor 1994). Oolitic-limestone tempered Cotswolds-type wares are extremely common finds at early medieval sites in Gloucestershire, and also western Oxfordshire, and occurs in smaller quantities at sites to the north in Northamptonshire and Worcestershire. 1 sherd, 2g

**SMC: Local coarse sandy ware, ?late 11<sup>th</sup> – mid 13<sup>th</sup> century.** A range of coarse sandy fabrics, similar to those noted at the Reading Waterfront excavations (Underwood 1997, 144). It is very likely that these coarser sand-tempered wares are from a number of different sources, as described by Mellor (1994). 4 sherds, 35g.

**ASH: Ashampstead ware, 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century** (Mephram and Heaton, 1995). Sandy ware, the main products of the kiln being jars and highly decorated glazed jugs, the latter often having painted geometric slip designs. This site lies only 4km of the centre of production 12 sherds, 116g.

**BB: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600** (Mellor 1994). Fine, wheel-thrown sandy ware, with the earlier products of the industry typified by glazed jugs, with production sites at a small number of villages on the Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire border. The ware has a wide distribution throughout the south midlands, and has been previously noted in small quantities from sites on a number of sites in Reading. 4 sherds, 163g

**SUR: Surrey Whiteware, mid 13<sup>th</sup> – mid 15<sup>th</sup> century** (Pearce and Vince 1988). A range of whitewares from several sources in Surrey, including Kingston and Cheam. Range of vessel forms which changes over time, but the earlier assemblages are dominated by glazed jugs, some with slipped, incised and plastic decoration. The ware is invariably found on sites of the period in Reading, and occurs on a large number of sites all over southern England (ibid. figs

2 – 4). 3 sherds, 6g.

**GRE: Post-medieval Redwares,** Mid 16<sup>th</sup> – late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Fine sandy earthenware, usually with a brown or green glaze, occurring in a range of utilitarian forms. Such ‘country pottery’ was first made in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in some areas continued in use until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Probably manufactured at a number of local centres, such as those in the Kennet Valley at Inkpen or on the Berkshire Downs at Ashton Keynes (Mephram 1997, 65). 1 sherd, 4g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of medieval sites in Reading and its hinterland, and suggests that there was medieval activity at the site from the 12<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is of no surprise that just over half of the medieval pottery comes from Ashampstead given the proximity to the production centre.

Generally, although small, the sherds were unabraded and in good condition. The assemblage comprised entirely jars and glazed jugs, with two rimsherds from the former noted.

Context	COT		SMC		ASH		BB		SUR		GRE		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
106					1	2					1	4	M16thC
116									1	3			M13thC
119					1	3	2	74					14thC
124					1	4							12thC
126	1	2			1	3							12thC
128			1	16			1	9					13thC
129			2	8	2	7							13thC
133					1	1			2	3			M13thC
155					3	70							12thC
156					1	18							12thC
170			1	11	1	8							12thC
Total	1	2	4	35	12	116	3	83	3	6	1	4	

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

## 5.2 Tile Report by Clare Roberts

An assessment of the assemblage was carried out; descriptions and dating are included in the table below.

Context	No.	Weight	Brief description	Assessment
106	2	59g	Small fragments, flint tempered	Post medieval
112	18	1220g	4 fragments with partial circular peg holes	Late medieval
114	2	131g	1 fragment glazed roof tile, 1 fragment with partial circular peg hole	Late medieval
115	1	155g	Circular peg hole, flint tempered	Late medieval
116	16	110g	All small abraded fragments of same tile	Late medieval
117	2	31g	1 thin peg tile, two close set circular peg holes, flint tempered	Late medieval
126	10	130g	1 fragment with partial circular peg hole, flint tempered	Late medieval

128	5	790g	1 fragment with partial circular peg hole, abraded with weathered spalling to upper	Late medieval
129	8	562g	6 fragments of glazed roof tile; 2 fragments with circular peg holes	Late medieval
133	6	1645g	3 fragments with partial and complete peg holes	Late medieval
155	5	37g	All undiagnostic, re-used fragments: mortar adhering to broken edges	Late medieval
156	5	447g	Glazed roof tile, 2 possible curved finial tile fragments; mortar on underside	Medieval
165	3	38g	Small undiagnostic fragments	Late medieval

Eighty-three fragments were recovered from thirteen contexts. The assemblage predominately dates to the late medieval period. 12 fragments were glazed roof tile (from contexts **114**, **129** and **156**) including two fragments of possible finial fragments; these could be indicative of a higher status building in the vicinity.

### 5.3 Architectural Fragments Report *by KA Rodwell*

The fragments recovered during the excavation were identified and dated stylistically where possible. All the pieces were vernacular and those that could be dated were only very roughly datable.

1) 2 piece section. Possible flue or channel section, well faced. Internally, rougher finish external. Butt joint on an outer face. Could possibly be internal quoin. Not distinctive and not dateable. Broken perhaps to fit for re-use.

2) Coping with nosing, or string coping. Well crisp condition on nosing, so was it ever used? C. 14-17<sup>th</sup> century.

3) Window head, probable twin window, unglazed with internal rebate for shuttering. Chamfered pointed heads to window. Used for stair or closet lights, or for ventilation. 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century but still used later up to 17<sup>th</sup> century although later has more rounded head. Likely to be from earlier phase of manor as opposed to coming from church. Building would have been reasonably elegant.

Probable that three pieces all from same date as 3) if contexts are similar.

### 5.4 Other Finds

A summary table of all finds from the excavation is detailed below.

A bone punch (126) was also recovered during the excavation. This was roughly triangular, tapering at one end, and measured 110mm long. It measured 21mm across its greatest width and 18mm deep. The punch was a piece of unidentified long bone, with the marrow still visible on the rear.



Material	Context	No. Items	Weight (g)
<b>Bone</b>	(106)	2	15g
	(108)	2	31g
	(111)	3	32g
	(112)	2	52g
	(114)	1	29g
	(116)	1	13g
	(117)	7	68g
	(118)	1	3g
	(119)	10	93g
	(122)	1	14g
	(125)	2	22g
	(126)	47	350g
	(126)	1	23g
	(128)	17	84g
	(129)	58	730g
	(132)	1	2g
	(133)	7	30g
	(135)	3	3g
	(136)	1	3g
	(147)	1	3g
(155)	6	40g	
(165)	5	10g	
(171)	2	5g	

Material	Context	No. Items	Weight (g)	
<b>Shell</b>	(116)	1	5g	
	(119)	3	29g	
	(123)	1	6g	
	(128)	11	57g	
	(155)	5	134g	
	(156)	5	454g	
	(165)	3	38g	
	<b>Metal</b>	(112)	2 Fe nails	10g
		(119)	1 Pb object	265g
		(126)	1 Fe nail	10g
(128)		1 Fe nail	18g	
(129)		3 Fe nail	40g	
(147)		4 Fe nail	94g	

## 5.5 Environmental Remains

No environmental sampling was carried out on the site.

## 6 DISCUSSION

No evidence for any activities associated with Grim's Ditch was observed during the excavation.

However, the excavations at De La Beche have expanded considerably on the previous archaeological knowledge of the site. The only previous work on the site was carried out in 1933 and, to quote the report in full, "Excavations round Beche Farm have revealed the foundations of a mediaeval castle" (Anon., 1934:213).

The excavation undertaken more recently has not revealed a castle, rather part of two buildings with internal floors as well as a cobbled surface, which was more than likely roofed over. The excavation showed that the construction of the buildings was carried out after the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and indeed a 13<sup>th</sup> century date seems more appropriate as with the exception of the local coarse sandy ware all the medieval pottery continues in use until the 14<sup>th</sup> century at least.

The northernmost wall [164] is undated, and it must be associated with an earlier

structure. It is unclear whether the building continued to the north or south of this wall. No floor layers associated with the wall were found and no evidence for other associated walls was located. It is possible that a wall further north, on the north side of evaluation Trench 2, exists. If wall [164] was the north side of a building then evidence for a south wall would have been removed by the terracing for the later building.

Following the razing of the first building an area was terraced for the second phase structure. Within one of the wall construction trenches pottery dated from the 12<sup>th</sup> to mid 13<sup>th</sup> century (170). A sherd from the floor in the southern room dates from mid 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards while an occupation deposit over the cobbles in the northern room dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It would appear that the building dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century probably associated with the arrival of the De La Beche family. From this it would appear that there was a previous building on the site dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The pottery does not indicate any earlier occupation.

The main surviving walls [103] and [124], which were not as deeply founded as that of the earlier building, defined a cobbled area which appeared to have post-pads, either for an upper storey or for the roof. These post-pads comprised, in the first case, a piece of limestone and, in the second, mortar hard-standing. This roofed over cobbled area was probably contemporary with the beaten floor in the occupation-area to the south. Here, the floor had been repaired on several occasions. Latterly, it was probably sub-divided, as evidenced by the beam-slots at right angles to one another and the post pad in the centre of the southern part of the excavation area. Clearly, these beam-slots extended beyond the edges of excavation, and indeed, it is very possible that the south wall of the garden is, or is footed on, the south wall of the building.

Neither the western nor eastern extents were established. The western part of the observed building extended below the terrace. The current house, which is to the west, has a basement, which would have removed any possible evidence of a continuation to the west of the building observed during the excavation.

The southern extent of the proposed building may well be under the current south garden wall, and as far to the east as the current eastern garden wall. Faint parchmarks were visible in the garden, west of the excavation area, and which may indicate that the walls are still present below ground. If this were so, then the building would measure an approximate maximum 17m long (north/south), as evidenced by the excavation, and at least 10m wide. Unfortunately a resistivity survey of the site by Berkshire Archaeological Research Group (Appendix 1) failed to yield any diagnostic information to confirm or refute the suggestion. The resistivity survey may well have located a fireplace east of the excavation area, in addition to indicating that the wall [103] only extended some metres east of the edge of excavation, although activity was observed to extend further east beyond that. The disturbance recorded may well be further cobbling. BARG believed there to be possibly two rooms east of the excavation area. Their results are however ambiguous.

At an unknown point after build-up of the land surface north of the building a stone-lined drain [160] was laid. This was undated, although later than the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was more than likely medieval. The distance from the north wall of the second phase

building suggests that it was not directly associated with the building.

The date of the structure excavated can be ascribed, from the associated pottery, broadly between the 13<sup>th</sup> and early or mid 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The decline, indicated by the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century date for the demolition activity, can be also associated with the De La Beche family having less direct contact with the manor after the latter part of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when it passed to the de Langford family, related by marriage. Clearly, as the property was not used by the family and became a source of income, it probably functioned increasingly as a working farm, rather than a typical late or post-medieval manor house, itself living off the rents of other property. Given the lack of pottery dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century and 15<sup>th</sup> century a date of demolition in the 14<sup>th</sup> century seems more reasonable.

It is reasonable to assume that the structure observed during the excavation was part of the manor house complex; the presence of the roofed-over cobbled surface on the north side of the excavation may well indicate a barn or similar working area for animals; the beaten earth-floored part of the structure was probably occupied and used by people. It may have functioned as a dairy, for storage, or indeed given the subdivision of the space – observed in the latter part of its use-life – it may even have been occupied by servants and other members of the manorial retinue.

As such the structure excavated at De La Beche is more than likely an ancillary building, rather than part of the core structure. As the manor had been leased out from the later part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, it is possible that as a working farm, maintenance and rebuilding by the occupiers meant that buildings might well have been pulled down to be rebuilt elsewhere on the farm. Clearly there is a quantity of reused flint and limestone in the garden to the south of the current De La Beche house. If this, too, were predominantly stone with a secular origin, then it is reasonable to suggest that at least one if not several buildings with quantities of flint as well as mouldings were torn down. The flint rubble was observed to extend as far north as Trench 2 where it was 0.4m thick at the south end of the trench reducing to 0.2m at the north.

Certainly, there is some stone which seems to be integral to the earlier phase of the building; nonetheless, the finer window mouldings are associated with the demolition of the structure. Additionally, the absence of any deposits between the worn out and patched up earthen floor and the overlying flinty demolition indicates a comparatively short period between abandonment and demolition. This might suggest a deliberate policy of demolition – and possible rebuilding – of specific parts of the manor complex, rather than the clearance of a run-down eyesore.

Unfortunately, the observed deposits and features were too limited in scope to provide a detailed picture of the scale and character of the later medieval activity. The absence of comparatively little detritus and the apparently short period of time between abandonment and demolition may well indicate that the structure was relatively well maintained and therefore in regular use.

Certainly, the walls observed would appear to indicate a significant building, which the stonework confirmed. The limestone mouldings are secular, rather than ecclesiastical, and can be associated with the manor house. Although it is not possible

to say whether the mouldings, which correspond in date with those from the pottery, are from the building investigated during the evaluation or from another similar structure elsewhere on the site; clearly as either outhouse or barn, it would have been an impressive flint-walled building, comprising perhaps two storeys.

## 7 ARCHIVE

### Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

#### Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records

The archive has been given an accession number NEBYM: 2008.88 by West Berkshire Museum

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anon. 1934 *Notes from County Correspondents* Journal of the British Archaeological Association Vol **39**

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

Gilbert, D 2008 De La Beche, Aldworth, West Berkshire AWDLB 08 *Archaeological Evaluation Report* Unpublished Client Report John Moore Heritage Service

Hawkes, JW and Fasham, PJ 1997 *Excavations on Reading Waterfront Sites, 1979-1988* Wessex Archaeol Rep **5**

Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Mellor, M 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217

Mepham, L 1997 Pottery in AG Vince, SJ Lobb, JC Richards and L Mepham, *Excavations in Newbury, Berkshire, 1979 – 1990* Wessex Archaeological Report **13**, 45-67

Mepham, L and Heaton, MJ 1995 A Medieval Pottery Kiln at Ashampstead, Berkshire *Medieval Ceramics* **19**, 29-44

Page W & Ditchfield PH (eds) 1924 'Parishes: Aldworth', *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 4* (1924), pp. 3-8.

URL: [http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=62670&strquery=de la beche aldworth](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=62670&strquery=de%20la%20beche%20aldworth) Date accessed: 26 November 2008.

Pearce, J and Vince, A 1988 *A Dated Type-Series of London Medieval Pottery. Part 4: Surrey Whitewares* London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Special Paper **10**

Sussex, 2006. *Snuffler Freeware Geophysics software*  
<http://www2.prestel.co.uk/asp/sussex/snuffler.html>

Underwood, C 1997 Pottery in JW Hawkes and PJ Fasham, 1997, 142-161

West Berkshire Archaeology Service 2008 *De La Beche, Aldworth, West Berkshire. Brief for Archaeological Investigation*

## APPENDIX 1

Berkshire Archaeology Research Group

# Field Work Report for resistivity survey in De La Beche garden on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2008

By Andrew Hutt

30<sup>th</sup> September 2008

### Background

This work was undertaken in response to a request from Duncan Coe, archaeologist at West Newbury Council for a geophysics survey to support an excavation being carried out by John Moore Heritage Services at De La Beche, Aldworth.

### Overview

John Moore Heritage Services were excavating a trench on the site of a planned extension to the De La Beche house. In the trench they found a number of features including two walls and a stone built drain, which were running into the side of the trench and into the garden.

The objective of this work was to carry out a resistivity survey to understand how these features developed.

The work was carried out by Andrew Hutt and Isobel Maclean.

### Work undertaken on site

When John Moore Heritage Services established their trench they set up a survey grid of steel markers 50cm from the side of the trench. We used these steel markers as our baseline and laid out a grid that was 1m away from the markers and was 10m long and 17m wide (see figure 1). When facing the house, access to the right hand side of the grid was restricted due to a large tree.

This grid was surveyed with left to right traverses. The first traverse was 1m from the steel marker baseline and thereafter traverses were at 1m intervals. Readings within a traverse were at 0.5m intervals; the first reading being 0.5m from the left hand edge.

On the day of the survey, the ground was dry; there had been no rain for 2 days.

The resistivity results were recorded manually, typed into an Excel spreadsheet and then fed into Snuffler (a freeware software package from Sussex University)(Sussex 2006). In order to process the data, the grid represented in Snuffler is 10m long and 20m wide, the additional survey points were set to unassigned values.

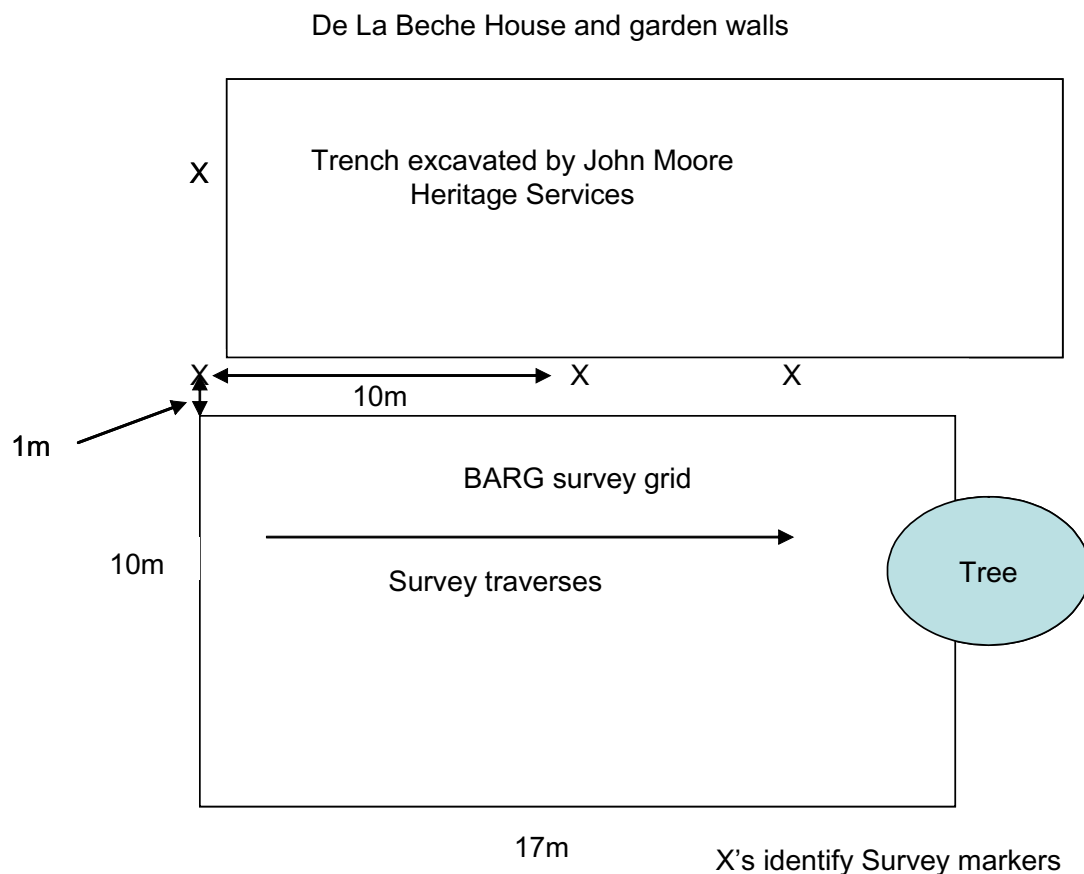
### The survey results

Figure 2 shows the survey results on the same alignment as the survey grid above. The raw data has been despiked and interpolated both vertically and horizontally. The red area to the right represents the unassigned values to take account of the tree and the additional survey squares required to enable Snuffler to process the data.

### Interpretation of the results

Figure 3 shows plots the features found in the excavation trench against the resistivity results. These features were: the south wall located between 4.6m and 6.0m, the north wall located between 12.75m and 13.5m and the external drain located between 16.5 and 17.1m from the 0m point established by the excavators.

The evidence suggests that south wall terminates some 3m east beyond the excavation trench in an area with other features which extend eastwards for another 9m. Taken together these could represent the remains of a building with two rooms to east of the south wall. The western (upper, see figure 3) of these feature has internal dimensions of approximately 5m north /south and 3m east/west, with a large area of high resistance on the southern side, which is approximately 2.5m north/south and 3m east/west and may represent the foundations of a chimney. The lower (eastern) feature with internal dimensions of approximately 4-5m north /south and 4m east/west may represent the remains of another room.

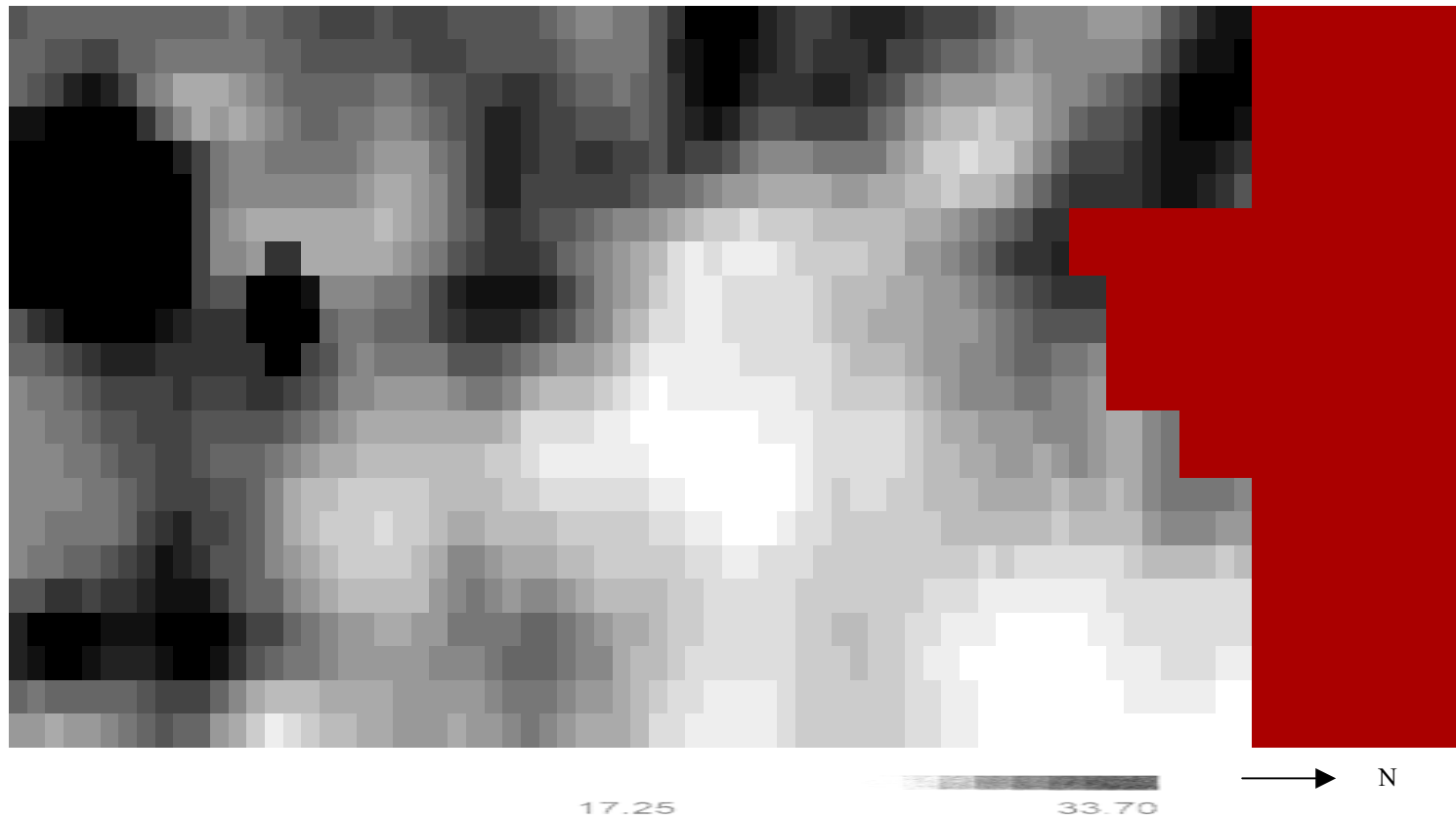


**Figure 1: layout of the BARG survey grid** Not to scale

There also is a large high resistance feature to the south east of the end of the north wall.

Figure 3 shows that the external drain continues for another 5.5m south east of the excavation trench and seems to terminate in a high resistance feature which currently has a large tree growing on it. The high resistance may be caused by tree roots. It could also be caused by loosely packed rubble used to create a soakaway.

Report

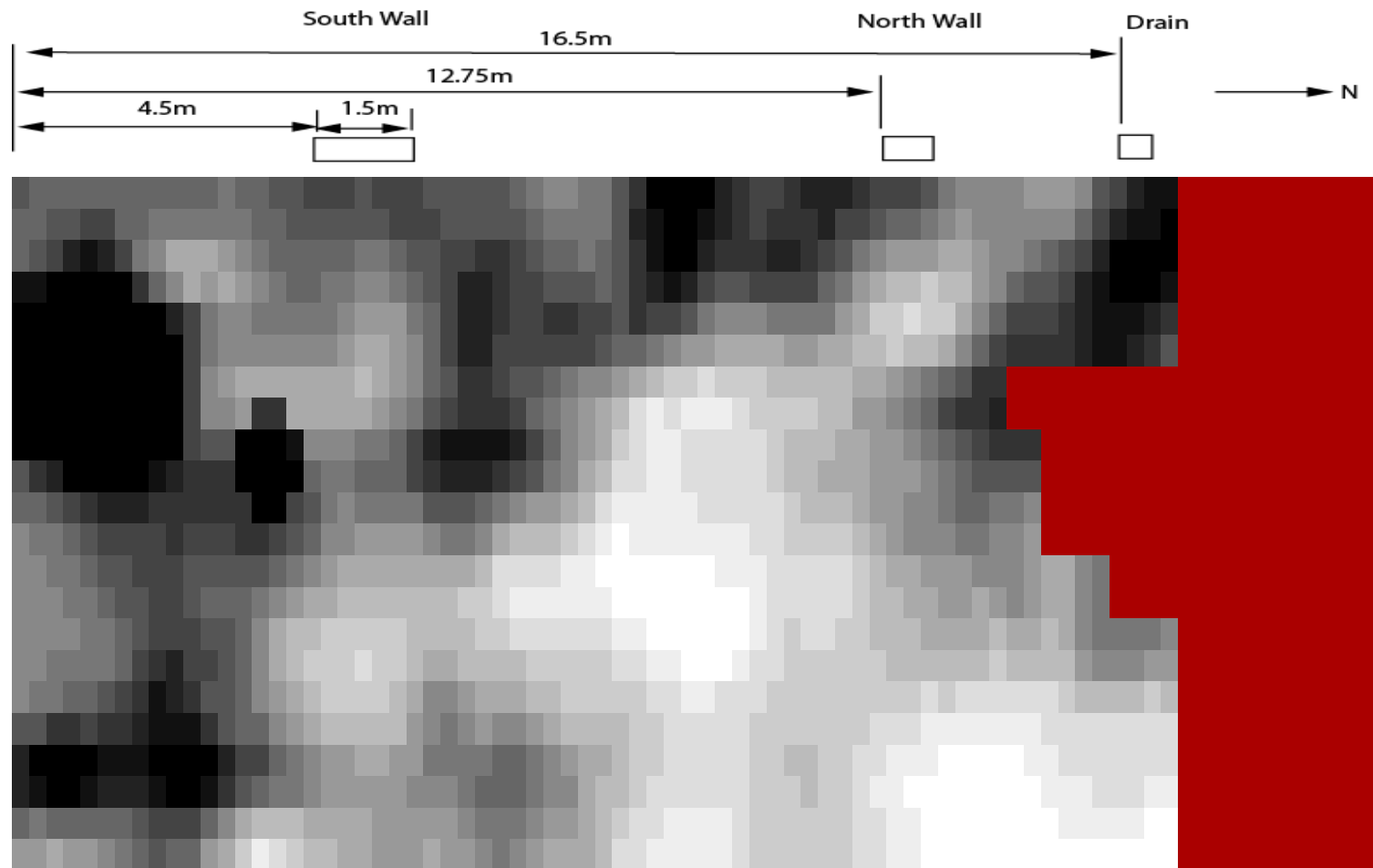


**Figure 2: Resistivity results from the De La Beche garden**

This plot represents an area 10m wide (east/west) and 20m long (north/south)



Report



**Figure 3: Resistivity plot showing the correlation with the features found in the excavation trench**