



Archaeological Watching Brief on land to the rear of the Prince Alfred Public House, Sittingbourne, Kent *April 2010*

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An Archaeological Watching Brief on land to the rear of
the Prince Alfred Public House, Sittingbourne, Kent

NGR: 590140 163863

Site Code: HRS-WB-10

(Planning Application Number: SW/09/0508)

Report for
Interbounty

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NGR: 590140 163863

Site Code: HRS-EV-10

SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land to the rear of the old Prince Alfred Public House in Sittingbourne, Kent. A planning application (PAN: SW/09/0508) for the... 'change of use of 14 Hawthorn Road from a public house (the Prince Alfred) to an Islamic Cultural Centre, and for the erection of a single-storey rear extension at the premises' (Planning Application 2009), was submitted to Swale Borough Council (SBC) whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Swale Borough Council requested that an Archaeological Investigation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within the Planning Application, 2009 and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council.

The archaeological watching brief commissioned encountered no significant ancient archaeological remains, but did encounter construction deposits which appear to date from the building of the public house and the slightly earlier surrounding 'estate' and dated to the late C19th. The excavations consisted of trenches for the footings of the single storey extension and trenches for the new drainage system, these all came down onto what appeared to be the remains of a large clamp kiln which overlay clean brickearth and chalk. This shows that either the C19th construction phase removed any earlier features or that they did not exist in this area. The minimal covering of brickearth found on this site suggests that the former may be the case.

These Archaeological Investigations have therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Planning Application condition.

INTRODUCTION

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by Interbounty to carry out an archaeological watching brief at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within the Planning Application condition and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. The work was carried out on the 6th and 7th April 2010 with a further two brief visits over the next month to observe pipe trench cutting. Confirmation of cessation of groundworks finally came on 21st June 2010.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The application site is located a few hundred metres to the west of the centre of the old town of Sittingbourne. The National Grid Reference for the new development is NGR 590140 163863. The underlying solid geology of the site consists of Upper Cretaceous period Upper Chalk with Head Brickearth deposits above. Hawthorn Road lies on the northeast facing slope at the foot of the North Downs, along with the town of Sittingbourne, at an elevation of around 15m OD.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

A planning application (PAN: SW/09/0508) for the *'change of use of 14 Hawthorn Road from a public house (the Prince Alfred) to an Islamic Cultural Centre, and for the erection of a single-storey rear extension at the premises.'* (SBC, 2009), at the above site was submitted to Swale Borough Council (SBC). Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Swale Borough Council, requested that a Watching Brief be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The following condition was attached to the planning consent:

“No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a watching brief to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the District Planning Authority so that the excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded. The watching brief shall be in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority.”

Grounds: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in pursuance of Policies E1 and E16 of the Swale Borough Local Plan 2008. (SBC, 2009)

Requirements for the archaeological watching brief are to establish the presence or absence, phase and date of any archaeological features. Due to the timing of the works a written specification was unable to be produced. The above is taken from the Planning Application Documentation. Works proceeded in accordance with a verbal specification from, and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council and in accordance with IfA Standards and Guidance, (IfA, 2008).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The area surrounding Hawthorn Road is rich in listed buildings, monuments and finds sites showing a continuum of occupation dating from the Roman to the present day. The earliest

history of the area is characterised by a few Bronze Age find spots and possibly some burials.

The earliest finds from the immediate area were Bronze Age Hoards and a single Inhumation possibly of the same date 700m to the Northeast of the application site, these were discovered in 1828 during brickearth cutting. The hoards consisted of, "A bronze gouge and four socketed celts... contained in an urn, together with 30lb. bronze or bell-metal. Another urn was discovered... containing a bronze dagger 12 inches long and six bronze rings." (KCC HER, 2009) (TQ 96 SW 23). Another Bronze Age site may also have been found, (TQ 96 SW 27). This had Roman burials associated, see below.

The Roman period is shown initially by construction of the Roman Road of Watling Street. Some 700m to the west of the application site a probable Walled Roman cemetery was found, (TQ 86 SE 19). The bodies found included four inhumations, one of which was in a lead coffin probably dating to the 3rd or 4th Centuries, two cremations, one of which had artefacts dating it to the C 2nd, and One possible circular mausoleum. The whole appeared to be surrounded by a rectangular flint wall. It is possible that this cemetery may have continued in use as the Second edition OS map shows an "Anglo-Saxon" Grave was found just to the south of this area, and possibly still within the cemetery.

Another Romano British cemetery was discovered which definitely did continue into the sub-Roman phase, (TQ 96 SW 27). This site was discovered 425m to the Northeast. Once again, during Brickearth quarrying, "...Bronze Age Cineraries were disturbed...", (*ibid*) showing an earlier period of use. "Urn burials of a Roman date were found", (*ibid*) these apparently lay to the western side of the fields, whereas to the east a number of inhumations of males and females were uncovered with materials apparently dating to the 7th century.

Closer to the site was an early medieval cemetery TQ 96 SW 14. This was located only 75m to the Southwest of the current site. Approximately, "...41 skeletons (were) found with grave goods...the eastern and western parts of the Rondeau Estate were built without first removing the brick earth, so probably many skeletons remain undisturbed beneath the houses." (*ibid*). The burials also appeared to have a 7th century date. Three more skeletons were found, "...when petrol pumps were being fitted at a new garage, directly west of Gospel Hall." (*ibid*). Both these sites occur between the application site and the Roman Road.

Two more early medieval burials, also possibly dating to the 7th Century, were found some 700m WSW, (TQ 86 SE 20).

An individual find of a, "...late 9th century inscribed knife..." (*ibid*) or scramasax, was found approximately 250m to the Northeast of the site. TQ 96 SW 12.

Medieval and Post-medieval sites are numerous in the surrounding area. There are a number of Medieval buildings still standing, if considerably altered, within Sittingbourne town centre.

The post-medieval landscape of the town is dominated by construction and industry, and this is shown by the number of Brickfields, (TQ 86 SE 66, TQ 86 SE 67, TQ 86 SE 69) and Limekilns, (TQ 96 SW 168, TQ 96 SW 175), found in the area.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of an archaeological watching brief are to, "...contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of the archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks." (KCC Standard Watching Brief Specification)

METHODOLOGY

The watching brief was carried out in several phases according to the needs of the developers between the 6th April and 21st June 2010. Excavation of the footings and the stripped area will be carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, with the intention of removing the overburden to the formation level in spits, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The areas of excavation will be subsequently hand-cleaned with the intention of revealing features in plan and section. Features under threat will be excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary. The archaeological watching brief will be carried out in accordance with current IfA Standards and Guidance, (IfA, 2008), and the methodology discussed with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council.

The footings were surveyed in by Jonny Madden at Digitise This using a Leica 1200 series GPS. This information was then digitised using AutoCAD 2007 and the final plan dropped directly onto an Ordnance Survey tile.

A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. A full list is presented in Appendix 1. Layers and fills are recorded (**100**). The cut of the feature is shown [**100**]. Context numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes; these are used in the report and shown in bold.

MONITORING

The curator was informed of the commencement of the project however, no site visits occurred and monitoring was carried out by telephone.

RESULTS

The general stratigraphic sequence to the rear of 14 Hawthorn Road in general comprised around 0.15m of Concrete (100), beneath which lay up to 0.70m of mixed rubble make-up, (103), or in the centre of the area brick walls were found, possibly footings of an early extension, {106}. Below this were several thin layers of burnt clay and organic residues, (104, 107-110) Group Context (200), none of which exceeded 0.15m in thickness. The whole area was cut many times by service trenches and walls, (101, 102, 111-114). Below this lay the natural Upper Chalk, (105) which was just reached in a few places, and above this was a thin extant layer of Brickearth. The footings for the new extension were excavated as three separate trenches forming the north, east and south sides of the extension. Owing to problems with lack of space it was impossible to bring in a mechanical excavator and therefore the trenches were dug by hand. Excavation paused at the top of the burnt layers for recording and again at the top of natural which was reached at a depth of approximately 0.90m below ground surface. The excavations then proceeded into this by another 0.30m until formation depth was reached. The trenches were approximately 0.50m in width. Careful examination and investigation for features truncating the natural was carried out but nothing was seen. Within the footprint of the walls the ground surface was lowered by 0.30m maximum so a new floor could be laid, here nothing was seen other than modern service pipes laid for the previous extension, most of which were re-used for the present extension to minimise impact.

FINDS

No archaeological finds were retained; the only materials seen were fragments of over fired Victorian size yellow bricks, these were photographed for reference purposes.

DISCUSSION

The watching brief carried out on land to the rear of the Eythorne House did not encounter any ancient archaeological remains, despite the immediate proximity of an early medieval burial ground, the other side of Hawthorn Road, and the Roman Watling Street.

What was seen were many thin burnt layers in the centre of the site; and in the overlying rubble, many over-fired yellow bricks were recovered, of the type used in the houses in the immediate area, the yellow Kent Stock Brick. This suggests that this may be the remains of a Victorian clamp kiln which was probably constructed to provide the bricks for the Hawthorn Road 'estate'. The First edition Ordnance Survey map, c1871, shows Hawthorn Road in existence but the only structures on it are the houses of Hawthorn Place, which are still extant and bear the date 1867. The area now covered by 14 Hawthorn Road and Gibson Street spanned, at that time, a field boundary between an open field and an orchard, the map marks

the spot of a boundary stone which is still extant within a modern brick wall.

By the time of the Second Edition, c1897, the estate is complete, with Frederick Street and Gibson Street built. It was between these two dates that the present street system was laid out and the houses constructed. The location of the kiln would be an obvious choice, as the public house may have been the last element of the estate to be built. The section shows the profile of a raised and burnt mound sat on the stripped natural and covered with construction and 'kiln' detritus. The Kent Stock Brick was the most common brick of this period, both in Kent and in the expanding City of London. The fuel for firing the bricks was most commonly domestic refuse brought down from London by the same barges that returned carrying bricks the smoke from this contributed to its yellow colour. (Sittingbourne Heritage Museum). After removal of the bricks forming the walls of the clamp kiln and those fired in the centre, all that would be left of the kiln would be a mound of burnt material. It is thought that this is what was found here, and that the mound of burnt material was then covered with construction rubble and wasters from the firing process and then built on.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological works have been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the verbal specifications and the Planning Consent Documentation. Despite the high archaeological potential of the surrounding area and the fact that the works were carried out almost adjacent to an Early Medieval cemetery, significant ancient buried archaeological remains were not present in the construction area, and the footprint of this extension has not significantly damaged the probable clamp kiln, which remains buried beneath the car parking area of the Cultural Centre. It is therefore suggested that the development presented little impact upon the local archaeological resource.

This work has therefore assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development and mitigated the impact on such archaeology as was going to be destroyed. The results from this work will be used to aid and inform the Archaeological Officer (KCCHC) of any further archaeological mitigations measures that may be necessary in connection with future development proposals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Interbounty for commissioning the project, and Mitch Rahman in particular. Thanks are also extended to Heritage and Conservation (Kent County Council) for their advice and assistance. Geoff Morley carried out the archaeological fieldwork, illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden, the project was supervised by Dr Paul Wilkinson MIfA

Geoff Morley MSc (Oxon) FSA Scot PlfA
August 2010

REFERENCES

Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) (2008) *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*.

<http://www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/inPages/docs/codes/watch2.pdf>

Sittingbourne Heritage Museum – website, (2010)

<http://www.sittingbourne-museum.co.uk/Bricks.htm>

Swale Borough Council, (SBC), (2009) Notification of grant of permission to develop land.

<http://www.ukplanning.com/ukp/doc/Decision-7541436.pdf?extension=.pdf&id=7541436&location=VOLUME6&contentType=application/pdf&pageCount=2>

CONTENTS OF SITE ARCHIVE

Correspondence

Photographs: Digital photographs (42).

Photocopies of Ordnance Survey and other maps:

Drawings: One A3 permatrace site drawing, comprising 3 representative sections and 1 plan.

Finds: None retained under advisement.

Context Register including: Context Register (1), Drawings Register (1), Photographic Register (1), and Context Sheets (16)

The archive is currently held in secure controlled storage at SWAT headquarters. It is hoped to be deposited at Sittingbourne Museum upon their request.

APPENDIX 1 - Context Summary

Site to the rear of The old Prince Alfred Public House, Sittingbourne, Kent

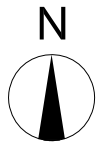
Site Code: HRS-WB-10

	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
	(100)	15.23m-15.08m OD	Concrete. Hardstanding
	(101)		Ceramic Pipe.
	[102]	15.08m – 14.78m OD	Cut. For (101)
	(103)	15.08m – 14.38m OD	Rubble. Make up
	(104)	14.38m – 14.31m OD	Brickearth. (Brown, Scorched) (N. side only)
	(105)	Below 14.31m OD	Natural. Brickearth and Chalk below.
	{106}	15.23m – 15.01m OD	Brick Wall. Three courses of Brick wall.
	(107)	15.01m – 14.86m OD	Burnt Layer. (Red)
	(108)	14.86m – 14.79m OD	Burnt Layer. (Yellow)

(109)	14.79m OD – 14.64m OD	Burnt Layer. (Black, Organic)
(110)	14.64m OD – 14.59m OD	Burnt Layer. (Brown, Scorched)
(111)	15.01m OD – 14.72m OD	Backfill. Foundation or early wall
{112}	15.01m OD – 14.79m OD	Wall. Foundation or early wall
[113]	14.79m OD – 14.64m OD	Cut. Foundation or early wall
{114}	15.08m – 14.31m+ OD	Wall. Foundation or early wall
(200)	15.01m – 14.31m OD	Group Context for 'Kiln' Structure

APPENDIX 2 – Kent County Council HER Summary Form

Site Name: <i>Land to the rear of the old Prince Alfred Public House in Sittingbourne, Kent</i>	
SWAT Site Code: <i>HRS-WB-09</i>	
Site Address: <i>14 Hawthorn Road, Sittingbourne, Kent</i>	
Summary: <i>Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land to the rear of the old Prince Alfred Public House in Sittingbourne, Kent. A planning application (PAN: SW/09/0508) for the... 'change of use of 14 Hawthorn Road from a public house (the Prince Alfred) to an Islamic Cultural Centre, and for the erection of a single-storey rear extension at the premises' (Planning Application 2009), was submitted to Swale Borough Council (SBC) whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Swale Borough Council requested that an Archaeological Investigation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within the Planning Application, 2009 and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council.</i> <i>The archaeological watching brief commissioned encountered no significant ancient archaeological remains, but did encounter construction deposits which appear to date from the building of the public house and the slightly earlier surrounding 'estate' and dated to the late C19th. The excavations consisted of trenches for the footings of the single storey extension and trenches for the new drainage system, these all came down onto what appeared to be the remains of a large clamp kiln which overlay clean brickearth and chalk. This shows that either the C19th construction phase removed any earlier features or that they did not exist in this area. The minimal covering of brickearth found on this site suggests that the former may be the case.</i>	
District/Unitary: <i>Swale</i>	Parish: <i>Sittingbourne - Sheerness</i>
Period(s): <i>Industrial / Modern</i>	
Tentative:	
NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): (NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs): <i>NGR 590140 163863</i>	
Type of archaeological work (delete) <i>Watching Brief</i>	
Date of Recording: <i>April - June 2010</i>	
Unit undertaking recording: <i>Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT)</i>	
Geology: <i>Chalk and Brickearth</i>	
Title and author of accompanying report: <i>Morley, G. (2009) An Archaeological Watching Brief on land to the rear of the old Prince Alfred Public House in Sittingbourne, Kent</i>	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) <i>As above</i> <p style="text-align: right;">(cont. on attached sheet)</p>	
Location of archive/finds: <i>SWAT</i>	
Contact at Unit: <i>Paul Wilkinson</i>	Date: <i>20th August 2010</i>



1:1250@A4

Figure 1: Location of site of proposed development



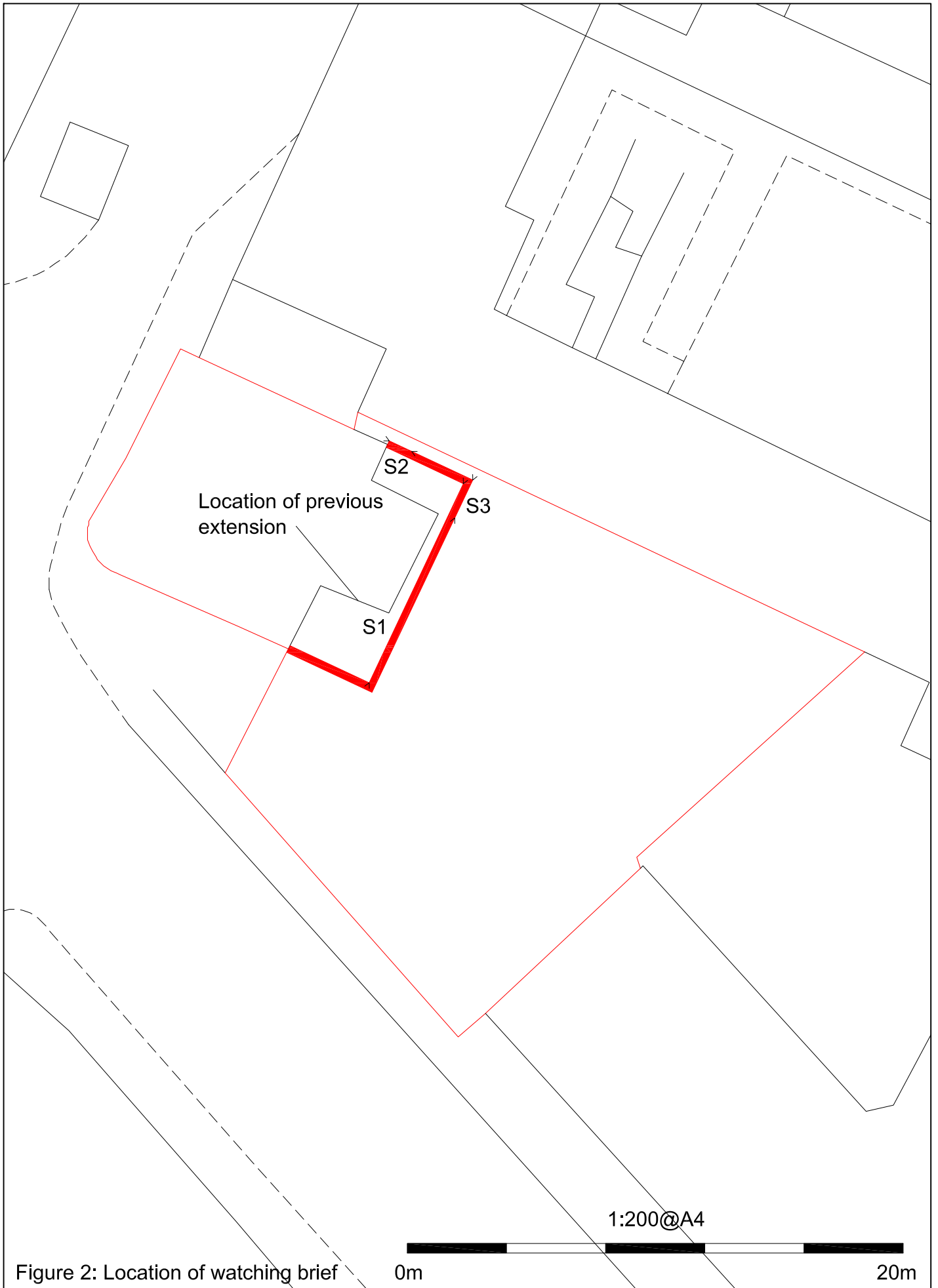


Figure 2: Location of watching brief



1:50@A4

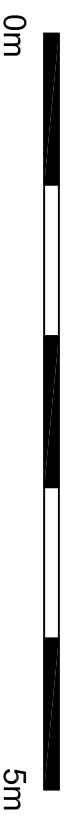
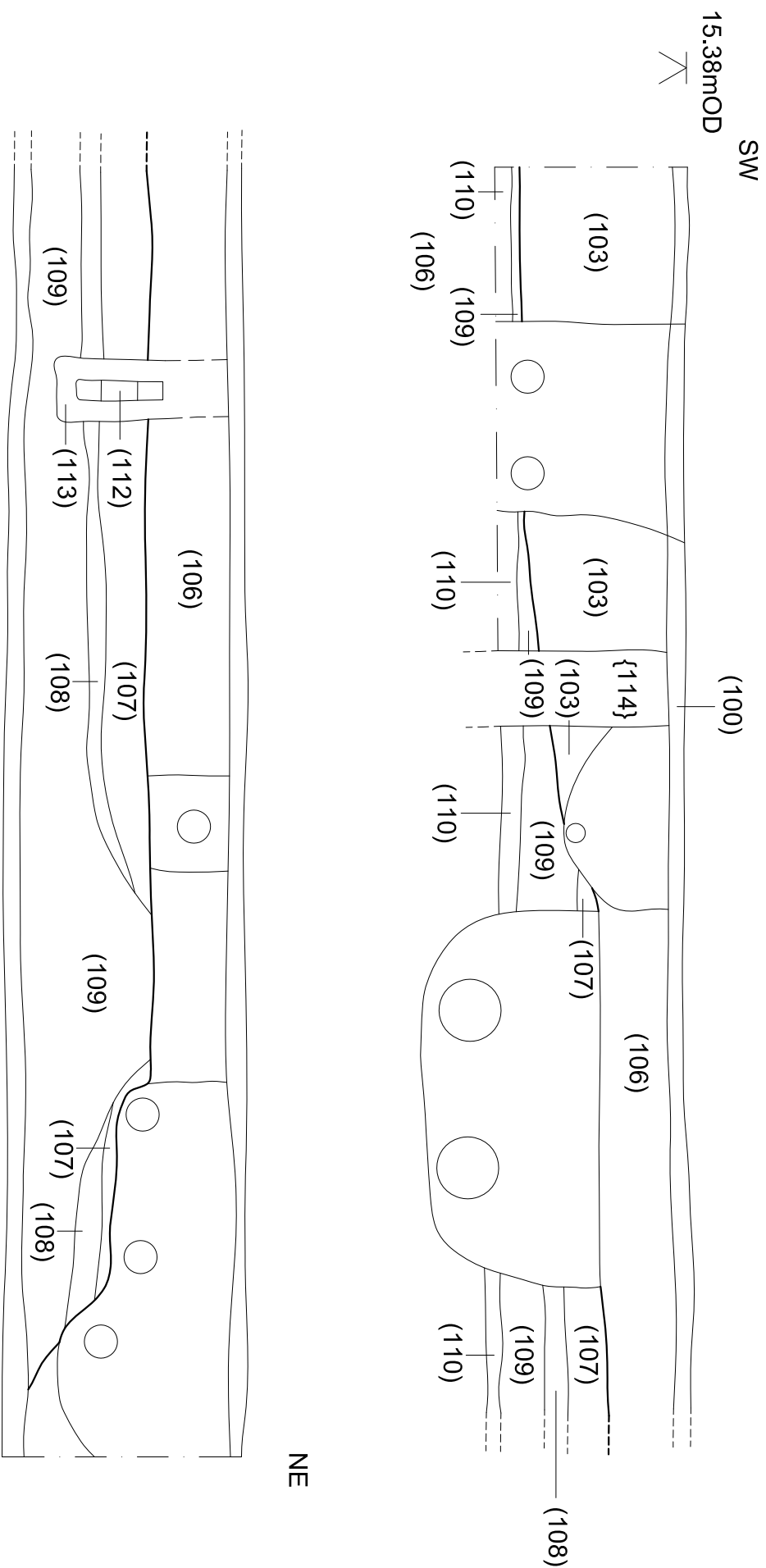


Figure 3: Plan of trench base

Section 1
 South-East Facing Section of Eastern Trench



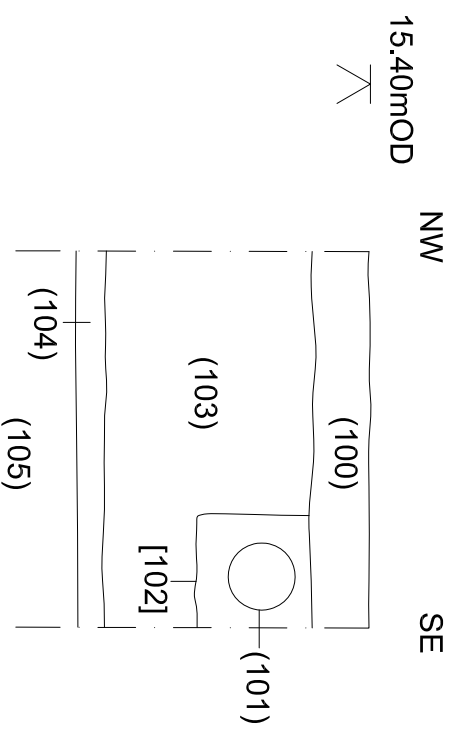
Heavy line indicates boundary of group context [200] 'Kiln Structure'

1:20@A4

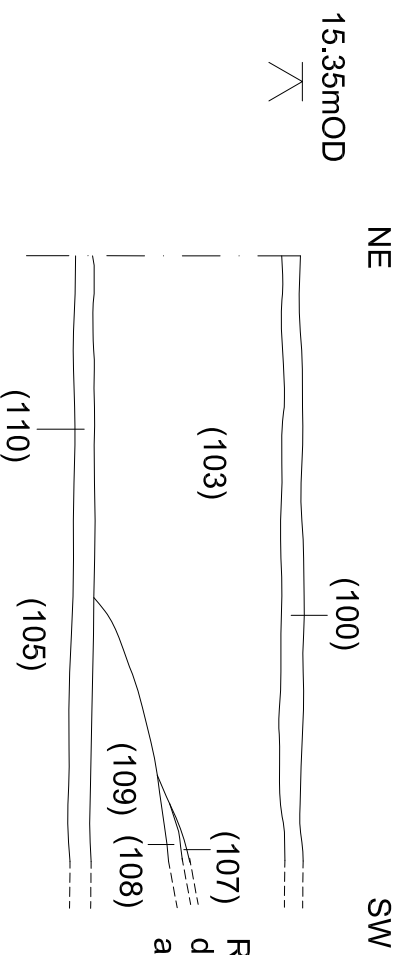
Figure 4



Section 2
South-West facing section of Northern trench



Section 3
North-West facing section of Eastern trench



Remaining section
destroyed by pipes
and modern intrusions

1:20@A4



Figure 5



Plate 1. Location of site of proposed development at the rear of the Prince Alfred Public House (NGR 590140 163863).



Plate 2. View of foundation trench.