

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
On Land at Groombridge Place,  
Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells, Kent**

**(NGR TQ 53350, 37611)**

**Project No. 3089**



**By**

**Alice Thorne  
With contributions by Elke Raemen,  
Gemma Driver and Lucy Allot**

**November 2007**

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**Archaeology South-East  
Units 1 & 2  
2 Chapel Place  
Portslade  
East Sussex  
BN41 1DR**

**Tel: 01273 426830  
Fax: 01273 420866  
email : [fau-ucl@btconnect.com](mailto:fau-ucl@btconnect.com)  
website: [www.archaeologyse.co.uk](http://www.archaeologyse.co.uk)**

*Abstract*

*An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundwork, at Groombridge House, Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Planning permission had been granted for the replacement of a concrete screed floor at this scheduled monument, with a condition specifying a programme of archaeological supervision during the process of groundwork. A wall foundation and a stone and brick floor surface were identified underlying an approximately 330mm thick mixed kitchen deposit. These had been truncated by the external walls of the mid seventeenth century house giving a terminus ante quem. A spot date (obtained from a single brick) suggests they may have a post-medieval, possible late 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century date.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of the University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology, was commissioned by Walrond Fuller Ltd, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundwork associated with the replacement of the kitchen floor at Groombridge Place, Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells, Kent (NGR TQ 53350, 37611) (Fig. 1).
- 1.2** Groombridge Place is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The scheduling refers to the medieval moated site (NM No 12728). The Jacobean house and courtyard are Grade 1 listed buildings, but are not in themselves included in the Scheduled Ancient Monument designation, although the ground beneath them is.
- 1.3** The proposed groundwork was located inside the building itself, within the kitchen and consisted of the removal of the existing concrete screed floor and its replacement to include a damp proof membrane and a drainage pipe to be linked to existing external drainage.
- 1.4** Due to the scheduled nature of the site consent was granted by the Secretary of State with a condition requiring a programme of archaeological inspection. Scheduled Monument Consent was granted for the works.
- 1.5** The British Geological Survey map Sheet number 303 (Tunbridge Wells) Solid and Drift Edition (1:50,000 scale) indicates that the site lies on Wadhurst Clay overlain to the south of the site by alluvial deposits of the river Groom.
- 1.6** The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Margetts, Alice Thorne, Tom Collie and Paul Riccoboni on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of August and 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007. The project was managed by Jon Sygrave (Project Manager) and Louise Rayner (Post-Excavation Manager and Assistant Director).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** The following archaeological background to the site has been obtained from the English Heritage's Record of Scheduled Monuments (1990):
- 2.2** The moated site at Groombridge Place comprises a stone-lined nearly square and broad moat defining an island 40m by 50m. The southern side of the island is occupied by a fine Jacobean house and associated service courtyard (both listed Grade I), but the north side is clear of buildings. The scheduling does not apply to any of the buildings on the site, although the ground beneath each is included.

- 2.2** Moated sites are generally seen as the prestigious residences of the Lords of the Manor. The moat not only marked the high status of the site but also served to deter casual raiders and wild animals. Most moats were built between 1250 and 1350, and it is to this period that the moat at Groombridge is likely to date, since it first enters the historical record as a manor in 1286.
- 2.3** No traces of the earlier buildings on the site are to be seen, but the sandstone lining of the moat probably represents early building material. The brick-built gatehouse and bridge on the north side, both excluded from the scheduling, may preserve the position of the original access to the moat.
- 2.4** The moated site at Groombridge is of particular importance because the moat survives in its entirety and remains wet throughout the year so that the archaeological potential for the survival of normally perishable artefacts and other evidence is high. The potential for the recovery of evidence both of the ground plan of the original buildings at the site and of the development of the manor is also great, especially on the northern side of the island (English Heritage, 1990).
- 2.5** In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the property was sold by the Walker family to J. Packer (Martin and Martin, 2006, 6). The house itself was rebuilt for Philip Packer between 1652-1674, according to John Evelyn who mentioned in his diary that a new house had been built since his previous visit (*ibid*, 6 and English Heritage Listed Buildings Register, number 439028). The Register also states that the structure has escaped major alterations, with only minor but high quality modernisations occurring circa 1700, and little since. In 1919 the house was carefully renovated.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1** The objectives of the archaeological watching brief were to ensure that no features or structures of archaeological and historical interest were impacted as a result of groundwork at the site and to contribute to the knowledge of the site through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed.
- 3.2** All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded according to accepted professional standards in accordance with the Specification using standard Archaeology South-East context record sheets. Deposit colours were verified by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.3** An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the process of floor reduction within the kitchen (Figs. 2 & 3). Following the initial

breaking up of the concrete kitchen flooring, the underlying silty clay deposit was hand excavated by the construction team on site, with archaeological aid and supervision. Following the identification of underlying archaeological structures, excavation proceeded carefully, with care not to damage or impact the underlying wall footing and floor surface. Following the removal of the overburden, the exposed surfaces were cleaned and recorded prior to photographing.

- 3.4 A full photographic record of the work was kept (black and white prints and colour slides and digital images) and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held at the Archaeology South-East offices at Portslade and will be offered to a suitable local museum.
- 3.5 Level readings were taken using a surveyor's level, and tied into Ordnance Datum. Values are displayed on the site plans.

#### 4.0 RESULTS (Figs. 3 & 4)

- 4.1 Following removal of the concrete flooring, a disturbed underlying deposit was revealed, with an approximate depth of 330mm (Context **100**). The deposit consisted of a mixed mid orangish brown friable silty clay containing frequent flecks of charcoal, and fragments of tile, brick and animal bone, pot and clay pipe.
- 4.2 Located below Context **100** a sandstone and brick surface was encountered (Context **101**) (Plate 1). The exposed extent of this layer measured approximately 3.32m by 2.94m, and was truncated to the north and east by the main external walls of the house (Fig. 4). The surface was composed of varying sized blocks of Wealden sandstone and red brick. The stone blocks were irregular and roughly hewn, but mainly roughly square with a maximum size of 300mm<sup>2</sup> by 200mm deep. The brick existed as occasional fragmentary blocks infilling across the layer. No coursing or mortar was evident. This layer had been laid abutting structure **102** to the west and had a clearly defined southern edge. A cavity in the floor surface was noted adjacent to the probable wall footing **102**. This measured 280mm by 100mm by 150mm and perhaps represents the location of a structural or tethering post. A line of regular sandstone blocks was also noted running north to south within **101**.
- 4.3 A wall footing was identified abutting floor surface **101** to the west (Context **102**) (Plate 2). This was orientated N- S with a maximum length of 3.20m, a width of 670mm and a depth of 200mm (Fig. 4). The line of the wall appeared to be slightly curving at its northern extent, although this could not be conclusively established due to the level of truncation in this area from a modern concrete pipe run (context 104, Fig. 4). The wall footing was constructed of sandstone blocks and red unfrogged brick. The sandstone blocks were generally rough and

unfaced within the core of the wall, with some examples of larger, rectangular worked blocks (maximum size 620mm x 260mm x 230mm) positioned on the external faces (Plate 2). No clear coursing was discernable; however there was trend towards the use of faced edges to define the outer edges of the wall footing, and particularly on the western side. These worked blocks appear to have been reused masonry, as in several cases the hewn faced edges were orientated inwards, towards the core of the wall. The red brick contained within the wall comprised substantial sized unfrogged blocks, measuring approximately 200mm x 110mm x 60mm. They were poorly finished and often badly damaged. A single block was removed from the wall and returned to the office for dating. This provided a late 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century date.

- 4.4** Layer **101** and wall foundation **102** were both situated on a mid yellow firm silty clay (Context **103**), containing flecks of charcoal and fragments of brick dust. This deposit is likely to comprise the surface of the natural Wadhurst clay, and is similar in height to the level of the clay noted in the service trench immediately outside the kitchen building. There remains the possibility, however, that Context (103) was formed by upcast material from the construction of the moat, although there is no direct evidence for this.

#### **4.5 Service Trench**

- 4.5.1** A stretch of service trenching was also inspected during the groundwork (Figure 3). No finds or features were identified, and a 0.26m thick deposit of a firm mid brownish yellow silty clay containing occasional small/ medium brick fragments (Context **105**) was found to overly the firm yellow Wadhurst clay (Context **106**).

#### **4.6 Foul Drain Investigation**

- 4.6.1** An investigation to locate a foul drain pipe junction was also undertaken and monitored by a member of ASE staff. All excavation occurred within the original cut of the drain and only 20<sup>th</sup> century made ground observed. The foul drain was uncovered at 0.2m deep.

#### **5.0 FINDS by Elke Raemen and Gemma Driver**

- 5.1** The watching brief produced a small assemblage of finds from only two different contexts, the majority of which was recovered from deposit layer **100**.

#### **5.2 Pottery**

- 5.2.1** All pottery was recovered from **100**. The oldest pieces are of a probable Raeren tankard dating to the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A



total of 14 fragments of high fired earthenware were recovered, representing two different vessels of mid 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century date. One piece is of an oxidised large plate, while the other fragments are from a deliberately reduced jar.

- 5.2.2** Sherds from a probable Cologne/Frechen tankard/tavern mug dating to the later 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century were recovered as well, together with another Cologne/Frechen fragment. A fragment of a glazed red earthenware probable jug dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **5.3    *CBM***

- 5.3.1** Deposit **100** contained a total of thirteen fragments of ceramic building material (CBM). The roof tiles are badly mixed, hard fired pieces with sparse fine sand-tempering and occasional iron oxide inclusions to 2 mm. Other pieces are high fired and sparse fine sand-tempered with rare clay pellets to 2 mm and rare iron oxide inclusions to 2 mm. Two of the latter are over-fired. All tiles are of early post-medieval date.

- 5.3.2** Three brick fragments were recovered, one of which is low to medium fired with abundant fine to medium sand-tempering. The piece can be measured at 54 mm high and is of early post-medieval date. Two other pieces are medium to high fired and moderate fine to medium sand-tempered with moderate iron oxide and slag inclusions to 6 mm and dating to the later 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. One of these pieces measures 49 mm high while the second one measures 63 mm high.

- 5.3.3** Wall **102** contained a medium fired, moderate fine to medium sand-tempered brick fragment with occasional iron oxide inclusions to 2 mm. After firing the brick has been neatly hollowed out on one edge, possibly to fit a doorframe or pole. The hollow measures 49 mm wide and 11 mm high. The whole piece has a width measuring 112 mm and a height of 48 mm and dates to the late 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### **5.4    *Clay Tobacco Pipe***

- 5.4.1** Five plain stem fragments from clay tobacco pipes were recovered from **100**. Two of these date to the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a fragment with a mouthpiece dates to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, while two other stem fragments are of late 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

### **5.5    *Glass***

- 5.5.1** Deposit **100** contained three glass fragments. A clear fragment of a large round-sectioned mineral water bottle dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century. An 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century clear window glass fragment and a 19<sup>th</sup> century pale blue fragment of an oval sectioned medicine bottle were recovered as well.

## **5.6 *Animal Bone***

**5.6.1** Deposit **100** contained 52 bone fragments, which are a mixture of cattle, sheep, pig and rabbit. The cattle remains consist mainly of ribs, long bone and vertebrae fragments. One of the ribs displays a vertical knife mark, which indicates that this is the remains of a butchered animal. The sheep remains comprise of ribs and long bone fragments, including the proximal end of a left radius and the distal end of a left humerus. The pig remains consist of the distal end of a left tibia. The rabbit remains consist of all elements, including long bones, pelvis and scapulae though no skull fragments are present. The assemblage is not large enough to carry out any statistical analysis.

## **5.7 *Other finds***

**5.7.1** One general purpose iron nail fragment was recovered from **100**. From the same context were three Horsham stone roofing slab fragments, one containing a peg hole. These are typical for the late medieval to early post-medieval period. In addition, a piece of local Wealden sandstone was recovered from wall **102**. This piece isn't worked. Two lower valves of oyster shells were recovered from **100**. One of these shows signs of overcrowding, while both contain traces of parasitic activity.

## **6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE by Lucy Allott**

**6.1** One soil sample was taken from context **100** to establish the presence of environmental remains and to characterise these remains. The sample was processed using tank flotation and the flots and residues captured on 250µm and 500µm mesh respectively. The flot and residue were air dried and passed through graded sieves to aid the sorting process. The flot was scanned using a stereomicroscope at magnifications of x10-40. Archaeological and environmental materials from the flot and residue have been classified and quantified (Table 1).

**6.2** This sample contained small amounts of charcoal, several uncharred (modern) weed seeds, molluscs, pottery, CBM and magnetic metal fragments. The sample had an oil/petrol smell which indicates modern contamination and percolation of industrial chemicals.

**6.3** No further work is required for this sample and the materials will be discarded due to the modern, possibly harmful contaminants, present.

Sample No.	1	
Context No.	100	
	Flot	Residue
Volume	10	
Total Weight	2	
Uncharred %	20	
Sediment %	10	
Charcoal >4mm frags	*	*/1
Charcoal <4mm	**	*/2
Weed seeds uncharred	*	
Molluscs		*/1
Pottery		*/1
Metal/magnetic pieces		***373
CBM		***107

Table 1 Flot and residue quantification (\* = 0-10, \*\* = 11-50, \*\*\* = 51-250 & \*\*\*\* = >250) and weight (g).

## 7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1** Context **100** is likely to have resulted from the accumulation of material within the internal space of the kitchen, perhaps resulting from the deposition of levelling material during relaying of floor surfaces. The deposit is mixed, indicating phases of intrusion and disturbance, and contains finds ranging from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some finds appear to predate the mid seventeenth century construction of the house, and it is possible that some material may be residual or derive from vessels remaining in use from an earlier phase of occupation at the site.
- 7.2** The fragmentary survival of both the wall footing **102** and layer **101** prevents a clear interpretation of their function. However, the unfinished surface of layer **101** indicates a floor surface, possibly external. This interpretation is supported by the presence of a regular line of smooth sandstone blocks orientated N-S, extending beyond the edge of the layer to the south and following the orientation of the wall footing **102**. This feature may possibly represent an alignment of a barn or byre compartment. No discernable reduction of floor level at this point perhaps precludes the possibility of the feature forming a drain, although the regularly spaced blocks and smooth surface may have facilitated water run-off. The presence of a cavity in the surface of **101** close to the wall footing perhaps represents the location of a structural or tethering post.
- 7.3** The layer and wall foundation appear to have been laid directly on the surface of the natural, and have been truncated by the external wall of the later house. It is known therefore that the structure predates the construction of the current house in the mid seventeenth century. A spot date of late 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century date has been obtained for the wall

footing **102** suggesting that the structures derive from an earlier phase of post-medieval occupation of the site. However, this date has been obtained from inspection of a single brick, and must therefore be viewed with caution. It is also possible that prior to construction of the new house for Philip Packer the ground was prepared, with any existing upstanding structures potentially reduced down to ground level. The use of late 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> brick may, consequently, relate to the preparation of the floor surface and wall footing immediately preceding the process of house construction. If so, the structures could potentially have an earlier origin.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Walrond Fuller Chartered Building Surveyors for commissioning the work and in particular Ian Walrond for the provision of Ordnance Data Values.

### **References**

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English Heritage's *Listed Buildings Register*. Groombridge Place. Number 439028. <http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk> (accessed 18/09/07)

Martin, D and Martin, B., 2006. *A Revised Historical Assessment of Groombridge Place, Groombridge, Kent*. ASE project number 2484

### SMR Summary Form

Site Code	GBP07					
Identification Name and Address	Groombridge Place, Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells,					
County, District &/or Borough	Kent					
OS Grid Refs.	(NGR TQ 53350, 37611)					
Geology	Wadhurst Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3089					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other Manor House		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 12 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup> / 08/07	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Walrond Fuller Chartered Surveyors					
Project Manager	Jon Sygrave					
Project Supervisor	Alice Thorne					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other Modern		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundwork, at Groombridge House, Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Planning permission had been granted for the replacement of a concrete screed floor at this scheduled monument, with a condition specifying a programme of archaeological supervision during the process of groundwork. A wall foundation and a stone and brick floor surface were identified underlying an approximately 330mm thick mixed kitchen deposit. These had been truncated by the external walls of the mid seventeenth century house giving a terminus ante quem. A spot date (obtained from a single brick) suggests they may have a post-medieval, possible late 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century date.</i></p>						

## OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

### Printable version

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-31579**

#### Project details

Project name	Groombridge Place, Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells,
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundwork, at Groombridge House, Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Planning permission had been granted for the replacement of a concrete screed floor at this scheduled monument, with a condition specifying a programme of archaeological supervision during the process of groundwork. A wall foundation and a stone and brick floor surface were identified underlying an approximately 330mm thick mixed kitchen deposit. The structures had been truncated by the external walls of the mid seventeenth century house giving a terminus ante quem. A spot date (obtained from a single brick) suggests the structures to have a post-medieval, possible late 16th to 17th century date.
Project dates	Start: 12-08-2007 End: 13-08-2007
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	3039 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	GBP07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	WALL FOOTING post-medieval
Significant Finds	POT Post Medieval

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Scheduled Monument Consent

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### Project location

Country England

Site location KENT TUNBRIDGE WELLS GROOMBRIDGE Groombridge Place,  
Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells,

Postcode XXXXXXXX

Study area 10.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 53350 37611 51.1166845452 0.191244293131 51 07 00 N 000  
11 28 E Point

Height OD Min: 45.00m Max: 45.00m

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### Project creators

Name of Organisation Archaeology South East

Project brief originator Heritage Conservation Kent County Council

Project design originator Archaeology South-East

Project director/manager Jon Sygrave

Project supervisor Alice Thorne

Type of sponsor/funding body Client

Name of sponsor/funding Walrond Fuller Chartered Surveyors

body

### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Local Museum

Physical Contents 'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Glass'

Digital Archive recipient Local Museum

Digital Contents 'none'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography'

Paper Archive recipient Local Museum

Paper Contents 'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Glass'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Correspondence','Diary','Drawing','Map','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey '

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title An Archaeological Watching Brief

Author(s)/Editor(s) Thorne, A

Other bibliographic details 3039

Date 2007

Issuer or publisher Archaeology South - East

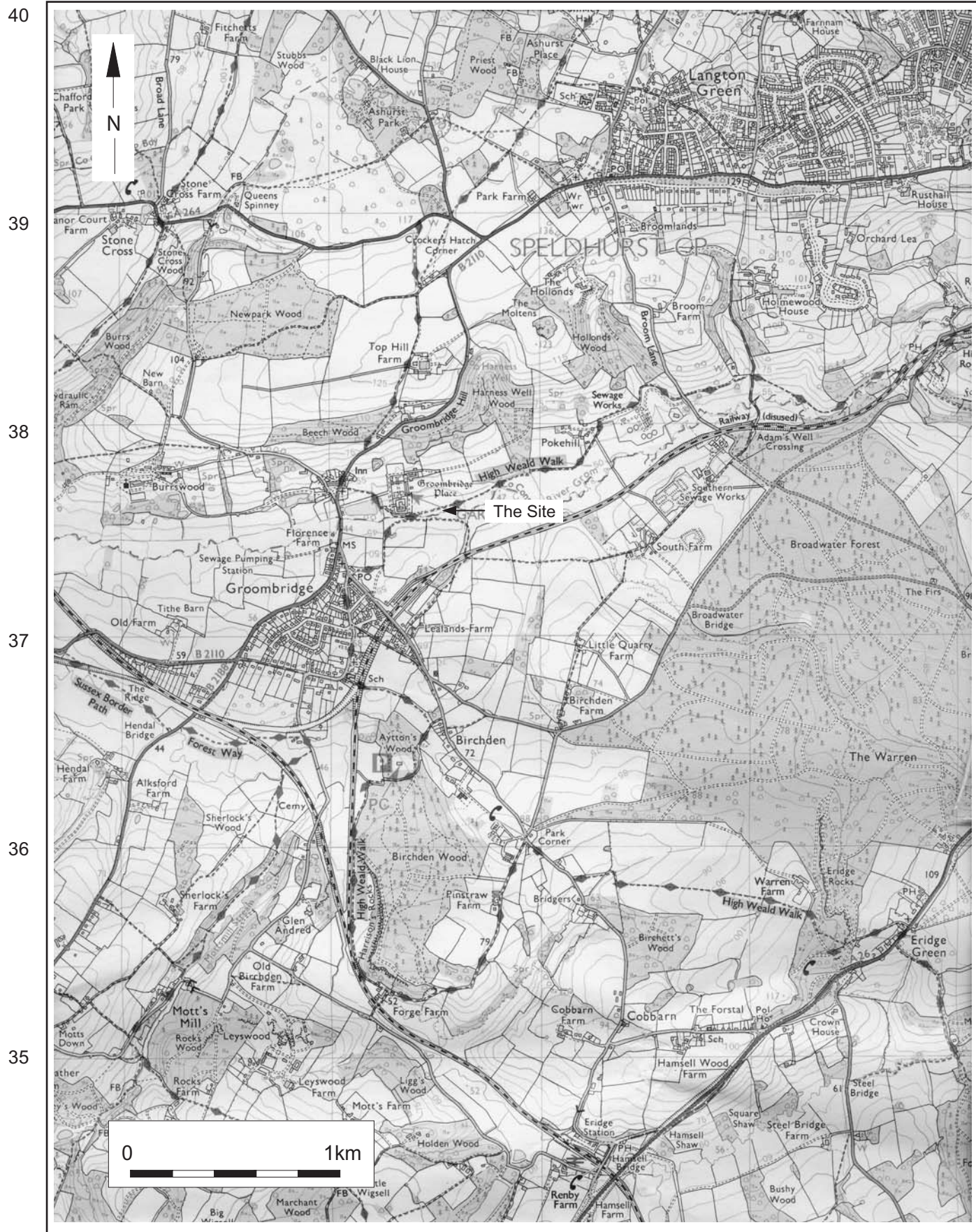


Place of issue or  
publication      Archaeology South - East

Description      Grey Literature Report

Entered by      Alice Thorne (tcrnath@ucl.ac.uk)

Entered on      20 September 2007



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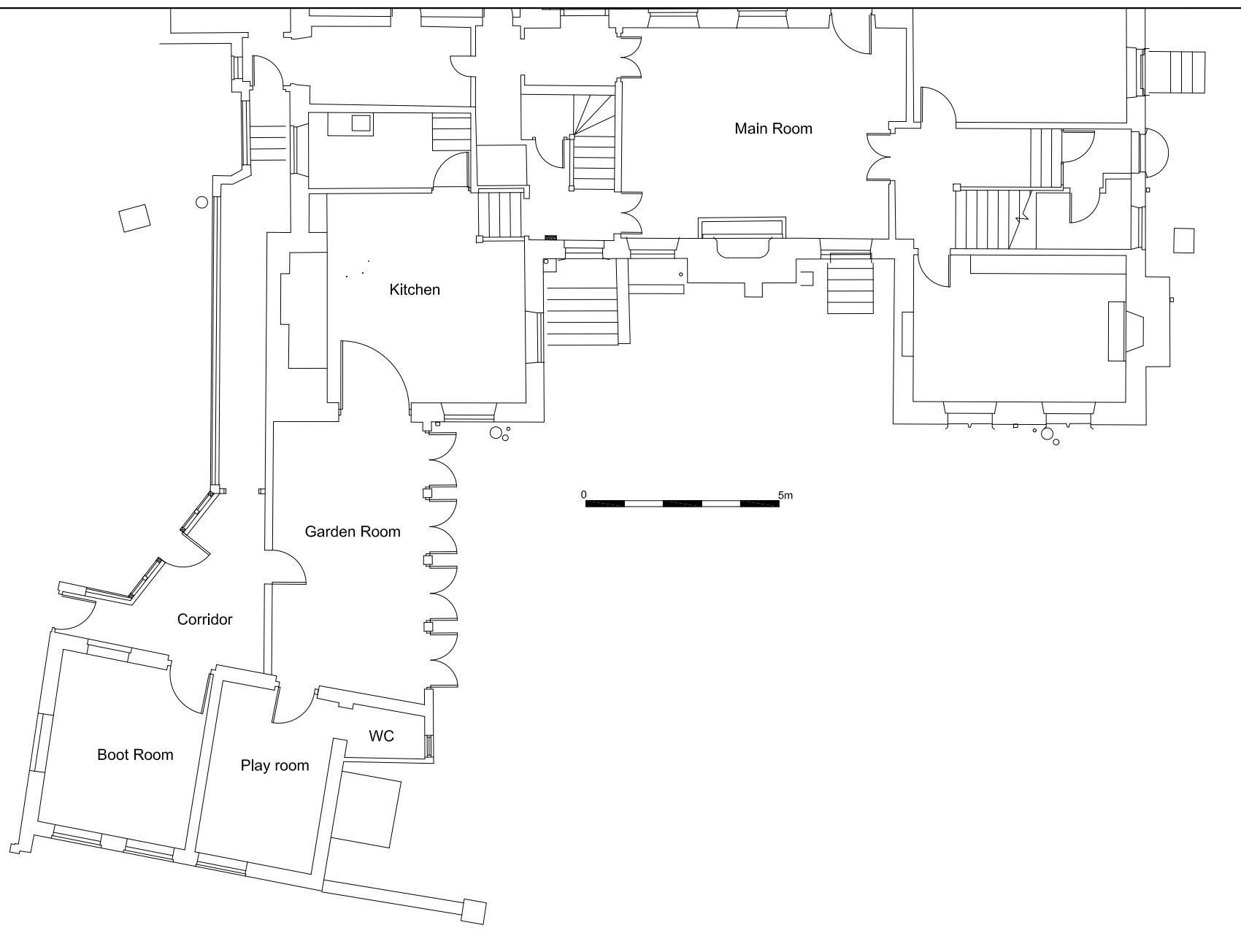
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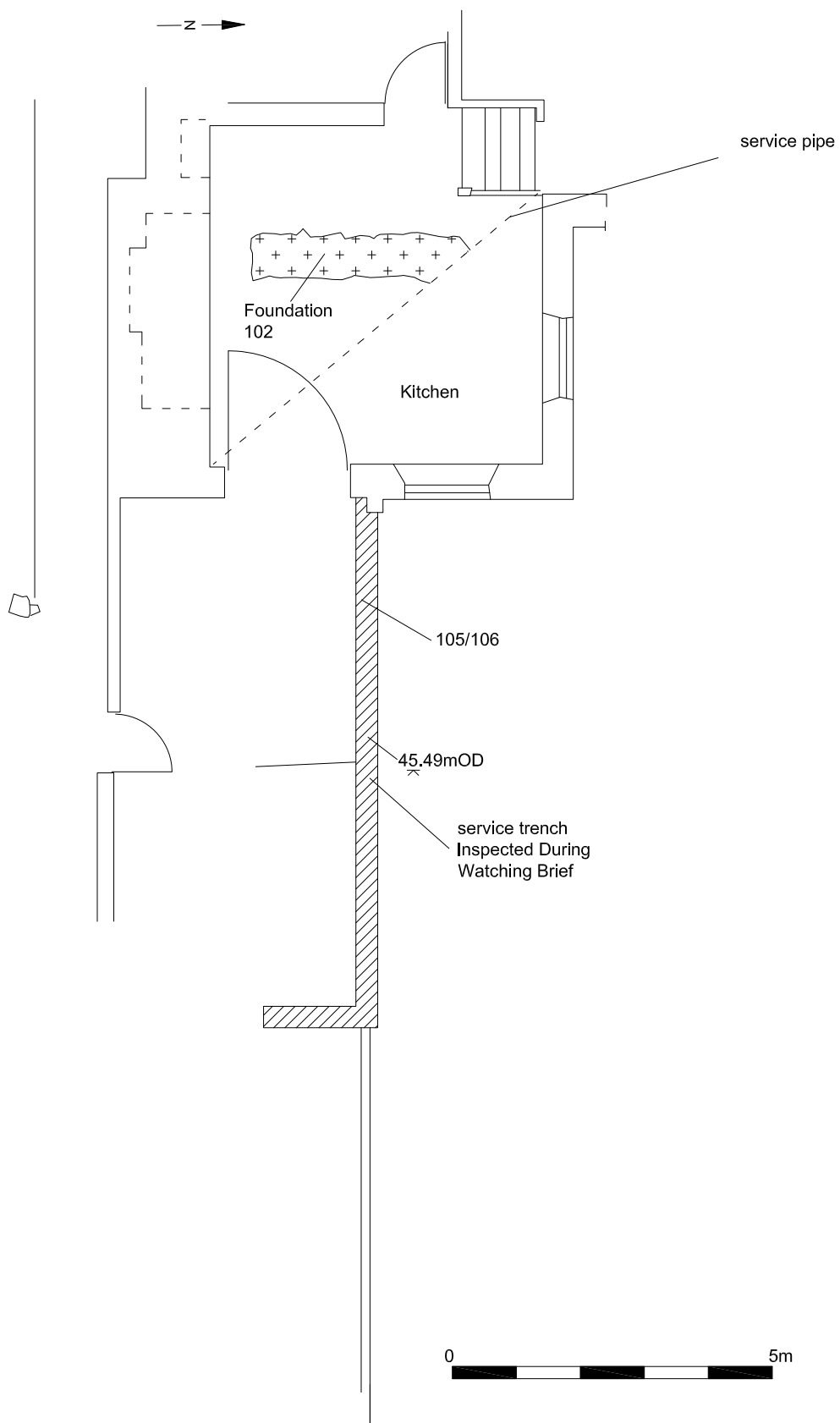
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© Archaeology South-East			Groombridge Place, Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells	Fig. 1
Ref: 3089	Sept 2007	Drawn by: SM	Site Location Plan	

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© <b>Archaeology South-East</b>			Groombridge Place, Tunbridge Wells	Fig. 2
Ref: 3089	Sept 2007	Drawn by: SM	Site plan showing location of Kitchen	



© Archaeology South-East			Groombridge Place	Fig. 3
Ref: 3089	Sept 2007	Drawn by: SM	1:100 Plan of site	

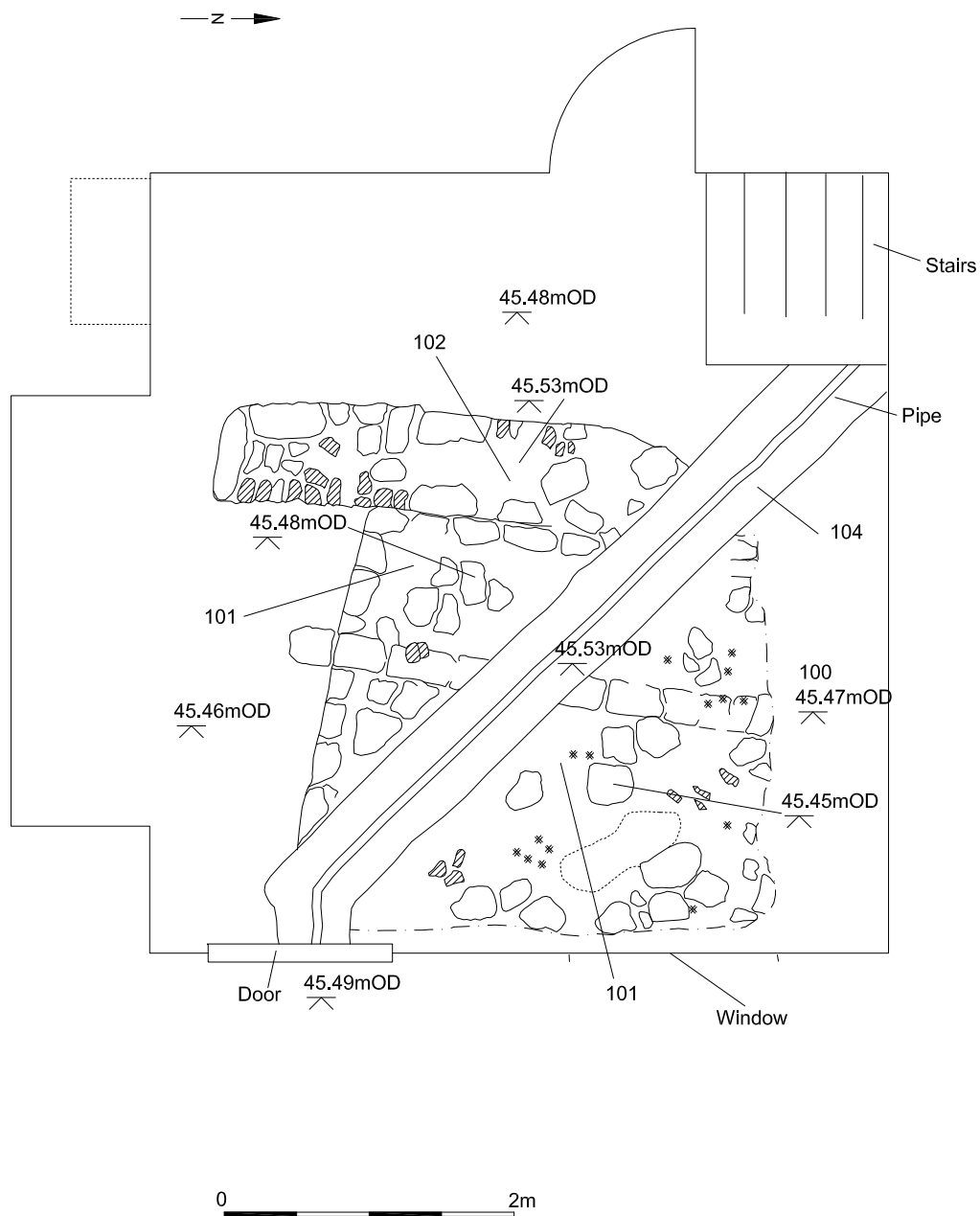






Plate 1: SE facing shot of Context 101



Plate 2: S facing shot of Context 102

Head Office  
Units 1 & 2  
2 Chapel Place  
Portslade  
East Sussex BN41 1DR  
Tel: +44(0)1273 426830 Fax: +44(0)1273 420866  
email: [fau@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.archaeologyse.co.uk](http://www.archaeologyse.co.uk)



London Office  
Centre for Applied Archaeology  
Institute of Archaeology  
University College London  
31-34 Gordon Square, London, WC1 0PY  
Tel: +44(0)20 7679 4778 Fax: +44(0)20 7383 2572  
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