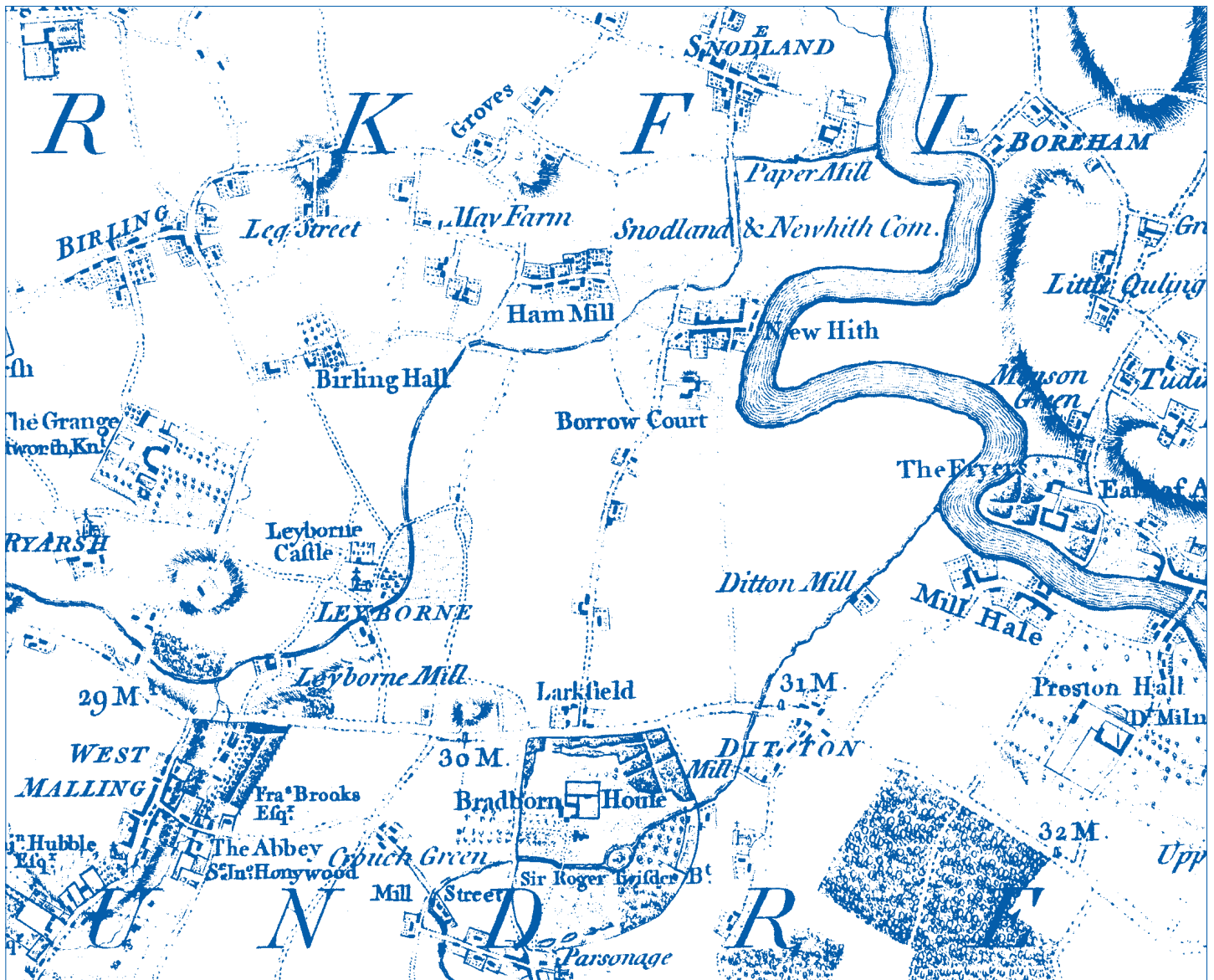


Unit A1, Land at Cobdown House, London Road, Ditton, Kent

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**Unit A1, Land at Cobdown House,
London Road, Ditton,
Kent**

**Archaeological Watching Brief
Report**

PLANNING REF. TM/05/00959/FL
NGR 571260,158657

Prepared for
CgMs Consulting

On Behalf of
Kent County Football Association

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**Unit A1, Land at Cobdown House,
London Road, Ditton,
Kent**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Limited acting on behalf of Kent County Football Association to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundwork for an office building (Unit 1A) at Cobdown House, London Road, Ditton, Kent (hereafter 'the Site'), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 571260, 158657.

The watching brief involved eight Site visits between 20th October 2009 and 30th November 2009. It soon became clear that the development footprint for Unit A1 was heavily disturbed by past building work, which involved removal of the topsoil, the laying of concrete, and the later construction of a tarmac car park. Visits to the Site, involved the monitoring, inspection and the recording of any new foundation footings whilst these were being excavated .

No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were observed during the watching brief. This is unlikely to be purely as a result of past ground disturbance as the subsoil, although partially disturbed, had survived across most parts of the Site.

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London Road, Ditton,
Kent**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgments

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank CgMs Consulting Limited for commissioning this watching brief on behalf of Kent County Football Association. Gratitude is extended to the site manager, Mick Howard of B.M. May, and his site foreman, for both providing schedule information concerning the groundwork programme.

The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Richard Greatorex. Caroline Russell undertook the fieldwork and produced the report. The illustrations were prepared by Elizabeth James.

**Unit A1, Land at Cobdown House,
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Archaeological Watching Brief

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**Unit A1, Land at Cobdown House,
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Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology were commissioned by CgMs Consulting Limited acting on behalf of the Kent County Football Association to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundwork for an office building (Unit A1) at Cobdown House, London Road, Ditton, Kent (hereafter 'The Site'), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 571260, 158657 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 Planning permission was granted (planning ref. TM/05/00959/FL) by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council for the erection of a two-storey extension to Cobdown House and the construction of two detached office buildings (Units A1 and A2) with associated car parking. In compliance with PPG16, and the council's archaeological policies and the condition (condition 3) attached to the planning consent, an archaeological watching brief is required during the duration of the ground works for the development. However, this watching brief covers groundworks for Unit A1 and associated car parking only.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared in advance of the watching brief (CgMs Consulting 2009). It set out in detail the methodologies and standards employed to undertake the archaeological works.
- 1.1.4 The watching brief was undertaken by Caroline Russell and involved eight Site visits between 20th October 2009 and 30th November 2009. It soon became clear that the development footprint for Unit A1 was heavily disturbed by past building work, which involved removal of the topsoil, the laying of concrete, and the later construction of a tarmac car park. In view of the extent of disturbance, following consultation with Kent County Council's archaeological officer it was agreed that the watching brief on Unit A1 and car park could be brought to an end before the completion of the groundworks. Visits to the Site, involved the monitoring, inspection and the recording of any new foundation footings whilst these were being excavated.

1.2 Site description

- 1.2.1 The Site is located within the north side of the village of Ditton, between London Road to the south and the M20 to the north (**Figure 1**). It is sited to the rear of Cobdown Park and rather than being directly accessed from London Road, it is accessed from a road behind the Sports and Social Club car park on Station Road. This road runs northwards through the sports grounds to Cobdown House in its woodland setting. The Site is located close

to the south-east corner of the house, and is irregular in shape with its longitudinal south-east side fronting a tributary river of the River Medway.

1.2.2 The Site comprises a tarmac road to the north that curves downhill and around to the north-east where it levels out. The ground falls away to the south at the top of the road, whereas it rises to form a bank to the north side behind a number of tarmac car parking spaces. Most of this bank is however located outside of the Site. A further possible car park is located on level ground accessed from the road at the base of the slope. The tree-lined area to the west of this tarmac hard standing was stripped of vegetation prior to the first Site visit. The south-east side of the Site is under grass beyond the car park. A small concrete structure appears to have stood to the north side of this car park, although it was demolished before the first Site visit.

1.2.3 The underlying geology is Folkestone Beds sand.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.1 No known archaeological sites (above or below ground) have been recorded within the Site. Nor have any archaeological finds been recovered from within the boundaries of the Site.

1.3.2 Within the wider area, however, and along the middle Medway valley in particular, there is a substantial amount of archaeological evidence, especially for the prehistoric and Romano-British periods.

1.3.3 Lower/Middle Palaeolithic flint implements (TW 75 NW 174) were discovered at Aylesford County Primary School, around 700m to the east of the Site.

1.3.4 The Mesolithic period is represented by a small collection of stone tools, including three obliquely backed pieces and an adze-sharpening flake, that were recovered at Ditton (Champion 2007, 72).

1.3.5 Aylesford has considerable evidence for both Bronze Age and Iron Age activity, largely in the form of burials. For instance, a group of three Bronze Age cist burials with crouched inhumations were discovered in the 1880's, whilst two Bronze Age flat graves were found in the 1890s' (Champion 2007, 92 and 94). One of the flat graves contained a flat axe and two triangular daggers. A Late Iron Age cemetery was discovered within an extraction sand pit at Aylesford in 1886 (*ibid*, 124). This site and a small cemetery at Swarling, south of Canterbury, typify the Late Iron Age cremation rite, sometimes known as 'Aylesford-Swarling' burials, in which cremations were placed in or near wooden buckets.

1.3.6 A Middle Bronze Age hoard comprising gold torcs was retrieved from the River Medway at Aylesford (Champion 2007, 112-113).

1.3.7 The closest known Romano-British settlement to the Site is located around 800m to the south-east, at Bradbourne Field. It is early Romano-British in date, likewise the villa site at Eccles which overlooks the Medway and may date as early as AD 55 (Millet 2007, 152-153). The Eccles site apparently overlies an Iron Age farmstead, so perhaps implying the continuation of a power centre after the invasion. This villa continued in use until at least the 4th century. The site of another Romano-British villa, dated to between the 2nd and 4th centuries, lies further to the north at Snodland, on the west bank

of the River Medway (www.archaeologyse.co.uk; accessed 15/12/2009). This site (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) has been excavated several times over the past century, revealing a substantial main villa building and a few outbuildings. It was most recently investigated in 2008 when the remains of a possible courtyard building were uncovered. Late Iron Age activity was also recorded during this excavation and was most notably represented by a copper alloy La Tène brooch and two Colchester brooches.

- 1.3.8 The settlement of Ditton is referenced in the Domesday Book as having a total of 36 settlements in 1086. It was presumably of a similar size in the Late Anglo-Saxon period. The name Ditton derives from the Saxon word 'Dictune' meaning 'Village on the Dyke', after the Bradbourne stream that passes through the village. An Anglo-Saxon royal manor at Alyelsford is mentioned in the Rochester bridgework list dated around 975 (Welch 2007, 242).
- 1.3.9 If the Site is waterlogged at depth, due to the close proximity of the adjacent river, faunal remains of an unknown date may be recovered within it, as may organic artefacts or structures associated with the use of the river. Extensive undated cropmarks are known from the area around the Site.

2 AIMS

- 2.1.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief, as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (CgMs Consulting 2009) were to:
- 2.1.2 Record and analyse any archaeological remains that are revealed in the course of all works that disturb the ground during development and to ensure that these are recorded/sampled and interpreted to an acceptable standard (general aims of the fieldwork);
- 2.1.3 Ensure that any significant discoveries of artefactual/environmental evidence are recorded and analysed to an acceptable standard;
- 2.1.4 Establish whether any archaeological remains are present and to record them so that they may be related to other archaeological remains within the area (specific aims of the fieldwork).

3 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 3.1.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety regulations 1992. A Project Health and Safety Risk Assessment was produced by Wessex Archaeology.

4 METHOD

4.1 Monitoring of Development

- 4.1.1 The watching brief began during clearance work (**Plate 1**), after the demolition of a small concrete structure to the north side of the tarmac hard standing for the car park and the stripping of vegetation to the west end of

the Site. Prior to the watching brief, an exploratory T-shaped trench was opened within the stripped area and partially backfilled. It exposed the overburden and underlying natural, as well as a water main found to run north-east to south-west, along the alignment of the Site. This trench was photographically recorded only.

- 4.1.2 After the eighth site visit, it was agreed with Sally Dicks of CgMs Consulting Limited and Wendy Rogers of Kent County Council that the Site was too disturbed and therefore the archaeological potential too low, to warrant any further monitoring during the remaining groundwork programme.
- 4.1.3 The tarmac hard standing was removed exposing the hardcore beneath (**Plate 2**). The machine excavated through this to uncover a large slab of concrete at foundation level, beneath where the tarmac had lain (**Plate 3**). When this was lifted to reveal the hardcore beneath (**Plate 4**), machine excavation of the foundation footings then begun. These layers of made ground and hard standing were only photographically recorded.
- 4.1.4 The foundation trenches were excavated to a depth of between 0.31m and 1.17m from the cleared ground surface. The deepest were excavated alongside the river, to the south-east side of the Site, where firmer ground was found at a greater depth. The stratigraphy of the first trenches opened (located to the south-west end and southeast side of Unit A1) was archaeologically recorded and photographed, whilst the footings excavated later were only investigated for archaeological features, deposits and finds within their sections, as well as photographed.
- 4.1.5 All recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system, supported by a digital photographic record.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Archaeological Features

- 5.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were identified during excavation of the foundation footings.
- 5.1.2 In view of the extent of past disturbance, following consultation with Kent County Council's archaeological officer it was agreed that the watching brief on Unit A1 and car park could be brought to an end before the completion of the groundworks.

5.2 Stratigraphic Sequence

- 5.2.1 Clearance work involved the removal of a layer of tarmac hard standing for a car park (**001**) and its underlying layer of hardcore within a sandy clay matrix (**002**; see **Table 1** in **Appendix 1** for a context summary table relating to clearance work). The foundation level was reached at a depth within the hardcore. However, at this depth elsewhere on Site a layer of concrete hard standing (**003**) was revealed beneath (**002**) and so the foundation level had to be deepened. The concrete slab was lifted to expose more hardcore (**004**).

- 5.2.2 From the excavation of the first foundation footings to the southwest end of Unit A1 (see **Tables 2 and 3** in **Appendix 1** for relevant context summary tables), it was clear that much of the Site would be greatly disturbed by past construction work. At the south corner of the unit (**Plate 5**), where clearance work was less complete than elsewhere, a layer of mulch (**005**) overlay a thick layer of made ground (**006**). This relatively light orangey brown sand was deposited over hardcore (**004**), as well as a layer of medium brown sandy silt (**007**), which may be interpreted as a buried layer of topsoil or mulch. A subsoil of medium orangey brown silt (**008**) lay beneath (**004**) and (**007**). The natural (**009**) found within the south-west end of Unit A1 is a medium orangey brown silt with frequent small chalk inclusions (**Plate 6**).
- 5.2.3 **Table 4** in **Appendix 1** is a summary record of the contexts found to the southeast side of Unit A1 (**Plates 7-9**). The top layer here is of mulch, which was partially cleared (**010**). To the very south, the underlying layer is made ground (**011**), which is the same as (**006**). This soon tails out to the north, at which point a short stretch of degraded red brick (**012**), one course thick, was observed to abut and run under the made ground (**011**). This brick layer was identified further to the east, where concrete slabs (**013**) lay over it. The layer of mulch (**010**) and brick (**012**) both overlie a layer of rooting (**014**). The subsoil (**015**), found beneath the rooting and the made ground (**006**), is the same as (**008**), and the underlying natural (**016**) is the same as (**009**).
- 5.2.4 The natural on Site varies in its composition. It has been recorded as sandy silt to the south-west end of Unit A1, silt to the south-east side, and clayey sand within the middle.

6 FINDS

- 6.1.1 No artefactual evidence was noted during excavation of the foundation footings. Nor was any recovered from the excavated spoil.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL

- 7.1.1 No material suitable for environmental analysis was present within the Site.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1.1 No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were observed during the watching brief. This is unlikely to be a result of past ground disturbance as the subsoil, although disturbed, has survived across most of the Site.

9 ARCHIVE

9.1 Preparation and Deposition

- 9.1.1 The project archive was prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (UKIC 1990). It comprises a ring-bound file containing a watching brief attendance form, site 'day book',

photographic register and *Written Scheme of Investigation*. It is currently held at Wessex Archaeology's office building under the site code 69490, but will ultimately be deposited for permanent storage with an appropriate museum.

10 REFERENCES

CgMs 2009 *Unit 1A, Land at Cobdown House, London Road, Ditton, Kent. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. Ref SD/11103

Champion, T. 2007. 'Prehistoric Kent', in J.H. Williams, (ed), *The Archaeology of Kent to AD 800*, 67-134. Woodbridge/Rochester: The Boydell Press, and Kent County Council.

Millet, M. 2007. 'Roman Kent', in J.H. Williams, (ed), *The Archaeology of Kent to AD 800*, 135-186. Woodbridge/Rochester: The Boydell Press, and Kent County Council.

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11 APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARY TABLE

Table 1	Clearance layers	
Context	Description	Depth (m) below ground surface
001	Tarmac hard standing - for car park. Kerbed to the southeast side and southwest end of the Site. Plate 1.	c. 0m-0.10
002	Hardcore and sandy clay - the hardcore contains many broken fragments of red brick. It is often mixed within medium orangey brown sandy clay. A narrow strip of this clay is found to the north side of the area stripped. This mixed layer is stained black in places from the above tarmac hard standing (001). Plate 2.	c. 0.10-0.30
003	Concrete hard standing - Plate 3	c. 0.30-0.40
004	Hardcore - Plate 4	c. 0.40-0.50

Table 2	South corner (southwest end) of Unit A1 (Plate 5) (Natural not reached at point of recording. Foundation trench later deepened down into natural)	
Context	Description	Depth (m) below ground surface
005	Mulch - Loose. Medium brown. Dense matting of tree roots. Same as (010).	0-0.08
006	Made ground - Loose. Relatively light orangey brown. Fine sand. Occasional small sandstone (1.5cm x 1cm x 0.5 cm), small grit (under 0.5cm ³), and small fragments of Construction Building Material (1.5cm x 1cm x 1cm max.). Frequent roots, finer than in (005). Same as (011).	0.08-0.60
007	Buried topsoil/mulch - Friable. Medium brown. Sandy silt. Very occasional charcoal fragment. Rooted.	0.60-0.70
008	Subsoil - Friable. Medium orangey brown. Silt. Occasional small inclusions. Rooted. Same as (015).	0.70-0.78

Table 3	Southwest end of Unit A1 (Plate 6)	
Context	Description	Depth (m) below cleared ground surface
009	Natural - Friable. Medium orangey brown. Sandy silt. Frequent chalk inclusions (a few mm ³ in size). Occasional charcoal flecks (several mm ³) and larger stones (c. 4cm x 3.5cm x 1cm). Occasional roots. Same as (016).	0.11-0.22

Table 4	Southeast side of Unit A1	
Context	Description	Depth (m) below ground surface (recorded at south corner)
010	Mulch - Loose. Medium brown. Dense matting of tree roots. Same as (005). Found above made ground (011) and layer of rooting (014).	-
011	Made ground - Loose. Relatively light orangey brown. Fine sand. Frequent small grit inclusions. Rooted. Located in the south corner of Unit A1. Tails out to the north within the southernmost footing 'pad'. Same as (006). Found below (010) and above subsoil (015). Plate 7.	0-0.59
012	Brick layer - one course thick within westernmost footing 'pad'. Very degraded brick. Found abutting and under (011). Possibly 13cm thick max. Less than 1m surviving. The same probable brick layer was identified further east above (014). Here, it is 0.31m thick max. Also found below (004) and (013) and above (014). Plate 8.	-
013	Concrete slabs - laid over the northernmost 2.5m long surviving stretch of brick layer (011). Plate 8.	-
014	Rooting - layer of rooting present along the entire length of the southeast side of Unit A1. Loose. Medium to dark brown. Silt. Occasional flint (3cm x 3cm x 1.5cm). Layer is particularly thick in the section of the excavated footings beside the river, within the southernmost footing 'pad' and the footing trench to its north. Found above subsoil (015) and below the layer of mulch (010), red brick (012) and hardcore (004). Layer may be interpreted as extremely disturbed subsoil. Plate 9.	-
015	Subsoil - Friable. Medium orangey brown. Silt. Occasional small inclusions. Rooted. Same as (008). Found below (011) and (014). Plate 7.	0.59-1.11
016	Natural - Friable. Medium orangey brown, occasionally mottled with small patches of dark blackish brown. Silt. Frequent chalk inclusions (a few mm ³ in size). Occasional charcoal flecks (several mm ³) and larger stones (c. 4cm x 3.5cm x 1cm). Occasional roots. Like (015) except firmer. Same as (009). Plate 8.	1.11-1.17



Site location

Figure 1

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Plate 1: Site after initial strip, facing north-east



Plate 2: Site upon removing tarmac hard-standing (001) down to hardcore (002): facing north-west

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Plate 3: Site upon removing hardcore (002) down to concrete hard-standing (003): facing north-east



Plate 4: Site upon removing concrete hard-standing (003) down to hardcore (004): facing south-west



Plate 5: North-east facing section at south corner (south-west end) of Unit A1



Plate 6: South-west end of Unit A1: facing south-east


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Plate 7: North-west facing section at south corner (south-east side) of Unit A1



Plate 8: South-east facing section at south-east side of Unit A1 showing the concrete slabs (013) and underlying brick layer (012)


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Plate 9: North-west facing section at south-east side of Unit A1 showing the layer of rooting (014)

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