

# BRIDGEWALK HOUSE, BRIXTON DEVERILL, WILTSHIRE

(NGR ST 86178 38851)

Results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation

Wiltshire Council planning reference PL/2022/05624

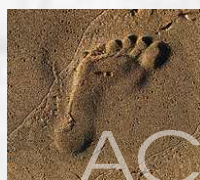
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With contributions from:  
Dan Carter

Report No: ACW1518/2/1

Date: July 2024



archaeology

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| Contributions | Dan Carter                      |
| Checked by    | Simon Hughes                    |
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The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith based on professional judgement and on information currently available.

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## Summary

*An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken at Bridgewalk House, Brixton Deverill, Wiltshire (ST 86178, 38851) by AC archaeology during February 2023. Investigations comprised two 5m long by 1m wide hand-excavated trenches positioned to target the footprint of a proposed new extension to an outbuilding at the property. The site lies adjacent to a Scheduled area containing a Roman villa complex (National Heritage List for England reference 1448408).*

*The trial trenches recorded evidence for Roman activity. This comprised the exposure of a stone built wall, which was overlain by demolition deposits that included fragments of Roman painted wall plaster. More recent activity dating from the 19th century was also recorded, with this comprising a brick structure, a ditch and a pit.*

*Finds recovered consisted of Roman painted wall plaster, Roman and post-medieval pottery, ceramic tile, animal bone, oyster shell and iron nails.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** This report sets out the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation carried out by AC archaeology at Bridgewalk House, Brixton Deverill, Wiltshire (ST 86178 38851) during February 2023 and associated with an proposed extension to the property. The work was required by Wiltshire Council to provide associated information for planning application reference PL/2022/05624 following consultation with the Wiltshire Council Assistant County Archaeologist.

**1.2** Bridgewalk House is located to the west of the B3095 that bisects the village and adjacent to the River Wylfe. The position of the proposed extension lies to the south of an existing outbuilding in an area currently occupied by gardens. It lies on flat ground at approximately 123m OD, with the underlying solid geology comprising chalk of the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation, which is beneath superficial deposits of alluvial clay, silt, sand, and gravel are also recorded (BGS 2024).

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

**2.1** The site is bounded immediately to the west by a Scheduled area (National Heritage List for England reference 1448408). This comprises Roman Villa that was discovered in 2015 during the excavation of a cable trench that exposed a mosaic floor. Following its discovery Historic England commissioned geophysical survey and trial trenching during 2015 and 2016, the results of which mapped a substantial winged corridor Roman villa (Fig. 2). The work showed that the northern wing and western part of the central range were poorly preserved, while the southern wing demonstrated a greater level of preservation that included evidence for a bath suite in the form of an apsidal wall, the remains of a hypocaust, and a possible bathing pool. The trial trenching also exposed evidence for a subsequent timber structure built in the ruins of the north wing that indicated some level of maintained occupation of the site in the immediate post-Roman period.

## 3. AIMS

**3.1** The main aim of the trial trench evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character, and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds

within the site. The results of the work will be reviewed and used to inform the planning decision and any subsequent mitigation that may be required as part of the planning application.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (2020). It comprised the hand excavation of two trenches measuring 5m long and 1m wide. These were positioned to provide sample coverage of the proposed new extension area (Fig. 1).
- 4.2** All features and deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (revised August 2012). Detailed sections and plans were produced at a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50, while all site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

## **5. RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction** (*Plan Fig. 1; Plate 1*)

Archaeological features and deposits were exposed in both trenches and were present from beneath an approximately 0.1m to 0.3m thick garden topsoil. The results from the trenches are described in detail below

### **5.2 Trench 1** (*Detailed plan Fig. 3a and section Fig. 3b; Plates 2-3*)

Trench 1 was aligned northwest to southeast and was positioned over the southwest extent of the footprint of the proposed new extension. It was excavated onto natural subsoil (context 105), which comprised a mixed brown clay with flints and creamy white marly chalk that was present from a depth of approximately 0.6m below existing levels. The natural subsoil was overlain by a 0.45m thick mid grey clay loam with sandstone roof tiles fragments, crushed wall plaster, and frequent flint and stone inclusions (107). Finds recovered from this layer consisted of Roman pottery sherds, an iron nail, ceramic tile fragments, animal bone and oyster shell. Layer 107 was sealed by a mid to light grey silty loam subsoil (106), which was cut by the construction cut (F104) for a brick structure (S101).

### **5.3 Structure S101**

Structure S101 was partially exposed and measured 1.9m across and 0.5m deep. It was comprised of lime mortar bonded brick walls and un mortared brick base. The structure was set within a construction cut (F104) that had been backfilled with a mid-grey silty clay with abundant lime mortar fragment inclusions. The structure contained a light grey silty loam fill (102) that had frequent stone and brick fragment inclusions and from which 19th century pottery was recovered.

### **5.4 Trench 2** (*Detailed plan Fig. 4a and section Figs 4b-d; Plates 4-8*)

This trench was northwest to southeast aligned and situated northeast of Trench 1. It was excavated to a depth of 0.52m into a dark grey silty clay (210) that had moderately common crushed mortar fragments. This was sealed by a thick deposit structural demolition deposit of mid greyish brown silty loam (209), with abundant mortar and wall plaster including painted fragments, as well as stone rubble. Demolition deposit 109 was sealed by a mid-greyish brown silty loam subsoil (201) and a dark greyish brown silty loam topsoil (200). The trench contained a partially exposed wall (S208), a small pit (F203), and a ditch (F206).

### **5.5** *Wall S208*

Partially exposed wall S208 was approximately east to west aligned and at least 0.65m wide. It was exposed from a depth of around 0.45m below existing levels and was sealed by demolition deposit sequence comprised of layers 210 and 209. The wall was comprised of light yellowish grey lime mortar bonded flint nodule facing and a rubble core.

### **5.6** *Pit F203*

Pit F203 was cut into the top of demolition deposit 209 and was sealed by subsoil 201. It measured 0.35m long, 0.23m wide and 0.07m deep with a gently rounded profile. The pit contained a dark brownish grey silty fill (204) that included the articulated remains of part of a fowl.

### **5.7** *Ditch F206*

Ditch F206 was cut into subsoil 201 and aligned northeast to southwest. It measured 0.46m wide and up to 0.2m deep, with a deeper element in the northeast. The ditch contained a deposit that was similar to the overlying dark grey-brown silty loam topsoil (207). A sherd from a 19th to 20th century flower pot was recovered from the ditch.

## **6. FINDS SUMMARY** *by Dan Carter*

### **6.1** **Animal bone**

Fifty-four pieces of animal bone weighing 62g were recovered from four contexts. A single cattle vertebrae fragment, context 100 (topsoil) has butchery evidence. Context 107, fill of ditch F206 contained two small animal long bone fragments and a canine tooth. Demolition layer 209 contained a small piece of rib bone with a butchery mark on one side. The largest amount of bone, 49 pieces, came from context 204. These fragments appear to come from a large type of fowl.

### **6.2** **Ceramic Building Material (CBM)**

The site produced 17 CBM fragments of Roman date weighing 216g. Apart from an incomplete piece of tegula from context 200 and a single tesserae piece from context 204, the rest of the assemblage are unidentifiable tile fragments.

### **6.3** **Shell**

Two oyster shell fragments were recovered from topsoil (100) and 107, fill of ditch F106.

### **6.4** **Ceramic spoon**

A small shaped spoon handle in two adjoining pieces, possibly a mustard pot spoon, were recovered from context 100 (topsoil). This is likely to be of 19th century date.

### **6.5** **Pottery**

A total of 30 sherds of pottery (338g) were recovered. The majority of the assemblage is of post medieval/modern date and consists of flower pot and domestic fragments. Of these domestic fragments, nine are blue/white tin glazed fragments with seven adjoining sherds from a single, incomplete vessel. Context 107 contained seven sherds (36g) of Roman pottery of which three are adjoining pieces from a grey ware vessel.

### **6.6** **Painted wall plaster**

Twenty-four fragments (1520g) of wall plaster were recovered from demolition deposit 209. The fabric of this assemblage is consistent and have an abraded, painted surface

of a predominately reddish/brown colour, with some pieces also having additional pink, grey, white and blue/green colours.

## **6.7 Iron**

The site produced a total of five iron objects from three contexts. These all comprised nails, with one recovered from contexts 107 and 109, and three from topsoil (200).

## **7. DISCUSSION**

**7.1** The results from the trial trench evaluation have recorded evidence for Roman activity within the footprint of the proposed new extension. This comprised the exposure within Trench 2 of an east to west aligned stone-built wall at a depth of 0.45m below existing levels. The results also demonstrated that the wall was sealed by demolition deposits (209 and 210) that included fragments of Roman painted wall plaster. A likely equivalent deposit containing structural demolition material and Roman finds was also exposed in Trench 1 (107). These demolition deposits were present from a depth of 0.2m to 0.3m below existing levels, and for Trench 2, extended to a depth of 0.6m where the natural subsoil was encountered.

**7.2** The results indicate a likely continuation of the adjacent Roman site to the northwest comprising the recently discovered villa complex. The remains are some distance from the main core of the villa and do not form part of an element that has been previously mapped from the results of the geophysical survey. Although the exposure of the wall was limited, the alignment matches that of the mapped villa complex to the northeast. Furthermore, a partially mapped range shown extending south towards the site from the southwest corner of the villa complex indicates that a likely continuation of the complex had previously been assumed.

**7.3** Given the limited exposure of the structural remains, a function of the building is difficult to ascertain, although the presence of a moderate quantity of painted wall plaster would suggest that an elevated status continued into this part of the site.

**7.4** Post-medieval activity was shown to also be present within the footprint of the proposed new extension. This comprised the small pit containing the remains of a probable fowl (F203), a small ditch (F206) and a brick structure (S101), which based on the depiction of a glasshouse shown in this location on the 1887 First-Edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map is perhaps likely to represent an associated structural element.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

**8.1** The trial trench evaluation established the presence of Roman activity within the proposed development area. This was shown to comprise the remains of a stone-built wall with thick overlying structural demolition deposits. Included within the demolition deposits were fragments of painted wall plaster indicating a likely high-status function to the structure. The close proximity of the results to the currently mapped extent of an adjacent Roman villa indicate that the results represent an element of the previously mapped complex.

**8.2** The proposed development will have a minimum formation depth of 0.5m below existing levels. It will therefore have an impact on below ground remains of Roman date, with this comprising *in situ* structural remains from 0.45m below existing levels and deposits containing structural fabric and artefacts from 0.2m below existing levels.

## 9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 9.1 The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at Manor Farm Stables, Chicklade, Wiltshire, SP3 5SU under the unique project code of **ACW1518** and an accession number **SBYWM:2023.4** issued from Salisbury Museum, Salisbury. It will be held until it is known if any further archaeological work on the site in relation to the current application is required.
- 9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique identifier **512456**, which will include a digital copy of the final report.

## 10. REFERENCES

Archaeological Surveys, 2016, *Bridgewalk House Roman Villa, Brixton Deverill, Wiltshire: Ground penetrating radar and magnetometer survey report* (Ref 637)

British Geological Survey online [www.bgs.ac.uk/open geoscience](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/open_geoscience)

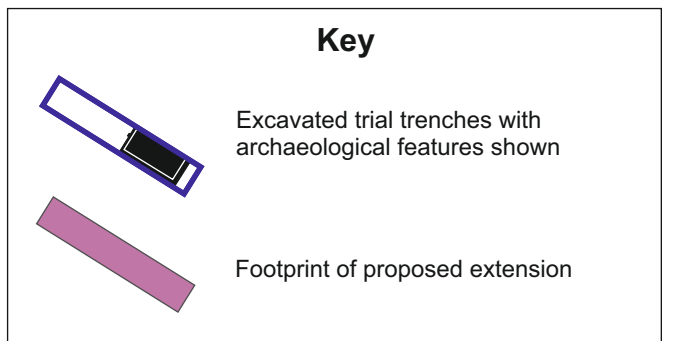
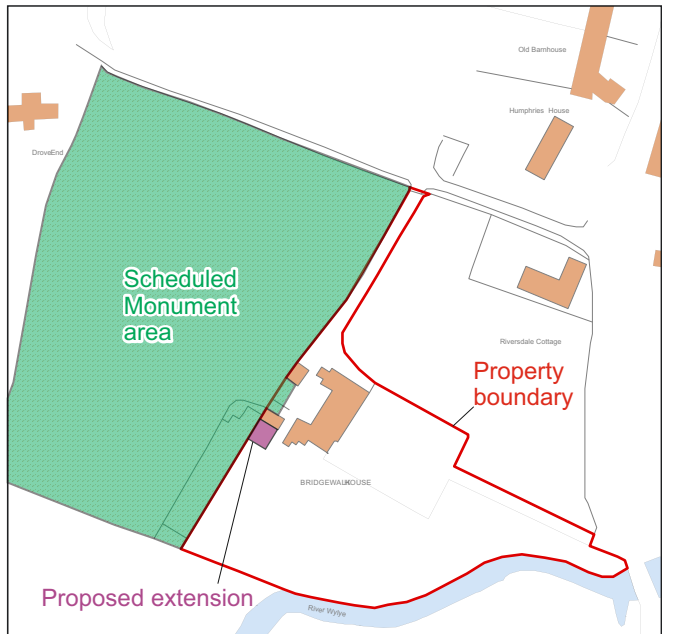
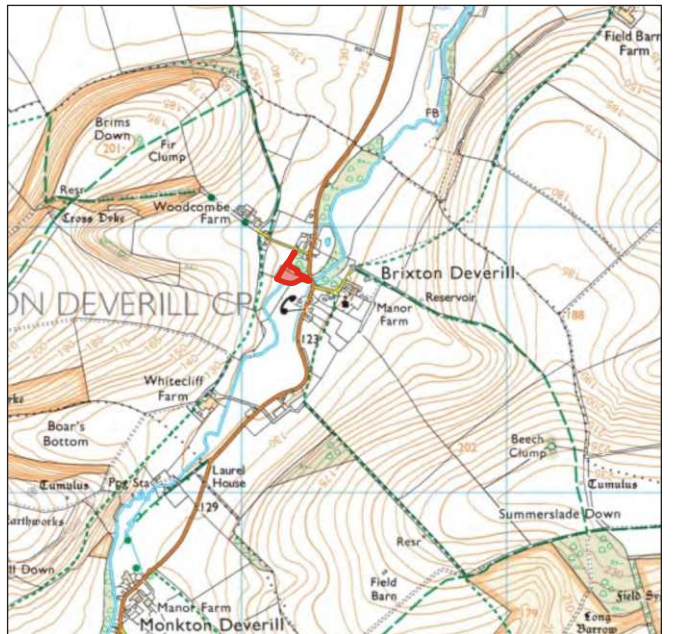
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National Library of Scotland (NLS), <https://maps.nls.uk/view/106031695> Accessed online 1st March 2023



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PROJECT  
Bridgewalk House, Brixton  
Deverill, Wiltshire

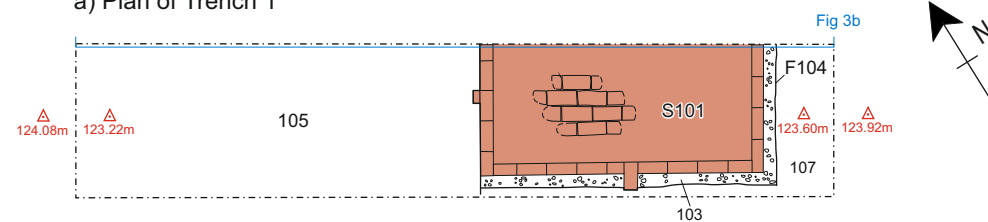
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Fig. 1: Location of site and  
excavated trial trenches and  
proposed development plan  
with archaeological features  
shown



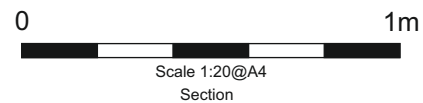
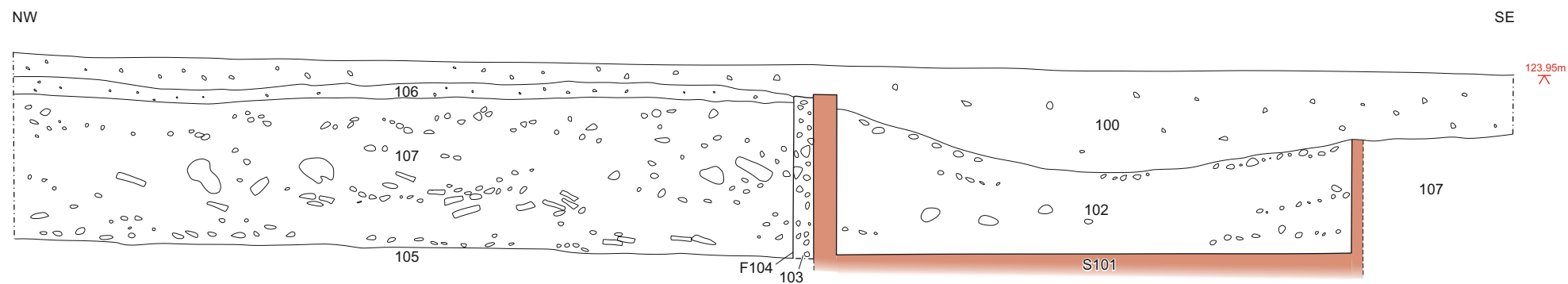
Based on drawing prepared by Ralph Perry Robinson



a) Plan of Trench 1



b) Section of Trench 1



| Key |                   |
|-----|-------------------|
|     | Stones            |
|     | Brick             |
|     | Structural stones |
|     | Plaster layer     |

PROJECT

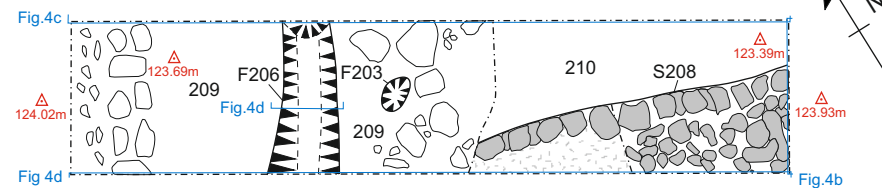
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Brixton Deverill, Wiltshire

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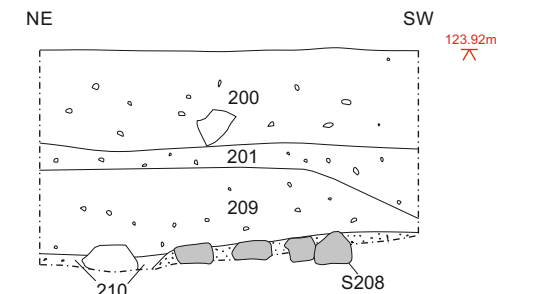
Fig. 3: Trench 1, plan and section



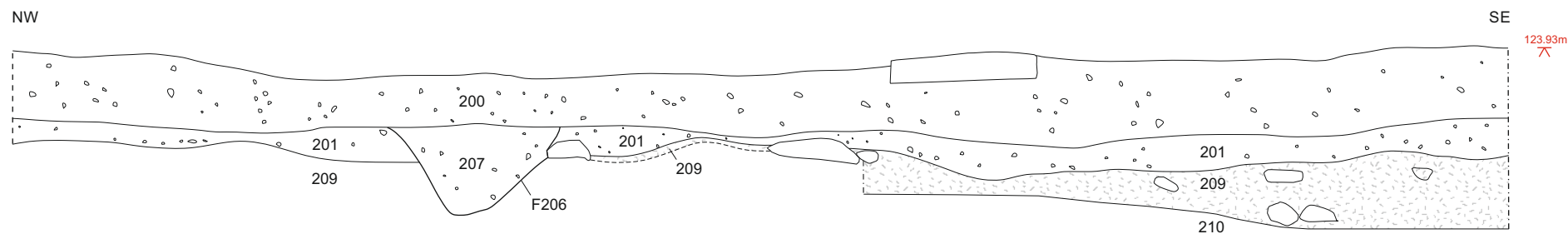
a) Plan of Trench 2



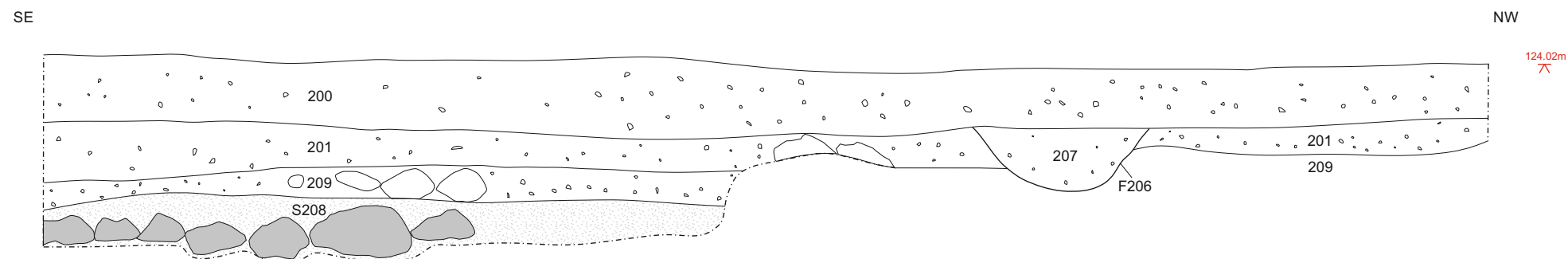
b) Section of Trench 2



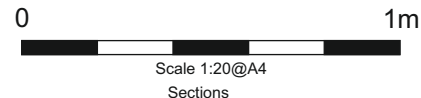
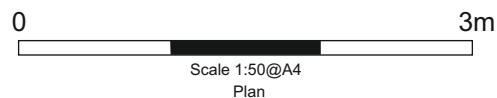
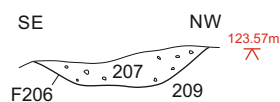
a) Section of Trench 2



c) Section of Trench 2



d) Section of ditch F206



PROJECT

Bridgewalk House,  
Brixton Deverill, Wiltshire

TITLE

Fig. 4: Trench 2, plan and sections





Plate 1: General working view of site looking northeast



Plate 2: Trench 1, view to north (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Trench 1, brick structure S101. View to northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 2, view to northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 5: Trench 2, wall S208, view to northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 6: Trench 2, detailed view of wall S208. Looking south (scale 0.5m)



Plate 7: Trench 2, showing wall S208 and overlying demolition deposits. View to southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 8: Trench 2, showing painted wall plaster fragments in demolition layer 209 (scale 0.3m)

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