

Project Code: WGNB07
Date of report: 20 June 2008
Client: Glendale Developments (Scotland) Ltd



Results of Archaeological Evaluation at Westgate, North Berwick, East Lothian

Kate Bain
BSc AIFA

Project summary sheet

<i>Client</i>	GLENDALE DEVELOPMENTS (SCOTLAND) LTD
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	NT549853
<i>Address</i>	WESTGATE/BANK STREET, NORTH BERWICK, EAST LoTHIAN
<i>Parish</i>	NORTH BERWICK
<i>Council</i>	EAST LoTHIAN
<i>Planning Application No</i>	07/00722/FUL
<i>NMRS No</i>	N/A
<i>SMR No</i>	N/A
<i>HB/SAM No</i>	N/A
<i>Listing Category</i>	N/A
<i>Project Manager</i>	SIMON STRONACH
<i>Text</i>	KATE BAIN
<i>Illustrations</i>	CAROLINE NORRMAN ANNA FARAS-PAGOWSKA
<i>Fieldwork</i>	KATE BAIN KIRSTY DINGWALL JOHN MCCARTHY
<i>Specialists</i>	JULIE FRANKLIN DAVID MASSON
<i>Schedule</i>	
<i>Fieldwork</i>	FEBRUARY-APRIL 2008
<i>Report</i>	20 JUNE 2008

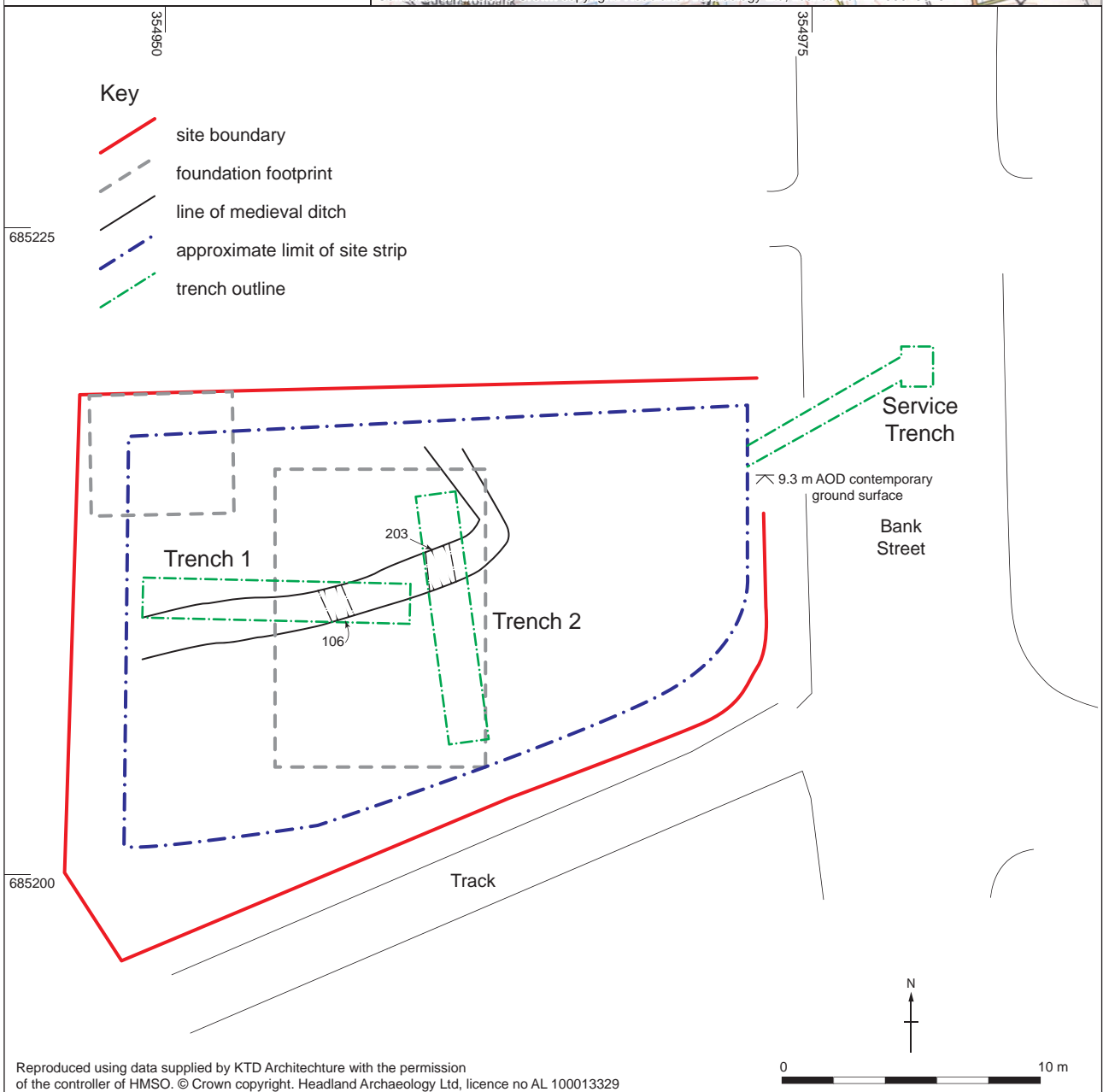
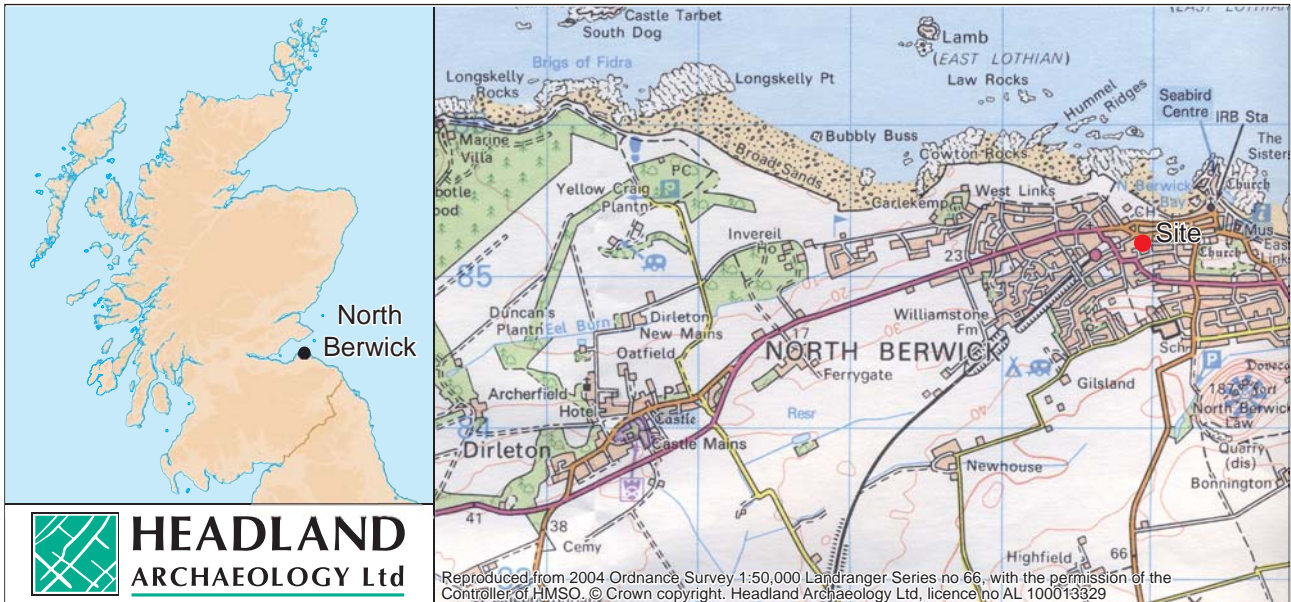
Signed off by:.....

Name Titles, Project Manager

Date:.....

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
BACKGROUND	5
METHODOLOGY	5
RESULTS	6
The Trenches	6
Watching Brief	7
FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL	8
The Finds	8
By Julie Franklin	8
Palaeoenvironmental Samples	8
By Mr D Masson	8
CONCLUSION	8
REFERENCES	9
APPENDIX 1: TRENCH STATISTICS - WESTGATE NORTH BERWICK WGNB07	10
Trench 1	10
Trench 2	10
APPENDIX 2: PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER	11



Illus 1
Site location

Results of Archaeological Evaluation at Westgate, North Berwick, East Lothian

by Kate Bain

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Glendale Developments to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of 23 Westgate, North Berwick as a condition of planning consent ahead of a residential development.

The site had been identified as having archaeological potential as it was thought to lie immediately adjacent to the western boundary of the towns' historic core.

The initial phase of investigation involved the excavation of two evaluation trenches located in the footprint of the proposed residential property. The earliest deposit indicative of anthropogenic processes comprised a possible buried soil containing medieval pottery and other domestic waste. This was concentrated toward the southern and western side of the site and probably represented an accumulation of material over stabilised dunes. Cut through this deposit and the dune sand was a ditch on a northeast-southwest alignment, observed in both trenches. The subsequent monitoring of excavations for foundation trenches revealed that the ditch altered its course to run northwest-southeast. The feature was thought to represent two sides of a plot boundary that defined a former rectilinear property. Almost all of the dateable ceramics, from both the ditch and the buried soil through which the ditch was cut, were from the medieval period. If the ditch was representative of a plot boundary, it implies that the limits of the medieval town were likely to be further west than has been previously assumed.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an intrusive archaeological evaluation and subsequent watching brief carried out on land to the rear of 23 Westgate, North Berwick. The evaluation was carried out as part of a planning condition imposed by East Lothian Council. The evaluation sought to investigate the archaeological potential of the site and establish whether further mitigation should be carried out in advance of or during the development process.

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a specification submitted and previously agreed with Bidy Simpson of East Lothian Council. The positive results of the evaluation led to a further stage of monitoring, also agreed with East Lothian Council.

BACKGROUND

The site occupied the former garden of 23 Westgate, North Berwick. The immediate area of the site was bounded to the south, east and west by a garden wall and to the north by 23 Westgate. A lane, providing access to properties to the west, ran along the southern site boundary; the line of Bank Street was located to the east.

Whilst there is evidence of the area around North Berwick being settled in prehistory, the earliest evidence for settlement within the town dates to the 7th and 8th centuries. During this time a ferry was established from the harbour to enable pilgrims visiting sites, such as St Andrews to the north, to cross the Forth. Indeed the area around the harbour appears to have formed the hub of the early settlement, gradually expanding to the south and in the later medieval period, to the west (Simpson & Ste-

venson 1981). An abbey, founded some time before 1154, lay beyond the precinct of the town to the west, whilst a motte and bailey castle, abandoned in the 15th Century, lay to the east. The first reference to the town as North Berwick is from the 13th Century and is thought to derive from a similar root as that of Berwick-upon-Tweed, from Bere, meaning Barley and Wic, meaning farmstead. The town was granted the status of Royal Burgh in 1373.

No previous archaeological work had been carried out on the site; however, a Burgh Survey (Simpson & Stevenson 1981) suggested a speculative western boundary to the medieval burgh on the line of Bank Street. This, however, was never formally identified and archaeological monitoring of service trenches to the west of the site, near Abbey Road, identified a stone wall, perhaps representative of the burgh boundary (Dingwall 2004).

METHODOLOGY

Two trenches were initially excavated within the footprint of the proposed development in order that its impact on any surviving archaeological features could be assessed.

The aim of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, character, extent and quality of any remains threatened by the proposed development and to devise any further mitigation strategies accordingly.

A total of 20 linear meters of trench were excavated with a JCB wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. A Digicat Cable Detector was used before trenching commenced to offset the possibility of disturbing any unmarked services. Both trenches were backfilled after being recorded.

Following the initial investigations a watching brief was maintained as the remainder of the site was stripped of topsoil and during the cutting of deeper foundation and service trenches. This mitigation strategy was discussed and agreed with the East Lothian Council Heritage Officer.

The location of all trenches/features was plotted to Ordnance Survey National Grid coordinates. Individual trenches, features and deposits were recorded on pro-forma record sheets. A full photographic record was kept, using colour transparency and black and white print film. The photographic and context records are presented in abbreviated form in Appendix 1 & 2. The locations of all modern features were plotted as a matter of course.

RESULTS

Prior to trenching the site consisted of a lawned garden area on a north-facing slope to the rear of an existing property. This appeared to have been subject to some landscaping toward the northern edge of the site in order to reduce the natural slope.

The Trenches

Trench 1 was excavated on an approximate east-west alignment and measured 10m in length. At a depth of approximately 1.4m natural sand deposits (103) were encountered. Immediately overlying the sand was orange-brown loam sand containing charcoal flecks and fragments of medieval pottery, bone and shell (102). The deposit increased in depth to the south, toward the top of the natural slope and also appeared to deepen to the west. It appeared to represent the introduction of anthropogenic material into the upper surface of stabilised dunes. The ceramic and other debris were incorporated into the upper horizons of the deposit, which at its deepest measured up to 1.5m. This distribution of debris and the composition of the deposit suggested that it was a slowly accumulated deposit rather than dumped material.

A shallow ditch [106] was identified, on a roughly northeast-southwest alignment, which truncated deposit (102) toward its northern limits and cut into the natural dune sands. A section, excavated toward its eastern end, revealed that the ditch had a broadly U-shaped profile and measured 0.92m wide and 0.3m deep. Two episodes of deposition were observable within the excavated section; the earliest (108) comprised mid-brown loam sand with fragments of coal. Above this was a more compact, darker deposit (107), which contained bone, shell, charcoal and pottery. This infilled the upper part of the feature and distinguished the line of the ditch from the surrounding deposits. The initial phase of infilling was thought to represent the slumping in of surrounding



Illus 2

South-west facing section of ditch 107, Trench 1

materials during a time when the ditch was probably still in use, the process of which was accelerated by the unstable nature of the sand through which it was cut. The later deposit contained a much greater loam content, perhaps suggesting that more agricultural activity was ongoing in the vicinity at the time of its deposition.

A fairly uniform layer of dark brown, sandy loam and coal (101) approximately 0.7m deep sealed the ditch. This appeared to be a deep, homogenised layer, probably a result of the accumulation of material and mixing by horticultural processes. Its surface was truncated by numerous indicators of garden activity. The interface between this and the layer of modern topsoil that overlay it was quite sharp and its levels did not reflect the natural slope of the site; suggesting an element of levelling had been involved prior to the deposition of the latter.

Trench 2 was excavated on a roughly north-south alignment and measured approximately 10m in length. It was located to the east of Trench 1, again within the footprint of the proposed structure. The stratigraphic sequence was very similar to that in



Illus 3

South-east facing section of ditch 203, Trench 2

Trench 1 although the topsoil deposit toward the southern end of the trench was slightly deeper due to a build up of material, visible on the ground surface, next to the boundary wall. The continuation of ditch [106] was also observed, toward the northern end of the trench. An excavated section through this part of the ditch [203] revealed that its profile had become more V-shaped and slightly deeper, measuring up to 0.7m in depth. The stratigraphic sequence in this profile was, however, virtually identical to that seen in the previous section.

Watching Brief

Following the positive results of the trial trenching, it was decided that a further watching brief be maintained during the remainder of the intrusive groundworks.

The footprint of the proposed development was stripped by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and all materials removed from the site.

The overburden removed from the site ranged from between 1.6 and 1.2m in depth and the stratigraphic sequence was consistent with that seen in the trenching phase. The depth of the strip was not, however, sufficient to entirely reveal the humic sand layer (102) or natural sands (103), through which the ditch was cut. The earliest features encountered were identified as buried garden features associated with the soil horizon (101).

Foundation trenches were subsequently excavated at this reduced level revealing evidence of the continuation of the northeast-southwest aligned ditch. At the northeast corner of the foundation footprint the profile of the ditch underwent a sudden change and became much wider. However, the profile of the same deposit, in the south facing foundation section, was similar to that seen throughout the remainder of the ditch, suggesting that the course of the feature had diverted through 90° to continue on a northwest-southeast alignment.



Illus 4

Site during excavation of foundation trenches

A further trench was excavated in order that services could be linked from Bank Street to the east, into the site. The earliest feature identified within the trench appeared to represent the remains of a former road surface of granite sett construction. This was sealed by the modern tarmac road surface and was visible, to a very limited extent, at the eastern edge of the pavement. Where undisturbed by modern features and service trenches, the stratigraphic sequence across the remainder of the site was consistent with that described above.



Illus 5

Service trench excavated in Bank Street

FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL

The Finds

By Julie Franklin

This is a relatively small finds assemblage, largely of medieval date. The pottery assemblage numbers 134 sherds, is mostly of local White Gritty ware and dates between the later 12th and the 14th centuries. There are 3 sherds of imported Yorkshire wares, as is typical of the period on the east coast. The relatively high proportion of cooking pots implies an early date (14th century or earlier). Other medieval finds include a copper alloy bar mount, which would have been used with a number of similar mounts to adorn a leather strap for personal dress or horse harness. A wrought iron nail from the same context may also be of medieval date.

A handful of post-medieval finds came from Context 107. A clay pipe stem is probably of 17th century date and a pot sherd is probably later still.

The later material discovered in the upper fill of the ditch was thought to have been introduced to the assemblage as the result of artifact collection from the surface of the ditch. The mechanism of excavation and the sandy nature of the stratigraphy were thought to have led to the contamination of the earlier stratigraphic unit from later ones above.

Palaeoenvironmental Samples

By Mr D Masson

Two samples were taken from a shallow ditch and were found to contain a mixture of burnt and unburnt bone together with marine shell. The burnt and unburnt bone has been identified as representing mammal and fish, which is likely to derive from domestic refuse. The marine shell is also likely to derive from domestic waste with all species identified being recognised food types such as oyster, winkle, mussel and limpet. Therefore these samples are both indicative of domestic waste, which has been discarded into the ditch.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological evidence from the site represents the slow accumulation of soils over a stabilising dune system. The earliest anthropogenic material identified within the soil horizons was pot sherds dated to around the 12th century. The unabraded nature of the sherds suggests that they were not deposited as the result of manuring, rather as a result of discrete episodes of domestic waste discard. As

the light soils were reworked by biological mixing, the waste became further incorporated into and distributed throughout the soil. A more distinctive sequence of refuse build up, interleaved invasive windblown sands was observed during earlier investigations along Westgate (Dingwall 2004) and in excavated sequences at the peripheries other parts of the medieval burgh (Hall & Bowler, 1997).

The first sign of more intensive human activity on the site was represented by a shallow ditch, which truncated the homogenous loam-sand. The ditch appeared to represent two sides of a rectilinear enclosure, perhaps part of a property or plot boundary. Artefacts recovered from the fills of the ditch suggested that this feature dates to the medieval period, some time between the 13th and 14th centuries. Quite a high number of pot sherds were recovered, along with fragments of animal bone and marine shell of a type and quantity consistent with the dumping of domestic refuse.

The small size and sharp profile of the ditch suggested that it was not substantial enough to represent a field boundary and was more likely to define the rear of a domestic plot fronting onto Westgate.

The presence of defensive walls surrounding the town has been much speculated upon, the Burgh survey (Simpson & Stevenson 1981) suggested that a likely location for a western wall was along the line of Bank Street. The presence of the plot implies an increased potential for medieval domestic structures to the west of this speculative boundary, adding weight to the theory that the Burgh extended westward, perhaps bounded by a wall identified, during archaeological monitoring, at the end of Westgate (Dingwall 2004). The lack of distinct invasive sand deposits in the stratigraphic sequence suggested that the site was physically protected from inundation, further supporting the theory that it was encapsulated by a more westerly located town wall or an area of settlement.

Whether or not the wall existed may be of limited relevance to the discussion here, as it is not entirely clear as to whether the site would have fallen under the jurisdiction of the Burgh. It seems quite likely that the plot belonged instead, to a suburb under the control of St Mary's Priory, the Cistercian nunnery to the west, established in the 12th Century (Hall & Bowler, 1997). This date also appears to be coincidental with the apparent increase in activity seen within the soil horizons on the site.

Whether the site represents a suburb dependant on the nunnery or simply a more westerly boundary to the Burgh proper than was previously suggested, the evidence indicates that the settlement at North Berwick, from the 12th Century onward potentially covered a greater area than had earlier been assumed.

REFERENCES

- Dingwall K, 2004. *Water Mains Renewal, North Berwick, East Lothian: Data Structure Report of an Archaeological Watching Brief*, Headland Archaeology client report
- Hall D & Bowler D, 1997. *North Berwick, East Lothian: Its Archaeology Revisited*, Proc Soc Antiq Scot 127, 659-675
- Kenward H K, Hall A R and Jones A K G, (1980). *A tested set of techniques for the extraction of plant and animal macrofossils from waterlogged archaeological deposits*. Science and Archaeology 22, 3-15
- Simpson A & Stevenson S, 1981. *Historic North Berwick: The archaeological implications of development Scottish Burgh Surveys*, Glasgow
- Simpson B 2006. *Brief for Archaeological work at 23 Westgate North Berwick*, East Lothian Council
- Stronach S, 2007. *23 Westgate North Berwick: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Works*, Headland Archaeology.

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH STATISTICS - WESTGATE NORTH BERWICK WGNB07

Trench 1

Length: 10m Alignment: E-W Average depth: 1.2m

Maximum depth: 1.5m

Context No.	Description	Depth of deposit
100	Topsoil	0.6m
101	Dark brown compact sand-loam, truncated by 104-5	0.65m
102	Orange brown 'dirty' sand-loam with occasional coal flecks and pottery sherds	0.40m
103	Whitish dune sand	@ 8.98m AOD
104	Various angular cuts through 101 representing garden activity	0.60m
105	Whitish sand infill of garden activity cuts	0.60m
106	Shallow linear feature aligned appx NE-SW with shallow bowl/u-shaped profile	0.29m
107	Compact dark brown sand-loam with coal flecks and pottery forming upper fill of 106	0.25m
108	Moderately compact mid-brown loam-sand with v occasional coal flecks and pottery, lower fill of 106	0.08m

Trench 2

Length: 10m Alignment: N-S

Average depth: 1.2m

Maximum depth: 1.4m

Context No.	Description	Depth of deposit
200	Topsoil	0.50m
201	Dark brown compact sand-loam with coal flecks and pottery	0.65m
202	Orange brown 'dirty' sand-loam with occasional coal flecks and pottery sherds	0.25m +
203	Cut of linear feature (as 106) but with more V-shaped profile	0.70m
204	Moderately compact mid-brown sand-loam with coal flecks and pottery sherds. Upper fill of 203	0.60m
205	Friable light brown loam-sand with occasional pottery sherds. Lower fill of 203	0.10m
206	Whitish dune sand	@ 8.8m AOD

APPENDIX 2: PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER

Shot No.	Direction facing	Description	Initials & Date
1	W	Trench 1 general shot	KSB 28/02/08
2	W	Trench 1 general shot	KSB 28/02/08
3	E	Trench 1 showing ditch 106	KSB 28/02/08
4	E	Trench 1 showing ditch 106	KSB 28/02/08
5	S	Trench 2 general shot	KSB 28/02/08
6	S	Trench 2 general shot	KSB 28/02/08
7	W	Trench 2 showing ditch 203	KSB 28/02/08
8	W	Trench 2 showing ditch 203	KSB 28/02/08
9	OH	Patches of rubble identified during reduction of level	KD 06/03/07
10	OH	Patches of rubble identified during reduction of level	KD 06/03/07
11	OH	Patches of rubble identified during reduction of level	KD 06/03/07
12	N	General site shot (Watching Brief)	JKM 11/03/08
13	W	Trench A	JKM 11/03/08
14	N	Trench B	JKM 11/03/08
15	S	Trench D	JKM 11/03/08
16	W	Trench E	JKM 11/03/08
17	W	Trench F	JKM 11/03/08
18	W	Trench G	JKM 11/03/08
19	S	Trench H	JKM 11/03/08
20	S	Section C	JKM 11/03/08
21	E	Trench D	JKM 11/03/08
22	S	N-facing section of service trench	JKM 01/04/08
23	SW	Service trench	JKM 01/04/08
24	W	Kerb and cobbles	JKM 01/04/08