

CAMBRIDGE INDEPENDENT ARCHAEOLOGY – CIA15 (NWW14)

Report of excavations at Nine Wells, Whittlesford in 2014

A year of consolidation



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1 Overview

Nine Wells, Whittlesford has long been known to be a Roman site. Its location, in the surrounding landscape has been reported on in several documents ^{ref 1,2,3....}, which reveal its potential as a site of significant importance. The location of the historic Chronicle Hills ^{ref 1,2,3....}, findings of flints, possible Stone Age (Iron Age?) barrows ^{ref 1,2,3....}, ancient trackways ^{ref 1,2,3....}, its location within the further distant environment, its position in relation to local churches all place it coincidentally in a significant position with possible links to pre-history.

The CIA have been fortunate to have been able to undertake several years of investigations into the Nine Wells site using various sources of information including fieldwalking, geophysical reports (courtesy of RheeSearch ^{ref 1,2,3....}), examining historical documents and the excavation of a nearby Roman Temple. These excavations have revealed the fact that the buildings have been so comprehensively demolished in antiquity that understanding its structure and history continues to be extremely difficult.

It was almost certainly of timber frame construction with flint cobble foundations, most of which have been robbed, resulting in the fact that very little in-situ structure remains. The clues to its configuration therefore are almost entirely down to searching for remnants of where the relationships of surfaces, cuts, contexts and any remains of structure enable some reasonable interpretation.

Unfortunately, previous excavations from the antiquarians in the 19th century, field finds, evidence from test pit excavations in 2010 and the excavations of 2011 to 2013 have still largely failed to reveal sufficient detail to enable us to fully understand the buildings layout and purpose.

While some of the previous excavations have revealed possible wall foundations, a hypocaust and a mosaic within an apse shaped outline, it still cannot be said for certain if it is

a: a villa,

b: a villa with a bath

c: a bath house

d: a farm house with a bath

e: a place of entertainment (e.g. a bath and a performance stage or gymnasium) or

f: something else entirely

The only thing we could say is that for most of its life, if not all, it was a high status building from the Romano British period with evidence of painted plaster (including some re-plastering), a small bath, a hypocaust and pottery finds from the 1st to possibly the 5th century. From geo-physics evidence, its location in the landscape close to springs, the proximity to other places of Roman occupation, the possibly earlier burial mounds and a small number of flints all suggest it was not isolated and the area was occupied over an extended period.

One problem that Cambridge Independent Archaeology were aware of by 2013 was that since the site needed to be reclaimed for agricultural use each year there did occur a slight misalignment of trench location one year to the next. We relied on the generous support of RheeSearch to locate the areas for us before commencing excavations. However, although accurate to within ½ metre, this is not precise enough to locate wall alignments etc. This has led to anomalies with our understanding of the alignments, thus making the interpretation of the building more difficult.

In 2013, a number of trenches were opened in anticipation of having sufficient numbers of personnel on site to investigate further the relationship between the interesting findings of all previous year's excavations and give a clearer picture of the whole. Fortunately, Mr Leslie Harrison, the farmer, who has always been very supportive and interested in the excavations, allowed the site to remain open from 2013 to 2014, while any sensitive areas were covered and protected, and this gave us the opportunity to use knowledge gained in 2013 to plan a comprehensive approach in 2014 without having to face any repositioning problems on reopening the site.

With all these considerations in mind, it was agreed that previous excavations, while comprehensive in themselves, had left a number of questions unanswered. Therefore, it was decided that 2014 would be a year of consolidation. This consolidation would include unifying all trench/test pit numbering, all context numbering and all sections and plans.

Before we proceeded with any work on the site, we needed to review what information we had and what we needed to know to help with our understanding. The plan (see section 2.3) was drawn based upon detail from previous excavations and their reports. These previous reports were written by the individuals who oversaw certain areas of excavations. They were largely based on collaborative discussion and due consideration was given by all as to what the findings might mean.

We identified a number of areas that needed investigation to resolve ambiguities identified whilst trying to develop and understand the site plan. We reviewed the plan, evaluated the site and produced an action plan for 2014 based upon a number of small localized excavations including further excavation of two areas unfinished in 2013.

2 Preparing for 2014 excavations

2.1 Unified numbering

It was agreed that there was a need to unify our trench and context numbering system as we had used references that allowed for multiple trenches with the same number, albeit in different years. This has led to misunderstandings, especially to those reading the reports.

Unified trench and test pit	Original trench / test pit	Year excavated
Tp1	A1011	2010
Tp2	A1213	2010
Tp3	A1415	2010
Tp4	A215225	2010
Tp5	AYZ6580	2010
Tp6	B235345	2010

Tp7	C89	2010
Tp8	C1213	2010
Tp9	E78	2010
Tp10	E1718	2010
Tp11	I1516	2010
Tp12	YX234245	2010
Tp13	Z56	2010
Trench 1	2011 trench	2011
Trench 2	2012 Tr1	2012
Trench 3	2012 Tr6	2012
Trench 4	2012 Tr2	2012
Trench 5, 6 and 7	2012 Tr3, 4 and 5	2012
Trench 8	2013 Tr1	2013 / 2014
Trench 9	2013 Tr2	2013 / 2014
Trench 10	2013 Tr3	2013 / 2014
Trench 11	2013 Tr4	2013 / 2014
Trench 12	2013 Tr5	2013
Trench 13	2013 Tr6/7	2013 / 2014
Trench 14	2013 Tr8	2013
Trench 15	New in 2014	2014

Note: Trenches 5, 6 & 7 were to investigate areas away to the East of the building excavations on the brow of the hill. These were reported on in the 2012 report [ref 1,2,3...](#).

The above table shows the unified numbering system, which will be used for all future references to the trenches and test pits on the site.

Part of this work is also to revise the context numbering for all excavations as well as all the finds data. As this is a major task, this is not anticipated being completed by the time this report is published. Therefore, please look on our website for updates.

However, all context numbers used in any excavations taking place in 2014 and beyond will use the unified numbering system.

Please note that the new unified trench numbers have been used throughout this document. Please refer to the table above to cross reference to the original trench or test pit numbers when reviewing any older reports, documentation or our website which will have used the old system.

2.2 Sections and plans

Some team members had training on recording sections, and whilst most sections and plans had been done during the 2013, it felt after this training that it would be a useful exercise to rework accessible trenches, and particularly those we planned to work on or near during.

A related exercise has been to unify all context numbers from all years of excavation. This is on-going and will not be completed until after this report has been published.

Note: After redrawing section 31, it was revealed that the possible structure left in Tr9 Area E (see Figure 1) was not in fact a wall, but simply a layer of demolition debris giving the appearance of being one.

2.3 2014 Excavation Plans

Areas A to M, shown in the figure below, were the areas identified as being ambiguous and/or incomplete and further investigation could provide the group with a better understanding of the whole site.

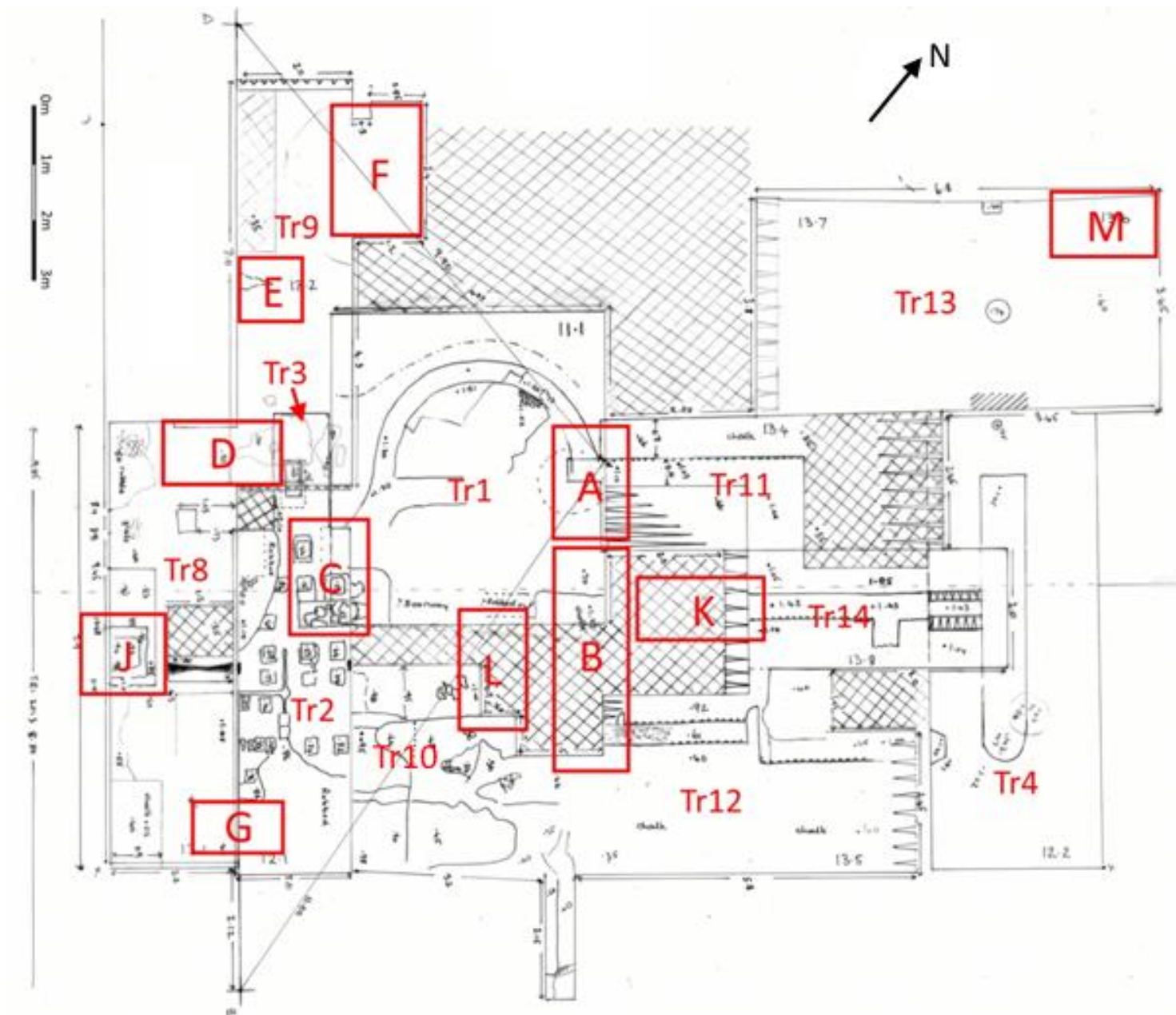


Figure 1 – Plan of site as of the end of the 2013 excavations and proposed 2014 excavation areas

These areas were:

- A: Tr1 (2011) - Semi-circular feature with regard to Tr11 (2012)
- B: Tr12 (2013) - Possible wall line and SW edge of sunken chalk surface
- C and D: Confirm the identity and position of pilae found Tr1 (2011), Tr2 (2012) and Tr9 (2013)
- E: Tr9 - Possible wall to be excavated to a greater depth / to natural (Note that after re-drawing the SW section, it was clear that this was not a wall and simply a layer of compact debris giving that appearance)
- F: Tr9 - Possible well or pit feature
- G: Tr8 - Ashy feature
- H: Tr8 - Excavate to natural in at least some areas
- J: Tr8 - Opus signinum area
- K: Tr14 with regard to Tr1
- L: Tr1 floor height not consistent with Tr10
- M: Tr13 to be augered.

The intention for 2014 was to work on as many areas as possible, but the limitations of resources and time meant we were able, with later on-site reviews, to work on areas A, D, F, L and. The report on each of these areas can be found in section 4. The rationale in some areas changed as the excavation progressed or before it was started due to re-evaluation based upon what was found, professional advice, or time limitations.

3 Site survey

By Richard Cushing

Survey order	Reference		Height re Pillae	Height re TD1
0	W Datum		0.51	0.07
1	E Datum		0.39	-0.05
2	S Datum		0.46	0.02
3	N Datum		0.38	-0.06
4	R01		-0.50	-0.94
5	R02	Pillae	0.00	-0.44
6	R03		0.46	0.02
7	R04		0.46	0.02
8	R05		0.53	0.09
9	R06		-0.62	-1.06
10	R07		0.35	-0.09
11	R08		-0.69	-1.13
12	R09		-0.69	-1.13
13	R10		-0.09	-0.53
14	R11		-0.05	-0.49
15	R12		-0.69	-1.13
16	R13		-0.62	-1.06
17	R14		0.41	-0.03
18	R15		0.37	-0.07

19	R16		0.37	-0.07
20	R17		-0.72	-1.16
21	R18		-0.18	-0.62
22	R19	Auger hole	-1.00	-1.44
23	R20		0.06	-0.38
24	R21		0.10	-0.34
25	TD1		0.44	0.00
26	TD2		0.16	-0.28
27	TD3		0.22	-0.22
28	TD4		0.23	-0.21
29	TD5		0.17	-0.27

4 The trenches

As mentioned in the overview, we had been fortunate in that Leslie Harrison, the farmer at Nine Wells, had been in a position to leave the trenches open from 2013 so we were able to access the site without the need to re-excavate the backfill from any areas before commencing excavations in 2014.

Resources available in 2014 meant we were in the end unable to complete all the areas we would like to have excavated.

Within the trench reports, a number preceded by a C refers to a context number, e.g. C1234 refers to context 1234.

4.1 Tr8 (NW end and Tr9 (SE end) - Area D

By: Peter Cornelissen

4.1.1 Rationale

The initial selection of this area was together with area C to determine the commonality between the pilae found in Tr1 (2011), Tr2 (2012) and Tr9 (2013). These areas of excavation would resolve this by clearly aligning and positioning the pilae from the two separate excavations.

However, as the excavation progressed, the rationale was revised to determine the location of wall lines and the edges of the opus signinum floor.

4.1.2 The excavation

In 2013, a 1m wide area of the trench immediately adjacent to the NW edge of the trench was partially excavated between the vertical edge of chalk/clunch deposit (C1122) and the pilae stack in Tr9 (C1334). The surface of this area had since become slightly compromised through walking over and soil falling back into the trench and subsequent trampling.

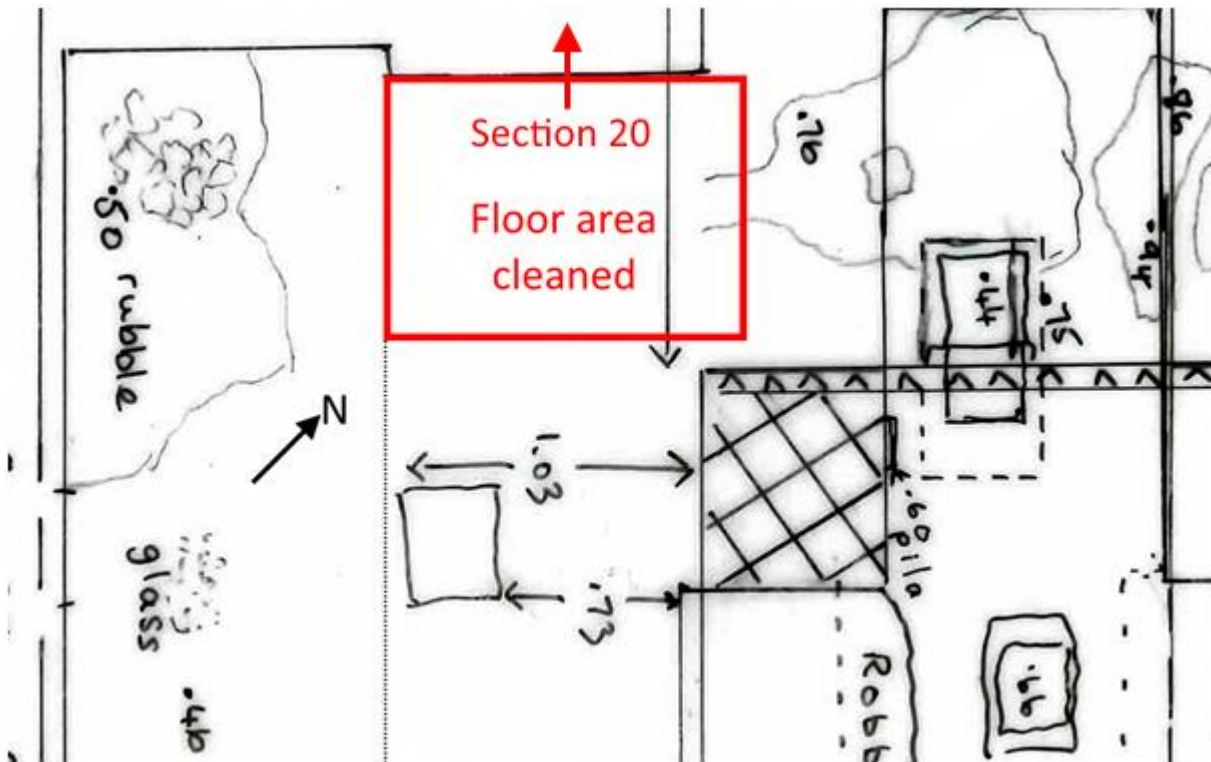


Figure 2- Area of the NW end of Tr8 showing location of initial cleaning

The initial task was therefore to first clean both the face of the NW end of the trench and remove the fallen debris to return to the section and floor to the previously excavated surfaces of 2013. The opportunity was also taken to redraw section 20.

Once the section was cleaned, the edge of the hard chalk (C1122) was clearly visible and the edge to the opus signinum (C1339) with a degraded yellow mortar overlay could be seen at the NE end of the section where it joins Tr9. At this stage, it was thought that C1122 was possibly the SW edge of the possible location of a robbed out wall.

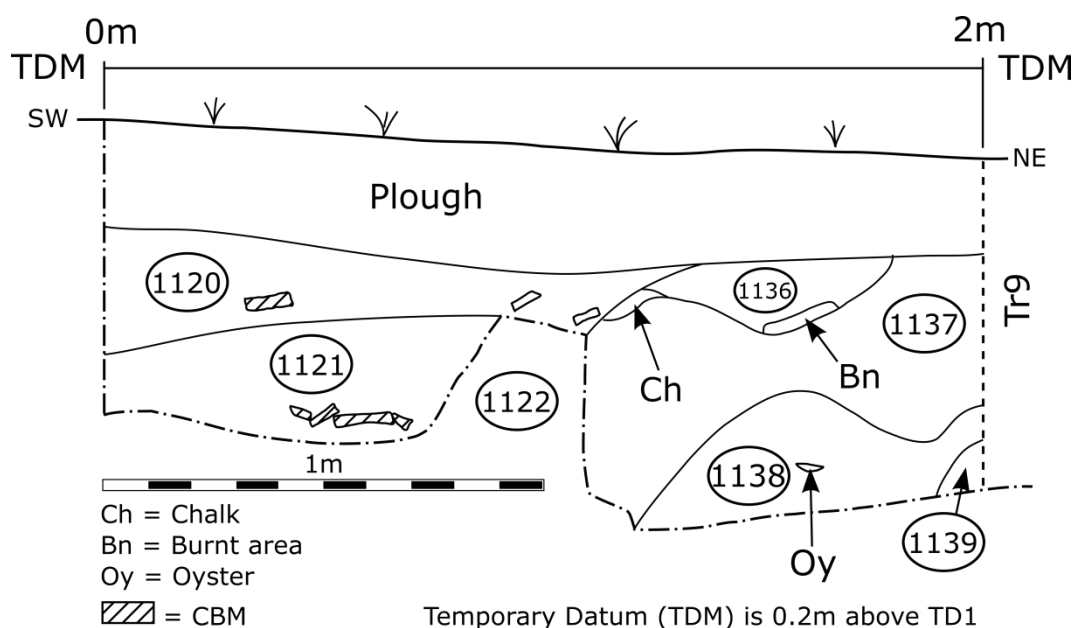


Figure 3 - Tr8 looking NW: Section 20

It was therefore decided to take extend the NW end of the trench by 10cm between the vertical edge of hard chalk (C1122) and the NE corner of the trench where it joins Tr9. This was done, leaving, at this stage, just the lower 15cm unexcavated (see Figure 4).



Figure 4 – Tr8 NW section during removal of 10cm from original face

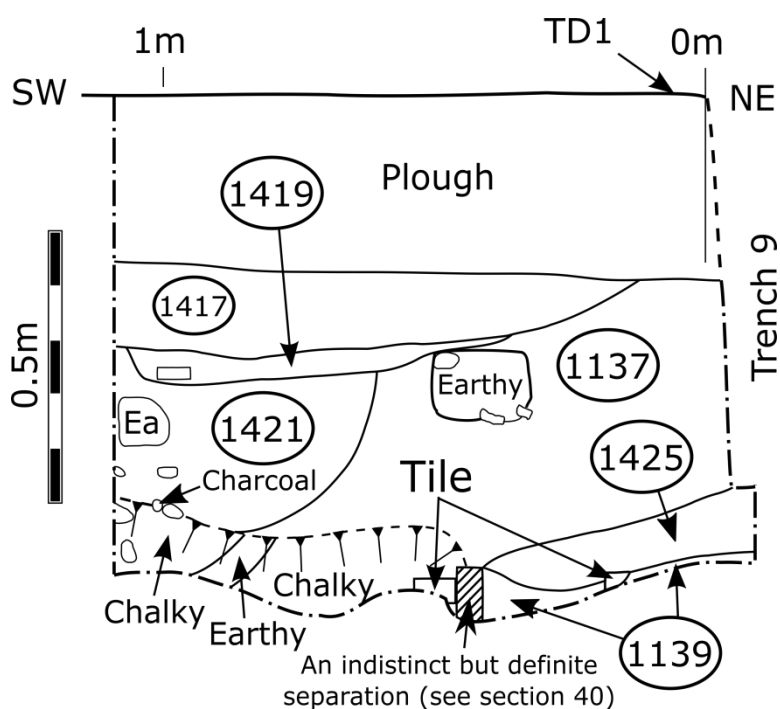


Figure 5 - Section 39, looking NW



Figure 6 - The NW end of floor area during removal of 10cm from original NW face

What was apparent during this phase of excavation was that the layers were very mixed, and in some cases just small, somewhat indistinct pockets with different densities and inclusions. This made identifying context and the resulting section 39 difficult to interpret. However, it did reveal two areas of interest. Firstly, the end of two in-situ tiles on a mortar surface (see Figure 5).



Figure 7 - SW edge of the cleaned area clearly showing the hard chalk/mortar feature

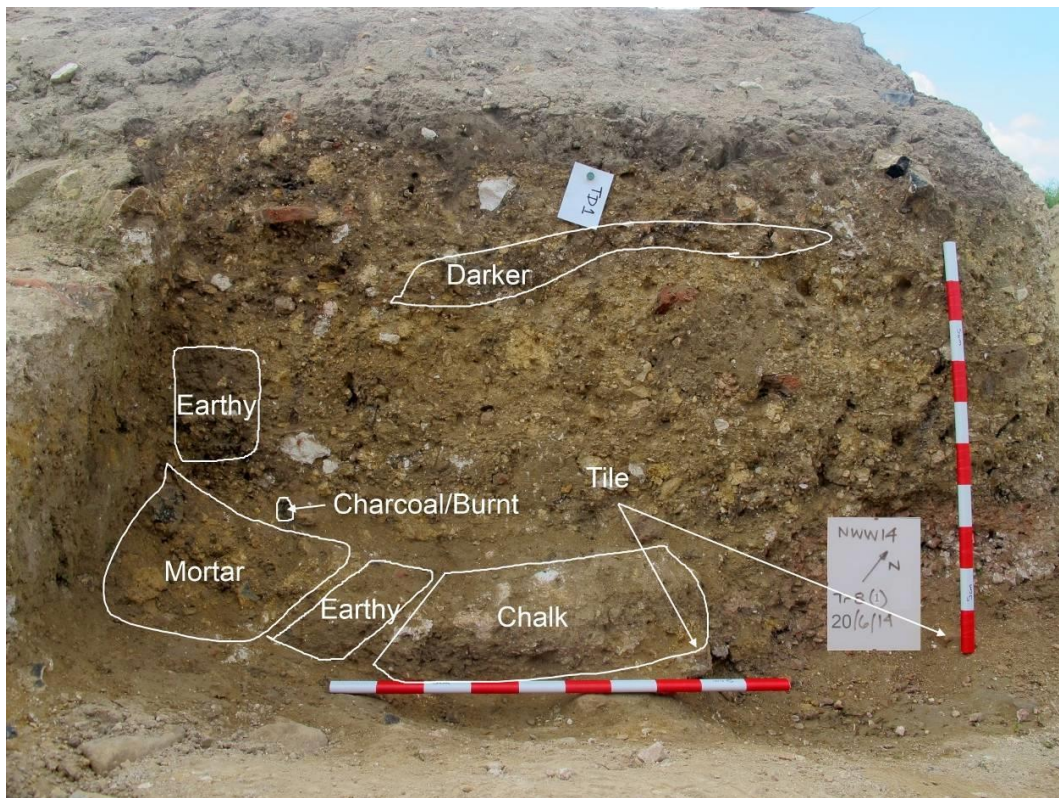


Figure 8 - NW section 39 showing two tiles and the mixed layers throughout the section

The other of interest was the much harder chalk/mortar SW edge (C1122) which continued NW. After reviewing what was revealed, it was decided that the NW end of Tr8 would be

extended by a further 0.5m. This would initially be excavated down to the bottom of the plough to see what was visible in plan and review what should, if anything, be done next.

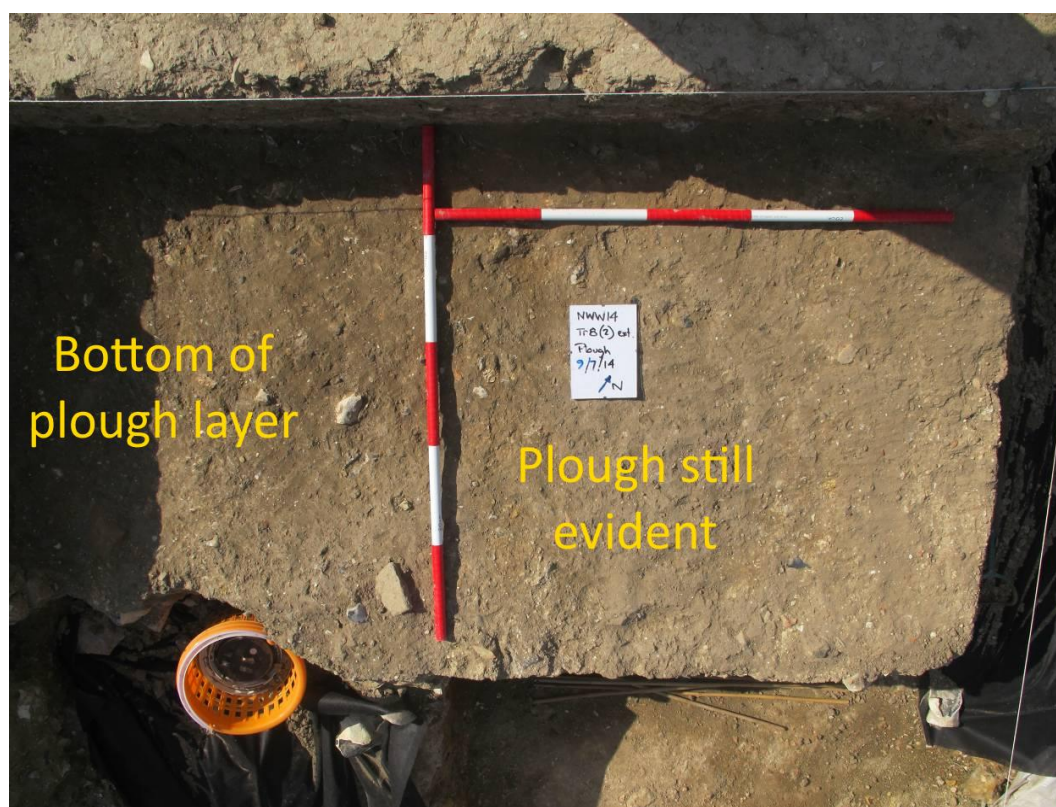


Figure 9 - Plough removed to 30cm

The bottom of the plough layer was found at approximately 30cm to the SW, but was still evident towards the NE end. It was in fact not until 40cm that the bottom of the plough was reached at this end. It is interesting to note, that at the SW end, a quantity of CBM was visible at 30cm, which had obviously been missed by the plough, yet the plough had gone to 40cm to the NE. Excavating the whole area to 40cm revealed a large amount of CBM (nearly 4kg). Although nothing was found to prove it, it may be possible that since deep ploughing has not taken place for many years, (ANY IDEA WHEN?) that the CBM is a remnant of backfill from previous excavations, perhaps even the antiquarians in 1818. DO WE NEED THIS?

At 40cm, there was clear evidence that the edge of the chalk/mortar feature (C1222), continued NW (between the arrows in Figure 10) with differing densities of degraded mortar/gravel either side of the line.

After review, and taking into account the two exposed tiles and this edge, it was agreed that the NW section would be excavated NW back a further 30cm but only the area to the NE side of the edge. The area to the SW would be left for later excavation (Note: due to time constraints, this was not during the 2014 excavations).

As the area was excavated it was clear that the layers were the result of the demolition debris having been tipped into the void, thus producing this series of complex layers with

pockets of debris of varying inclusions, including a number showing evidence of burning and ash (see Figure 11)



Figure 10 – At 40cm revealing CBM to the SW end and evidence of the edge of the chalk/mortar feature continuing NW (between the arrows)



Figure 11 – Looking NW exposing multiple layers of debris with evidence of burning



Figure 12 - Further evidence of areas of burning within the layers



Figure 13 – Same view as Figure 11, this time clearly showing evidence of the ‘tipped in’ nature of the layers

The section eventually exposed a clear edge of both the chalk/mortar feature (C1122) continuing to the NW, albeit mainly mortar rather than a chalk/mortar mix, and the edge of the opus signinum floor and mortar to the NE (see Figure 15 and Figure 16). The surface reached was found to be a relatively loose layer of mortar. This, together with the evidence reached in 2013 lead us to conclude that the area between C1122 and the opus signinum was the location of a robbed out wall. This aligns with the edge of the opus signinum (c1114/C1123) exposed in the 2013 excavations (see Figure 14) of trench 8.

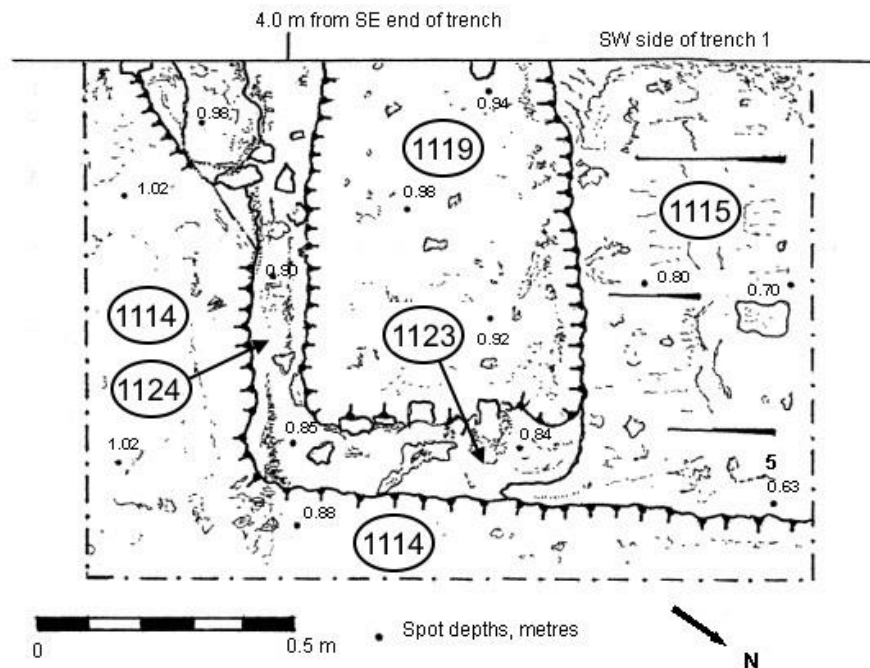


Figure 14 – The sunken opus signinum feature found in Tr8 in 2013



Figure 15 – The chalk/mortar feature (C1122) further exposed and continuing NW



Figure 16 – The outside edges of the possible wall

This area was then lightly excavated down to a hard mortar layer. This revealed that the tile (C1430) first noticed in section 39 (see Figure 5) was bedded in mortar together with other tiles and that they appeared to continue to the NW (see Figure 17 and Figure 23).



Figure 17 – Tiles bedded on mortar



Figure 18 – The opus signinum floor with mortar below and ash overlay. Also note the tiles

After review, the backfill from 2013, i.e. the area between this area of excavation and the pilae stack (C1334) to the SE end of Tr9, would be cleaned and further excavated if required.



Figure 19 – Remains of the hypocaust floor below the pilae stack

Once the backfill was removed the ragged edge of the hypocaust, first seen in context 1.07 in 2013, was visible below the pilae stack (see Figure 19 and Figure 20). This, together with 2014's excavations to the NW of the trench revealed that what was thought to be a surface in 2013 had not been reached. Further excavation (not carried out in 2014) would be needed to reveal the actual surface.



Figure 20 – Excavating below the 2013 excavations (the pilae stack is just off the top of the picture)

The surface was then excavated approximately another 10cm which enabled the corner of the opus signinum floor to be identified and recorded (shown red in Figure 21). Its SE edge is in line with the NW edge of the pilae stack (C1334) and the hypocaust remains and its SW edge ends at the tiles (see Figure 23)



Figure 21 – The opus signinum floor edge (red) and chalk wall foundation (yellow)



Figure 22 – The end of the chalk in the chalk/mortar feature (C1122) which aligns with the possible chalk wall foundation seen in Figure 21. Shown here in yellow



Figure 23 – Tiles to SW edge of opus signinum floor as outlined red in Figure 21



Figure 24 – Looking NW, an overview of the 2014 excavation to the NW of trench 8



Figure 25 – Looking SW at the excavation of the NW end of trench 8 again showing the end of the chalk/mortar feature (C1122)



Figure 26 – Looking SE towards the area partially excavated in 2013, revealing the edge of the hypocaust and the overall layers of debris



Figure 27 – Looking SE, the baulk has not been excavated to date so remains an area of interest

The area to the SE of area D (see Figure 26Error! Reference source not found.) is that excavated in 2013, and shows debris over the edge of the hypocaust and layers of debris over the remainder. In Figure 27, there remains an area of baulk that has not been excavated previously by our group and was left for later exploration.

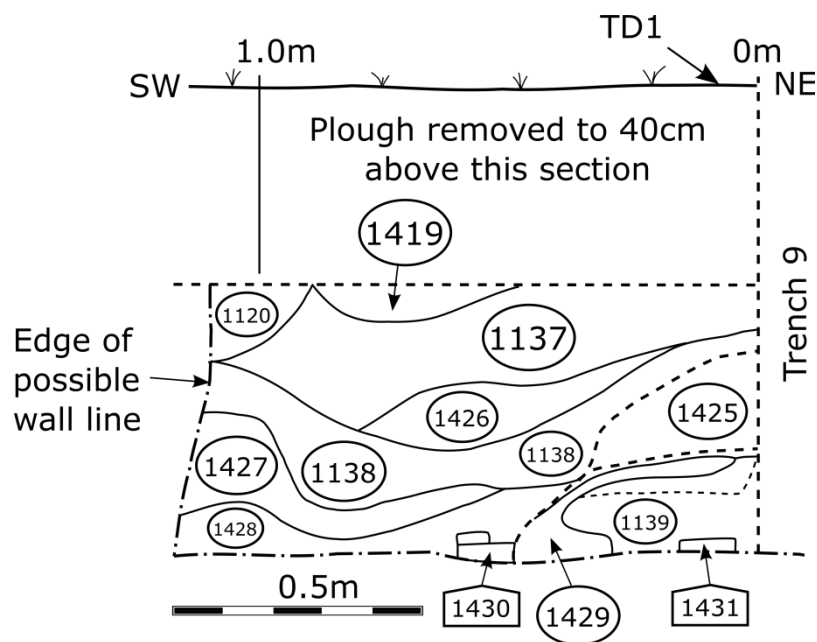


Figure 28 – Final NW Section 40

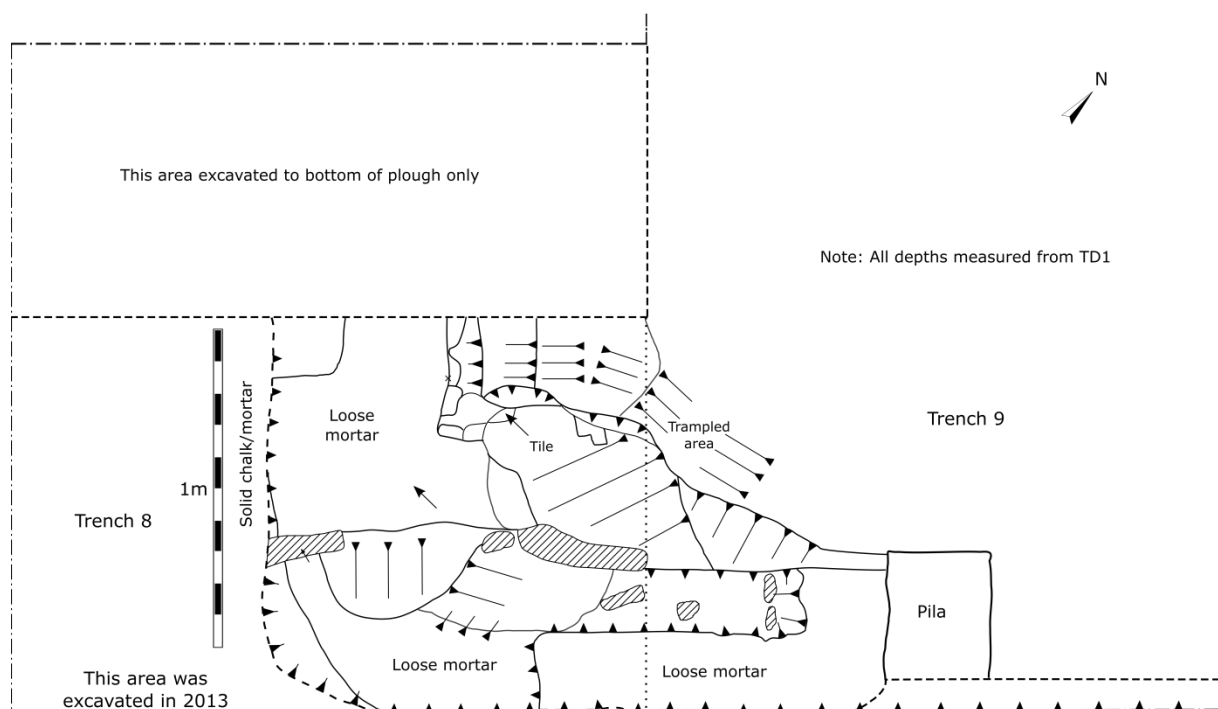


Figure 29 – Plan of the area between trench 8 and trench 9 (Area D) at the end of 2014

4.1.3 Summary from the 2014 Tr8 excavations

The with the evidence of the end of the chalk in the feature C1122 and the chalk line (see Figure 21 and Figure 22), it suggests that what we are seeing is the location of a number of walls. The edge of chalk/mortar, the edge of the hypocaust, the edge of the opus signinum floor and the chalk line SW/NE (in Figure 21) all suggest location for wall lines.

There was almost certainly a wall running alongside the hypocaust SE to NW, and possible wall lines running SW to NE both adjacent to the opus signinum floor and to the SW from the end of the chalk (see Figure 30), but only further excavation will resolve those questions.

In all, the excavations in Area D in 2014 have established the locations of wall lines that can now point to the wall lines in other, previously excavated areas. For instance, the possible wall line adjacent to the opus signinum, could be the wall to the SE of the apse bath found in 2011, although due to the inevitable minor errors in trench alignment, we cannot be certain of this.

Further excavations in 2015 are expected to further clarify the wall lines.

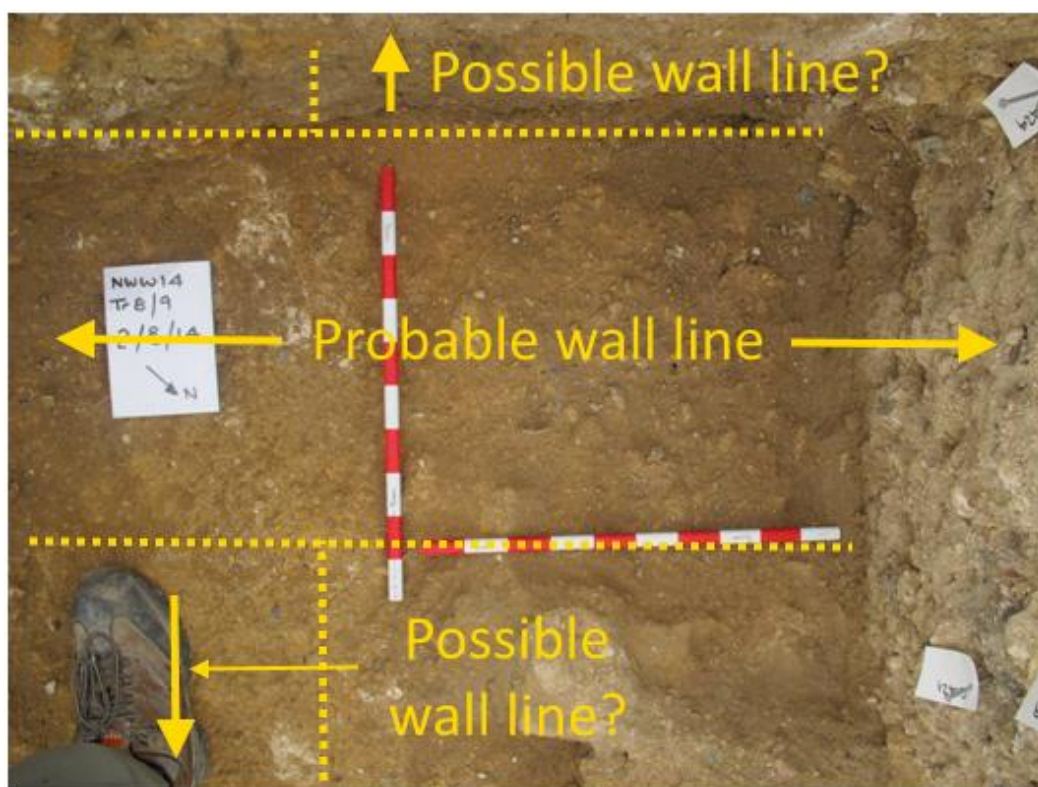


Figure 30 –The extended NW end Trench 8 (Area D) showing probable and possible wall lines

4.1.4 Finds

In 2014, very few finds were found in the part of the excavations. In fact the largest quantity was in the lower plough layer and in some smaller contexts, nothing was found. The most interesting, again in the plough, were fragments of flue tile, which included at least 6 different fabric types and associated combing patterns.



Figure 31 – Glass and a shard of shelly ware found in the lower plough layer



Figure 32 – CBM fragments, including 6 flue tiles found in the lower plough layer



Figure 33 – Further CBM fragments and tesserae

Context	Pot Qty	Tess	Plaster Qty	Daub Qty	Plaster Daub Wt	Opus Sig Wt	Mortar Wt	CBM Wt	Roof Tile Stone Wt	Quern Qty	Quern Wt	Chalk Wt	Nail	Glass win
Plough	1	7			60		327	3862		1	184			2
1403					97		128	452	114					
1405						61		24						
1417							52	55						
1421							653	515	58					
1424							23	51						
1426			1	9		215	54	198	37			247		
1429		1					334	170					1	

Figure 34 – Table of finds for Tr8 in 2014

4.1.5 Contexts summary from the 2014 excavation of Tr8/9 (Area D)

Context	Notes
1120 / 1405 / 1417	Harder mortar layer with large CBM
1121	Loose gravel/mortar/chalk layer
1122	<i>Not fully excavated</i> , but is mainly chalk and mortar
1136	Mortar layer
1137 / 1420	Smaller mortar/chalk with CBM. Inc. some small pockets of burnt material
1138	Degraded yellow mortar layer
1139	Opus signinum
1403	Top of contexts E of 'wall' (not shown in section drawings)
1419	Pocket of ashy/burnt material.
1421	Larger mortar/gravel fragments
1424	Very thin black ashy covering over mortar (1137
1425	Black burnt/ashy layer covering opus signinum and mortar (1139 & 1429)
1426	Dark burnt material layer, linked to 1425 (Not shown in section drawings)
1427	Earthy layer. Notably on tiny fragments of CBM within
1428	Loose degraded yellow mortar layer. Not excavated below 95cm
1429	Layer of hard mortar partially covering opus signinum
1430	In-situ (?) tile with another fragment of tile mortared on top. Possibility that 1429 continues NW under OS.
1431	In-situ (?) tile under OS

4.2 Tr9 (Area F)

By: Jayne Nelson

4.2.1 Rationale

The area to the NE of Tr9 has layers that indicate a possible well or ditch feature. This needs further investigation to determine its significance and clarify what it is.

4.3 Tr10 (Area L)

By: Susan May

4.3.1 Rationale

Towards the end of the excavations, although not part of the original plan for 2014, the opportunity was taken to clean sections in trench 10 (excavated as Tr 3 in 2013) for drawing in order to assess any relationship between contexts in this trench and contexts in trench 12.



Figure 35 – Trench 10, looking NE, section 41

In Section 41 (see Figure 35 and

Figure 36), at the north east of the trench, facing south west, lenses of degraded mortar with chalk flecks were confirmed, the highest (C1363) also containing opus signinum. These were mixed amongst soil. Chalk lumps were also observed. These mixed layers are believed to be the result of backfill after the destruction of floors.

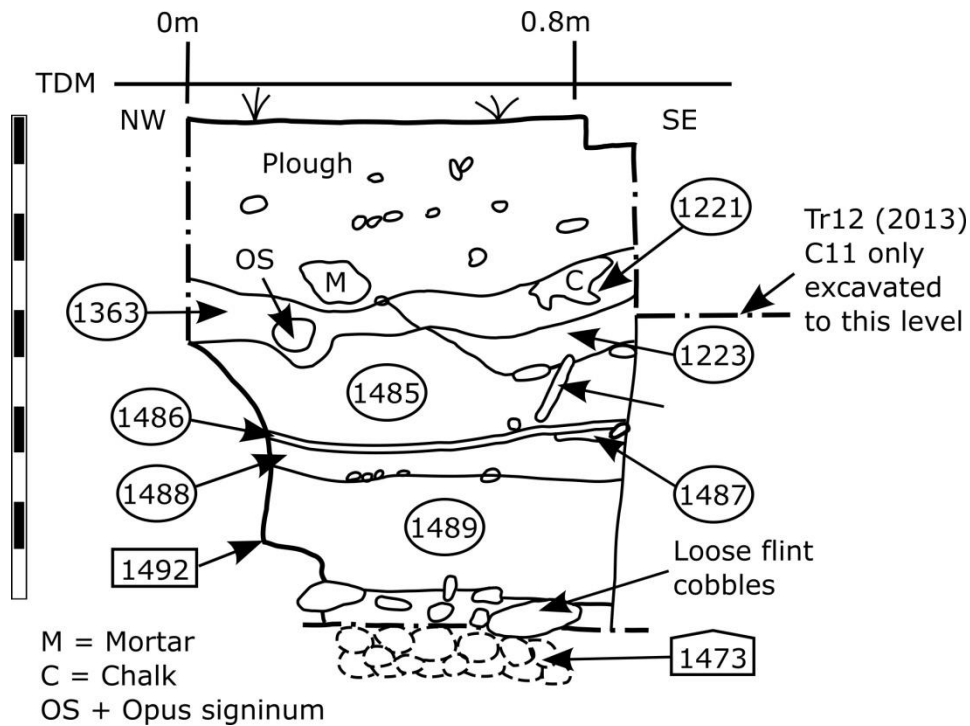


Figure 36 – Trench 10, Section 41, looking NE

At 1.05 metres below datum (below the bottom of the 2013 trench), loose cobbles measuring between 8 and 20 cm, with voids between them, were found in a horizontal layer. Chalk descending from 95 cm below datum, extending from 0 (NW corner) – 28cm at this level, was not excavated. Chalk was also found from 80 – 90 cm (the corner of the trench), at the same level. Backfill from 2013 was, in consequence, removed from the floor of the trench and Section 22, facing south east, was also re-cleaned. Mortared in cobbles were found at the base of the section (C1473).



Figure 37 – Trench 10 - NE end of section 22 after cleaning

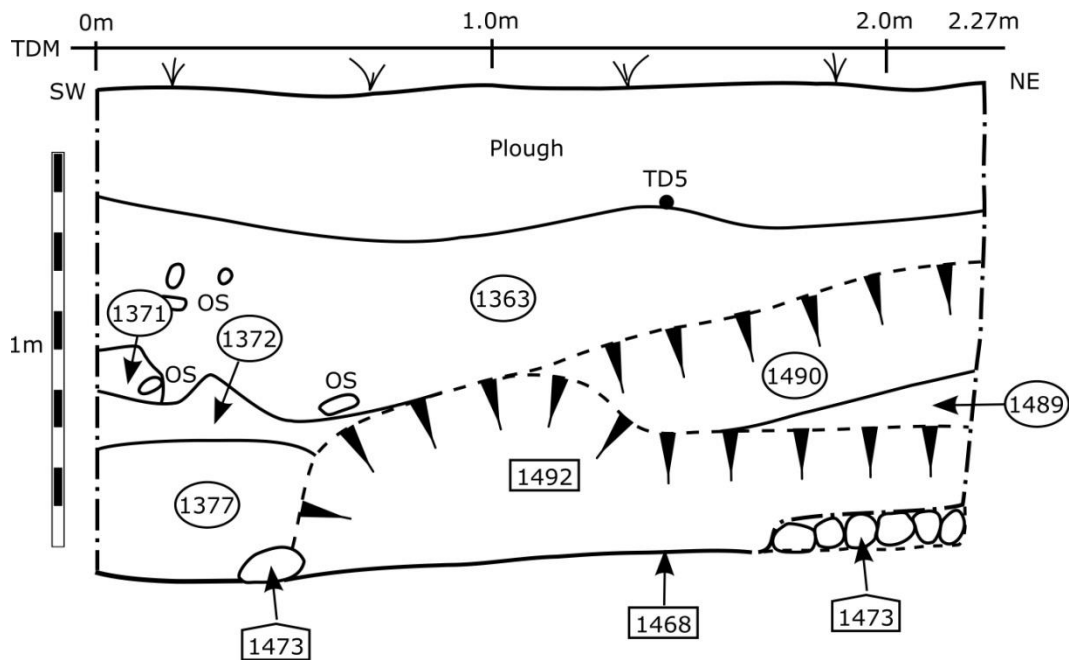


Figure 38 – Trench 10, section 22 (Revised in 2014), looking NW

In Section 22 (see Figures 3 and 4), cobbles were found to be mortared in at 1.12 metres below datum (C1473). These cobbles extended c. 48 cm out from Section 41, presumably continuing under the chalk of Section 22 (C1490) as no edge was observed. The cobbled layer was c. 9 cm thick, below which was a hard chalk surface. This chalk surface with loose

cobbles lying on it (C1468) ran the length of this part of the trench (from Section 41 to Section 38), some 2.20 metres. It is believed to be the foundation of a wall. The trench was not excavated below this level.

Chalk (C1490), under a film of powdery mortar, was found to fall away from the section from 92 cm below datum to a maximum of 70 cm out from the section over the chalk surface.

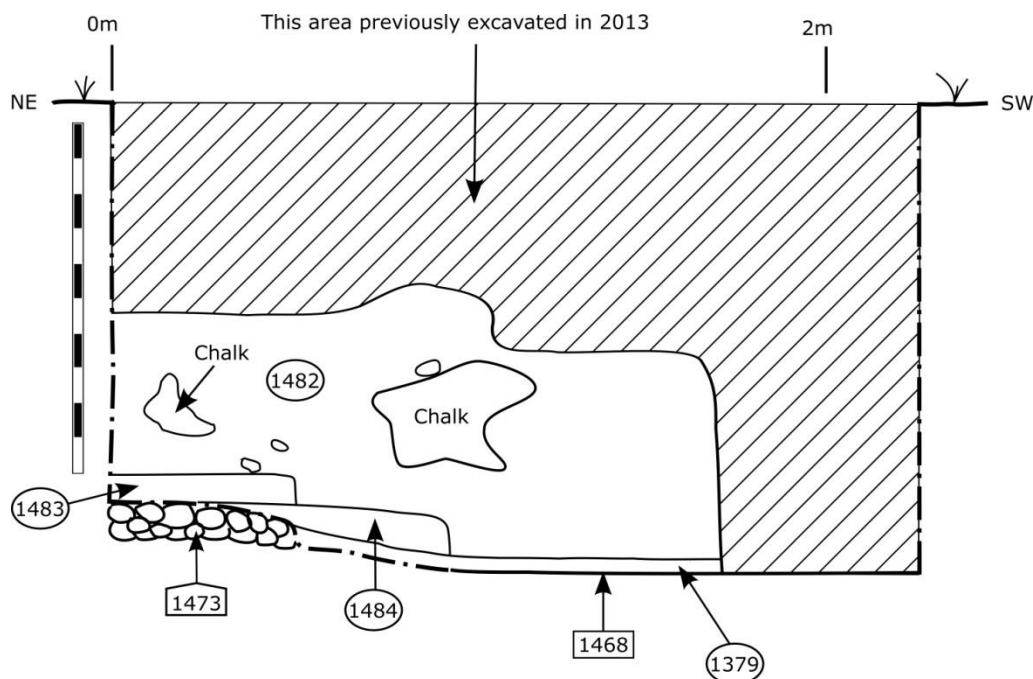


Figure 39 – Trench 10, section 42, looking SE

Opposite and parallel to Section 22, Section 42, which had been removed down to 60 cm below ground surface in 2013, comprised chalk with mortar lenses (See Figures 5 and 7). A layer of mortar c. 10 cm thick (C1483) lay over the mortared cobbles, and a layer of clay, again about 10 cm thick, ran from the end of the mortared cobbles to c. 95 cm from the section 0 cm (C1484). A thin layer of mortar (C1379) ran under this for the length of the section and, under this, the chalk surface (C1468). The clay layer is believed to be the edge of the wall.



Figure 40 – Surface with loose cobbles, looking SW



Figure 41 – Trench 10, looking SE, section 42 in foreground

The lower part of Section 38 (See Figure 8), running north west to south east and adjacent to the 2012 “hypocaust trench”, was cleaned, revealing the same chalk surface (C1468) running along its base. No alteration or break in the chalk foundation was observed at the north west corner. Immediately above the surface was a c. 5 cm thick layer of pale coloured mortar (C1379), and above that, a slightly thicker layer of orange coloured mortar (C1377). The chalk surface continued for the 2 metres of this section, to the point where Section 44 (area 11 in 2013) met it at right angles, and may continue underneath this section. A possible channel in the surface was found 33 cm north east of Section 44 (C1476). Flint cobbles were found aligned with this possible channel.

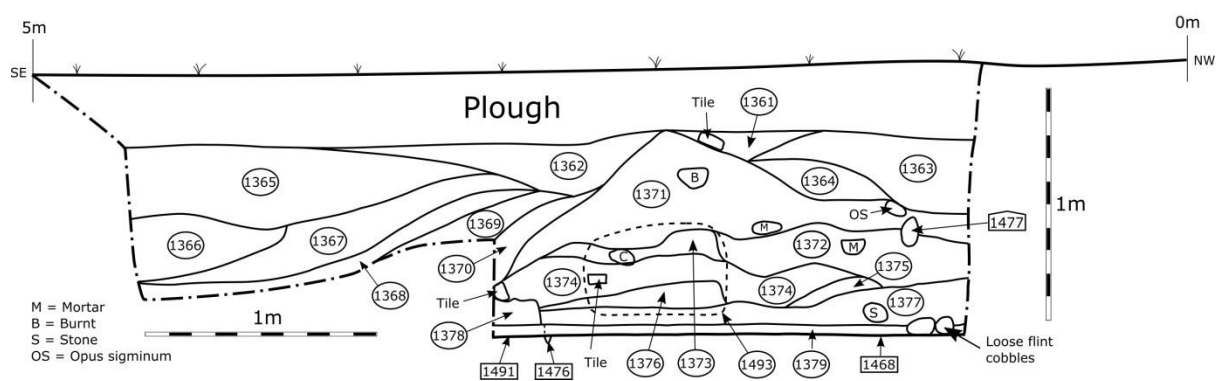


Figure 42 – Trench 10, section 38, looking SW

In cleaning Section 38, a roughly rectangular area (see Figure 43) with horizontal bands of mortar/stones and ash was revealed 1.07 – 1.68 metres from the North West corner of the trench and 0.8 – 1.18 metres below datum (shown as a dotted line in Figure 42, C1493). This area appeared to sit within contexts extending either side of it, and was thought to be related to the hypocaust of the adjacent trench.



Figure 43 – Trench 10, lower part of section 38

At the bottom of Section 44 (See Figures 10 and 11), the chalk surface (C1468) extended from Section 38, 60 cm to the edge of a layer of redeposited chalk with stones, possibly wall packing (C1471). The whole of the width of the chalk lay under a layer of pale mortar (C1379).

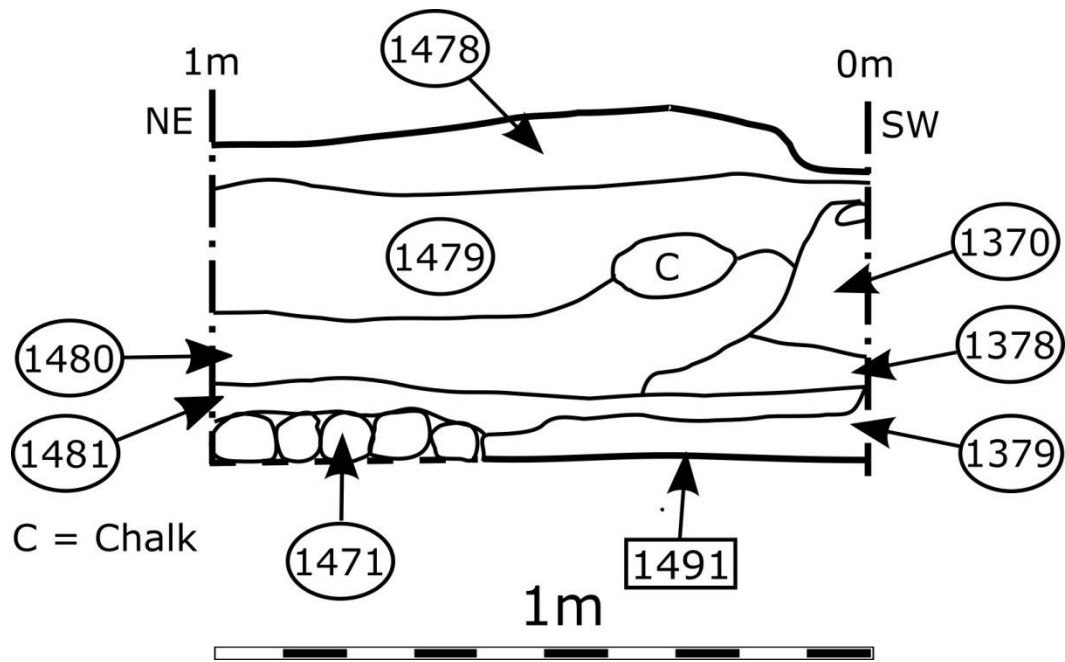


Figure 44 – Trench 10, section 44, looking SE

Above the redeposited chalk (C 1471), c. 40 cm north of Section 44, was a slump of chalk with mortar, flint pieces and opus signinum. This also extended over cobbles and the chalk foundation.



Figure 45 – Trench 10, looking SE, section 44



Figure 46 – NW corner of trench 10

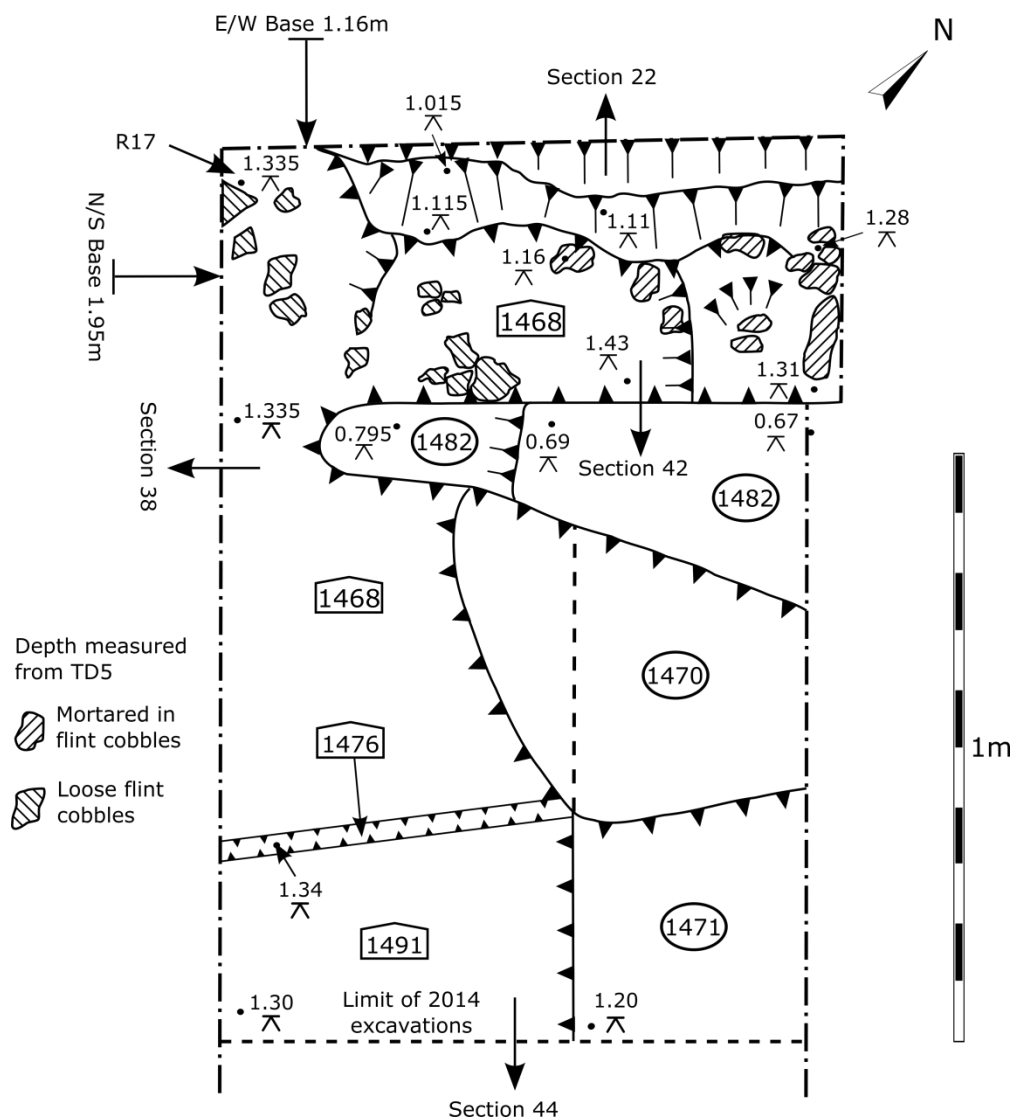


Figure 47 – Plan of trench 10, after completion of excavation



Figure 48 – Trench 10, looking NW



Figure 49 – Trench 10, NW corner showing chalk surface and overlaying cobbles

4.3.2 Finds

As most of the work carried out in this trench was mainly cleaning, the only finds, other than opus signinum, were from the 2013 backfill. For the record, they are listed here, but are not included in the main table of finds in section 8.

1074 g. opus signinum

3578 g. mortar

208 g. hard white opus signinum/mortar

1236 g. tesserae

2393 g. stone tile

3685 g. red tile

32 g. painted plaster – 1 green/grey, 1 black with white pattern

23 g. metal – 2 pieces

34 g. pot – 2 black (1 with plain rim), 1 buff, 1 orange with remains of glaze, 1 tile-like but possibly decorated

4.3.3 Contexts summary from the 2014 excavation of Tr10

Context	Notes
1221	Soil with mortar and OS
1223	Degraded mortar, chalk flecks
1361	Earthy
1362	Degraded mortar and debris
1363	Sandy soil and degraded mortar mixed with OS and chalk flecks and lumps
1364	As 1363, less mortar more soil but still lots of debris
1365	Chalk/ashy/some (bright) mortar/debris/soil
1366	Similar to 1365 but much less ash; less chalk to NW plus bright mortar debris to ?
1367	Mixture of ash, earth and mortar with CBM
1368	Earthy
1369	Mortar with chalk & debris
1370	Earthy
1371	Mortar
1372	Earthy very little debris
1373	Mortar with darker (ashy) content
1374	Mortar - orange with occasional OS and CBM
1375	Burnt layer
1376	Earth with ash lenses and some CBM
1377	Orange mortar
1378	Mortar with some chalk mixed in
1379	Pale mortar
1468	Flat chalk surface; foundation of wall
1471	Chalk with stones. Possible wall packing
1473	Mortared flint cobbles 8-20cm; remains of wall
1476	Possible channel. Linear dip of approx 4cm in chalk with flints alongside and stones embedded in chalk.
1477	Black ash/timber
1478	Loose mortar and some CBM
1479	Earth & stones/flecks chalk
1480	Chalk, mortar and stones
1481	Chalk
1482	Chalk with mortar lenses
1483	Mortar
1484	Clay
1485	Brown soil with a few small stones
1486	Lens of mortar
1487	Mixed soil and mortar
1488	Brown soil with a few small stones
1489	Degraded mortar, few inclusions
1490	Redeposited chalk

1491	Chalk surface. Possibly same as 1468, but has slightly rougher surface which may be due to original levelling.
1492	Chalk cut
1493	Not a definite context as it possibly a remnant of the excavations of the hypocaust trench (Tr1) in 2012

4.4 Tr11 (Area A)

See separate report by Tim Butcher

4.5 Tr13 (Area M)

By: Adam Lister and John Street

4.5.1 Rationale

The excavation planned for Tr13 is to determine the depth of the redistributed chalk currently exposed from just under the plough layer. An area to the NE of the original trench would be excavated for this purpose

4.6 Tr15 (Area A)

By: Peter Cornelissen

Note that the 2014 excavation of the adjacent Tr11 carried out simultaneously was carried and reported separately by Tim Butcher and should be read in conjunction with this report, particularly regarding the excavations after the baulk between the two trenches was removed.

4.6.1 Rationale

In the excavation of trench 1 in 2011, a cut was found which appeared to be the wall foundation all around the edge of the mosaic floor. At the time, the excavation did not expose any continuation of this wall. However, in 2013, Tr11 exposed a cut on the NW edge of the trench and in the W corner of the trench the cut turned NW which, considering its location, suggested it was linked to the wall surrounding the mosaic floor.

Excavating Tr15 should enable us to determine the exact relationship between the two cuts found in trench 1 and trench 11 in 2013 by revealing the edge of the mosaic floor and the continuation of the NW cut.

4.6.2 The excavation

The plough layer was removed, leaving a small unexcavated edge to avoid collapse of the baulk into trench 11 (see Figure 53), which was being excavated and at the same time. The cut from the trench 1 excavations was revealed at approximately 40cm (shown below in Figure 50). This confirmed the approximate location of trench 15 in relation to the trench 1 excavations and trench 11 from 2013/14 and it was hoped, therefore, that we would be able to achieve our goals for this trench.

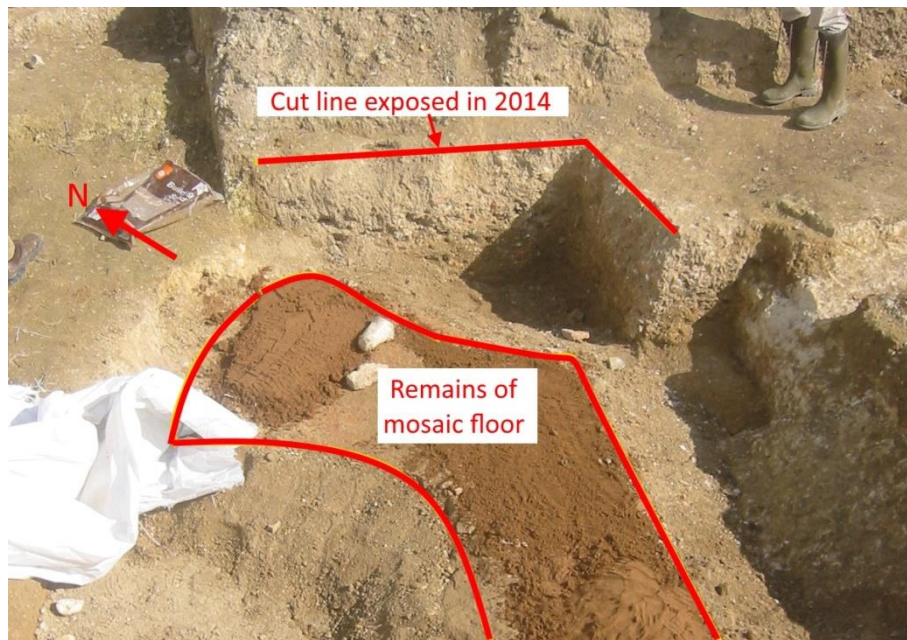


Figure 50 – Trench 1 from 2011 showing the cut revealed in trench 15 in 2014

Further excavation down to 60cm did not expose any further information except to clarify that a 'feature' seen in the excavation of trench 11 was in fact where a step had been cut into the side of trench 1 to help climbing out of the trench.



Figure 51 – 'Feature' seen in trench 11 was in fact this step



Figure 52 – Trench 15 at 25-30cm

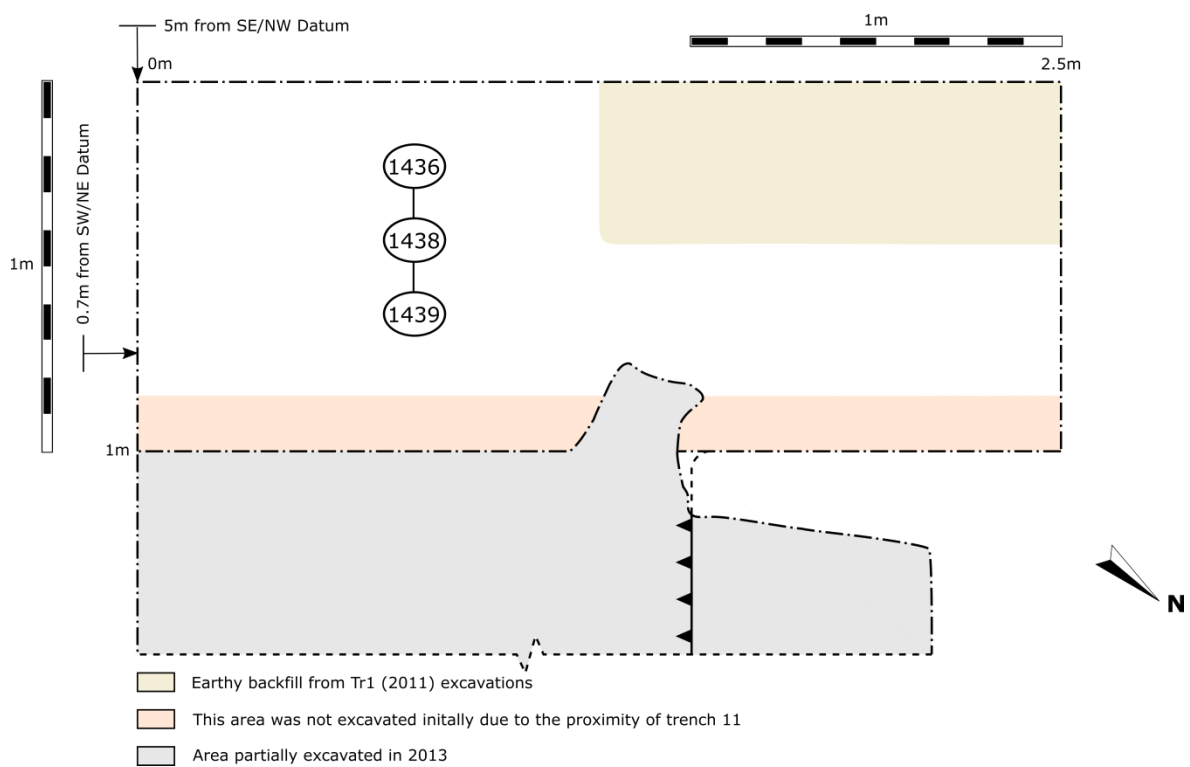


Figure 53 – Plan 49 – 30-60cm (C1436, C1438 and C1439)



Figure 54 – Plan 50 – 60cm

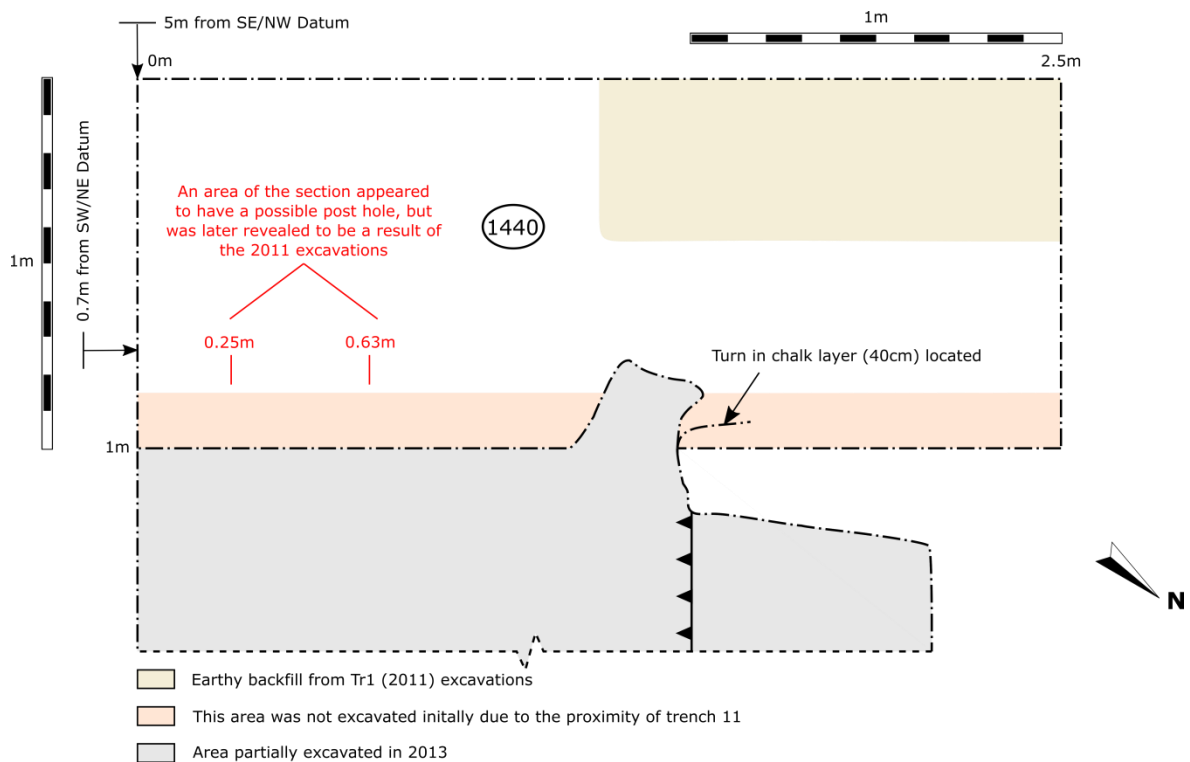


Figure 55 – Plan 50 – 60cm

At 60cm, it appeared that we would need to extend the trench by 50cm to the NW in order to fully clarify the curve of the apsidal side of the wall surrounding mosaic floor.

Excavating this started to reveal the edge of the outside of the wall line for the mosaic apse as well as a layer of chalk falling in a N direction from the SW corner of the trench.

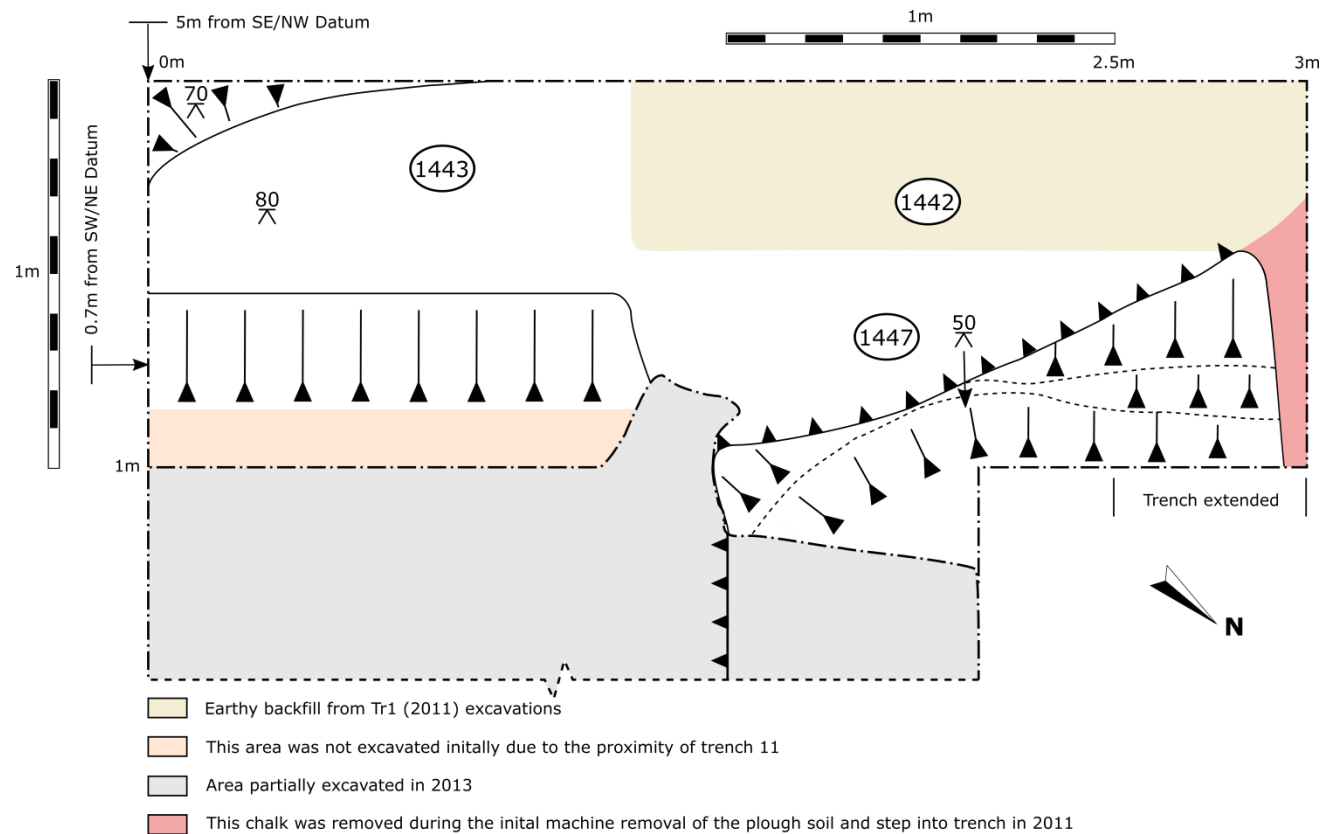


Figure 56 – Plan 51 – 80cm - Depths are referenced to TD1



Figure 57 – The edge of the mosaic floor found under the protective covering.

Continuing to excavate eventually exposed the protective covering placed over the mosaic floor in trench 1. Also the apparent cut which turned NW found in trench 11 in 2013 was found to join with the cut of the outer wall of the mosaic floor apse.

What also became apparent due to the nature of the fill was that this was all part of the antiquarian disturbance which was also responsible for the damage caused to the eastern corner of the mosaic floor discovered in trench 1.



Figure 58 – Cobble and mosaic floor found again in 2014

Confirmation of the location of the position of the trench to the mosaic floor was also confirmed by the cobble seen in pictures from both trench 1 and in the ground in 2014 (see Figure 61).

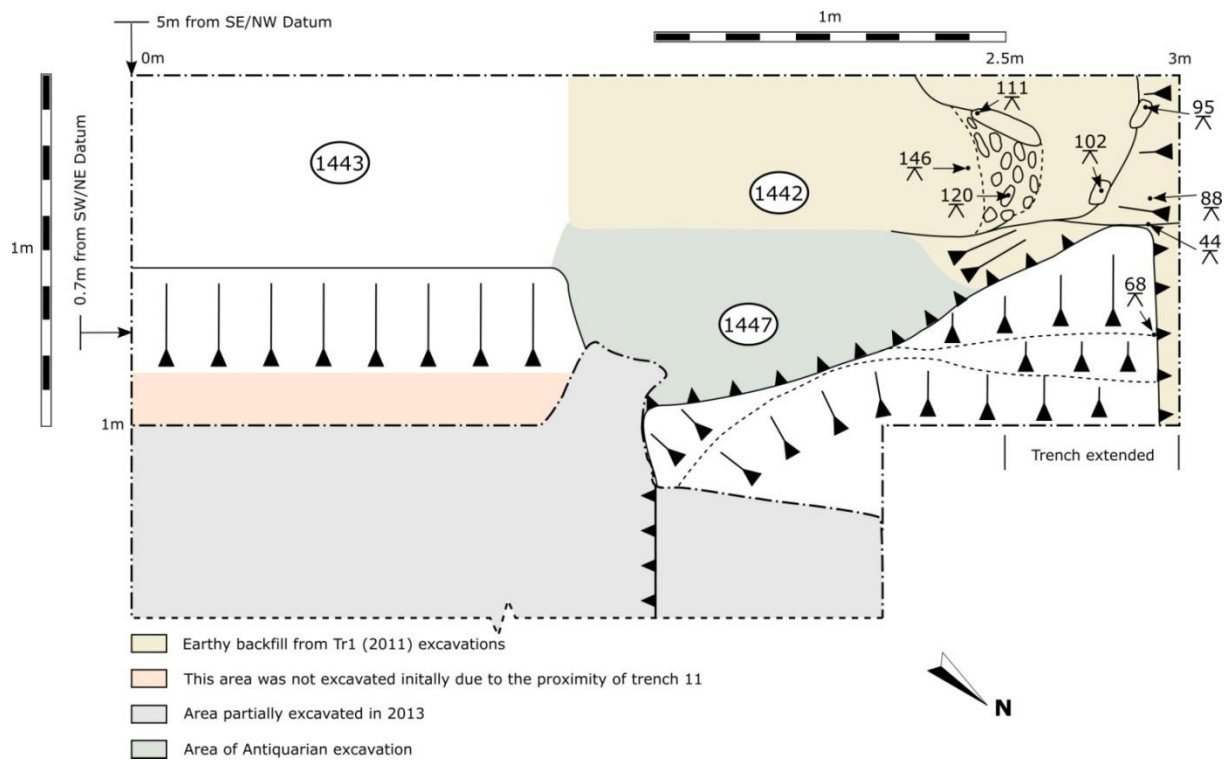


Figure 59 – Plan 52 – Depths are referenced to TD1

Further excavation revealed more antiquarian debris, but also further clarified the cut in the redistributed chalk for the outer edge of the mosaic floor apse wall.



Figure 60 – The cut into the redistributed chalk for the outer edge of the wall surrounding the mosaic floor

The cut into the redistributed chalk forming the outer edge for the wall surrounding the mosaic floor can be seen clearly in Figure 60 and Figure 61 as well as when the cut turns to the NE.



Figure 61 – The curve of the outer wall cut for apse can be seen here clearly

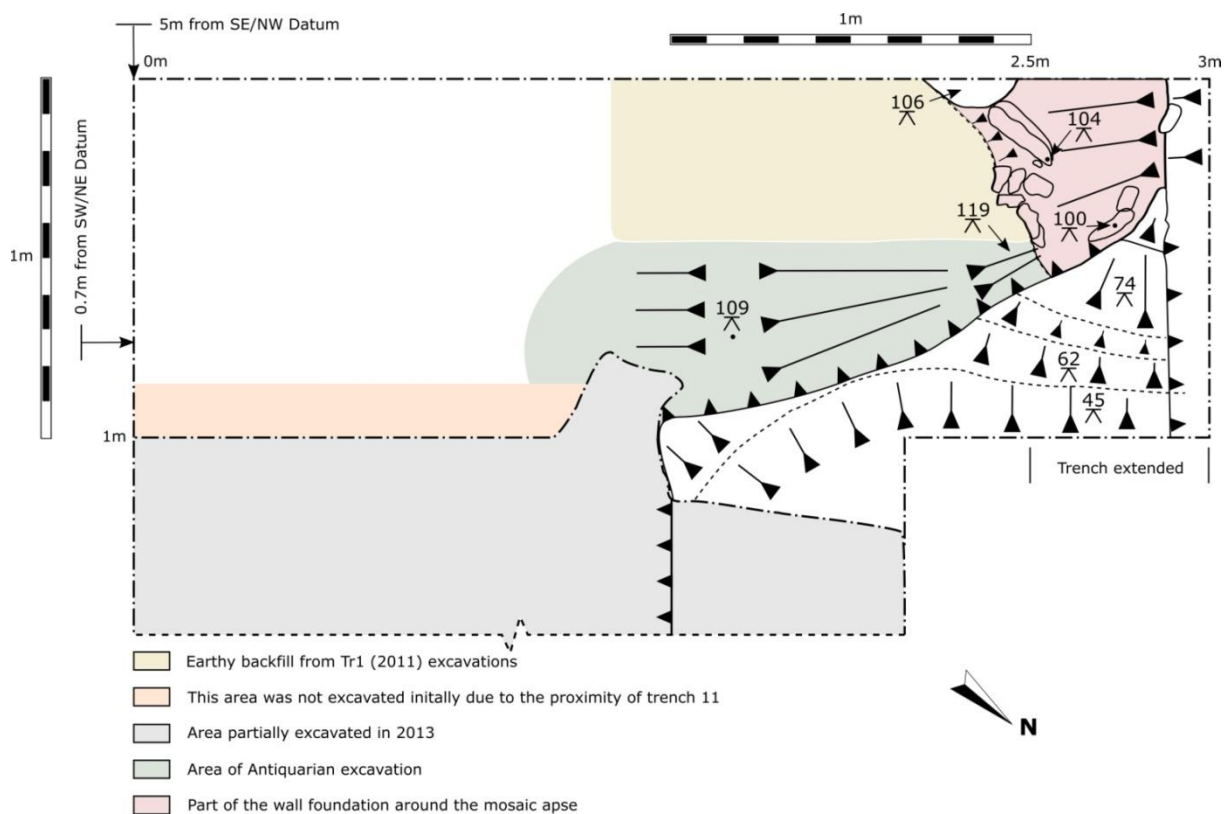


Figure 62 – Plan 53 – Depths are shown in drawing

Once the excavation in trench 15 reached the same level as that in trench 11, the baulk between the two was removed and the excavation then extended over the two trenches. At this stage it was also possible to see the extent of the trench 1 excavation in 2011 in the SE face of trench 15. There was the impression in this face that there was a possible wall line extending SE, but that was not investigated in 2014. Also the

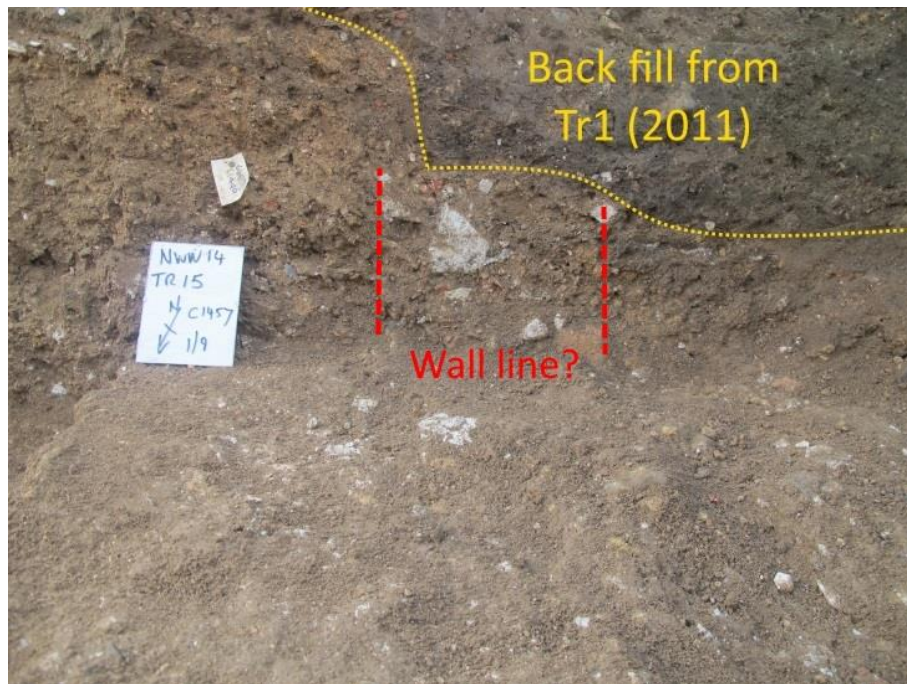


Figure 63 – The SE end of trench 11/15 showing the outline of area M from trench 1 in 2011



Figure 64 – The view SE of section AA (see Figure 65) showing cobble and stone in line with possible wall

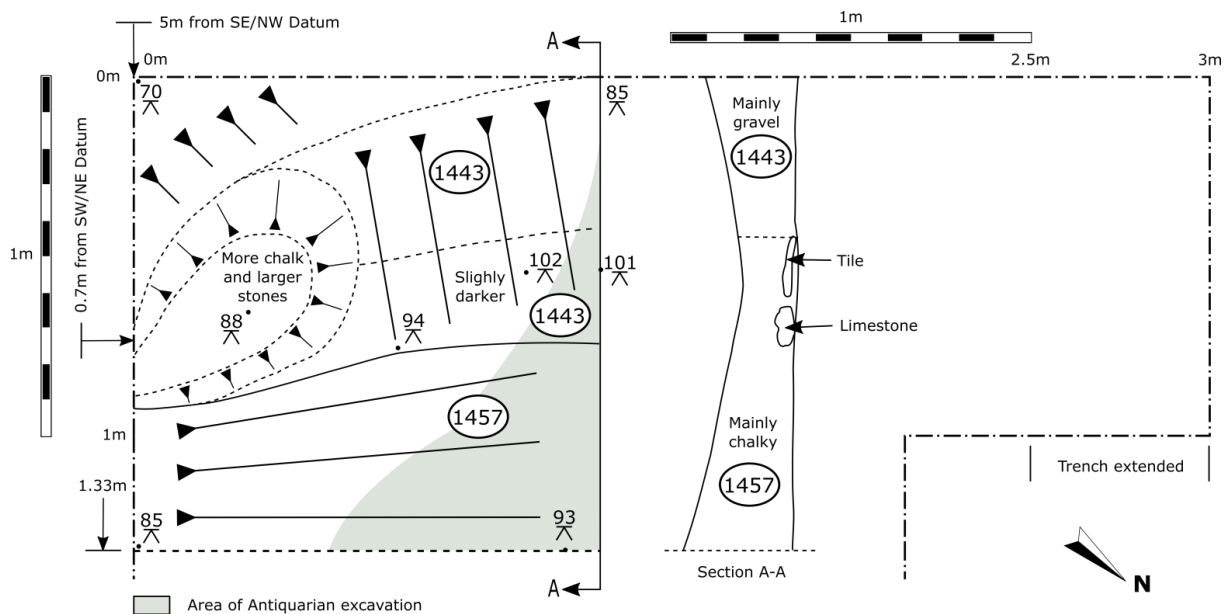


Figure 65 – Plan 54 – Depths are shown in drawing

Further excavation in trench 11/15 also revealed the extent of the antiquarian excavations which may have caused this effect.

Plan 54 with its section also gave rise to this speculation, but further excavation (see Figure 69 to Figure 71) revealed that this was indeed an antiquarian excavation when a fragment of 18th/ 19thC wine bottle and small shard of glazed pottery was discovered near the bottom of context 1467 (i.e. not part of the trench 1 excavations).



Figure 66 – 18th/19th C Wine bottle



Figure 67 – Glazed pottery shard

Plan 55 (Figure 69) below shows the area of chalk to the SW corner continuing to appear. This almost certainly relates to the area of chalk found to the SE of the mosaic apse in trench 1, where a steeply sloping area of redistributed chalk was found. It was not possible to determine if this slope of chalk was redistributed chalk was damaged by the antiquarian excavations, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that there may have been steps cut in this area to chalk to step down from the higher area of chalk floor found to the SE end of the trench 1, adjacent to the SW.



Figure 68 – The sloping are of chalk can be seen to the top left of this picture

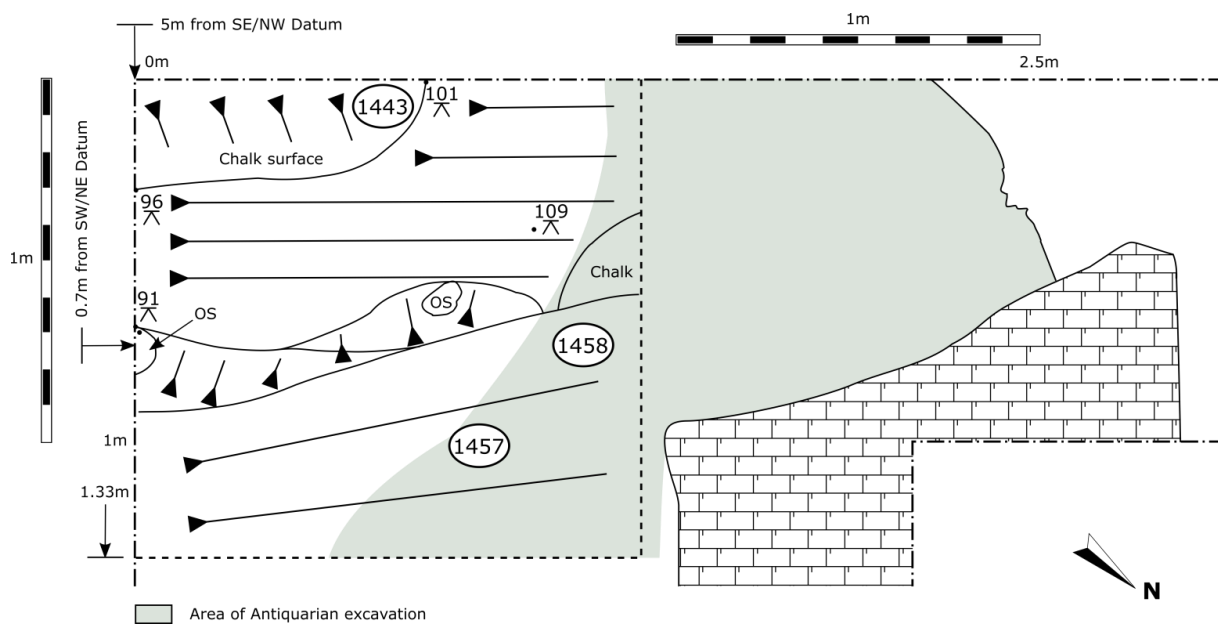


Figure 69 – Plan 55 – Depths are shown in drawing



Figure 70 – Wall remains and the cut redistributed chalk

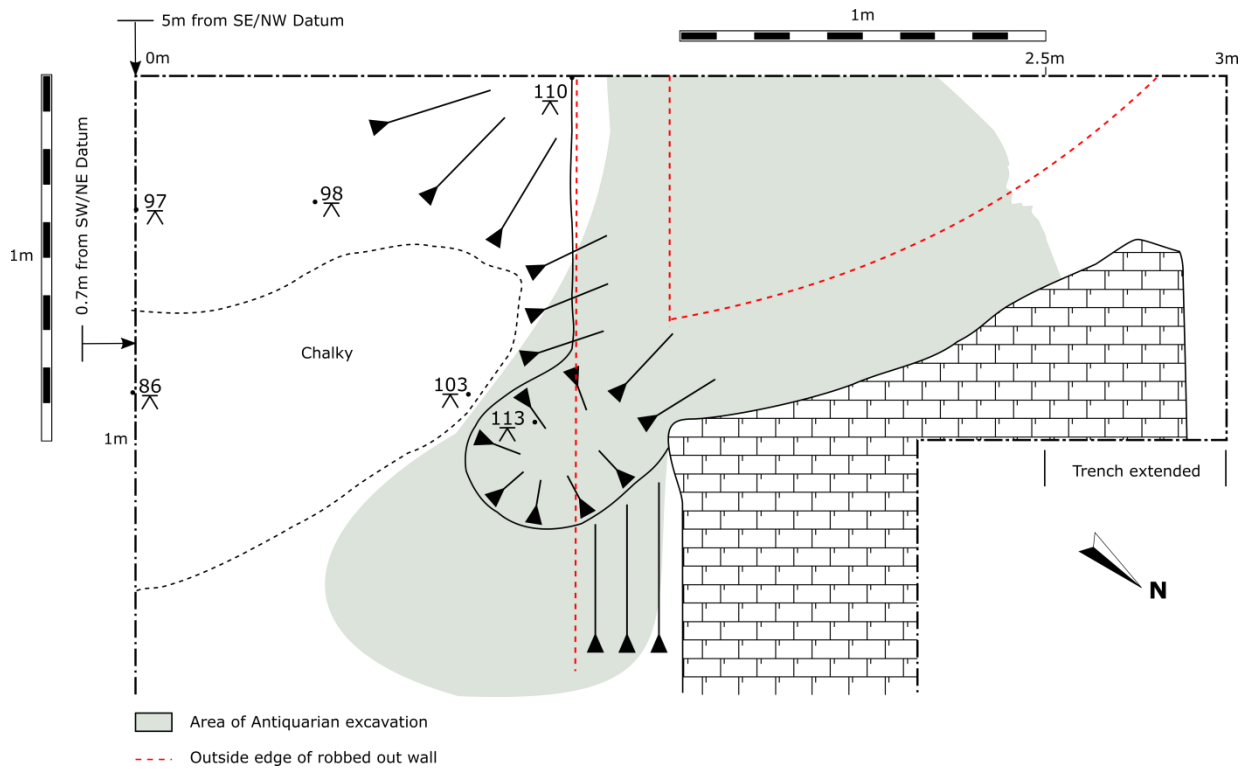


Figure 71 – Plan 56 – Showing the outline of the location of the robbed out wall - Depths are shown in drawing

4.6.3 Summary of the trench 15 2014 excavations

The goals of this trench were achieved by relocating the mosaic floor and relating it to the redistributed chalk cuts found in both the 2011 and 2013 excavations. It also revealed the fact that the large lower area found in trenches 11, 12 and 14 in 2013 was at the same level as the top of the mosaic floor, suggesting that this was all part of the same construction. It also leads to the possibility that the mosaic floor may be a bath and constructed in similar way to the bath shown in that suggested by this drawing of the bath house at Chedworth Villa (see Figure 72) , where there was a wall raised around the edge of the bath. However, this could equally mean that the mosaic floor was not in fact a bath at all as it was the same level as the rest of the floor. In that case though, why sink the foundations another 40-50cm and built it on a layer of cobbles and mortar overlaid by 15cm of waterproof opus signinum?

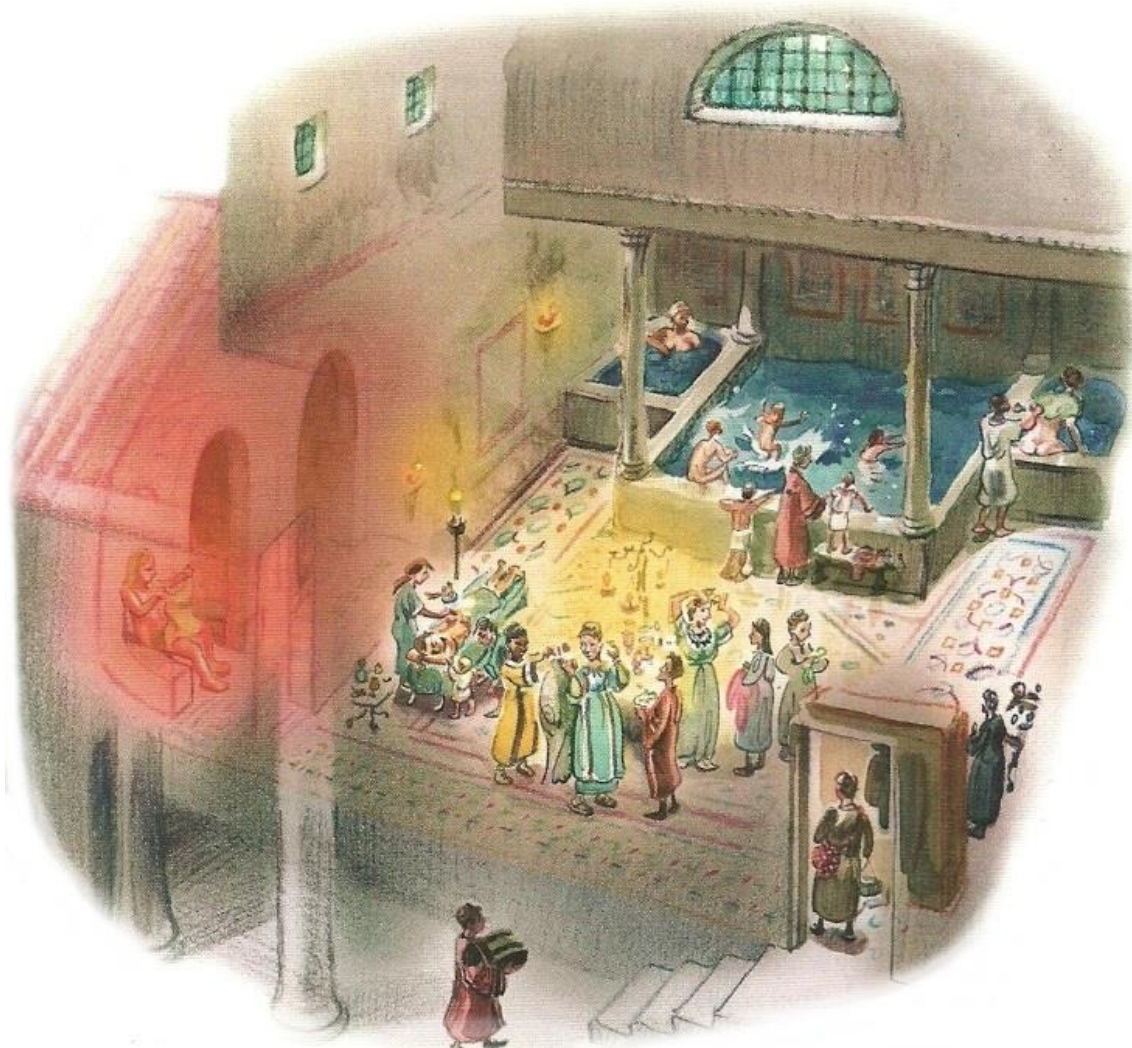


Figure 72 – The construction technique for the bath here at Chedworth could have been used at Nine Wells

Figure 73 shows a stylised interpretation of the construction and scale of the SE edge of the mosaic floor of the 'bath' in relation to floor level in trench 11, which are both approx.1.1m.

Further excavation as originally planned by Area B would help resolve the high level of chalk appearing to the SW of the trench compared to that in trench 1.

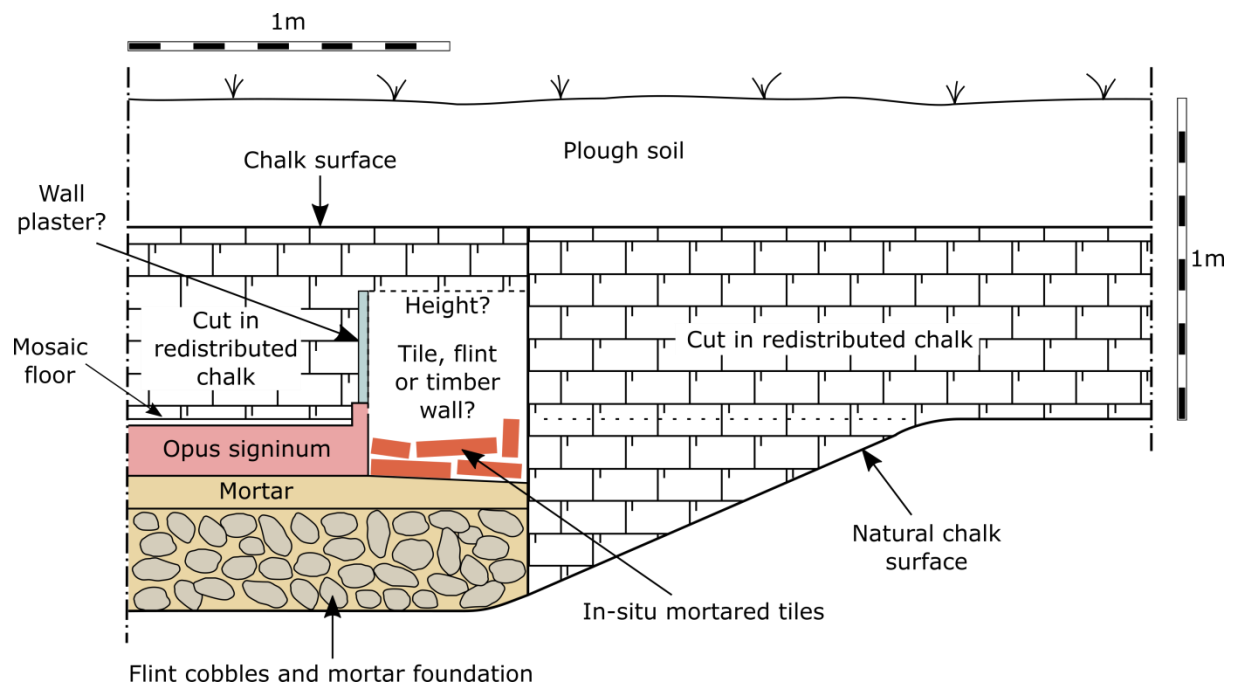


Figure 73 – Stylised section looking towards the NW showing the mosaic floor and its surrounding wall in relation to the cut in redistributed chalk cut

4.6.4 Finds

As the greatest area of this trench consisted of either backfill from 2011 or antiquarian disturbance, any finds within this trench were collected, but assumed to be out of context so not recorded as part of the contexts listed below.

4.6.5 Contexts summary from the 2014 excavation of Tr10

Context	Depth	Notes
1436	30-40cm	Still plough in places
1438	40-50cm	Backfill from trench 1 (2011) excavations visible is SW area of trench
1439	50-60cm	Backfill from trench 1 (2011) excavations visible is SW area of trench
1440	60-80cm	Edge of chalk cut revealed
1442	80cm	North of the cut line of backfill from the 2011 excavation
1443	80cm	South of trench 1 excavation extents
1447		Antiquarian excavation debris (note: not part of the trench 1 excavation)
1455		Further antiquarian debris
1456		Further antiquarian debris
1457		Further antiquarian debris
1458		Further antiquarian debris
1459		Cut to SW of trench. From 2011 excavations
1460		Cut in chalk for outside edge of wall surrounding the mosaic floor.

1461		Antiquarian layer of trample, much more compacted than 1458 and above
1462		Antiquarian pit
1465		Chalk mortar and earth debris in apse wall area
1466		Mortar and flint, probably antiquarian
1467	1.1m – 1.4m	Chalk surface below antiquarian excavations and almost certainly original cut layer

5 Summary of excavations

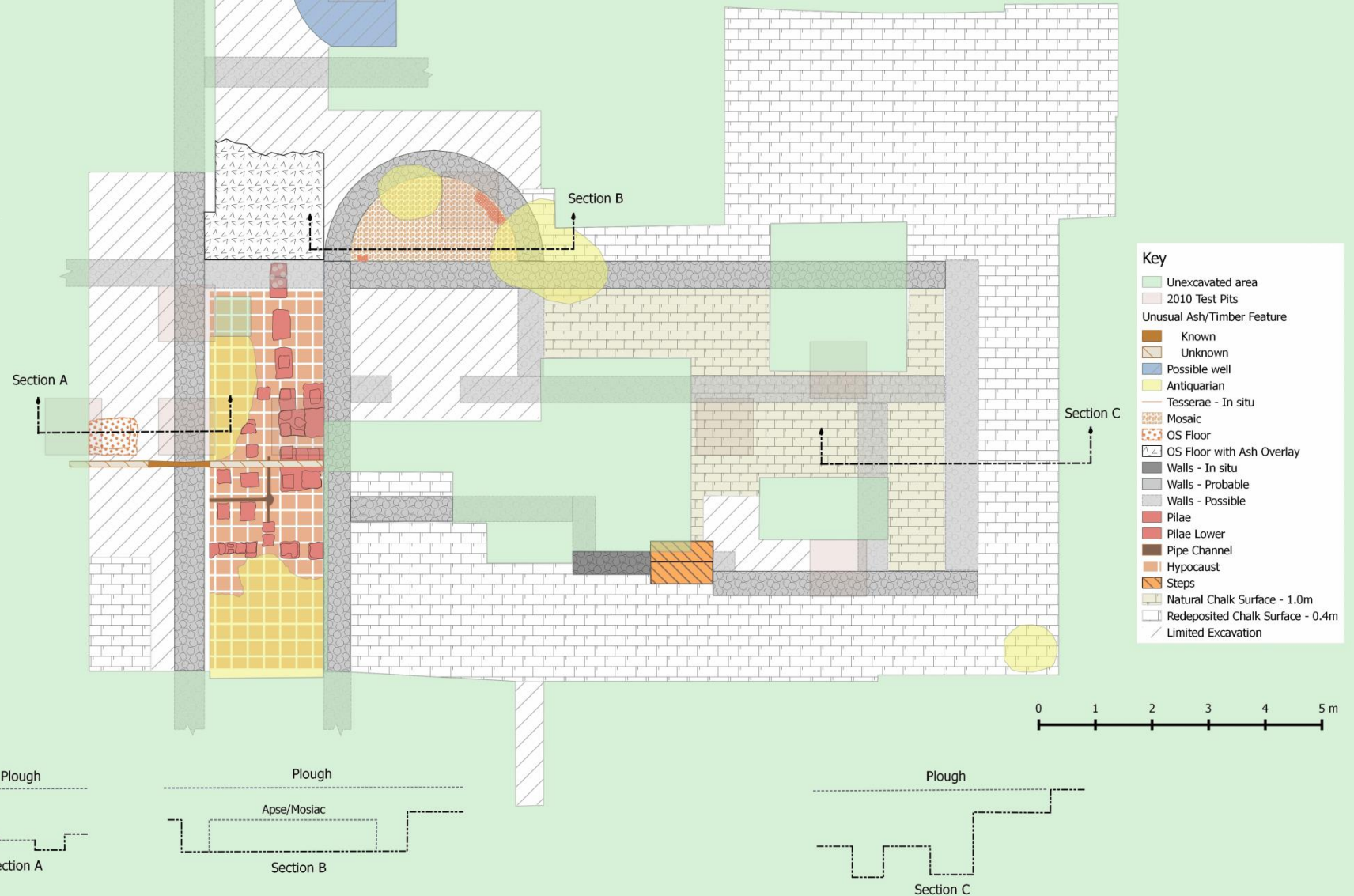
While all the areas originally planned were not excavated, everyone involved in the excavations in 2014 deserves recognition

6 Overall conclusions

All. Here we should consider what we have or have discovered in 2014. The plan we produced from it is important too

Cambridge Independent Archaeology

A schematic representation of part of a Roman villa complex at Nine Wells,Whitlesford?



7 What next?

All

8 Finds

This will be a complete list of all finds for all trenches. The finds recorded here are those found in 2014 only.

Please refer to the 2013 report for finds found in the same trenches in 2013.

Comments: All

Spreadsheet/s: Peter

9 References

- 1) Report on a limited evaluation excavation of a Roman temple at Nine Wells, Whittlesford -
- 2) William Hughes and Rodney Scarle
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- 6) W Hughes et al
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- 10) Nine Wells 2013 excavation report for trenches 4 to 8 –
- 11) Peter Cornelissen
- 12) The Roman Villa – John Percival
- 13) The Roman House in Britain – Dominic Perring
- 14) The Handbook of British Archaeology – Roy and Lesley Adkins and Victoria Leitch
- 15) Gentlemans Magazine
- 16) Beveridge – Finds in Arch and Ants
- 17) PCAS
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- 21) Maynard
- 22) Britannia
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- 24) Anne Barker Diary – Recitations
- 25) Westlake P et al, University of Glasgow – Painted Plaster

- 26) Roman Cambridgeshire – David M Browne
- 27) Roman Glass in Britain
- 28) Samian Pottery in Britain – Peter Webster
- 29) Roman Baths in Britain – Tony Rook
- 30) Denise Allen
- 31) Pottery in Roman Britain – Guy de la Bédoyère
- 32) ,,,
- 33) ...

Add your own references if not already here

10 Acknowledgements

- To farmer Leslie Harrison for site access and interest
- To Cambridgeshire County Farms for site permission and access
- Mark Hinman and John House of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd for their advice and support throughout the planning and excavation.
- Please add anyone who has helped
- All our diggers not mentioned

11 Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in many locations within this report.

Abbreviation	Meaning
Cnnnn (e.g. C1234)	Context number nnnn (e.g. Context 1234)
CBM	Ceramic building material
OS	Opus signinum
Oy	Oyster

12 Appendices

12.1 Complete list of all context by trench and number

This will be a list of all context records for 2014

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