

CAMBRIDGE INDEPENDENT ARCHAEOLOGY – CIA17

Report of the interim excavations at Nine Wells, Whittlesford in 2014

Context Report and Finds of Trench 9 Extension – 2014 – Part II J Nelson

This is a detailed pictorial and graphical representation of the excavation, contexts and finds of
Trench 9 Ext 2014

A general discussion of the trench, overview of findings,
section drawings and conclusion can be found in:

CAMBRIDGE INDEPENDENT ARCHAEOLOGY – CIA16 TR9 Report 2014 – Part I

Both reports can be accessed from www.ciarch.org.uk



Figure 1: Taken before the end of season 2013. Note the clear definition between the blue grey cut against the hard brown adjacent fill shown between the two ranging poles, indicated by yellow arrow. The blue outline of Figure 2 reveals the surface of this feature.



Figure 2: View of area at beginning of season 2014 with Context 1401 removed
Area in Blue is Context 1401

Context 1401: 20/6/14

This was removal of the plough layer to 30-36cm depth to reveal the surface of a brown red soil surface with an irregular hard pale grey edge, See Figure 1 Blue line outlining this harder pale grey edge.

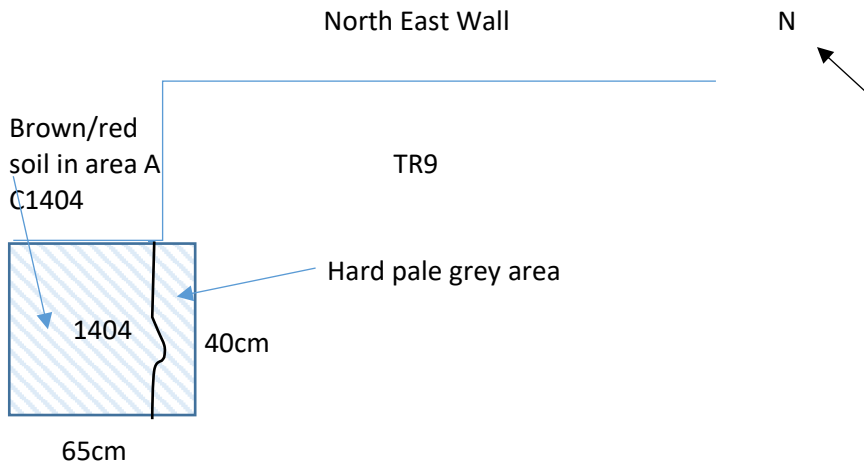


Figure 3: Diagram in plan of Context 1401 removed, with 1404 below



Figure 4: C1404 part removed revealing 1407

Context 1404: 20/6/14

Continued to take down area A. The yellow arrow points to an area that has dark soft grey showing after having been soft brown soil 30x13x7. The hard paler grey area (bottom of picture below blue line) has changed shape.

Later the green dotted area (C1404) was taken away down to all over 42cm, below was the dark soft grey (C1407). The harder grey area (at bottom of picture) remains in place at this time.

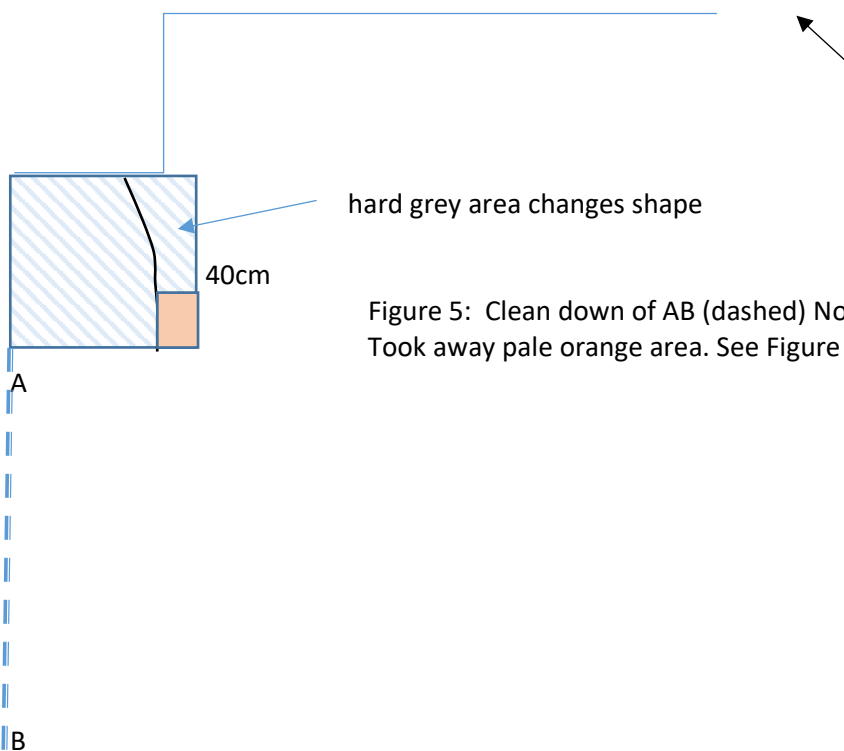


Figure 5: Clean down of AB (dashed) Northern wall, reveal and draw section. Took away pale orange area. See Figure 6: Context 1407



Figure 6: Context 1407 removed. Indicated by red arrow

Context 1408 a and b: 27/6/14

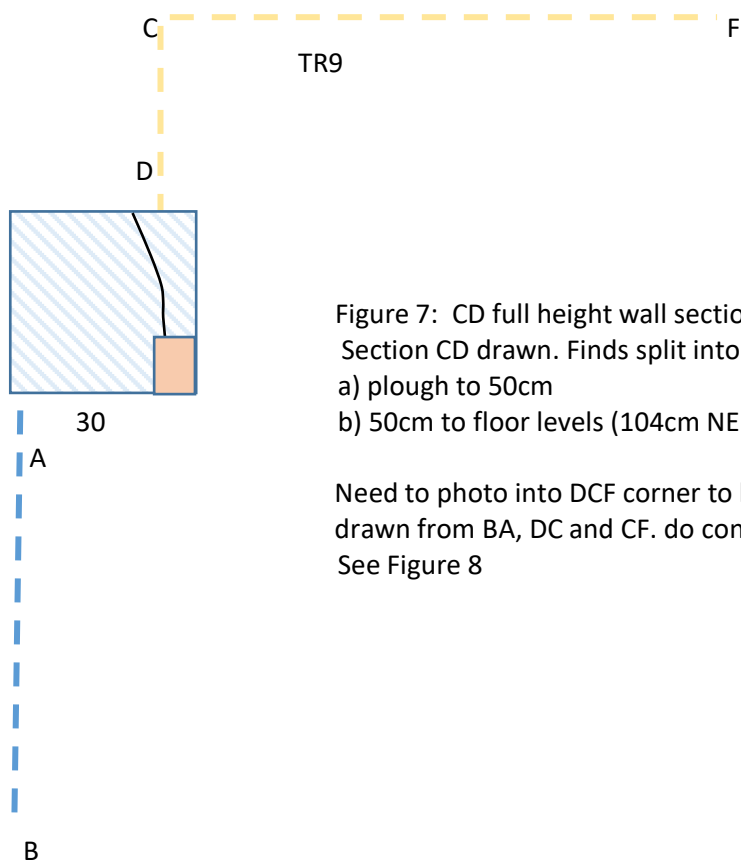


Figure 7: CD full height wall section cleaned down to clean up revealed rubble at base
Section CD drawn. Finds split into a and b.

a) plough to 50cm

b) 50cm to floor levels (104cm NE Corner)

Need to photo into DCF corner to look at deposits and check sections
drawn from BA, DC and CF. do contexts run round corner from NW to NE
See Figure 8



Figure 8: Checking for continuation of contexts from NW to NE wall sections

Context 1412:

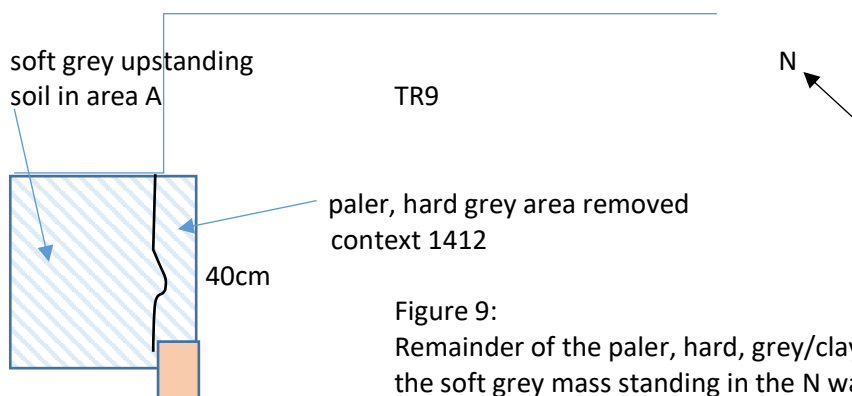


Figure 9:

Remainder of the paler, hard, grey/clayey area removed (see red arrow) to reveal the soft grey mass standing in the N wall. This context revealed more of the very soft, loose mixed upstanding grey soil behind it.



Figure 10: Next areas to examine. Area B in Yellow Area, C in Orange

Context 1413: 29/6/14

Area currently looking as in Figure 10. Area B to be worked on outlined in yellow

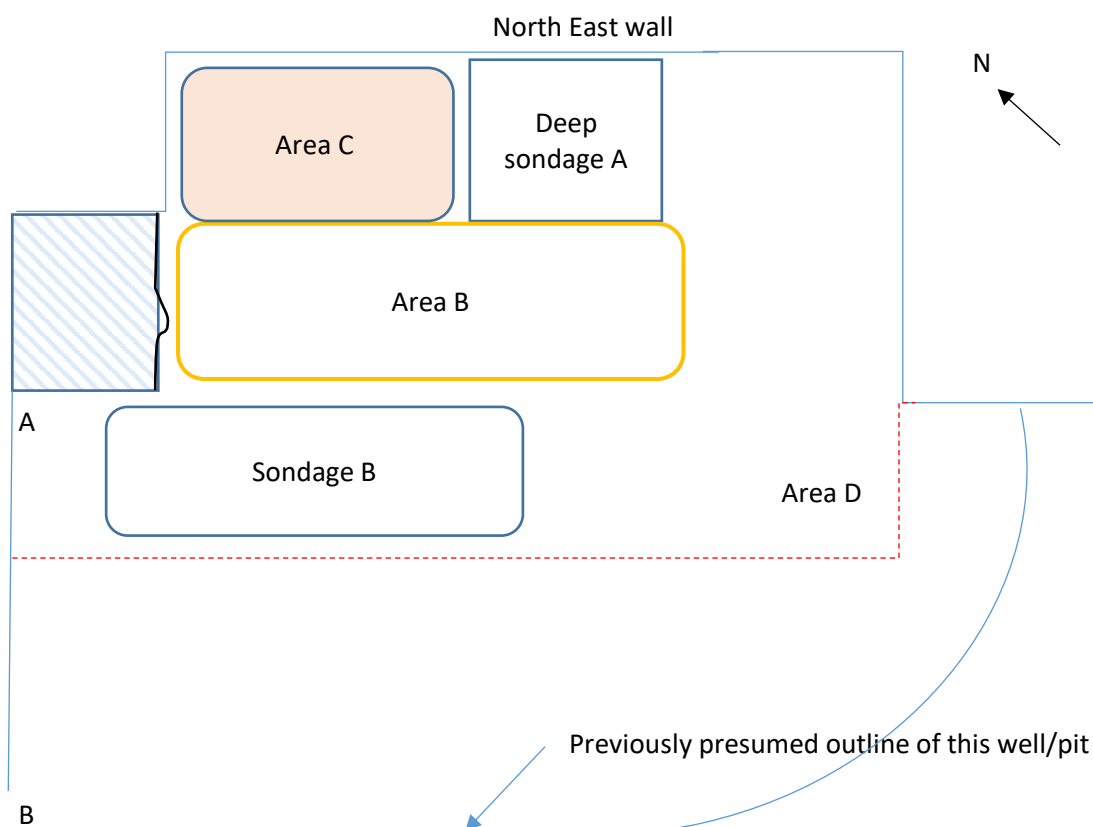


Figure 11: Area B: depth at start 83cm.

Red dashed line indicates the extent of this excavation rectangle this year.

C1413 is the content of surface of B. Brown soil down to some grey below. [Possibly the same context as C1385 in wall section]. This is very soft brown soil but soon revealed a further blue/grey surface similar in colour to the greys found throughout. Area C is already at a lower level (100cm nearest the NW wall dipping to 114cm nearest the 'deep' sondage A edge [poss C1389 in wall section]) but is a different, harder, blue/grey, less silty/ashy with more chalky inclusions (is this compacted). The grey in area B, where it lies exposed by C1413 removal, is a softer, more silty layer, perhaps drawn in by seepage? Area B reveals two such grey upstanding areas. See Drawing Figure 12 outlined in yellow and photo Figure 13.

NB: In preparing the final report of the season it became apparent that TP11 (I15/16 in 2010) probably was dug in its NE quadrant to a depth that may cause a gap between the aforementioned two grey upstanding areas.

Context 1414: 29/6/14**

[NB: As excavation progressed a clear cut began to be seen in the NW/NE corner of this trench extension. This was not until 18/8/2014. After that this context and finds were reassigned as C1389]

Between these grey upstanding areas was more of the browner, softer soil as in C 1413, with some mixed constituents, small stones, occasional building fragments. This brown soil extends across the whole outlined area but meets a harder mix of CBM in the southern area. Area D Fig 6 (C 1423). As can be seen from the drawing Figure 12, this whole area is dipping down towards and under what was area B and under the soft grey upstanding areas (outlined yellow in Figure 12).

Context 1418: 11/7/14

The next context 1418 was a continuation of this removal of brown softer soil to reveal a hard compacted area with CBM and appearing to be a complete layer, Context 1423. (C1423 probably corresponds to what was earlier assigned C1386 in wall section, S30 on the basis of drawing at the beginning of 2014 season)

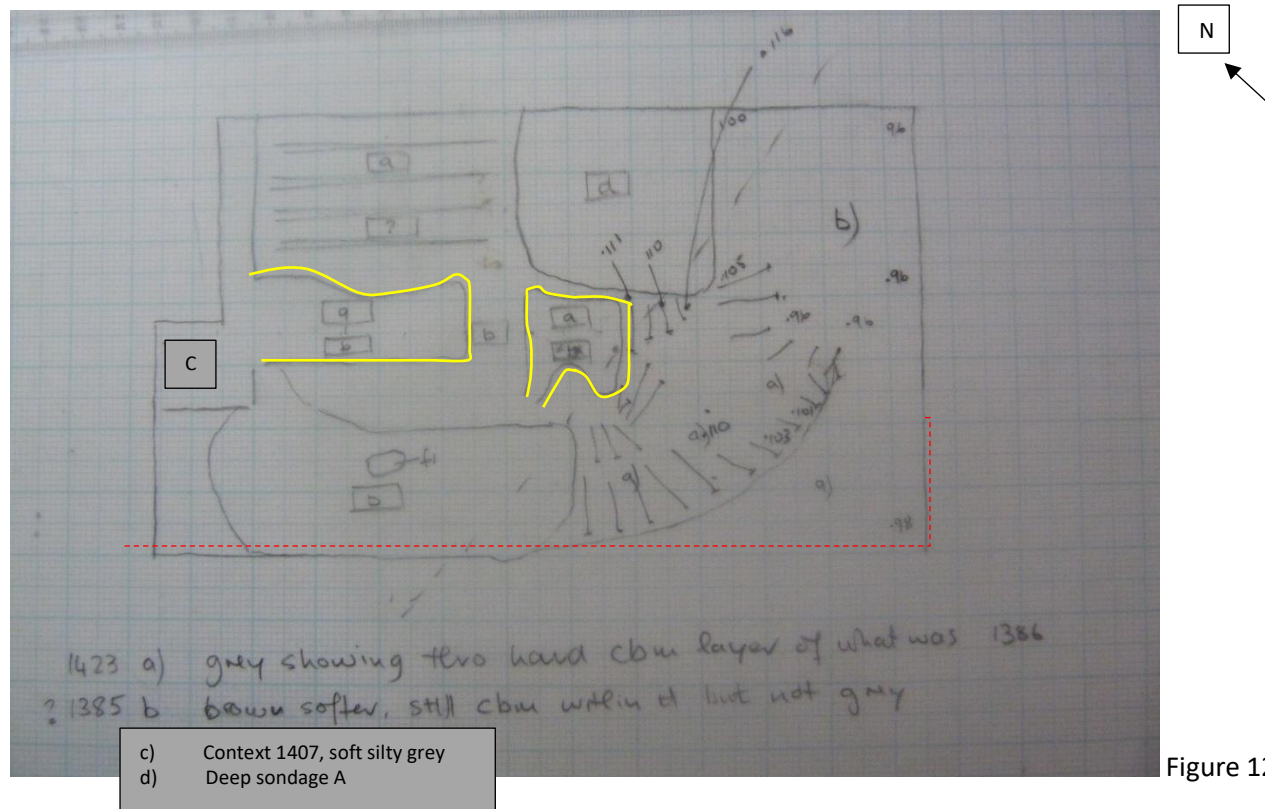


Figure 12



Figure 13: View from above: C1434 grey upstanding areas. Pic 7 also shows the C1423 before removal.

Context 1423: 13/7/14

This was the crust layer of CBM which, on excavation, appeared to be very thin, did not cover the whole area and underneath was more of the soft brown soil (C1432) lying above a harder CBM layer (Context 1451 N & S) with the soft grey flecks interspersed), all dipping down as mentioned towards the N corner.

Context 1432: 27 & 31/7/14

Thin layer of softer mixed soil, some appears trampled in very hard mixed lumps in general. Flints, stones, mortar, some painted plaster, some tesserae, 1 pot. This layer is above the complex CBM layer with the ashy grey deposits within (C1451 N&S).

C1432 was a continuation of the removal of brown soil below C1423 in the south east area and across to the north. But as the plane of excavation at this point was clearly dipping towards the north east corner of the area it became clear that the remaining upstanding grey areas from area B were later infill and were above C1432 and now were in the way of progress. They were removed in C1434.

Context 1434: 27 & 31/7/14

Grey soft fill, very thin layers as it happens and again underneath was brown soil which has been included in C1432 being removed to look for more of the CBM with grey ashy deposits between, Contexts 1451 N and S.

The variety of the beginning levels within this well/pit area of excavation in 2014 has made it difficult to know exactly how contexts lay originally, see Figure 10

eg C1423 appears to only occur in the southern half of this small area of excavation but perhaps it extended further towards the NE but had been removed in 2013, without the benefit of the knowledge of the extent of angles of deposits discovered in 2014. However, as contexts begin to show themselves to be across the whole area it may become easier to excavate.

On 6/8/14, during removal of the middle upstanding grey area and the underlying brown soil, a hole was revealed. Black arrow Figure 14

The hole is 3cm diameter, 125cm from the surface, 112cm from the Southern edge of this area, 75cm from the Western edge and 122cm from the Northern edge. It appears to have been coincidentally or accidentally plugged by a chunk of chalk and, as at this time, appears to be at least 70cm deep. It appears to be symmetrical in shape, a cylindrical, smooth bore hole with no apparent voids on the way down. We suspect at this time that this is a bore hole from earlier excavations on this site perhaps as long ago as the Victorians but may have been made by County Farms a few years ago! How it has remained open and not collapsed is a mystery at this time.

The tracing of the angling down of this area places the lowest point at present somewhat further towards the north and further east than the bore hole, more towards the extreme Northeast corner of the extension to TR9.

You can see from Figure 13 that there is no sign of this hole previously and instead is located beneath the central area marked C1434 of the picture.

On 16/8/14 further investigations were made to check the depth of the grey area in area C. This can be seen in the green outlined area in Figure 14. The grey, (at approx 100cm from surface, yellow dot ●) is very shallow again and has brown soil underneath. The sloping of the pit continues under this area below the yellow dot, shown by the yellow lines. The red dot ● is at 134cm depth from the surface. The black arrow indicates bore hole.



Figure 14: View from above



Figure 15: View from close to lowest level of the ground – eye level

View South showing depth of slope following removal of contexts 1423/32. What you see here is the layer of CBM interspersed with grey ash/silt, context 1451 N & S sloping down towards the NE corner of the trench. Position of bore hole indicated by black arrow at 125cm below plough surface. The plan is to work down a further 70cm, following contexts, in order to see how far the bore hole goes and what it reveals. Perhaps this is truly new territory, ie pre-antiquarian digging!

JNelson 17/8/2014

18/8/14



Figure 16: View of area at start of day 18/8/14

Context 1441 ** NB this was changed to C1389. See below for explanation

The small area (red outline Fig 16) cut just into the outlined area, C, was to check that the grey I was chasing went under the mass above. The mass above (C – Context 1441**) has had a significant amount of hard grey on its surface but it is clear that this is not the grey I have been chasing. This surface has become compacted however but underneath the mix is actually a great deal of very soft dark grey but also a good deal of soil. I made a first look at this area and called it Context 1441**. See Figure 17 and 18. Note also that a chalk bulk appears on the left hand side, underneath the rubble layer (C1388) above shown in Figures 17, 18, 19.

Subsequently, a meeting with Mark pointed out that this rubble and lower chalk context was indeed a 'cut'. Now, a fill inside a 'cut' could not have a same context number as a fill outside of the cut and as C1387 had already been assigned to outside of the cut I had to renumber the C1387 inside the cut. This was reassigned C1389.

[The rubble and newly exposed chalk below were clearly a 'cut'. The deposit removed to expose this cut became C1389 and the cut was assigned C1441. This cut had not been anticipated in the original section drawing. In that figure that Context 1387 was thought to form a sharp incline down and then continue along lying just below C1385***. However, on establishing that there was indeed a cut, C1441, there had to be a change of context number assigned to the C1387, within the cut. 8/1/15]

*** {This still needs clarification – 24/3/15}



Figure 17: Arrow indicating C1389 in part removal



Figure 18:

Context 1389 (previously removed as C1441):

The more silty/brown/grey with some CBM, C1389, became what had been removed in what had been thought to be C1441. The grey area seen at the top of area C looked quite thin but on removal grey was found throughout the fill and not just that small layer as seen in Figure 18. Perhaps the thin distinct layer was trample?

[On further analysis of pictures of the NE wall section, Section 33, in Jan 2015 the topmost grey layer seen in Figure 18, dotted orange arrow, is quite clear and considered as being C1389. An additional context has been assigned to the lower more brown layers as seen in Figure 18. Context C1390/1474 But they were excavated together and all finds are combined into C1389.]

As with all these layers, they are confused, sometimes a bit mixed up and too many greys and mixes to be absolutely clear between them. However, with the angle of deposit shifting continually towards the NE corner of this area, and being in layers, it makes sense that the grey thin area seen in Figure 18 can become the much deeper area seen in the wall section as C1389 and you can see a clear more brown area beneath C1389 in one of the final pictures, Figure 22]

Context 1389 (refer to area C)

Initially the grey dipped and rose in a very irregular fashion and when I thought I had cleared it all it appeared again further below still mixed in with loose brown soil. Though interestingly, as can be seen in Figure 18, it doesn't appear in the remaining, lower section at this point! [See note above] The harder grey surface with white chalk flecks you see on the right in Figure 20 is hard from exposure but also may have been trampled significantly because its soft underneath and it may be this that is forming the thin crust as seen in Figure 18.

In Figure 19, it is hard to see, but the first removal of this softer, darker grey area resulted in a very uneven surface and, as mentioned, it appeared much more of the grey/brown mixed all together. As a result I took the surface down in a layer approximately 20cm all over calling it context 1389 with context 1453 below, which appeared to be a clearer, grey soft fill. However, as can be seen in Figure 22, the C1389 is the grey irregular line, C1453 is the soft more blue grey and between them is the clearer, C1390, context.



Figure 19: Shows the uneven appearance of the mix of brown and soft grey within C1389. As it still seemed the same context it was taken down evenly to the depths shown in Figure 21.



In light of the appearance of the chalk vertical wall appearing below the rubble a 'cut' was assigned. This was assigned 1441. Therefore Context 1441 in this picture was changed to C1389 to coincide with the wall section at this point.

C1441 was reassigned to the 'cut' as shown in Figure 22

Figure 20

Figure 20: Chalk underlying the rubble showing above it.

The final surface photo of the day, Figure 21, still shows these soft grey areas interspersed. The Yellow dots are depth measurements of: NE 124cm, SE 120cm, NW 121cm, SW 121cm



Figure 21

The red line indicates a difference in texture with perhaps a visible crack between. There appears to be no soft grey here.

Question: Is this a sign of a previous test pit? One of the recent years or something earlier. Or just a random event?

JNelson 19/8/14

Answer: Probably not, it's all in the way take it down!!

Also the bore hole is 'recent' and unimportant. So the plan is to take down all inside the green area, continuing to chase the greys and establishing where C1451, the CBM interspersed with grey, lies in relation to C1389 in the wall section. Then once that is done, update the section drawing, plan and draw the whole area, and then assess if the looser grey recently uncovered within the yellow dot area is part of, on top of or under any particular area in order to know what context comes next.



Figure 22

Cut 1441: Indicated in yellow dashed line Figure 22 in north east corner of TR9. This had been clarified after further levels taken out revealed the clear appearance of a chalk base (Context C1475) under the rubble of C1388.

Context 1451:

Abundant CBM interspersed with grey ashy deposit. This is the general covering of CBM interspersed with grey ashy bits that has been chased out all over the area and dipping down to the NE corner. On removing this it became apparent that there was a difference in 'feel' to the surface under this context when considering the southern side and northern side of the area. The southern side was more friable in breaking through the CBM whereas the northern half had a more clay, hard base to it. They were separated in their finds into C1451 N & S. In plan, this context lies over 1463.

Context 1452:

In the east wall of the well extension, Section 33, the yellow mortar area outlined in green dashed line in Figure 23 is below wall mixed contexts 1389 and 1390 in the new, updated wall section 33. But see how it appears when outlining its apparent position away from the wall, red dotted line.

On removing C1451, in plan, a new context (to be numbered) appeared. This overlays what is believed to be a continuation of C1452 away from the vertical trench side as indicated by the red line in Fig 23. A small area of this new context was removed to investigate the extent of the hard yellow C1452 area. It revealed a very irregular area of dips and angles. *(Currently the finds tray labelled C1452 contains this removed context and needs a new number)*. It is clear that we need to understand the relationship between these contexts at this position. No further work was done in this area.

The angle of this mortar layer, C1452, in the vertical wall section dips towards the NE, below the soft, mixed grey/soil contexts of C1389 and C1390/1474. So, since C1389 still lay above C1452 a decision was taken to remove the remaining C1389 in the NE to seek the next context there.

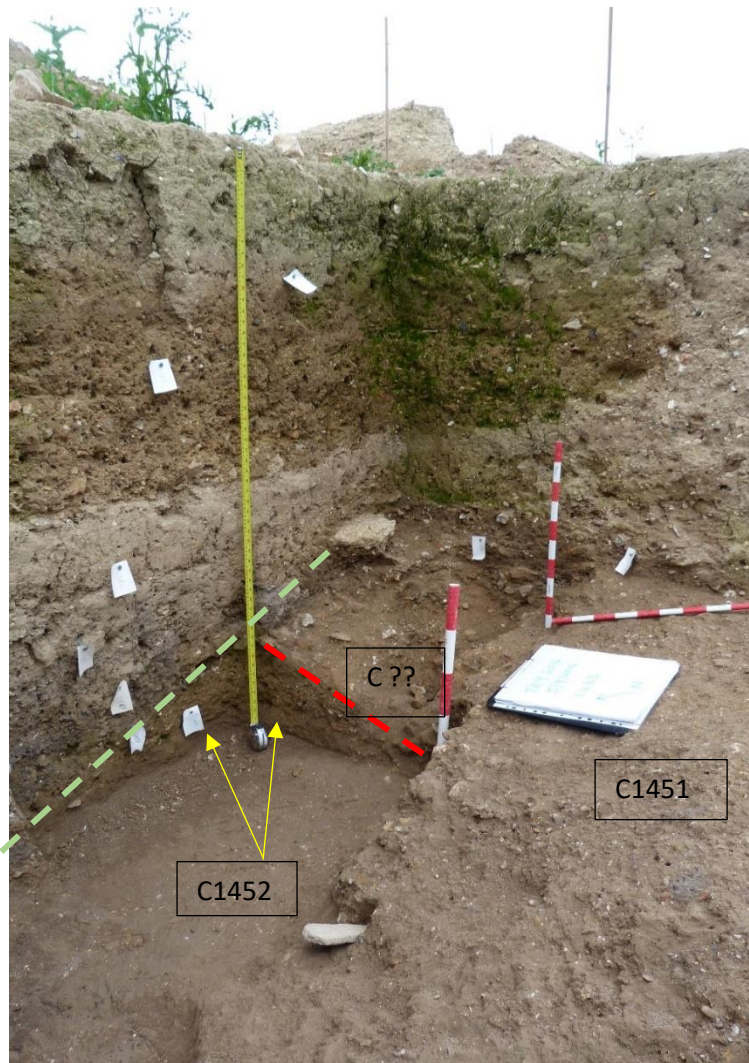


Figure 23:

Context 1453:

This is a grey, soft fill in NE corner of the area. It is very soft and grey, shown outlined in orange dashed line in Figure 24 and 25 and it runs under C1464 indicated by orange arrows. Context tags were placed at end of the season so on return, in 2015, it will be necessary to review 1464 in relation to 1463. (I think 1464 is the more clay, northern equivalent of 1463. If this is so then 1453 lies under 1464 which is contemporary with 1463)



Figure 24: Orange arrows indicating C1453 diving beneath C1464

Context 1464 and Context 1463:

These lie on the surface of the area at the end of 2014.

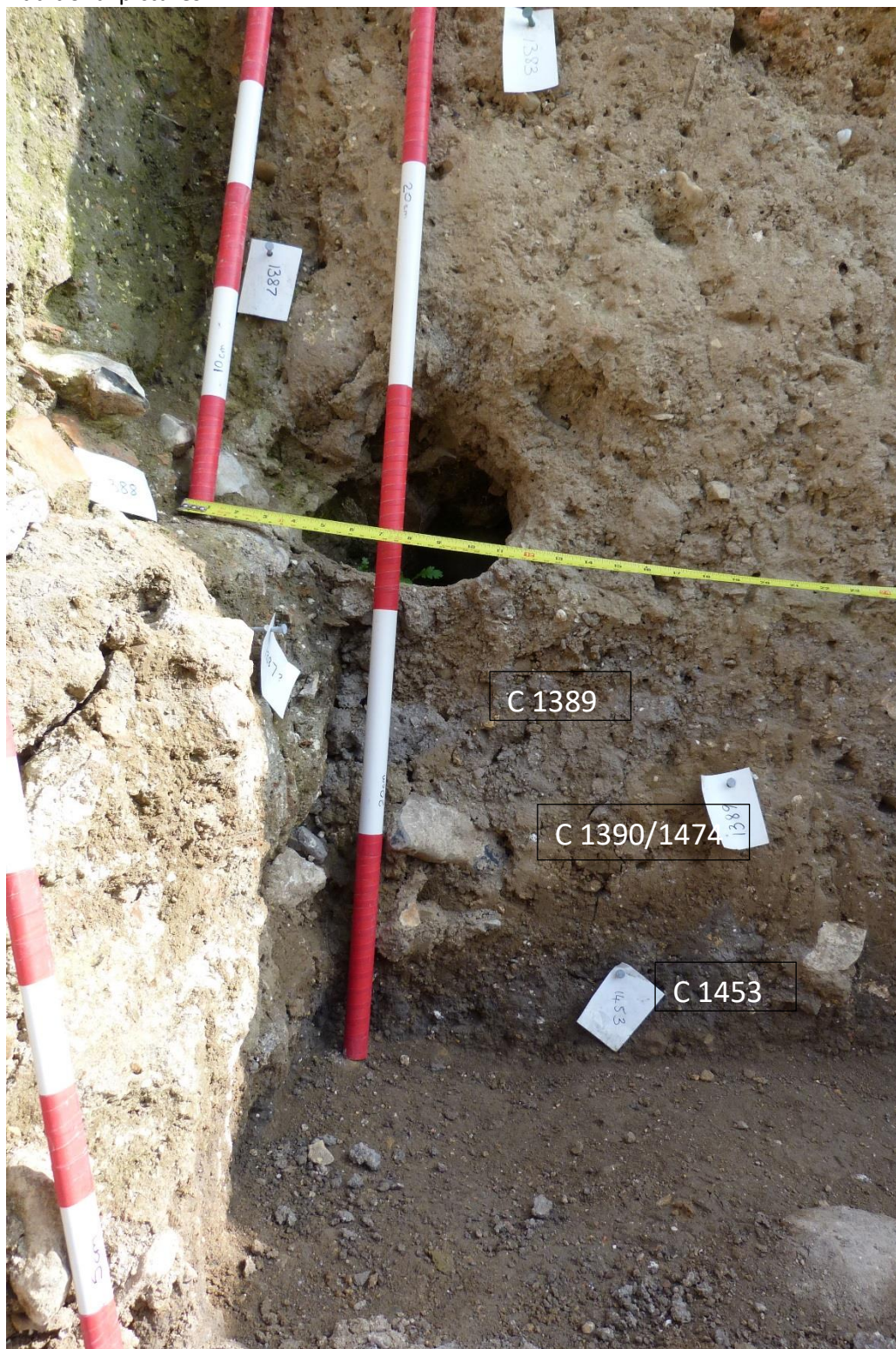


Figure 25: 9/9/14

Context C1453 as seen in wall section. Note C1389 is the paler grey fill and a new context has since been assigned the middle brown fill, C1390/1474.



Figure 26: 5/9/14
Surface of Context 1463



Figure 27: 5/9/14
C1464 on left hand side C1453 grey soft soil on right hand side and deep at the base of wall section

Appendix Context List:

Contexts for Tr9 – Sections 30 View NE, 33 and 35			
Context		Depth	Notes – Most layers are angled so they can cover a range of depths across the area
Original	New		
x	1381	24-36	Mainly soil, some red flecks, little CBM
x	1382	38-70	Crushed CBM, granular
x	1383	26-70	More soil consistency, lighter grey – an angled lens of fill
x	1384	32-90	Hard chalky clay, little CBM, may be a ‘capping’ layer – starts at 32 , drops to 90
x	1385	70-100	Similar to 1384 but more friable - starts at 70 drops to 100
	1386	92-98	This number used in early section drawings of S30 before later contexts assigned in plan. Same context as 1432, hard compact thin layer of CBM with brown soil below. More CBM, stone, flint, mortar.
x	1387	58-	More blue/grey, silty, with chalk chips. Appears to travel round to the NW in S32Ext. Lays over cut 1441
x	1388	83-100	Rubble fill in S51Ext. Layer of brick/tile, flint, stone and chalk. Possible foundation. Start of cut 1441
	1441	83	
x	1389	100-138	Largely soft, brown soil with abundant clumps of soft grey deposits, some small stone, a little CBM. Initially this presented as a hard crust, perhaps trample. On removal the lower layers were often soft, mixed brown and grey.
x	1390/1474	124-138	1390 assigned in NE extension wall S33. 1474 assigned in NW extension wall S32Ext. Soft brown soil – this context removed with 1389 as it was difficult to differentiate, however, there appears to be some clarity of difference visual in the wall section
	1391		A void that was investigated in 2013 and has eroded further over time
	1392/1452	116 -	In earlier 2014 this hard, yellowy mortar area appeared at the base of the deep sondage next to the NE Ext wall, S33 and traverses to S35. Later assigned 1452. Mixed CBM. Triangular fill at about 40°
X	1385/1423		Slim crisp area of CBM with some brown soil
x	1386/1432		Underlying 1423. Brown, softer more soil
	1451	98 -	Abundant CBM interspersed with grey ashy deposit. Finds separated into 1451N and S based on the underlying context having different texture in the N and S areas.
	1453	138 -	Grey, soft fill in NE wall S33. Very soft. Runs under 1463
	1463	≈ 128	Current unexcavated surface in northern half of the area. See note on 1451.
	1464	≈ 132	Current unexcavated surface in southern half of the area. See note on 1451

Contexts for Tr9 – Section 51 TR9Ext: View NW: NB this section stands 30cm further SE from S32 therefore direct comparisons of contexts with S32 may not be appropriate.

Context		Depth	Notes
Original	New		
a	1384	34-56	More soil, less grey, less chalk, harder
b	1494	54-58	Brown/grey/blue with fragments of mortar, chalk chips, tile – not soft
c	1495	50-100	Very friable, soft blue/grey, earthy/ashy, less constituents, very small stones
d	1387	60-90	Brown/grey/blue with fragments mortar, chalk, tile
	1388	83-104	Rubble beginning of the cut 1441
	1441	82	Cut
e	1475	100 -	Reconstituted chalk
f	1390/1474	124-128	More brown soil
g	1453	138 -	Dark, soft, silty grey
			b and d very grey but b dries to a lighter colour and has less chalk chips

Contexts for Tr9 – Section 32 View NW

Context		Depth	Notes
Original	New		
a	1496	54-58	Brown/grey/blue with fragments of mortar, chalk chips, broken tile – <u>not</u> soft/ashy
b	1497	26-46	Grey silty, abundant chalk chips, odd fragment brick/tile
c	plough	0-40 varied	Soil fill (included plough), hard brown with clear 'v' plough line. Compact. - [Probably 'plough' and 'a' in S32Ext]
d	1494	46-64	More soil based. Less grey, less chalk chips, harder. [probably same as 'b' in S51Ext]
e	1495	30-58	Soft ashy grey, dries out pale, less constituents. [possibly same as 'c' in S51Ext]

Appendix Context Finds

Contexts 1381 – 1385 were excavated in 2013. There are no specific finds reported here.

Appearance:

Context 1381: Mainly soil , some red flecks, little CBM

Context 1382: Crushed CBM, granular

Context 1383: More soil, lighter grey

Context 1384: Hard chalky clay, little CBM may be a 'capping' area.

Context 1385: Similar to 1384 but more friable

Context 1386: SE Section 30: More CBM, hard layer, stone, flint, mortar

Context 1387: Initially located and numbered in Section33 (2013), excavated ultimately (2014) as 1389. See notes on reasons for renumbering. More blue/grey, silty

Context 1388: Layer of brick/tile/flint/stone/chalk, possible foundation

Context 1389: Mixed layer initially rather grey, brown interspersed and more brown underneath (C1390) but all removed in same context. See Pic 14a for clarification



Picture Context 1389 Finds

Context 1390: included in 1389

Context 1391: A void that was investigated at end of 2013, and has gradually grown in size through erosion.

Context 1392/1452: Originally noted in Section 33, not excavated, just numbered. Yellowy, mortar filled area appearing more as each clean out of the sondage occurs and can be seen in the East wall below 1389. As excavation continued it was assigned 1452. Not excavated at present in 2014.

Context 1401 – Plough soil to 30cm – no finds retained



Picture Context 1404 finds

Context 1407 Clean down of original Northern trench wall – no finds

Context 1408 Clean down of Northern wall of NE wall of extension – no finds



Context 1412



Context 1413



Context 1414



Context 1414 cont'd



Context 1418 brown soil between upstanding greys



Context 1423 slim crust of CBM



Context 1432 brown soil beneath slim crust C1423



Context 1434 grey upstanding areas only



Context 1451 North

Context 1451: Abundant CBM interspersed with grey ashy deposit. This was collected in two boxes N and S as the underlying context appeared quite different in each case.



Context 1451 South



Context 145? – see note below

Context 145^{??}: This needs renumbering as it actually was the finds gathered after 1451N/S had been removed and was sitting on top of 1452 in SE section see Pic 20. Yellow mortar area outlined in green dotted line in Figure 23. C1452 continues towards the SW, also Figure 23. These finds were laying on top of this and taken out as a sample to see how the terrain lay underneath.



Context 1453: Grey soft fill in NE corner of the area. Very soft shown outlined in orange in Pic 16 runs under 1464?

Context 1463 not excavated

Context 1464 not excavated