

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Glassenbury House, Cranbrook, Kent

NGR 574852 136675

Project No. 2509

**By
Andrew Margetts BA PGCE**



November 2006

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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during excavations associated with the building of a new swimming pool and glasshouse in the grounds of Glassenbury House, Cranbrook, Kent. Groundworks included landscaping and service trenches as well as excavation of areas for both the swimming pool and glasshouse. Site visits were made to monitor groundworks between 7th June and 31st August 2006. Excavations for the pool reached depths of up to 2.4 meters and the glasshouse 700mm beneath the current ground surface. No archaeological finds or features were encountered.

Archaeology South-East

Archaeology South-East is a division of the Field Archaeology Unit, University College London, one of the largest groupings of academic archaeologists in the country. Consequently, Archaeology South-East has access to the conservation, computing and environmental backup of the college, as well as a range of other archaeological services.

The Field Archaeology Unit and South Eastern Archaeological Services (which became Archaeology South-East in 1996) were established in 1974 and 1991 respectively. Although field projects have been conducted world-wide, the Field Archaeology Unit retains a special interest in South-East England with the majority of our contract and consultancy work concentrated in Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Greater London and Essex.

Based in the local community, the Field Archaeology Unit sees an important part of its work as explaining the results to the broader public. Public lectures, open days, training courses and liaison with local archaeological societies are aspects of its community-based approach.

Drawing on experience of the countryside and towns of the south east of England the Unit can give advice and carry out surveys at an early stage in the planning process. By working closely with developers and planning authorities it is possible to incorporate archaeological work into developments with little inconvenience.

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Plate 1: Area of swimming pool showing nature of deposits.

Plate 2: Area of the glasshouse.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeology South East (ASE), a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit (UCLFAU), was commissioned by Mr I.D. Coffey on behalf of Weald Holdings Ltd, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundwork's at Glassenbury House, Cranbrook, Kent (centred NGR 574852 136675, Fig 1).
- 1.2 Planning permission was granted by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Planning ref. TW/05/02404) for the construction of a new glasshouse and swimming pool and alteration of a stable block to form a family room and changing room. Groundworks included landscaping and service trenches as well as excavations for the swimming pool and glasshouse.
- 1.3 The Heritage Conservation Group at Kent County Council considered the site to have sufficient archaeological potential to warrant the attachment of a condition to the planning consent which stated that:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a watching brief to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the Local Planning Authority so that excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded. The watching brief shall be in accordance with a written programme and specification which has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.4 The general objective of the archaeological work was to monitor the groundwork in order to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the excavations were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards. This was to include artefacts of archaeological interest (e.g. worked flint, burnt flint, pottery, ceramic building material) that may be recovered from within the soil during its removal.
- 1.5 A Brief outlining the requirements was prepared by the Heritage Conservation Group at KCC. It suggested intermittent periods of attendance by a suitably qualified archaeologist. The fieldwork was undertaken by Justin Russell on the 7th June and the 31st of August 2006. The project was managed by Neil Griffin (Project Manager) and Louise Rayner (Post-excavation Manager).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The British Geological Survey shows that the site is situated on Tunbridge Wells Sand although Wadhurst Clay is recorded close by to the north.

- 2.2 The site is located between Cranbrook and Goudhurst off the B2065 near Glassenbury Hill Farm and is situated around 75m north west of the main house in a former stableyard and garden. It is situated approximately 95m AOD.
- 2.3 Glassenbury Park House is a Grade II Listed Building dating to the early eighteenth century but replacing a medieval house; some portions of the fifteenth century structure survive in the north east corner. The wider grounds of the park also represent a medieval manor dating to 1474 and the application site appears to have been close to the spring, pond and stream system that filled the manor house moat, and also served as fishponds until the nineteenth century.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The objectives of the archaeological watching brief were to contribute to the knowledge of the area through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks. Particular attention was to be made to the character, height below ground level, condition, date and significance of the deposits.
- 3.2 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded according to accepted professional standards in accordance with the Specification using standard Archaeology South-East context record sheets. Deposit colours were verified by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.3 The groundworks, (monitored intermittently by a suitably qualified archaeologist), comprised the removal of existing foundations and yard features, excavations for the new swimming pool, excavations for a glasshouse, service trenching and landscaping. Excavations for the swimming pool comprised the stripping of an area approximately 7 x 14 meters to a depth of c.2.4 metres below the current ground level. The groundworks associated with the glass house were of an area 8.6 x 10.65m to a depth of 700mm (Fig. 2). Landscaping, service trenching and the preparation for the more intrusive groundworks were unobserved. All observed excavations were carried out with a tracked machine (equipped with a toothless bucket).
- 3.4 The spoil from the excavations was inspected to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest.
- 3.5 All archaeological features and deposits encountered were recorded according to accepted professional standards. A full photographic record was kept of the work as appropriate.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS (Fig 3)

Swimming Pool

- 4.1 An area c.7 x 14m was stripped to a depth of between 520 and 570mm beneath the current ground surface at which point natural ground was reached. The deposits encountered consisted firstly of mid grey-brown topsoil (Context 1). This occurred directly above the natural. This was a combination of grey silty sand and mottled yellow clay that contained outcrops of soft yellow sandstone. It was noted that the natural ground undulated considerably over the area dipping in the middle and rising as much as 150 – 200mm to the east and west (see *Plate 1*). Excavation was only observed to the natural. The remaining groundworks reached a depth of 2.4m below ground level.
- 4.2 No archaeological features were encountered during the excavation of the swimming pool, however the area was heavily impacted with modern drains and post-holes. The undulating nature of the natural also meant that pockets of topsoil remained as isolated spreads on the surface. Investigation of these showed them to be 10 - 20mm in depth. A linear feature (Context 3) with a dark black-brown fill was encountered orientated north to south across the middle of the strip. This contained small quantities of ash, white china, lemonade bottles and tile of early to mid 20th century date, none of which were deemed worthy of retention. An investigative slot (Fig 3) was excavated at one end of the feature which was approximately 1.50m in width and at least 0.40m deep. This feature appeared to be cut by Context 4. This was a loose fill, brown-black in colour and containing gravel, clinker and modern tile.

Glasshouse

- 4.3 For the creation of a glasshouse an area 8.6 x 10.65m was reduced to a maximum of 700mm below ground to the north of the swimming pool (see *Plate 2*). A mid grey-brown topsoil was encountered (Context 1) heavily disturbed by rooting and containing modern building debris. Beneath this was the natural comprising yellow sand mixed with patches of blue-grey compact sandy clay. It was noted that the natural slopes visibly away from the east to the west.
- 4.4 This area was comparable to that of the swimming pool in that it was crossed by modern drainage including both plastic and ceramic pipes. The modern feature (Context 4) noted in the swimming pool area (see above) continued into the footprint of the glasshouse (Fig. 3). The surface of 4 was also heavily disturbed by root disturbance.

5 The Finds

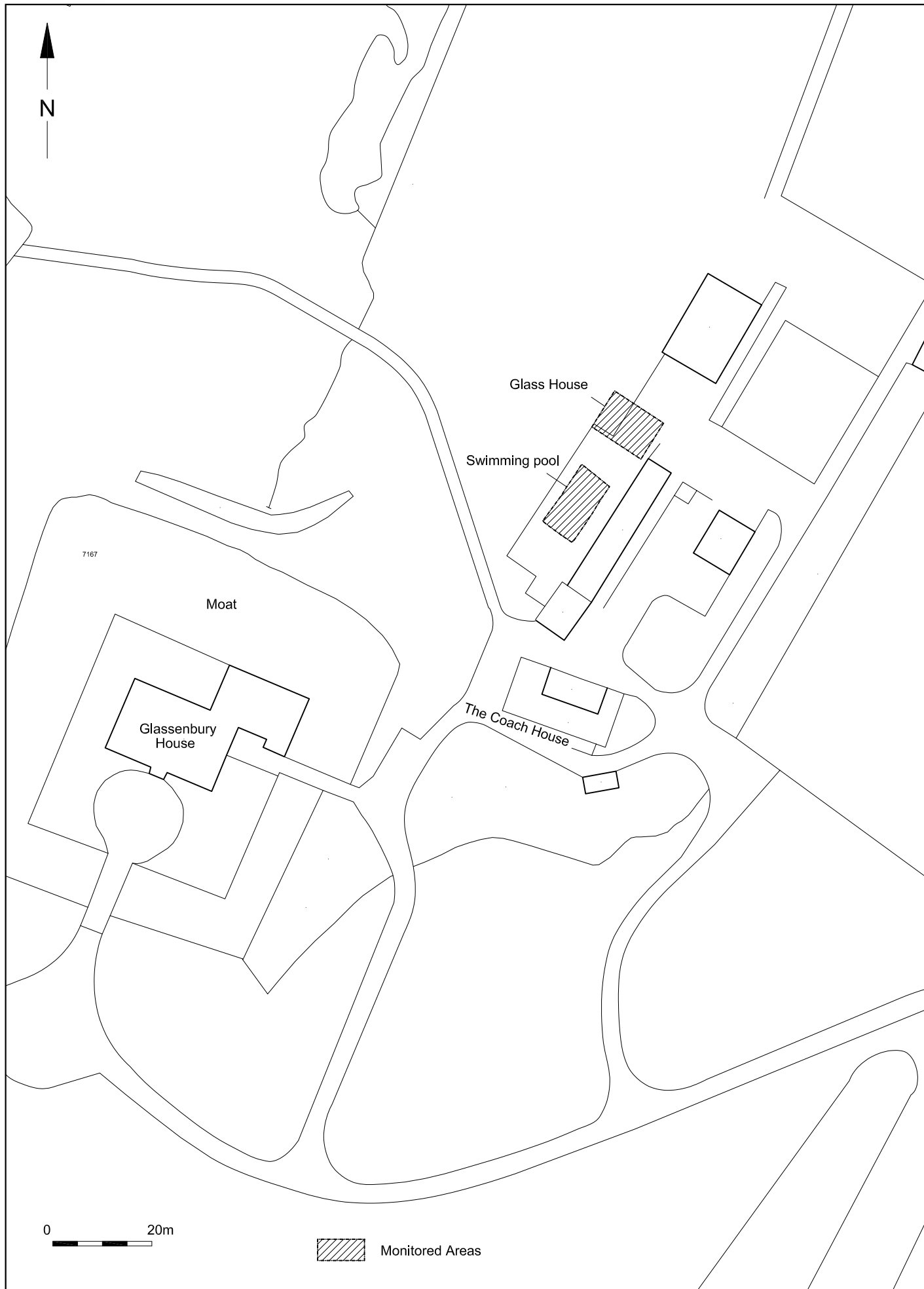
- 5.1 The watching brief recovered no finds of an archaeological nature.

6 DISCUSSION

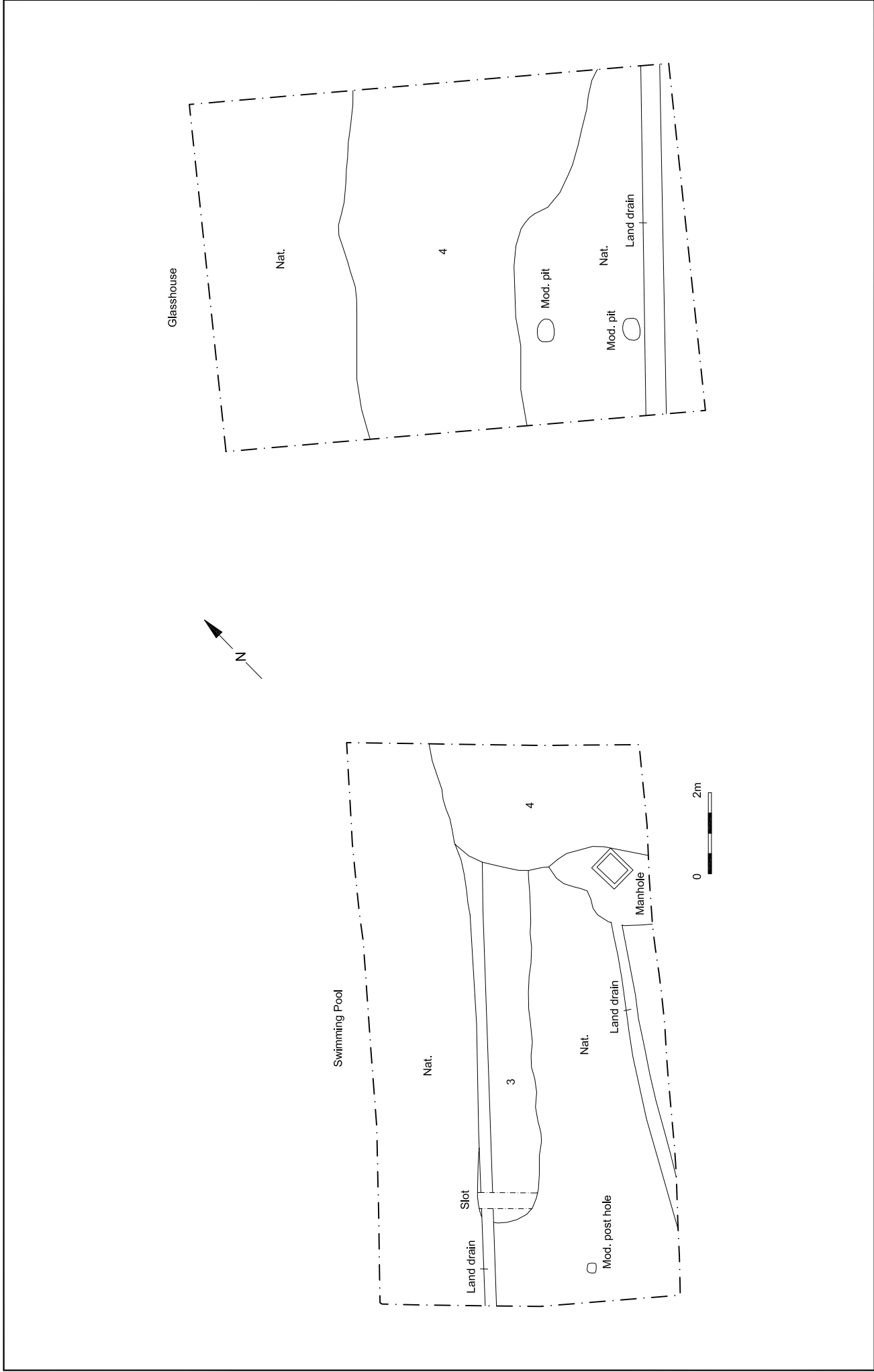
- 6.1 The underlying geology encountered during the course of the groundworks consisted of Tunbridge Wells Sand with localised patches of Clay with Tunbridge Wells Sand. It was revealed that the natural undulated across the site, visibly sloping away to the west (see section 4.3).
- 6.2 It is thought likely that **3** served as some sort of drainage. This is supported by the fact that there is a subsequent land drain sitting within the top of **3** and following exactly the same alignment. Context **4** represents an area of modern disturbance and activity, the precise nature of which is uncertain. The heavily rooted nature of **4** within the footprint of the glasshouse suggests that it may be related to 20th century garden activity.
- 6.3 The results of the watching brief illustrate that no finds or features of an archaeological nature were encountered. The groundworks showed that the area had been highly impacted by modern activity and thus, it could be concluded that this activity may have served to destroy any archaeological evidence if indeed there had been any present.

SMR Summary Form

Site Code	GHC06					
Identification Name and Address	Glassenbury House, Cranbrook, Kent					
County, District &/or Borough	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Kent					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 574852 136675					
Geology	Tunbridge Wells Sand.					
Arch. South-East Project Number	2509					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field ✓	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 7 th June, 31 st August.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Mr I.D. Coffey on behalf of Weald Holdings Ltd					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin and Louise Rayner					
Project Supervisor	Justin Russell					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern ✓		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during excavations associated with the building of a new swimming pool and glasshouse in the grounds of Glassenbury House, Cranbrook, Kent. Groundwork's included landscaping and service trenches as well as excavation of areas for both the swimming pool and glasshouse. Site visits were made to monitor groundworks between 7th of June and 31st of August 2006. Excavations for the pool reached depths of up to 2.4 meters and the glasshouse 700mm beneath the current ground surface. No archaeological finds or features were encountered.</i></p>						



© Archaeology South-East			Glassonbury House, Cranbrook		Fig. 2
Ref: 2509	Nov 2006	Drawn by: JLR	Site Plan		



© Archaeology South-East		Glassenbury House, Cranbrook	
Ref: 2509	Nov 2006	Drawn by: JLR	Site Plan

Fig. 3



Plate 1: Area of Swimming Pool Showing Nature of Deposit



Plate 2: Area of Glass House

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