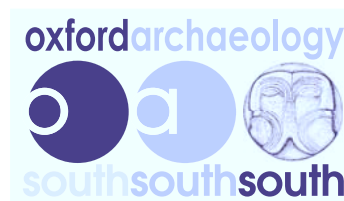


Manor Farm Hardwick Road Priors Marston Warwickshire



September 2010

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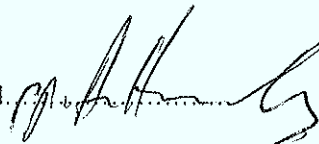
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between the 26th of April and the 12th of May 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Manor Farm, Hardwick Road, Priors Marston, Warwickshire (NGR: SP 488 570). The work was commissioned by Johnston Cave Associates in advance of a barn conversion. The watching brief revealed evidence of 18th-century terracing, a cobbled farmyard surface, details of the construction of the standing buildings, and their later use, but no evidence for any earlier activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between the 26th of April and the 12th of May 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Manor Farm, Hardwick Road, Priors Marston, Warwickshire (NGR: SP 488 570). The work was commissioned by Johnston Cave Associates in respect of a planning application for a barn conversion (Planning Application No. 09/01627/FUL).

1.1.2 Due to the possibility of disturbance to below ground archaeological deposits a condition requiring that an Archaeological Watching Brief be maintained during the period of intrusive ground works was attached to the permission.

1.1.3 A project brief was set by Anna Stocks, the Warwickshire County Planning Archaeologist detailing the requirements of Warwickshire Museum Field Services and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2010).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The village of Priors Marston is located approximately 8 km south-east of the town of Southam (Fig. 1). Manor Farm is situated on the southern edge of the village. The barn is bounded to the south, west and north by the farmyard and other farm buildings and to the east by Hardwick Road. The barn is sited at the bottom of a gentle slope rising to the north-west at a level of approximately 138 m above OD. The underlying geology is Lower Lias Clays (Geological Survey of England and Wales, sheet no. 201).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

A design brief for the watching brief was prepared by Warwickshire Museum Field Services and the section on the archaeological background has been reproduced together with other references.

1.3.1 The name Priors Marston is from the Anglo Saxon 'merse' meaning marsh, with 'ton' meaning town. The Priors being added by the Benedictine Priory of Coventry

when the manorship was endowed to them. The village is mentioned in the Domesday survey as part of Priors Hardwick, but in 1236 was listed as a separate place. After the dissolution of Coventry Priory in 1539, the manorship passed through several hands until it was granted to Robert Lord Spencer in 1602. There are a number of houses in the village which were constructed in the years following this handover.

- 1.3.2 The Enclosure Act of 1758 appears to have prompted a second expansion of the village with a number of new farm houses being constructed outside the main village.
- 1.3.3 The proposed development lies within an area of significant archaeological potential, within the probable extent of the medieval settlement of Priors Marston (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 8999). There is therefore a potential for any groundworks associated with the development to impact upon archaeological deposits associated with medieval and later utilisation of this area.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that may be truncated or disturbed during intrusive ground works.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a continuous archaeological presence during those works which had the potential to disturb or destroy archaeological deposits. These works included breaking out of modern concrete features and the reduction of floor level within the main barn and the excavation of a service trench. The excavated areas were closely examined for any features and the spoil was examined in order to collect dating evidence.
- 2.2.2 A plan of the extent of any excavations was maintained (Fig. 2) at a scale of 1:300 and sections of exposed features and sample sections showing the stratigraphy were drawn at a scale of 1:50. All excavated features were photographed using digital photography and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

The Barn Conversion

- 3.1.1 The underlying natural, a yellow-brown lias clay (10) was encountered at a level of 0.1 m below the finished floor level at the western end of the barn interior sloping down to 0.5 m below finished floor level at the eastern end of the barn (Fig. 3, Section 1). No evidence was observed for any subsoil or topsoil deposits overlying this deposit and it is probable that the area had been stripped prior to construction starting on the barn.
- 3.1.2 Cutting the natural was the foundation trench for the barn (9). This varied in depth between 0.35 m along the sides of the barn, increasing to 0.5 m at the gable ends. The stone footings for the barn walls were trench built within this cut (10). The footings for all the walls consisted of two courses of the local limestone bonded with lime mortar. Underneath the side walls these extended for approximately 0.1 m either side of the 0.5 m thick walls while the footings for the end gables were extended for approximately 0.2 m outside the walls.
- 3.1.3 Laid directly upon the natural (10) and butting up to the side and gable walls at the western end of the barn was a stone slab floor (11) (Fig. 3, site plan and Plate 2). This was constructed using iron stained limestone slabs measuring between 0.5 m x 0.5 m and 0.5 m x 0.3 m. The side fronting on the central aisle of the barn was edged with four rows of hand moulded red bricks measuring 0.23 m x 0.11 m x 0.075 m. Only the upper surface and sides of these slabs were dressed with the underside remaining as quarried.
- 3.1.4 At the eastern end of the barn and extending partway into the central aisle of the barn the footings and the natural was sealed by a levelling layer of greenish grey-brown clay silt (7). This measured 0.5 m in depth against the eastern gable wall of the barn reducing in depth towards the central aisle. This deposit contained numerous medium to large fragments of iron stained limestone, including several dressed blocks, which may represent constructional debris. Fragments of bone, brick and pottery together with several metal objects (Small Finds 1 to 4) were also recovered. These have been provisionally dated to the 18th or early 19th century giving a possible construction date for the barn.
- 3.1.5 Laid directly upon this levelling layer was a brick floor (6) (Fig. 3 and Plate 1). This was constructed using a hand moulded red brick identical in size and appearance to those edging the stone slab floor (11) in the western end of the barn. The courses ran east to west along the axis of the barn. Along the southern edge of the floor the bricks dipped slightly forming a possible shallow drainage channel. This surface was at a similar level to the stone slab floor in the western end of the barn.

- 3.1.6 The stone slab floor (11) had been sealed below a layer of grey-brown clay silt (4). This measured between 0.2 m and 0.25 m in depth and contained numerous fragments of stone and brick. This was overlaid by a layer of clear plastic damp proof membrane (DPM) weighted down with modern glazed floor tiles. Cast in situ over the DPM was the concrete grain silo base (1). This was composed of a 0.2 m thick reinforced concrete slab covering the area of layer (4) and a solid wall facing into the central aisle. Voids allowing the insertion of grain elevator augers were cast into the surface of the base. The bottom ring of the corrugated sheet steel silo was bolted and then cemented on top of the base.
- 3.1.7 The brick floor (6) was sealed by a similar construction, with a layer of made ground (5) being deposited over the floor and an identical concrete silo base (2) cast over it.
- 3.1.8 The area of barn floor between the silo bases 1 and 2 had been truncated down to the top of the natural clay (10). Excavated within the centre of the barn aisle was a rectangular pit measuring 3.2 m by 2.4 m. This contained a steel hopper supported by concrete. This concrete continued over the barn aisle, butting up to the silo bases forming a concrete floor (3).

The Service Trench

- 3.1.9 This was located approximately 1.5 m south of the northern boundary/garden wall and measured approximately 25 m long by 1 m wide.
- 3.1.10 A continuation of the underlying natural clay (10) was encountered throughout its length. At the western end of the trench a stone spread (18) was observed sitting directly upon the natural. Immediately east of this spread was a 0.4 m wide by 0.1 m deep gully (20) running approximately north-west to south-east. This had been backfilled with a grey-brown silty loam (19) which produced fragments of a brown glazed earthenware similar those recovered from layer 7.
- 3.1.11 Also cutting the natural at the north-eastern corner of the trench was a modern feature (16) containing a concrete sheep dip trough. This had been backfilled with a dark brown silty loam (17) containing fragments of brick and slate.
- 3.1.12 Sealing the gully, the sheep dip and the stone spread was a layer of dark brown silty loam made ground (15). This also produced fragments of brick and slate and is probably part of the same phase of deposition as (17). This material also butted up the stone constructed garden/terrace wall (14) forming the northern boundary of the farmyard. A layer of broken slate (13) had been spread over the layer of made ground forming a hardcore base for the modern concrete farmyard surface (12).

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 All the finds recovered were post-medieval in date and ranged from the 17th to 20th centuries. These finds included metal artifacts, pottery, butchered bone and brick and tile fragments. The pottery included a mid 17th-century tin glazed ointment jar and

fragments of locally produced black and brown glazed earthenware pottery dating to the early part of the 18th-century. The vast majority of the bricks recovered were of hand moulded red brick, again probably produced locally. Their size suggests a probable mid to late 18th-century date. Examples of 19th-century glazed floor tiles were also recovered from within the layers of made ground.

- 3.2.2 Four metal objects were recovered from within the levelling layer (7), these included a large spherical harness bell and a set of three lead weights, these have been provisionally dated to the mid post-medieval period.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 All the deposits, features and structures observed during the course of the watching brief relate to the construction and use of the standing farm buildings and farmhouse and date from the 17th/18th century to the present day. No deposits, structures or artefacts relating to earlier activity on this site were encountered.
- 4.1.2 The absence of any subsoil or topsoil above the natural clay within the footprint of the barn suggests that the area was stripped or possibly terraced prior to construction of the barn commencing. There is a possibility this may have truncated any earlier features, although the absence of earlier residual finds or of the presence of the bases of deep features would argue against this.
- 4.1.3 The deposition of the levelling layer of made ground (7) within the eastern half of the barn is probably contemporary with the construction of the barn. This conclusion can be supported by the fact that the deposit seals the footings for the barn side walls and gable. The surface of this deposit is roughly level with the base of the stone floor (11), suggesting that floors 6 and 11 formed part of a whole and thirdly that when the floors and layer (7) were removed the limewashing within the interior of the barn terminated at floor level.
- 4.1.4 The pottery fragments within layer (7) give a date range between the mid 17th-century and early 18th-century giving a tentative date for the construction of the barn. There is a proviso that since this material was brought in they only provide a “cut off” date for its construction rather than a definitive date.
- 4.1.5 The brick floor (6) and the stone slab floor (11) appear to be contemporary suggested by their closeness in levels. The difference in materials may be related to potential activities in each half or possibly reflect the availability of the materials at the time of construction. The difference in alignment of the bricks, from running east-west in floor (6) to north-south within the area of the aisle is probably to allow wagon wheels to travel along the length of the joints within the aisle.

- 4.1.6 The construction of the concrete grain silo bases and the associated hopper is a reflection on the changes in agricultural practises since the Second World War. The original threshing floor in the aisle has been removed, the upper floor originally used for grain storage dismantled, the holes for the floor joists bricked in and the steel grain silos installed.
- 4.1.7 The stone spread (18) noted with in the service trench may have been part of the original cobbled farmyard surface, but may also represent construction debris from the building of the stone wall (14). The gully (19) may originally have channelled water away from the wall. The concrete sheep dip observed is an obvious modern insertion.
- 4.1.8 The absence of any subsoil or topsoil layers within the farmyard suggest that the area may have been stripped prior to the construction of the farmyard with the material possibly used to build the raised garden immediately to the north of the farmyard.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/ Height</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Structure	0.3 m	4.85 m	Modern grain silo base	Reinforced concrete	C20th
2	Structure	0.3 m	4.85 m	Modern grain silo base	Reinforced concrete	C20th
3	Surface	> 0.8 m	4.85 m	Modern barn floor with integral steel hopper	Reinforced concrete	C20th
4	Layer	0.2 m – 0.25 m	4.85 m	Layer of modern made ground supporting (1)	Brick, stone, wood	C20th
5	Layer	0.2 m – 0.25 m	4.85 m	Layer of modern made ground supporting (2)	Brick, stone, wood	C20th
6	Surface	0.1 m	4.85 m	Brick barn floor	Brick	C18th
7	Layer	0.5 m	4.85 m	Levelling layer under brick floor (6)	Brick, pottery, bone, metal	C18th
8	Structure	> 5 m	6.2 m	Footing and walls for standing barn	Brick	C18th
9	Cut	0.3 m-0.5 m	6.2 m	Foundation trench for standing barn	-	C18th
10	Layer	> 0.8 m	-	Natural Lias clay	-	-
11	Surface	0.15 m	4.85 m	Stone slab floor with brick edging	Brick	C18th
12	Surface	0.2 m	> 4 m	Modern concrete yard surface	-	C20th
13	Surface	0.1 m	> 4m	Modern hardcore base for surface 12	Slate, concrete	C20th
14	Wall	4 m	> 0.6 m	Stone garden/terrace wall	-	C18th
15	Layer	> 0.2 m	3.7 m	Modern made ground	Brick, concrete	C20th
16	Structure	> 0.4 m	1 m	Concrete sheep dip trough	-	C20th
17	Fill	> 0.4 m	1 m	Modern backfilling of 16	Brick, concrete	C20th
18	Surface	> 0.1 m	2.5 m	Stone spread, possible cobbling	-	C18th ?
19	Cut	0.05 m	0.4 m	Probable drainage channel	-	C18th ?
20	Fill	0.05 m	0.4 m	Fill of channel 19	Pot, bone	C18th ?

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

WMFS 2010 *Manor Farm, Hardwick Road, Priors Marston: Brief for Archaeological Work*

IFA, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA 2010 *Manor Farm, Hardwick Road, Priors Marston, Warwickshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

Priors Marston Parish Council 2005 *Priors Marston: Looking Ahead with the Parish Plan*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Manor Farm, Hardwick Road, Priors Marston, Warwickshire

Site code: PRMAFB 10

Grid reference: SP 488 570

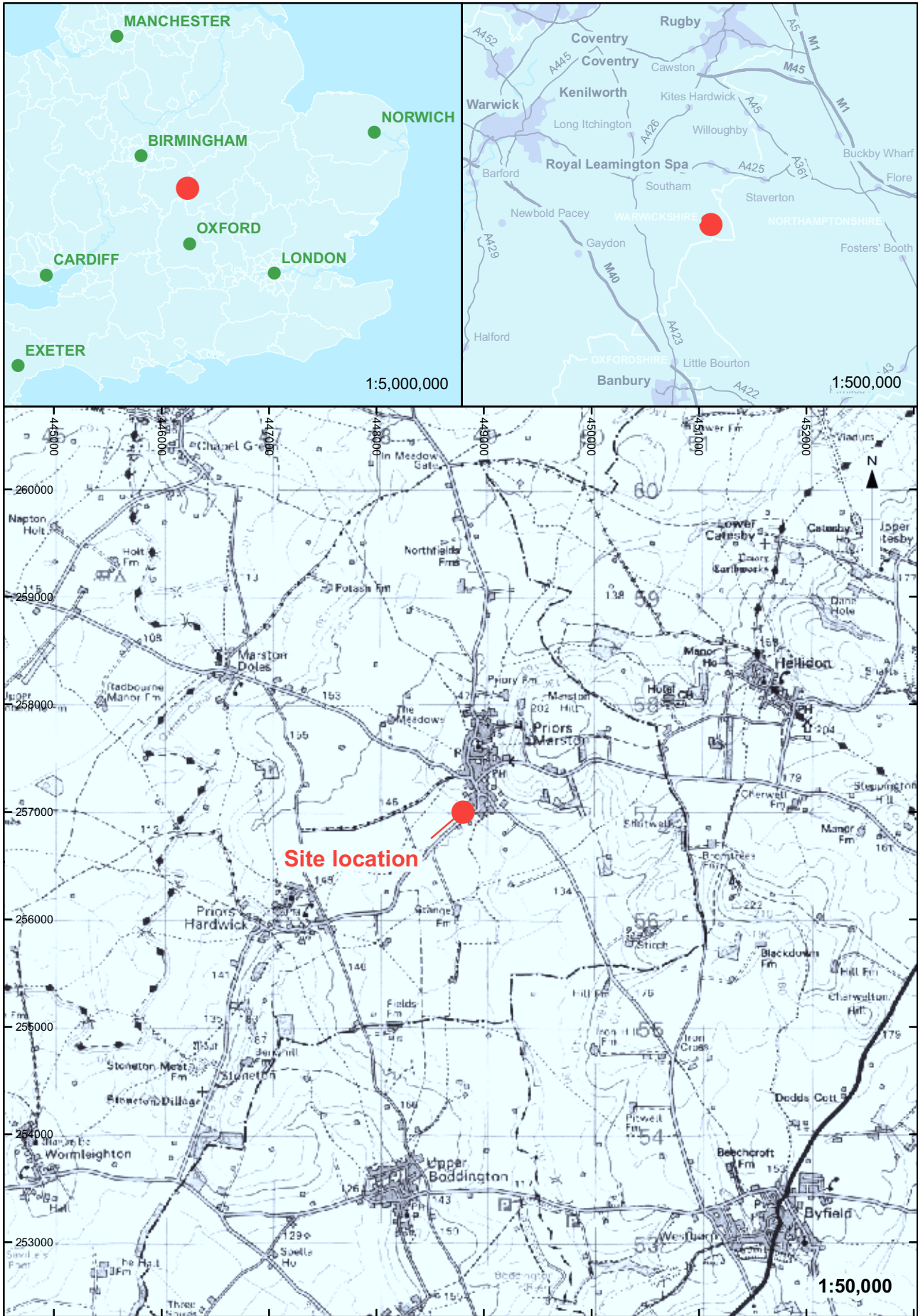
Type of watching brief: Barn conversion including the reduction of floor levels, excavation of a service trench.

Date and duration of project: 26th to 12th May 2010, 5 days on site

Area of site: 1500 m²

Summary of results: All deposits and features encountered relate to the 18th century construction of the standing farm buildings and other structures and their later use. No evidence for earlier activity was encountered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Warwickshire County Museum Service in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

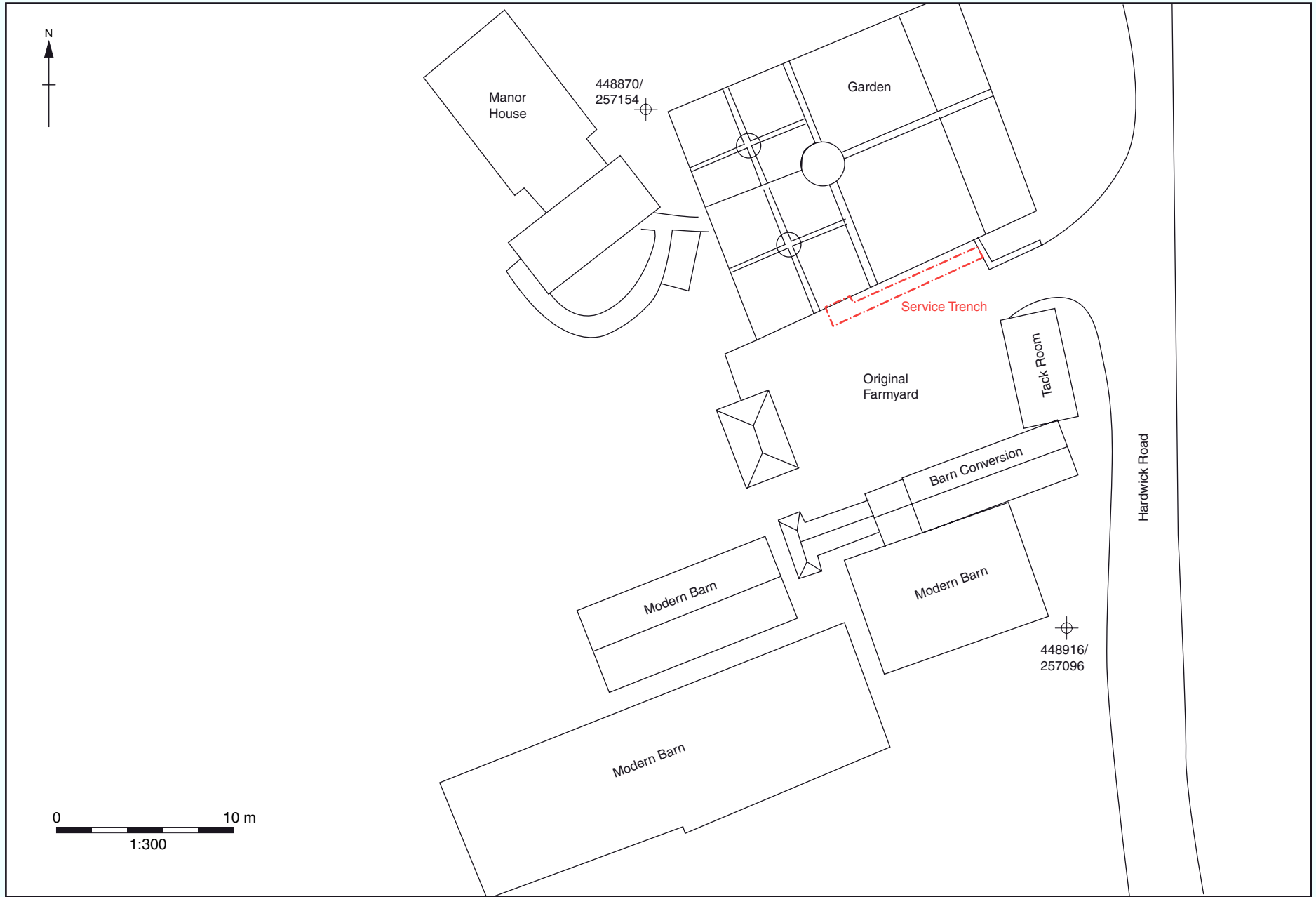


Figure 2: Site plan showing areas of work

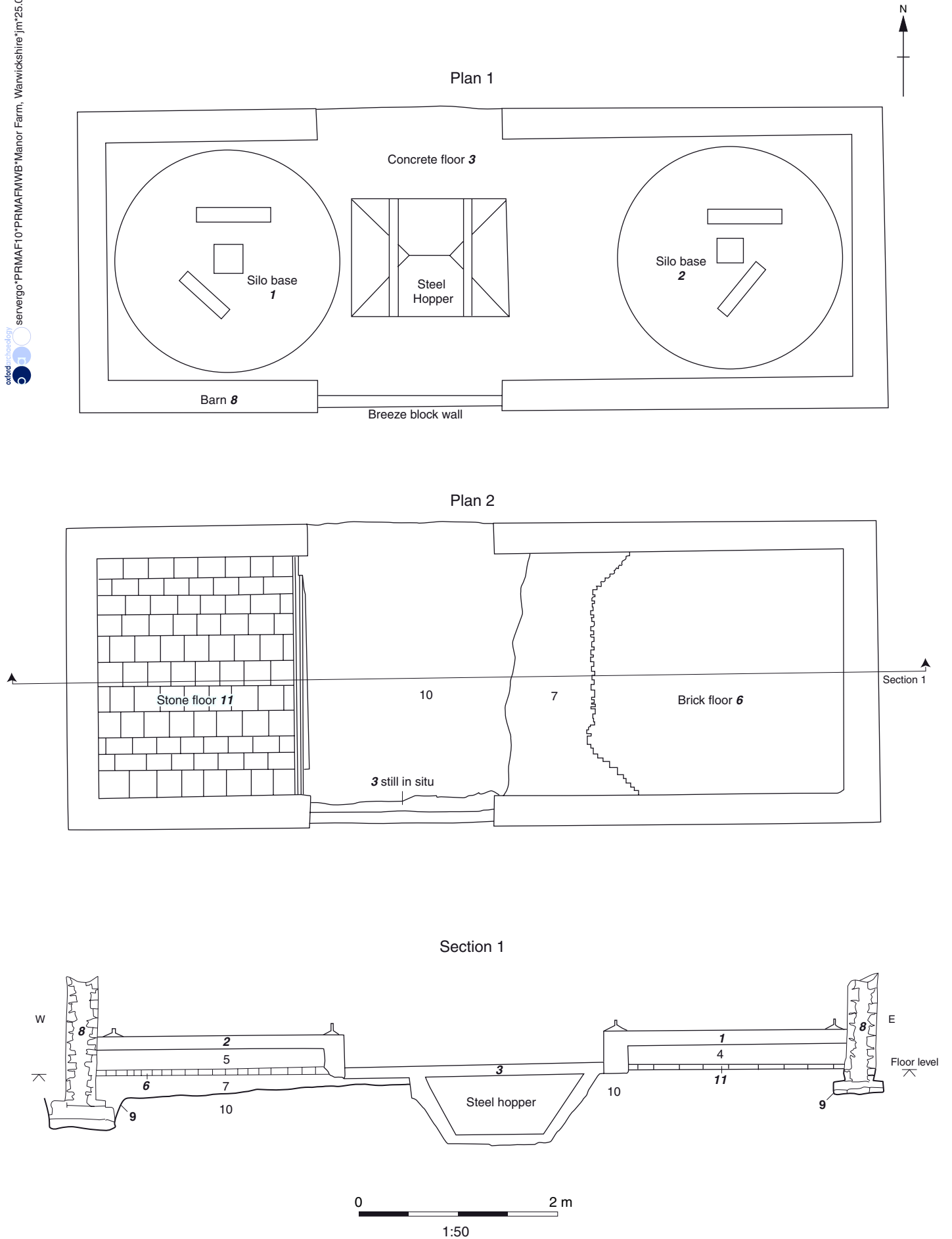


Figure 3: Barn conversion plans and cross section



Plate 1 : Brick floor 6



Plate 2 : Stone slab floor 11



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