

A possible medieval wall
and associated drain at
Gate House Farm,
Culworth,
Northamptonshire



**Observation, Investigation
and Recording Report**



October 2013

Client: Mr and Mrs Duggan

OA East Report No: 1531

OASIS No: oxfordar3-162389

NGR: SP 53948 47248

**A possible medieval wall and associated drain at Gate House Farm,
Culworth, Northamptonshire**

Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording

By Taleyna Fletcher BA MfA

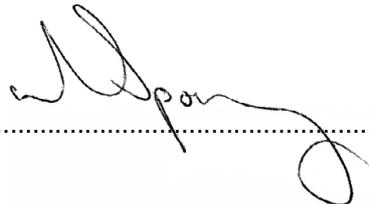
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Report Date: October 2013

Report Number: 1531
Site Name: Gate House Farm, Culworth, Northamptonshire
HER Event No: N/A
Date of Works: 13th-14th March and 23rd-25th September 2013
Client Name: Mr and Mrs Duggan
Client Ref: Gate House Farm, Culworth
Planning Ref: n/a (pre-planning)
Grid Ref: SP 53948 47248
Site Code: XNNGHF13
Finance Code: XNNGHF13
Receiving Body: To be held by OA East until a depository is available
Accession No: 46
Prepared by: Taleyna Fletcher
Position: Project Officer
Date: October 2013

Checked by: Dr Paul Spoerry
Position: Regional Manager
Date: October 2013
Signed:



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Summary

Between 13th and 14th March and 23rd and 25th September 2013, Oxford Archaeology East attended ground works at Gate House Farm, Culworth in order to carry out a programme of archaeological monitoring.

This work was carried out in response to a request from Northamptonshire County Council's Archaeological Advisor. The brief required that an archaeological programme of Observation, Investigation and Recording was undertaken during any below ground works associated with the proposed extension to the 17th-century farmhouse and during the excavation of trenches associated with the ground source heat pump within the field to the immediate north of the historic farmyard. The purpose of the archaeological works was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any archaeological remains on the site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The first phase of monitoring, undertaken in March, to the immediate north of the farmhouse consisted of a continuous trench forming a rectangular shape in plan. Positioned against the farmhouse, a sequence of foundations beneath the existing building was noted, but no other surviving archaeological remains were encountered. The trenches measured 0.60m wide and 1.3m deep.

The second phase of works carried out in September 2013 consisted of six trenches in the field to the north of the farmyard and one leading into the farmyard itself, all radiating from a 7m by 4m sump. The only archaeological remains were encountered in Trenches 1 and 2 and comprised a stone culvert/drain and the foundations of a parallel wall and an undated ditch. As a result, the trenches were redirected and no further remains encountered. The remains encountered are tentatively dated to the 12th-14th century based on pottery recovered from the back-fill of the drain cut. These features may be associated with earthworks known to exist within this part of the site.

The Council's Archaeological Advisor was informed of the works and following the re-routing of the trenches for the heat pump, no further investigation was required.

This work follows on from a historic building survey previously undertaken by OA East at the farmhouse and associated buildings in 2012 (Fletcher 2012).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 A programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken in two phases at Gate House Farm, Culworth, Northamptonshire (Figures 1 and 2). The work was carried out during ground works associated with an extension to the 17th century farmhouse in March 2013 and construction of a ground source heat pump in September 2013. This required a series of parallel trenches to be dug in the field to the immediate north of the site; an area that is known to have surviving earthworks of unknown date.
- 1.1.2 The archaeological monitoring was undertaken in response to a Brief from Northamptonshire County Council's Archaeological Advisor (Mordue 2013) supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (Fletcher 2013).
- 1.1.3 This work followed on from a previous phase of historic building recording of the farmhouse and all associated outbuildings. Due to the high archaeological potential of the site a condition was placed on planning consent requiring a scheme of archaeological monitoring work to be undertaken.
- 1.1.4 The village of Culworth is located close to the Northamptonshire / Oxfordshire border, approximately 8 miles from Banbury and 7 miles from Brackley (Figure 1). Gate House Farm is located within a conservation area on the north-western side of the village of Culworth. It is accessed from the High Street, the main road which runs on a south-east to north-west orientation through Culworth. It is centred at SP 53948 47248.
- 1.1.5 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies at around 139mOD and is located approximately 200m east of a dismantled railway line. The underlying geology is Northampton Sand Formation - Sandstone, Limestone and Ironstone from which many of the local buildings are constructed.

1.3 Historical and archaeological background

For a full description of the historical development of the site, including historical map regression, see the historic building survey for the site (Fletcher 2012).

- 1.3.1 The site is located on the High Street, on the western outskirts of the historic village of Culworth. The line of the High Street follows a possible Roman road also known as Welsh Road. There is relatively little information regarding the historical development of the village and there have been few recorded archaeological investigations.
- 1.3.2 The High Street was formerly built up on both sides in this part of the village; remains of house sites and scatters of pottery of medieval date are recorded from the south side of the road. Further earthworks and cropmarks are also recorded in the fields to the north of Gate House Farm.
- 1.3.3 Culworth is a linear village located in a predominantly agricultural part of the county. Half of the village is set on a prominent ridge, the other half, comprising the High Street area, falls steeply down to the west.
- 1.3.4 The village once had its own market and fair, being at the crossroads of two ancient cattle and sheep drove roads, The Welsh Road and Banbury Lane. The eastern end of

the High Street is the village core with a triangular village green surrounded by a number of historical buildings including the 17th century former manor house and the remains of the original market cross.

- 1.3.5 Not far from the green is the 13th/14th century Grade II* parish church of St Mary which was extensively altered in the 19th century.
- 1.3.6 On the north side of the church is the ringwork of a small medieval castle known as Berry Close Hill which is thought to have been constructed during the reign of King Stephen (AD1135-1154).
- 1.3.7 East of the church, the ground is fairly level along the ridge and there is a strong sense of enclosure derived from buildings or high garden walls sited close to the street edge. Prominent amongst the latter are the listed ironstone walls and gateways to Culworth House, a large 18th century building set in attractive gardens.
- 1.3.8 Buildings within the village are mainly constructed in a light coloured limestone and ironstone with slate or tiled roofs reflecting the local vernacular style. There are also a number of red brick buildings in the village at the eastern end and some modern housing in buff and red-brown brick.
- 1.3.9 The 1839 Tithe map was the earliest map of Culworth available at Northamptonshire Records Office (NRO) which depicts the buildings of Gate House Farm (Figure 3). The purpose of the maps was to show the owners, occupiers and size of land within a parish and buildings are not always represented. For many parishes they provide the only large scale map showing the landscape and they frequently provide the earliest evidence for the field systems in the parish. This map depicts the farmhouse (pink), fronting onto the road. Unlike the present shape in plan, in 1839 it was h-shaped. At the rear of the farmhouse are a parallel range of buildings. There is no surviving evidence of these structures within the field to the north at this time.
- 1.3.10 In 1900 the Great Central Mainline opened a branch from Culworth Junction on the main line just over a mile north of the station to Banbury. It passed through Culworth parish, just west of the village and in 1913 the GCR opened a halt for the village. As the company already had a Culworth railway station it called the new halt Eydon Road Halt. British Railways closed the halt in 1956 and Culworth station in 1958, it closed the line through Eydon Road in 1966 and subsequently had both railways dismantled (www.wikipedia.org).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Dana Easthorpe of MJCT Architects who commissioned the work on behalf of their client, Mr and Mrs Duggan. James Fairbairn undertook all site work including excavation, recording and photography. Lucy Gane compiled the graphics, Rachel Clarke edited the text and Carole Fletcher spot dated the pottery. The author managed the project throughout.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The objective of this programme of Observation, Investigation and Recording was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The Observation, Investigation and Recording exercise comprised two phases:

- **Phase 1** : This involved the monitoring of foundation trenches to the immediate north of the farmhouse during March 2013 (Figure 2). A continuous trench, rectangular in plan was excavated to a depth of 1.3m and a width of 0.60m.
- **Phase 2** : This involved the monitoring of trenches for a ground source heat pump. The trenches were mostly located within the field to the north of the farmyard as well as a 7m by 4m sump and a trench which were positioned within the farmyard (Figure 2). These trenches measured mostly 0.90m wide and approximately 1m deep.

2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB digger with a 0.6m wide ditching bucket. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately and scanned for finds both visually and with a metal detector.

2.2.3 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench sections were recorded at appropriate scales and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits supplemented by digital photographs using an Olympus M760 7.1mega pixel camera.

2.2.4 The trench locations were located by the site director using measured plans located on the Ordnance Survey grid system.

2.3 Site Conditions

2.3.1 Weather conditions were good during both phases of investigation, with occasional sunshine.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Results are presented in the following sections by monitoring phase. Archaeological fills and deposits are represented in normal text and cut numbers and masonry in **bold**.
- 3.1.2 Figures 1 and 2 show the location of all trenches and Figures 4 and 5 provide trench section drawings. Plates showing the site during investigation are also presented at the back of the report.

3.2 Phase 1 : Foundations at rear of farmhouse (*Figures 2 and 4*)

- 3.2.1 A single continuous trench running north-south was excavated to the immediate north of the farmhouse within the location of a former 20th century lean-to (Figure 2). The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.3m and a width of 0.60m. The trench formed a rectangular shape in plan, spanning an area measuring approximately 8m by 5m (Plate 1).
- 3.2.2 The area immediately in front of the rear property entrance revealed a sequence of 19th century and possibly earlier rubble and foundations associated with the construction of this part of the house (Figure 4, Section 1) (Plate 2). Beneath this were layers of a light orangish brown sandy clay measuring 1m in thickness (113) and a dark sandy clay layer (114), thought to be the natural geology.
- 3.2.3 The remaining trench revealed a sequence of modern car park/driveway surfaces beneath which was a mid orangish brown silty, sandy clay (001) sealing a dark grey silty clay (002), which may represent an earlier surface layer (Figure 4, Section 2) (Plate 3). This deposit was recorded over the natural geology of sandy clay (003). Within the south-west corner, the trench picked up the edge of a cut (**007**) thought to be associated with the construction of the former 20th century lean-to which had previously been located in this position (see Fletcher 2012).

3.3 Phase 2 : Trenches in northern field and farmyard (*Figures 2 and 5*)

- 3.3.1 Seven trenches were excavated in the field to the north of the farm and one trench was excavated through the farmyard itself (Figure 2). The first trench investigated was Trench 1, which contained archaeological features after approximately 5m of excavation (Figure 5) and was consequently re-routed (Trench 2) (Plate 4). As archaeological remains were also found within Trench 2, a second diversion was attempted (Trench 3); no archaeology was found to be present in the remaining five parallel trenches and they all continued to be excavated and monitored to a length of 125m (Figure 2) (Plate 5). In addition, no archaeology was encountered in Trench 8 through the farmyard. The trenches are described below:

Trench 1

- 3.3.2 This trench measured approximately 10m in length, 0.90m wide and was orientated north-south. It contained an undated ditch (**123**) and a culverted drain (**121**).
- Ditch **123** was linear in plan, orientated approximately east-west and measured 0.90m in length continuing beyond both edges of the trench. It measured 0.40m wide and 0.20m deep with gradual sloping edges and a rounded base. It was filled by a single deposit, 122; a grey silty fill with occasional small stone inclusions. No datable finds were recovered from the fill of this ditch.

- Culvert/drain **121** was identified orientated approximately north-south and located running along the western edge of Trench 1. It was not fully revealed in plan but continued beneath the trench edge to the west. The exposed section of the drain measured 3.2m long and it was at least 0.50m wide (Plate 6).

The drain was constructed from carefully sorted fragments of ironstone blocks of various sizes. Flat pieces of stone had been used to top the drain and the vertical sides were pushed into a purpose-made cut and supported by smaller stones (Figure 5, Section 3) (Plate 6).

During excavation, the top of the drain was removed by the machine bucket, revealing the drain to be empty with a small amount of dark grey silty-clay soil in the base (120); no finds were recovered from this deposit.

The deposit used to backfill the drain cut (119) was a reddish brown silty clay with occasional medium-large stone inclusions measuring 0.40m in thickness. Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from this deposit; one fragment of shelly ware and one base sherd of a quartz tempered cooking vessel. Both are considered to be 12th-14th century in date (Carole Fletcher *pers. comm.*). Above this was a 0.20m thick deposit of topsoil (118) (Figure 5, Section 1).

Trench 2

- 3.3.3 This trench measured approximately 4.5m in length, 0.90m wide and was orientated north-south, forking off from Trench 1 (Figure 5). This trench contained the possible continuation of the drain recorded in Trench 1 (**115**) which may have turned at a right angle to run east-west or may have been a separate drain be connected to that recorded in Trench 1. Parallel to this were the remnants of the foundations of a limestone wall (**117**).

- Culvert/drain **115** was linear in plan, orientated approximately east-west and measured 0.90m in length continuing beyond both edges of the trench. The full dimension of the drain were recorded from the east-facing section drain which revealed a maximum depth of 1.0m and measured 0.50m wide (Figure 5, Section 4). It had the same construction characteristics as that recorded in Trench 1, however this drain was completely silted up with the same dark grey silty-clay soil (120). Again, no finds were recovered from the fill of the drain.

As in Trench 1, the deposit used to backfill the drain cut (119) was a reddish brown silty clay with occasional medium-large stone inclusions. Above this was a 0.20m thick deposit of topsoil (118) (Figure 5, Section 4).

- Running parallel to the drain were the foundations of a limestone wall (**117**) which had partially survived in loose fragments against the drain (**116**) (see plan and Section 4 on Figure 5). The wall (**117**) measured approximately 0.60m wide and the section of possible upstanding wall between **117** and the drain measured 0.50m wide. The stone blocks used in **116/117** were irregular shaped fragments of flat limestone of varying dimensions. There was no obvious mortar used in the construction.
- The orientation of the drain recorded in Trench 1 appears to be in line with a line/boundary of shrubs noted within the same field to the north (Plate 8) and a slightly raised area at the northern end of both trenches, which was covered with nettles and may represent further surviving archaeology associated or contemporary with that recorded in Trenches 1 and 2.

Trenches 3-8

- 3.3.4 No archaeological remains were identified and no artefacts were recovered during the monitoring of these trenches (Plates 9 and 10).

3.4 Finds Summary

- 3.4.1 No finds were recovered during the first phase of monitoring at the rear of the farmhouse. Two sherds of medieval pottery (12th-14th century) were recovered from context 119 in Trench 1. No other archaeological finds or ecofacts were recovered during the second monitoring phase.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Discussion

- 4.1.1 The discovery of the undated ditch, drain and wall confirm the presence of surviving archaeological remains within the field to the immediate north of Gate House Farm. The recovery of two sherds of medieval pottery dating to the 12th-14th century provide a possible/tentative date for these recorded remains and possibly, by association, for the adjacent earthworks which were not investigated as part of this monitoring programme.
- 4.1.2 There is no cartographic evidence to indicate buildings surviving within this area of the site dating as far back as the 1839 Tithe Map, which was the earliest detailed map found during the background research at Northamptonshire Records Office for the 2012 investigations.
- 4.1.3 Given their location, the features recorded are unlikely to be associated with the current buildings at Gate House Farm, which are known to date from the 17th century onwards and the use of a local, readily available stone makes it difficult to date them on materials alone. The fact that no other datable finds were recovered during the monitoring across the entire site suggests that the pottery found within the backfill of the drain may provide a close date for this feature. Also, as no other earlier features were found to be cut by it would support a suggestion that these features are medieval in date.

4.2 Conclusions

- 4.2.1 The programme of Observation, Investigation and Recording has been successful in achieving the project aims: to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area. It has recorded the presence of surviving archaeological features within this part of the village which has been subject to very little previous investigation.
- 4.2.2 The origins of the name of the site were never fully understood during the background research, perhaps the "gate house" in the name of the site is a reference to other important buildings which may have been in existence set back from the road and the wall, ditch and drain revealed during monitoring works may have been associated with these.
- 4.2.3 Although earthworks were previously known to exist within the field to the north of the farm, no other investigations have been undertaken to indicate a date or function. This phase of work has provided a small insight into the possible date of the remains and has demonstrated the potential survival of buildings and other buried structural remains in this location. This should assist in the planning decisions of future development within this part of Culworth.

APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | | |
|--------------|------|---|
| Fletcher, T. | 2013 | Specification for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at Gate House Farm, Culworth, Northamptonshire |
| Fletcher, T. | 2012 | Historic Building Survey at Gate House Farm, Culworth, Northamptonshire |
| Mordue, L. | 2013 | Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Works at Gate House Farm, High Street, Culworth, Northamptonshire. |

APPENDIX B. OASIS REPORT FORM

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-162389		
Project Name	Watching Brief at Gate House Farm, Culworth, Northamptonshire		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	13-03-2013	Finish	25-09-2013
Previous Work (by OA East)	Yes	Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	XNNGHF13	Planning App. No.	n/a
HER No.	n/a	Related HER/OASIS No.	oxfordar3-134343

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Planning condition
Development Type	Rural Residential

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
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<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
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<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
culvert/drain	Medieval 1066 to 1540	pottery	Medieval 1066 to 1540
wall	Medieval 1066 to 1540		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Northamptonshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	South Northamptonshire	Gate House Farm, High Street Culworth Northants NN17 2RG
Parish	Culworth	
HER	Northamptonshire	
Study Area	n/a	National Grid Reference
		SP 53948 47248

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Northamptonshire County Council
Project Design Originator	Taleyna Fletcher
Project Manager	Taleyna Fletcher
Supervisor	James Fairbairn

Project Archives

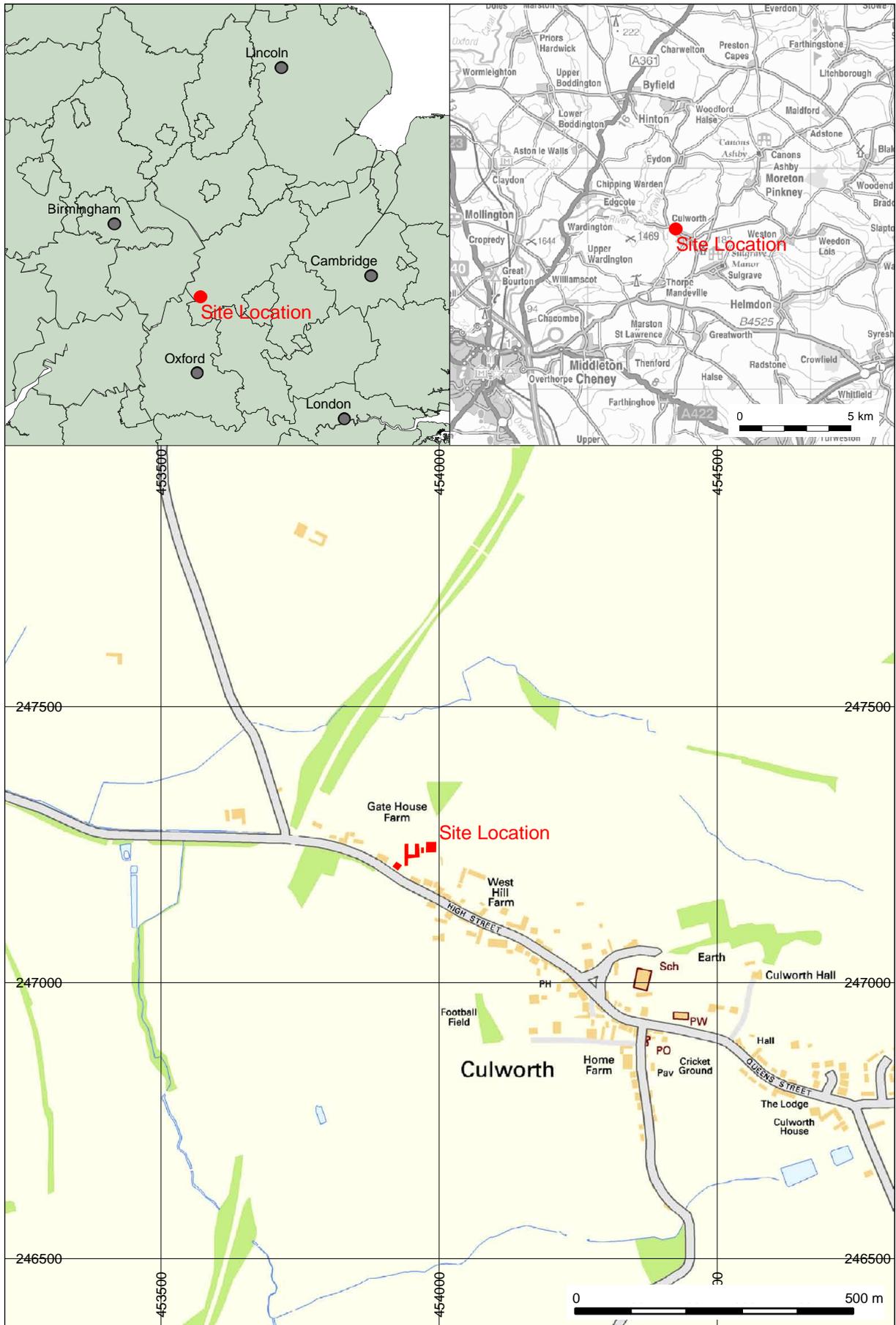
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OA East Offices, Bar Hill	OA East Offices, Bar Hill	OA East Offices, Bar Hill
XNNGHF13	XNNGHF13	XNNGHF13

Archive Contents/Media

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Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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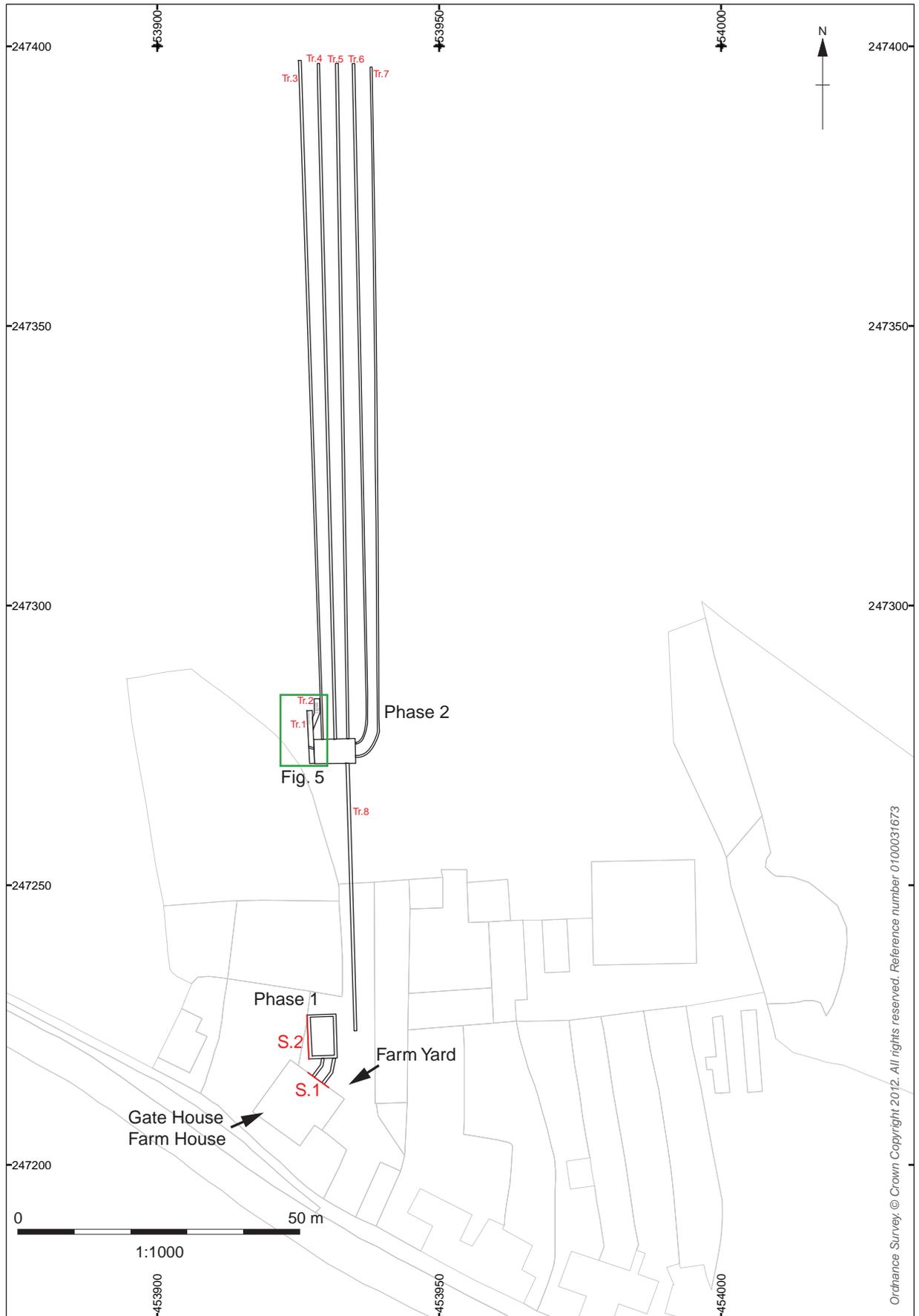
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



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Figure 1: Site location



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Figure 2: Plan of watching brief trenches (phases 1 and 2)

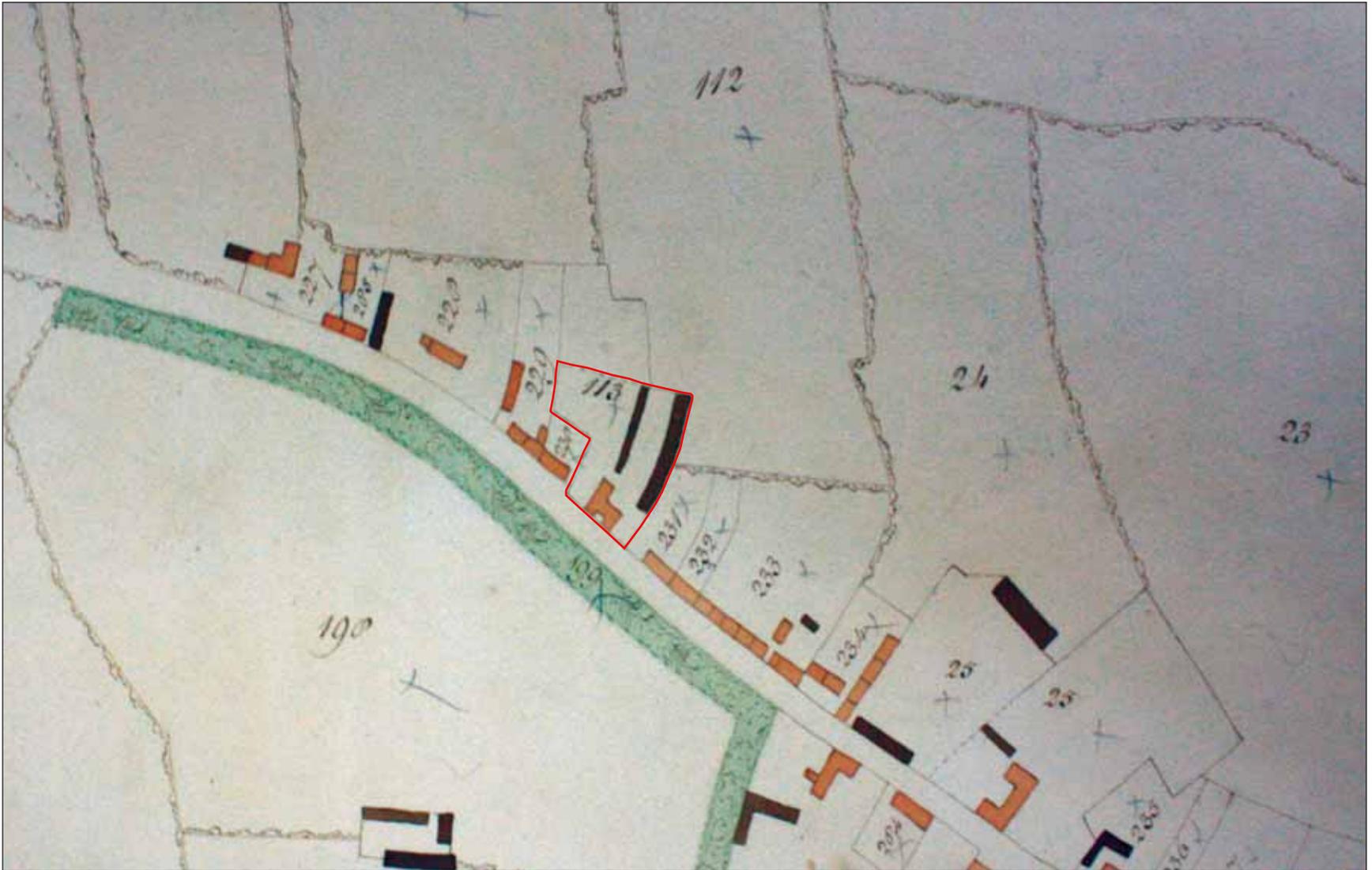


Figure 3 : Extract from Culworth Tithe Map, 1839, showing location of Gate House Farm (red)

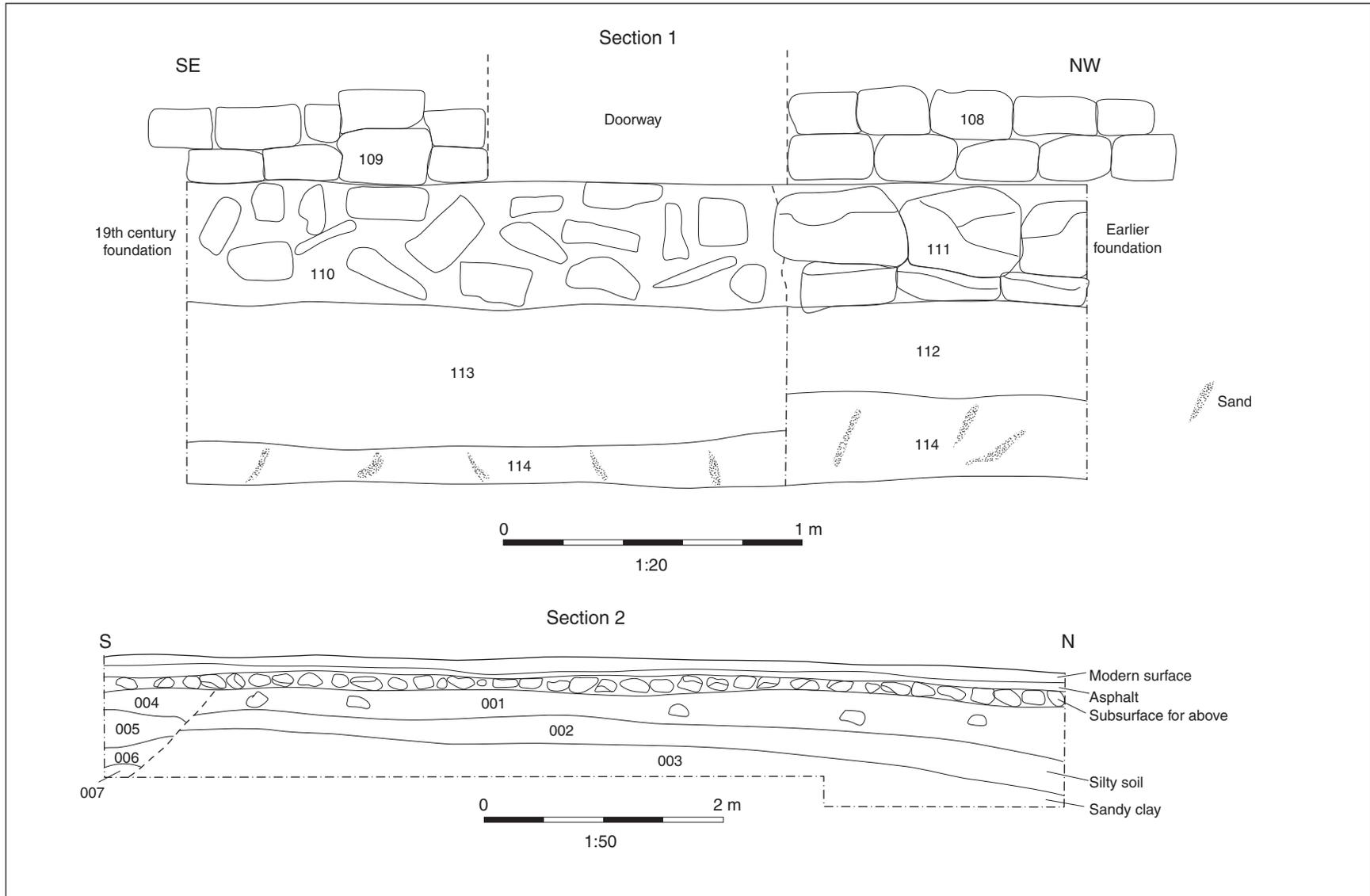


Figure 4 : Phase 1 sections

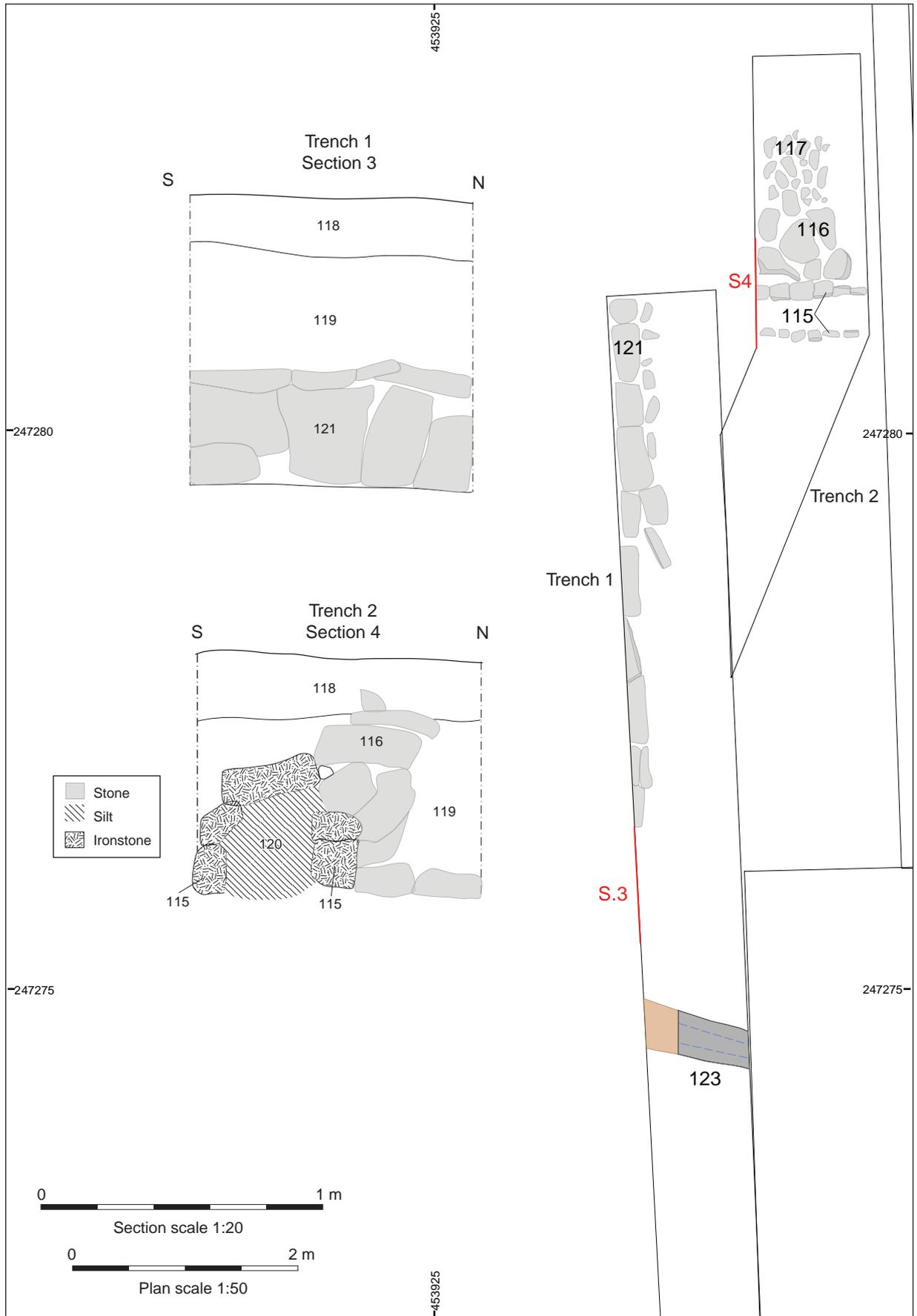


Figure 5: Phase 2 trench plan and sections



Plate 1: Watching brief trenches, phase 1



Plate 2: Trench section against farmhouse, phase 1



Plate 3: Trench section, phase 1



Plate 4: Working shot; Trenches 1 and 2 during excavation, phase 2



Plate 5: Phase 2 trenches, looking south



Plate 6: Culvert/drain, Trench 1, phase 2



Plate 7: Culvert/drain and wall foundations, Trench 2, phase 2



Plate 8: Culvert/drain and wall in Trench 2, phase 2, with possible earthworks within area of nettles to the north



Plate 9: Trench 3, phase 2, looking south



Plate 10: Trench 4, phase 2, looking south



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