

Barn Conversion Park House Hornton Lane Horley Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Barn Conversion, Park House, Horton Lane, Horley, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between November 2009 and April 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Park House, Horton Lane, Horley, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 417 439). The work was commissioned by Mr David Marriott in advance of the proposed conversion of an existing barn to a studio and utility room and a proposed orangery. The watching brief revealed evidence of the construction of the barn undergoing conversion, an associated cobbled yard surface, a possible terrace wall and the original topology of the yard. No evidence for any earlier phases of Park House was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between November 2009 and April 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Park House, Horton Lane, Horley, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 417 439). The work was commissioned by Mr David Marriott in respect of a planning application for the conversion of an existing barn to a music and utility room and a proposed orangery (Planning reference 100120797687).
- 1.1.2 As part of the planning permission a condition requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the period of intrusive ground works was attached to the consent.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of this condition (OA 2009).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The village of Horley is located approximately 2 km north-west of the town of Banbury (Fig. 1). The development site is situated within the central core of the village, to the east of the Church of St Ethelreda. The barn to be converted is situated to the north-east of Park House, at approximately 148 m OD. The building is bounded to the north-west and north-east by gardens, to the south-east by a standing building, part of which is utilised as a garage and to the south-west by hard standing. The underlying geology is alluvium overlying Middle Lias (Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 201).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2009) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The village of Horley lies between two streams, Wroxton Brook and Horley Brook. The name Horley comes from the Old English and can be translated as *clearing in a tongue of land*. The village has an irregular plan with one long street of cottages and

farmhouses ascending the hill from Horley Mill to the church of St Ethelreda (located 113 m to the east) on the hilltop, around which the remainder of the village forms a rough parallelogram on the west side of the hill. On the southern side of the hill are the two manor houses, one a prebendal manor and the second belonging to the lay manor of Horley. The fishponds located to the west of the village presumably belonged to one or both of these manors.

- 1.3.3 The church of St Ethelreda has Late Norman origins with major alterations occurring in the 14th and 15th centuries.
- 1.3.4 The site is located 20 m north-east of Park House, a listed early 14th century building with 17th and 18th century additions (ORN 18548). The house was originally constructed with two ground floor rooms, a hall and a service wing, (both on different levels) separated by a through passage. The rear doorway dates to the 14th century, while a similar doorway in the passage may have been moved from the front of the house. In the west gable a two-light window with plate tracery dated c1300 may have lit a solar. The chimney once backed into the left side of the through passage. At the back of the house is a small blocked ogee-headed window, also medieval in date. The barn post-dates the house but has the potential to mask earlier structures associated with the house. A grade two listed house, dating to the 18th century is located 65 m north-east of the site. The position of Park House on the main road through the village and its proximity to the parish church suggests that it is likely that this area was utilised during the medieval period (OCAS 2009).

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 series of periodic visits to examine intrusive works and excavations as development work proceeded. These works included the underpinning of the barn walls, service trenching and the internal excavation of a new foundation trench for the north wall of the building. 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 1:100 and sections of exposed features and sample sections showing the stratigraphy were

drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using digital photography, colour slide 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

Foundation trenching

- 3.1.1 A layer of pale red-brown clay silt (2) was encountered at a depth of between 0.2 m and 0.25 m below the surrounding ground level (Fig. 3, Section 1). This was a very clean deposit and probably represents a layer of colluvium. Overlying this deposit was a 0.2 m – 0.25 m deep layer of grey-brown clay loam, the present day topsoil and turf. This deposit contained numerous small fragments of the local iron stained limestone, probably construction debris.
- 3.1.2 The observed stratigraphy was similar throughout the length of the new foundation trenching.

Reduction of the floor level

- 3.1.3 The interior of the barn was reduced in level by approximately 0.3 m. A stone slab floor (4) consisting of sandstone slabs was removed exposing a bedding layer of grey-brown silt clay (5), approximately 0.15 m deep. This sealed a continuation of the underlying colluvium (2).

Underpinning of the western gable

- 3.1.4 The underpinning of the western gable end of the barn was conducted after reduction of the floor level within the barn. All the excavations were conducted solely within the underlying colluvium (2).

Ground clearance to the west of the barn

- 3.1.5 As part of the work the area between the western gable wall of the barn (20) and the property boundary was cleared prior to landscaping of the area (Fig. 2). This area was raised approximately 0.5 m above the yard surface.
- 3.1.6 The area was sealed by a mixture of dark brown silt loam and charcoal and ash from a bonfire heap (6). This overlaid an area of cobbling running between the barn and the boundary fence (3). The cobbling consisted of an area measuring approximately 4.4 m x 4.4 m. The northern and southern edges were bounded by rounded ironstone blocks measuring 0.55 m by 0.4 m (depth unknown) and the western edge bounded by stones averaging 0.3 m by 0.2 m (again depth unknown). The interior was laid using south-west to north-east aligned rows of cobbles composed of ironstone measuring 0.28 m x 0.1m laid on edge. All the exposed stones had been rounded through wear.

- 3.1.7 The cobbling stopped approximately 1 m away from the gable end of the barn. This may be indicative of a foundation trench, suggesting the standing barn had been built after the cobbles had been laid.
- 3.1.8 Underpinning on the outside of the gable wall showed that the cobblestones were bedded on a 0.18 m deep layer of grey-brown gritty clay silt (7). This overlaid a 0.15 m deep layer of mid brown silt clay (8). This sealed a layer of pale yellow-brown silt clay (9), which was in excess of 0.4 m deep. This deposit became more compact with depth.

Service Trench

- 3.1.9 A service trench measuring approximately 15 m in length and 0.6 m wide was excavated between the rear wall of Park House and the barn (Fig. 2). The depth of the trench measured 0.7 m at the barn increasing to 0.9 m at the rear wall of Park house.
- 3.1.10 Approximately in the centre of the trench a roughly constructed NW to SE aligned wall (14) was encountered at a level of 0.65 m below the current yard surface (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, Section 2). This measured 0.35 m wide and 2 courses were exposed within the bottom of the trench. It had been constructed using roughly dressed local stone. No bonding agent was observed, but it is possible that this had leached out over time. No construction cut was visible at this level. Butting up to, and partially sealing the wall was a layer of grey-brown gritty silt clay (13), a probable layer of made ground. At the northern end of the trench this was overlaid by a 0.3 m deep layer of dark grey-brown clay loam (12), a probable buried soil horizon.
- 3.1.11 Overlying this deposit and layer (13) elsewhere was a 0.2 m deep layer of pea gravel (11), possibly an earlier yard surface. Both layer (11) and (12) were sealed below a mixture of crushed stone and silt (10) measuring between 0.28 m and 0.5 m in depth.
- 3.1.12 At the southern end of the trench close to Park House the underlying natural, a yellow-brown clay silt colluvium (19) was encountered at a depth of 0.7 m below the current yard level (Fig. 3, Section 3). This is a probable continuation of layer (9).
- 3.1.13 This was overlaid by 0.15 m deep layer of light brown clay silt (18). This contained many angular stone fragments. Sealing this layer was a layer of crushed stone and silt (17), 0.25 m in depth. This was a probable continuation of layer (10).
- 3.1.14 Overlying layer (17) was a 0.18 m deep deposit of grey-brown clay loam (16), a layer of made ground composed of redeposited topsoil. The current yard surface, a 0.12 m deep layer of mixed gravel and hardcore (15) had been laid directly on top.

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 No dating evidence was recovered during the course of the watching brief. Occasional fragments of brick and tile were observed within layer (17) but these

were probably imported along with the rest of the context. The presence of these was noted but they were not retained.

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 The stratigraphy observed can be used to establish a sequence of events for the area to the rear of Park House. The overall topology of the area would indicate that the original ground level sloped up towards the fields north of Park House. Subsequently various phases of work has altered the area eventually forming the relatively level yard area visible today.

4.1.2 Section 3 shows that the area immediately north of the house has been reduced, truncating any topsoil and possibly reducing the level of the colluvium (19). This may have been done in order to produce a small yard to the rear of the house and also to reduce the possibility of dampness caused by soil butting up against the wall. It is probable the truncated wall (14) observed within the service trench may mark the limit of this work. Layers (17) and (18) represent two different phases of yard surface related to this activity.

4.1.3 The position and alignment of wall (14) appear to be at variance with the alignment of the standing buildings which may indicate that it predates them. The buried soil horizon (12) is only visible north of this feature suggesting that the wall may have retained it, possibly confirming that this was a terrace wall. Subsequent removal/truncation of this wall (possibly when the barns were built and the northern part of the yard constructed ?) has allowed layer (12) to spill southwards over the top of the wall.

4.1.4 The level of the stone slab floor (4) within the converted barn is markedly lower than the ground level either to the north-west (3) or to the north-east (1). This observation together with the absence of any buried topsoil horizon underneath the stone slab floor originally within the converted barn suggests that the floor level has been lowered, probably in order to allow easy access directly from the yard. It is unclear if this was done after the construction of the barn or whether it was done simultaneously.

4.1.5 The cobbled area (3) appears to have been built directly upon the underlying topsoil (8), giving an indication of the original ground level to the north-west of the barn. The cobbled area had been carefully constructed suggesting that it was intended for hard use. All the stones had a rounded appearance probably indicating that the area had been used over a long period of time. It is unclear if the cobbles were intended as an area of hardstanding or if they were originally formed part of the floor of a building.

There were no obvious construction cuts around the cobbles to indicate that there had been a building enclosing them, but there is the possibility that it may have been a freestanding wooden framed building.

- 4.1.6 The cobbled area (3) is sited at a level of approximately 0.6 m above the current yard level with a steep slope separating them. There was no evidence for excess wear caused by wheel rutting visible on their surface which may indicate that the area was only intended to be accessed from the fields to the north-east rather than forming a thoroughfare between the fields and the yard.
- 4.1.7 There was no evidence for the construction cut for the gable wall (20) cutting the cobbles and it is probable that they are contemporary. No dating evidence for the construction of the barn was recovered from the underpinning trenches or during the removal of the stone slab floor, although its general style of construction suggests an 18th-or 19th-century date.
- 4.1.8 Deposits (10), (11), (15) and (16) are modern layers forming both levelling layers and the present day yard surfaces.
- 4.1.9 No evidence for any earlier phases of Park House's construction itself was observed during the course of the watching brief.

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	Layer	0.22 m	-	Ploughsoil/Present day topsoil and turf	-	C19th/ C20th
2	Layer	> 0.9 m	-	Colluvium	-	-
3	Surface	0.2 m	4 m	Cobbled surface	-	C18th ?
4	Surface	0.12 m	2.65 m	Stone slab floor within barn	-	C18th ?
5	Layer	0.15 m	2.65 m	Bedding for stone slab floor 4	-	C18th ?
6	Layer	0.2 m – 0.4 m	4.4 m	Dumping/soil build up over cobbles 3	-	C19th/ C20th
7	Layer	0.18 m	4.4 m	Bedding layer for cobbled surface 3	-	C18th ?
8	Layer	0.15 m	4.4 m	Buried soil horizon	-	-
9	Layer	> 0.4 m	> 4.4 m	Colluvium	-	-
10	Surface	0.2 m – 0.5 m	> 4 m	Northern yard surface	-	C19th/ C20th
11	Layer	0.2 m	-	Peagravel, made ground	-	C20th
12	Layer	0.3 m	-	Buried soil horizon	-	-
13	Layer	> 0.4 m	-	Made ground	-	-
14	Structure	> 0.3 m	0.35 m	Possible terrace wall	-	-
15	Surface	0.12 m	> 4 m	Southern yard surface	-	C20th
16	Layer	0.18 m	-	Made ground	-	-
17	Surface	0.25 m	-	Earlier yard surface (possible continuation of layer 10?)	-	C19th/ C20th
18	Layer	0.15 m	-	Subsoil/ made ground	-	-
19	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Colluvium, probable continuation of layer 9	-	-
20	Structure	> 4 m	0.6 m	Northern gable wall of barn conversion	-	C18th ?

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1st edition. ed. D. Wilkinson)

OA 2009 *Park House, Hornton Lane, Horley, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

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

OCAS 2009 *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Park House, Horton Lane, Horley*

Pevsner, N and Sherwood, J, 1974 *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* p.652-654

Victoria History of the County of Oxford Vol.IX (ed. R.B.Pugh, 1969) p.123-136

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Barn Conversion, Park House, Hornton Lane, Horley, Oxfordshire

Site code: BAHOPH 09

Grid reference: SP 417 439

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of foundation and service trenches and ground reduction.

Date and duration of project: November 2009 to April 2010, 5 site visits

Area of site: 400m²

Summary of results: The watching brief observed evidence for the construction of the barn undergoing conversion, an associated cobbled yard surface, a possible terrace wall and the original topology of the yard to the rear of Park House was observed. No evidence for any earlier phases of construction of Park House itself was encountered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS.2009.93



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Figure 1: Site location

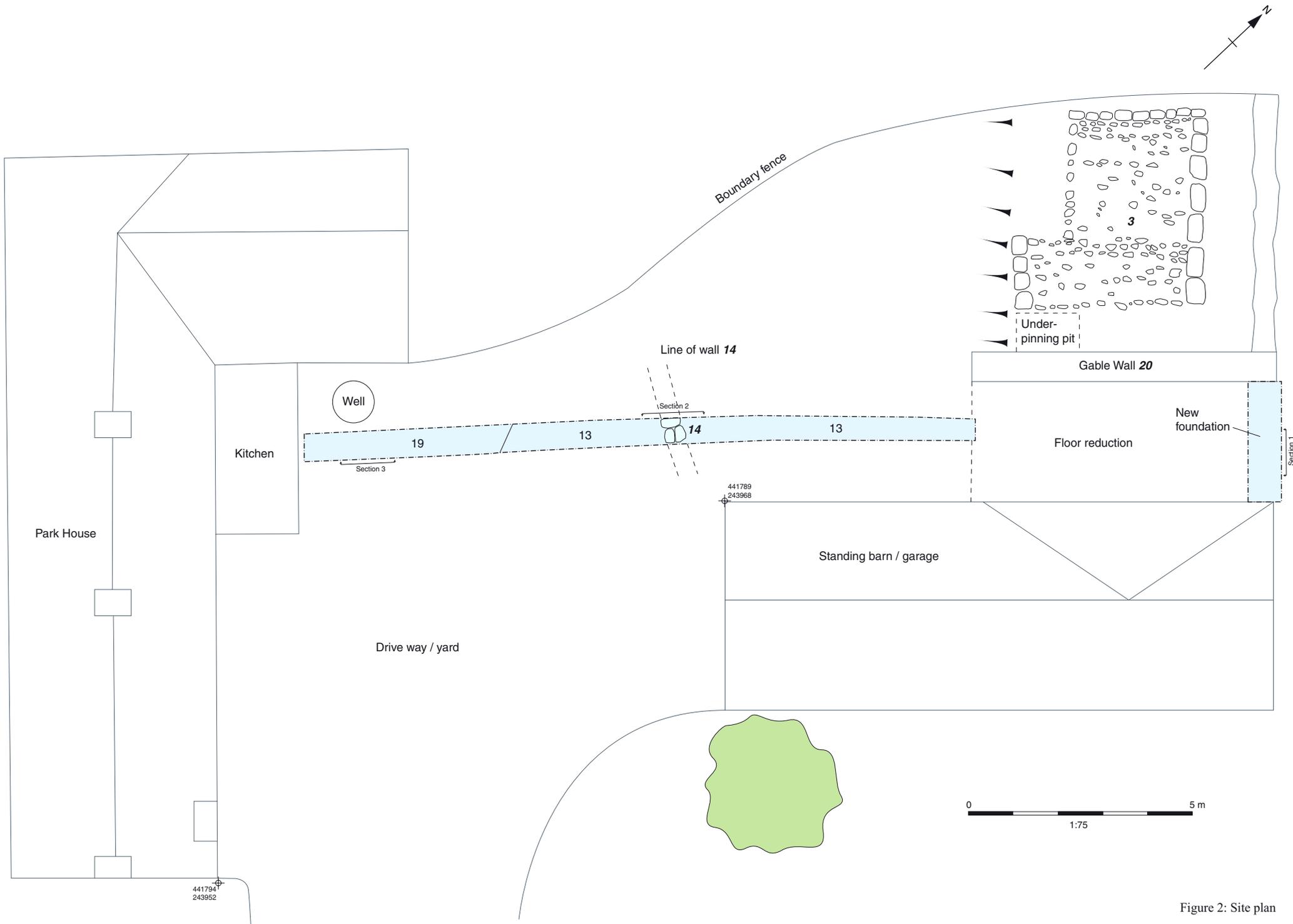


Figure 2: Site plan

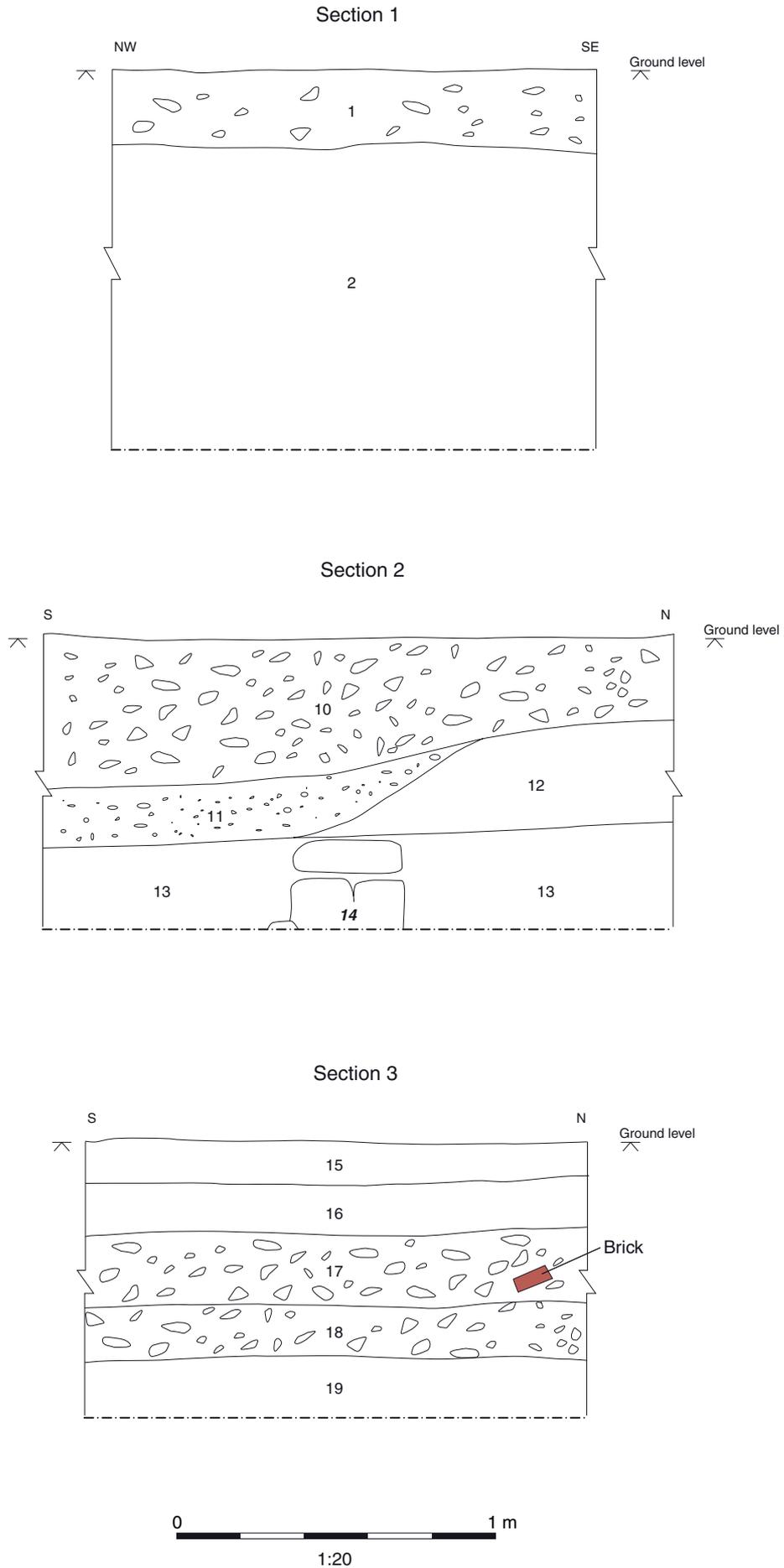


Figure 3: Sample sections



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