

Church View Barn Denchworth



Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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1	Angela Warner Buildings Archaeologist	Jon Gill Senior Project Manager, Historic Buildings	Julian Munby Head of Historic Buildings Department	

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Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: +44 (0) 1865 263800 e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
f: +44 (0) 1865 793496 w: oxfordarchaeology.com
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Church View Barn, Denchworth. Watching Brief.

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Angela Warner

illustrated by Markus Dylewski

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned to carry out a watching brief at Church View Barn during the excavation of the foundations for the construction of a single storey dwelling on a similar footprint to the barn demolished following Historic Building Investigation and Recording by Oxford Archaeology.

The site's proximity to the churchyard and the potential for buried archaeology required archaeological monitoring of the excavation of the foundations and any reduction in ground level.

The recently demolished Church View Barn appeared on the earliest available map of 1801. Although the structure had undergone several phases of repair and modification, the footprint had not altered.

The demolition of the building and clearance of the modern concrete floor revealed that the building had had little or no foundations. The excavation of the new foundation trenches revealed the levelling layers across the site and features which pre-dated the barn. A un-dated pit in the south western corner of the site underlay the barn, public footpath and the made-up ground of the churchyard.

No finds pre-dating the mid 20th-century layers, nor any features relating to the burials in the adjacent churchyard were discovered.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Vic Cox of V K Cox Developers to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of foundation trenches for the construction of a single storey dwelling at Church View Barn, Hyde Road, within the village of Denchworth, Oxfordshire. OA previously carried out building recording and historical research on the since-demolished original Church View Barn in September 2014.
- 1.1.2 The archaeological watching brief relates to Planning Application reference P14/V1262/FUL. Although the former barn was not listed, the site is within Denchworth Conservation Area and adjacent to a churchyard and the watching brief during the excavation was undertaken to meet the requirements of Conditions 5 and 6 of the planning permission:
- 1.1.3 Condition 5 states: *'A full archaeological watching brief and WSI shall be carried out during the period of construction works by a professionally competent archaeological organisation in accordance with details which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before development commences. The brief shall include the recording of any archaeological features revealed, limited archaeological excavation and the retrieval of artefactual evidence. Reason: To secure the protection of and proper provision for any archaeological remains in accordance with Policy HE10 of the Local Plan 2011.'*
- 1.1.4 Condition 6 states: *'Following the approval of the Written Scheme of Investigation referred to above, no development shall commence on site without the appointed archaeologist being present. Once the watching brief has been completed its findings shall be reported to the Local Planning Authority, as agreed in the Written Scheme of Investigation, including all processing, research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and usable archive and a full report for publication.*
- Reason – To safeguard the recording of archaeological matters within the site in accordance with Policy HE10 of the Local Plan 2011 and the NPPF (2012).'*

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The following historical background of the village of Denchworth and the site in this study has been reproduced from the report written following the aforementioned Historic Building Investigation and Recording project.
- 1.2.2 Denchworth is a village and civil parish in the Vale of the White Horse district in Oxfordshire and lies approximately 3 miles north north west of Wantage (Fig 1). Until the Local Government reorganisation of 1974, Denchworth was in Berkshire.
- 1.2.3 The site is set on the Gault Mudstones and Ampthill and Kimmeridge clay formations, with superficial deposits of the Summertown-Radley Sand And Gravel Member (Pl. 1). The majority of the older buildings in the village are built of

limestone, probably from the bedrock to the north, although many are trimmed in the brick which appears to become more prevalent later.

- 1.2.4 The parish church is situated at the south of the village; the site is situated immediately to the north of the churchyard.
- 1.2.5 There are eighteen listed buildings in the parish of Denchworth, with five being in the immediate vicinity of the site. The 17th-century Fox Inn on the opposite side of the road and the 19th-century Old School House to the south east are grade II listed, as is the relocated village cross stump which is now situated on the grass verge adjacent to the driveway to the property. St James's Church, a grade II* listed building with 12th-century origins, is immediately to the south of the site; the south wall of the former barn having been formed from the boundary wall of the churchyard. A headstone memorial with a separate grade II listing is within the churchyard.
- 1.2.6 The majority of the village of Denchworth makes up the Denchworth Conservation area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Although the site lies at a much lower level than the adjacent churchyard, the potential remained for earlier burials to be encountered should the extent of the churchyard have altered since the 12th century.
- 1.3.2 The Enclosure Map of 1801 shows the recently demolished barn on its existing footprint at the time of the historic building recording and subsequent demolition.
- 1.3.3 The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1878 shows a small projection at the north end of the barn, although this was not shown on the Second Edition of 1899 or throughout the subsequent editions. Other than this, the footprint of the building did not change.
- 1.3.4 The barn had been heavily altered and portions rebuilt as necessary during its time in use. An open-fronted barn with a brick rear wall on a limestone footing and a limestone north gable (Pl. 2), the barn abutted the churchyard retaining wall (Pl. 3), utilising the retaining wall as its southern end with the projecting gable clad in timber (Pl. 4). The open-front was supported on timber posts which were set upon staddle stones. The barn had been converted in the late 1980s or early 1990s to office and storage use and the floor of the three southernmost bays concreted. The roof timbers and the timber posts had been renewed at around this time and a steel frame incorporated into the three southern bays; all that remained of the earlier structure was the western and northern walls and the re-used roof tiles.
- 1.3.5 Several days prior to the excavations of the foundations for the new dwelling, the existing barn was demolished.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The principal aims of the current work have been:

- to help meet the requirements of Conditions 5 and 6 of the planning permission;
- to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains which may survive and their extent, and should remains be found to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;
- to determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means;
- to determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains;
- to assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape;
- to determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity;
- to make the record publicly accessible through a report (a public document) and a project archive deposited with a public institution.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The foundation trenches were excavated by machine using a toothless bucket to a width of 0.8m to 1m according to structural requirements and to a minimum depth of 0.6m with a level base within the natural clay geology.

2.2.2 The watching brief was conducted as a continuous archaeological presence during those works that had the potential to disturb or destroy below ground archaeological remains.

2.2.3 The excavated material was removed in approximate 0.1m spits down to the required depth. Provision was made for the halting of the machine and for appropriate investigation by hand excavation should it have been required.

2.2.4 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, with context recording undertaken in accordance with established OA practices.

2.2.5 The work comprised three principal elements: a photographic, a drawn and a written record.

2.2.6 The *photographic record* consisted of general site photographs plus photographs of features observed during the excavation and was undertaken using 35mm black and white print film and digital photographs were taken using an 8 megapixel camera.

2.2.7 For the *drawn record*, a site plan was drawn at 1:50; section drawings of sample sections of trenches with exposed features were drawn at scales of 1:20 and 1:50 accordingly (Figs 2 and 3).

2.2.8 The *written record* consisted of pro-forma Context Record Sheets containing analytical and descriptive detail of each feature and layer exposed during the excavation.

2.2.9 The site work was undertaken on the 24th and the 27th October 2014.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The overburden for the majority of the site was broken brick hardcore (005) which contained some mid 20th-century domestic waste. An earlier broken stone hardcore layer (014) was within the footprint of the barn. The overburden was shallower towards the west of the site and thicker towards the east, the front of the barn. The northern end of (005), merging with the driveway, contained some individual tips of similar waste material within the layer; these consisted of ash and burnt material. These pockets of material originated from an individual barrow- or bucket-full of material added to the broken brick during the process of laying down the hardcore layer and as such were not given individual context numbers. The burnt material possibly represents the burnt timbers of the building from which the broken brick originated.
- 3.1.2 An earlier area of hard-standing (011), containing broken stone, was spread across the east of the site, the cut for which [010] was exposed by the easternmost foundation trench. This was set approximately 2 metres away from the former building's footprint and overlain by the overburden associated with the barn (014) and so does not appear to be associated with the recent site usage.
- 3.1.3 Some disturbance of the surface of the hardcore layers may have occurred during the demolition of the barn and the removal of the concrete floor to the southernmost bays several days prior to the foundation excavation, although the limestone chippings used as surface dressing to the east and north of the barn were present, indicating that disturbance was minimal.
- 3.1.4 The edge of the westernmost foundation trench cut the topsoil and subsoil which the hardcore abuts. The topsoil was a dark, humic layer, disturbed by roots, planting and minor repairs to the wall; the subsoil was a slightly gravelly silty clay with heavy root disturbance in the cut area.
- 3.1.5 A large pit, [006], was located at the south west of the site, underlying the former barn, the churchyard retaining wall, footpath and the made-up ground of the churchyard. The fill, (007), consisted of a single-action of backfilling which contained no finds in the excavated material (Pl. 5). Repairs in the barn wall's stonework and brickwork were noted in this area during the building recording (Pl. 6).
- 3.1.6 A small pit with some possible root disturbance, [008], was exposed in the east-facing section of the easternmost foundation cut, adjacent to the southernmost foundation cut (Pl. 7). The feature was overlain by the broken brick hardcore, [005], and so its extent was not uncovered in plan. The pit is located over a metre from the front of the former barn and so not associated with the construction. It may have been cut to extract a fairly small quantity of clay, and was backfilled with the associated subsoil immediately in a single event with no finds within the fill material (009).



3.1.7 A feature, [012], was exposed by the cut for the southern foundation (Pl. 8). Backfilled with gravel, but appearing to contain some cess (013), this may be the remains of a drainage feature later obliterated by the addition of the broken brick hardcore layer (005). The feature is located to the immediate east of the location of the barn, to the front of the former open front of the barn. The surviving section may underlie the churchyard retaining wall, although structural concerns prevented undercutting the wall to verify this.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 The features and layers which pre-dated the hardcore-based levelling layers did not contain any finds at all within the excavated portions.
- 3.2.2 The broken-brick hardcore levelling layer (005) contained mid 20th-century domestic waste, including animal bone, broken crockery and plastic objects, electrical cable and pieces of glass electrical insulators mixed into the same layer, none of which were retained due to their recent origin.
- 3.2.3 No material which necessitated environmental sampling was encountered.
- 3.2.4 No material associated with the adjacent graveyard was encountered.



4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 It is not evident where the crushed building material contained in the broken brick hardcore layer (005) originated, however, a building to the east of the barn appears on the Ordnance Survey maps up to the first quarter of the 20th century. By the next available Ordnance Survey map of the late 1950s, the building no longer appears; as this period is contemporary with some of the waste material within the hardcore, it is possible that the material originated from this building. As the hardcore is laid directly onto clean, clay natural, it is likely that the existing surface material was removed and the hardcore was spread across the yard areas surrounding the barn to provide a firmer, better-drained surface.
- 4.1.2 Following the demolition of Church View Barn, no evidence of foundations of previous buildings were encountered: traces were not visible on the surface of the site, during excavation or within the sections of the excavated areas (Pl. 9). The recently demolished barn was shown to have had little or no foundations and had been constructed directly onto the clay and gravel natural layers. The south western corner of the barn had been built over the pit [006] where structural repairs had been apparent in the brick and stone work.
- 4.1.3 The location of the northernmost wall of the former barn was not cut by the new foundation trenches; the location of the westernmost end of the wall was cut by the foundation trench, but no evidence of a foundation was visible in the surface or in section, which is likely to be attributed to the shallow remains of any footing having been obliterated during scraping-back of the demolition material.
- 4.1.4 The timber posts to the front, the east elevation, had been replaced in the late 20th century and were supported on staddle stones at the time of the initial building recording; no post holes pre-dating the final phase were encountered, suggesting that they were previously supported in a similar way, or that any evidence of previous methods of support was removed or obscured when the material at the front of the building was scraped back and hardcore was spread across the site in the early to mid 20th century.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
001	Deposit	0.42m	/	/	Topsoil	/	/
002	Deposit	0.50m	/	/	Subsoil	/	/
003	Deposit	/	/	/	Clay Natural	/	/
004	Deposit	0.40m	/	/	Gravel Natural	/	/
005	Deposit	0.40m	>18m	>13m	Hardcore Levelling Layer	Modern domestic Waste	Mid-C20
006	Cut	1m	>1m	>2m	Pit	/	Pre C19
007	Deposit	1m	>1m	>2m	Fill of [006]	None	Pre C19
008	Cut	0.40m	0.46m	/	Pit/Treebole	/	Pre mid-C20
009	Deposit	0.40m	0.46m	/	Fill of [008]	None	Pre mid-C20
010	Cut	0.18m	>1.30m	/	Cut for Hardstanding Area	/	C20
011	Deposit	0.18m	>1.30m	/	Hardstanding Layer	None	C20
012	Cut	0.28m	0.88m	/	Pit	/	Pre C19
013	Deposit	0.28m	0.88m	/	Fill of [012]	None	Pre C19
014	Deposit	0.10m	>5m	14.5m	Levelling Layer	None	Pre C19



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

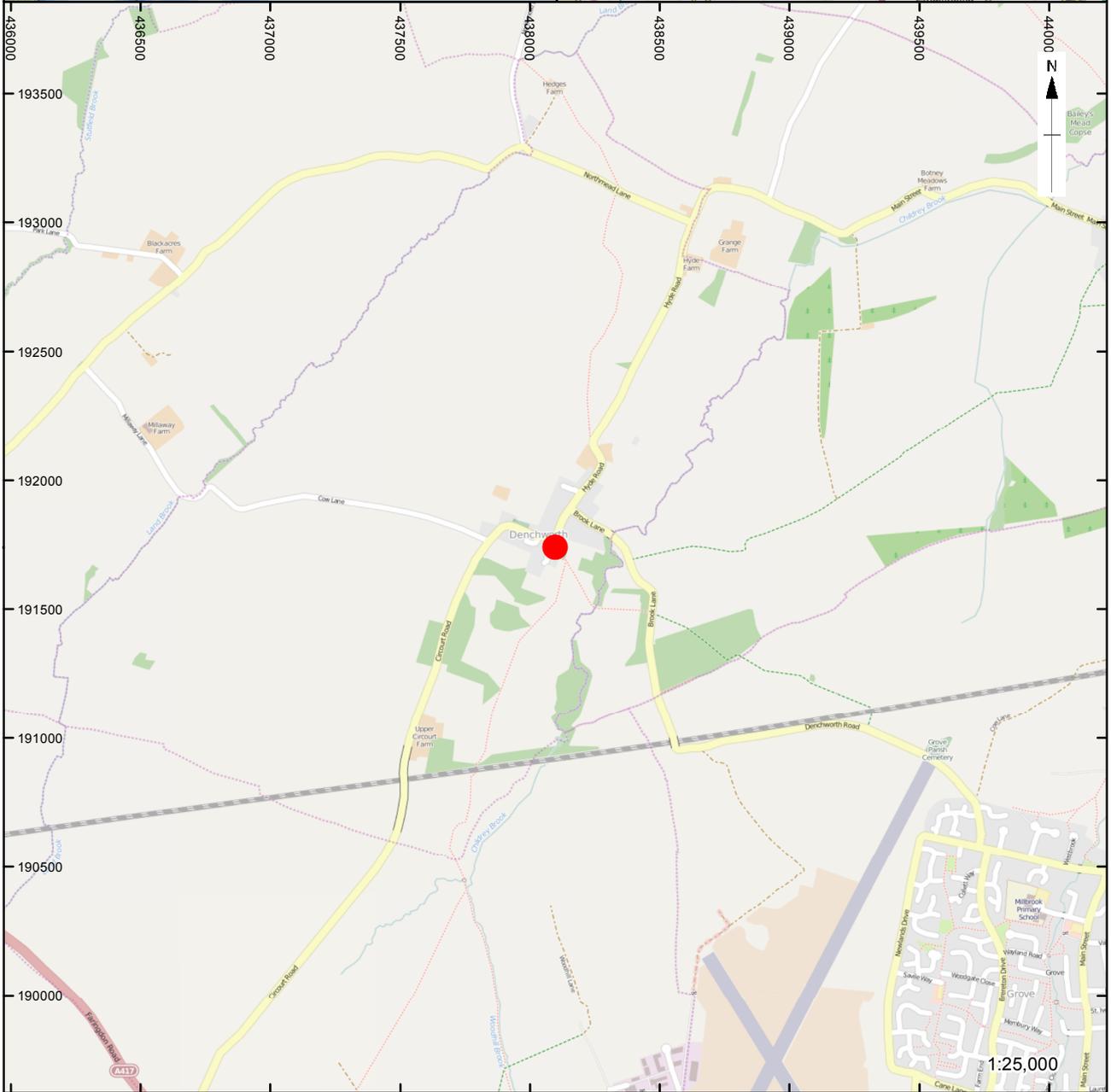
Oxford Archaeology *Church View Barn, Denchworth, Vale of the White Horse: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014)

Oxford Archaeology *Church View Barn, Denchworth, Oxfordshire: Building Investigation and Recording* (2014)



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Church View Barn, Denchworth
Site code:	DECVB14
Grid reference:	SU 38098 91739
Type of watching brief:	Machine excavation of foundation trench for dwelling of approximately 78.5m
Date and duration of project:	24 th & 27 th October 2014, 2 days in duration
Area of site:	Approximately 0.27 hectare
Summary of results:	<p>The watching brief observed two levelling layers, one within the footprint of the former barn and one across the rest of the stripped area of the site. An earlier layer of hardcore was observed in the south east corner set away from the footprint of the former barn.</p> <p>A pit was uncovered at the south west corner of the site, but no dating evidence or evidence of usage was present. A small pit and a possible drain were also observed, but no dating evidence found.</p>
Location of archive:	The Archive is currently held at Janus House and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service under the Accession Number to be obtained.



E:\DEV\CEBS\DEV\CEBS_Figure01.mxd* julia.collins* 19/09/2014

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2014
 (c) OpenStreetMap and contributors, Creative Commons-Share Alike License (CC-BY-SA)

Figure 1: Site location

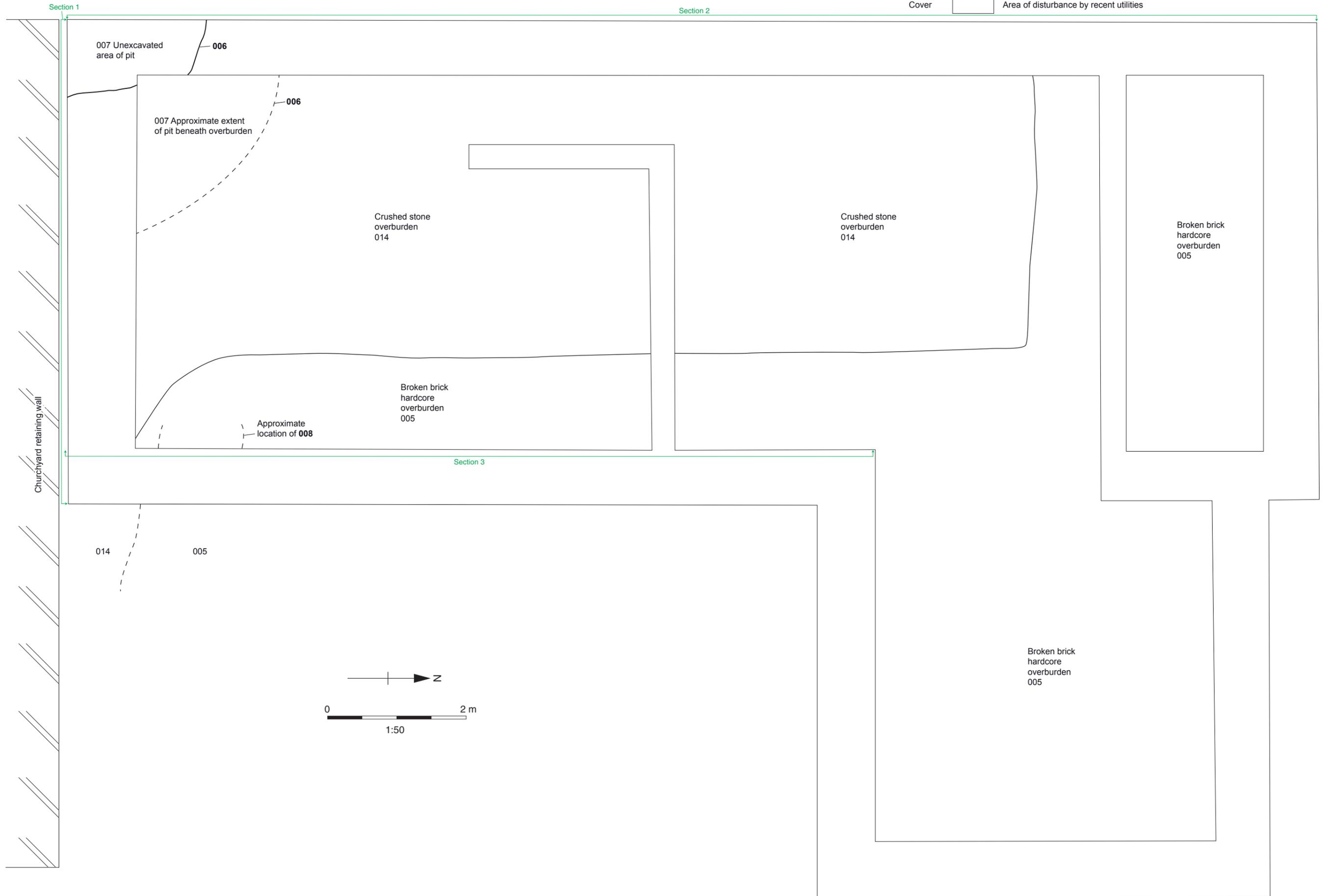
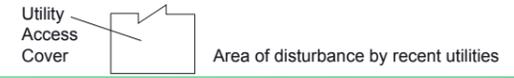


Figure 2: Site plan

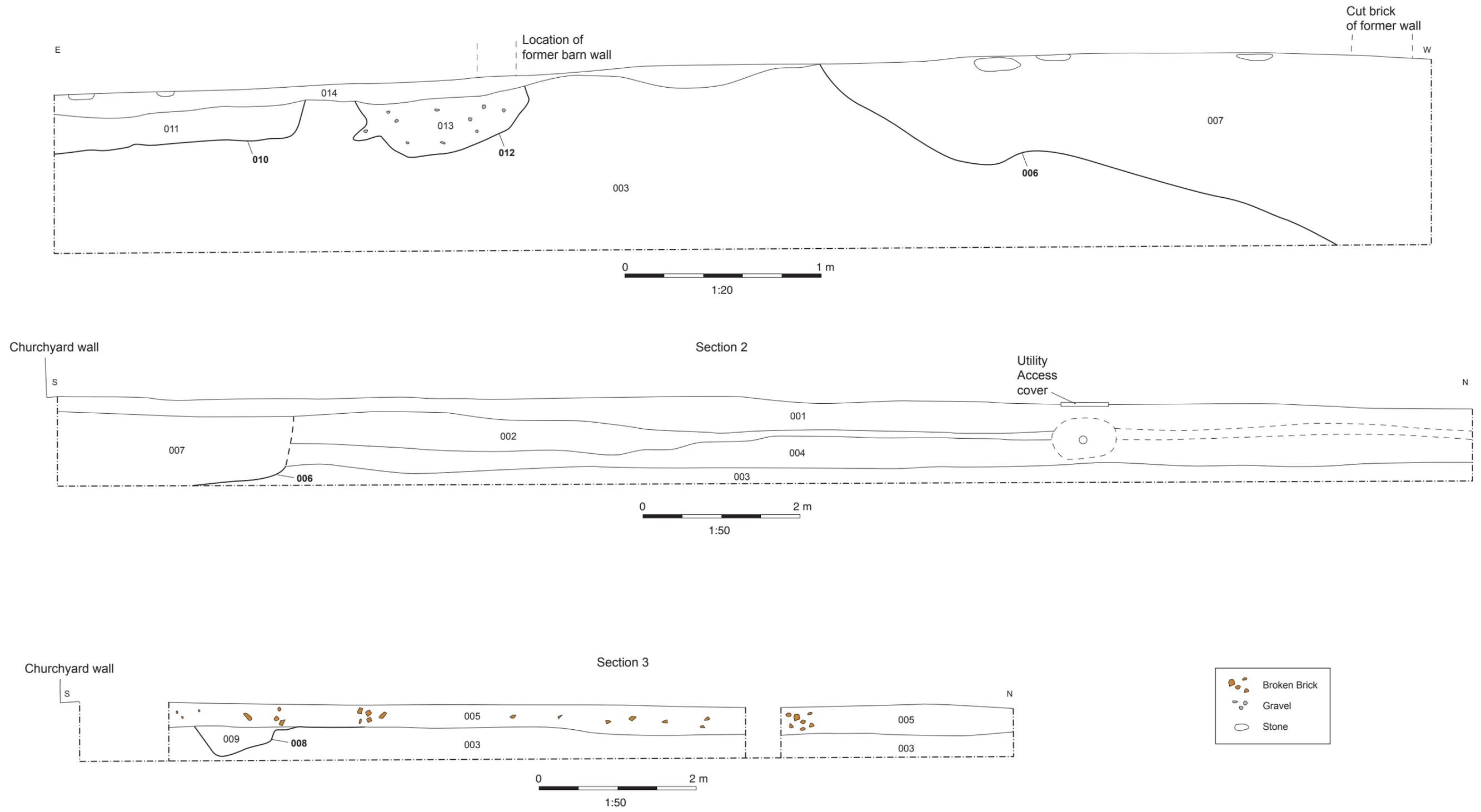


Figure 3: Sections



Plate 1: Typical section of topsoil to natural layers



Plate 2: East and north elevations of Church View Barn



Plate 3: East wall of the barn abutting churchyard retaining wall



Plate 4: West and south elevations of Church View Barn



Plate 5: Pit [006], looking west



Plate 6: Repairs evident in the wall above pit [006]



Plate 7: Possible small pit [008]



Plate 8: Possible drain [012]



Head Office/Registered Office/ OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCifA
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