

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
during groundworks at Back Lane,  
Skillington, Lincolnshire  
(SK 8965 2576)**

**Jennifer Browning**



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An Archaeological Watching Brief during groundworks at Back Lane, Skillington, Lincolnshire (SK8965 2576) 00 MAY 8-1

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**Jennifer Browning**

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For Hazel Ltd.

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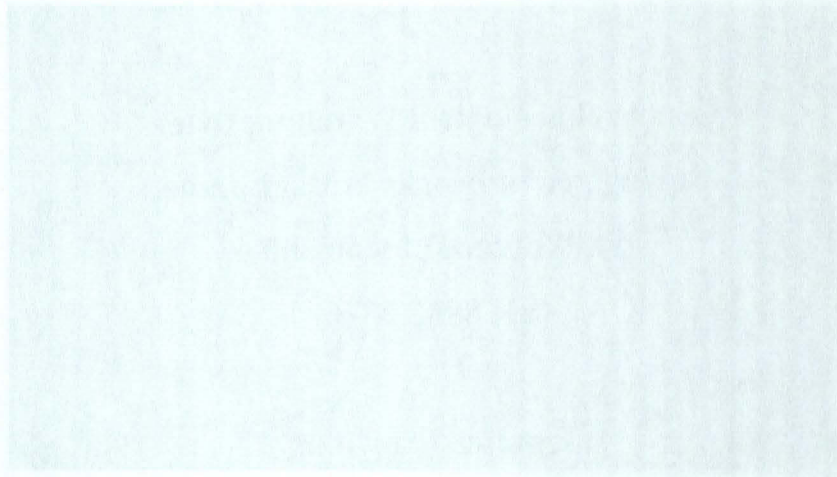
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Archaeology Section

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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief during Groundworks at Back Lane Skillington, Lincolnshire (SK8965 2576).**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during topsoil stripping and groundworks for a barn conversion and the erection of ten dwellings. A post medieval well at the north west of the site was recorded and there was evidence of medieval activity towards the northern boundary. A substantial drystone wall was uncovered. Evidence of post medieval and modern building was widespread across the site. The archive will be held by the City and County Museum, Lincoln under the Museum Accession Number 178.1999 and the site code SKB.1999.*

### **Introduction**

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during topsoil stripping and groundworks prior to the barn conversion and the building of ten new houses (Planning permission number: SK 98/418/67/17).

The village of Skillington is located approximately 10 km to the south east of Grantham, on the western edge of the district of South Kesteven, Lincolnshire (SK 8965 2576). Archaeological attendance during the topsoil strip and groundworks was recommended by the Community Archaeologist for South Kesteven District Council, as the development is in an area of archaeological interest (*Archaeological Project Brief for a watching brief during the erection of 10 dwellings and conversion of a barn to a dwelling PT OS 6875 Middle Street/Back Lane, Skillington*).

The site lies close to the historic settlement core of Skillington, south east of the church, in an area of the village where numerous earthworks have been observed, some of which may be house platforms. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet 143, (1964) indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Kellaways Clay and Great Oolite Clay.

### **Aims and Methods**

The aim of the work was to observe the topsoil stripping, and to record, as appropriate, any archaeological deposits or features encountered. The work addressed the requirements of the *Archaeological Project Brief for a watching brief during the erection of 10 dwellings and conversion of a barn to a dwelling PT OS 6875 Middle Street/Back Lane, Skillington* set by the Community Archaeologist for South Kesteven and followed the *ULAS Design Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Back Lane, Skillington, Lincolnshire*. The work was also in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.



The site was visited on twelve occasions from the 7th December 1998 to the 3rd March 1999, when the programme of work consisted of the removal of topsoil and later subsoil within the specified area, using two machines, a JCB and a Caterpillar, with 1.5m ditching buckets. The stripped area was examined, hand cleaned where appropriate and the spoil heaps checked for artefacts.

## Results

Context	Brief Description	Feature/Location
1	Stone wall	Post-medieval building
2	Stone floor	Post-medieval building
3	Brick wall	Post-medieval building
4	Stone wall	Assoc. with earthworks.
5	Soil overlying wall (4)	Assoc. with earthworks
6	Mound of stone	Assoc. with earthworks.
7	Stone wall.	Below road turning

The numbers in brackets in the following text are context numbers.

Remains relating to previous building were present across the site, showing up as areas of brick and stone rubble. There was evidence of a track from the north west of the site towards the farm buildings in the east. Some tarmac was visible on the surface and underneath there were compacted stone layers, with fragments of modern brick rubble pressed in. It is marked on *figure 2*. Another track from the farm buildings to the gate consisted of compacted stone over rubble. The south and eastern part of the site was disturbed by frequent patches of brick rubble. Two deep water-filled brick shafts were noted towards the centre of the site and a number of drains ran across the site mostly from south west to north east. A stone built well was located to the west of the site and was the subject of a building survey (see Appendix 1). The subsoil, where revealed, consisted of a mid yellow brown clay.

Towards the west of the site, east of the well, the remains of three walls and a stone floor were located (*figure 4*). The walls (1) were stone built, 0.6m wide, and the stones were mortared together. The floor (2) was built of smooth but irregularly shaped flagstones tightly packed together, with the occasional cobble. A single line of bricks (3) separated one area from another. The bricks measured 230 x 110 x 80mm (9"x 4 3/8" x 3"), but were not evenly fired. All of the finds associated with the building were post medieval.

Part of the hedge boundary to the north was removed, as the development area stretched into what was previously part of the paddock. This was potentially the most interesting part of the site as earthworks were visible on the paddock and this area was likely to have been less disturbed in recent times than the rest of the site. A short stretch of apparently drystone wall (4), running approximately north-south, was located, amid a lot of stone rubble. It was one metre wide and appeared to continue into the paddock, possibly showing as an earthworks there. At its southern end, it was disturbed by the hedge line but appeared to turn east before becoming indistinguishable from the rubble (*figure 5*). Rough blocks of stone were used to face the wall on either side but the inside consisted of more irregular pieces. At least three courses of stone still remained, with more showing in the section to the north. Three



sherds of medieval pottery, dating from the late 12th or 13th century, were recovered during the cleaning of the wall (5) (see Appendix 2).

A mound of stone fragments (6) was revealed below topsoil in the area south of the wall, adjacent to the paddock. It consisted of irregular pieces of broken limestone ranging in length from 5cm to 20cm and interspersed with mid-brown silty clay earth. It formed no structure and appeared to be a dump of some kind. It may correspond to the earthworks in the adjoining paddock, where a line of "bumps" was visible.

During the excavation of subsoil for the road turning, the remains of a wall (7) were exposed. It was 0.5m wide and constructed from limestone blocks bonded by a yellow sandy mortar. A couple of metres of the wall were revealed, aligned approximately north-east to south west. The wall was not destroyed and was covered up by the new road surface. A sherd of medieval pottery, dating from the 13th or 14th century, was unstratified but found close to this structure.

## Conclusion

Several features of interest were located during this watching brief, which also provided an opportunity to see what the earthworks in the adjoining paddock might represent. A stone and brick built well was observed towards the west of the site and is discussed in more detail in the Appendix. It seems likely that in the post-medieval and modern periods, buildings were present on the site. Given the location of the site close to the village core, these may have been dwellings or possibly farm buildings. An example of one such building was revealed towards the west of the site (1), (2) and (3). The presence of the bricks and the post-medieval finds in the soil around it suggest that it is unlikely to date from earlier than the 18th century. The brick size and type and the presence of stone footings suggests that the structure may date from the eighteenth century. Stone footings to brick buildings tend not to be as late as the nineteenth century (Neil Finn *pers. comm.*). The stone wall located during the groundworks for the road turning (7) could not be dated with certainty. A sherd of pottery found close to the structure was dated to the 13th and 14th century but this was unstratified.

The stone wall (4) at the north of the site, is likely to date from the medieval period. Although only a short stretch was uncovered in the development site, it is probable that more of this structure exists in the paddock, beneath the earthworks. A great deal of tumble is present to the east of the wall and there is also a mound of stone fragments (6) suggesting a dump of material but no unfortunately no dating evidence was found associated with it.

Most of the finds recovered from the site were unstratified but ranged in date from the late 12th to the 18th century, including some late medieval roof tile. The medieval pottery recovered from the site suggests that there was occupation in the area from at least the late 12th century, and the late medieval roof tile is indicative of buildings of some quality.



## Archive

The archive consists of site notes, one annotated plan, plan and section drawings, three sketch sections, an annotated sketch plan of the "fishwell", black and white prints and colour transparency slides and will be held by the City and County Museum, Lincoln under the Accession number 178.1999 and the finds code SKB.1999.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Hazel Ltd, with particular thanks to Graham Anderson, Gaz, Stu and Declan for their help and co-operation with this watching brief. I would also like to thank the Community Archaeologist for South Kesteven, Jo Simpson and Richard Hazelton of H.I. Ltd. The pottery and tile were identified by Deborah Sawday. Dr. Patrick Clay managed the project.

Jennifer Browning

07.01.2000.

ULAS Report 2000/05

## Location and Background

Skillington is approximately 10 km to the south east of Grantham, on the western edge of the district of South Kesteven, Lincolnshire (OS Pw 2376). The development site is situated within the historic village curf, adjacent to a paddock with arable crops. An archaeological watching brief was maintained during topsoil stripping and groundworks (see main body of text).

The well is located on the boundary of the site and Back Lane, close to the junction with Spraxton Road (figures 2 & 3). "The Abbey" is a small stone manor house, which lies next to a moated site on higher ground, west of the church. It is dated on a gable to 1637 (Pevsner 1964: 632). Local tradition suggests that the well might originally have belonged to the Abbey and it is known within the village as the "fishwell".

## Description

The structure is built of blocks of stone (mostly limestone) stacked together. It consists of a sub-circular well with an adjoining rectangular "trough" (figure 4 & plates 1-4). A stone wall projects out to the north at right angles to the trough, curving round towards the fence. It is topped by a course of blue engineering bricks. The "trough" is about 0.6m deep from the top of the south eastern wall and has a solid base. However, due to weed cover it was not possible to see from what the base is made, and it seemed likely that it has been filled with rubble. A layer of concrete caps the south eastern wall of the trough.



## Appendix 1

### A Building Survey of the "fishwell", Back Lane, Skillington, Lincolnshire (SK8965 2576).

#### Summary

*A building survey was undertaken to record a stone structure to the north west of the development area, known locally as the "fishwell". The survey followed guidelines laid down by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England.*

#### Introduction

This report forms part of an archaeological watching brief carried out during the groundworks for a barn conversion and the erection of ten new houses.

A building survey of the well, a stone structure to the north west of the development area, was carried out on the 6th January 1999. This report is based on guidelines laid down by the Royal Commission for the Historical Monuments on England (RCHME, 1996) for the recording of historic buildings and is intended to fulfil the requirements of a level two survey (see Appendix 2). The structure was located, using an Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM). Measured sketch plans were produced and the structure was photographed from a number of different angles.

#### Location and Background

Skillington is approximately 10 km to the south east of Grantham, on the western edge of the district of South Kesteven, Lincolnshire (SK 8965 2576). The development site is situated within the historic village core, adjacent to a paddock with earthworks. An archaeological watching brief was maintained during topsoil stripping and groundworks (see main body of text).

The well is located on the boundary of the site and Back Lane, close to the junction with Sproxton Road (*figures 2 & 3*). "The Abbey" is a small stone manor house, which lies next to a moated site on higher ground, west of the church. It is dated on a gable to 1637 (Pevsner 1964, 632). Local tradition suggests that the well might originally have belonged to the Abbey and it is known within the village as the "fishwell".

#### Description

The structure is built of blocks of stone (mostly limestone) mortared together. It consists of a sub-circular well with an adjoining rectangular "trough" (*figure 6 & plates 1-4*). A stone wall projects out to the north at right angles to the trough, curving round towards the fence. It is topped by a course of blue engineering bricks. The "trough" is about 0.6m deep from the top of the south eastern wall and has a solid base. However, due to weed cover it was not possible to see from what the base is made, and it seemed likely that it has been filled with rubble. A layer of concrete tops the south eastern wall of the trough.



The well is capped just above present ground level by a rectangular block of coarse concrete measuring 1.42m x 1.23m x 0.15m and the water level is about 1 metre below the concrete cap. The well shaft itself is partly filled by brick rubble so it was not possible to establish the original depth. Alterations have also been made to the well using brick. The east end of the "trough" is blocked by a wall of blue bricks, similar to those of the stone wall at the western end of the "trough". The north western wall of the "trough" has been reveted using at least four courses of red bricks, which have since suffered some breakage.

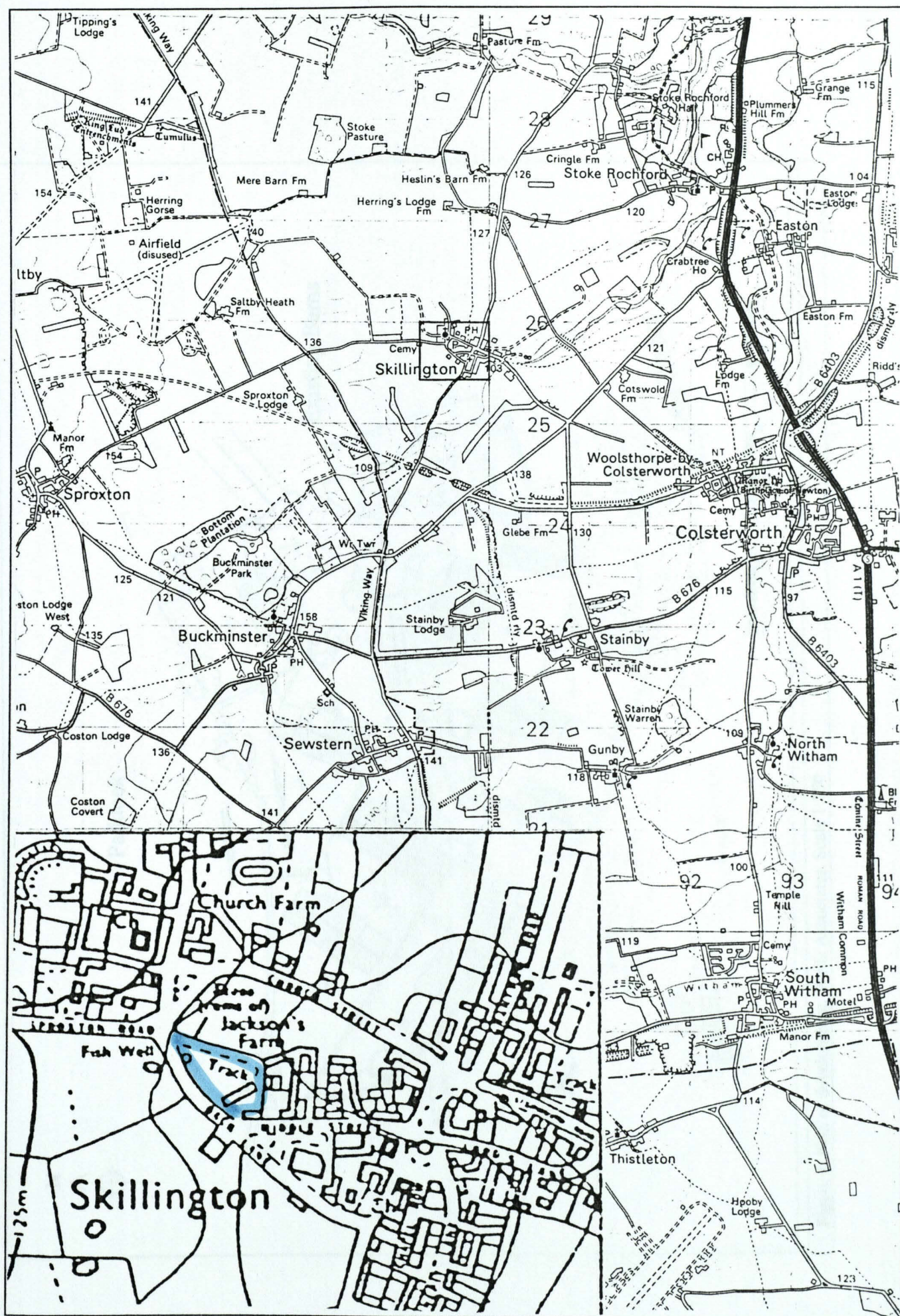
## Conclusions

Wells are generally shafts dug in the ground to tap a supply of spring water. The trough, adjoined to the well, may have been a place for washing, or even for the watering of animals. It is uncertain what the local term "fishwell" may refer to but it has been observed that the 1:10 000 OS map (*figure 1*) shows another structure marked as the "fishwell" on the south side of Back Lane. Whether this is merely the result of some confusion is not clear.

It has not been possible to assign a date to the construction of the well, although it was originally built in stone. The later use of bricks and concrete suggest that the well was maintained and refurbished at intervals, although it has evidently fallen into disuse in recent years. The blue bricks used to refurbish the well are engineering bricks, probably dating from the 19th century, which suggests that the original fabric of the well certainly predates this. If the structure is associated with the stone manor house, known as "the Abbey", then it may be as early as the seventeenth century or potentially even earlier.

Pevsner, N., 1964 *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*. Penguin. London.





**Figure 1:** Location Map. Scale 1:50 000. Reproduced from the 1994 Ordnance Survey map, sheet 130 with the permission of the Controller of HMSO © Crown Copyright. ULAS licence no. AL51800A0001. Inset at 1:5000.



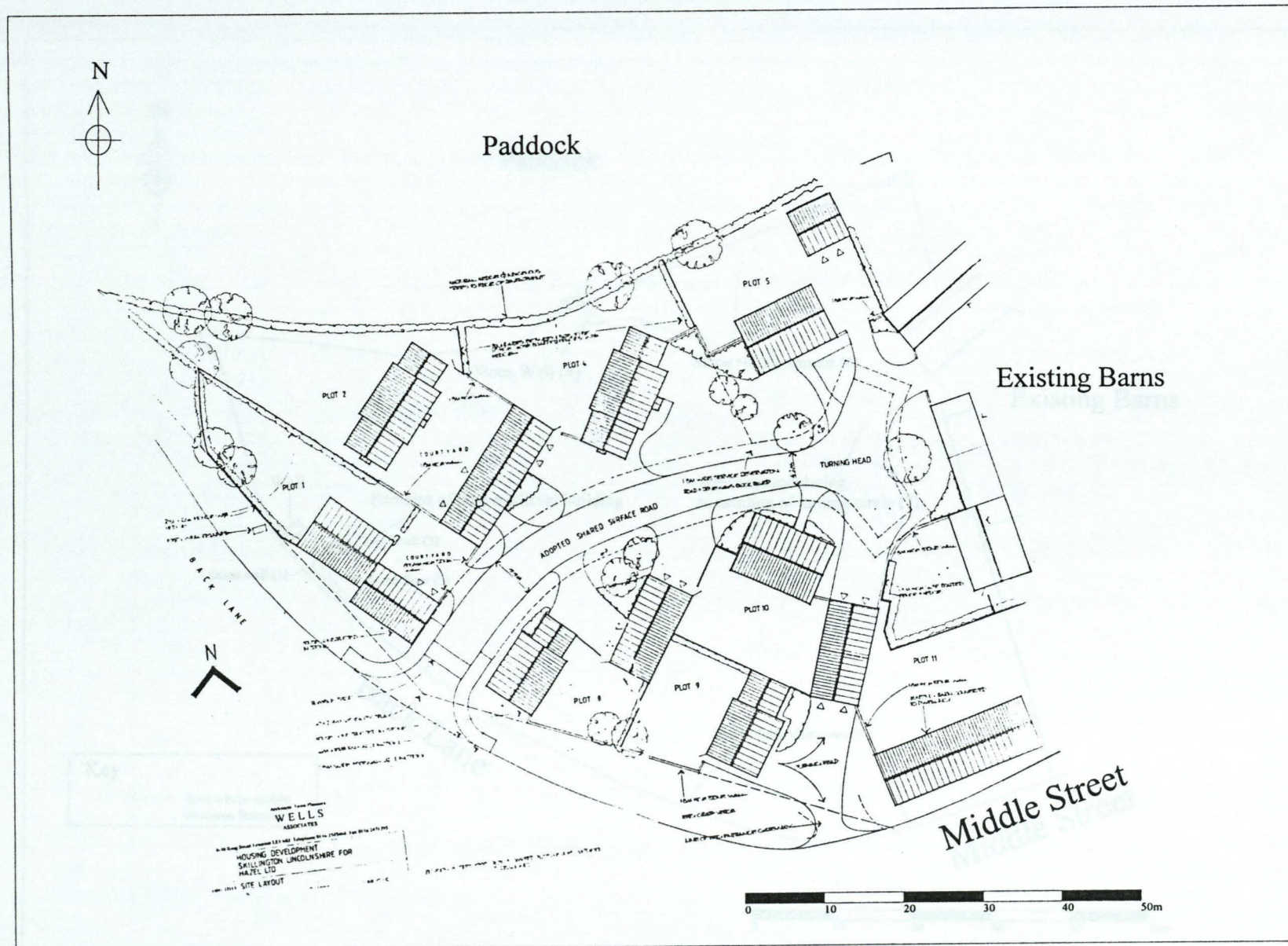


Figure 2: Plan of development. Wells Associates. Scale 1:750



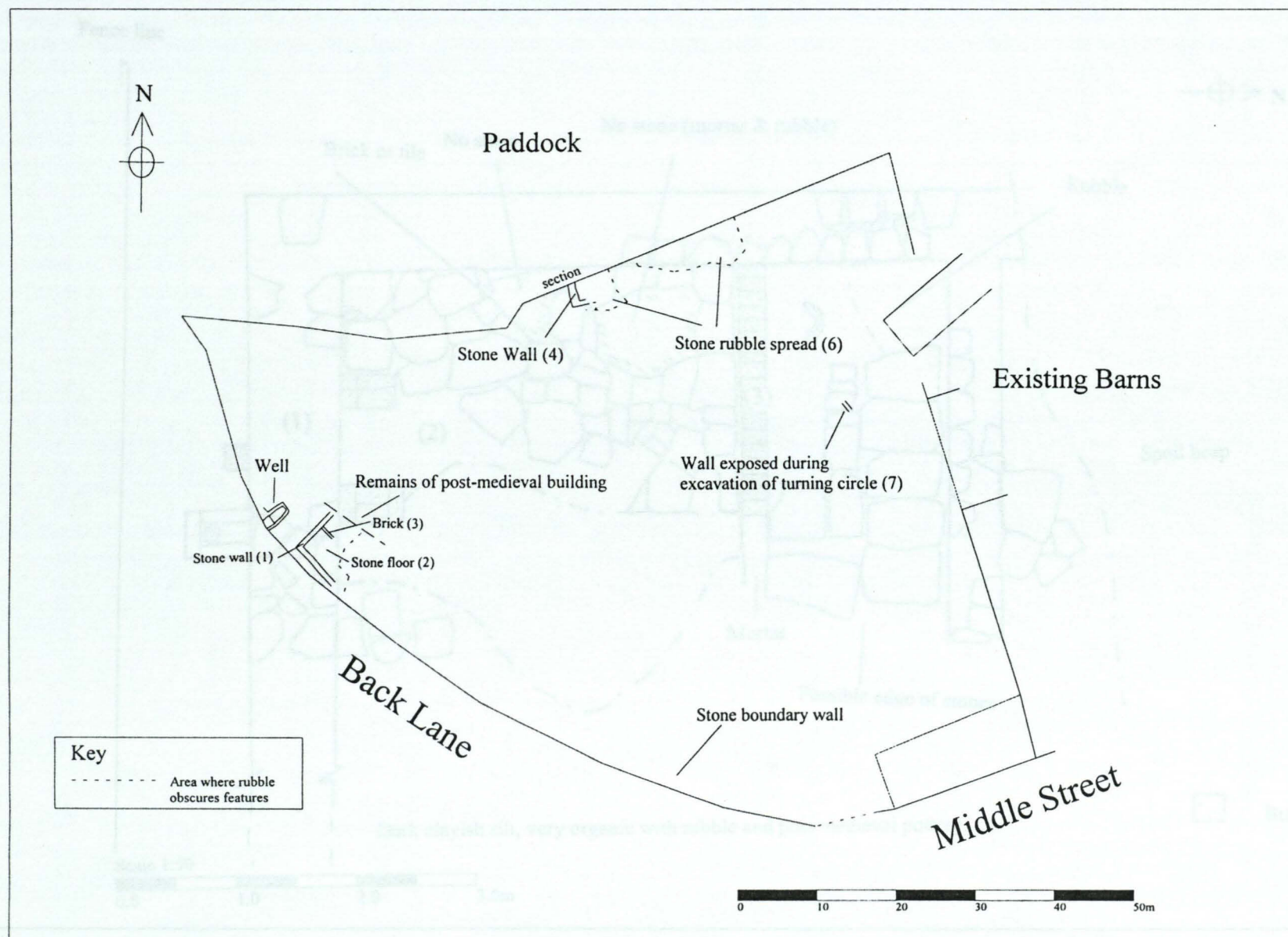
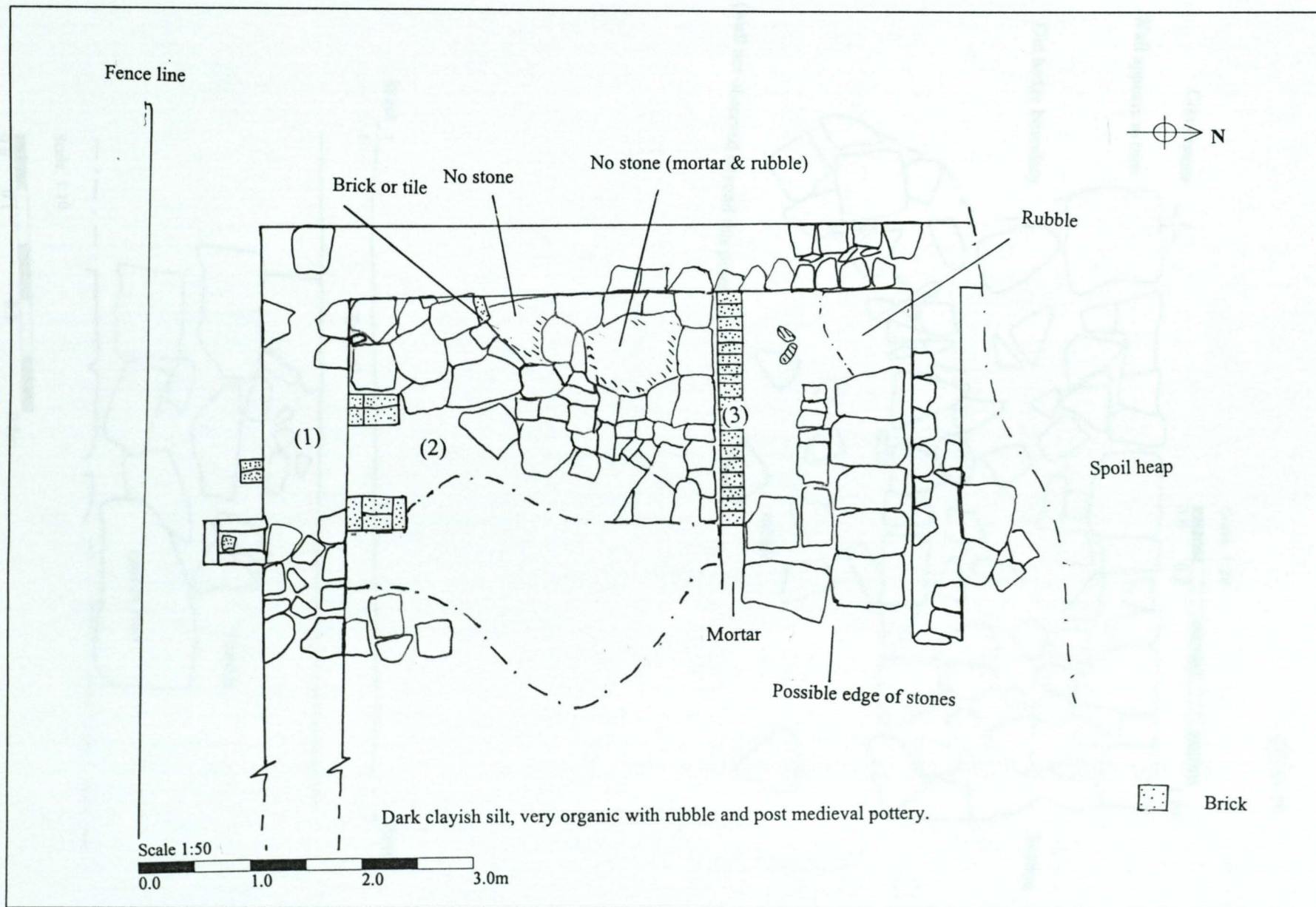


Figure 3: Plan of site showing archaeological features. Based on EDM survey. Scale 1:750





**Figure 4:** Plan of post medieval building. Scale 1:50



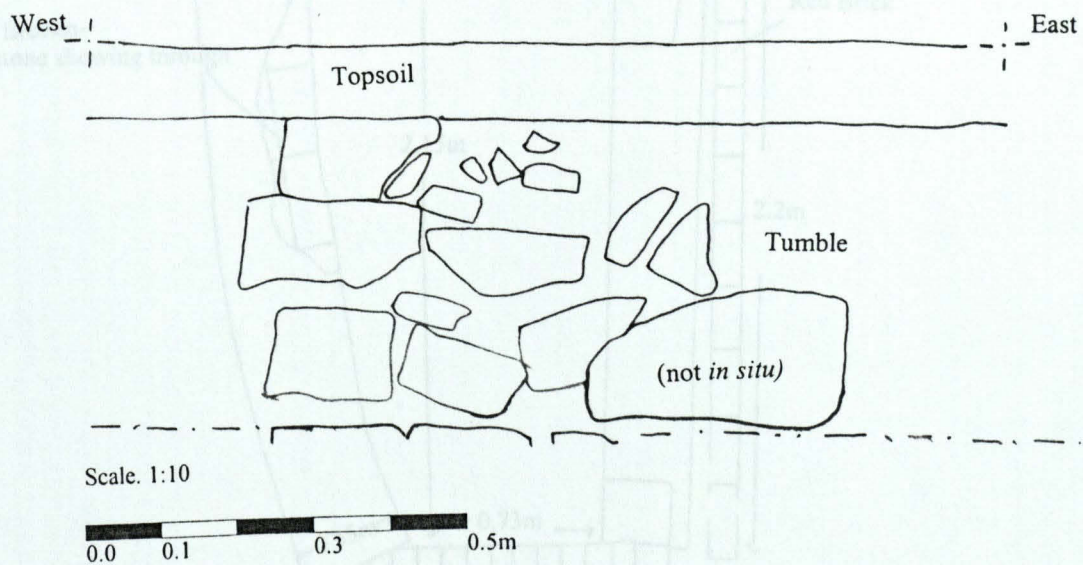
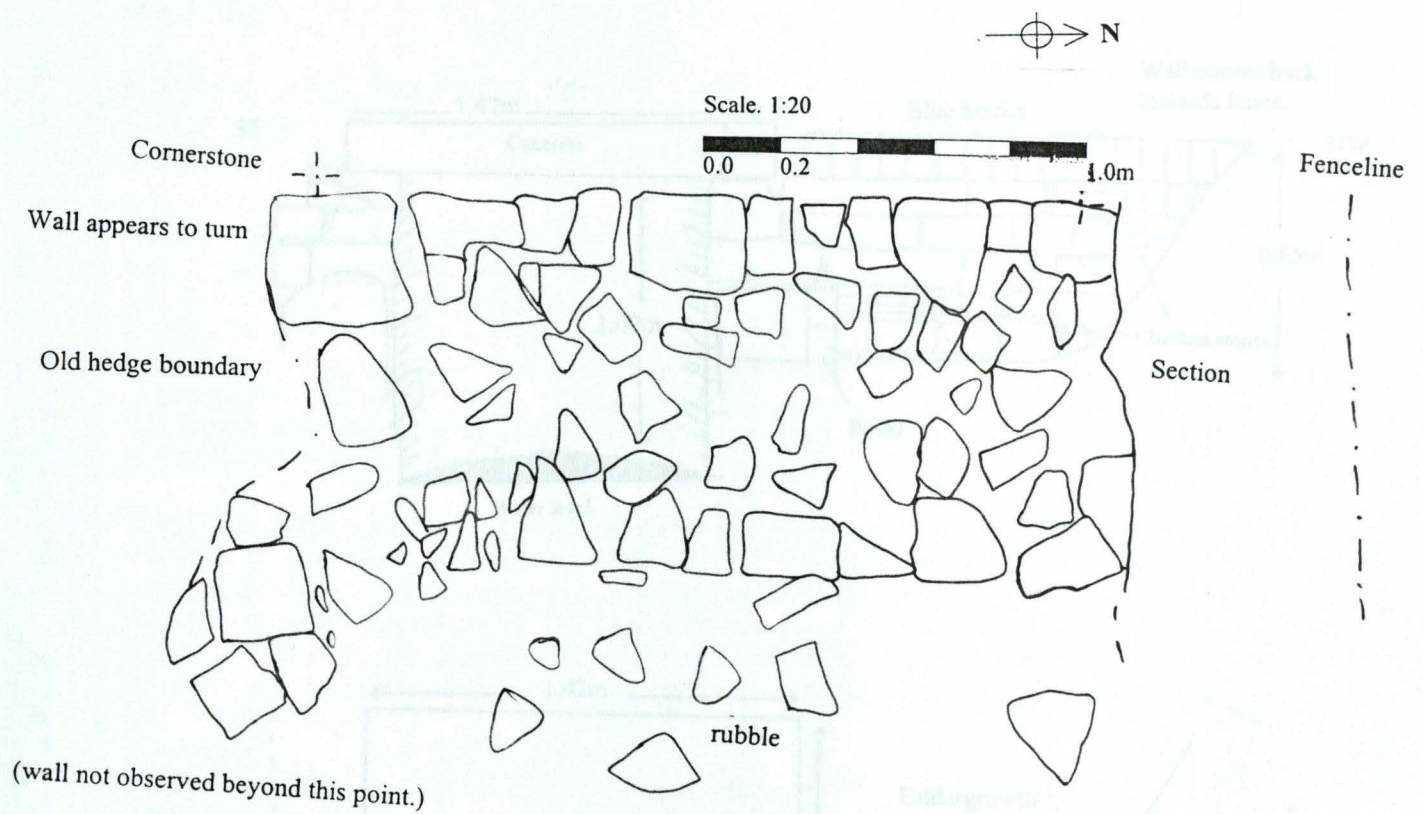
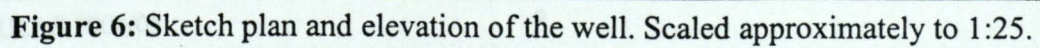


Figure 5: Plan and section of wall (4).







## Appendix 2

### The Post Roman Pottery and Tile.

#### Deborah Sawday

Only three fragments of pottery, all in what is thought to be a local early medieval Lincolnshire shelly ware, possibly dating from the late 12th or the early 13th century (Adams Gilmour 1988), were recovered from a context overlaying the stone wall in the north west corner of the site. Another fragment of medieval pottery was also recovered, dating from the 13th or 14th centuries, in Stanion Lyveden type ware, from north Northamptonshire (Davies and Sawday 1999). The rest of the unstratified material included sherds of post medieval and modern pottery, and four fragments of roof tile, at least one of which may be a product of the Bourne kilns in Lincolnshire (Healey 1969, 1973), and of late medieval rather than post medieval date.

The medieval pottery suggests that there was occupation in the area from at least the late 12th or 13th centuries, and hints at continuing activity during the 13th or 14th centuries. The presence of post medieval pottery dating to the 17th or 18th centuries, if not slightly earlier, confirms that there was activity in the area during this period also, as does the presence of the roofing tile. The latter may also indicate that there was a building or buildings of some status in the vicinity. Typically for this period, the medieval pottery appears to originate from local kiln sites in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire.

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Site/Parish: Skillington, Lincs	Submitter: J. Browning
Accession No: 178 1999/SKB 1999	Identifier: D. Sawday
Material: Pottery and Tile	Date of Id: 6.1.00
Site Type: village core, associated with medieval earthworks	Method of Recovery: watching brief
	Doc Ref: skillin1.doc

Context	Fabric/Ware	Sherd Nos.	Weight Grams	Comments
<b>POTTERY</b>				
(5) soil overlaying stone wall	?LI - Lincoln/Lincs Local Early Medieval Shelly ware	3	23	three joining sherds from wall of coil built vessel, coarse shelly fabric, ?late 12th/early 13th c.
U/S by road turning	LY1 - Stanion Lyveden type ware	1	5	oolitic, coil built, green glazed, 13th/14th c.
U/S topsoil strip	EA2 - Earthenware 2/pancheon ware	1	20	post med
	EA6 - Glazed Red Earthenware/Blackware	2	55	includes part of a 17th/18th c. chamber pot.
	SW5 - Brown/Grey Stoneware	1	22	modern
	EA8 - Creamware	2	2	c.1730+
	EA10 - White Earthenware	1	5	modern
U/S close to stone wall	EA2	2	155	profile shallow bowl with internal sediment, and jar rim, 17th/18th c.
<b>TILE</b>				
U/S by road	EA - Earthenware	1	14	hand made roof tile, sanded on one surface. 1/2" thick, fabric suggest post med
U/S topsoil strip	EA	1	72	moulded and hand finished curved roof tile, sanded on one surface, thickness varies between 1/2" and less to 5/8", fabric suggests possibly a late medieval or early post medieval product of the Bourne kilns
	EA	1	78	moulded flat roof tile fragment, sanded on one surface and edge c. 5/8" thick, fabric suggests post med
	EA	1	180	curved ?tile fragment, sanded with traces of mortar on one surface, thickness varies from c.1/2" to 3/4" - fabric suggests post med



## Appendix 3: Extracts from "Recording Historic Buildings; a Descriptive Specification. Third Edition.

### *Levels of record*

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#### LEVEL 1

Level 1 is essentially a visual record, supplemented by the minimum of information needed to identify the building's location, age and type. This is the simplest record, and will typically be adopted when the aim is to gather basic information about a large number of buildings for statistical sampling, for a pilot project, to identify buildings for planning purposes, and whenever resources are limited and much ground has to be covered in a short time.

Level 1 surveys will generally be of exteriors only, though the interior of a building may sometimes be seen in order to make a superficial inspection and to note significant features. Only if circumstances and objectives allow it will a sketch plan be drawn.

A Level 1 record will typically consist of:

written account	1-3
drawing sometimes	1
photography	1, sometimes 2

#### LEVEL 2

This is a descriptive record, made in similar circumstances to Level 1 but when rather more information is needed. It may also be made of a building which is judged not to require any fuller record. Both the exterior and interior of the building will be seen, described and photographed. The examination of the building will have produced an analysis of its development and use and the record will include the conclusions reached, but will not discuss the evidence on which this analysis is based. A plan will be made and the possibility of publication must be borne in mind.

A Level 2 record will typically consist of:

written record	1-2, 4, sometimes 10
drawn record	sometimes 1, normally 2
photography	1-3

#### LEVEL 3

A Level 3 record is fully analytical, and will comprise an introductory written description followed by a systematic account of the building's origins, development and use. The record will include an account of the evidence on which the analysis has been based, allowing the validity of the record to be re-examined. It will also include all visual records that may be required to illustrate the building's appearance and structure and to support a historical analysis.

The information contained in the record will for the most part have been obtained through an examination of the building itself, without extensive use of other sources, and the record will not normally discuss at any length the building's broader stylistic or historical context and importance. It may, however, form part of an extended survey of a number of buildings which will aim at an overall synthesis, such as a thematic or regional publication, when the use of additional source material may be necessary as well as a broader historical and architectural discussion of the buildings as a group.

A Level 3 record will typically consist of:

written account	1-2, 4-10, sometimes 12
drawing	2-4 or 5
photography	1-6

#### LEVEL 4

This level of recording will only be employed by the Royal Commission in respect of buildings of special importance. The range of drawings may also be greater than at other levels. Whereas the analysis and interpretation employed at Level 3 will clarify the building's history so far as it may be deduced from the structure itself, the record at Level 4 will draw on the full range of other sources of information about the building and discuss its significance in terms of architectural, social, regional or economic history.

A Level 4 record will typically consist of:

written account	1-2, 4-13
drawing	2-10
photography	1-6



## PHOTOGRAPHY

Black-and-white photography is preferable to colour for permanent, archival purposes. Colour should be used, however, to record decoration, when there is a likelihood for colour photography (eg. for publicity material, book illustrations, etc.), and when significant structural detail shows up more clearly in colour than in monochrome.

Photography may include:

- 1 General view or views of the exterior of the building.
- 2 The overall appearance of principal rooms and circulation areas.

- 3 Detailed coverage of the building's external appearance: in the case of a building designed by an architect, or intended to be seen from a certain point of view, it is important to have regard to the builder's intentions and to record the effect of the design or of the building's placing.
- 4 Any external detail, structural or decorative, which is relevant to the building's design, development and use and which does not show adequately on general photography.
- 5 The building's relationship to its setting, to other buildings, or to a significant viewpoint.
- 6 Internal detail, structural and decorative (as for 4).

## SURVEY AND DRAWINGS

A set of drawings may contain:

- 1 A sketch plan, roughly dimensioned (when no more thorough design record is made). Such a plan may not always include structural details (eg. timber framing).
- 2 Plans (to scale or fully dimensioned) of all main floors in existing. Small buildings of well-known types, or buildings with a repetitive structure (eg. many industrial buildings) may be planned on one floor only, but a note or a sketch plan should be made to show the arrangement of other floors. Plans should show the form and location of any structural features of historic significance (eg. blocked doors and windows, former fireplace openings, masonry piers, changes in internal levels).

## THE WRITTEN ACCOUNT

- 1 The precise location of the building, by name or street number, civil parish, town, etc., and National Grid reference and details of listing or scheduling.
- 2 The date when the record was made, and the name(s) of the recorder(s).
- 3 A summary statement describing the building's type or purpose, materials and possible date(s) so far as these are apparent from a superficial inspection.
- 4 An expansion of 3 above. This account should outline the building's plan, form, function, age and development sequence. The names of architect, builder, patron and owners should be given if known. Its purpose is to describe the building when no fuller record is necessary, to serve as an introduction to the more detailed body of the record that may follow, and to satisfy those users who may need no more than a summary of the Royal Commission's findings.
- 10 A note of the building's past and present relationship to its setting: for example, its relationship to local settlement patterns, to a field system, to a park, garden, moor, graveyard or other man-made landscape; its part in a larger architectural or functional group of buildings; its visual importance as a landmark, etc.





Plate 3: Detail of southern wall. Looking south.



Plate 4: Detail of well, looking west.





**Plate 1:** General view of well. Looking south west.



**Plate 2:** Closer view of well. Looking west.



