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**CHURCH CLIFF HOUSE**  
**FILEY, NORTH YORKSHIRE**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**

John Buglass

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*Summary*

*An archaeological investigation was undertaken during the turf and topsoil stripping of a c.2m wide and c.80m long footpath in the grounds of Church Cliff House on the northern side of St Oswalds Church in Filey, North Yorkshire (TA 1174 8112).*

*Previous desktop research and physical investigations in and around Filey and its environs had resulted in establishing that the area had a long and varied historic and archaeological past. Both to the north-east and south of Church Cliff House there are significant historic/archaeological sites. To the north-east lies probably the most well known and significant archaeological site - the scheduled remains of the Roman signal station at Carr Naze on Filey Brigg (TA 1271 8162). Whilst to the south stands the Grade I listed St Oswald's Church (TA 1178 8106). In the immediate vicinity of Church Cliff House two sites have been identified. The first was as a result of excavations between 1924 and 1926 in the field to the east of the new footpath which encountered the substantial remains of a 17<sup>th</sup> century building along with evidence for earlier activity. The second was a spot find of a Neolithic greenstone axe found at the base of the cliffs further to the east, which had probably been deposited there as a result of erosion from the cliff top. In addition to these sites Church Cliff House and some of the associated farm buildings in the complex date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards and as such are listed. This meant that there was a high potential for the discovery of previously unknown archaeological remains during the construction work.*

*The archaeological investigation was able to examine the entire length of the footpath to a depth of c.0.30m. The archaeological remains revealed during this investigation consisted of traces of what appeared to be a robbed out wall along with the remains of an area of cobbling and a possible threshold or doorway for another building. A relatively large amount of artifactual and environmental material was recovered which included ironwork, ceramics, glass and animal bone. The majority of this material was 19/20<sup>th</sup> century in date though there were several sherds of late medieval/early post-medieval green glazed pottery recovered. These features appeared to represent the remains of agricultural buildings, probably associated with the surviving farmhouse although there is a strong possibility of earlier phases of activity being present either below and/or adjacent to the features revealed which may be related to the earlier 17<sup>th</sup> century structure.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological investigation during the stripping of the turf and topsoil along the line of a new footpath across a small plot of land to the east of Church Hill House, Filey, North Yorkshire (TA 1174 8112).
- 1.2 The investigation was undertaken by members of the Filey Bay Initiative (FBI) and John Buglass (of JBAS) their archaeological advisor at the kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Lofthouse the landowners. The investigation was carried out on 18 June 2005.
- 1.3 The footpath was in a straight line from the boundary of the garden on the eastern side of Church Hill House, in line with the door on that side, to the edge of the paddock/pasture to the east (see Figure 1).
- 1.4 The area stripped was c.80m by 2m by 0.3m with the resulting topsoil and turf dispersed in the paddock to the east.
- 1.5 The investigation was intended to examine and record the nature of any visible archaeological remains exposed during this work.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **Site Location**

- 2.1 Church Hill House lies some 30m to the north of the parish church of St Oswald's on the north-eastern side of the settlement of Filey. The building is part of an old farm complex of which several buildings still survive, mainly dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. A number of the buildings, including Church Hill House itself are listed, as is St Oswald's church (see Appendix I for details of the listings). The area of the footpath had up until recently been part of the pasture/paddock which lay between the eastern side of the house and garden and the cliff edge at Pampline Cliffs.
- 2.2 Filey and its surrounding area contains a wide range of evidence for multi-period archaeological activity dating from the Palaeolithic up to the Second World War. The earliest evidence is from the Palaeolithic with finds of flint and other stone tools along with evidence, also in the form of flint tools, of Mesolithic, Neolithic and later prehistoric activity period. The Bronze Age is represented several burial mounds outside the settlement. Later prehistoric activity is represented by a series of earthworks, typically linear, which are attributed to the Iron Age. Although there is little evidence for Roman activity in the area what there is of national significance – the remains of the signal station on Carr Naze is a Scheduled Ancient Monument - and there is evidence for settlement at Long Whins to the south. During the medieval period the landscape took on the form that is largely as it is seen today - a dispersed pattern of settlements set within a mainly arable landscape linked by a network of small roads. There are the remains of several deserted or re-located medieval villages and historic records show a strong local centre at Hunmanby. The post-medieval period saw the continued change and development of the area with the various settlements expanding and contracting as

various balances of power and trade/agriculture changed. The advent of the railway and improved road systems saw the rapid development of Filey as the major town in the area and its establishment as a seaside resort (Buglass, 2005).

### **Geology and Soils**

- 2.3 The underlying solid geology of the area is basically divided into Corallian limestone and gritstone of the Upper Jurassic period to the north of the Speeton Hills and the chalk of the Cretaceous to the south. Overlying this is a substantial deposit of glacial till which is continually eroding to leave a distinctive, deeply incised landscape seen along the Brigg, especially at Pampline Cliffs.
- 2.4 The landscape is largely composed of Oolitic limestone overlying Oolitic sandstone deposits; this in turn is covered by limestone and sandstone. Filey Brigg is a reef of calcareous grit, which projects more than a half mile from the foot of the promontory.

### **Topography and Land-use**

- 2.5 The landscape was broadly level with a gentle rise towards the east and south of the field. The area of paddock/pasture to the east of the boundary fence was noticeably more uneven and contained features which could well be archaeological earthworks. A further area of pasture to the north-east contained the remains of very prominent, well preserved ridge and furrow agriculture. In the area to the north of the site there were a number of converted post-medieval farm buildings.
- 2.6 Currently the land was laid to pasture though it is understood that the area around the footpath will eventually become a semiformal extension to the garden.

## **3.0 AIMS**

- 3.1 The aim of the investigation was to identify and record any features of archaeological interest revealed during the groundworks for the new footpath.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 A wheeled mechanical excavator using a toothless or ditching bucket undertook the stripping of the turf and topsoil (Plate 1). The resulting stripped area was inspected visually and any areas of potential archaeological remains were then cleaned by hand and recorded photographically. The resulting spoil was also scanned for artefactual material.

## **5.0 RESULTS**

- 5.1 As a result of the topsoil stripping portions of two archaeological features were revealed (Figure 2). The first of these was located some 10m to the east of the garden boundary and was aligned in a north-south direction. This feature appeared to be the remains of a

- robbed out wall (001) that appeared to have been constructed from sandstone rubble on a crushed chalk base. There was no evidence for an internal floor surface though this could have been completely removed previously or was of a simple packed earth construction. The feature measured approximately 2.25m wide and survived to a depth of 0.15m (Plate 2). Due to the linear nature of the excavation no limit to the north or south of the feature was determined. However, it was noted that it did line up with the western end of St Oswald's church to the south. Artefactual material recovered from the feature consisted of ceramic sherds, ironwork, glass and a small amount of animal bone.
- 5.2 The second feature recorded was the substantial remains of a cobbled surface with the possible remains of a doorway/threshold at the eastern end of the feature (Figure 2). The cobbled area extended approximately 12m along the trench; however, there was insufficient time to reveal the whole of its extent heading westwards in the trench (Plate 3). The surface was formed from water worn cobbles of varying sizes and are probably from the foreshore. Within the area of cobbling there were two distinct differences. The first was in a band orientated north-west/south-east and was composed of larger stones (002) (c.0.30m diameter) which then appeared to form a corner on the southern edge of the trench. Within this was an area of smaller stones (003) (c.0.10m diameter) which may have formed a working surface with the larger cobbles acting as footings for a wooden wall (Plate 4). All of the cobbled areas had a shallow but noticeable slope down to the north-east.
- 5.3 To the east of the larger cobbles was a further area of smaller stones, which lie directly to the south of the dressed threshold. These stones may represent an area of 'walkway' between internal divisions of a building (004). Further to the east again from this patch was a discrete area of angular sandstone blocks that probably represents the remains of the wall of the building (005). The possible threshold was represented by a well-dressed sandstone block (006), which retained evidence for dressing with a c.20mm chisel. To the north of this block there were three further, smaller, sandstone blocks (007) all of which had been dressed in a similar manner (Plate 4).
- 5.4 This feature yielded a very similar range of artefacts to wall 001 suggesting at least a degree contemporaneity; however, it was noticeable that there was slightly more later medieval/early post-medieval pottery. Although no direct stratigraphic or physical link could be established between the two features there is a possibility that they are remains of the same structure.
- 5.5 A brief inspection of the surrounding landscape showed that there was a high potential for other archaeological features to survive. The most obvious of these has already been mentioned above and is the well-preserved, north-south, ridge and furrow. It should be noted that this ends at the current field boundary that runs east-west from the rear of Church Cliff House towards the cliff top. This boundary consists of the denuded remains of a ditch and bank type feature. The manner in which the ridge and furrow ends at this boundary very strongly suggests that this is the original boundary from when this method of agriculture was in practice. This would, in turn suggest that the area of the 1924-26 excavation to the south of this boundary, which encountered the building remains, is on the site of an earlier settlement (see Eaton 2005).

- 5.6 As already mentioned the field to the east of the site contains what appear to be significant earthworks. In addition to this the eroded area around the small pond for watering the horses appears to contain the possible remains of stone footings and floors. A conversation with one of the owners in relation to the exposed cobbled area indicated that there was at least another area like this to the west of the surviving outbuildings in these fields.
- 5.7 In addition to the ridge and furrow the surviving buildings to the north of Church Cliff House, although predominantly 18<sup>th</sup> century in date, could well relate to the remains excavated in the 1920s. Incorporated within the fabric of one of the buildings was the eroded remains of a carved head (Plate 5). The carving has obviously been re-used from its original location and appears to have once been covered with cement/mortar. The original origin of the carving is unknown. The present owner has no knowledge of where it came from as it was already in place when the property was purchased a few years ago and local knowledge cannot account for it either. There are two surviving examples of a medieval table corbel on St Oswald's church but a comparison of the styles, even allowing for erosion, does not appear to make them contemporary. It is possible; therefore, that this originates from a building no longer recorded on the site.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The archaeological investigation at Church Cliff House during the cutting of the footings for the new footpath recorded the remains of one, probably two stone buildings one of which had a cobbled courtyard or working surface. The slope on the cobbles could be indicative of a livestock handling area to allow waste material to be channelled away, or could be as a result of subsidence into an earlier, unknown feature underneath.
- 6.2 The presence of the possible threshold of dressed stonework suggests a building of better quality and could easily be associated with the remains of the 18/19<sup>th</sup> century buildings that still exist today. However, the excavated remains could equally be associated with the features recorded in the excavations between 1924-26 in the field to the east which were attributed to the Bucks family manor house of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Eaton 2005).
- 6.3 The presence of significant amounts of late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics and iron work indicates that the structures may have been standing until then, however, examination of the Ordnance Survey (OS) 1<sup>st</sup> edition six inch series of 1854 did not reveal any buildings located in that field. This would then suggest that the possible source of this material is from midden and night soil material, which had been spread on the pasture to improve the soil quality.
- 6.4 The results of the excavations in the field to the east of this site in both 1924-6 and the 1950s show that there is a very high potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains. These would relate at least to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Bucks house but recorded in the 1920s excavation but there is also a strong possibility that it could also relate to a potential early medieval settlement based on the north side of St Oswald's.

The arguments for the existence of this settlement are comprehensively set out in Eatons' report of 2005.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 Re-examine the accounts for the earlier excavations and attempt to rectify the measurements from the site plans with extant features in order to determine the location of the excavations.
- 7.2 Carry out a systematic probe/geophysical survey to establish the potential for further survival of archaeological remains in all the fields.
- 7.3 Survey the surviving ridge and furrow and associated field boundaries.
- 7.4 Examine the aerial photographic record to try to determine the extent of the earlier earthworks and ridge and furrow, prior to the establishment of the Country Park.
- 7.5 Carry out trial excavations on identified features to determine the depth, nature, form and degree of survival of the archaeological remains.

## **References**

- Buglass J (2005) *The Archaeological and Historical Background to Filey Bay and its Environs*. Unpublished contractors report to Filey Bay Initiative.
- Eaton D (2005) *The Settlement of North Filey*. Unpublished report.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Mr and Mrs Lofthouse of Church Cliff House for inviting the Filey Bay Initiative to have a look at site during the ground works, I would also like to thank those members of FBI for their assistance on site. Lastly, but by no means least, I would like to thank Roz Armstrong for her assistance in digging, especially when she had been promised a day at the seaside with a picnic.....

**Illustrations**



**Plate 1. Machine Stripping Footpath.**



**Plate 2. Wall 001. Scales 1m**



**Plate 3. Part of Cobbled Surface.**



**Plate 4. View to north showing possible threshold (007), wall 005 to right & path 004 to left.**

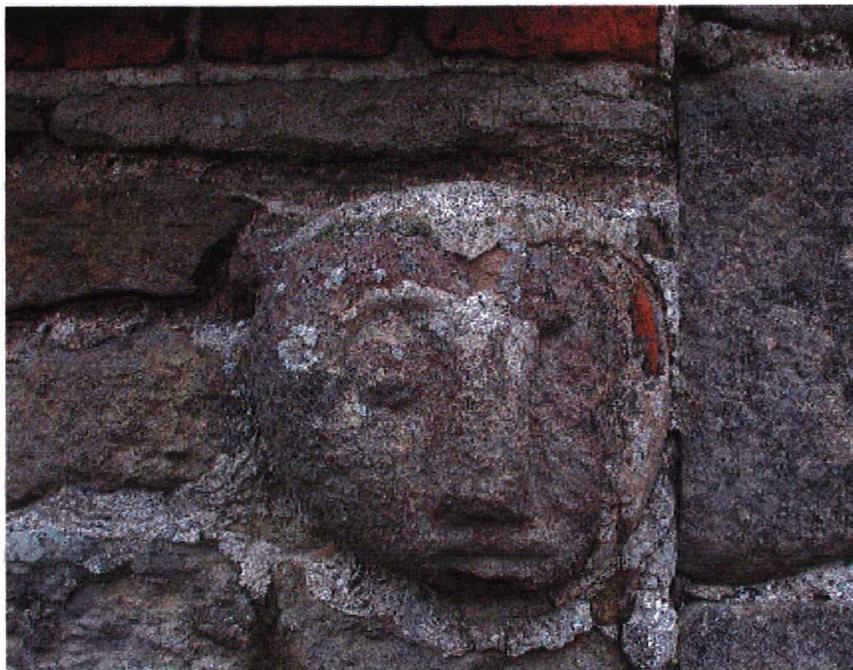


Plate 5. Carved head reused in stone building.

## APPENDIX I

Listed Building Data from English Heritage web site [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk)

Location : FILEY, SCARBOROUGH, NORTH YORKSHIRE

IoE number : 326941

Date listed : 24 OCT 1950

Date of last amendment : 24 OCT 1950

TA 11 81

FILEY

CHURCH CLIFF DRIVE

(east side)

10/4

Farm Buildings approximately  
20 metres to west of Church

24.10.50

Cliff Farm

GV

II

Farm buildings. Early C19. Chalk with brick dressings; red brick in Garden Wall Bond; pantile roofs. Three ranges of buildings enclosing three sides of a fold yard. 1½ storey, 5-bay range of cart and implement sheds flanked by 2-storey range of barns to left, with attached single storey Smithy; single storey range of cowshed to right. C20 full height door to left end of barn range; C20 pivoting sashes to Smithy at end right; plank doors in timber frames to cowsheds with window openings to left; all with quoined brick surrounds. Brick eaves course to Smithy. Included for group value.

Location : FILEY, SCARBOROUGH, NORTH YORKSHIRE

IoE number : 326942

Date listed : 24 OCT 1950

Date of last amendment : 24 OCT 1950

TA 11 81

FILEY

CHURCH CLIFF DRIVE

(east side)

10/5

Dovecote approximately  
20 metres to north-east  
of Church Cliff Farmhouse

24.10.50

GV

II

Dovecote. Late C17/early C18; probably reroofed C19. Coursed rubble limestone; slate roof; timber glover. Square on plan. 2-stages articulated by a raised chamfered band, on a chamfered plinth. Irregular quoins. Low doorway in west side, with chamfered lintel and chamfered, irregular quoined jambs. Horizontal opening with landing platform high in the south wall. Hipped roof. Interior: all 4 walls are lined from floor to ceiling with nesting boxes and landing platforms.

Location : FILEY, SCARBOROUGH, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Photographer : Mr Derek Mason LRPS

IoE number : 326943

Date listed : 24 OCT 1950

Date of last amendment : 24 OCT 1950

TA 11 81

FILEY

CHURCH CLIFF DRIVE

(south-east side, off)

Church of St Oswald

10/6

24.10.50

GV

I

Church. C12 and C13 with C15 battlements; restored and partly rebuilt in 1885 by W S Barber; roof partly rebuilt in 1908 after a fire; C19 south porch; C20 vestry and north porch. Dressed sandstone; slate and lead roofs. 6-bay aisled nave with clerestory, transepts and crossing tower, chancel and north and south porches. 2-stage, embattled crossing tower with 2-light pointed bell openings under a round-headed arch; continuous sill band. South door to nave of four orders with moulded round arches interrupted by later inserted stoup. Vertical slit

window in west end, originally intended to light a west tower stair turret. Impost band to aisles and nave. Transepts have stepped angle buttresses and a continuous sill band. Chancel has a pointed Priest's Door under a corbelled dripmould in south wall, with a mass clock and C17 bronze sundial inscribed in Greek to the right. Group of 3 stepped lancets in the east end, under a continuous hoodmould. Diagonal buttresses. Lancet windows throughout, those in the chancel and transepts dating from C12/C13, the remainder from C19. Embattled parapet over corbel table throughout. Interior: nave arcades have tripartite responds with the middle shaft keeled, alternating round and octagonal piers with moulded capitals and chamfered pointed arches. Deeply-splayed round-headed clerestory openings; similar openings at west end of north aisle. Sedilia with trefoil head to chancel and south transept; piscina to each transept. Other furnishings include; a late C13 carved wooden figure in the south aisle; a sealed altar slab carved with 5 crosses in the sanctuary; a C13 plain bowl font on a cylindrical shaft; a hatchment over the north door.

Location : FILEY, SCARBOROUGH, NORTH YORKSHIRE

IoE number : 326940

Date listed : 24 OCT 1950

Date of last amendment : 24 OCT 1950

TA 11 81

FILEY

CHURCH CLIFF DRIVE

(east side)

Church Cliff Farmhouse

10/3

24.10.50

GV

II

2 houses. Early C19 with later alterations. Light-red brick in English bond; stone dressings, not painted; slate roof; brick stacks. 2 central entry houses set at right angles forming L-shape, with later infill. South front: 2 storeys, 5 windows, symmetrical. Central 8-panelled door, recessed, with panelled reveals, under radial fanlight and bracketed porch with fluted pilasters. 16-pane sashes throughout, with stone sills and wedge lintels. Paired modillions at eaves level. East front: 2-storey, 6-window front. Half-glazed and panelled door to left of centre in round-arched doorcase with flat hood on consoles. Round-headed radial-glazed staircase window above under semi-circular archivol. 16-pane sashes with stone sills and wedge lintels throughout. Window to right of staircase window is blocked. Stacks pierce hipped roof.

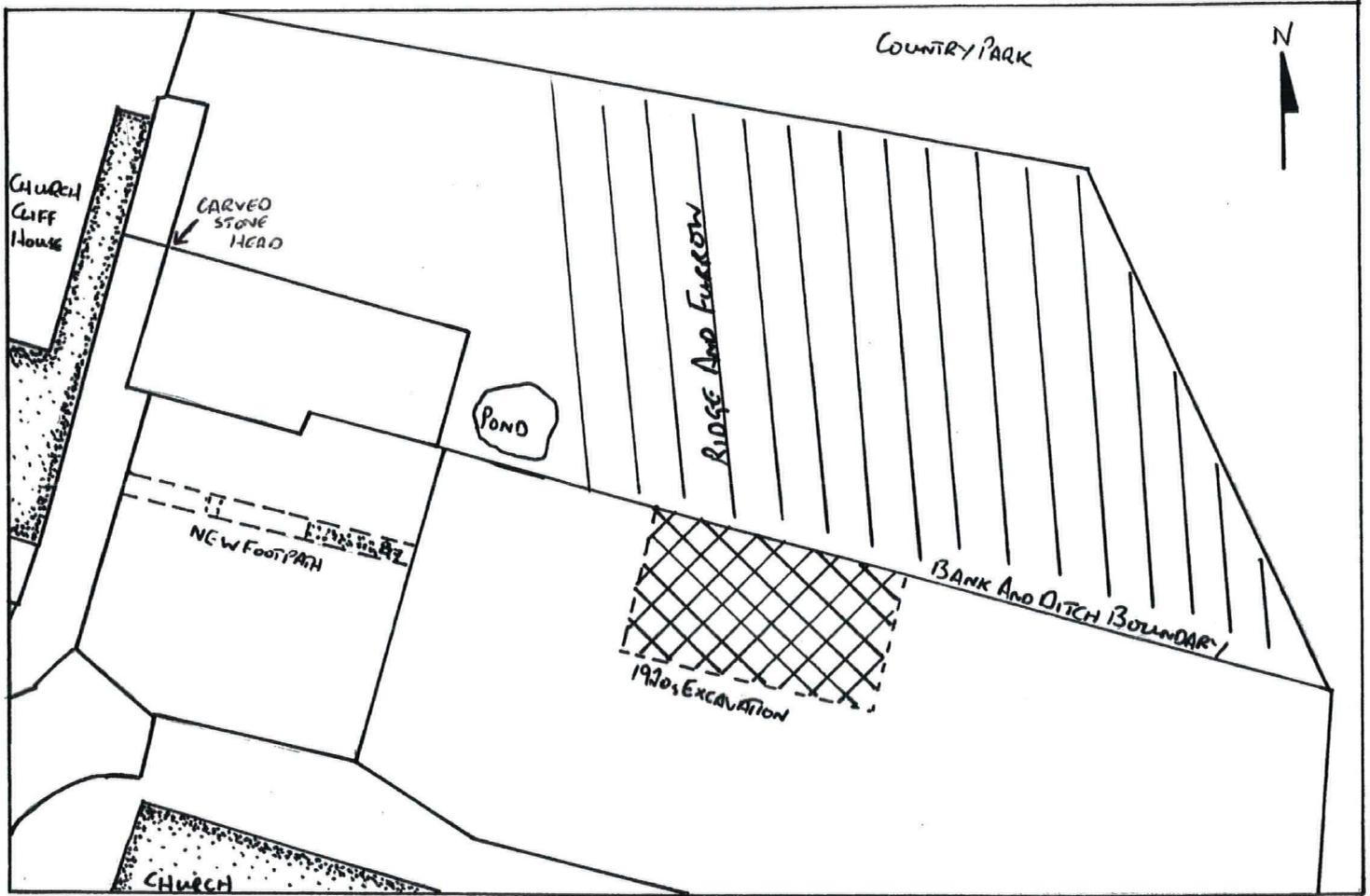


FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF FOOTPATH.

NOT TO SCALE

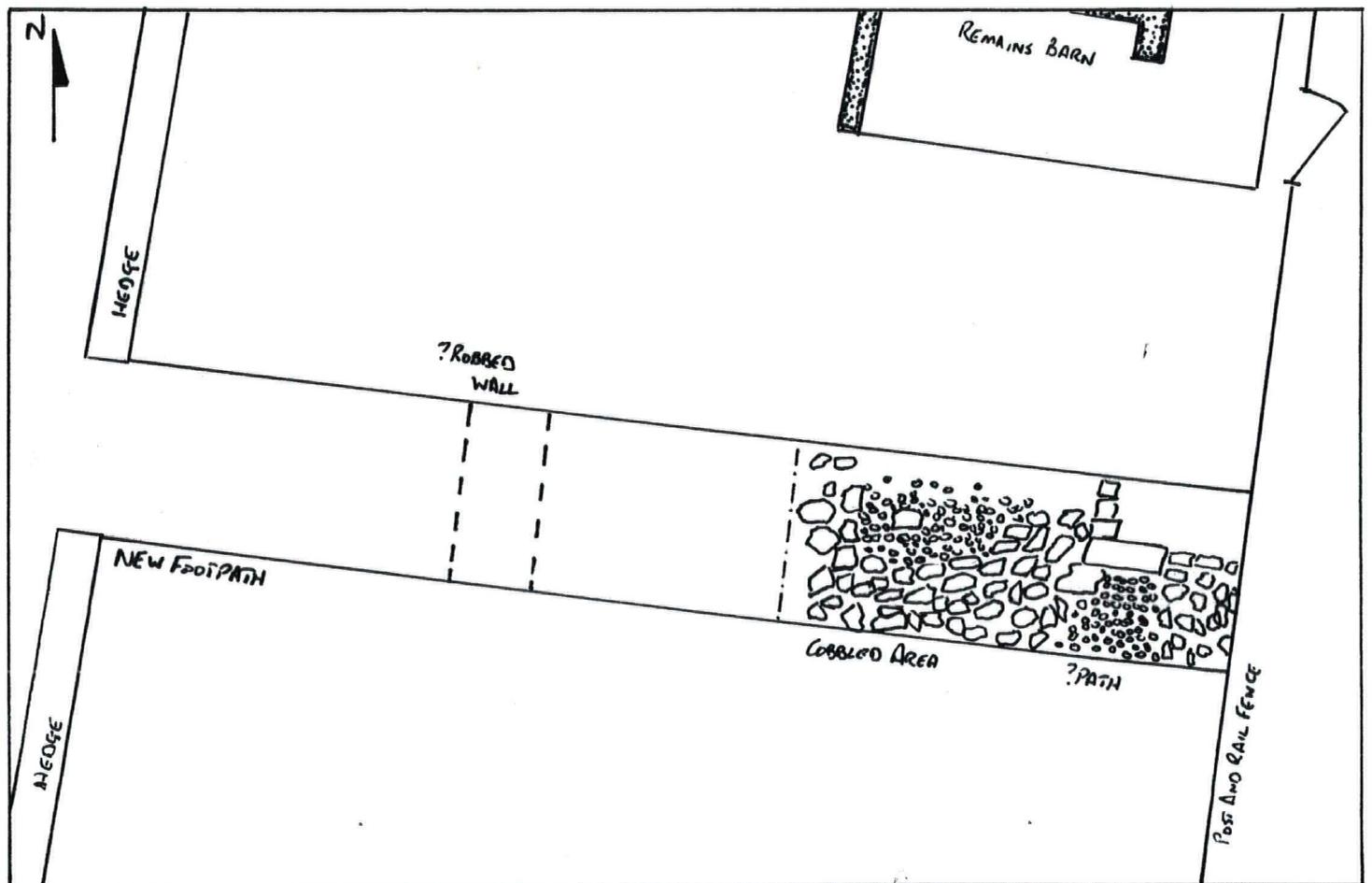


FIGURE 2. FEATURES BELOW FOOTPATH.

NOT TO SCALE.