

**STOCK HOUSE, FYNE COURT, BROOMFIELD, SOMERSET**  
**Archaeological Observations and Recording**



**Report No. 53305/3/1**

**May 2009**



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## **Archaeological Observations and Recording, April 2009**

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# **Stock House, Fyne Court, Broomfield, Somerset**

## **Archaeological Observations and Recording, May 2009**

### **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Terrain Archaeology in April 2009 during groundworks for the substantive rebuilding of a former stock house, part of a complex of agricultural outbuildings probably of late 18th century date, and associated with the 17th century Fyne Court House, Broomfield (NGR ST22263217). An original brick floor was revealed in the eastern room of the building, and observations were made regarding aspects of the building's construction, but no other archaeologically significant remains were found.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by the National Trust, to undertake archaeological observations and recording during foundation trenching carried out to allow rebuilding of a former stock house at Fyne Court, Broomfield. The site is centred on NGR ST22263217 (Figure 1).

Archaeological Observations and Recording, also known as an archaeological watching brief, is defined by the Institute for Archaeologists as "a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, within a specified area or site where there is the possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed."

The site is located just north of the former Fyne Court House, northeast of the hamlet of Broomfield, on a lower southeast slope of the Quantock Hills (Figure 2). The stock house itself is thought to be of late 18th century date, but probably much altered and heavily repaired. It was formerly a stone and brick building measuring 11 m by 4.35 m (externally), on two storeys, and being partly built off the east wall of the south walled garden. At ground floor level two rooms (here referred to as Rooms 1 and 2) contained various fixtures and fittings relating to its use as a stock house, and on the first floor was a single room running the full length of the building, and accessed by a set of brick- and concrete steps outside the west wall. In latter years, the building was derelict, with outward wall-bulges due to roof-spreading. Client photographs show the building pinned north-south by steel tie-bars, and the south-facing doors to Rooms 1 and 2 supported by Acro-props.

Local solid geology comprises Devonian Morte Slates, usually overlain by a reddish fine loam. Underlying the site itself, superficial deposits (where present) comprise a thin colluvial clay or head deposit, giving way to highly degraded/fragmented slate.

The fieldwork was carried out on the 21st and 22nd April 2009 by Mike Trevarthen.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of the following during this project: Martin Papworth, Neil Johnson and Nigel Garnsworthy (The National Trust) and John Parsons (LHS Construction).

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The National Trust property of Fyne Court has been the subject of a recent historic landscape assessment, which has gathered together much of the information on the history and archaeology

of the estate (TFT Cultural Heritage 2005). Reference should be made to this survey for more background detail, which will not be repeated here, except in very summary form.

Prehistoric flints and Romano-British pottery have been found in the area (although not from Fyne Court), and cropmarks indicating sub-square and rectilinear enclosures, fields and farmsteads likely to be of Iron Age and/or Roman date can be seen on web-based aerial-photography, some 4 km to the east, near Thurloxton (Google Earth). The village of Broomfield has medieval origins.

Fyne Court was built for the Crosse Family in the mid-late 17th century, and its grounds are significant for their numerous 18th century garden features, amongst which are a serpentine lake, boathouse, castellated folly, and a string of five lakes. A small artificial lake, with an overflow sluice to the east, lies immediately north of the site and, beyond that, a walled garden is bounded to the north by a derelict vinery building (Figure 2). On the hill slope west of the site is a mound believed to be an artificial viewing platform, and the stock house itself is connected to the southern end of a row of lincays (Plates 1-2).

Andrew Crosse carried out electrical experiments at Fyne Court in the early 19th century, adapting and creating new buildings to enable this research. Much of the main house was destroyed by fire in 1894, leaving only the outbuildings, music room and library intact.

The stockhouse is thought to be 18<sup>th</sup> century in date, although there is a documentary record of the construction of a new cow house in 1854, but it is uncertain that this refers to the stock house which is the subject of this report (TFT Cultural Heritage 2005, 71).

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the archaeological observations was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

## **METHODS**

The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with an archaeological specification issued by The National Trust's Regional Archaeologist (Papworth 2009), and the Institute for Archaeologists (formerly the Institute of Field Archaeologists) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs and Excavations* (2001).

Although the original programme of works for the stock house entailed a limited suite of repairs and underpinning (Scheme of Works prepared P. J. Stow & Associates, reference National Trust/ 27,1233 Fyne Court Stock House Repairs, 17th March 2009), it became evident as works progressed that the building was in greater structural distress than had been suspected, its problems including voiding of wall interstices by nesting rodents. Prior to commencement of the archaeological watching brief, most of the superstructure of the building was dismantled/demolished, leaving only the lower portions of the east and west gable walls intact (Plates 1- 4). Modern concrete floors with associated sub-floor makeup had also been broken-out and removed.

No archaeological monitoring was required for the removal of the building's superstructure. Archaeological observations were primarily made during mechanical- and hand-excavation of new foundation trenches cut along the lines of former wall bases, all some 0.9 m wide and ranging from 0.5 m to 1.2 m in depth, (Figure 3). The base of the new foundation trenches at the western end of the building was stepped-up by some 0.8 m. Overall, archaeological visibility was good.



All features and deposits revealed were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complimentary written, drawn and photographic records, regardless of their perceived archaeological significance. A photographic record was maintained in digital and black-and-white print format, which includes specific archaeological detail and the general setting and conduct of the investigation. A site plan was maintained with former building plan data derived from the client's construction drawings (P. J. Stow & Associates, 17th March 2009).

## **RESULTS**

Figure 3 shows the location of the footings trenches in relation to the surviving walls of the building. The internal rooms were numbered Room 1 and Room 2 from east to west.

### **Room 1**

A slightly undulating red brick floor (105), comprising a single layer of bricks and partial bricks, set in semi- and part-staggered east-west rows, was discovered in the sunken eastern ground floor room (Figure 3, Plates 5-6). These were set on a thin irregular hard yellow mortar bedding, deposited directly onto a cut earthen/clay construction terrace. Around the base of the wall, and resting on the edges of the brick floor, roofing slates (102) had been mortared vertically against the inside of the walls (100, 101, Plate 6), potentially as a form of damp- or rodent-proofing. The interior render (patches of which survived) had been applied over these slates.

Directly above brick floor 105, a levelling deposit (104, removed prior to the archaeological watching brief), is said to have been about 0.2 m thick, comprising relatively loosely compacted soil with rubble, roof-tile and mortar. This served as a sub-base for a modern concrete slab floor (103).

### **Cross-wall 101**

All traces of the original masonry cross-wall 101 were removed during the groundworks (Plate 7). This wall was 0.6 m thick and its base was level with the mortar bedding below brick floor 105. It was constructed against a crude terrace cut into the hill slope and formerly extended to first storey level. The fabric was of poorly lime-mortared, random coursed tabular Morte Slate, rough-faced against the terrace edge but more evenly faced and rendered to the east, where it formed the internal wall of Room 1.

### **Room 2**

A modern concrete floor in Room 2 (to the west) had been removed prior to commencement of the watching brief. It had lain directly on a terrace of degraded natural bedrock, and on a shallow (up to c. 0.3 m thick), compact wedge of rubbly clay makeup immediately west of the dividing cross-wall 101 (Plate 7)

### **External deposits**

After removal of the wall masonry, it was evident that deposits of soil and other debris had accumulated against the building. This was most clearly seen at the western end of the south wall, where some 0.7-0.8 m of topsoil, rubble and other 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century debris had accumulated (Plate 9), derived primarily from a low, mounded and overgrown pile of similar material dumped just to the south-west, between two branches of the adjacent trackway.

Against the northeast face of the building, up to 0.4 m of dark, humic topsoil overlay 0.3-0.4 m of browner and less stony silty clay – possibly a remnant subsoil or colluvial deposit. Below this, the

upper exposure of head/degraded bedrock comprised firm mid yellowish-brown silty clay, with abundant, and poorly sorted, degraded slate fragments.

No other features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were discovered.

## Finds

No finds were retained from this watching brief.

## CONCLUSIONS

No additional evidence was recovered to date the construction of the stock house. The original wall footings of the north and south walls were found to have been terraced more deeply to the east than to the west, taking account of the natural hill slope.

Room 1 (at the eastern end of the building) was originally furnished with a simple red brick floor. To the west, Room 2 may originally have had an earthen floor, although it is possible that any original floor-levels here were removed prior to installation of a modern concrete floor.

## REFERENCES

NTSMR = National Trust Sites and Monuments Record

- |                                   |      |   |
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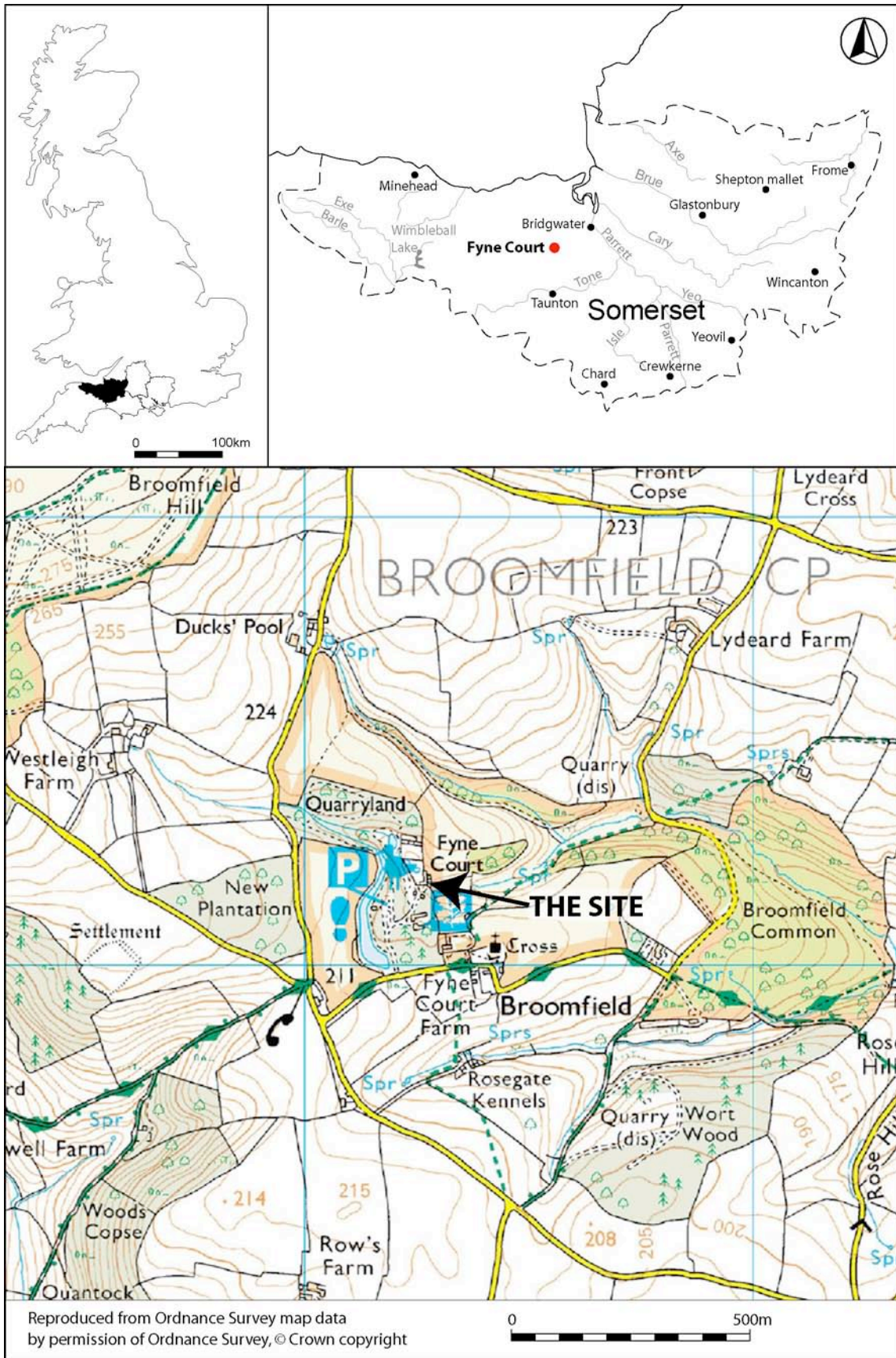


Figure 1: Site location map



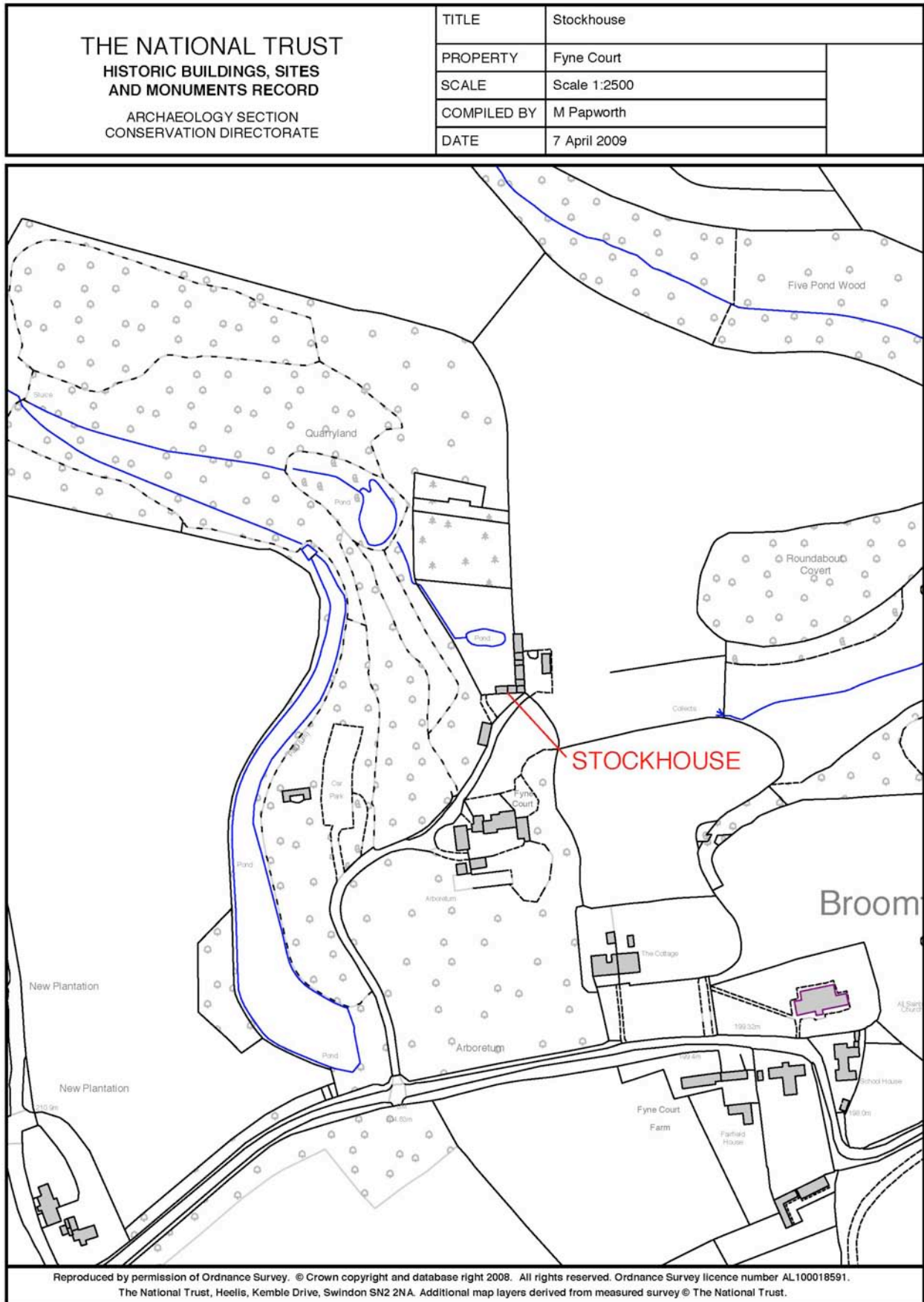


Figure 2: Location of the Stock House at Fyne Court (from a plan provided by the Client).

**STOCK HOUSE, FYNE COURT, BROOMFIELD**  
**Plan of Observations**

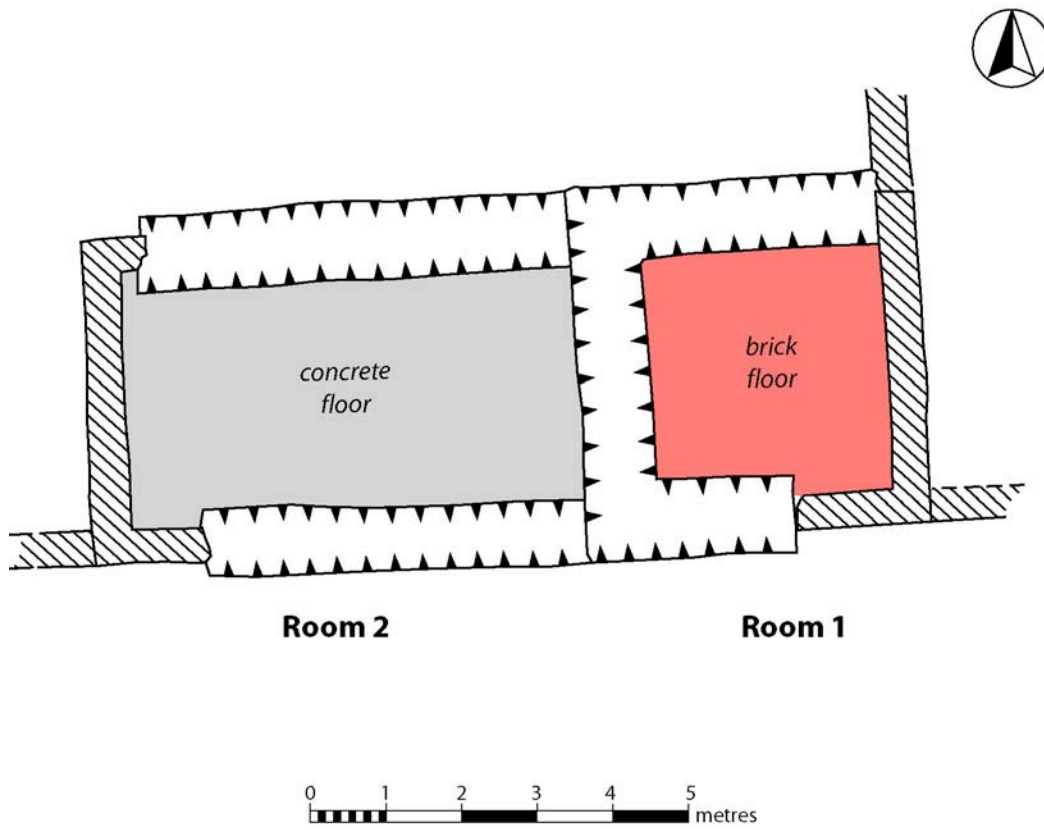


Figure 3: Plan of Observations





*Plate 1: General view of site of stock house viewed from west.*



*Plate 2: View of works on Room 1.*



*Plate 3: View along Stock House towards the east.*





*Plate 4: View Room 2 and east wall of Stock House.*



*Plate 5: Room 1, showing brick floor.*



*Plate 6: Detail of slates mortared along edge of brick floor in Room 1.*





Plate 7: View of cross-wall 101.



Plate 8: View of Room 2 looking northwest.



Plate 9: View of material accumulated against the west end of south wall of Room 2.