

# Windy Hill, School Lane Priors Marston, Warwickshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief



*understanding heritage matters*

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1405  
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*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** Conversion of Cattle Byre  
**Commissioned by:** Norman Yates  
**Project Report No.** 1405  
**Site Code:** PM13  
**Planning Reference:** 11/00762FUL  
**National Grid Reference:** SP 4905 5755  
**Staff:**  
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## Summary

Archaeological observation at Windy Hill cattle byre revealed some early floor and make-up surfaces and was able to confirm that it was built as an open-fronted structure. No significant evidence was found which would indicate a construction period earlier than the late 19th century was found.

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-upon-Avon District Council for the restoration and conversion of a farm building at Windy Hill, School Lane, Priors Marston, Warwickshire. The site lies within the supposed extent of the medieval village and it was therefore possible that archaeological remains might be disturbed during the development. A condition of planning permission therefore required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, following on from the photographic recording of the buildings, consisting of the archaeological observation of soil stripping and foundation trenches in accordance with a brief prepared by the County Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority (March 2013), was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out between September 2013 and October 2013. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under temporary accession number T/1241.

## 2 Site Location

2.1 The development site is located within the village of Priors Marston, at the western edge of the village, at map reference SP 4905 5755. The site is flat and surrounded by mature trees. The area of the barn is 73m<sup>2</sup>.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Charmouth mudstone formation - mudstone (British Geological Survey Viewer <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/mapViewers/> accessed October 2013).

## 3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 There are no records of prehistoric or Roman activity in the village of Priors Marston, although they exist in the wider parish.

3.2 The earliest reference to medieval Marston occurs in a document that records the founding of Coventry Priory by Earl Leofric in 1043 (VCH 1949, 140-1). At Domesday (1086) Marston formed part of Hardwick and was not recorded by name. The manor, which has been distinguished as Priors Marston from 1316, was granted to Sir Edmond Knightly after the Dissolution of the monasteries and has descended with the Spencer (Earls of) family since at least 1599 (VCH 1949, 140-1).

3.3 The earliest parts of the church, which is dedicated to St Leonard (HER MWA720), date from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century whilst the remainder has been remodelled thereafter.

3.4 The medieval village of Priors Marston (HER MWA724) has never been examined in detail but the likely extent has been surmised with reference to the boundaries and roads and pathways extant on the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey (1885) at which time the cattle byre looks much the same as today (Figure 2).

<b>Date</b>	<b>HER Ref</b>	<b>HER Description</b>
Neolithic / Bronze Age	MWA 743	The possible site of a barrow, a mound of earth usually built to conceal a burial. The site lies 500m south east of Marston Doles.
Medieval	MWA 720	The Church of St Leonard which was originally built during the Medieval period. Alterations to the building were carried out during the Medieval period. The Church is situated on Shuckburgh Road, Priors Marston.
	MWA 724	The possible site of a Medieval shrunken village at Priors Marston. The remains of the village are visible as earthworks, including several house platforms. The site lies to the north of Priors Marston.
	MWA 8999	The possible extent of the Medieval settlement of Priors Marston based on documentary evidence.
Medieval / Post-medieval	MWA 721	Findspot - part of a stone cross was found near the Church yard in Priors Marston. It is thought to be the remains of the churchyard cross.
	MWA 722	Fishponds, used for the breeding and storage of fish, which date to the Medieval/Post Medieval period. They remain partly visible as earthworks and are situated 200m southeast of the Manor House at Priors Marston.
	MWA 723	The site of two possible claypits or Fishponds of uncertain date. They are situated 300m southeast of the Church at Priors Marston.
	MWA 6203	The possible site of a Post Medieval deserted settlement. Remains of the settlement are visible as earthworks. The site is located to the north of Priors Marston.
Imperial	MWA 865	The site of a post mill, a type of windmill mounted on a post. It was in use during the Imperial period. It stood 1km south west of the Church at

		Priors Marston.
	MWA 2456	A Moravian chapel that was built during the Imperial period. The walls of the chapel are built from rubble but the front of the building were built in brick. It is situated on Keys Lane, Priors Marston.
	MWA 3876	The site of brickworks dating from the Imperial period. They were marked as 'disused' on the Ordnance Survey map of 1905, and were situated to the southeast of Nedge Hill Farm. Some earthworks are still visible.
	MWA 4369	The site of Marston Doles Wharf, a canal wharf, where vessels would have loaded and unloaded goods. It was located north of the lock, and is marked on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1884 and 1905.
	MWA 8711	The possible site of a park dating to the Imperial period. It is marked on a map of 1822. The park was situated 300m south east of the church at Priors Marston.
Modern	MWA 8607	A garden that was created in the 1950s. Garden features include a kitchen garden, terraces and a water garden. It is situated at The Hermitage, Priors Marston. Recommended for inclusion on Local List by Lovie.
Uncertain	MWA 4650	A Prehistoric trackway known as the Jurrassic Way. It runs through the area of Little Compton. The original route stretched from the Humber to the Mendips.
	MWA 4743	Linear features and enclosures, of unknown date, are visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs. They are situated 500m south east of Potash Farm.
	MWA 6791	A possible enclosure and linear feature are visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs. They are of unknown date. The features are situated 400m east of Potash Farm.
	MWA 725	The possible site of an undated windmill, suggested by sources that cannot be verified. Its location may have been in an area 600m east of the church at Priors Marston.

3.5 The barn is L-shaped and built predominantly of siltstone. None of the walls are keyed into one another. The brick pillars supporting the corrugated iron roof are late 19th or early 20th century in date. A similar date is likely for the wooden frame which is supporting the roof.

## 4 Aims and Methods

4.1 The watching brief was designed to observe any groundworks associated with the development and record as far as possible, the nature of the archaeological resource.

4.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area, local historical journals and other publications. Fieldwork involved an archaeologist being present during groundworks.

## 5 Watching Brief

### **Floor reduction**

5.1 The composite floor of the byre (Fig 3) was removed using a mini-excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

### **Foundation trenches**

5.2 Foundation trenches were excavated 1m below the former ground level using a toothless bucket 0.6m wide (Fig 4).

### **Deposit sequence**

5.3 Geological natural greyish-blue clay (17) was observed in the northern part of the trench. At the lowest part of the trench, large siltstones (19), were aligned east to west, but these were probably natural and associated with the water table: no bonding material, construction cut or man-made artefacts were found around the stones (Fig 7).

5.4 In the southern part of the trench and overlying layer 19 was a mixed deposit of greyish-brown clay loam and reddish-brown clay (20). Occasional fragments of stone and clinker were noted in this 0.4m deep layer but no dating evidence.

5.5 Both contexts 19 and 20 were overlaid by a layer of stone fragments in a yellowish brown clay matrix (10; Fig 4) which was up to 0.68m deep. A single sherd of Midlands Blackware was recovered from this layer (not retained).

5.6 Overlying 17 was a layer of siltstone blocks laid flat (8) which were probably a former yard surface.

5.7 Overlying layer 10, was 0.28m of mixed grey and brown clay with siltstone fragments (3; Fig 5). A sherd of pearlware noted from this context provides an earliest possible date for this layer as late 18th-century, but it was still likely to have been a late 19th-century deposit, probably a bedding layer for the composite floor of the byre.

5.8 The composite floor consisted of up to four different materials; bricks were laid flat and lengthways (1), siltstone blocks laid lengthways and side upwards (2; Fig 6), a layer of reddish brown and very dark reddish brown clay loam with 19th/20th century pottery (5) and crushed white lime mortar (12). The latter context was also found below the bricks and may have been a bedding layer for them.

5.9 In the southern part of the byre both stone floors and bedding layers sloped down towards the yard and continued slightly outside of the building, confirming it had always been open fronted.

5.10 A series of postholes (9, 13, 14, 21-28) were noted (Fig 3). These may have been supports for feed troughs or other internal structures.

5.11 Overlying layer 8 was a more recent surface consisting of bricks laid longways on their side (7; Fig 8). The red frogged-bricks were manufactured by the Leamington Brick Company which made bricks until the middle of the 20th century.

5.12 The brick yard surface was overlain by very dark greyish brown clay loam topsoil (6) which had formed to a depth of 0.25m.

## 6 Conclusions

6.1 A photographic record was made of the open fronted cattle byre prior to works commencing. The lack of any evidence for wall foundations and the fact that there was not always a clear distinction between the internal and external deposits, suggests that the byre had always been open fronted.

6.2 The date of the byre structure appeared to be late 19th-century and excavations through the floor deposits did not contradict this.

## Acknowledgements

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## References

Ordnance Survey 1885 First edition 1:2500 map, Warwickshire Sheet

VCH 1949 'Parishes: Priors Marston', A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 5: Kington hundred (1949), pp. 140-141. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=57061> Date accessed: 01 October 2013

## Appendices

### A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Bricks set lengthways	Byre floor
2	Stones set edgeways (siltstone)	Byre floor
3	Grey & yellowish-brown clay	Bedding layer
4	Stones laid flat	Byre floor
5	Reddish brown/dark reddish brown clay loam	Deposit
6	Very dark greyish-brown clay loam	Topsoil
7	Bricks end on	Yard surface
8	Stones laid flat	Surface
9	Posthole	Trough post?
10	Fragments of stone in clay matrix	Layer
11	Brick pillar	Roof support
12	Crushed mortar	Bedding layer
13	Rectangular posthole	Feed trough?
14	Fill of posthole 13	Post for trough
15	Sandy	Make-up layer
16	Stones laid flat	Flagstone floor
17	Grey/blue clay	Geological natural
18	Mixed clay	Layer
19	Stone laid flat, 2 courses	Surface or wall
20	Mixed clay layer, stone and clinker	Layer
21	Posthole	Feed trough?
22	Posthole	Feed trough?
23	Posthole	Feed trough?
24	Posthole	Feed trough?
25	Posthole	Feed trough?
26	Posthole	Feed trough?
27	Posthole	Feed trough?
28	Posthole	Feed trough?

### B List of Finds (Not Retained)

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
3	Pearlware	1	
10	Midlands Black	1	MB02/ 17 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> C

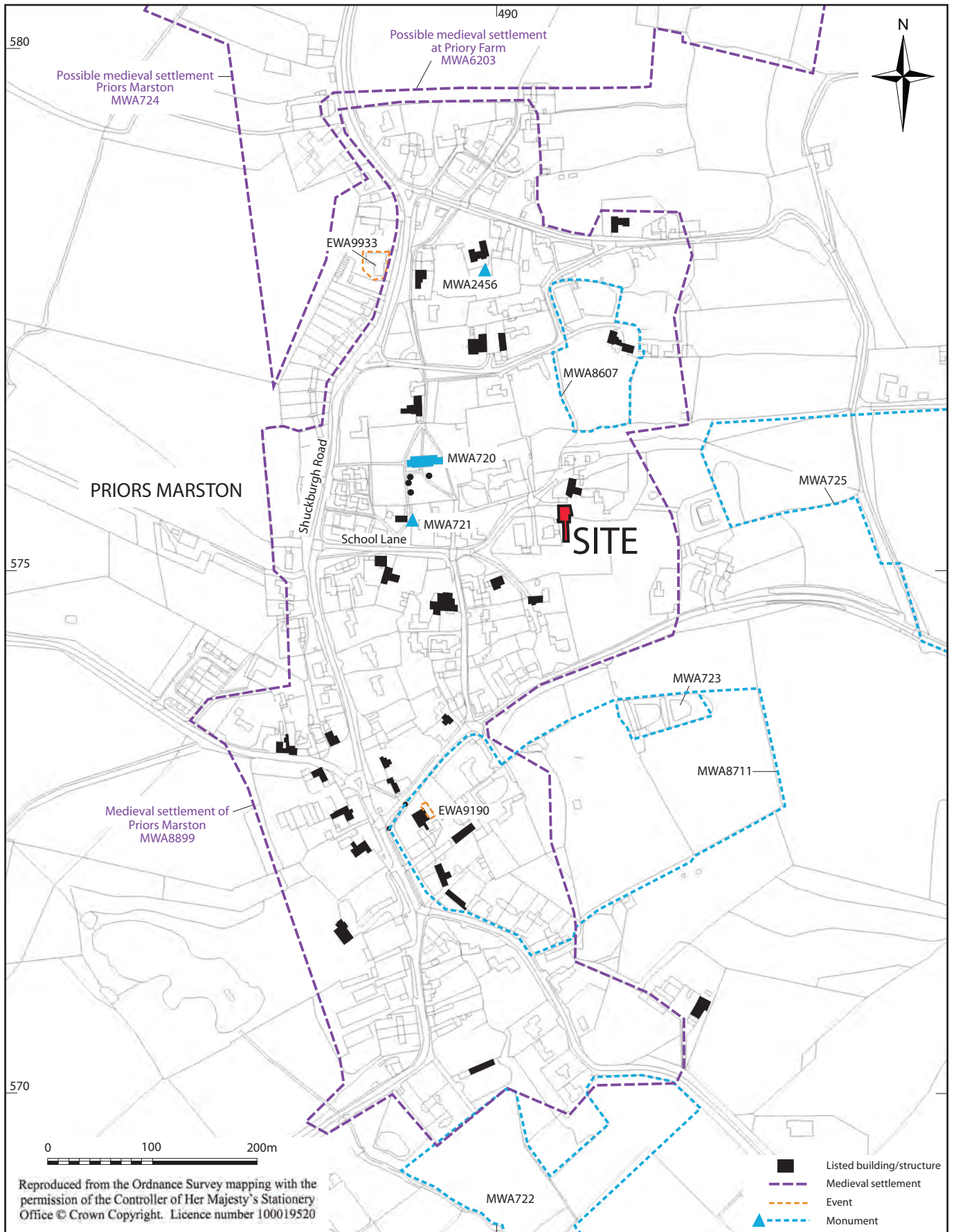


Fig 1: Site location



Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885

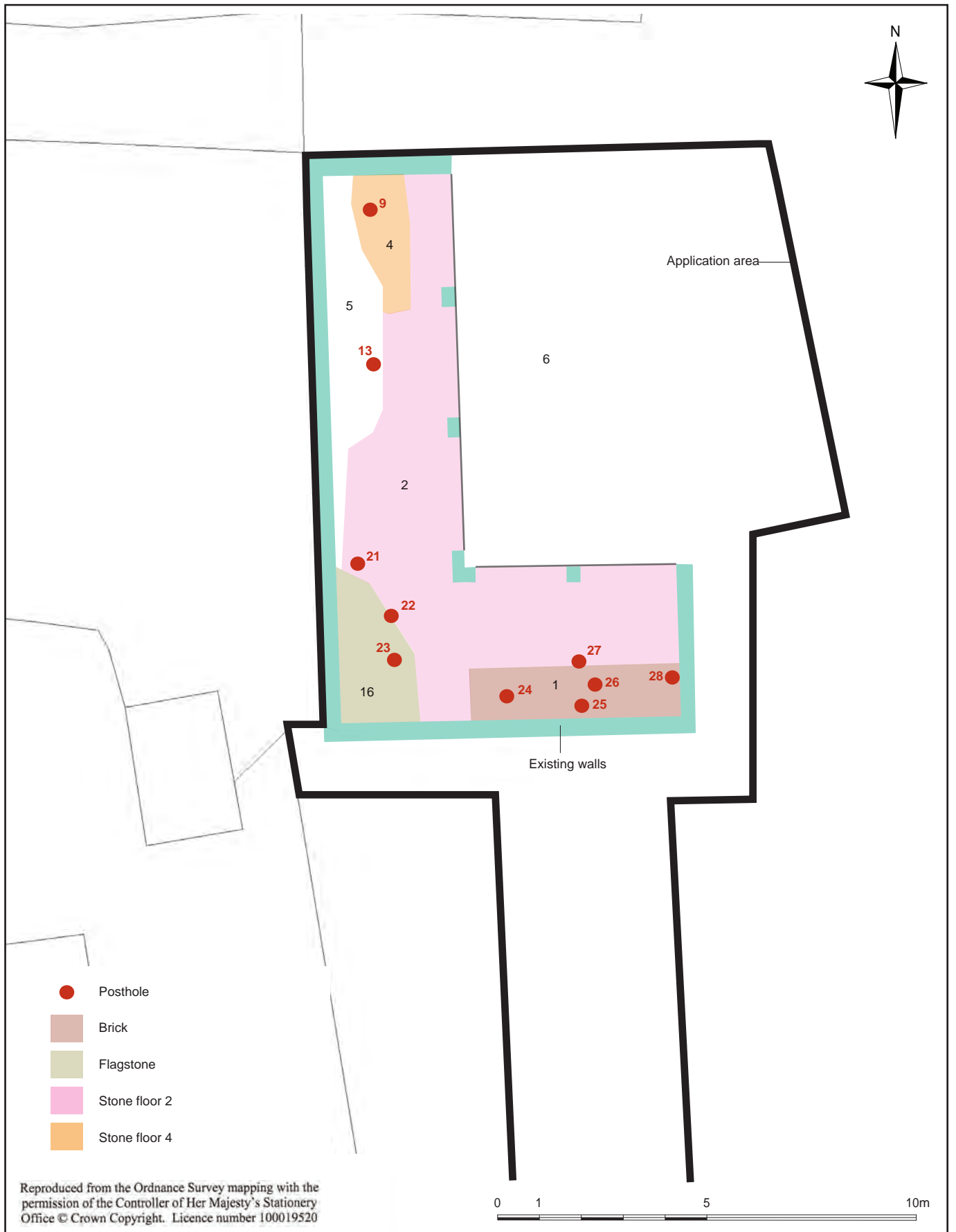


Fig 3: Composite floor of byre and postholes

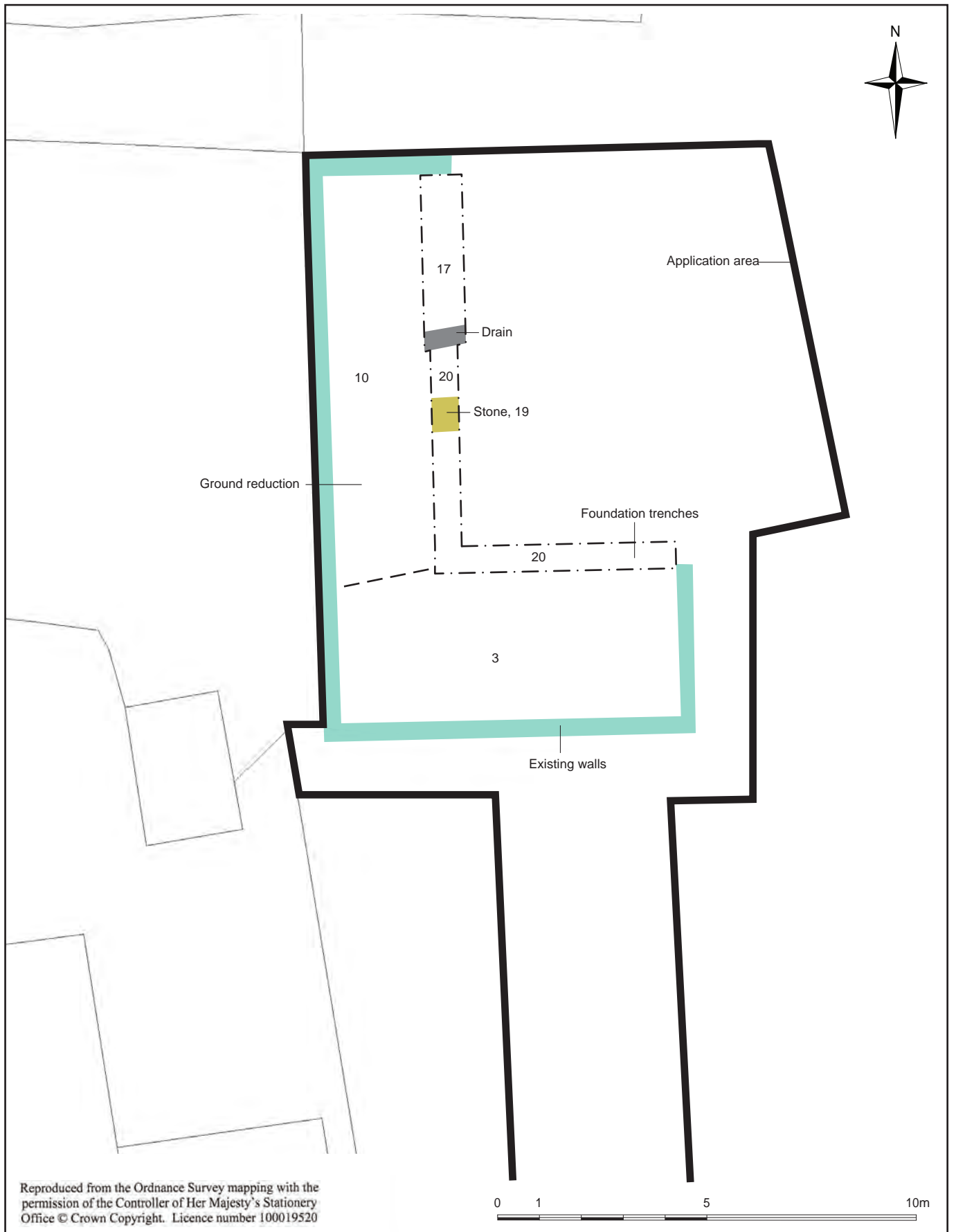


Fig 4: Foundation trenches and area of ground reduction



Fig 5: Floor make-up deposits



Fig 6: Removal of composite floor of barn



Fig 7: Siltstone layer 19



Fig 8: Floor of barn and brick yard surface