



**Priory Farm
Hickling**

**Monitoring of Works under Archaeological
Supervision and Control**

ENF 146350

**Heather Wallis
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HW Report No. 246



Project name	Priory Farm
Parish	Hickling
Scheduled Monument List No.	1020859
Event No.	ENF 146350
Oasis ID	heatherw1-357084
Grid Ref.	TG 41844 24870
Date of Fieldwork	24th June 2019 to 6th November 2019

Introduction

Priory Farm is located in the centre of the Augustinian Priory at Hickling, Norfolk (Fig. 1). Scheduled Monument Consent was recently granted for a link to be constructed joining the farmhouse to a set of outbuildings (Fig. 2, Plate 1). A condition within the Consent required all groundworks to be carried out under archaeological supervision and control. A Written Scheme of Investigation for the archaeological monitoring was prepared by Heather Wallis and approved by Historic England prior to the commencement of the works.

Monitoring of groundworks was undertaken in a single day in June 2019 and a further visit was made in November 2019 to assess the building material removed during the creation of a new doorway.

Location, Topography and Geology

Located in the northern part of the Norfolk Broads, Hickling village is adjacent to Hickling Broad, a flooded medieval peat digging. To the north of the village and somewhat isolated from it is the site of Hickling Priory which occupies a low rise within an otherwise flat and low-lying landscape.

Hickling Priory is now largely ruinous although several elements of masonry remain standing to a considerable height. These remains, along with the study of aerial photographs have allowed an outline plan of the church, cloisters and some outlying buildings to be construed.

The bedrock geology of the area is made up of crag group sands and gravels (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The superficial geology is made up of glacial formations of Happisburgh sands and gravels and Bacton Green tills which are overlain by post-glaciation Breydon formation peats in the lower valleys. Hickling Priory sits on the Happisburgh sands and gravels giving it its slightly elevated position in the landscape.

Archaeological Background

The Augustinian priory at Hickling was founded in 1185 by Theobald Valognes and was sited on a low island within a wide area of former marshland. Setting and place-name evidence hint at a possible Anglo-Saxon monastic foundation although extensive fieldwalking of the precinct has not produced any evidence dating to this early period; the earliest recovered artefacts are of 12th-century date (Pestell 2004, 203-206). It is therefore generally accepted that the priory is solely of 12th-century foundation.

Following the dissolution in 1536 the priory buildings fell into a state of dereliction. Today only a few of the monastic walls remain standing some of which have been incorporated into outbuildings. Despite the lack of upstanding remains the layout of the Priory buildings has been firmly established through the study of aerial photographs (Albone, Massey and Tremlett 2007; 86-7; NHER 8384) (Fig. 3).

The farmhouse sits just to the west of the monastic cloistral range and is probably late 19th-century in date. Some material from the Priory has been re-used in its construction and in the adjacent outbuildings which also include part of the west wall of the cloisters.

The development

The new link construction is a modest building measuring 4.4m by 1.75m. The South-east wall of this was to be constructed on a post-medieval footing which lay just below the present ground surface. For the north-west supporting wall a footing trench 0.5m wide, 1.3m long and 0.65m deep was excavated. Additionally, masonry was removed from the walls of the outbuilding and farmhouse to create new doorways.

Monitoring and recording methods

All excavation was undertaken by hand. Disturbed soils were inspected and metal-detected in order to maximise retrieval of artefacts. Archaeological records of the watching brief comprise written, drawn and photographic data.

Works were undertaken following the methodology laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation and in full accordance with national and regional guidelines for the treatment of archaeological remains, and in particular the guidance set out in *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003) and the *Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).

Observations (Fig 3, Plates 2-5)

The lowest deposit revealed in the footing trench was a light brownish yellow sandy clay (11) above which was a thin deposit of uncompacted creamy mortar (10) which was probably a spread of demolition debris. Over this was c.0.35m of light orange brown sandy clay (09). This was soft and malleable and included occasional fragments of animal bone, mortar flecks and oyster shell. It is likely to represent a build up of material during the early post-medieval periods. The foundation trenches for the outbuilding and farmhouse cut through this deposit.

The footing trench (12) for the outbuilding was vertical sided and only seen in the edge of the trench. It contained large fragments of redbrick in a light brownish orange very sandy clay (13).

The lower part of the footing trench (06) for the farmhouse was almost vertical but flared outwards towards its upper edge. Within this, the footings (08) of the farmhouse were revealed and seen to be made up of limestone ashlar pieces reused from the Priory buildings. Some of these pieces still had remnants of mortar from their original medieval use adhering; this was a soft creamy lime mortar. The limestone making up the footing was roughly coursed. Packed between the lowest course was light brown sandy clay while the upper courses were infilled with a gravelly lime mortar. Above the limestone footing was the flint and mortar work which forms the visible wall of the farmhouse. The footing cut had been backfilled with sandy clay (07).

Sealing both footing trenches was a deposit of dark greyish brown clayey loam (03) with mortar, chalk and brick fleck inclusions. This is likely to be a deliberate raising of the ground level following construction of the buildings. Above this in the north-east part of the trench was a cobbled surface (02). The modern topsoil (01) sealed all deposits but was cut by a modern drainage trench (04) containing a ceramic pipe. This was backfilled with a dark grey brown sandy silt clay (05). A thin modern gravel surface lay across the whole area.

The building material removed from the outbuilding in order to create a new doorway was assessed. The vast majority of this was flint although a number of pieces of reused limestone was also present. These limestone pieces originated from the priory buildings but were mainly fragmentary without moulded features. Most of the limestone has been reused to form the jambs for the new doorway.

Conclusion

No *in situ* deposits relating to the use of the priory were encountered during these works, the revealed layers probably being post-medieval in date. Building material originating from the priory buildings was observed in the walls of the farmhouse and outbuildings. It was interesting to note that re-used

limestone was the main material utilised for the footings of the farmhouse although the upstanding elements of the building are made-up primarily of flint with brick and the occasional re-used limestone block.

Bibliography

Albone, J., Massey, S. and Tremlett, S., 2007

The Archaeology of Norfolk's Coastal Zone, Results of the National Mapping Programme, English Heritage and Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.

Pestell, T., 2004

Landscapes of Monastic Foundation: The Establishment of Religious Houses in East Anglia, c.650-1200, Boydell Press.

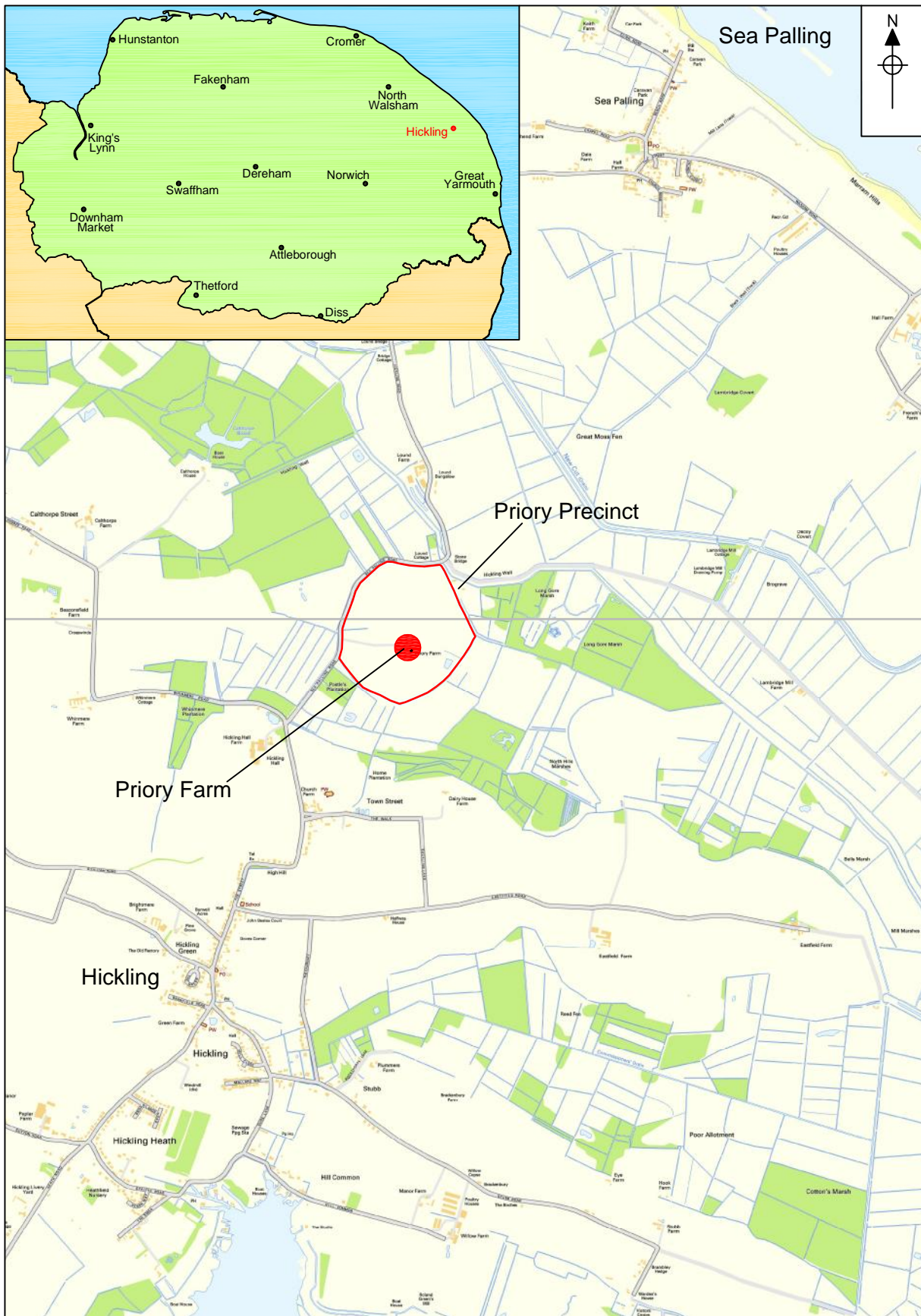


Figure 1. Site location map.

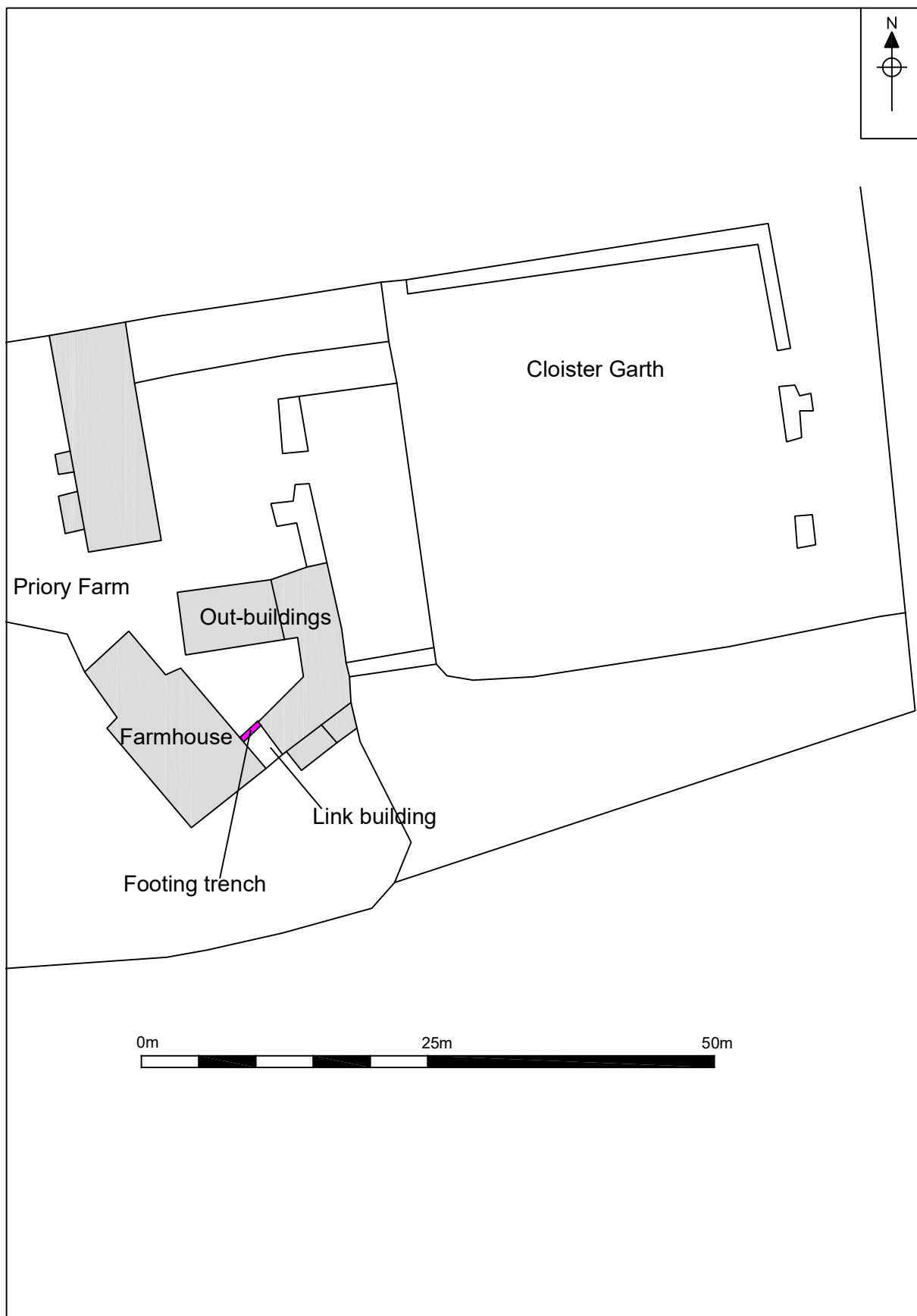


Figure 2. Priory Farm showing location of footing trench. Scale 1:500.

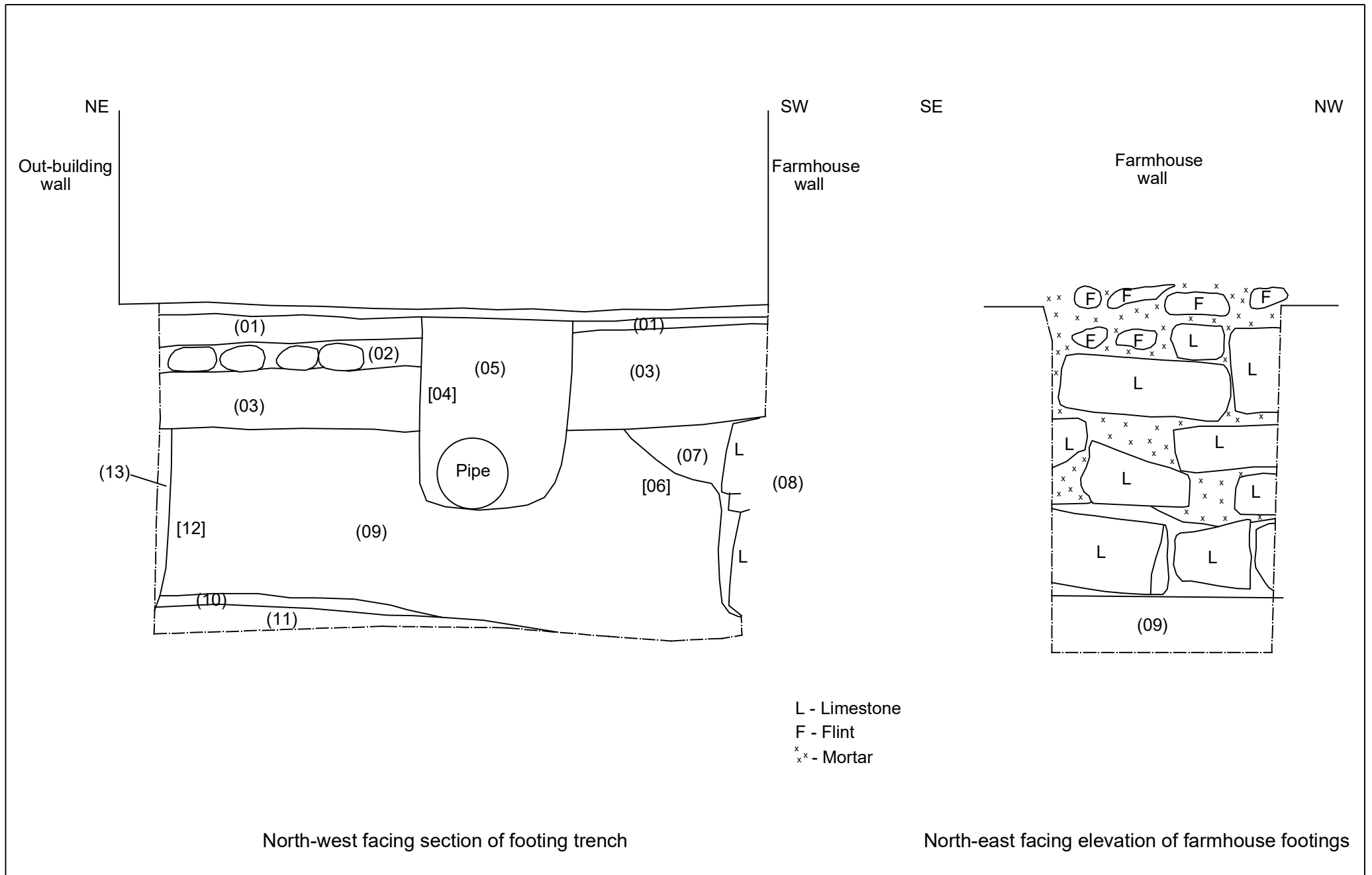


Figure 3. Sections of footing trench. Scale 1:10.



Plate 1. Area prior to works, looking south-east



Plate 2. Trench section, looking south-east



Plate 3. Footing of farmhouse, looking south-west.

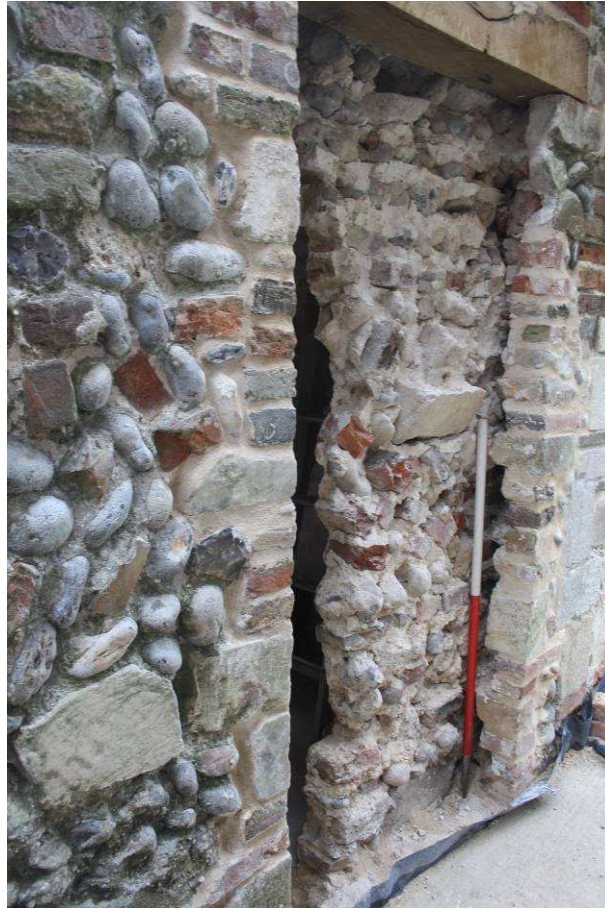


Plate 4. New doorway in outbuilding partially opened and new jamb (by ranging rod) partly built with re-used materials. Looking south-east.



Plate 5. Other limestone pieces from outbuilding wall.

Appendix 1

Context List

Ctxt No.	Category	Description	Date
01	Topsoil		modern
02	Surface	cobbles	modern
03	Layer	dark greyish brown clayey loam with mortar, chalk and brick fleck inclusions	post-medieval
04	Pipe cut		modern
05	Fill of 04	dark greyish brown sandy silty clay	modern
06	Footing cut (farmhouse)		post-medieval
07	Fill of 08	mid brown sandy clay with frequent mortar fleck and lump, cbm flack and fragment	post-medieval
08	Footing within 08	re-used ashlar limestone, three rows, roughly coursed	post-medieval
09	Layer	light orange brown sandy clay mortar fleck and oyster shell inclusions	post-medieval
10	Layer	uncompacted creamy mortar	post-medieval
11	Layer	light yellowish brown sandy clay	medieval/post-medieval
12	Footing cut (outbuilding)		post-medieval
13	Fill of 12	light brownish orange very sandy clay with large red brick fragments	post-medieval