

Astwell Park Farm,
Astwell Road, Helmdon,
Northamptonshire, NN13 5QX
(NGR SP 620 437)

Archaeological Investigation

Historic Environment Record No. ENN 108520
Planning Application Ref. S/2016/1612/MAF

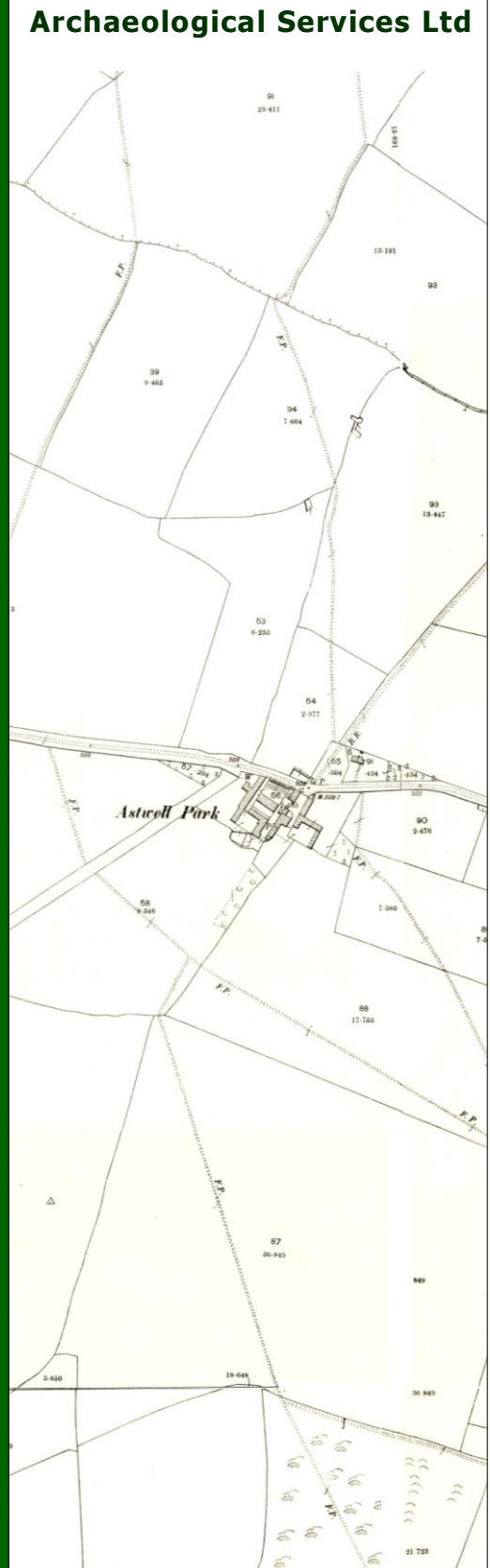
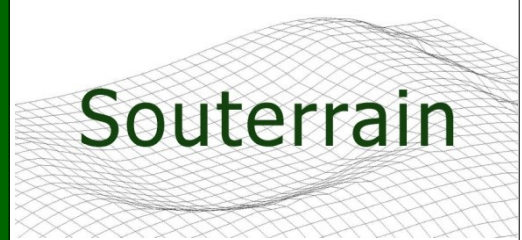


December 2016

Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd

for

Mrs Sarah Roach
Astwell Park Farm



Archaeological Investigation:

**Astwell Park Farm,
Astwell Road, Helmdon,
Northamptonshire, NN13 5QX
(NGR SP 620 437)**

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Project: SOU16-507

November 2016

Produced for:

Mrs Sarah Roach
Astwell Park Farm

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(Illustrations follow the main text)

Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

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Summary

An archaeological investigation was carried out by Souterrain during groundwork preparation for a new stable block and its adjoining yard at Astwell Park Farm, Helmdon, Northamptonshire. The investigation took place on the 9th and 10th of November 2016.

The proposed site of the new stable block lay on the projected southeast/ northwest course of a medieval deer park boundary which probably comprised a ditch and bank.

Ground reduction took place over an area of 376 sq. m. There was no evidence of the deer park boundary. Neither were there any features or artefacts earlier than 19th century date.

It is surmised that the deer park boundary ditch is either buried beneath 20th century deposits just inside the north-eastern perimeter of the development footprint, or that its course approximates to the property boundary further to the northeast.

Exposed within the reduced area were the brick footings of a range of 19th century farm outbuildings. The outbuildings, which are depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885, were demolished at sometime between 1980 and 2000. The land was subsequently landscaped into a garden.

The areas of ground investigation were surveyed and photographed, and the depth of impact recorded.

1. SCOPE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report documents the results of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording, analysis and reporting ('the Investigation') carried out by Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) during ground preparation for a new stable block and adjoining yard at Astwell Park Farm, Astwell Road, Helmdon NN13 5QX, Northamptonshire (the Application Site).
- 1.2 The investigation was undertaken on behalf of Mrs S Roach (the Planning Applicant) of Astwell Park Farm in compliance with a condition attached to planning consent, and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)¹ approved by Liz Mordue, Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council (hereafter 'AAA').

2. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On the 26th of September 2016, South Northamptonshire Council granted planning permission (S/2016/1612/MAF) subject to conditions, to Mrs S Roach, for the 'erection of stable block, arena and use of land for grazing of horses and new gated access' at Astwell Park Farm. The area of the proposed development is defined on the drawings (latest revisions) by Scotts of Thrapston Ltd submitted with the planning application².
- 2.2 Prior to the grant of planning permission the Planning Officer consulted the AAA on account of the Application Site being situated within an area of archaeological interest and with regard to potential impacts on buried archaeological assets. With reference to the Historic Environment Record, the AAA advised that the proposed manège arena would most likely impact a probable medieval track-way, while the proposed stable block would be on or near the boundary of a medieval deer park³. In consideration of the AAA's comments the proposed manège arena was re-located to an area where archaeological investigative work would not be necessary. A condition was duly recommended by the AAA for the monitoring of ground-work for the stable block.
- 2.3 A Condition (No. 3) was accordingly attached to the planning permission for the implementation of a programme of archaeological mitigation work (in the form of a written scheme of investigation (WSI)), to meet the approval of the local planning authority prior to the commencement of development work. The reason for the Condition is to ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and planning Policy BN12 of South Northamptonshire Council.

3. SITE LOCATION AND ASPECT

- 3.1 Astwell Park Farm is situated in the parish of Helmdon, 3.2 km east of the village of Helmdon and 2 km to the northwest of the village of Syresham (Fig. 1). The new stable block is sited approximately 50 m to the northwest of the main dwelling at NGR SP 620 437 (Fig. 3). The stable is L-shaped with a floor space of 192 sq.m. It occupies the north-eastern and north-western sides of a concrete slab, 21.5 m by 17.5 m (376 sq. m), the remainder of which comprises the yard.

¹ Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd 2016. *Astwell Park Farm, Astwell Road, Helmdon, Northamptonshire, NN13 5QX, (NGR SP 620 437). Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis & Publication of Works (Application Ref. S/2016/1612/MAF), SOU16-507, October 2016*

² Scotts of Thrapston Ltd. Site Astwell Park Farm, Helmdon, Brackley, NN13 5QX, Drawing No. SP-8007-1-E, Site Plan, Revision E, 13.6.2016

³ See Consultee comments: South Northamptonshire Council S/2016/1612/MAF

- 3.2 Prior to the development the Application Site was in use as a garden. The topography of the site is around 154.4 m OD. Several amorphous, low and wide linear mounds exist on the north-eastern and north-western periphery of the garden, which are understood to be the results of 20th century landscaping. One such mound occupied the development site (Section 10, 1 - 3).
- 3.3 The underlying solid geology is the Stamford Member of the Rutland Formation, consisting of inter-bedded sandstone or siltstone, typically 4 m to 5 m in thickness⁴.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

- 4.1 Prior to the archaeological investigation a search was made of the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER)⁵, of archaeological sites, monuments, find spots and archaeological events within a 1 km radius (the Study Area) of the Application Site. The HER numbers in this report refer to the unique identifier for each monument, find spot, archaeological site or archaeological event.
- 4.2 In the late 19th and early 20th century Astwell Park Farm was known as Astwell Park⁶. Astwell Park Farm is not to be confused with an 18th century farm building situated c. 760 m to the southeast, which was formerly known as Astwellpark Farm and now named Old Park Farm⁷ (Fig. 2, HER 1419/1/1). The present Astwell Park Farm is situated within the northern boundary of what has been identified as a large medieval deer park⁸, which occupied a considerable part of the east side of the parish of Helmdon⁹. The park is understood to have covered an area of about 200 hectares (Fig. 2, HER 88/1) extending eastwards into the parish of Syresham.
- 4.3 The date of the postulated deer park is not known, though most deer parks in the region are understood to have been established in the 13th century, with lesser numbers being created in the 12th, 14th and 15th centuries¹⁰. The identification of the park boundary was made in the late 20th century, at which time it was plotted partly from field reconnaissance and partly from vertical air photos taken in 1947 (much of the boundary had been destroyed by ploughing¹¹). On the air photos the boundary is recorded as an almost continuous bank, which in places has a trace of an internal ditch. To the east, the park boundary extends into Syresham parish where a section (c. 400 m long) is marked by a broad hedge-bank up to 5 m wide and a 1 m high. It has been noted that the new stable block at Astwell Park Farm lies on or near the projected course of the deer park boundary (*ante*. 2.2; Fig. 3). Such a boundary would have been marked by either an earthen embankment crested by a wooden fence (pale) and an inner ditch, or a wall.
- 4.4 Towards the south-western edge of the deer park, about 820 m to the southwest of the Astwell Park Farm, there is a concentration of manorial earthworks. The main earthwork feature is a rectangular moated enclosure which has been interpreted as the site of a park keeper's lodge¹² (Fig. 2, HER 710/1/1-5). Among the other earthworks are fishponds and 'pillow mounds' (domestic rabbit warrens). Interestingly, immediately to the east of the earthworks there are traces of ridge and furrow much of which is understood to be of medieval form¹³. Since these

⁴ British Geological Survey, <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/>

⁵ 24th October 2016

⁶ OS surveyed 1882

⁷ 1419/1/1 - MNN106298

⁸ *Ibid.* RCHME, 1982

⁹ HER 88 - MNN3272; HER 88/1/1 - MNN26251; HER 88/1 - MNN131979

¹⁰ Lewis, C, in Cooper, N (ed), 2006, p.209; c.f. Knight, D et al.. 2012, Research Objective 7I, 104

¹¹ By RCHME, 1982

¹² HER 710/1/1 - MNN123971; scheduled monument (No. 13654).

¹³ See. RCHME, 1982, Helmdon Site 11, Fig. 78

cultivation strips are within demarcated boundary of the deer park they are very unlikely to be contemporary.

- 4.5 Although there are no known documentary references pertaining to a medieval deer park in this part of Helmdon parish, the modern name of Astwell Park Farm and the associated earthworks have been considered to 'prove beyond a doubt' the presence of a park¹⁴. Within the demarcated boundary there are a number of linear earthworks, some partially flattened, and several ditches and track-ways which have been identified from soilmarks. The majority of features are thought to have been associated with the medieval deer park¹⁵.
- 4.6 A deer park is known to have been created at Astwell in 1547 by Thomas Lovett, the lord of Astwell manor¹⁶, although this park is considered to have been located north of Astwell Castle¹⁷ on the site of the deserted village of Astwell (c. 1 km WNW of the Application Site)¹⁸. The Lovett family acquired the manor in the late 15th century, and subsequently created a gardened landscape from parts of the former village¹⁹. The village itself is first mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086, at which time there were 17 families; a fairly large population of perhaps 80 persons²⁰. Pottery dated to the 12th to 14th centuries has been found on the eastern periphery of the deserted village²¹.
- 4.7 In addition to elements of the medieval landscape, the environs of the Application Site are known to contain the remains from the Romano-British period. A settlement existed about 590 m to the west, which is known from crop-marks²² and scatters of occupation debris²³. Two late Roman coins have also been found in a field approximately 850 m to the northeast²⁴.

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 In view of the archaeological potential of the Application Site, the broad purpose of the archaeological investigation was to:
- i. establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
 - ii. establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
 - iii. recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
 - iv. recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions; this to be an intrinsic part of the investigation.
- 5.2 Specific objectives were to:

¹⁴ Ibid. RCHME, 1982

¹⁵ HER Nos. 88/0/1 to 88/0/13

¹⁶ HER 706/2 - MNN11514

¹⁷ HER 706/2 - MNN11514

¹⁸ HER 706 - MNN3644 Astwell

¹⁹ HER 710/1/5 - MNN18992

²⁰ see Open Domesday <http://opendomesday.org/place/SP6044/astwell/> [accessed 24th October 2016]

²¹ RCHME, 1982. 'Helmdon', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire, Vol.4, Archaeological Sites in South-West Northamptonshire* (London), pp. 80-88. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/northants/vol4/pp80-88> [accessed 13 October 2016]

²² HER 89 - MNN3273

²³ HER 89/0/0 - MNN17957

²⁴ HER MNN151392 and MNN151393

- i. determine the presence or absence of the of the deer park boundary, and if present, to determine its character and dimensions and to acquire dating evidence through artefactual or ecofactual material.
 - ii. determine, via paleo-environmental samples, whether or not the deer park supplanted a former cultivated area (i.e. open field system)²⁵.
- 5.3 Although the key focus of the research will be to attempt to determine land-use and conditions during the medieval period, this will not preclude evidence that may shed light on the function and nature of the part of the landscape in other periods, particularly in view of Romano-British occupation within the Study Area (*ante*. 4.7)

6. RESULTS

Field Procedure

- 6.1 The fieldwork was carried out on the 9th and the 10th of November 2016. The investigation was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Written Scheme of Investigation and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 6.2 The area of ground reduction and archaeological features (Fig. 4) were surveyed to Ordnance Survey National Grid co-ordinates and height datum using RTK differential GPS. Written descriptions were made of ground deposits and archaeological features (Appendix 1) accompanied by a digital photographic record. The numbers in bold throughout the report refer to photographs at Section 10. The directions of photographs are shown on Figure 4.

Observations

- 6.3 As previously noted (3.2), several low and wide amorphous linear mounds exist on the north-western periphery of the property which are understood to be the results of 20th century landscaping. A part of one such mound was present in the area of proposed stable and yard (**1**, **2** and **3**). Its removal in the process of ground preparation proved it to have a late 20th / early 21st century creation.
- 6.4 Ground reduction was carried out by a mechanical excavator fitted with a wide grading bucket, under the direction of the archaeologist. The area of ground reduction measured 21.5 m by 17.5 m (376 sq. m). Up to 0.36 m of topsoil (001) and modern overburden (002) was removed to a construction level around 154.25 m OD (Fig. 4, **4** to **7**). Visibility was good throughout the process.
- 6.5 The eastern half of the stripped area (c. 230 sq. m) proved to be covered in a deposit of very loose modern rubbly soil (002) of unknown depth, which contained occasional pieces of debris (Fig. 4, **4**, **6** and **7**). The deposit overlapped partial remains of brick footings (Fig. 4, (005), **4**, **5** and **6**). It was interpreted as a backfill and spread of demolition material and soil that had taken place after machine-removal of the floors of the outbuildings. The layout and area of the brick footings (005) correspond precisely to part of a group of farm outbuildings shown on the 25" Ordnance Survey maps of 1885 and 1923 (Fig. 5). It is surmised from later Ordnance Survey maps that the outbuildings were demolished at sometime between 1980 and 2000.

²⁵ Lewis, C, in Cooper, N (ed), 2006. 'The Medieval Period', in *The Archaeology of the East Midlands*, Leicester Archaeology Monograph 13 2006, 215

- 6.6 The brick footings were set in foundation trenches [008] cut into the upper geological stratum of clay (003). The width of each wall was c. 0.3 m. The bricks were handmade commons of mid to late 19th century type, each measuring approximately c. 270 mm x 104 mm x 74 mm) (8 ¾ " x 3 1/8 " x 4 1/8 "). Further wall footings (007) were partially revealed in the northwest corner of the reduced area, consisting of 19th century-type brick and small pieces of stone. There are no walls or structures shown in this area on Ordnance Survey mapping.
- 6.7 The upper geological stratum (003) was exposed on the west side of the reduced area (Fig. 4, 4) It consisted of light yellowy-brown to mid brown clay. Except for where a patch of modern gravel hard-standing (004) had been laid to serve a gateway in the northwest, the geological stratum was visible across the reduced area from northeast to the southwest in a band between c. 5 m and c. 10 m wide.

7. REVIEW OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 Importantly, to exposure of the upper geological stratum in a fairly wide band from northeast to southwest across the reduced area (*ante*. 6.6) signifies that the medieval deer park boundary ditch must be aligned differently to the course conjectured in the HER record (see Fig. 3; *c.f.* objective 5.2, i). The most likely location for the boundary ditch would be on the northeast side of the exposed geology. It is indeed possible that the ditch lies concealed beneath deposits of rubbly soil (002 and 006) and modern hard-standing (004), or else is located between the north eastern side of the reduced area and the roadside, an overall unexplored strip of about 10 m width.
- 7.2 The investigation established that the only archaeological features and deposits exposed within the development area were associated with a range of 19th century farm outbuildings, their demolition in the late 20th century, and the subsequent creation of a landscaped garden (*c.f.* objectives 5.1, i and ii).
- 7.3 There was no pottery or artefacts, of any period, revealed during the groundwork (*c.f.* objectives 5.1 iii). The investigation proved to be 'negative' in terms of significant archaeological deposits or remains being present (*c.f.* objectives 5.1 iv; 5.2, ii).

8. ARCHIVE

- 8.1 The OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations: www.oasis.ac.uk) identification number for this project is souterra1-270204. All survey and photographic data is contained in this report.

9. COPYRIGHT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 9.1 Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it will provide an exclusive licence to the Owner in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the WSI. Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd retains the right to be identified as the author of all project documentation and reports as defined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. A licence is to be also granted to Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record for the use of all reports arising from projects for planning purposes and *bona fide* research requests.

- 9.2 Souterrain undertakes to respect all requirements for confidentiality about the Applicant's proposals provided that these are clearly stated. It is expected that owners respect Souterrain's and the Institute for Archaeologists' general ethical obligations not to suppress significant archaeological data for an unreasonable period.

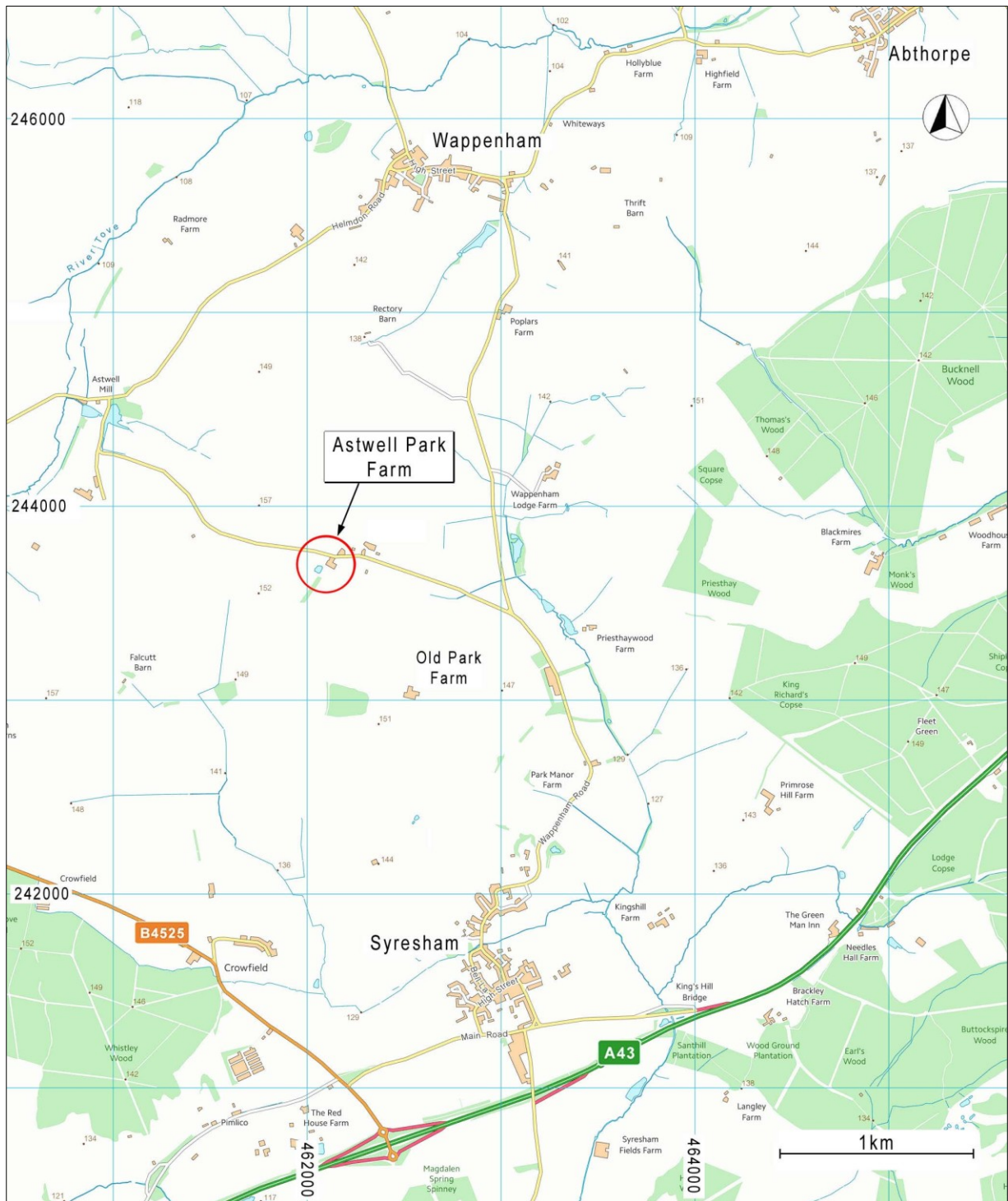


Figure 1. Location of Site

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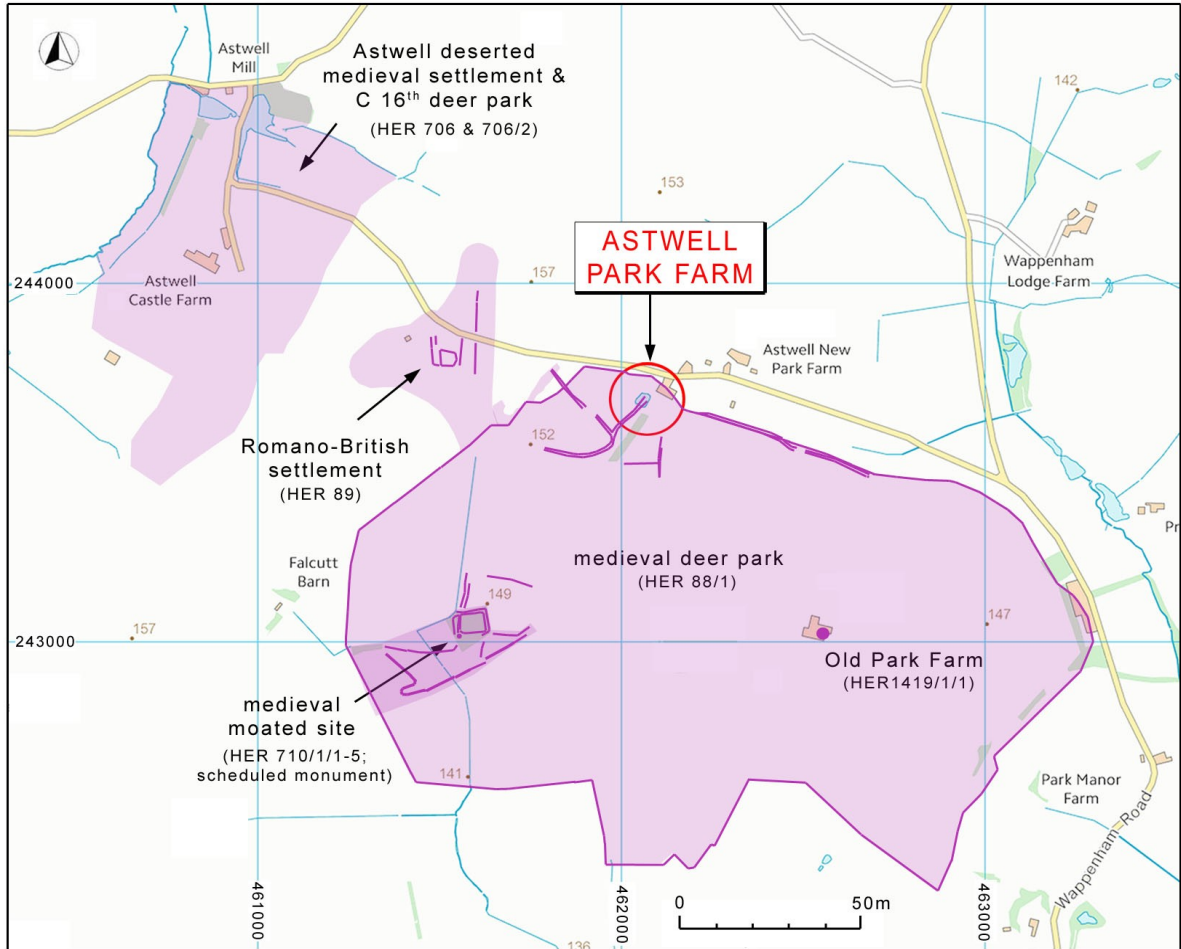


Figure 2. Extents of the main HER sites cited in the text

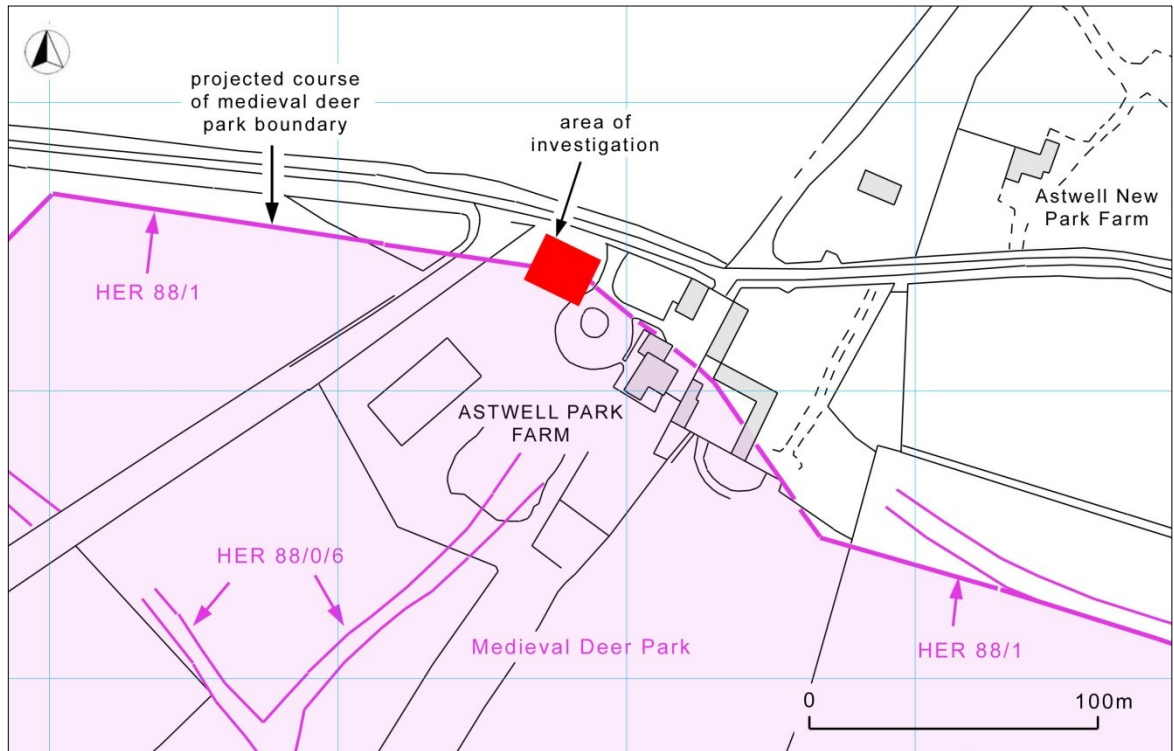
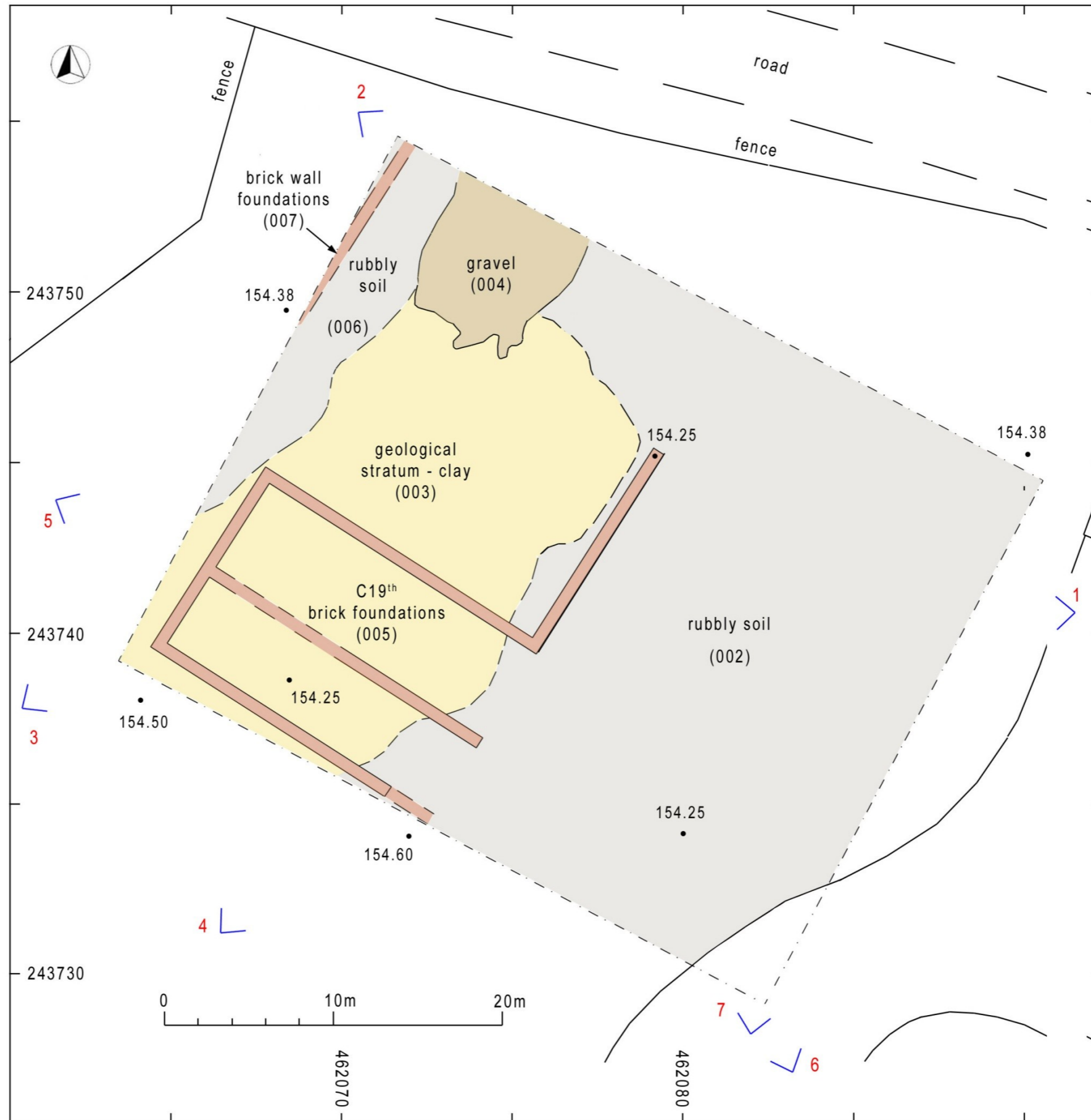


Figure 3. Area of investigation and HER sites in the vicinity

Figure 4.

Features and deposits exposed in the area of ground reduction and direction of photos at Section 10



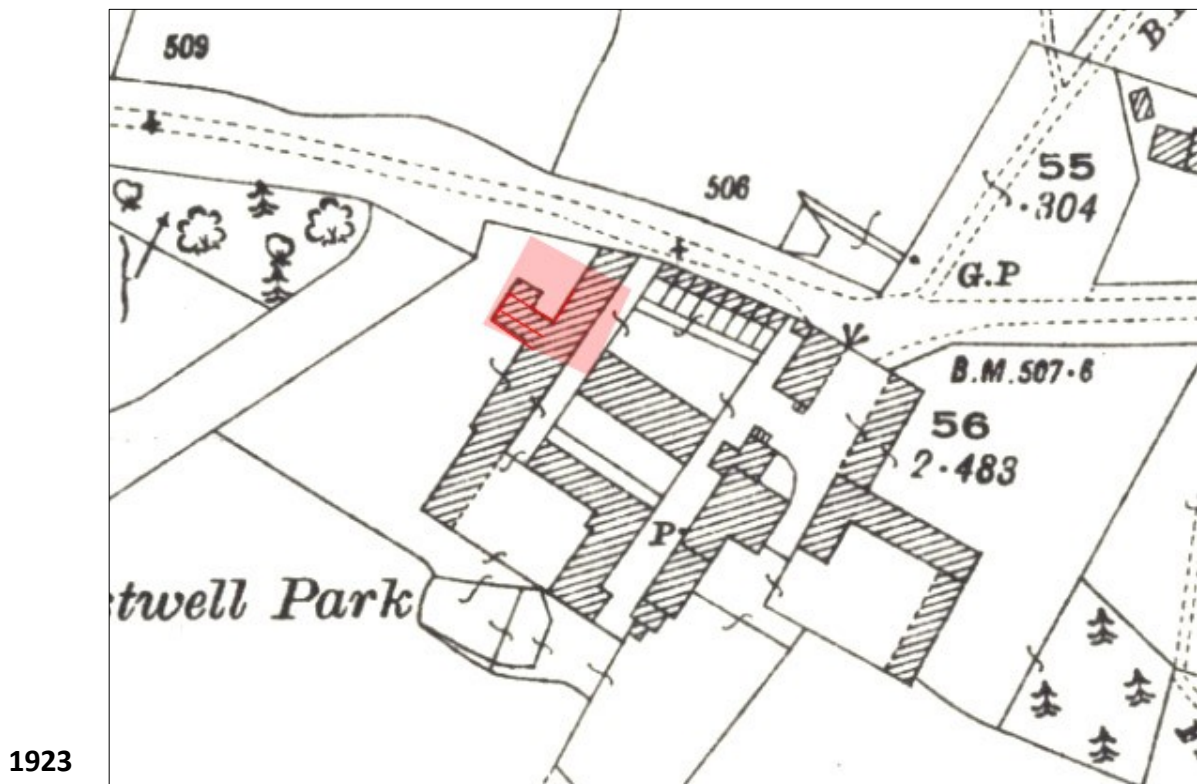
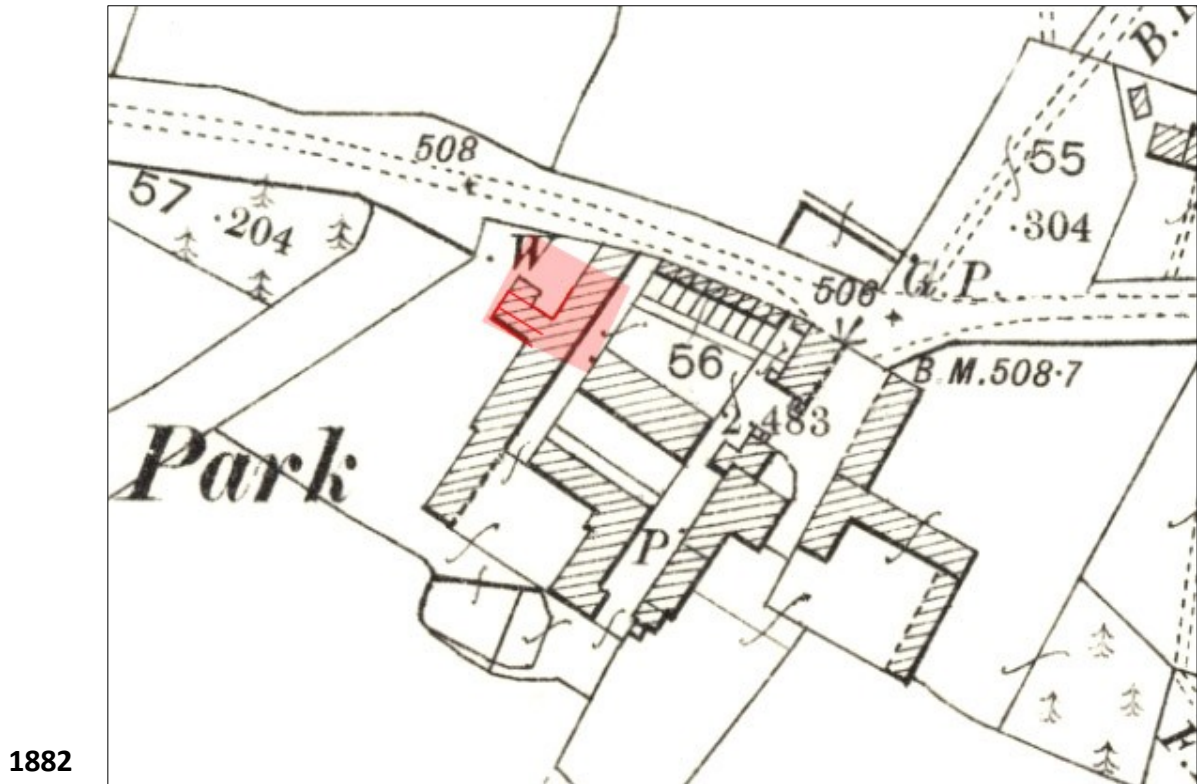


Figure 5. Extracts from 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25" maps, showing area of ground reduction (light red) and wall foundations (red)

10. PHOTOGRAPHS

1.
Pre-excavation,
facing W



2.
Pre-excavation,
facing SE



3.
Pre-excavation,
facing NE





4. Overview of reduced area. Foundations of 19th century brick-built farm outbuildings (005). Facing NE



5. Foundations of 19th century brick-built farm outbuildings (005). Facing SE



6. Overview of reduced area, facing NW. Rubbly soil deposit (002) in foreground



7. Overview of reduced area, facing NE. Rubbly soil deposit (002)

APPENDIX 1: List of Contexts

KEY: Relationships: **a.** above; **abt.** abuts; **adj.** adjoins; **b.** below; **c.** cuts; **cub.** cut by; **co.** contains; **wi** within
 Dimensions: **le.** length; **wid.** width; **de.** depth; **th.** thickness

Context No.	type	Description and Interpretation	relationships	dimensions	drawing	Finds	Date of record
001	Layer	topsoil	a.(002) to (008)	c. 0.24 m – c. 0.36 m	survey plan	none	10.11.2016
002	Deposit/ layer	A spread of very loose rubbly soil. Covers just of 50% of the reduced area on the E side. It largely coincides with the former location of a 19 th century farm outbuilding shown on 1 st and 2 nd edition 25" OS mapping. Contains occasional pieces of plastic – drain pipes and fertiliser sacks. The spread lapped over broken brick wall-footings (005) denoting machine disturbance after /during the removal of floors. Demolition spread.	b.(001); a.(003),	c. 230 sq. m de. unknown;	survey plan	none	10.11.2016
003	layer	Clay. Light yellowy-brown to mid brown. Geological stratum. Appears as a NE/SW aligned band on the NW side of the reduced area. Brick wall footings (005) of farm outbuildings have been set in the clay.	b. (001), (002) (004); cub. [008]	-	survey plan	none	10.11.2016
004	Layer/ deposit	Localised area of modern gravel in the NW part of the reduced area. Hard standing placed by gated entrance to the property.	a.(002), (001)	c. 3.5 m x 4 m	survey plan	none	10.11.2016
005	structure	Brick footings, occasionally mortared. Part of building, aligned NW/SE, 9.8 m long by x 6.4 m wide; and part of building (?rear wall), aligned NE/SW, c 7 m. Wall width c.0.3 m. Bricks are handmade, of mid to late 19 th century type, each approximately c. 270 mm x 104 mm x 74 mm) (8 ¾ " x 3 1/8 " x 4 1/8 "). The position of the outer footings correlate precisely to the plan of farm outbuildings depicted	b.(001), (002) wi. [008]	see description	survey plan	none	10.11.2016

Context No.	type	Description and Interpretation	relationships	dimensions	drawing	Finds	Date of record
		on on 1 st and 2 nd edition 25" OS mapping.					
006	Deposit/ layer	A spread of very loose rubbly soil in the NW part of the reduced area. A continuation of deposit (002). Lapps over brick and stone wall foundations (007). Demolition spread.	b.(004); a. (003), (007)	wid. c.1 m- 2.5 m; le. c.12 m	survey plan	none	10.11.2016
007	structure	Short length of very disturbed wall foundations of brick and small pieces of stone, in the NW corner of the reduced area. Uncertain whether a foundation trench is present. A building is not shown in this area on 1 st and 2 nd edition 25" OS mapping.	b.(006)	le.c. 6.5 m; wid. c. 0.3 m	survey plan	none	10.11.2016
008	cut	Foundation trench cut for brick wall footings (005)	c.(003); Co.(005)	wid. c. 0.3 m co.(005)	survey plan	-	10.11.2016

OASIS ID: souterra1-270204	
Project details	
Project name	Archaeological Investigation: Astwell Park Farm, Helmdon, Northamptonshire
Short description of the project	An archaeological investigation was carried out by Souterrain during groundwork preparation for a new stable block and its adjoining yard at Astwell Park Farm, Helmdon, Northamptonshire. The investigation took place on the 9th and 10th of November 2016. The proposed site of the new stable block lay on the projected southeast/ northwest course of a medieval deer park boundary which probably comprised a ditch and bank. Ground reduction took place over an area of 376 sq. m. There was no evidence of the deer park boundary. Neither were there any features or artefacts earlier than 19th century date. It is surmised that the deer park boundary ditch is either buried beneath 20th century deposits just inside the north-eastern perimeter of the development footprint, or that its course approximates to the property boundary further to the northeast. Exposed within the reduced area were the brick footings of a range 19th century farm outbuildings. The outbuildings, which are depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885, were demolished at sometime between 1980 and 2000. The land was subsequently landscaped into a garden. The areas of ground investigation were surveyed and photographed, and the depth of impact recorded.
Project dates	Start: 09-11-2016 End: 10-11-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SOU16-507 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	S/2016/1612/MAF - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	ENN108520 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	WALL FOUNDATIONS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Prompt	Planning condition
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HELMDON Astwell Park Farm
Postcode	NN13 5QX
Study area	376 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 620 437 52.08775743569 -1.095008569986 52 05 15 N 001 05 42 W Point

Height OD / Depth	Min: 154.25m Max: 154.61m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd
Project director/manager	M D Wilson
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Mrs Sarah Roach
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record
Digital Archive ID	ENN 108520
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record
Paper Archive ID	ENN 108520
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Report"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Investigation: Astwell Park Farm, Astwell Road, Helmdon, Northamptonshire, NN13 5QX
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Wilson M.D
Other bibliographic details	SOU16-507
Date	2016
Issuer or publisher	Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd
Place of issue	Olney
Description	illustrated technical report, A4, 21 pages inc. cover, colour
Entered by	M Wilson
Entered on	1 December 2016