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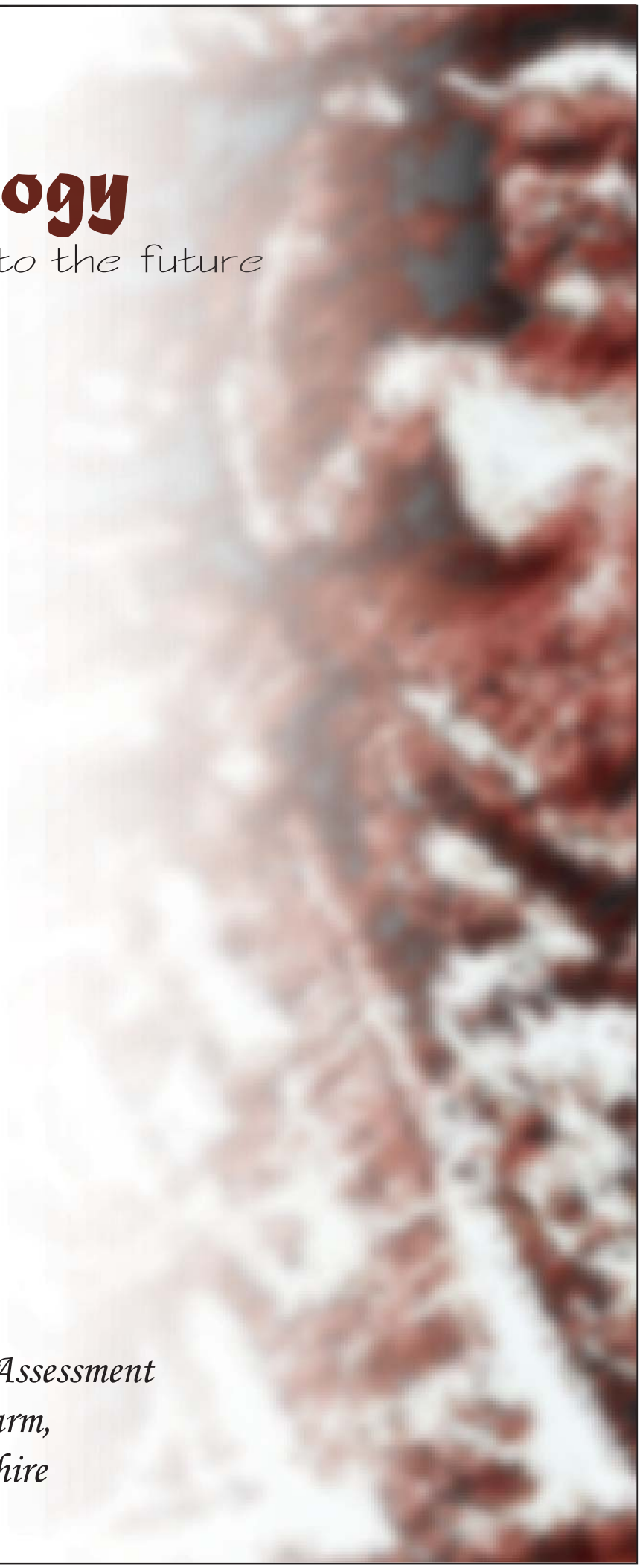
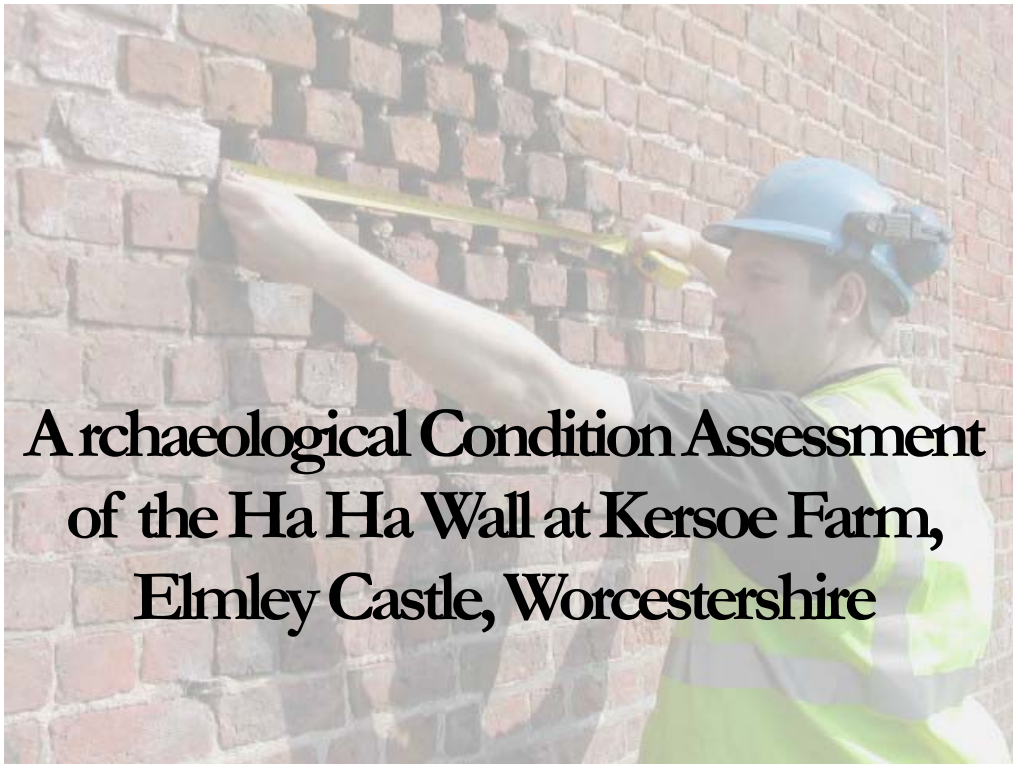


Archaeological Condition Assessment of the Ha Ha at Kersoe Farm, Elmley Castle, Worcestershire

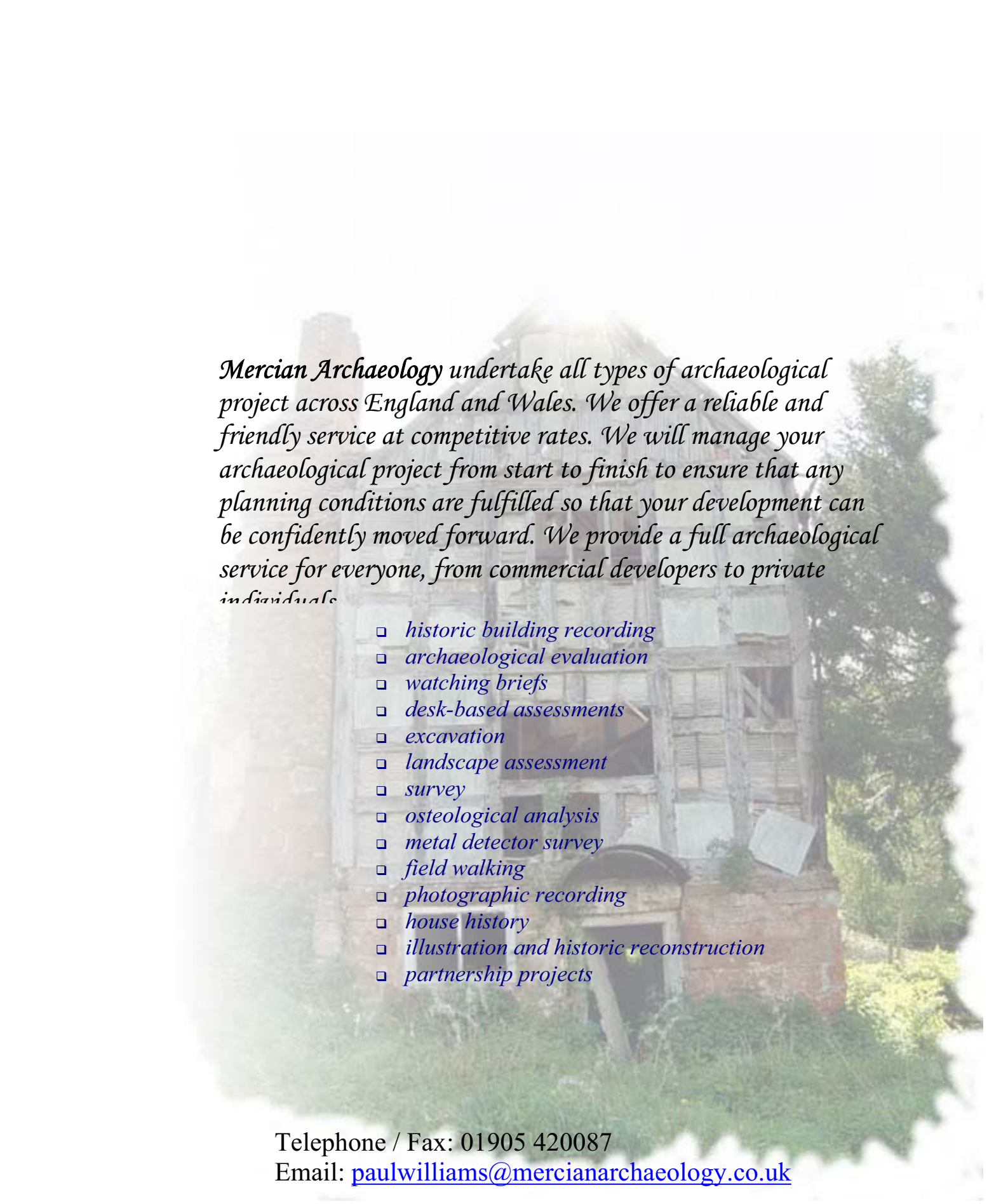


Archaeological Condition Assessment of the Ha Ha Wall at Kersoe Farm, Elmley Castle, Worcestershire

January 2008

Project: PJ 204

WSM:



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1. Project Background

1.1. Location of the Site

Kersoe farm lies at the foot of the north-eastern slope of Bredon Hill, around 1-kilometre to the south of Elmley Castle. The farm extends to the north-west and encompasses the site of the medieval castle of Elmley and a former deerpark, which lies along the slope of Bredon Hill. The Ha Ha is located around 250 metres to the south of the village (NGR SO 9814 4081), defining the boundary between the former deerpark and the site of Elmley Park House, which no longer stands (Figure 1).

1.2. Project Background

The Ha Ha has been identified as a key historic feature of the historic deerpark landscape. The structure is currently in poor condition and requires informed restoration in order that the feature may be maintained as part of the historic landscape (Mindykowski 2005, referred to in Mindykowski 2006). The restoration work is to be carried out under a 'ten year agreement' managed by Natural England, following a successful *Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Application*.

The condition assessment of the Ha Ha wall was proposed in a *Brief for a Landscape Management Plan* (Bretherton 2006, referred to in Mindykowski 2006), which identify the need to 'carry out recording and condition assessment of the Ha Ha, in order to 'identify damage caused by scrub and erosion of the feature fabric, which should set restoration targets and inform a maintenance plan' (Priority Points 10 and 10b).

The following report aims to fulfil this requirement.

1.3. Ha Ha Description

The Ha Ha forms the former southern boundary of the private gardens of Elmley Park House, which unfortunately was demolished in the late 1960's. The feature now extends 511 metres, aligned approximately north-west to south-east, though originally it is likely that the wall and ditch turned to the north-east to form the eastern boundary of the Elmley Park gardens; the ditch can still be seen in the present hedge line and it is suggested that the wall from this point south-eastwards, is a later extension. The early phase of the wall is separated from the proposed later phase by a 'corner' which is devoid of wall and ditch, though it maybe that this has been intentionally removed / buried, to give access between fields to the north and south of the Ha Ha at this point. There is also a distinct section of walling at the far north-western end that differs from the remainder in that it includes a band of mortared brickwork within the fabric, in comparison with the remainder of the wall, which is of drystone construction; this is likely to represent a previous repair and consolidation phase. The associated ditch runs along the southern side of the wall and is some 1.50 metres deep in places. The wall stands to a maximum height of just over 1-metre, though it is likely that up to a further metre of walling is

buried within the silts of the ditch, which is extensively waterlogged and carries a watercourse via drains to a pond in the adjacent property to the north. However, much of the wall is denuded standing to only a few centimetres and in many places, is not visible at all.

The Ha Ha would have required constant attention during its lifespan as a barrier between the deerpark / grazing land and the private gardens, and all the problems noted during this survey would have been apparent in the past should routine maintenance have been neglected.

2. Methods and Process

2.1. Project Specification

- The project fieldwork conforms to the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Field Evaluation (IFA 2001).
- The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Countryside Section, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS, 2006) and for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology 2007).

2.2. Specific Aims of the Project

The archaeological condition assessment aimed to:

1. To make a referenced photographic record of the entire length of the wall (including areas of missing masonry).
2. To undertake a basic measured survey of the wall, highlighting areas that need restoration / maintenance / consolidation.
3. To use the results of the survey to compile a list of restoration / maintenance / consolidation targets that can be clearly identified.
4. To make the results and recommendations available in report form, so that specialist contractors are able to use the information for tendering processes.
5. To supply a CD of digital images, which may be used in conjunction with the report, by tendering contractors.

3.4. The Fieldwork Methodology

The archaeological field survey undertaken in January 2008.

The photographic survey was carried out using digital imaging. A 1-metre scale was used in all photographs.

The methodology adopted and the favourable working conditions meant that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

4. The Results

4.1. The Survey

The survey work determined that overall, the wall could be said to be in poor condition, though there are several areas where the wall remains generally intact.

The survey identified three main threats to the integrity of the wall; damage from tree roots and scrub, erosion / subsidence damage, and damage caused by animals, the latter may be split into damage from burrowing / wild animals and damage by stock animals.

It was not thought that the watercourse running into / along the ditch was a direct cause of damage to the wall, though rapid silting was clearly causing the ditch to become ill-defined in areas.

The cause of some areas of damage to the wall fabric could not be determined, though the effect on the fabric is clear and unless a programme of consolidation of these areas is undertaken, further damage will result.

4.2. The Photographic Record and Drawn Record

The measured survey record of the wall is contained in Drawings 1 to 5 and the accompanying CD of digital images. The key to the drawings identifies the form of different types of damage to the wall and is expanded upon here.

Intact walling: This refers to expanses of wall that are 'generally' intact and which require little attention other than re-setting of any loose stones and light scrub clearance from the bank behind.

Patchy walling: This refers to areas of walling that can only be seen in part; it is apparent that this is likely to be the result of collapse of fabric into the ditch, removal of stone to be used elsewhere, or possibly some areas are merely obscured below modern turf / vegetation cover.

Missing walling: Areas of missing walling are left un-annotated on the drawings. It is likely that the walling in these areas has fallen down and the stone has been removed for use elsewhere.

Collapsed walling: This records areas of walling where the cause is not clear, but is likely to have been caused by a prolonged combination of root action and erosion.

Pressure from behind wall causing subsidence: Areas of wall were identified which were 'bulging' towards the ditch due to pressure behind the wall. This presents a problem as the ultimate result of the movement is collapse and the remedy is rebuilding.

Tree damage: Tree damaged areas are shown where damage from tree roots or scrub is obvious, though much of the damage across the upper levels of the wall is likely to have been accelerated by this form of problem.

Damage caused by stock animals: One area had clearly been regularly used by grazing animals, resulting in erosion of the bank by animal hooves; there was no sign of remaining walling in this area.

Damage caused by burrowing animals: Two areas were noted where animal burrows had 'obscured' the fabric of the wall; in both cases the animals (presumably badgers) were burrowing behind the wall and spoil was being up-cast over into the ditch. The north-westernmost burrowing appears to be occurring on the opposite side of the boundary fence in the adjacent property.

5. 4. Restoration Targets

5.1. Explanation of the Choice of Restoration Targets

The suggested restoration targets are designed to primarily stabilise and consolidate the walling and to repair / restore some areas of the fabric in order to reinstate aesthetic value to the feature, as well as helping to stabilise the adjoining fabric to either side of the repairs. Some areas remain 'un-restorable' and any rebuilding in these areas would arguably represent replication rather than restoration. Further basic long-term maintenance has been suggested in order to help preserve the wall and prevent a reversal into decline.

5.2. Explanation of *Notes Shown on Drawings 1- 5

Refer to *Notes 1-11 on Drawings 1 to 5

NOTE 1: The north-western corner of the Ha Ha wall is missing (Photo 1) and it would benefit the aesthetic nature of the feature if it were rebuilt; it is assumed that this would also stabilise this end of the wall. This would involve some localised excavation down to the top of the original foundation, removal of vegetation from the area, re-walling and tying into the existing fabric.

NOTE 2, NOTE 4 and NOTE 5: It is recommended that the length of walling from 2m to 28m be partially dismantled and rebuilt. The section of walling below the brick and mortar band is relatively intact and it should be possible to insert stones into any voids to add stability. The central brick band should be repointed where necessary with a similar (lime based) mortar to the existing mix; the southern end of the brickwork (27m-28m) has broken away due to subsidence of the wall in this area and it is suggested that this, and the walling below and above, be rebuilt to aid stability at this end of the banded area. The walling above the band is capped with a row of larger copingstones, many of which are being pushed off the wall by overgrown scrub vegetation. It is recommended that these are re-set where possible. This would encompass cutting back some tree cover and vegetation and may require some repair to the walling above the band, which is also leaning forward in places (Photos 1-5).

NOTE 6: It is also recommended rebuilding the damaged area at 36m-37m (Photo 5) and removal of the small tree at 38.5m (Photo 5) and rebuilding this small section. This will give a complete section of some 45 metres of walling at the north-west end of the Ha Ha, which will be in a 'restored condition'. It is also suggested that it would be worthwhile rebuilding small sections further along the wall in order that the adjoining fabric may be stabilised and to better give the impression that the feature is an extensive wall; these sections are at 337m, 390m, between 407 and 420 m and at 439m (see drawings).

NOTE 3: Areas were noted where the wall has been directly damaged by trees, tree roots and scrub encroachment. There needs to be a compromise between felling trees and preserving the fabric of the wall and this has been taken into account when formulating the recommendations, as annotated onto drawings 1-5. It is assumed that the best method of removing unwanted trees is to cut close to the base of the trunk and poison the roots, before removal of the obstructive root wood and making good any repairs. It does not make practical sense simply to cut back where damage will re-occur following re-growth.

NOTE 7: These areas are beyond restoration and remain only as a bank, though the bank should be preserved by keeping vegetation cover low.

NOTE 7A: This area, at the corner between the proposed phase 1 Ha Ha and the proposed phase 2 wall extension to the south-east, shows no evidence of ever having had a wall, though it maybe this has been removed and/ or buried and the ditch filled in. It is recommended that this area be left.

NOTE 8: A watercourse flows into the Ha Ha ditch from a pool on the hillside to the south-west; this and the pool are almost certainly man made and the water purposely directed via its present course, though it has not been ascertained if this is contemporary with the ditch or an earlier feature. It is clear from the survey that the ditch is holding water along much of its length and according to the client (pers comm. Jamie Hobbs), during extremely wet periods the water fills the ditch (up to around 1-metre). It is therefore important to keep the drain, which runs into the wall, free of debris. Though it is clear from silty-mud within the gaps between the stones that there is rapid silting, thus far this does not appear to have compromised the wall and there is no obvious requirement for de-silting the ditch, though the drain should be maintained.

NOTE 9: Note 9 refers to patchy walling, or walling that cannot be seen to be continuous wall. There is little that can be done to 'restore' these sections, but cutting back scrub and managing the vegetation will help preserve the bank profile. It is not recommended to remove turf cover in an attempt to expose the remains of any wall below, unless there is clear evidence of likely survival of sound fabric remaining in-situ.

NOTE 10: This identifies an area where livestock has trampled down the profile of the bank, though it is likely that the walling had already gone. There is no restoration proposal for this area.

NOTE 11: Note 11 refers to a tree that is growing through the wall, but does not appear to have affected the integrity of the wall to either side. It is suggested that this is left as is', but the area periodically visually monitored.

5.3. Comment on Specific Restoration Targets as Shown on Drawings 1-5

1. Priority 1, Burrowing Animals. Natural England, the adjacent landowner and any other interested parties should be consulted regarding the two areas identified on the drawings as areas of burrowing.

2. Priority 2, Scrub and tree clearance as required: Scrub should be cut back, trees removed and loose material / debris removed from the entire length of the Ha Ha and ditch before any restoration and consolidation of stonework commences.

3. Areas of walling to be rebuilt (see Notes 1,2, 4-6 above): The random drystone coursing as seen in the existing build should be utilised wherever possible. Stone should be sourced from the cleared upper levels of the ditch and from the areas outlined on Drawing 4. If further stone is required, then it should preferably be re-used and of a similar type to the existing stone.

4. Brickwork should be repointed and repaired as necessary (this does not refer to areas of loose brick, which has been used within the fabric of the drystone wall, but just the area shown in Drawing 1), using a lime-based mortar similar in content to the original mix.

5. Walling to be stabilised / consolidated and stones reset, should first be cleared of all intrusive vegetation. Repairs should be of drystone in keeping with the existing fabric.

6. Mature trees should be managed so that ‘all reasonable care’ is taken that they do not compromise the wall any further. It is not necessary to remove trees, except where suggested on the drawings.

7. An annual programme of maintenance should be implemented in order that scrub does not return and threaten the monument as it has done in the past.

8. The wall should also be checked every year for loose stones, and the stones re-set as necessary.

9. Though possibly impractical, as far as possible grazing animals should be kept to the south-western side of the ditch.

6. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the client Mr Jamie Hobbs of Kersoe Farm. Thanks are also due to Della Lawrence for her invaluable site assistance. Thanks are also extended to Adam Mindykowski, Countryside Officer, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service.

REFERENCES

Mercian Archaeology (2007) *Proposal for an Archaeological Condition Assessment of the Ha Ha at Kersoe Farm, Elmley Castle, Worcestershire*

Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Section (Mindykowski 2006) *Brief for an Archaeological Condition Assessment of the Ha Ha at Kersoe Farm, Elmley Castle, Worcestershire*

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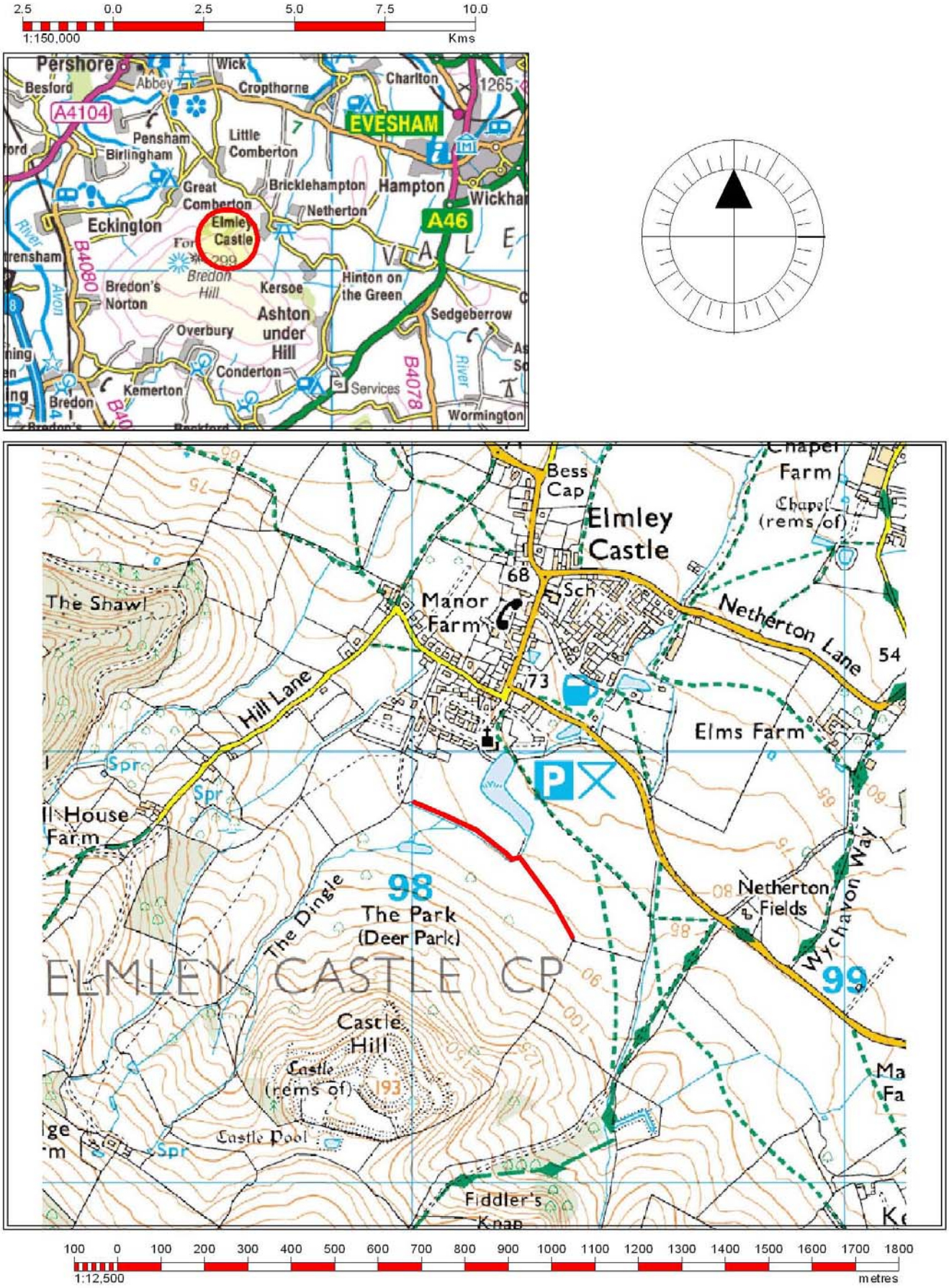
Figure 1: Location of the Site



Location of the Ha Ha (red line) at Elmley Castle, Worcestershire

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KEY TO DRAWINGS 1 to 5


In-tact or fairly in-tact walling


Wall damaged and requires rebuilding or consolidation


Wall is patchy and only appears to survive in areas


Brick and mortar band


Damage due to tree roots or pressure from vegetation


Wall obscured by animal burrowing

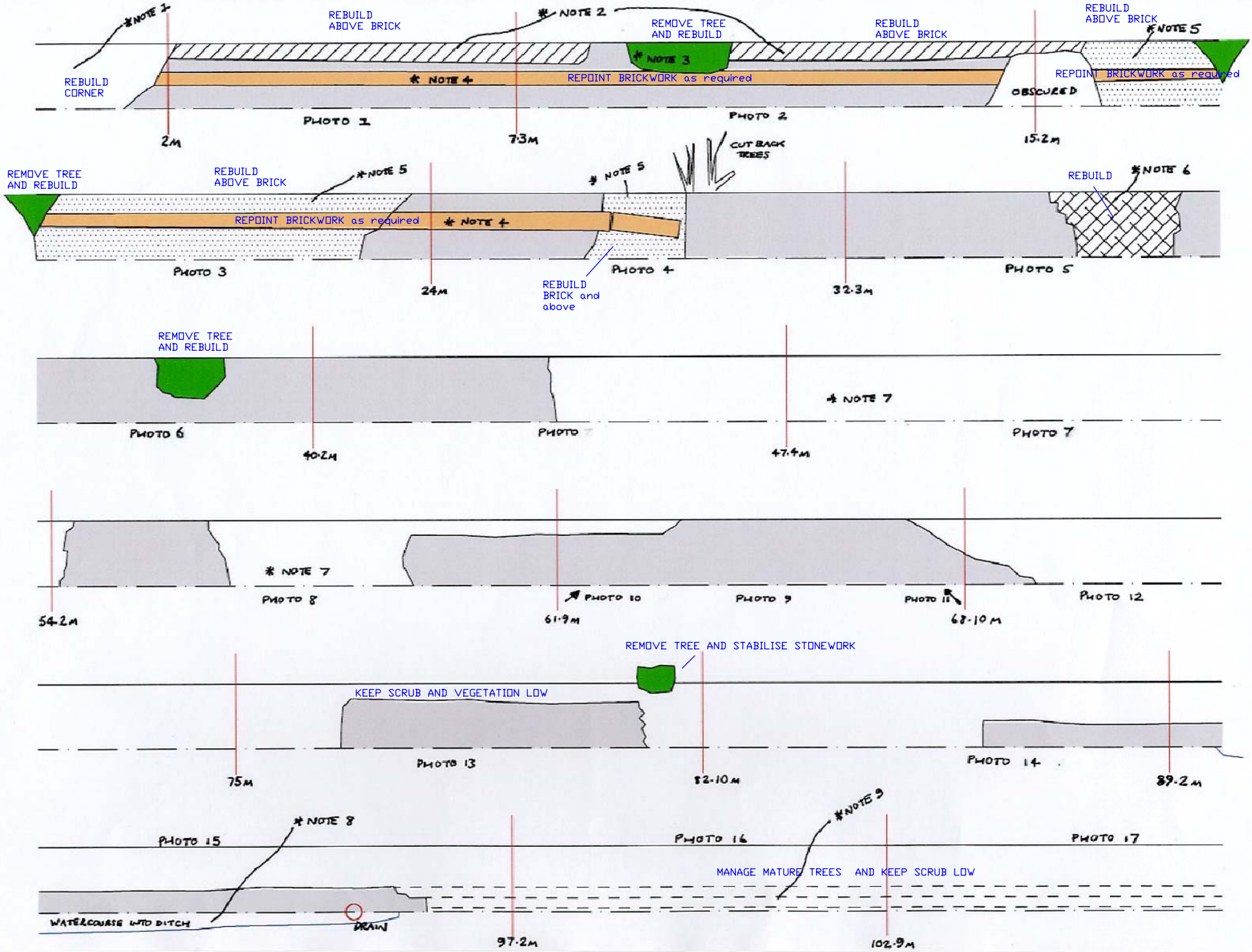

Wall destroyed by stock animals


Coping stones slipping off wall


Pressure from behind wall causing subsidence

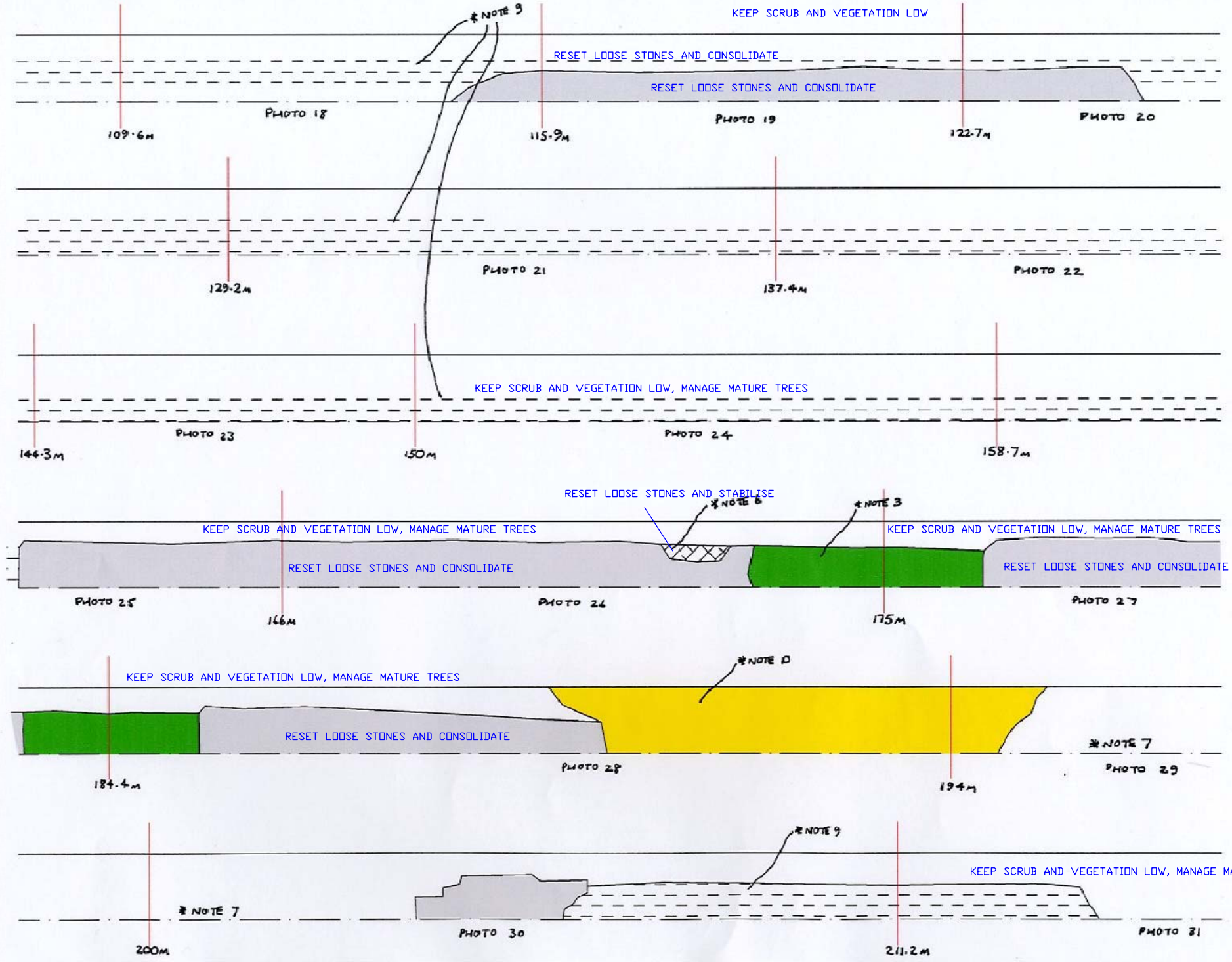
Position of ranging rods in photos

Wall corners



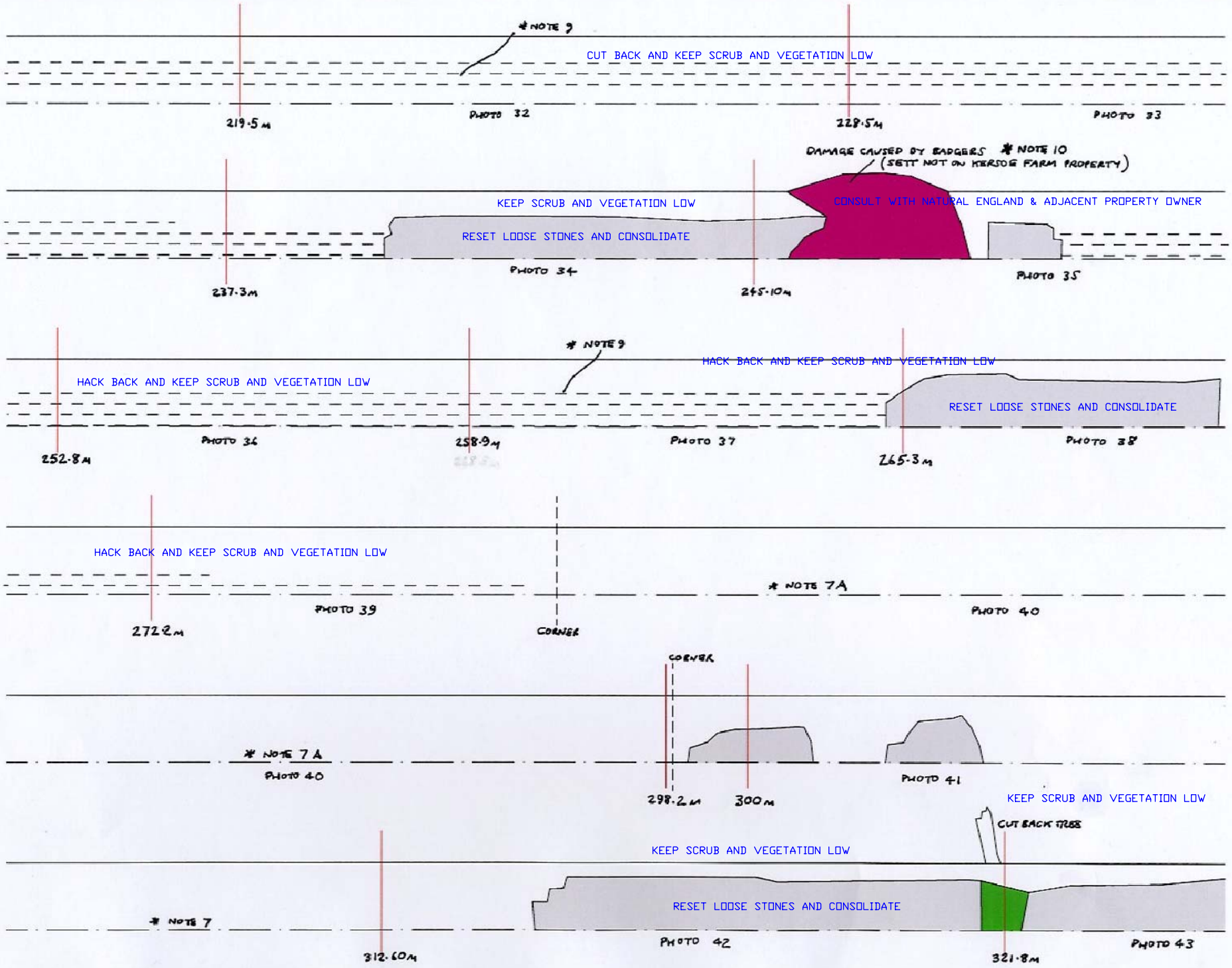
DRAWING 1 (0M - 108M) 1:50

KERSOE FARM, ELMLEY CASTLE, HA HA WALL



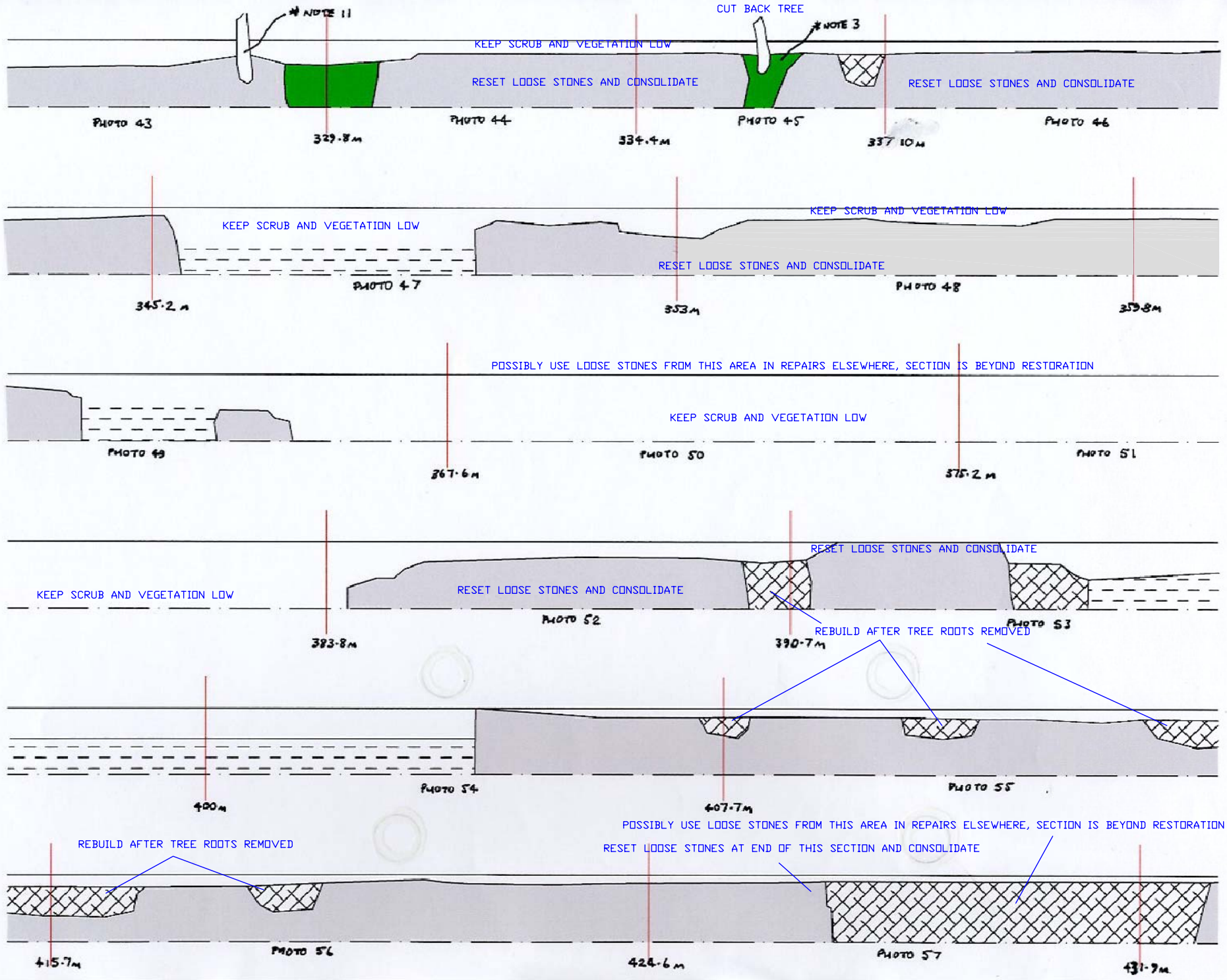
DRAWING 2 (108M - 216M) 1:50

KERSOE FARM, ELMLEY CASTLE ; HA HA WALL



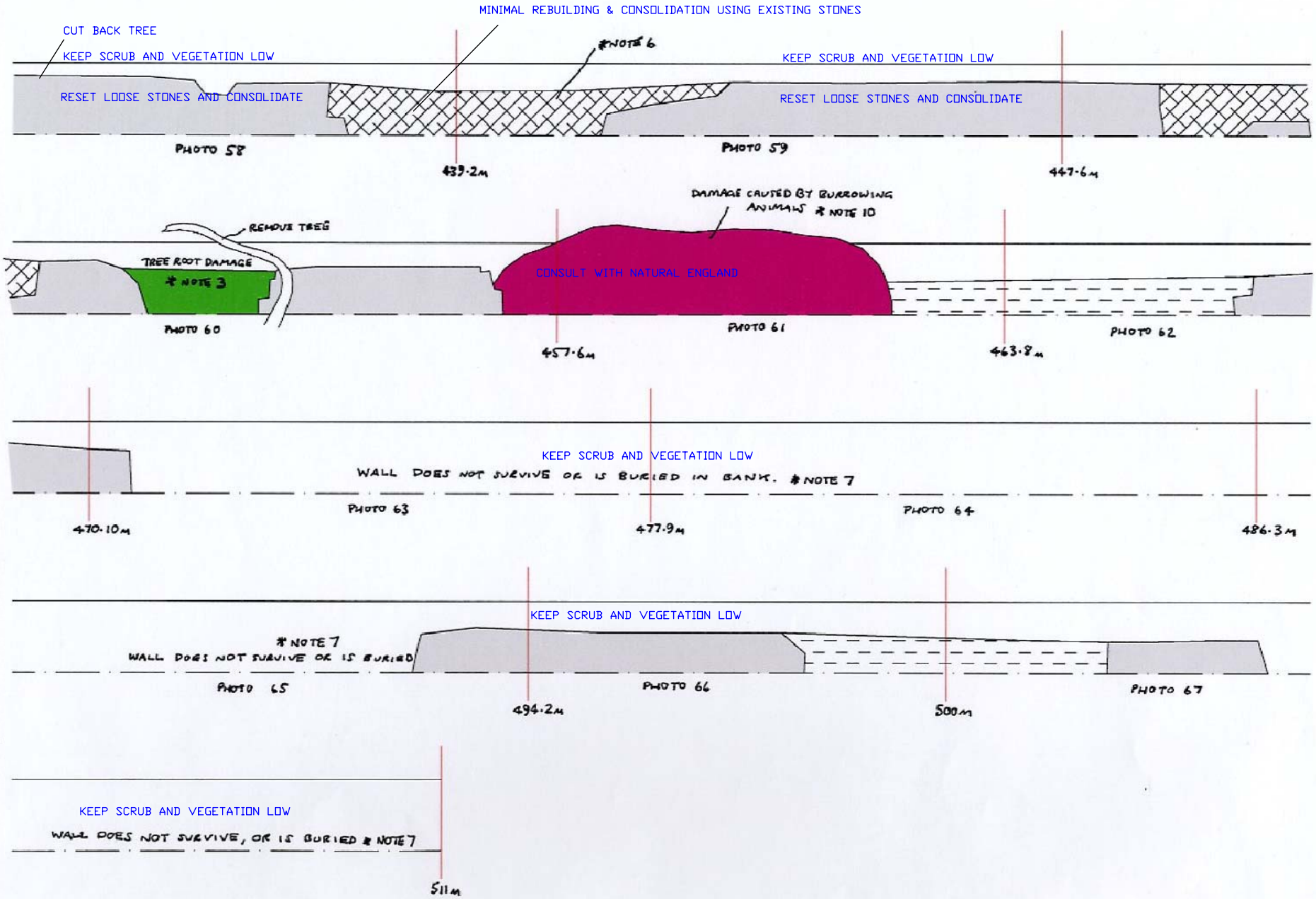
DRAWING 3 (216M – 325M) 1:50

KERSOE FARM, ELMLEY CASTLE, HA HA WALL



DRAWING 4 (325M - 433M) 1:50

KERSOE FARM, ELMLEY CASTLE, HA HA WALL



DRAWING 5 (433M TO 511M) 1:50

KERSOE FARM, ELMLEY CASTLE, HA HA WALL