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Minor Archaeological Services Call-Off Contract Mavisbank House, Midlothian (PIC156)

New Access Road, Fencing and Drainage
Installation, Watching Brief, March 2019
Report No. HES-PIC156-2019-01

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Minor Archaeological Services Call-Off Contract

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in March 2019 within the grounds of Mavisbank House, Polton, Midlothian (NGR: NT 28900 65142), a Property in Care (PIC156) in the guardianship of Historic Environment Scotland. Work was undertaken as part of the Minor Archaeological Services Call-off Contract.

The works involve the replacement of the access road that was installed in the initial building of the house. Works also include the replacement of a fence line and installation of drainage.

1.2 Background

One of Scotland's most important country houses, the well-documented collaboration between William Adam and the lawyer-scholar, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, resulted in a highly original design of Mavisbank house (LB7404) on a freshfield site. Sir John's father had planned a house here, and a drawing of 1698 shows a plain square box with coupled chimneystacks perched on top of a tall piended roof. This became the basis, enriched and Palladianized, of the present house. Inspired by the Earthwork (MEL8081) just south west of Mavisbank, claimed by Clerk to be a Roman fort, Clerk's vision was to bring the villa style of Ancient Rome to the Scottish lowlands. John Baxter Senior was the mason contractor, and William Sylverstyne the stone carver. The house was recast circa 1840 with a symmetrical arrangement of large well-designed additions (possibly Thomas Hamilton) flanking the rear elevation to provide a drawing room and ball room (demolished 1954). It appears that the parterre within the principal courtyard was excavated at this time, and the cills of basement windows lowered with the forestair. Further extensions were added to the front of the pavilions in the 1880s, related to the house being turned into an insane asylum under the name New Saughtonhall House, but these were also demolished in 1954 after the hospital closed down.

Until recent consolidation work, the corps de logis retained many timber sash and case windows, in a 12-pane pattern to the principal floors, and 16 and 4-pane patterns to the basement, although it is likely that the majority of the multi-pane windows are from the 1840 re-casting. A photograph of circa 1956 shows a blind window at 1st floor displaying what appears to be the original 24 pane arrangement with thicker glazing bars. Since the fire of 1973, the house has lost some urns from the principal balustrade and pediment, and the ornate 19th century cast-iron balustrade to the principal forestair. It has also lost its roofs, essential to understanding the French and Dutch influence of the design. Of grey slate, they comprised a distinctive and unusual domical piended platform roof to the main block, piended and bell-cast roofs to pavilions with a monopitch to the service wing. A-group with Doocot, Gazebo (LB73870), Walled Gardens (LB44166), Ice House (LB44165), Dairy (LB44163), Game Larder (LB44164), and East Lodge, (SSI, HES).

In 2008, Kirkdale monitored the restoration of the road and noted significant build up of the road surfaces, this as well as the proximity of the road to existing structures suggested there was potential for previously undiscovered archaeology to be exposed.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the programme of archaeological works were:

- To conduct an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation, (watching brief) to monitor all ground disturbance works required for the replacement of the existing road - drainage channel excavations, and installation of a new fence line.
- To mitigate the effects of construction on any archaeological deposits or features identified through their excavation and recording and produce a report on them.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 General

All work was conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) 'Code of Conduct' (CIfA 2014), and other relevant CIfA Standards and Guidance, as well as all requirements of Historic Scotland and under the terms of the Minor Archaeological Services Call-off Contract.

2.2 Watching Brief

All ground-breaking works were carried out under constant archaeological supervision.

All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures and by completing standard CFA record forms.

All deposits of archaeological significance were excavated by hand by the watching brief archaeologist.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

Numbers in bold refer to contexts, a full list of which is contained in Appendix 1.

The works were within the original road to Mavisbank House, starting at the top of the hill (NT 28920 65182) to the bottom of the hill (NT 28886 65112), with an overall size of c.65m x 4m (Fig. 1, 3).

The stratigraphy of the stripped area begins as hardcore path cover (**000**) with a depth of 0.14m, Geotech netting (**001**), compacted dark brown made ground (**002**) with a depth of 0.24m, coming onto an orange-brown sandy clay natural with a significant number of stone and pebble inclusions (**003**).

Parts of the area stripped for the new road had a very soft clay (**017**) overlying the natural. It was noted to reach c.0.7m in depth. The original depth of excavation was to be 0.4m. Due the very soft nature of this clay (**017**), however, it was removed as part of the works.

A number of brick and stone-built structures were uncovered during the watching brief.

At the north most end of the stripped area an arched brick culvert (**006**) was uncovered, aligned NW-SE (Fig. 4). The feature measured 4m in length and 0.5m in width. A break at its N end allowed the internal diameter of the culvert to be measured, at 0.4m, and its outer diameter was 0.6m. The structure was made of red unfrogged bricks, bearing no stamps or makers marks, bonded with mortar. Based on the shape, colour, and lack of any markings on the bricks, it can be concluded that the feature is Victorian (Suddaby, I. Pers. Comm.).

South of **006**, on the eastern edge of the road, a c.30m long brick gully (**009**) was uncovered, with a stone kerb (**010**) on its eastern side (Fig. 6). The gully was made of a double row of bricks (0.4m wide), laid end to end and slightly pitched towards each other to form a gully. The bricks were unfrogged, with no makers mark or stamps, again suggesting it to be Victorian (Suddaby, I. Pers. Comm.). The condition of the feature was variable: some bricks were more damaged than others, and during excavation it was noted that the bricks were quite fragile. A section of the feature had an additional line of more modern frogged bricks, stamped with "NIDDRIE" (circa mid 1920s) and "WHITEHILL" (unknown), along its western edge (**018**). The feature becomes more fragmentary to the south.

Parallel to **009** and on its east side was a stone kerb (**010**), which appeared to be contemporary to the brick gully. The kerb was 17.5m long and c.0.3m wide, made of stones of varying sizes, with a few dressed stones visible along its length (Fig. 8). There were several gaps with missing stones. A concrete block with a cut-out for a metal fitting (**011**) was present within the kerb, possibly for a metal fence post.

The gully feature (**009** and **010**) sat on top of a compacted, yet friable, dark brown made ground deposit (**012**) which disappeared southward.

At its southern most end, **009** sits on top of a surviving fragment of the assumed

original road surface (016) (Fig. 7). It measured 3m long by up to 0.5m in width, and was a compact deposit of stones of various sizes. This surface was concluded to be part of the old road to Mavisbank house. This was the only remains of the original metalled road surface within the watching brief area.

A 7" glazed ceramic pipe (015), which continued under 009 and 010 to the east, connected to a brick drainage sump (013) to its west (Fig. 5). The ceramic pipe and drain were no longer live. The sump (013) measured 1.3m by 0.95m, with a depth of 0.8m. It was two bricks thick and eight bricks tall. The base of 013 was brick-lined as well and the drain hole was located in the western wall of the feature, the opening obstructed by stones. The bricks used were a variation on the "WHITEHILL" bricks used for 018, as these bore the stamp "○VITEHIL○" (with a circular stamp at each end of the name). On closer inspection it was clear that the circular stamp did not obstruct the last 'L' but was made in this way without the second 'L' (Suddaby, I. Pers. Comm.). After excavation and recording of the feature was finished, all removed or fallen off bricks were put back in the base of (013), as discussed with HES.

The gully feature was also broken by a cut for a metal cable. The cable was no longer live and was removed.

No finds were recovered.

As agreed with HES, the culvert and sump were left in situ and covered with a steel plate prior to upfilling for the new road, and the gully was also left in situ and covered with terram prior to upfilling for the new road.

4. CONCLUSION

A watching brief was conducted during groundworks for the upgrade of the road to Mavisbank House.

Several brick and stone structures were recorded, including a brick culvert, a brick drainage sump with drainpipe, and a brick gully with stone kerb running along the eastern edge of the trackway, along with a fragment of the original metalled surface of the road. These features are likely to be Victorian or later in date and relate to estate management at Mavisbank. These features have been recorded and preserved in situ.

The brick gully is the same feature as was identified in Trenches 1 and 2 in 2008 (F105 and F204: Kirkdale 2008). The fragment of metalled road surface is likely the same as was identified in Trenches 1 and 2 in 2008 (F106 and F206: Kirkdale 2008).

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the National Record for the Historic Environment Scotland (NRHE) and copies of reports will be lodged with the West Lothian Council Sites and Monuments Record.

A summary statement will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 4) and will also be reported on through *OASIS Scotland*.

5. REFERENCES

Kirkdale Archaeology 2008 *Mavisbank House: Archaeological excavations, July 2008*. Report No. HSCO-4921-2008-01.

APPENDIX 1: Photographic Register

Shot No.	Summary description of subject	Facing
1	Pre-ex shot of road surface	NW
2	Pre-ex shot of road surface	SSE
3	Flagstone, found at N edge of road during stripping	N/A
4	Post-ex shot of road strip	SSE
5	Brick gully (009) and stone kerb (010)	N/A
6	Working shot	S
7	Post-ex shot of road strip	N
8	Post-ex shot of exposed brick culvert (006)	NW
9	Post-ex shot of exposed brick culvert (006)	NW
10	Working shot with (009) and (010) in view	S
11	Working shot of (013) being exposed	SW
12	Post-ex working shot with cable casing in view	S
13	Post ex shot of (013) and (015)	WSW
14	Post ex shot of (013) and (015)	W
15	Post-ex shot of (013) with depth scale	W
16	Post-ex shot of (013)	S
17	Post-ex shot of (015) going under (009) and (010)	E
18	Post-ex shot of (009) and (010) + stoning of road	N
19	Post-ex shot of (009) and (010) + stoning of road.	N
20	Post-ex shot of (009)/(010) with (016) in view	E
21	Break in (009)/(010) for metal cased cable	E
22	General area view of post-ex (009)/(010)	S
23	Plan view of (009)/(010) with focus on one of the dressed stones	N/A
24	Plan view of (009)/(010) with focus on (011)	N/A
25	Post-ex view of (009)/(010)	S
26	General area view of (009)/(010) with Type 1 laid down	SSW
27	Condition shot	N
28	Condition shot	S
29	Condition shot of (013)	W
30	Condition shot of collapsed wall	W
31	Condition shot	N

APPENDIX 2: Context Register

Context no.	Fill of	Type	Description
000			Gravel - Hardcore/Type 1
001			Plastic netting - Geotech
002			Made ground
003			Natural
004			Cut for culvert (006)
005	004		Packing fill for culvert (006)
006			Arched brick laid culvert
007			VOID
008			VOID
009			Brick gully
010			Stone kerb
011			Concrete/Fe fitting
012			Made ground under (009)/(010)
013			Brick drainage sump
014			Cut of pipe ditch
015	014		7" ceramic pipe
016			Road surface

017			Sealing clay
018			Modern brick kerb

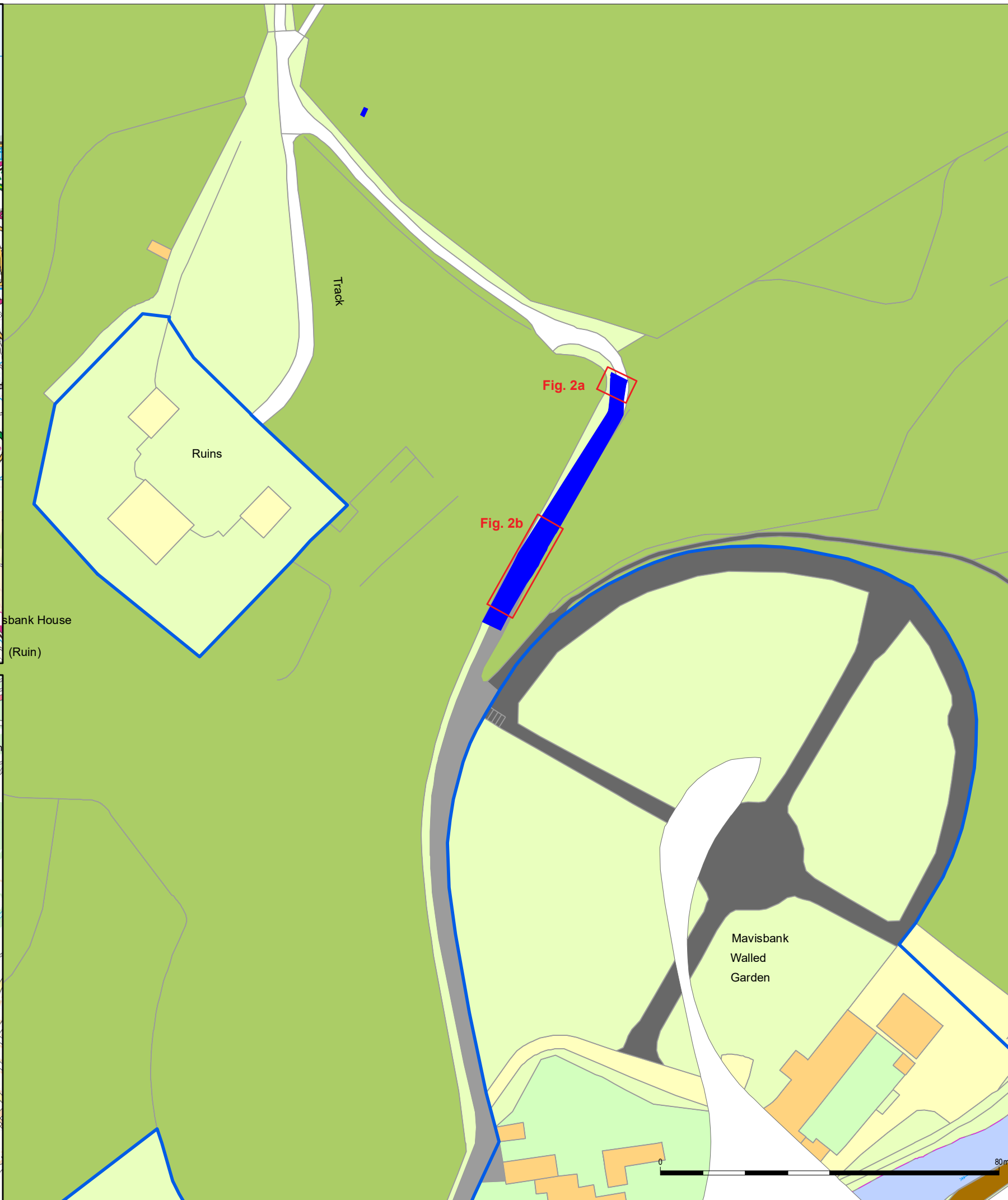
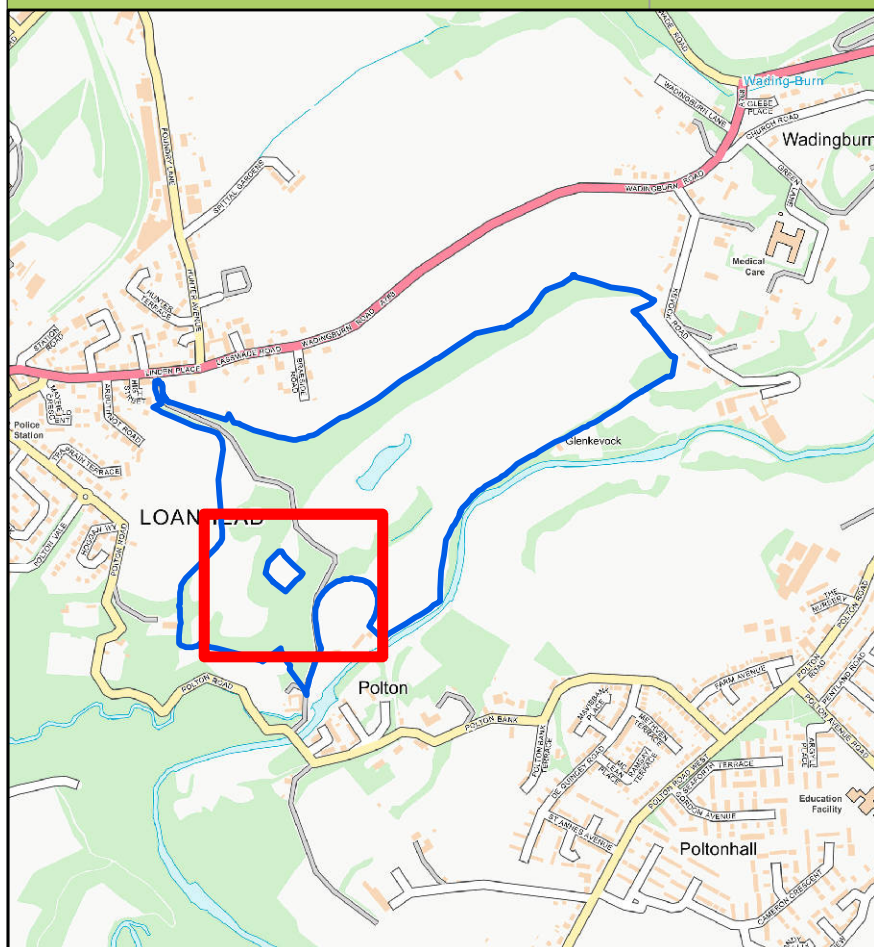
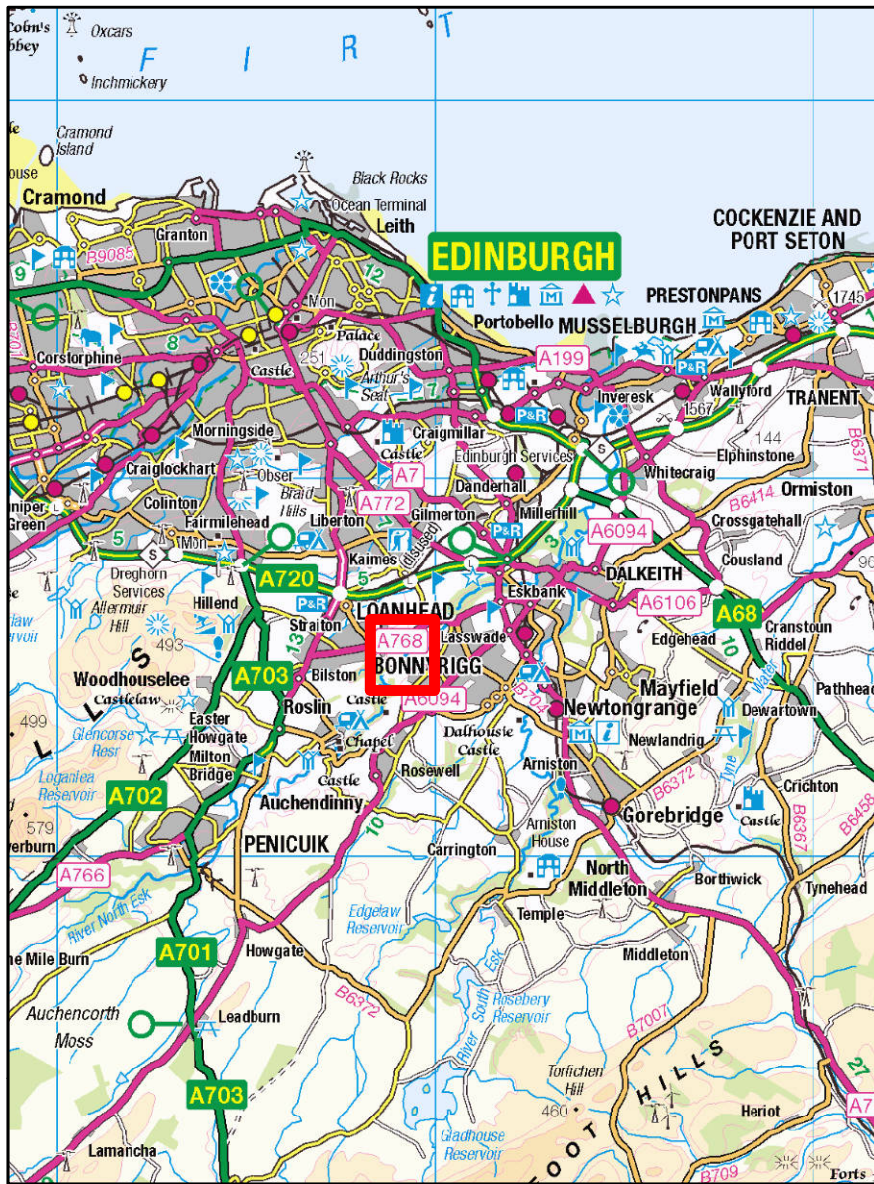
APPENDIX 3: Drawing Register

Dwg No.	Sheet No.	Scale	Plan / Section	Description/contexts
1	1	01:50	P	Site plan.
2	1	01:20	S	Example section of culver (006).

APPENDIX 4: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Midlothian
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Mavisbank House, Polton, Midlothian
PROJECT CODE:	MINA89
PARISH:	Lasswade
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Sofia K Black
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	CFA Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	N/A
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	N/A
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	N/A
NGR (2 letters, 10 figures)	NT 28900 65142
START DATE (this season)	March 2019
END DATE (this season)	March 2019
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	Yes
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	A watching brief was conducted during groundworks for the upgrade of the road to Mavisbank House. Several brick and stone structures were recorded, including a brick culvert, a brick drainage sump with drainpipe, and a brick gully with stone kerb running along the eastern edge of the trackway, along with a fragment of the original metalled surface of the road. These features are likely to be Victorian or later in date and relate to estate management at Mavisbank. These features have been recorded and preserved in situ.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Environment Scotland
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	CFA Archaeology Ltd, Old Engine House, Eskmills Park, Musselburgh, EH21 7PQ.
EMAIL ADDRESS:	cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited with NRHE, reports lodged with SMR.
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Key:

PIC 156 Boundary

Contains Historic Environment Scotland data
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Title:
Location plan and site map

Project:
Mavisbank House

Client:
Historic Environment Scotland

Scale at A3:
1:1,000

Drawn by: SW	Checked by: MJ	Date: 30/07/2019
Report No: 3856	Fig. No: 1	

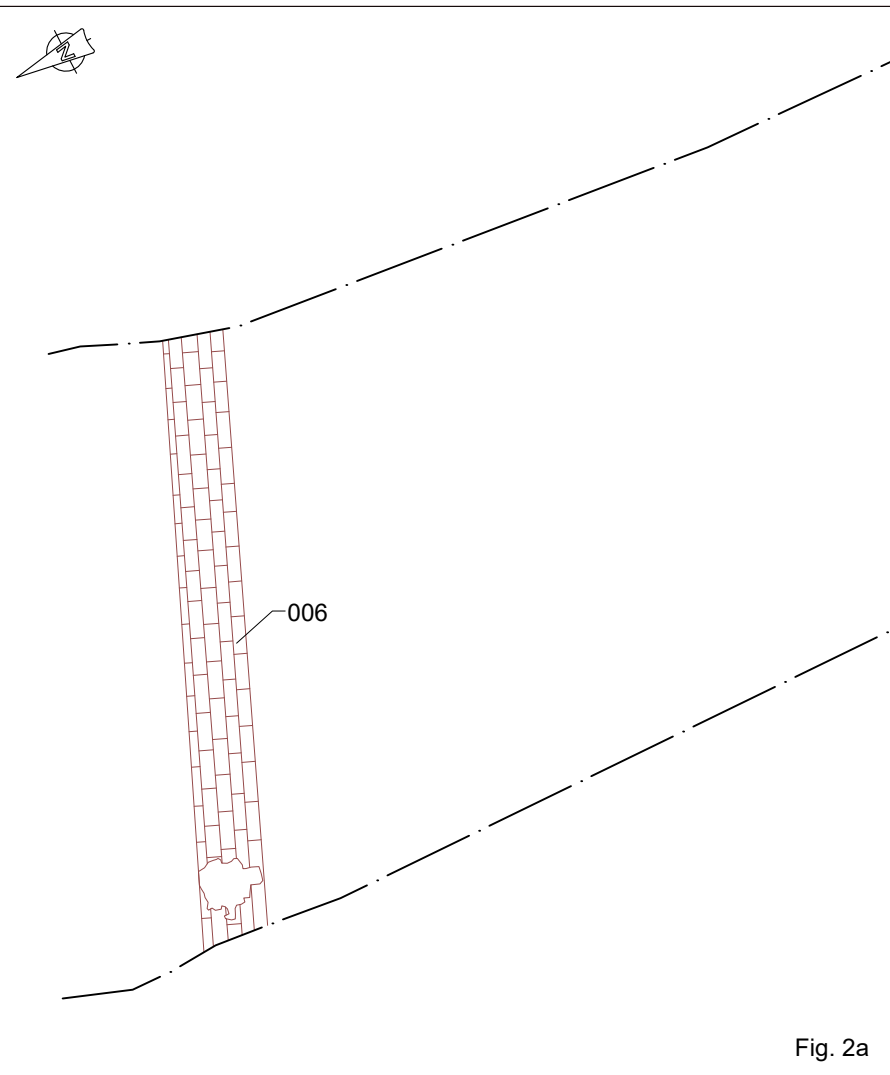


Fig. 2a

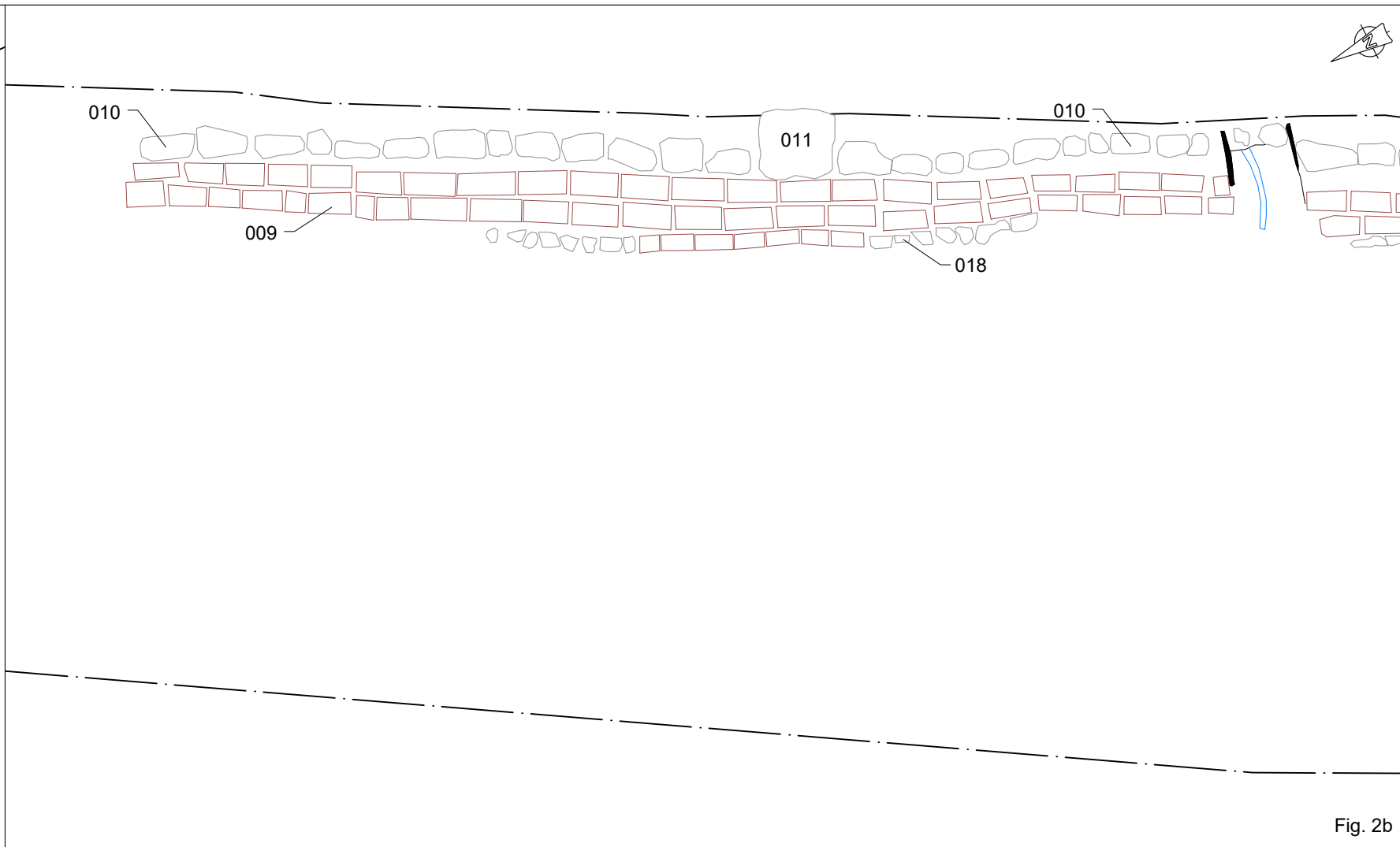


Fig. 2b

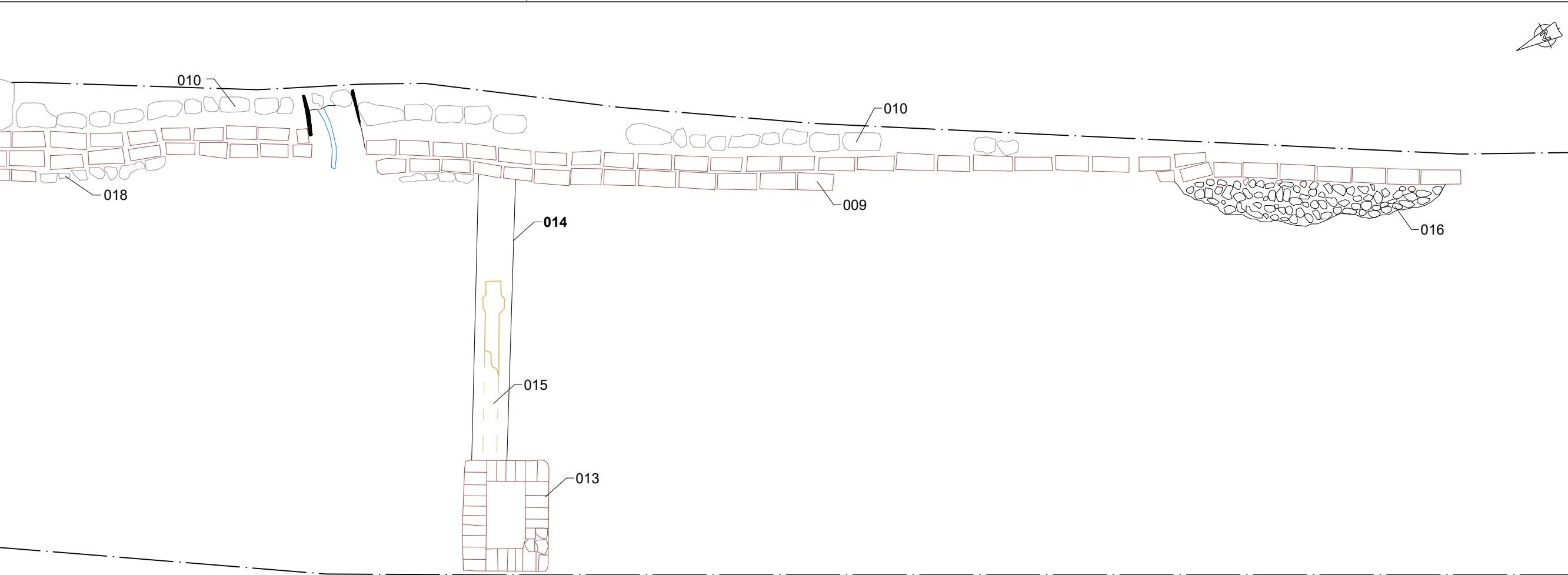


Fig. 2b cont

Key:

- Brick
- Ceramic Pipe
- Metal Cable

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Title: Plan drawing		
Project: Mavisbank House		
Client: Historic Environment Scotland		
Scale at A3: 1:50		
Drawn by: SW	Checked: MJ	Date: 22/07/2019
Report No: 3856	Fig. No: 2	



Fig. 3: Pre-ex shot of road surface.



Fig. 4: Post-ex shot of exposed brick culvert (006).

Project:
Mavisbank House



Client:
Historic Environment Scotland

Drawn by: SW	Checked by: MJ	Date: 15/07/19
Report No: 3856		Fig. No: 3 - 4



Fig. 5: Post ex shot of (013) and (015).



Fig. 6: Post-ex view of (009)/(010).

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Mavisbank House



Client:
Historic Environment Scotland

Drawn by: SW	Checked: MJ	Date: 15/07/19
Report No: 3856		Fig. No: 5 - 6



Fig. 7: Post-ex shot of (009)/(010) with (016) in view.



Fig. 8: Plan view of (009)/(010) with focus on one of the dressed stones.

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Mavisbank House



Client:
Historic Environment Scotland

Drawn by: SW	Checked: MJ	Date: 15/07/19
Report No: 3856		Fig. No: 7 - 8



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