

Hagbourne Mill, East Hagbourne, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

written by Simon Loaring
fieldwork by Steve Ford and Adam Croney
Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Site Code EHM98/54

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Report 98/3-2

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Hagbourne Mill, East Hagbourne, Oxfordshire (SU 538 875) (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Josephine Cormier of Queenpost Building Histories, 69 Crafts End, Chilton, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 0SB, on behalf of Mr Corderoy. This watching brief was a programme of archaeological investigation required to allow an informed decision to be made concerning a planning application (P95/WO407) and listed building consent (P95/WO387/LB) for proposed renovations to the mill and conversion of the rear lean-to section to residential accommodation. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16 1990) and District policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Paul Smith of Oxfordshire County Archaeology Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford and Adam Croney between October and December 1998, the site code is EHM 98/54.

Location, Topography and Geology

The site is located on a flat ground south of Didcot and to the east of the river Thames (Fig 1). At the time of the watching brief the site was occupied by Hagbourne Mill and a group of barns 15 m to the south. The site is approximately 0.25 hectares in extent and lies approximately 54.8 m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology is alluvium (BGS 1980) although, in addition to thin calcareous alluvial deposits, solid chalk bedrock was observed in several locations.

Archaeological Background

A summary of the history of the mill is provided in the brief for recording action prepared by Dr N Doggett, conservation officer of South Oxfordshire District Council. To summarise, the mill site was constructed in c1700 with alterations in c1828 when the mill was modified, regeared and refloored. Towards the end of the

19th century the present iron waterwheel was installed. The mill retains all its machinery, providing a good evolutionary sequence, and a moulded and decorated hurst frame from the early 18th century has also survived.

Early in the 20th century the mill was producing animal feed stuffs. The millstones were decommissioned in 1962/3 but the mill was used to crush barley up until 1975.

Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of the watching brief were to monitor the groundworks associated with the proposed renovations to the mill and conversion of the rear lean-to section to residential accommodation, along with excavation and recording of all archaeological deposits within areas of ground disturbance associated with the building works and associated services. The groundworks which were the subject of this watching brief comprised a service trench running from the mill to the farmhouse and then to the new development to the south of the site, and three rectangular trenches along the east wall of the mill (Figs 2 and 3). The service trench was 0.55 m wide and ranged in depth from 0.5 m at the east to 0.7 m at the west. The rectangular trenches were *c* 1 m square and *c* 0.6-0.8 m deep.

Results

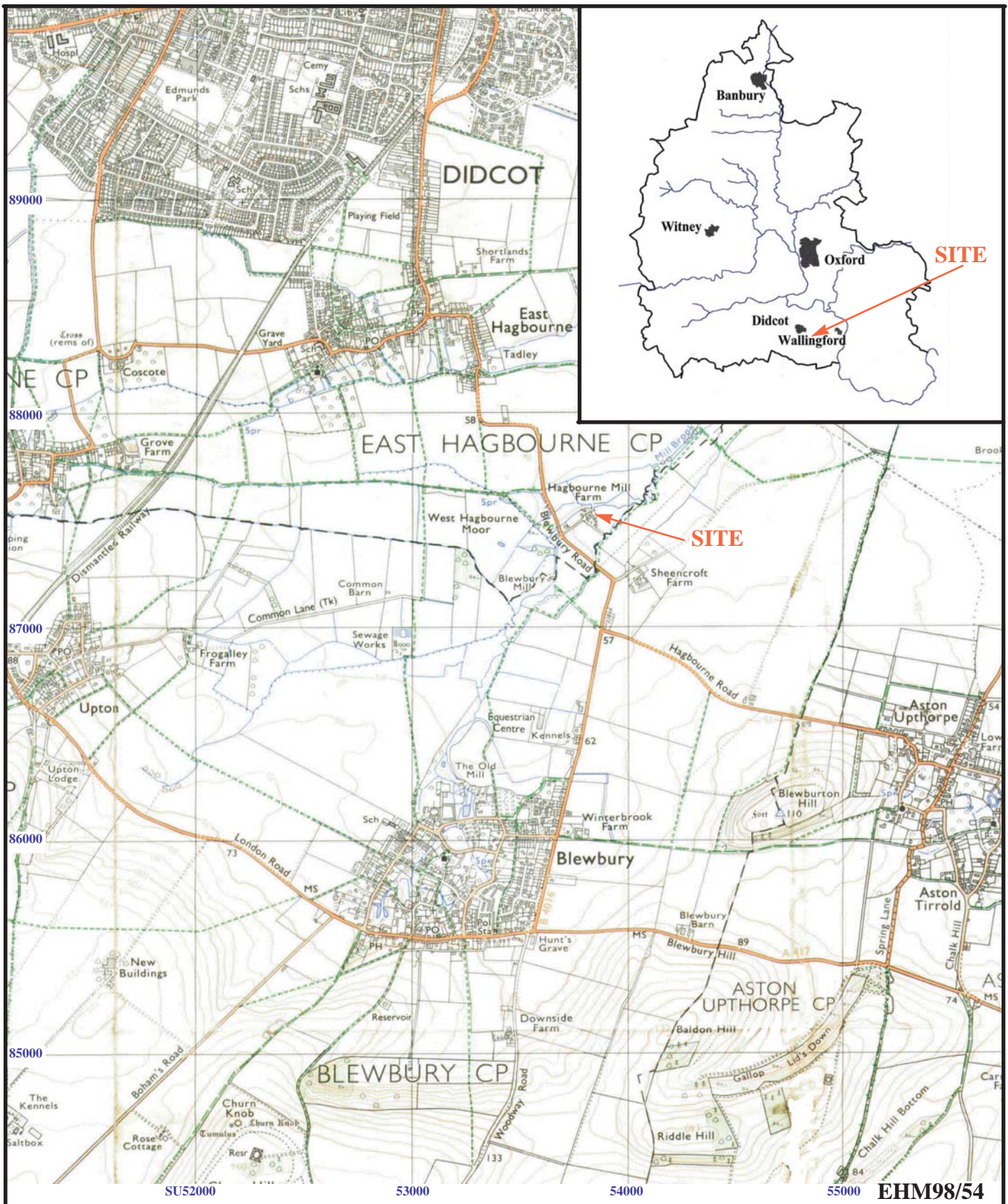
Excavation of the northern part of the service trench revealed a surface of tarmac, gravel and turf above made-ground containing building rubble, chalk, and flint, above chalk bedrock at the eastern and western ends. At the centre was a possible ditch 3.0 m wide (Fig 3). Only 0.05 m of its upper full was disturbed by the trench digging and no dating evidence, nor confirmation that it was an archaeological rather than a natural feature such as an old river channel, could be made. The fill was a dark grey, sandy clay. A few sherds of pottery of late post-Medieval date (not retained) were observed in the made-ground above the possible ditch.

Excavation of the three rectangular trenches adjacent to the dwarf wall forming an eastern extension to the main mill building revealed varying profiles (Fig 4). The dwarf wall was made of brick and stood to a height of *c* 0.2 m above ground level. In trench C the brickwork foundations (0.2 m) overlay alluvium (0.2 m), which overlay chalk bedrock. The foundations deepened to the north and in trench A the brick foundations (0.4 m) overlay 0.2 m of made-ground containing stone and flint, below which was alluvium (0.2 m) and chalk bedrock.

No evidence of any structure pre-dating the post-Medieval mill was recovered and no finds dating to earlier than the post-Medieval period were observed.

References

BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 254, Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16,
HMSO



**Hagbourne Mill, East Hagbourne, Oxfordshire,
1998**

Figure 1. Location of site within East Hagbourne and Oxfordshire.

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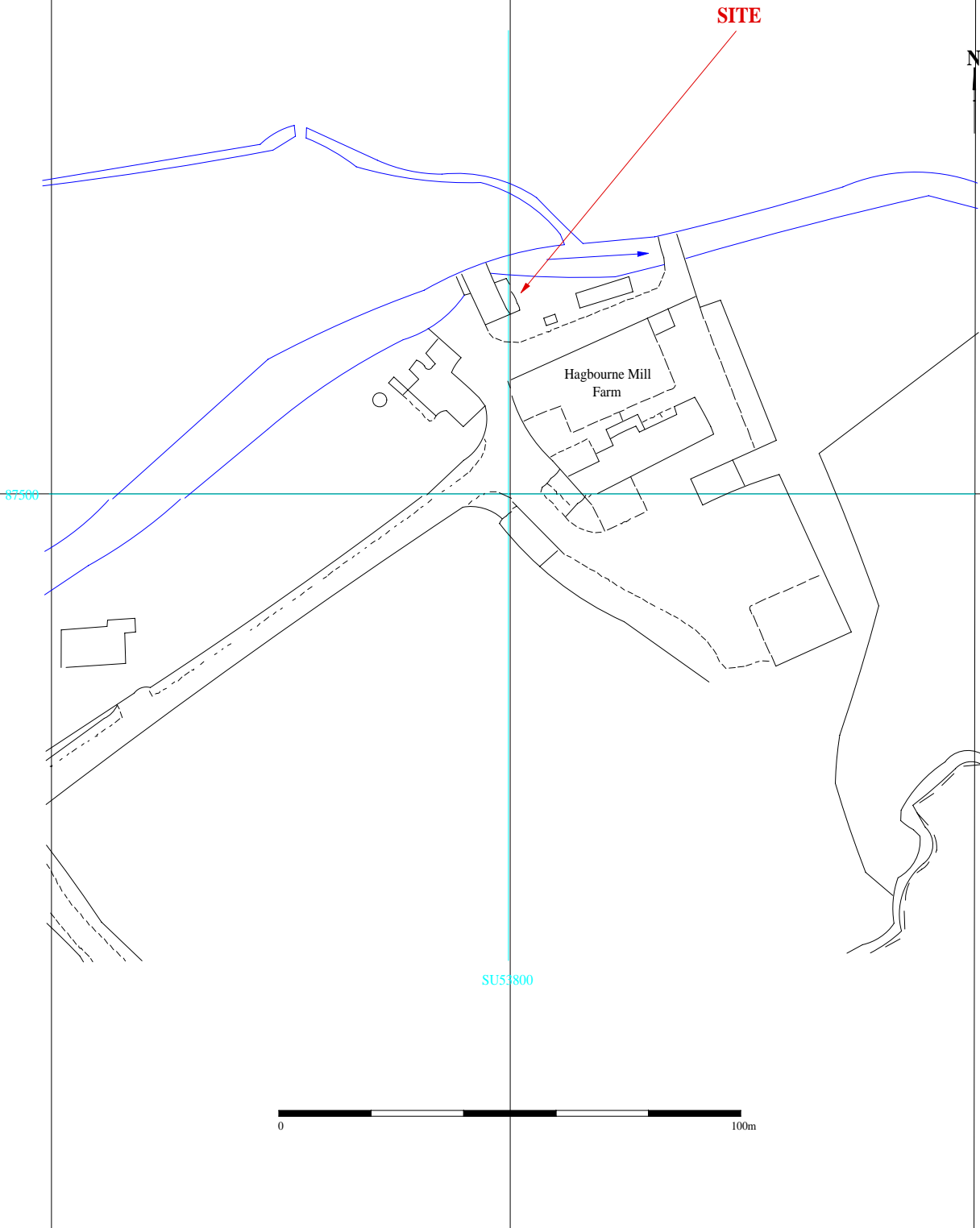


Figure 2. Location of watching brief.

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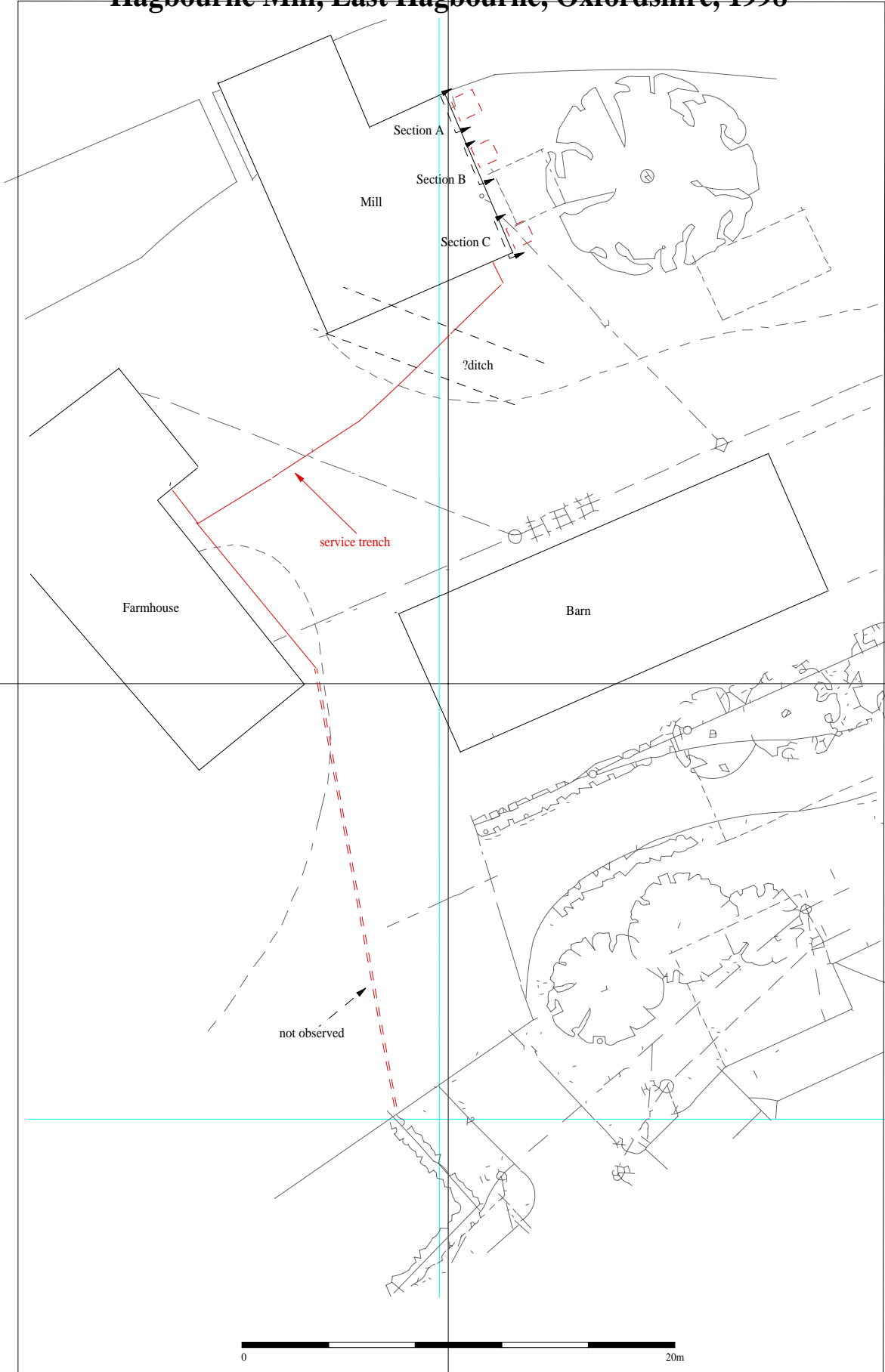


Figure 3. Location of watching brief areas.

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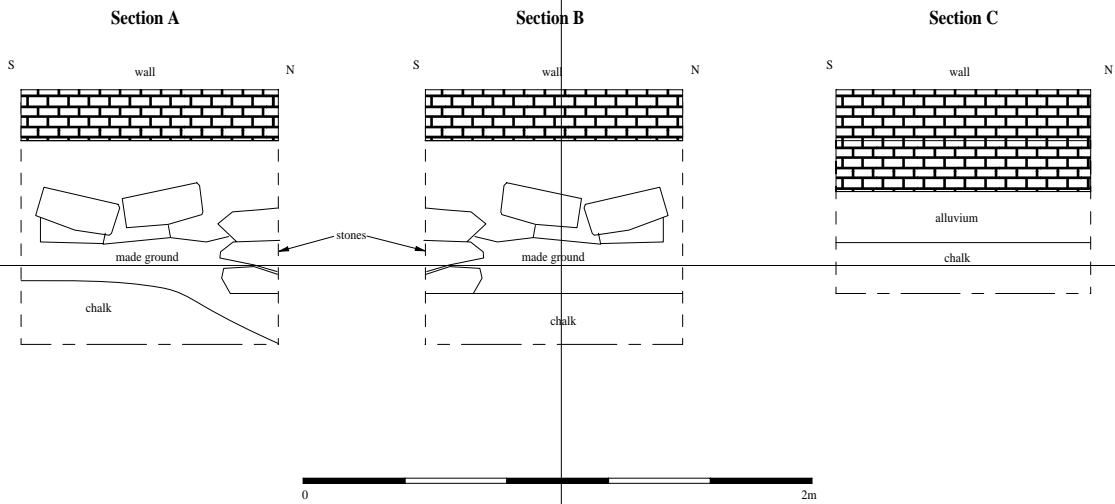


Figure 4. Sections.