

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

AT

BRILL SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB,

CHURCH STREET, BRILL,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

SP 6560 1392

On behalf of

Brill Sports and Social Club

SEPTEMBER 2005

REPORT FOR Brill Sports and Social Club
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FIELDWORK 7th - 9th September 2005

REPORT ISSUED 30th September 2005

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SAM No: 143
Site Code: BRSC 05
JMHS Project No: 1521
Archive Location Buckinghamshire County Museum Service
Accession number 2005.50

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	
1.2 Planning Background	
1.3 Archaeological Background	
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	2
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	5
4 RESULTS	5
5 FINDS	7
5.1 Pottery	7
5.11 Medieval Pottery	7
5.12 Prehistoric Pottery	8
5.2 Clay Pipe	8
5.3 Other Finds	8
6 DISCUSSION	9
7 CONCLUSIONS	10
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	10
APPENDIX- Archaeological Context Inventory	12
Figure 1 Site and Excavation Location	4
Figure 2 Plan and Sections	6

Summary

An excavation on this site was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services from 7th-9th September 2005. An area 3.75m by 5.90m to the north of the Club House was hand excavated to a maximum depth of 0.70m below ground level, at a height of 185.70 m OD.

The excavation was too restricted both in area and depth to unequivocally date the monument. Archaeological deposits were limited. The upper fill of the ditch was excavated, which produced material of a late 18th century date and earlier residual finds.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The proposed extension is on the north side of the Sports and Social Club. The club lies off Church Street and is NW of All Saint's Church, Brill (NGR SP 6560 1392). The site is situated on Calcareous Grit of the Corallian Beds. The site of the proposed development is currently partly under a concrete slab and partly grassed. The site lies at approximately 190m OD.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning consent has been granted by Aylesbury Vale District Council for an extension to the Sports and Social Club (02/2477). Due to the known presence of remains of archaeological interest in the footprint of the extension a condition has been attached requiring a programme of archaeological works to be carried out. The site lies within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Bucks 143) and Scheduled Monument Consent has been granted (HSD/9/7134, 13 April 2005). This is in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Brill is of considerable archaeological interest with evidence for Iron Age occupation adjacent to the church associated with an earthwork (CAS0106), which may be the remains of a hillfort rampart (Farley 1989) (see below). In the late Saxon period, Brill was a royal manor and the centre of an estate, which may have had its origins in a pre-Saxon 'multiple estate' (Baines 1995). Brill was the most important settlement within the medieval forest of Bernwood, which was legally established following the Norman Conquest based upon the pre-existing woodland and a hunting lodge built by Edward the Confessor. Brill was the administrative centre for the forest and hundred with a royal house, fishponds, mills, church, prison-house, market and fair, claypits and kilns. In the 13th and early 14th centuries Brill was described as a borough but thereafter it went into decline and lost its status as a town. Brill was the centre of an important regional pottery and tile industry, which is believed to have originated in

the 12th century and continued to be active into the post-medieval period when it also produced bricks (Harvey 1997). During the Civil War Brill was briefly garrisoned by Parliament during the winter of 1644.

Little early prehistoric remains have been found in Brill with a possible Mesolithic blade found 150m to the SE (CAS2053). Similarly limited Roman finds are known from Brill and include a coin 350m W (CAS5216) of the proposal site and a 1st century coin from the parish (CAS0582).

A timber royal hunting lodge (CAS2310) was constructed in the 11th century somewhere within Brill. The building prospered and grew with royal favour and the later parish church (CAS2192) may have functioned as a royal chapel to the palace. Royal presence had economic implications as under its patronage, the pottery industry may have been established by the end of the 12th century (Mellor 1994, 111). Evidence for the industry is found throughout Brill and often medieval pottery is found in conjunction with later brick, tile and pottery kilns (e.g. CAS5712), indicating longevity and continuity of use.

Extensive remains of the medieval and post-medieval pottery, tile and brick industry are known in relatively close proximity to the proposed development site. Medieval pottery kilns have been found 0.5km NE of the site (CAS5058), between 300-400m N (CAS4394, CAS0576, possible CAS5681), 200m NNW (CAS5293) and 100m W (CAS2195).

Post-medieval brick and tileworks are known 1km N of the proposed development site (CAS4653 and CAS4192). Pottery kilns of the post-medieval period occur 200m NNW (CAS5293), 200m NW (CAS2129, CAS2153) and 280m SE (CAS2499). An evaluation at the east end of Windmill Street, to the rear of the Sun Inn, produced traces of post-medieval pottery production, including dumps of clay, pottery wasters and kiln furniture (Murray 2001).

A mound considered a medieval castle motte lies 120 to WSW (CAS 0528). This mound is recorded on the Bateson map of 1590.

The earthworks close to the church survive in two parts; one just north of the churchyard consisting of a bank, and a further section west of the track to the playing fields as a bank with a ditch on the north side. In 1977 the bank averaged 2.5m in height and 14m in width (OS records). Farley's report (1989) recorded ditch deposits comprising homogenous loam to at least a depth of 1.65m at the south extent of the foundation trenches. At the north end 500mm of loam was recorded over ironstone, in turn over sand. It is therefore probable that the north side of the ditch may lie within the area of the proposed excavation. Pottery of Iron Age date was obtained from the ditch deposit and Farley concluded that the earthwork could be the remains of a hillfort rampart. A further sherd of Iron Age pottery has been picked up in the churchyard. Burnt grain was found 4ft down in a grave dug in the churchyard in 1977. It lay 2cm above the natural ironstone, which suggests that it was in the base of a pit.

In 1644 Brill was selected as the winter quarters for a thousand Parliamentary foot-soldiers (VCH 1925, 15). The quarters may have been centred on the church using/creating/modifying the earthwork.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To excavate and record the archaeological deposits that will be impacted on by the proposed raft foundation for the new extension.
- To obtain further dating evidence from the ditch deposits.
- To attempt to obtain ecofactual and environmental information from the ditch deposits.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

In particular

- To establish the sequence of infilling of the ditch affected by the development including the date and nature of each infill episode and any buried soils.
- To attempt to relate the results to the 1987 watching brief and the documented history of the locality (e.g. the Iron Age hillfort, royal hunting lodge, civil war garrison).

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* issued by Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Services and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and was to involve the excavation within the footprint of the proposed extension (Fig. 1).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

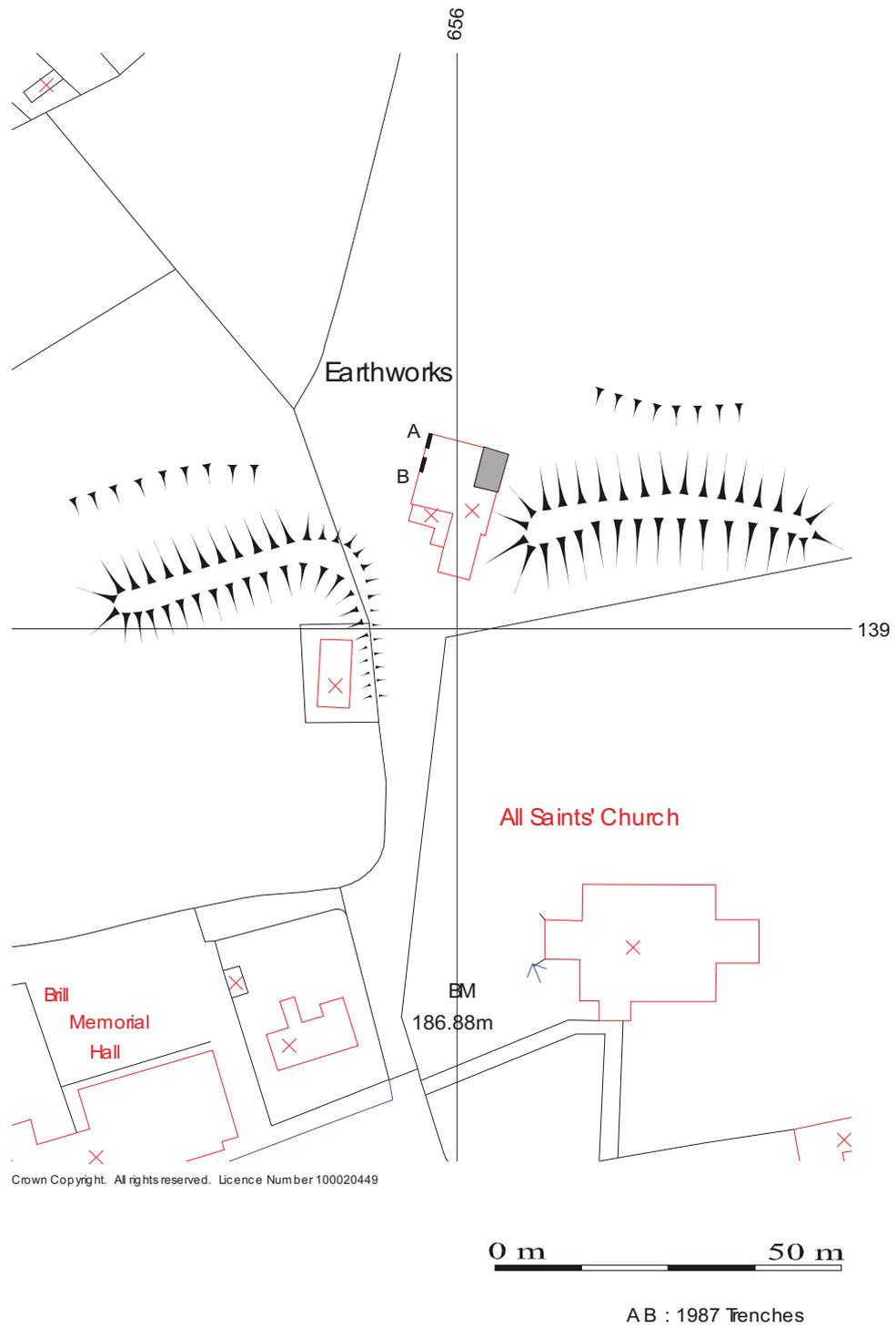


Figure 1. Site location

3.2 Methodology

The concrete slab was broken out and removed, along with the underlying hardcore, by the main contractors under archaeological supervision. The resulting surface was hand cleaned and scanned with a metal detector.

The footprint of the proposed extension was hand excavated to a depth of 0.38m below DPC and the 0.5m wide footings trench to a depth of 0.8m below DPC; the depth of impact of the raft foundation. The area was excavated stratigraphically with the deposits removed from the latest to the earliest. Full excavation of all to the agreed depth was carried out with contingency to excavate individual discrete features (e.g. a burial) to full depth if appropriate.

An environmental sampling strategy was agreed with English Heritage's Regional Advisor in Archaeology Science. This stated that should concentrations of pottery, animal bone or other rubbish be present then bulk samples of 40-50 litres will be taken. As primary deposits will not be investigated no other sampling was considered necessary.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

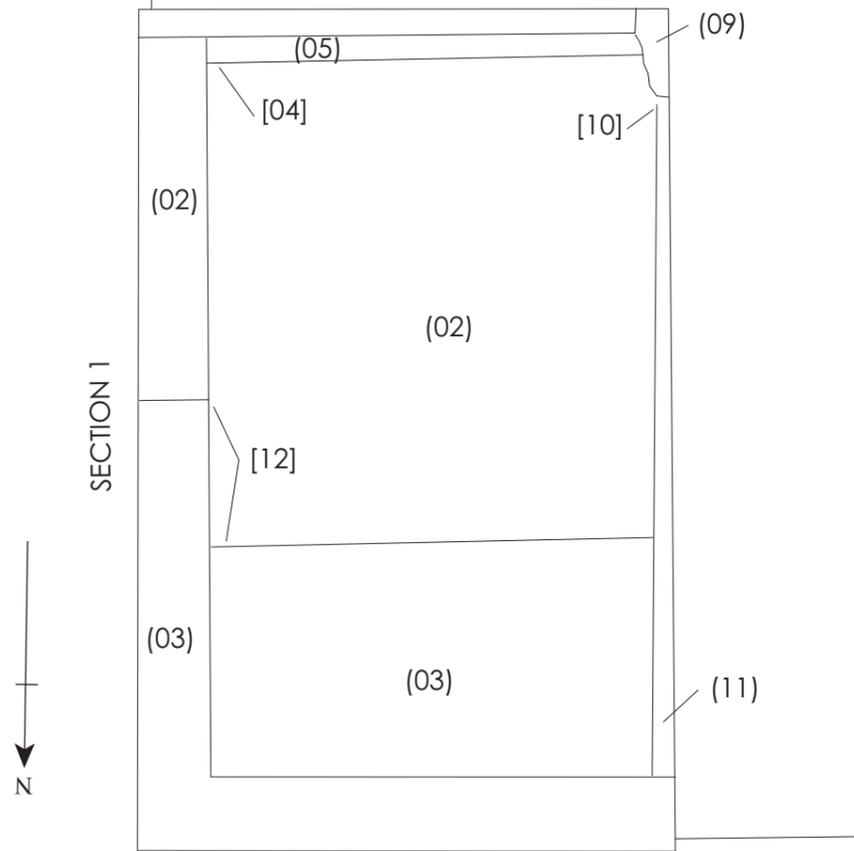
An area 3.7m by 3.5m of concrete slab butted the clubhouse in the southern portion of the excavated area. Which rested on a thin layer of hardcore. This slab was surrounded on the north and east by a grey-brown loam topsoil (01) that was on average 0.14m thick.

The subsoil under the slab area was a dry compact brown-grey silty-loam (02) with some limestone fragments. The deposit was not fully excavated, only to a depth of 185.70m OD and the extent of the depth is unknown. It contained pottery, glass, bone, metal and modern CBM.

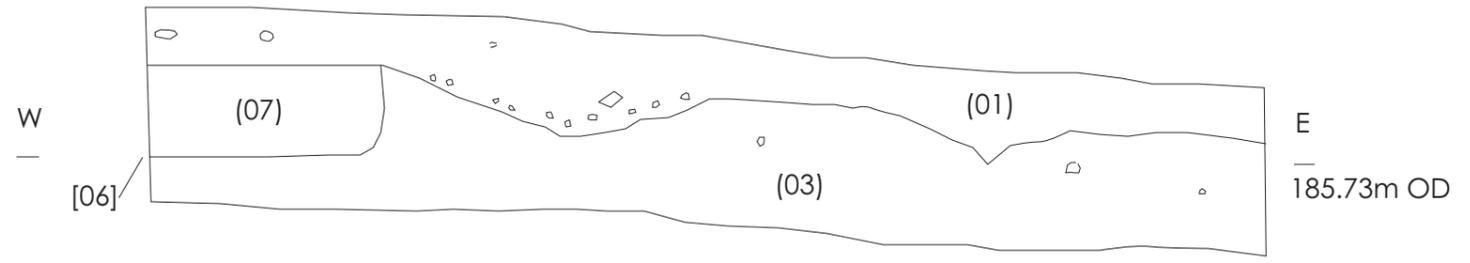
To the northern end the subsoil was a loose brown-grey silty-loam (03) with small limestone fragments. This deposit was also not fully excavated, but to a depth of 185.71m OD and its full extent remains unknown. It contained pottery, glass, bone, metal and CBM.

There was a very indistinct interface between (02) and (03), however it is possible that this is in fact a cut [12] in (03), and that (02) is the upper fill of the ditch.

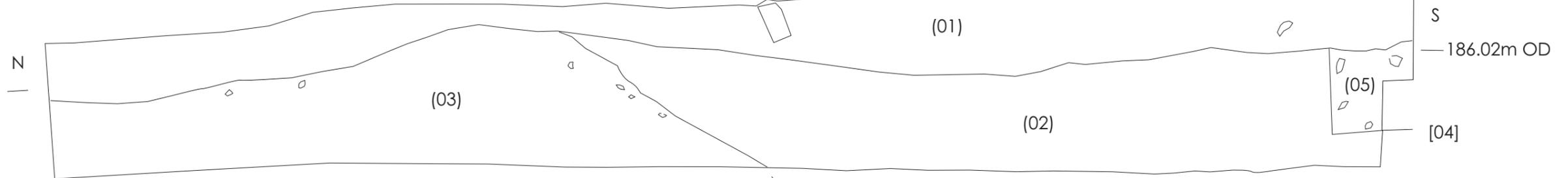
PLAN OF EXCAVATION



SECTION 2



SECTION 1



Cut into the subsoil (02) is the foundation trench [04] of the 1950's clubhouse. The footings for this structure were of concrete, covered with a compact brown silty clay (05) that was 0.38m thick.

At the corner of the clubhouse and the 1989 extension was a thick deposit of concrete (09). This measured 0.2m by 0.6m and was 0.2m thick sitting on top of the footings and the subsoil (02). It was unclear if this was a remnant of the concrete slab or part of the foundations; it was left *in-situ*.

A cut [10] for the foundations of the original building could only be detected where it had cut through an earlier linear concrete slab (08). This slab was 0.3m wide, 0.08m thick and extended the width of the excavation starting 0.15m from the extension and aligned east-west at 186.08m OD. It is possible that this slab was originally larger and had been superseded by the one removed prior to excavation. Interestingly is also marked the upper junction between (02) and (03). It was covered by the topsoil (01). The fill (11) of the foundation cut [10] was a grey-brown silty-clay loam, which contained a small quantity of pottery and CBM.

The northern end of the excavation revealed a shallow trench [06] cut into the subsoil (03) for a modern water drain (07). This trench was 0.25m deep and 0.6m of its length was uncovered.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery

5.11 Medieval Pottery (by Paul Blinkhorn)

The pottery assemblage comprised 38 sherds with a total weight of 745g. The range of fabrics indicating that there was activity at the site from at least the 13th century onwards. However, all the earlier medieval pottery is redeposited, with the earliest possible date for any of the context-specific assemblages being the late 15th century.

The assemblage was recorded using the coding system of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat et al. 1994), as follows:

MC9: *Brill/Boarstall Ware*. 1200-?1600. 20 sherds, 422g.

PM5: *Trailed slip-ware* 17th century. 2 sherds, 45g

PM8: *Red Earthenware*. 17th century. 3 sherds, 23g.

PM14: *Midland Purple ware*, AD1450-1600. 6 sherds, 207g

PM15: *Cistercian ware*, AD1470-1550. 2 sherds, 12g.

PM16. *Black-glazed coarsewares*. 17th century. 4 sherds, 17g.

PM25: *White Earthenware*. Late 18th – 20th century. 1 sherd, 19g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

The Midland Purple ware is all Brill/Boarstall type, which is not classified as separate to the products of other production centres in the Milton Keynes type-series. Mellor (1994) noted the presence of such wares at Oxford, where it was given the fabric code OXAP, and dated to the 13th – 17th centuries.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	MC9		PM14		PM15		PM8		PM16		PM5		PM25		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1	13	244					1	5	2	9	1	6	1	16	19thC
2	3	61	4	148	1	4									L15th C
3	7	181	2	59			2	18			1	39			17thC
11					1	8			2	8					17thC
Total	20	422	6	207	2	12	3	23	4	17	2	45	1	16	

5.12 Prehistoric Pottery (by Frances Raymond)

A single fresh body sherd and two split fragments from the same vessel, with a total weight of six grams, came from Context (02). The fabric is soft with a laminar fracture and is unevenly fired with an oxidised reddish brown wiped exterior. The sherds are tempered with common amounts of coarse shell (up to 7 mm.).

The pottery is clearly handmade and has been fired under open conditions and while there is no doubt that it is of prehistoric origin, its date is entirely uncertain. Wares of this type recur throughout prehistory and cannot be phased without stylistic evidence, particularly when sherds occur in isolation.

5.2 Clay Pipe (by John Moore)

The excavation produced a number of clay pipe stems, 3 pieces each from (01) and (02), and 6 pieces from (03). A stamped clay pipe bowl was also recovered from (03). It is a thin, short bowl with a flared mouth conforming to type G13 of Oswald's general typology, dated c. 1780 - 1820 (Oswald 1975, 38). This bowl had GE stamped on the side of the foot, which cannot be attributed to a local manufacturer.

5.3 Other Finds

Small amounts of modern CBM and concrete tile was present in (01), a sample of each was retained. Animal bone was present in small quantities in (01), (02) and (03), largely comprising of sheep/goat remains.

Three coins were recovered during the excavation. A ten pence piece dated 1992 was in context (01). A five new pence piece dated 1990 was recovered resting on the surface of the linear slab (08) covered by (01). The third coin was a half-new pence piece dated 1971 which can from the interface of contexts (01) and (02).

Five sherds of glass was present in (01) and (02). The four sherds from (01) were obviously modern and included sherds from a wine glass, “pop” bottle and car windscreen. The sherd from (02) was from a green glass bottle. Two flints were recovered, one broken retouched blade 22mm x 25mm (01); and a small, 14mm x 15mm, hard hammer hit flake (03).

Four iron nails were recovered two from each context (01) and (02). A fragment of an iron horseshoe was also recovered from (01), as was a copper alloy hand made washer from (02). A copper alloy cast-pellet bell was recovered from (03). The iron pellet was in situ, and the suspension loop is slightly worn. This type of bell is known from the early post-medieval period through into the 18th and 19th centuries (Margeson, 1993).

6 DISCUSSION

The field to the north of the earthworks was previously under ridge and furrow. Signs of this are still visible at present. It has been reported that in 1922 this field was levelled to provide an area for the village cricket pitch. Some of the soil associated with this levelling was reputedly pushed against the north face of the bank and into its ditch. Also in this field, and still visible, are the remains of a low bank and an in-filled ditch running north to south, possibly an old field boundary. It has being suggested that this ditch was in the region of 0.5m deep before its infilling.

In 1949 the churchyard was expanded on the northern side, and a gateway opened onto the cricket field. It has been reported that the churchyard was levelled and surplus material was pushed against the southern face of the earthworks. This face is noticeably not as steep as the northern one. During the construction of the gateway the eastern most portion, perhaps 10m in length, was reputedly flattened to allow access. This removed section of bank was reported to have been turning slightly towards the north.

A watching brief was undertaken in 1987 during extension work to the clubhouse (Farley 1989). Two trenches were hand dug at the buildings northwest corner. The total length of trenches was less than 4m with a maximum width of 0.4m. These trenches were located on the line of the western wall, in roughly two 2m lengths either side of the doorway in the extension (Figure1). Farley admits that observation was difficult within this confined space.

Farley (1989) observed a homogeneous brown silty loam to a depth of 1.65m in his southern most trench (B) that he identified as ditch fill and a mid-brown loam to a depth of 0.5m in his northern most trench (A) that he believed to be natural soil accumulation. He identified a cut in plan and section between the two at the southern end of trench (A).

The natural deposits located by Farley lie outside the limits of this excavation. The earthworks can be seen to curve to the south at this point and the ditch appears to follow this line. This curve placed the edge of the ditch within the footprint of the

building on the western side but outside the footprint of the current extension to the east.

It is easy to see the deposits (02) and (03) identified during this excavation as the same as the homogeneous loam Farley identified in his trench B. Farley noted the difficulty in recording the section in such confined conditions, and it would be wrong to assume that these deposits (02) and (03) remain unchanged to a depth of 1.65m.

The material recovered from (03) would appear to date the deposit to the late 18th to early 19th century. The fill (02) of the cut [12] into this deposit contained earlier material, including a prehistoric sherd. This material was obviously redeposited at a later date. This may have caused confusion in the 1987 Watching Brief, thus resulting in assigning an early date to the feature (Farley, 1989).

It is possible that the material in (02) is redeposited from the levelling of the cricket pitch, as has previously been reported. However, there is no evidence for a buried turf line covering (03) as one might expect. Although this could be explained easily if the turf was first removed before filling to be placed on the new surface.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The excavation was limited, because of the design of the raft foundations proposed for the new extension. Due to this design the excavation was too restricted both in area and depth to unequivocally date the monument.

The edge of the ditch lies further to the north outside the area of excavation, and all that was excavated were the upper fills and sequence of later disturbance within the ditch.

However, it recorded a sequence to the fill of the ditch, which was previously unidentified. It produced significant dating material for the deposits excavated, giving a *terminus post quem* of the late 18th century to the upper fill. The restriction in excavation depth did not allow the lower deposits recorded in 1987 to be reached.

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APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
01	Deposit	Brown-Grey loam	0.08 - 0.18	tr.	tr.	pot, glass, metal, CBM	Modern
02	Deposit	Brown-Grey silty clay loam		tr.	3.5	pot, glass, bone, metal	17th Century
03	Deposit	Brown-Grey silty clay loam		tr.	2.5	pot, glass, bone, metal	19th Century
04	Cut	Foundation trench	0.38	0.4	tr.	-	Modern
05	Fill	Compact brown silty clay	0.38	0.4	tr.	-	Modern
06	Cut	U-shaped trench	0.25	-	0.6	-	Modern
07	Fill	Dark brown loam with mortar	0.25	-	0.6	pipe, CBM	Modern
08	Deposit	Concrete	0.08	0.3	tr.	-	Modern
09	Deposit	Concrete	0.2	0.2	0.6	-	Modern
10	Cut	Foundation trench	-	0.15	tr.	-	Modern
11	Fill	Brown-Grey silty clay loam	-	0.15	tr.	pot	Modern
12	Cut ?	-	0.6+	3.7+	tr.	-	-