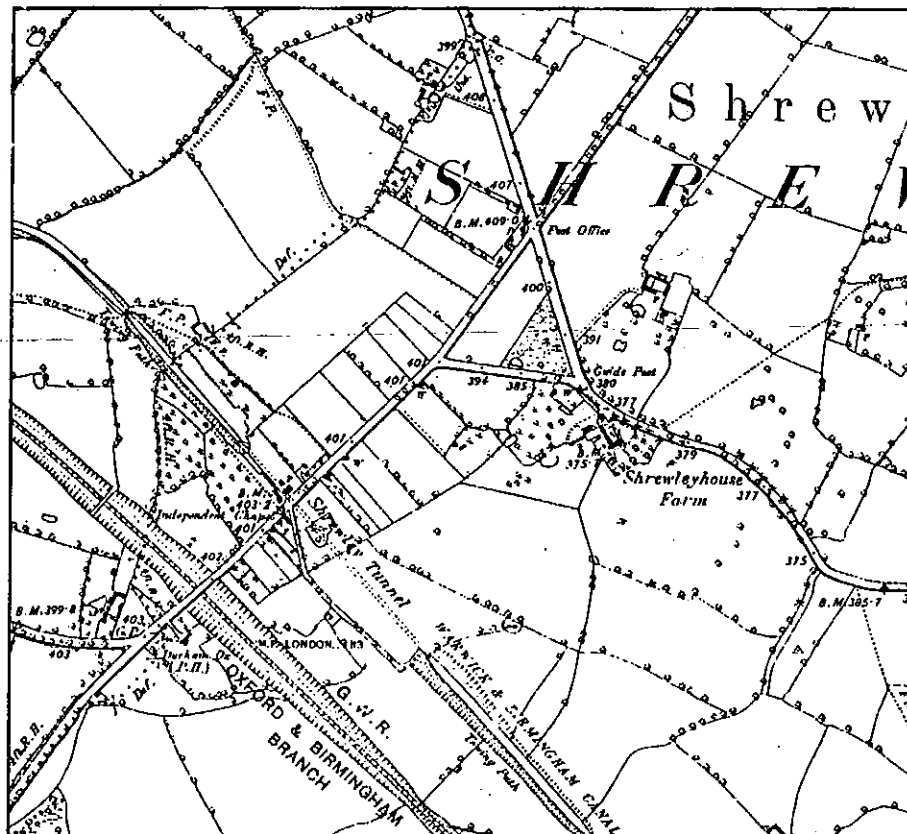


S WA 18210
E WA 7058
M WA 4029
MWA 4032

Archaeological Observation at Oak View, 99 Shrewley Common, Shrewley, Warwickshire



October 2001

Archaeological Observation at Oak View, 99 Shrewley Common, Shrewley, Warwickshire

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Cover: Shrewley Common 1887 (Detail of 1st Edition 1: 2,500 Ordnance Survey map)

Fig. 1: Site location and plan showing area observed and recorded section

Report 0137
November 2001

Warwickshire Museum Field Services
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Summary

Archaeological observation of groundworks associated with the construction of a new extension at Oak View, 99 Shrewley Common, Shrewley, recorded evidence of Romano-British activity. This consisted of the remains of a probable pebble yard surface and a possible internal floor. These will have been associated with the settlement identified during excavations on the neighbouring property to the south west in 1977.

1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Warwick District Council for the erection of a ground floor side extension at Oak View, 99 Shrewley Common, Shrewley, Warwickshire (Ref. W2001/0387). As the site lies within an area of high archaeological potential, close to a known Romano-British settlement site (Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record WA 1773), it was thought that Romano-British archaeological deposits might be disturbed during the work. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of archaeological observation of groundworks associated with the new development, in accordance with a Brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority, was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in August 2001. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code SO01.

2. Site Location

2.1 The site is located on the south side of Shrewley Common Road, Shrewley, Warwickshire centred around national grid reference SP 2132 6720 (Fig. 1). The area of the current development covers less than 1 hectare and is currently a private garden.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Till (Boulder Clay) over Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Survey 1989).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 In 1977 a small scale archaeological excavation, consisting of three trenches (Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record WA 1773), took place immediately south-west of 99 Shrewley Common as a result of Roman remains being encountered during construction work on a new house (Fig. 1). The excavations recorded a pebble surface, which had been repaired on a number of occasions and was cut by a number of pits. Two postholes were also identified, which formed part of a building. Romano-British finds were recorded from both the pit fills and the gravel surface and included quantities of roof and floor tile, metal working slag, iron nails and daub as well as pottery (Lamb 1978, 163-165). The pottery consisted mainly of Severn Valley wares, Black Burnished ware and grey wares with some colour coated ware and Mancetter mortaria. It was dated to the 3rd-4th century AD (Lamb 1978, 166).

3.2 The site was interpreted as part of a more substantial settlement, possibly a villa, made up of a number of structures, which lay for the most part beyond the excavated

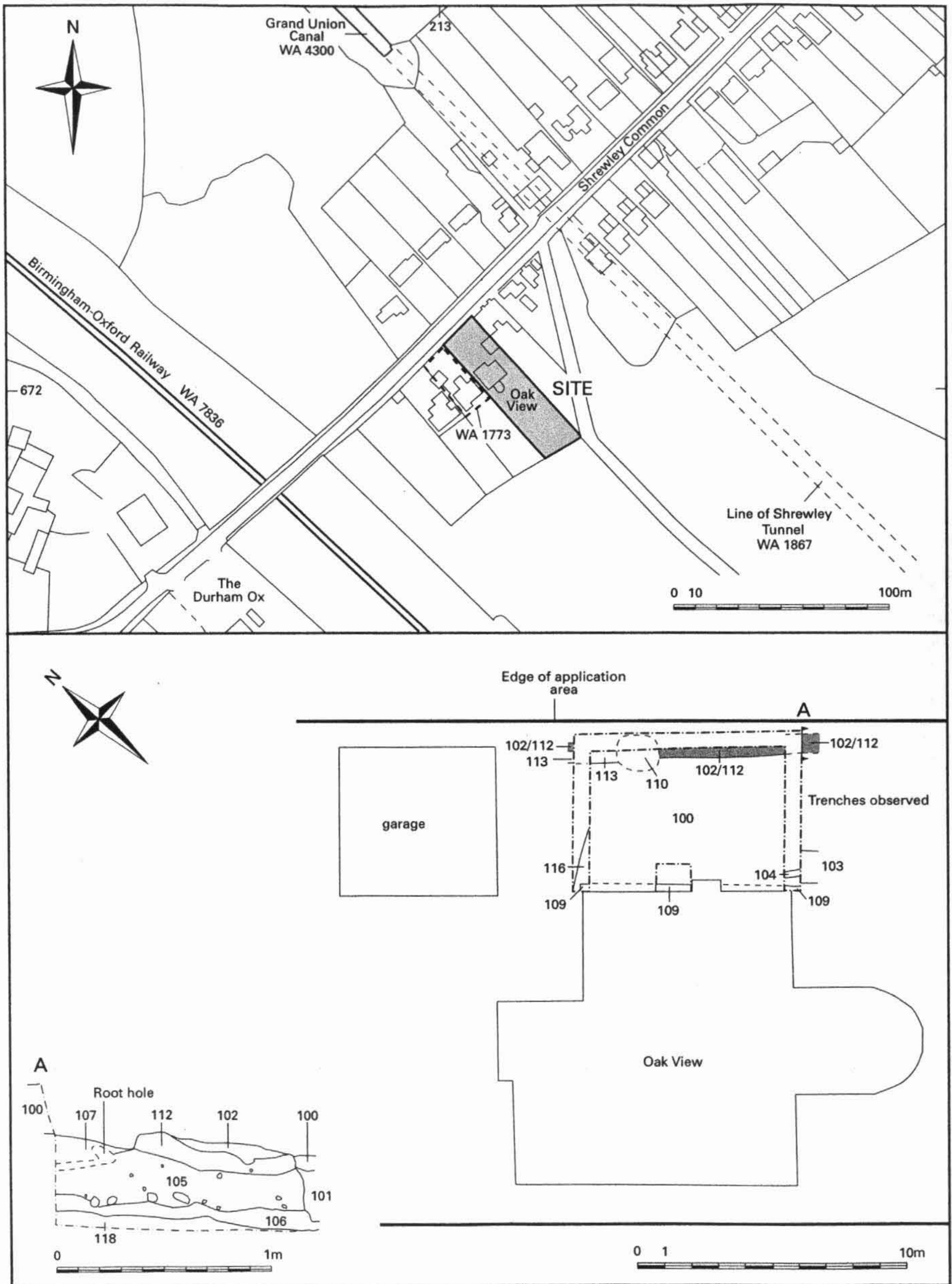


Fig. 1: Site Location and Trenches Observed

areas. It was thought that the centre of the settlement may have lain to the north-west of the Shrewley Common road in a paddock adjoining the railway cutting where there were a number of terraces visible in the ground surface (Lamb 1978, 166). The settlement was not thought to extend to the east, as there was an edge to the cobbled surface running north-west to south-east in one of the trenches. No trace of the cobbled surface was found in a small trial hole to the rear (south-east) of the property (Lamb 1978, 165).

3.3 Following the abandonment of the settlement after the end of the Roman occupation the area appears to have been undeveloped for several centuries. The manor of Shrewley was formed in the late Saxon period with the hamlet of Shrewley lying to the east of the current development. It had a population, which can be estimated at the time of Domesday (1086) at around 90 (VCH 1904, 326). It would have also included a band of woodland measuring 1 league by $\frac{1}{2}$ a league (VCH 1945, 115; a league being a variable measurement of generally 2-3 miles, 3.2-4.8km) which probably included the common.

3.4 Shrewley Common, as its name suggests, was uncultivated or 'waste' land during the medieval and post-medieval periods, used in common by the population of the manor. In 1628 the common was covered by 'many hundreds of trees therein whereof the inhabitants take great benefit in this time of mast' (VCH 1945, 115), presumably feeding their pigs on the beech nuts though they would also have made use of timber and firewood. The Durham Ox Inn which lies to the south of the canal dates from the 17th century and may thus be contemporary with this description, though it has been much altered in more recent times (VCH 1945, 116).

3.5 Little changed in the area up until the 19th century, the only development being the construction of the Grand Union canal (SMR WA 4300). Shrewley Tunnel (SMR WA 1867) was excavated under the common as part of the construction. The canal opened in 1800, but had little effect on the economy of the immediate area. The original portals of the canal tunnel survive and are Listed Buildings (Department of the Environment 1987, 9/10002, 9/10003).

3.6 The practice of communal use of the land came to an end when it was inclosed in 1836, the land being parcelled out amongst those who had previously had rights of use (WCRO QS 75/57). A band of properties, including the development site, along the south side of the Shrewley Common road was divided up at this time. The rear boundary of this was irregular in places suggesting that there may have already been some piecemeal intrusion into the common land. The subdivisions of this 'band' lay at right angles to the road and have for the most part survived as the boundaries between the current properties.

3.7 By 1842 the Tithe Map shows the site of the present development was under arable crop, with the land owned by the trustees of William Wilcock, but occupied by William Parkes (WCRO CR569/125/1). The Birmingham and Oxford branch of the Great Western Railway, which lies 100m to the south-west of the current development, was opened in 1852 (Slater 1981, 90). This had little direct impact on the area, although a station was opened at Hatton around 1.35km to the south east.

3.8 There were no buildings on the property in 1842, but a small structure is shown in 1886 (Ordnance Survey 1886). This was situated close to the road frontage near to the site of the current garage. It may be that the structure, which is shown on a number of maps up until the construction of the present house (Ordnance Survey 1905, Ordnance Survey 1923, Ordnance Survey 1968) was originally used in association with agricultural or horticultural activities. Other smaller structures that appear on maps from 1905 probably had similar functions (Ordnance Survey 1905, Ordnance Survey 1968). The existing house, which was constructed in the 1980s, represents the first known dwelling on the site since the Roman period.

4. Observation of Trenches

4.1 The foundation trenches (Fig. 1) measured 0.60m wide and varied in depth from 1.2-1.5m below the existing ground surface. A rectangular pit measuring 1.4m by 1m and 0.65m deep was also cut against the east wall of the present house to the north of the chimney stack. The geological natural, which was a thin tan/yellow sandy clay (106) overlying red/brown clay and sand (118), was encountered at c. 0.55-0.70m below the former existing ground surface.

4.2 Along the north-eastern edge of the area (Fig. 1) the geological natural was overlain by a layer of greenish-brown sandy clay loam (105), which was 0.10-0.25m thick and included a fairly large quantity of small pebbles. This layer also contained Romano-British pottery, including Severn Valley ware, Black Burnished ware, grey ware and Mancetter Mortaria, as well as a considerable quantity of Romano-British roof tile. It may represent the remains of a floor or yard surface. Loam and pebbles layer (105) was overlain by a c. 0.60m wide, band of red clay (102), parallel to and c. 0.40m west of the present property boundary. The clay was overlain by a thin layer of small, green mudstone fragments (112). It is possible that together they represent the remains of a Romano-British floor layer. However, no finds were recovered from either (112) or (102) and they may have been of more recent origin. The two layers only survive in this area because it was situated on the line of the later property boundary. As a result 112 and 102 were, for the most part, preserved from the ploughing and other disturbance which affected the plots of land on either side. However, both layers were cut by two probable plough marks (119 and 120).

4.3 Layer 105 was overlain by a layer of brown loam (107) in the narrow band of ground between 102/112 and the present fence line. This layer was mixed with the top of 105 and was probably the remains of a cultivation soil created after the enclosure of the area in 1835/36. To the south-west of 112 the ground had been much more disturbed by later activity, including construction work for the existing house. The churned up layer overlying geological natural here was numbered 101 and was probably made up of the remains of 105 and possibly 102/112 together with whatever cultivation layer existed prior to the construction of the present house.

4.4 Layer (101) was cut to the east by the construction trench (108) for the concrete foundation (109) of the existing house. These foundations were 1.2m deep, below the former ground surface. Close to the eastern edge of the site a soakaway (110) was cut through layer 101 to a depth of c. 1.4m below the present ground surface. This was filled with loose bricks (111) and had drains from the present house (116) and garage (113) emptying into it. Another contemporary drain ran parallel to the eastern wall of the house (104). Overlying drain 104 against the east wall was the pebble and sand make-up and concrete slab surface of a 1.5m wide patio (103). To the east of the patio all of the deposits described above were overlain by a modern garden soil (100).

5. Conclusions

5.1 Stratified deposits recorded along the eastern edge of the development were interpreted as the remains of Roman occupation. These may have been surviving fragments of an external yard surface (105) and a possible internal floor (102, 112). The loam and pebble layer 105 may be a continuation or variation of a similar deposit recorded to the west in the excavations of 1977; thus extending the area of occupation eastwards. A similar assemblage of pottery types to that found in 1977 was also recorded from the current development. The remains appear to have survived in a narrow strip along the line of a post-medieval boundary.

5.2 No evidence for medieval remains was recovered from the site. The majority of the development area has been heavily disturbed by the construction of the present house.

Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. G. Upex for commissioning this work and for supplying copies of the plans. Work on site was carried out by Chris Jones and this report was written by Chris Jones with drawings by Candy Stevens. The report was edited by Nicholas Palmer.

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WCRO CR569/126/1 Tithe Map of Shrewley with Schedule, 1842, Warwickshire County Record Office

Appendix A - List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Date/Comments</i>
100	Pottery	2	20th century
100	Tile	1	20th century
101	Pottery	1	18th/19th century
101	Tile	1	Probably Romano-British
105	Pottery	1	Romano-British
105	Tile	6	Probably Romano-British
Spoil heap, NE. trench	Pottery	4	Romano-British
Spoil heap, NE. trench	Mortar	1	Modern ?
Spoil heap, NE. trench	Tile	35	Probably Romano-British
Spoil heap, NW. trench	Pottery	4	20th Century (2), Romano-British (2)
Spoil heap, NW. trench	Tile	13	Probably Romano-British
Spoil heap, NW. trench	Brick	3	20th century
Spoil heap, NW. trench	Glass	1	20th century
Spoil heap, NW. trench	Slate	1	Probably 19th/20th century

Appendix B: List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>
100	Modern garden soil
101	Mixed construction layer for existing house (not on plan)
102	Layer of small green mudstone fragments
103	Modern patio
104	Modern ceramic drain
105	Loam and pebble surface
106	Yellow sandy clay on surface of 118. Geological natural layer
107	Cultivation soil along east edge of site
108	Cut for modern house foundations (not on plan or section)
109	Modern concrete house foundations
110	Cut for modern soakaway
111	Loose brick fill of modern soakaway (110)
112	Red clay layer
113	Modern ceramic drain (not on plan or section)
114	Cut for drain 113
115	Modern ceramic drain (not on plan or section)
116	Cut for drain 115
117	Cut for drain 104
118	Red clay and sand, geological natural
119	Plough scar in surface of 102/112 (not on plan or section)
120	Plough scar in surface of 102/112 (not on plan or section)



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County Council

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