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Southampton Archaeology Unit Report 1203

**Watching Brief at the Rear of
45 Latimer Street, Romsey
A2015.33**

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2015

Client: Frenchwood Construction



Contents

1. Summary	1
2. Introduction.....	1
3. Site location, topography and geology.....	1
4. Archaeological and Historical Background	3
5. Aims of the watching brief	4
6. Watching brief methodology	4
7. Results	4
7.1 Natural	4
7.2 Feature 4.....	6
7.3 Post Medieval / early modern layers	6
7.4 Modern concrete	7
8. Conclusions.....	8
Bibliography.....	8
Appendix 1. Context list.....	9
Appendix 2. Finds.....	9

Archaeological Watching Brief at the rear of 45 Latimer Street, Romsey

By EL Anderson BA MA ACIfA and Dr AD Russel BA PhD MCIfA

Site code	A2015.33
Planning application number	11/01605/FULLS
Grid reference	SU 352212
HCT Accession Number	A2015.33

1. Summary

The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out a watching brief on the construction of houses at the rear of 45 Latimer Street, Romsey, in January 2014 and July 2015. A total of four trenches were dug for foundations and services.

Natural gravel was observed between 0.4m and 0.75m below the surface. Above it was natural brickearth up to 300mm thick. The natural brickearth was cut by a post-medieval/early modern pit. Above the natural brickearth was a series of post-medieval/early modern layers, including a brick and flint-cobble floor.

No trace of the ditched enclosures located on the adjacent Waitrose site were seen, but the area where a Late Iron Age—Romano-British ditch was projected to be present in Trench 3 was not excavated below the post-medieval cultivation level. The Late Saxon settlement evidence to the east and south on the Waitrose site was marked by large deep pits, again none were present, suggesting the area of the present site lay outside the settled area.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out a watching brief at the rear of 45 Latimer Street, Romsey on the 21st of January 2014 and the 21st of July 2015. Frenchwood Construction had permission to construct three units on land to the rear of the William IV public house under Application 11/01605/FULLS.

2.2 The site lies some distance from the historic core of Romsey but to the east of the site recent archaeological work has identified late Iron Age, Romano-British, and Late Saxon occupation (Powell 2011) and an archaeological watching brief was required as a condition of the planning permission.

2.3 The project was managed by Dr AD Russel. The artefacts were identified by Dr AD Russel BA PhD MCIfA. The report illustrations were prepared by E Anderson BA MA ACIfA and the report was edited by Dr AD Russel.

3. Site location, topography and geology

3.1 The site lies on the east side of Latimer Street, at OS Grid reference SU 352212, to the northeast of the historic core of Romsey which lies around the Abbey (Hampshire County Council 1999). The natural topography of the area slopes down from the east towards Latimer Street in the west. The nearest benchmark shown on the OS map is 17.32m OD on Latimer Street on the northern boundary of the public house front yard. The underlying geology is River Terrace gravels (British Geological Survey Sheet 315, 1998).

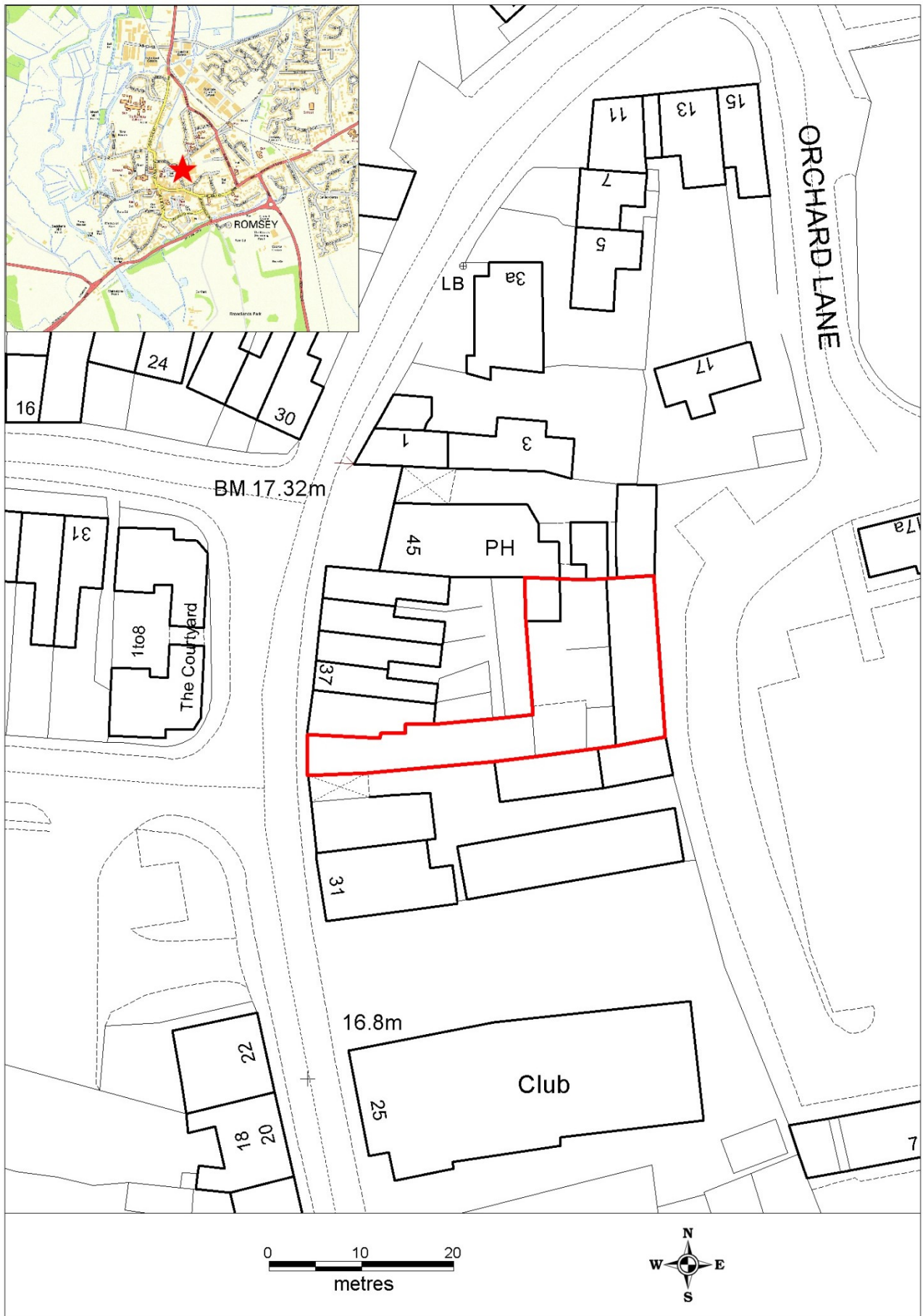


Figure 1. Location of site (red).

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Figure 2. The area of the William IV public house in 1870.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 The site lies close to the historic core of Romsey, but outside the parish of Romsey Infra, which was the area most closely associated with the Saxon and medieval Abbey (Hampshire County Council 1999). The date when the settlement spread east of the Holbrook stream is not known, but archaeological work to the south of The Hundred suggests it was in the 9th–11th centuries. It has been suggested that Latimer Street has a Saxon derivation from *mere* a marshy or wet place.

4.2 To the southwest of the present site a watching brief at the White Horse Hotel car park on the west side of the south end of Latimer Street found Late Saxon to Anglo-Norman activity marked by two pits and a ditch. The three features all contained wheel-thrown sandy pottery and evidence of iron smelting. A second ditch and another feature were late medieval in date. Post-medieval activity was mostly confined to the west of the site where a layer, wall, trench and pit were all attributed to that period (Russel and McDonald 2010).

4.3 At 16 Latimer Street building work revealed a thick mixed soil deposit that included medieval pottery (HCC AHBR UID 57493). Work to the rear of 13–17 Latimer Street revealed 13 medieval pits, 11 post-medieval pits, a post hole and a well.

4.4 The Waitrose site to the immediate east of the site produced evidence of occupation from the Late Iron Age onwards with evidence of ditched enclosures. One ditch was found on an alignment, which if projected would pass through the present site (Powell 2011, fig 1). Important evidence of late glacial activity was also found within the underlying gravel.

4.5 A number of sites in Romsey have produced evidence of medieval and post-medieval industrial activity. Evidence for cloth processing, bronze casting, and tanning have all been found in the vicinity of the site.

5. Aims of the watching brief

5.1 The aims of the watching brief were to ‘make a record of any archaeological deposits disturbed by the development’ and that ‘All groundworks will be subject to a watching brief’ (Garner and Russel 2014, 2).

5.2 To reduce the impact of the development on the potential archaeology beneath the site Frenchwood re-designed the foundations to use small diameter driven piles and a reinforced concrete slab rather than traditional strip foundations. Preliminary observations on ground investigation revealed a thick deposit of agricultural soil on the site and Hampshire County Council, in their role as archaeological advisor to Test Valley Borough Council, agreed that the driven pile foundations for the houses and the shallow excavation for the concrete raft could be excluded from the watching brief.

6. Watching brief methodology

6.1 The methodology followed that specified in the Written Scheme of (Garner and Russel 2014, 2).

6.2 A total of four trenches were dug (fig 3). Trench 1 and 2 were dug for services. Trench 1 was situated in the east part of the site and ran east-west for 6m then ran southwest for a further 7.4m. It was 0.5m wide and was between 0.3 and 0.4m deep. Trench 2 was situated in the west part of the site and ran roughly east-west for 24m. It was 0.5m wide and 0.75m deep.

6.3 The excavation for the slab, Trench 3, was 14 by 15m (fig 3). This trench cut through contexts 1 and 7. The rest of the foundations were driven piles and were not subject to the watching brief.

6.4 Trench 4 was a test pit situated on the east edge of the site to check the foundations of the boundary wall. It was 1m long, 0.5m wide and 1m deep.

6.5 All archaeological records were made using the Southampton City Council archaeological recording system. The colours of deposits were recorded using the Munsell Soil Color Chart and these are used in this report (Munsell Color 2000). Contexts 1–8 were assigned and finds were recovered. The archive will be deposited with the Hampshire Cultural Trust under Accession Number A2015.33 on completion of the project.

7. Results

The results are presented in chronological order from the oldest to the most recent. Appendix 1 lists basic details of the contexts and Appendix 2 gives finds details.

7.1 Natural

7.1.1 Natural gravel 3 was observed 0.75m below the surface in the west end of trench 1 and 0.4m below the surface in the west of trench 2. It was a light yellowish brown (10YR6/4) and was at least 0.5m thick (fig 4).

7.1.2 Above the gravel was natural brickearth 2. It was situated 0.7m below the surface in the west end of trench 1 and 0.3m below the surface in the west of trench 2. It was a light yellowish brown (10YR6/4) clay loam and was 0.3m thick (fig 4).

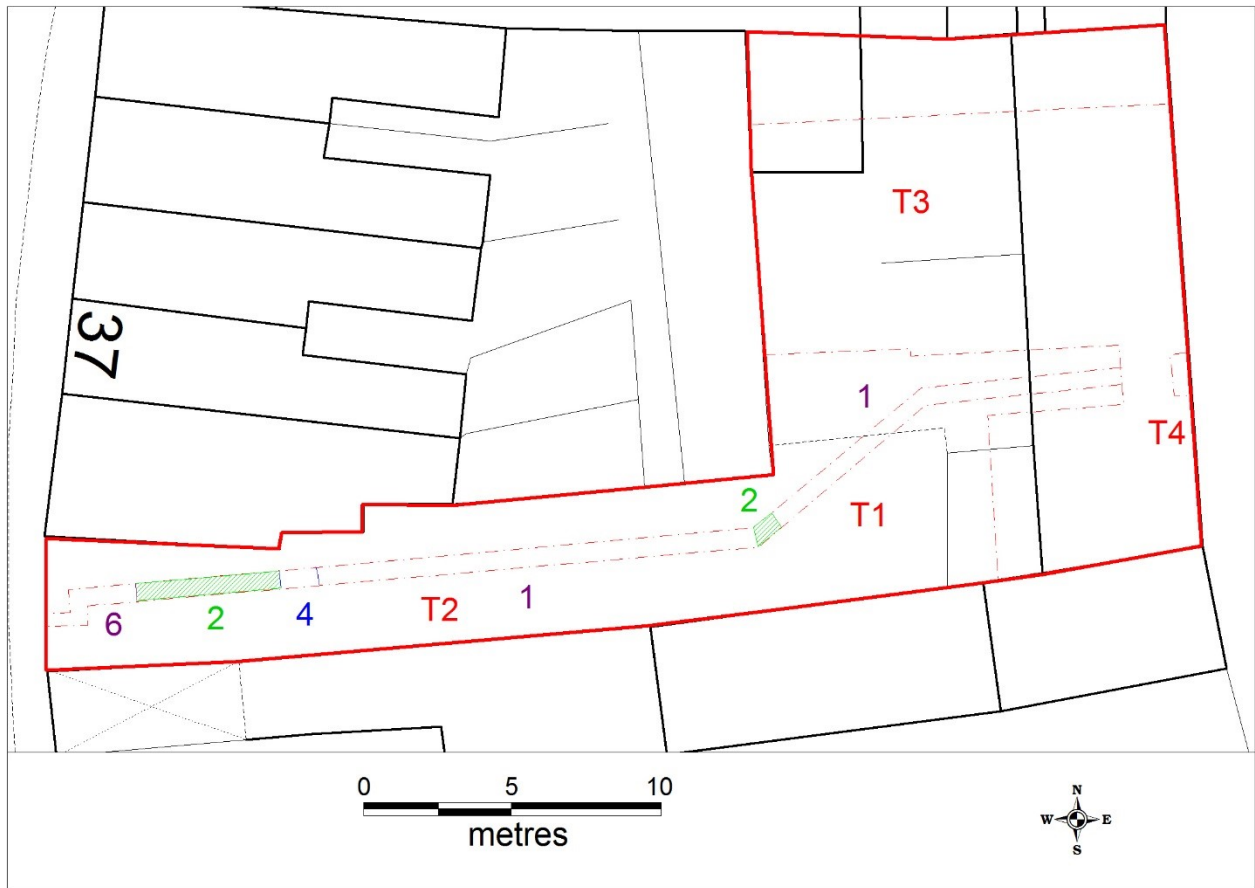


Figure 3. Location of site and trenches (red). Feature 4 (blue). Post Medieval layers 1 and 6 (purple). Natural layer 2 (green hatching).

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Figure 4. North facing section, trench 2. Showing layers 2, 3 and 6

7.2 Post-Medieval/early modern Feature 4

7.2.1 Possible pit or ditch 4 was situated in the western end of trench 2 (fig 5). Only the top was revealed. It was 1.3m long, at least 0.5m wide and at least 0.2m deep. It was filled with context 5, a dark grey (10YR4/1) clay loam. This fill contained abundant fragments of brick and chalk. The bricks were post-medieval/early modern in date.



Figure 5. North facing section, trench 2. Showing feature 4 and layer 1

7.3 Post-Medieval/early modern layers

7.3.1 Layer 6, a deposit of brick rubble, was observed in the western end of trench 2 (fig 4). It consisted of abundant brick fragments and lime mortar in a light yellowish brown (10YR6/4) clay loam matrix. It was 200mm thick and was at least 3m long and 0.5m wide. The bricks were post-medieval/early modern in date. Many of the fragments showed signs of wear and they probably came from a floor. A fragment of ceramic roof tile was also recovered.

7.3.2 Layer 1 was seen in all the trenches. It was a dark grey (10YR4/1) silty clay loam, between 0.3m and 0.7m thick that contained fragments of oyster shell, animal bone, fragments of post medieval/early modern brick and fragments of 17th/18th century pottery (fig 5). The adjacent Waitrose site had a thick 'cultivation soil' that suggested agricultural activity into the 18th century (Powell 2011, 129) and layer 1 may have been the same deposit. Two sherds were collected from layer 1. Both were post-medieval; one was a green-glazed white ware, probably from the Farnham area, the other was a sherd of German Westerwald stoneware (fig 6), both common types in post-medieval deposits in Romsey.

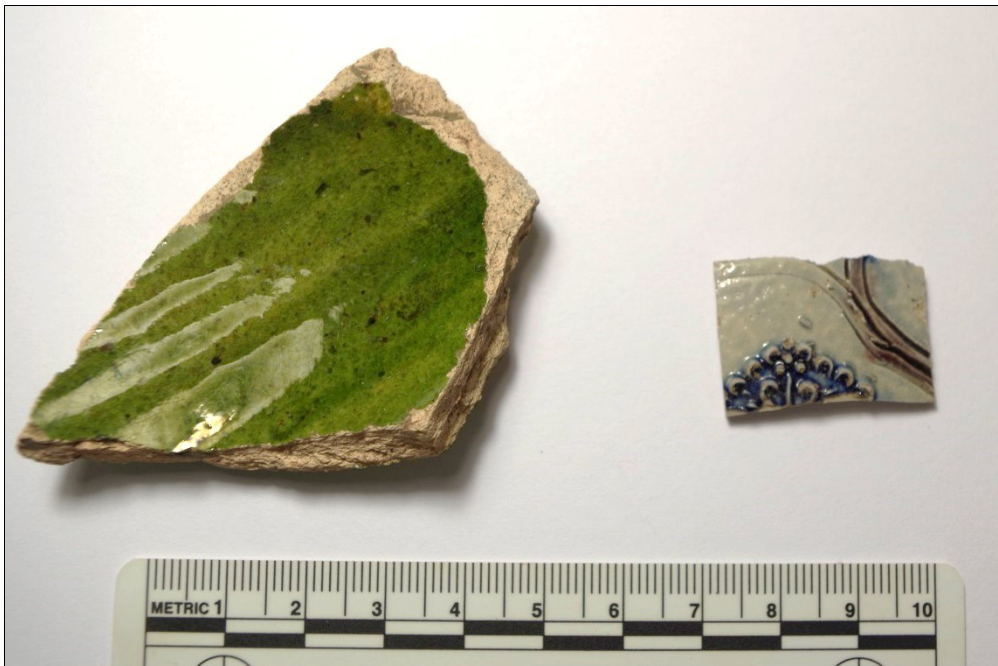


Figure 6. Post-medieval pottery from layer 1.

7.3.3 Above layer 1 along the east edge of the site was brick floor layer 7 (fig 7). The bricks were laid on edge and were dated to the post-medieval/early modern period. Below the bricks were numerous flint cobbles, probably an earlier floor; overall the two deposits were 250mm thick. The floors were probably associated with the building shown in this location on the 1870 map of Romsey (fig 2).

7.4 Modern

7.4.1 Modern concrete layers, context 8, were observed in all trenches. They were above layers 1 and 7 and were between 0.2m and 0.3m thick.



Figure 7. Trench 3, showing brick floor 7

8. Conclusions

8.1 Natural gravel was observed between 0.4m and 0.75m below the surface. Above it was natural brickearth some 0.3-0.7m below the surface. The natural was cut by a post-medieval/early modern pit. Above the natural was a series of post-medieval/early modern layers, including a brick and flint-cobble floor perhaps from stables associated with the William IV public house.

8.2 No trace of the ditched enclosures located on the adjacent Waitrose site were seen, but the area where a Late Iron Age—Romano-British ditch was projected to be present in Trench 3, was not excavated below the post-medieval cultivation level. The Late Saxon settlement evidence to the east and south on the Waitrose site was marked by large deep pits, again none were present, suggesting the area of the present site lay outside the settled area.

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Appendix 1. Context list

FULL CONTEXT SHEET RECORDING FORM									
CONTEXT	CATEGORY	MUNSEL PAGE	COL	TEXTURE	STONE ABUND	DESCRIPTION	ABOVE	BELOW	PERIOD
1	LAYER	10YR	4/1	SILTY CLAY LOAM	3	Dark soil layer. Situated 0.1m below the surface. In all trenches	2	8, 7	PMED/EMOD
2	LAYER	10YR	6/4	CLAY LOAM	3	Natural brickearth	3	1	NATURAL
3	LAYER	10YR	6/4	SANDY CLAY	4	Natural gravel. Only seen in the western end of trench 2. 0.75m below the surface in the east and 0.4m below the surface in the west of the trench.		2	NATURAL
4	FEATURE					Possible pit or ditch. Seen in the western end of trench 2.	2, 3	5	PMED/EMOD
5	FILL	10YR	4/1	CLAY LOAM	4		4	1	PMED/EMOD
6	LAYER	10YR	6/4	CLAY LOAM	4	Brick floor or demolition layer, brick rubble	3	8	PMED/EMOD
7	LAYER					Brick floor. Bricks laid on edge. A flint-cobble floor underneath	1	8	PMED/EMOD
8						Concrete	2, 7		MOD

Appendix 2. Finds

Finds recording form					
Context no	Mat Type	Find Type	No of frag	Wgt(gm)	Description
5	CRMC	BRIC	2	140	Brick frags. One very well fired. Post medieval – early modern
6	CRMC	TILR	1	86	Post medieval – early modern
6	CRMC	BRIC	1	717	Red half brick, no frog. Top worn, part of a floor. Post medieval – early modern
1	POT	FRAG	1	3	Westerwald pmed
1	POT	FRAG	1	20	Surrey border pmed