

TSSB13



THE SWALLOWS, SILSOE, BEDFORDSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation

commissioned by John Vincent

CB/10/01314/FULL

June 2013

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Planning background	1
	1.2 Site location and geology	1
	1.3 Archaeological background	1
2	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	2
3	METHODOLOGY	2
4	RECORDING	2
5	RESULTS	2
6	FINDS REPORTS	5
	6.1 Pottery, CBM and glass	5
7	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS	5
	7.1 Animal bone	5
8	DISCUSSION	5
	8.1 Assessment of the impact of development on the significance of Heritage Assets	5
9	REFERENCES	6
	9.1 Bibliographic sources	6
	9.2 Internet sources	6
	APPENDICES	7
	Appendix 1 Site registers	7
	<i>Appendix 1.1 Context register</i>	7
	<i>Appendix 1.2 Photographic register</i>	7
	<i>Appendix 1.3 Drawing register</i>	7
	Appendix 2 Finds	8
	<i>Appendix 2.1 Pottery, CBM and glass</i>	8
	Appendix 3 Environmental	8
	<i>Appendix 3.1 Animal bone</i>	8

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<i>Illus 1</i>		viii
<i>Site location</i>		
<i>Illus 2</i>		3
<i>Site plan</i>		

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1</i>		5
<i>Significance of Heritage Assets</i>		
<i>Table 2</i>		5
<i>Impact on Heritage Assets</i>		



Illus 1

Site location

THE SWALLOWS, SILSOE, BEDFORDSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation

Headland Archaeology Ltd conducted an evaluation on land adjacent to The Swallows, West End Road, Silsoe, Bedfordshire, in order to provide information on its archaeological potential. The work was commissioned by John Vincent. One trench was excavated within the Development Area (DA). No significant sub-surface archaeological remains were revealed. A number of post-medieval and modern finds were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLANNING BACKGROUND

John Vincent (the client) has been granted full planning consent (CB/10/01314/FULL) for residential development comprising one dwelling on land adjacent to The Swallows, West End Road, Silsoe, Bedfordshire centered on TL 0792 3549; henceforth referred to as the Development Area (DA) (*Illus 1*).

The local planning authority (LPA) is advised on archaeological matters by the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologists (CBCA). Due to the proximity of the DA to known archaeological remains and the fact that it lies within an area of known historical/archaeological potential (Archaeological Background) the CBCA advised that an intrusive archaeological trial trench evaluation would be required. This was to be carried out in advance of any development in order to obtain further information on sub-surface archaeological potential. These works were requested in accordance with government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012).

The CBCA produced a brief (CBC 2013) which encapsulated the need for these works and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the evaluation was prepared by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd (2013) on behalf of the client. As part of the WSI production process, Headland Archaeology undertook consultation with the CBCA on behalf of the client, regarding the requirements for the trial trench evaluation. A suitable trenching sample was agreed and Headland Archaeology then undertook the site works and produced a report (this document) on the results.

1.2 SITE LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

The proposed development area (DA) lies on the western edge of the village of Silsoe. The site elevation is at a height of c.62m AOD. It is centered at TL 0792 3549. Topographically the site lies at the junction between the northern edge of a Gault Clay vale and the southern edge of the Greensand Ridge. It is on the northern side of a shallow valley within which a small west to east flowing watercourse

lies. The land rises gently towards the north. The geology of the area is Gault Clay overlain by Head Deposits.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The CBC Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted during the preparation of this document and a visit made to the HER office on 24/05/2013. This visit and other sources confirmed that the DA lies within the core of the medieval settlement of West End, Silsoe (HER17003).

Domesday entries infer that there was settlement, dating from at least the late Saxon period in Silsoe (<http://www.domesdaybook.net>) and the HER records that modern archaeological investigations in the immediate vicinity (Thatcher 2011 and Upson-Smith 2012) have revealed remains of other periods. Specifically, an area of putative relict Roman field systems and an Early – Mid Saxon Sunken Featured Building with associated pits was recorded to the north of the DA (Thatcher 2011). Further archaeological investigation revealed that occupation appears to have shifted to the south of the DA in the late Saxon and medieval periods (10th and 14th centuries AD) centering on West End Road and land to the south (Thatcher 2011 and Upson-Smith 2012). In this location (south of the DA) a series of medieval plot boundaries along with a number of quarry and cess pits were recorded including a metallised surface aligned perpendicular to West End Road which may have formed a trackway leading southwards.

During the late medieval and post-medieval periods, settlement along West End Road may have reduced in density. Some known occupation remained on West End Road in the form of a number of 17th century buildings. These include 51 West End Road (HER 1590) and West End Farmhouse (HER 3791) and 18–22 West End Road (HER 3792) both directly adjacent to the development site.

Further archaeological work to the rear of 49 West End Road revealed no archaeological deposits and trial trenching on the site of the former Cranfield University Campus to the south revealed the presence of Saxo-Norman boundary ditches and associated pits in the northwest corner of the site.



A watching brief carried out during groundworks at The Church of St James the Great to the east recorded the presence of a possible early-Middle Saxon/early medieval boundary ditch running parallel to Church Road and a residual leaf shaped flint arrowhead from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age was also recovered.

The above archaeological evidence gave a clear indication of the archaeological potential in this part of Silsoe. If additional remains lay within the DA, they were most likely to be in the form of Roman field systems and/or Saxon and medieval settlement. There was also potential for post-medieval structural remains on the street frontage of West End Road at the southern limit of DA.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aims of the project were:

- to identify and assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment that may be affected by the relevant proposal;
- to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any remains on the site, in their cultural and environmental setting;
- to analyse any evidence retrieved in light of objectives contained within the frameworks of local and regional research. In this case they are provided by Research & Archaeology: A framework for the eastern counties, volumes 1 & 2 (Glazebrook 1997 & Brown and Glazebrook 2000) updated in Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England (Medlycott 2011) and Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy (Oake et al 2007);
- to determine the potential for remains of the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval settlement of Silsoe. The importance of investigating Saxon and medieval rural settlements with regards to their diversity and characteristics is described in Wade (2000, pp24–25) and Oake (2007, p14) and explored in local research agendas referenced above;
- to consider the results in light of National Research objectives detailed in Exploring Our Past (English Heritage 1991), and English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda (English Heritage 1997).

In addition to these general aims, it was considered possible that the results of the evaluation would provide an opportunity to address the following specific research objectives:

- in the late Saxon and medieval period, occupation appears to have shifted from land to the north of the DA, to land to the south of the DA. Was there evidence of this shift within the DA?
- what are the spatial limits of occupation in the Roman, Saxon and medieval periods? Was there evidence within the DA?
- establishing the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation within the development area;
- establishing the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

3 METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork took place on the 30th May 2013 and was carried out in accordance with the WSI (Headland Archaeology 2013) and the Brief (CBC 2013). One trench was excavated (*Illus 1*) covering an area of 35.25m². This trench was targeted within the footprint of the proposed new building and had to be re-located from the original layout due to a large hedge and trees (*Illus 2*) which covered the majority of the DA. Additional constraints comprised the proposed new driveway access to the new building which was designated a 'No dig area' due to tree protection orders (TPOs).

These constraints were observed by the CBCA during their monitoring visit and the trench re-location was agreed at this time.

A JCB equipped with a toothless ditching bucket was used to remove topsoil and subsoil in controlled spits under constant archaeological direction. Machine excavation continued until the top of the underlying geological sediments or the first significant archaeological horizon were encountered.

Further excavation required to satisfy the objectives of the evaluation was continued by hand. A representative sample, (sufficient to meet the objectives of the evaluation), of identified features were investigated by hand and all features were recorded. The stratigraphy of the trench was recorded in full.

4 RECORDING

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and the CBC Brief (2013). The trench and contexts were given unique numbers. All recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological standards. All stratigraphic relationships were recorded.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was compiled. The site plan was accurately tied in to the National Grid and a scale version is shown in *Illus 2*.

A digital photographic record was taken and a metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs.

5 RESULTS

The technical detail of contextual information can be found in Appendix 1. The following narrative is designed to interpret that technical detail and categorise its significance.

The trench was orientated on an ENE-WSW axis with two NNW-SSE branches covering an area 11.5m x 10m. Topsoil (01) and subsoil (02) had both been heavily disturbed by bioturbation and occasional modern truncations.

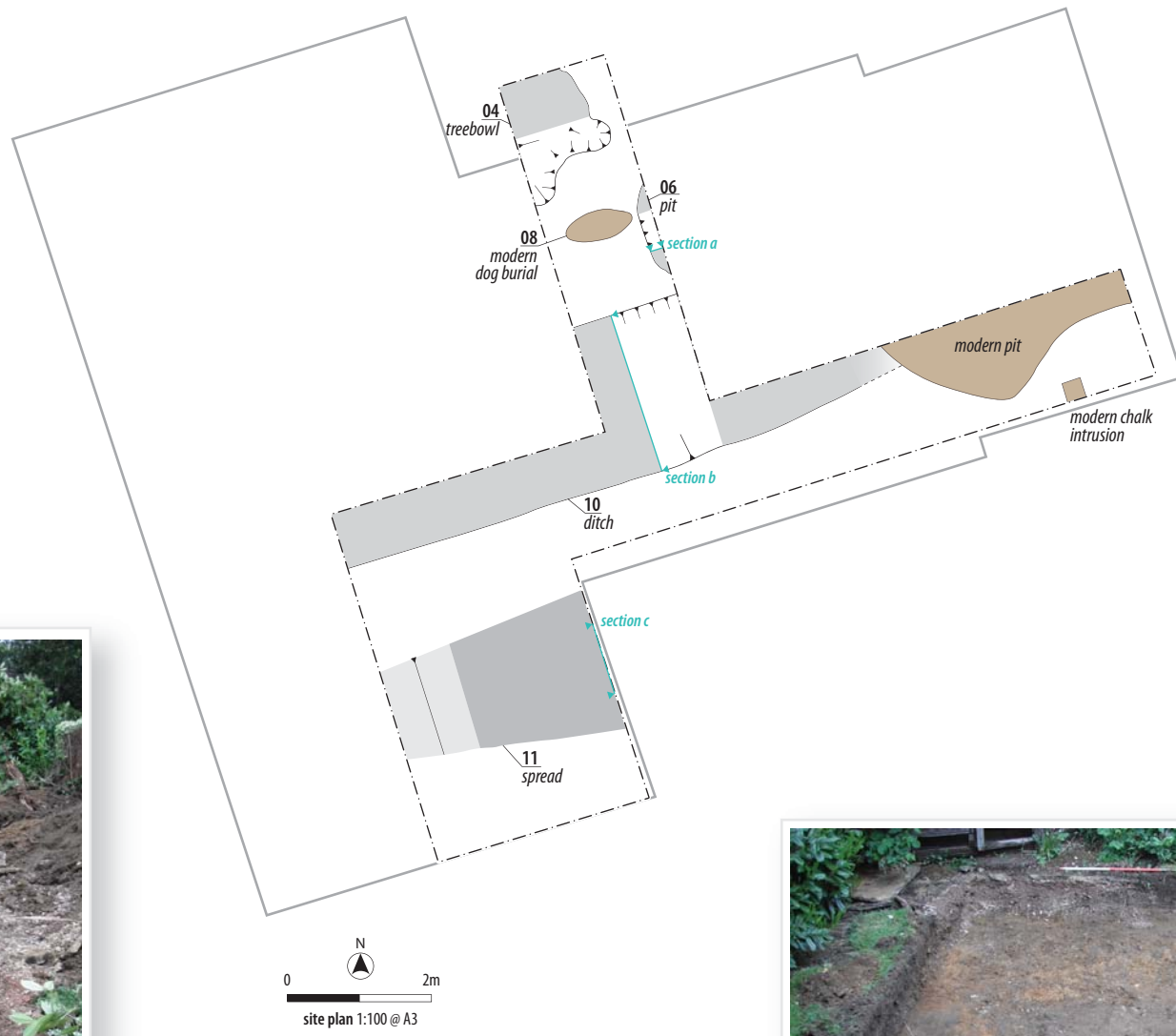
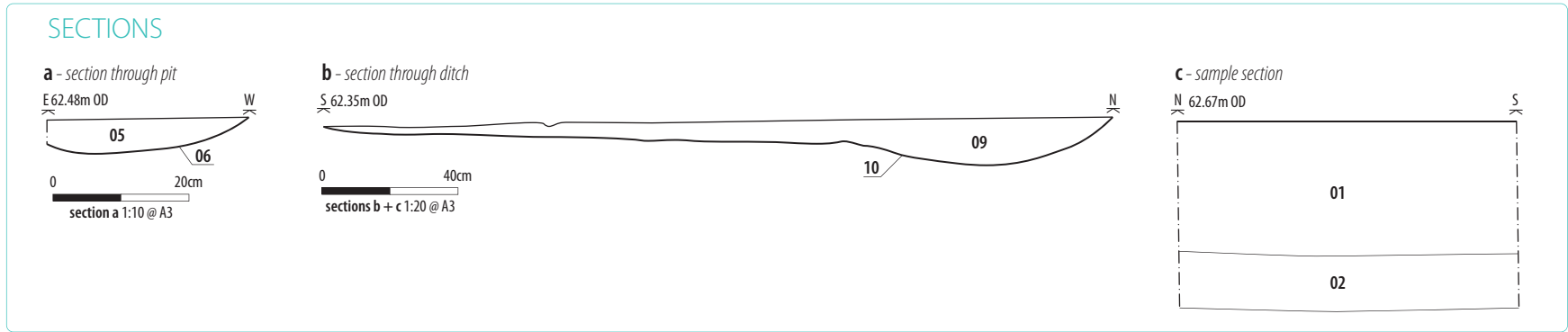
Five anomalies of potential archaeological interest were revealed; of these only one, linear feature [10] was considered to be of archaeological significance. This ran ENE-WSW for 8m along the trench and was truncated at its eastern limit by a modern intrusion. It was fairly wide measuring 2.30m wide but was relatively shallow measuring up to 0.13m in depth (maximum). Such dimensions are



View of N-S part of trench



E-W view of trench



Ditch [10]



N-S area of trench in SW corner

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not unlike those associated with trackways (Holloways) though such an interpretation is difficult to demonstrate within the confines of such an evaluation. These landscape features can be long lived as can other land boundary divisions (e.g. field boundaries) of which [10] may also be an example. The finds recovered indicate that this feature fell into disuse in the post medieval period.

Pit [06] was of uncertain function but was considered likely to be the truncated remains of a dog burial. It contained bones from a medium sized mammal, probably that of a dog along with modern window glass.

Pit [08] was clearly identified as the remains of a modern dog burial on site accordingly it was not excavated and no remains were recovered. Pit [08] was cut from a higher level and contained modern glass. It is considered likely that features [08] and [06] were fairly contemporary as they were located in close proximity.

Spread (11) contained one small piece of post-medieval ceramic building material (CBM) which was probably intrusive into a naturally accumulated deposit. Treebowl [04] was located in a gap in the hedge line, suggesting it was once part of a complete hedge.

Post medieval and modern finds were found outside of the above anomalies indicating a relatively high level of disturbance within the DA.

6 FINDS REPORTS

By Julie Franklin

6.1 POTTERY, CBM AND GLASS

The finds assemblage numbered one sherd of pottery, two pieces of glass and seven fragments of ceramic building materials (CBM). A complete catalogue of all the finds is given in Appendix 2.1. All the finds were of post-medieval or modern date. The pot sherd is small and unglazed and thus difficult to date but is likely to derive from a modern jar or flower pot. The glass sherds are both pieces of modern window glass. The CBM amounts to brick fragments with three sherds of roof tile which do not lend themselves to fine dating, but are likely to be of post-medieval or modern date.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

By Laura Bailey

7.1 ANIMAL BONE

A small assemblage of animal bone was collected from one context (05). The bone was retrieved by hand-recovery. The assemblage is summarised in Appendix 3.1 and includes fragments of pelvis, vertebrae and ribs from a medium sized mammal, probably a dog. The bones are fragmented and both old and modern breaks are visible. The preservation of the surface is good. There was limited evidence of weathering on the bone surfaces (Brehrensmeyer 1978) and damage due to scavenging animals was absent suggesting the bone was not exposed for long before deposition. An unusual pathology in the form of bony outgrowths around the socket suggests the possibility of arthritis perhaps caused by hip dysplasia, a developmental defect of the hip joint.

8 DISCUSSION

The local and regional research contexts are provided by *Research & Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties*, vol 1 & 2 (Glazebrook 1997 and Brown & Glazebrook 2000) updated in *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011) and *Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake et al 2007) outline various gaps in knowledge in the Bedfordshire area. Due to the limited evidence for any activity of archaeological significance revealed by the trial trenching (Table 1), the site does not allow for detailed comment on these research aims.

Table 1

Significance of Heritage Assets

Description of HA	Trench	Feature	Significance of HA on Local, Regional, National, International scale
[10] (HA1) may be part of a linear track/route way for a field boundary	1	[10]	Local (existence of interest to future works in the vicinity as it may tie in with linear features encountered elsewhere)

Trial trench evaluation revealed limited archaeological evidence for post-medieval and modern activity. The remains identified are considered to be of local significance. Specifically, these remains contribute to our understanding of the development and use of the DA during the post-medieval and modern periods. Generally, the results of the evaluation have the potential to contribute to research on the development of the landscape in the area of the site in the post-medieval/modern periods. In addition, the lack of Saxon and Roman remains provides us with additional information on the limits of settlement from those periods.

8.1 ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HERITAGE ASSETS

The proposed development will involve destructive groundworks. Several sub-surface anomalies were investigated. However, the results of the evaluation indicate that the groundworks required for the proposed development, although of likely to be of high impact, will not impact on any significant heritage assets (Table 2). As such the harm to sub-surface heritage assets caused by the development is considered to be negligible.

Table 2

Impact on Heritage Assets

Description of HA	Trench	Description of development affecting	Significance of HA on Local, Regional, National, International scale	Impact of development on HA (None, Low, Medium, High)
Ditch [10]	1	Development, intrusive groundworks	Local	High



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9.2 INTERNET SOURCES

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 SITE REGISTERS

APPENDIX 1.1 CONTEXT REGISTER

Context	Area	Description	Dimensions and cut/fill details
01	1	Topsoil	Mid grey brown, sandy silt, occasional gravel and pebble inclusions. Heavily root disturbed. 11.5x10m. Max depth 0.4m
02	1	Subsoil	Light brown grey, silty sand, occasional sandstone inclusions. Varies slightly depending on the natural. 11.5x10m. Max thickness 0.15m
03	1	Fill of treebowl	Mid grey brown silt, loose, no inclusions. 1.75x1.4m. Max depth 0.12m
04	1	Treebowl cut	Sub-circular, gently sloping uneven sides and base. 1.75x1.4m. Max depth 0.12m. Undated
05	1	Fill of pit [6]	Dark grey brown, silty sand, loose, occasional small sandstone inclusions. 1.2mx0.3m. Max depth 0.05m. Disuse fill
06	1	Pit cut	Sub-circular, gently sloping side into base which is mainly under the trench section. 1.2x0.3m. Max depth 0.05m. Pm/Mod feature
07	1	Fill of pit [8]	Dark grey brown, silty sand, loose, occasional small sandstone inclusions. 1x0.4m. Not excavated. Dump fill
08	1	Pit cut	Sub-circular, moderately steep sloping sides, base not uncovered. Not fully excavated, modern dog burial, cut seen from a higher level. 1x0.4m
09	1	Fill of ditch [10]	Light grey brown clayey sand, moderate compaction with occasional small sandstone and charcoal inclusions. 8x2.3m. Max depth 0.13m. Disuse fill
10	1	Ditch cut	Linear cut running ENE-WSW, very gently sloping sides and base. 8x2.3m. Max depth 0.13m. PM/Mod feature
11	1	Spread	Light grey brown silt, loose compaction, occasional sandstone inclusions. Roughly linear running ENE-WSW. 3x2.5m. Max depth 0.05m

APPENDIX 1.2 PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER

Frame	Digital	Direction	Description
01	1553	W	General pre-exc shot site shots
02	1554	SW	General pre-exc shot site shots
03	1555	NW	General pre-exc shot site shots
04	1557	NW	General pre-exc shot site shots
05	1558	S	Trench post-exc shots
06	1559	W	Trench post-exc shots
07	1560	N	Trench post-exc shots
08	1561	E	Spread (11)
09	1562	E	Spread (11)
10	1563	W	Ditch [10]
11	1564	W	Ditch [10]
12	1565	W	Ditch [10]
13	1566	E	Ditch [10] and trench section
14	1567	E	Ditch [10] and trench section
15	1568	E	Pit[06]
16	1570	N	Pit [08]
17	1572	N	Treebowl [04]
18	1573	N	Trench section
19	1574	E	Trench section

Frame	Digital	Direction	Description
20	1575	E	Trench section
21	1576	S	Trench section
22	1577	S	Trench section
23	1578	S	Trench section
24	1579	W	Ditch [10]
25	1580	W	Ditch [10]
26	1582	E	Trench section
27	1583	N	Site backfilled shots
28	1584	N	Site backfilled shots
29	1585	S	Site backfilled shots

APPENDIX 1.3 DRAWING REGISTER

Drawing	Plan	Section	Description
1	1:50	—	Trench plan
2	—	1:20	Section of treebowl [04]
3	—	1:20	Section of pit [06]
4	—	1:20	Section of ditch [10]
5	—	1:20	Section of spread (11)



APPENDIX 2 FINDS

APPENDIX 2.1 POTTERY, CBM AND GLASS

Context	Qty	Weight (g)	Material	Object	Description	Period
05	1	1	Pottery	Red earthenware	Small sherd of unglazed red earthenware, possibly a flower pot	Mod
05	1	–	Glass	Window	Clear, colourless, good condition	Mod
09	3	91	CBM	Roof tile	Small sherds of red or pink ceramic roof tile, sandy fabric with flint inclusions	PM/Mod
09	1	–	Glass	Window	Clear, colourless, good condition	Mod
09	3	22	CBM	Brick	Small fragment of coarse red ceramic, probably brick	PM/Mod
11	1	1	CBM	Brick?	Small fragment of coarse red ceramic, possibly brick	PM/Mod

APPENDIX 3 ENVIRONMENTAL

APPENDIX 3.1 ANIMAL BONE

Context	Feature	Condition	Weight (g)	No. of fragments	Medium sized mammal (e.g. pig/sheep/goat)	Comments (fragmentation, diversity cut marks and other observations re. bone type)
05	–	Poor	30.9	7	7	Rib fragments, vertebrae and pelvis – probably dog



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