

6 Mill Road Marcham, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Planning Ref: P15/V1758/FUL Accession Code: OXCMS: 2017.54

> Ref: 116310.03 October 2017



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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Greencore Construction Ltd, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the demolition of existing outbuildings, the conversion of an existing workshop into 2-bed dwelling, and the erection of a pair of semi-detached 3-bed dwellings. The monitored works covered 0.08 hectares, centred on NGR 445450 196580, at 6 Mill Road, Marcham, Oxfordshire, OX13 6NZ. The work was carried out in response to planning conditions (ref: P15/V1758/FUL) placed on the development by the Vale of the White Horse District Council.

Archaeological monitoring of machined topsoil stripping and associated ground works was carried out on three separate occasions between May and October 2017.

The archaeological works monitored several areas of topsoil stripping principally to the west side of the site and several areas close to the rear of the existing property. The principal west area was monitored on two separate occasions, due to identified topsoil contamination and included the complete removal of the contaminated material and the importing of new topsoil. The underlying natural limestone deposits were identified in all monitored areas. Within the west area, the remains of a possible stone wall were recorded. No associated finds or features were found with this feature and it is thought to be possibly related to post medieval agricultural buildings or boundaries. Several sherds of were recovered from the general topsoil layer during the course of the watching brief. These have been dated to the medieval and post medieval periods.

The lack of significant archaeological features or deposits is largely attributed to the fact that the established focus of occupation in Marcham, certainly in the medieval period, is some distance from the historic core of the settlement to the north-west. However, the presence of small amounts of medieval redeposited pottery would suggest that there was some amount of activity in the immediate area. The mixed nature of the topsoil is attributed to mainly post-medieval use of the site particularly the 19th and early 20th century when there was a small foundry on the site.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Greencore Construction Ltd, for commissioning the archaeological watching brief, in particular Mark Patten, Technical Manager at Greencore Construction Ltd. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of Hugh Coddington, the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, who monitored the project for the Vale of White Horse District Council, and to Piers Ashley-Carter, Site Manager for Greencore Construction Ltd for his cooperation and help on site.

The archaeological watching brief was carried out by Rachel Williams, Bob Davis and Yohann Paci. This report was compiled by Bob Davis and the illustrations prepared by Nancy Dixon. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Gareth Chaffey.



6 Mill Road Marcham Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project and planning background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Greencore Construction Ltd, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the demolition of existing outbuildings, the conversion of an existing workshop into 2-bed dwelling, and the erection of a pair of semi-detached 3-bed dwellings. The monitored works covered 0.08 ha, centred on NGR 445450 196580, at 6 Mill Road, Marcham, Oxfordshire, OX13 6NZ (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The watching brief was carried out as a condition of planning permission, granted by the Vale of the White Horse District Council (Planning ref: P15/V1758/FUL).
- 1.1.3 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed Wessex Archaeology 2017). Richard Oram, the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) approved the WSI, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), prior to fieldwork commencing. The watching brief was undertaken between 8th-9th May 2017, 8th -11th August 2017 and 5th October 2017.

1.2 Scope of the report

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the watching brief, to interpret the results within their local or regional context (or otherwise), and to assess their potential to address the aims outlined in the WSI, thereby making available information about the archaeological resource (a preservation by record).

1.3 Location, topography and geology

- 1.3.1 The watching brief was located in the Village of Marcham, 2 miles west of Abingdon in Oxfordshire. It was situated south of Frilford Road (A415) and west of Mill Road, north of the Manor Farm. The monitored area was a plot of land situated at the rear, west side, of number 6 Mill Road. The area was bounded to the south by a stone barn, to the west, open ground/tree boundary and to the north, by residential back garden boundaries.
- 1.3.2 The area was relatively flat with existing ground levels at approximately 60 m above Ordnance Datum.
- 1.3.3 The underlying geology is mapped as Limestone of the Stanford Formation. No superficial deposits are recorded for this area (British Geological Survey online viewer). Historic borehole results from the surrounding area record Corallian Limestone occurring at approximately 0.76 m BGL.



2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Marcham, originally in Berkshire, has late Saxon origins and is mentioned in Domesday Book and in an earlier charter of King Edgar; however, the Site lies at some distance to the south-east of the historic core of the settlement, with the parish church around 700 m to the north-west.
- 2.1.2 To the north of the Site (north of Packhorse Lane), archaeological evaluations have recorded a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery along with evidence for Iron Age and Roman settlement, the deposits of which may extend south into the area of the proposal site. The wider area of Marcham is archaeologically rich, with a wealth of Iron Age and Roman deposits at Garford and Frilford to the west including a temple and amphitheatre complex with Iron Age occupation and burials to the south-west (Hart et al 2012). Recent archaeological work at Wantage Road, Garford revealed substantial ditches containing mixed assemblages of pre-historic pottery alongside a number of features which were of pre-historic, Roman and medieval date. The Priory to the west is a 16th century building.
- 2.1.3 Immediately to the west of the Site is a Grade II Listed Dovecote which lies some 30 m south-east of a war memorial.

2.2 Previous investigations related to the development

- 2.2.1 In 2012 a detailed magnetometer survey was completed of the whole of land north of Priory Lane, some 100 m south-east of the Site (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2012a). The survey detected a cluster of linear archaeological anomalies in the north-west corner of the Site which were suggested as possibly representing features associated with medieval or post-medieval settlement, some possibly corresponding with boundaries shown on the 1818 Inclosure map. Another cluster of archaeological anomalies was identified in the south-west part of the Site, including a linear feature and possible pits with 6 Mill Road, Marcham, Oxfordshire WSI for an Archaeological Watching Brief 5 T23076.01 a magnetic intensity consistent with areas of burnt soil or pits containing slag, brick rubble or other magnetic debris (NA 2012a).
- 2.2.2 Following this survey, four 30 m trial trenches, mainly targeted on the geophysical anomalies, were excavated to evaluate the archaeological potential of the Site. A number of boundary ditches, generally aligned north/south or east/west, were concentrated in the west of the Site and were dated from the mid-11th to 13th centuries; these may have formed medieval plot or toft boundaries (NA 2012b). A posthole and several pits were recorded close to the boundary ditches.
- 2.2.3 A detailed gradiometer survey (WA 2012a) was undertaken at Anson Field some 300 m east of the Site, which detected a number of previously unknown anomalies of archaeological interest. One annular anomaly and a further four curvilinear anomalies were identified as features of likely archaeological origin. These anomalies were clustered in the south-western corner of the Site and may suggest a small prehistoric settlement or grouping of funerary monuments (ring ditches or barrows) from this period.
- 2.2.4 Following this survey two phases of archaeological evaluation works were undertaken by WA to investigate the results of the survey (WA 2012b). They were successful in providing further evidence of the Iron Age settlement, which was established around the pre-existing barrow cemetery identified through the geophysical survey. This phenomenon is observed elsewhere in Oxfordshire and indicates that earlier features and monuments within the



landscape provide a focus for later settlement, and in the case of Anson Field, an associated agricultural landscape resulting in the infilling of the barrow ditches in this period.

- 2.2.5 In 2014 WA conducted a Strip, Map and Record excavation 90 m to the east of Site at Land to the North of Priory Lane (WA 2014). These works produced evidence of settlement dating from the medieval to the post-medieval period, though virtually all of the features recorded were of 11th–13th century date, reflecting the establishment and use of plots or tofts towards the south-west edge of the village. The paucity of later remains is likely to reflect subsequent settlement shrinkage.
- 2.2.6 Also in 2014, some 400 m to the east at Willow Farm, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken, however, no deposits of archaeological interest were recorded (TVAS 2014).
- 2.2.7 The following year, in 2015, a watching brief was undertaken at The Red Horse, Packhouse Lane, approximately 170 m north-east of Site (TVAS 2015a). The watching brief noted a high density of archaeological deposits on the site. The deposits found here include pits, postholes and a possible ring gully, which all date to the early Iron Age (6th to 4th century BC) and reveal more of, although not necessarily the full extent of, the occupation site.
- 2.2.8 Also in 2015, approximately 130 m north east at Land North of Peartree Cottage a watching brief was conducted (TVAS 2015b). The watching brief did not identify remains of archaeological interest and it is possible that the Site had been previously levelled owing to the amount of topsoil present and the absence of the silt and clay capping features had been identified in in the surrounding areas.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Aims

- 3.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as stated in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2017) and as defined in the ClfA' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), were:
 - To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of the development or other works;
 - To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and
 - To guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

3.2 Objectives

3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the objectives of the watching brief, also defined in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2017), were:



- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified works area;
- To record and establish, within the constraints of the works, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (a preservation by record);
- To place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- To make available information about the archaeological resource on the site by preparing a report on the results of the watching brief.

4 METHODS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methodology set out within the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2017) and in general compliance with the standards outlined in CIfA guidance (CIfA 2014a). The methods employed are summarised below.

4.2 Fieldwork methods

General

- 4.2.1 The monitored areas were assigned unique numerical identifiers (**Fig. 1**). Area 1 was the largest area and was located to the south-west of the site. The area was monitored twice (Areas 1a and 1b) and, in its entirety, covered an area of approximately 305 square meters. Area 2 was located along the short north boundary and covered an area of approximately 32 square meters. It included a machined test pit to establish the depth of topsoil in this part of the site. A small area, it covered approximately 7 square meters.
- 4.2.2 A soakaway was also machine dug to the east of Area 1. It covered an area of approximately 9.3 square meters. A service trench was dug for electric cable and ran from the south-east end of Area 1, north across the site and to the rear of the existing building.
- 4.2.3 Area 1 was monitored on two separate occasions. The first visit (Area 1a) monitored removal of topsoil over the footprint of the pair of proposed dwellings. The second (Area 1b) monitored further stripping of the entire west end of the site as a result of identified ground contamination. The strip was remodelled in order to remove any contaminated deposits and to replace with new topsoil for gardens. During the first site visit, two narrow machine dug test trenches were dug in Area 1a. They were dug to further inform the depth of deposits.
- 4.2.4 The watching archaeologist monitored all mechanical excavations within the specified areas. Where necessary, the surface of uncovered archaeological deposits were cleaned by hand. A sample of archaeological features and deposits identified was hand-excavated, sufficient to address the aims of the watching brief.
- 4.2.5 Spoil derived from both machine stripping and hand-excavated archaeological deposits was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. Where found, artefacts were collected and bagged by context.



Recording

- 4.2.6 All exposed archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system. A complete drawn record of excavated features and deposits was made including both plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections), and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD: Newlyn) heights of all principal features were calculated, and levels added to plans and section drawings.
- 4.2.7 A Leica GNSS connected to Leica's SmartNet service surveyed the location of archaeological features. All survey data is recorded in OS National Grid coordinates and heights above OD (Newlyn), as defined by OSGM15 and OSTN15, with a three-dimensional accuracy of at least 50 mm.
- 4.2.8 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4.3 Artefactual and environmental strategies

4.3.1 Appropriate strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of artefacts and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2017). The treatment of artefacts and environmental remains was in general accordance with: Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (ClfA 2014b) and Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation (English Heritage 2011).

4.4 Monitoring

4.4.1 Hugh Coddington, the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, on behalf of the LPA, monitored the watching brief.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 For clarity, the results are presented in monitored area numerical sequence. Overall, the archaeological watching brief

5.2 Soil sequence and natural deposits

- 5.2.1 The general soil sequence across the site was consistent and comprised a very dark grey loam topsoil between 0.30 m and 0.60 m thick. Within Area 1a the topsoil layer was fairly loose in structure and contained occasional limestone fragments (**Plate 1**). Also noted were small quantities of 20th century objects including tin cans, Bovril jars and glass bottles. A distinct subsoil layer was recorded in Area 2 test pit (**Plate 2**). The subsoil was moderately loosely bound mid-reddish brown silty clay containing few limestone fragments. It was 0.30m deep. Toward the west of the site the subsoil was less well defined and the soil profile appeared more mixed. Below the subsoil underlying natural limestone geology was recorded in all areas. However, in Area 1, only patches of solid limestone were exposed by the formation depth of the development.
- 5.2.2 Along the west boundary of Area 1, a well-established tree boundary had affected the underlying soil profile to a significant depth (**Plate 3**). This was marked by deeper mixed



- deposit and no clear interface between topsoil, subsoil and underlying limestone geology. This area had also been used as a dump for many years with ash deposit lenses noted.
- 5.2.3 The underlying natural deposits of limestone were exposed in patches within Area 1 (**Plate 4**). The upper surface of which was fragmented and undulated slightly leaving subsoil hollows.
- 5.2.4 In Area 2 the level of disturbance was much less and the soil sequence probably represented the historic soil formation more accurately, particularly close the existing dwelling.

5.3 Uncertain date

5.3.1 A single subsoil feature was recorded in Area 1 along the south edge of the site. This was interpreted as the slight remains of a stone wall (**Fig. 1**). Although not clear, it consisted of poorly bonded larger limestone fragments with no visible mortar forming two sides and a corner (**Plates 5** and **6**). The shorter side, aligned approximately south-north, measured 4.2 m long and approximately 0.50 m wide. The longer side, aligned approximately south-west to north-east, measured 10.40 m long and 0.60 m wide. The feature did not appear to extend any further to the east and may have been truncated. No associated finds were found and it remains undated.

6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

6.1.1 The only finds recovered from the Site were nine sherds of pottery, found unstratified in Trench 1. Eight were medieval (Oxfordshire fabrics OXAG, OXAQ, OXY, probable dating 12th/13th century) and one post-medieval (glazed redware, not closely datable). These sherds have not been retained.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 The aims of the watching brief during ground woks at Mill Road have been largely met. Observations of associated ground works including topsoil stripping, test pit and test trench digging, soakaway digging and service trench digging, although not specifically targeted, have covered a significant percentage of the site and gave a fair indication of below ground deposits. From close to the existing house and occupation area, to the more westerly extent of open ground, a broadly accurate understanding was achieved.
- 7.1.2 The lack of significant archaeological features or deposits is largely attributed to the fact that the established focus of occupation in Marcham, certainly in the medieval period, is some distance from the historic core of the settlement to the north-west. However, the presence of small amounts of medieval redeposited pottery would suggest that there was some amount of activity in the immediate area. The mixed nature of the topsoil is attributed to mainly post medieval use of the site particularly the 19th and early 20th century when there was a small foundry on the site.
- 7.1.3 The single undated possible remains of a stone wall also indicate that there was some potential of occupational evidence on the site. The lack of associated finds or features may also indicate that the feature represents an agricultural structure or boundary.



8 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

8.1 Museum

8.1.1 The archive resulting from the watching brief is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury. Oxfordshire Museums Service has agreed in principle to accept the archive on completion of the project, under the accession code **OXCMS: 2017.54**. Deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full written agreement of the landowner to transfer title of all finds to the museum.

8.2 Preparation of the archive

- 8.2.1 The archive, which includes paper records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the *Requirements for Transferring Archaeological Archives* 2017/18 for Oxfordshire Museums Service, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; CIfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 8.2.2 All archive elements are marked with the accession code, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive currently comprises the following:
 - 01 files/document cases of paper records and A3/A4 graphics

8.3 Selection policy

- 8.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows national guidelines on selection and retention (SMA 1993; Brown 2011, section 4). In accordance with these, and any specific guidance prepared by the museum, a process of selection and retention will be followed so that only those artefacts or ecofacts that are considered to have potential for future study will be retained.
- 8.3.2 In this instance, the only finds recovered were unstratified, and comprised pottery sherds in an expected range of types for the area. These have not been retained.

8.4 Security copy

8.4.1 In line with current best practice (eg, Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

8.5 OASIS

8.5.1 An OASIS online record (http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main) has been initiated, with key fields and a .pdf version of the final report submitted. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service ArchSearch catalogue.

9 COPYRIGHT

9.1 Archive and report copyright

9.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. The museum,



however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations* 2003. In some instances, certain regional museums may require absolute transfer of copyright, rather than a licence; this should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

9.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

9.2 Third party data copyright

9.2.1 This document and the project archive may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (eg, Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which Wessex Archaeology are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferable by Wessex Archaeology. Users remain bound by the conditions of the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of such material.

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- British Geological Survey online viewer http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html (accessed 14-08-2017)
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: OASIS form

OASIS ID: wessexar1-293592

Project details

Project name 6 Mill Road, Marcham

Short description of

the project

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Greencore Construction Ltd, to undertake an archaeological watching brief. The monitored works covered 0.08 hectares, centred on NGR 445450 196580, at 6 Mill Road, Marcham, Oxfordshire, OX13 6NZ. The work was carried out in response to planning conditions (ref: P15/V1758/FUL) placed on the development by the Vale of the White Horse District Council. The archaeological works monitored several areas of topsoil stripping principally to the west side of the site and several areas close to the rear of the existing property. The principal west area was monitored on two separate occasions, due to identified topsoil contamination and included the complete removal of the contaminated material and the importing of new topsoil. The underlying natural limestone deposits were identified in all monitored areas. Within the west area, the remains of a possible stone wall were recorded. No associated finds or features were found with this feature and it is thought to be possibly related to post medieval agricultural buildings or boundaries. Several sherds of were recovered from the general topsoil layer during the course of the watching brief. These have been dated to the medieval and post medieval periods. The lack of significant archaeological features or deposits is largely attributed to the fact that the established focus of occupation in Marcham, certainly in the medieval period, is some distance from the historic core of the settlement to the north-west. However, the presence of small amounts of medieval redeposited pottery would suggest that there was some amount of activity in the immediate area. The mixed nature of the topsoil is attributed to mainly post-medieval use of the site particularly the 19th and early 20th century when there was a small foundry on

Project dates Start: 08-05-2017 End: 05-10-2017

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated project reference codes

116310 - Sitecode

Any associated project reference codes

P15/V1758/FUL - Planning Application No.

Any associated project reference codes

OXCMS: 2017.54 - Museum accession ID

Type of project Recording project

Site status None

Current Land use Residential 1 - General Residential

Monument type **NONE None**

Significant Finds **POTTERY Medieval**



Investigation type "Watching Brief"

Prompt Planning condition

Project location

Country England

Site location OXFORDSHIRE VALE OF WHITE HORSE MARCHAM 6 Mill Road, Marcham

Postcode OX13 6NZ

Study area 0.08 Hectares

Site coordinates SU 445445 196572 50.974058974413 -1.36547823168 50 58 26 N 001 21 55 W Point

Lat/Long Datum Unknown

Height OD / Depth Min: 0.76m Max: 0.8m

Project creators

Name of Organisation

Wessex Archaeology

Project brief originator

Oxford City Council Archaeologist

Project design originator

Wessex Archaeology

Project

director/manager

Gareth Chaffey

Project supervisor Bob Davis

Type of

sponsor/funding

body

Developer

Name of

sponsor/funding

body

Greencore Construction Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive

Exists?

No

Digital Archive recipient

Oxford County Museum Service

Digital Archive ID OXCMS: 2017.54

Digital Contents "none"

Digital Media available

"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"



Paper Archive recipient

Oxford County Museums Service

Paper Archive ID O

OXCMS: 2017.54

Paper Contents

"none"

Paper Media available

"Context sheet", "Notebook - Excavation', 'Research', 'General

Notes", "Plan", "Unpublished Text"

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Entered on 21 August 2017



Site location showing monitored areas



Plate 1: Area 1a topsoil stripping looking south-east



Plate 2: Area 2 test pit showing soil profile

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Plate 3: Area 1b removal of west tree boundary looking east



Plate 4: Area 1b after site stripping looking west

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Plate 5: Area 1b remains of possible stone wall looking west



Plate 6: Area 1b remains of possible stone wall corner looking south

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