



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

66 HIGH STREET, WITNEY,

OXFORDSHIRE OX28 6HJ

NGR SP 35734 09991

JULY 2021

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SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief to the rear of 66 High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 35734 09991). The watching brief comprised monitoring the excavation for the footings, two footings pads, and service trenches, in which a series of features and deposits relating to the medieval and post-medieval occupation of Witney were recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located to the rear of 66 High Street, Witney (NGR SP 35734 09991).

The site lies at approximately 80m OD. The underlying geology is Forest Marble Formation, which is a sedimentary mudstone, overlain by superficial deposits of alluvial clay, silt sand, and gravel. The site was formerly occupied by unused ancillary buildings of 66 High Street.

1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the construction of two semi-detached dwellings with amenity areas, and a replacement bin store (20/01152/FUL). Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area a condition was attached to the permission requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of building operations or construction works on the site.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site lies in the historic core of Witney, between two listed buildings that date to the 16th and 17th centuries. The site therefore has the potential to contain remains from these and earlier periods.

A search of the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record was carried out from a radius of 250m from the site. The results of the search are presented below in chronological order.

The remains of a field system of undetermined date were recorded during an archaeological watching brief during construction to the rear of 63-69 High Street, approximately 100m west-north west of the site (MOX24197: SP 35640 10015). The form of the field system was of a type that could potentially date any time from the Middle Bronze Age through to the early medieval periods.

Archaeological investigations in the High Street area have recorded a series of features and deposits relating to the medieval occupation of the town. A watching brief undertaken to the rear of 68-72 High Street, 30m east, recorded pits and a structure of unknown function, dated to the 12th century on the basis of the ceramic assemblage (MOX8194: SP 3576 0999). An archaeological evaluation undertaken

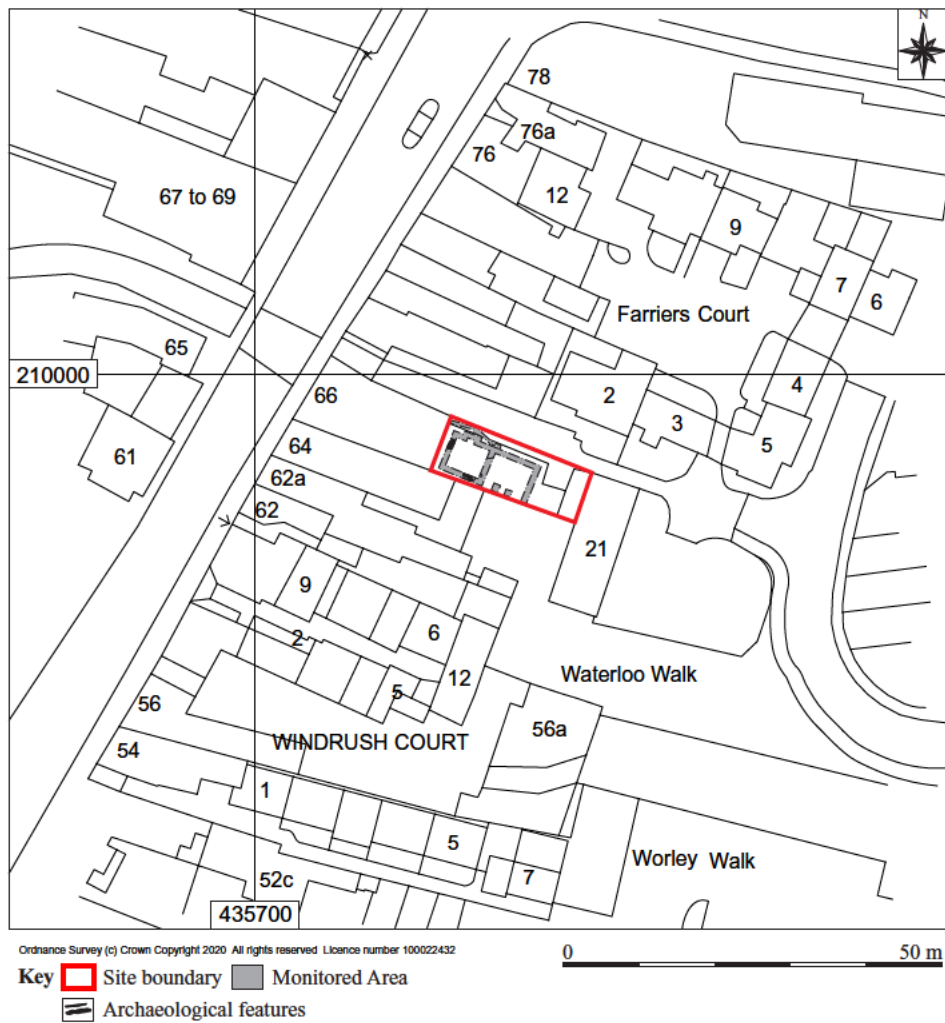
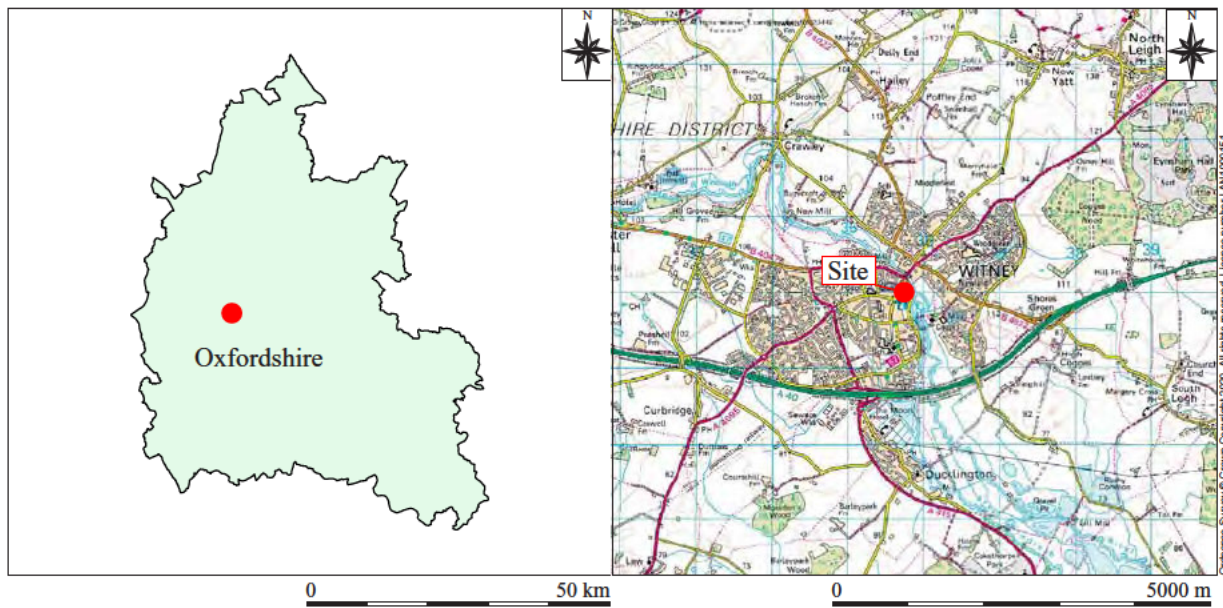


Figure 1: Site location

approximately 60m south recorded two gullies containing pottery of 11th to 13th century date (MOX12513: SP 3575 0993). These were interpreted as tenement boundaries or drainage features within a larger burgage plot. A watching brief at 77 High Street recorded activity from the 14th century onwards (MOX12512: SP 3576 1002); this comprised evidence for property boundaries, extending from the frontages along the high street. Excavation also recorded a stone filled pit containing pottery dating to the 13th and 14th centuries (MOX2604: SP 3568 1006). A layer of cultivation soil dating to the early 12th century and a wall of 12th to 16th century date was recorded during a watching brief to the rear of 45 High Street (MOX26867: SP3563 0996). A substantial ditch and 11th century structures including a compacted floor surface were recorded at land to the rear of 63-69 High Street, approximately 100m west of the site (MOX24197: SP 35640 10015).

A range of post-medieval activity has also been recorded, including extant buildings. Those closest to the site include: 64 High Street, a late 16th century town house located 20m south west (MOX21303: SP 35710 09986); a post-medieval blanket mill dating to the 18th century, located immediately east of the site (MOX22563: SP 35746 09979); 68-70 High Street, a late 17th or early 18th century house located 15m north west (MOX21875: SP 35724 10004). Archaeological remains dating to the post-medieval period have also been recorded; these typically overlay earlier medieval activity, demonstrating the continued occupation of the town. These include a 17th century quarry, located approximately 30m east (MOX8194: SP 3576 0999); a range of walls, a rubbish pit and a cultivation soil to the rear of 45 High Street (MOX26867: SP 3563 0996); quarry pits and wall foundations at land to the rear of 99 High Street (MOX12686: SP 35700 10140); a large pit, postholes and pottery were recorded during an evaluation 100m east of the site (MOX1827: SP 3584 1000).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To make a record of any significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To record any evidence of the medieval and post-medieval occupation of Witney.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

The initial groundworks consisted of the excavation of footings trenches for the two dwellings, and the excavation of Footing Pad 1, and Footing Pad 2. Later works included ground reduction within plots 66a and 66b, as well as the excavation of drainage, and services.

Where archaeological horizons were encountered, they were cleaned by hand and excavated appropriately.

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

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating to the medieval and post-medieval periods.

4 RESULTS (Figures 2-5; Plates 1-6)

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts, numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material, while numbers in bold indicate structural features.

Prior to the monitored works, the disused ancillary buildings of 66 High Street had been demolished, and the tarmac/ modern deposits covering the site had largely been removed, though still existed to a shallow depth in places.

4.1 Excavation of Footings

Across the area of the footings, the majority of the modern deposits had been removed prior to the monitored excavations; however in places bands of friable to loose yellow gravel, and compact purple clay were present (01). These were levelling layers and modern made ground deposits which varied in thickness across the site, dependant on the amount of ground reduction, with a maximum thickness of 0.40m (Figs 3 and 4).

Below the made-ground deposits was a friable dark greyish brown silty clay (02), ≤0.66m in thickness, and was probably a cultivation soil (Figs 3 and 4). The deposit (02) had frequent limestone and gravel inclusions and contained a large quantity of medieval and post-medieval finds. This overlaid a friable to compact dark greyish brown silty clay deposit (14), ≤0.18m thick, which was present across the site (Figs 3 and 4). This was also rich in medieval and post-medieval finds, and was potentially an occupation layer relating to the use of the site.

In the northwest corner of the footings, there was a significant amount of modern disturbance, in the form of several manholes, and modern pipes. Disturbance from one of these manholes – modern drainage trench 09 – extended into the footings trench to depth of 0.66m, and contained fill (08), which was a friable to compact dark blackish grey silty clay, which contained patches of gravel, shingle, and hardcore

localised around the plastic drainage pipes. No finds were associated with this modern disturbance.

The remains of stone wall **03** (Fig. 2, Fig. 3, S.1 to S.3; Plates 1 and 2), which had a NW-SE orientation, were present in the north-west part of the footings within construction cut 04. The wall was constructed using random uncoursed angular stones; its dimensions were >0.64m (L) x 1.35m (W) x 0.16m (D). No bonding material was visible, but a dark greyish brown clay matrix was present between some of the stones. This wall extended beyond the limit of the footings, and was not visible in any of the other footings.



Plate 1: Overhead photograph of Medieval to post-medieval Wall 03.



Plate 2: Medieval to post-medieval Wall 03, with possible levelling layer (07) below.

Butting up against the northeast side of wall **03** was a friable mid-greyish brown silty clay deposit (06) 0.40m thick, which contained frequent sub-angular limestone rubble, 50-150mm in size. Due to these inclusions, deposit (06) probably represents collapsed rubble following the disuse of wall **03**. This deposit (06) also contained animal bone, medieval to post-medieval pottery and tile, and unidentified metal.

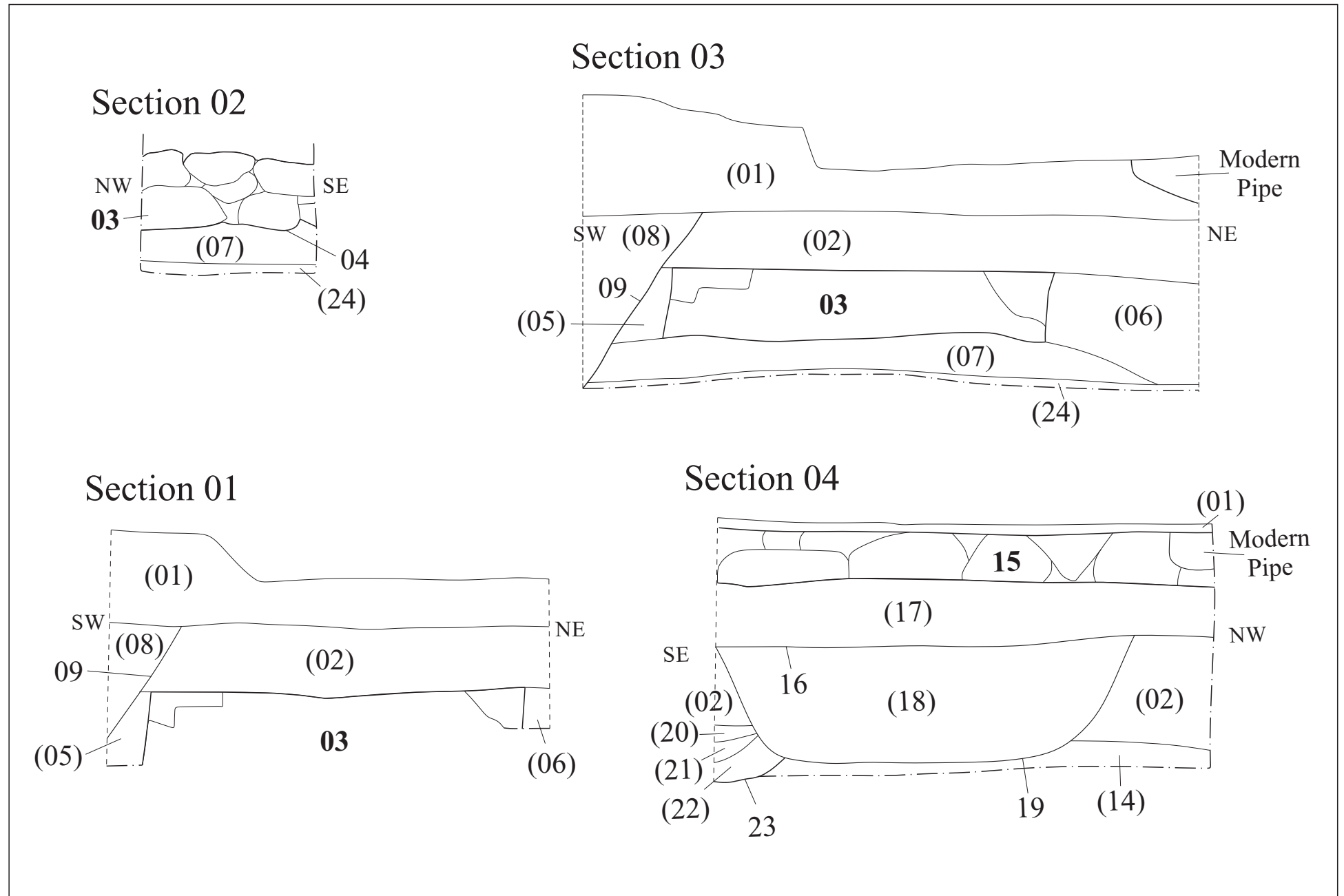


Figure 3: Sections 01, 02, 03, and 04, showing wall 03, wall/floor 15, and pits 19 and 23

Butting up against the southwest side of wall **03** there was a friable mid-greyish brown silty clay deposit (05), 0.26m thick, which contained frequent sub-angular limestone rubble, 50-150mm in size. The frequent inclusions of rubble suggest that this deposit probably resulted from the disuse or collapse of wall **03**, and is therefore probably the same as (06). Deposit (05) is cut by modern pipe 09.

Below wall **03** was a friable to compact mid-brown silty clay (07) (see Plate 2), which had occasional rounded pebbles, 5-20mm in size. This was a possible levelling layer below wall **03**, as it is not present elsewhere on site. This deposit (07) had a maximum thickness of 0.16m and was also cut by modern pipe 09, fill (08).

In the south of the footings, the remains of stone well **10** (see Plate 3) were uncovered within construction cut 11, measuring $\geq 1.58\text{m}$ in diameter; the feature extended beyond the limit of the footings, therefore true dimensions could not be accurately determined (Fig.2, Fig. 4, S.5). Well **10** was constructed using random coursed, angular stones of irregular size, with no visible bonding. Between the construction stones of the well was a friable dark greyish brown silty clay (48) which contained a quantity of finds (dated by the pottery to the post-medieval period, perhaps mid 17th to 18th century). When the surrounding deposits of (02) and (14) were removed, the well was unable to support itself structurally.



*Plate 3: Medieval to post-medieval well **10**, infilled with modern hardcore (12), and disturbed on the surface by modern truncation.*

Though well **10** was present within the footings trench, it had been uncovered at surface level prior to the monitored works, when the contractors were shutting off the water mains. When initially discovered, the contractors filled well **10** for safety purposes with loose light greyish yellow sand and gravels (12), as the well was found to have a depth of over 2.5m. Beyond 2.5m, water was present within the well, so its full depth could not be determined. Within the footings, well **10** and modern infill (12) both had a depth exceeding 0.64m.

Another historic well or similar feature may have been present below the floor of 66 High Street, though evidence for this is only anecdotal; the contractors exposed and capped this feature. This was in an area outside of this application site and did not need to be monitored.

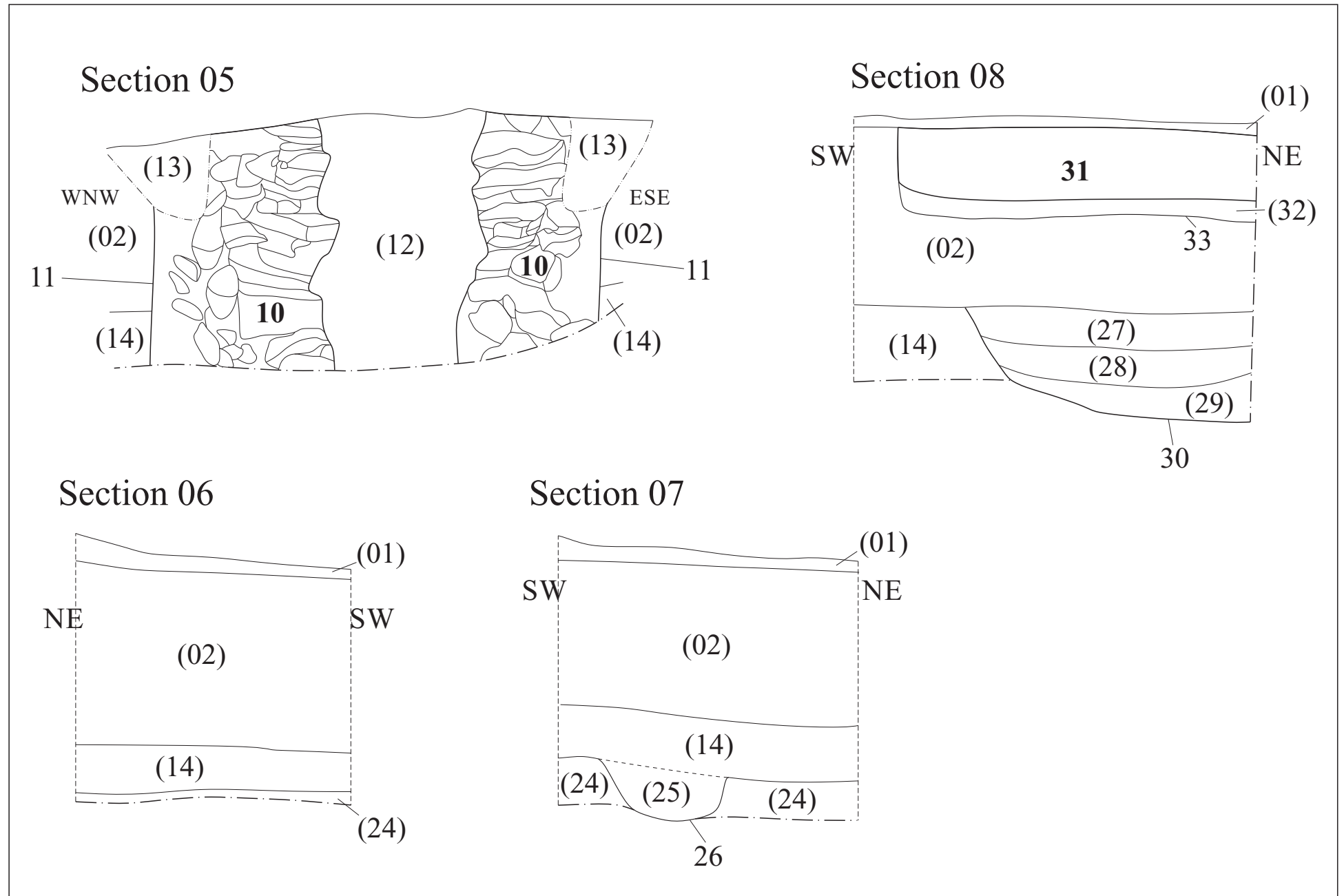


Figure 4: Sections 05, 07, and 08, showing well 10, wall 31, and pits 30 and 26; as well as a representative section, 06, of the footings trench

From the contractors' accounts, this other feature was significantly larger in diameter than well **10**, though its actual dimensions and character cannot be determined. As the feature was capped and below the floor level, it likely suffered only minor truncation and is preserved *in-situ*.

Within the northern area of the footings, the remains of a probable modern wall/floor **15** were visible (probably the same as wall/floor **31**). Feature **15** comprised of stone slabs that were random coursed, with a cement bond (Fig. 3, S.04). The extent of wall/floor **15** visible in section was $\geq 1.89\text{m}$ (W) x 0.19m (D). The length of this feature could not be determined as it extended beyond the limit of excavation; any extant buildings had been demolished; and the ground level had been reduced prior to the monitored works. Below the stone slabs of feature **15** was levelling layer (17), probably the same as (32), which was a loose mid-yellowish brown gravel hardcore in a sand matrix, with a thickness of 0.28m . Both the levelling layer (17)/(32), and the wall/floor **15/31** were within construction cut 16 (same as construction cut 33), which cut earlier cultivation layer (02), and pit 19 (see below).

Below feature **15/31**, was circular pit 19 with concave sides and a flat base. Pit 19 had a single fill of (18), which was a friable to compact mid-greyish brown silty clay of 0.44m thickness (Fig. 3, S.04). No finds were recovered, though the pit is probably post-medieval to modern in date as it cuts through cultivation layer (02).

Within the northern and central area of the footings, pit 23, which is the same as pit 30, was a circular pit with three fills (Fig. 3, S.04; Fig. 4, S.08). The upper fill (20) (same as (27)), comprised mostly of charcoal, within a friable mid-grey silty clay matrix, with a thickness of 0.08m . The fill (20) contained animal bone, which may indicate a deliberate deposit of burnt or organic material. The middle fill (21) (same as (28)) was a loose dark greyish brown silty clay with frequent sub-rounded gravel, $20\text{-}50\text{mm}$ in size, which was also 0.08m thick. This may also have been a deliberate deposit, as it is unlike the other fills on site, and does not correspond to the natural geology of the area. Similar to the uppermost fill, the lowest fill (22) (same as (29)) also comprised mostly of charcoal within a friable mid-grey silty clay matrix, and was 0.12m thick. Once again, this fill (22) may represent a deliberate deposit of burnt or organic material.

Within the central footings, circular pit 26 was located close to well **10**. Pit 26 had a single fill of (25) which was a friable dark greyish brown silty clay, 0.20m thick, with frequent sub-angular limestone pebbles, $20\text{-}50\text{mm}$ in size (Fig. 4, S.07). The true extent of this pit could not be determined, as (25) is very similar to occupation layer (14), indicating that the two were probably contemporary.

Within the eastern footings, structure **40**, within construction cut 41, corresponded to the extant outbuilding, and were visible in section with dimensions: $\geq 1.57\text{m}$ (L) x 0.42m (D). The extant foundations, wall, and step were constructed from stone, in uneven courses, with cement bonding, all of which were modern in date (Fig.5 S.11; Plate 4).

Below this, the remains of wall **42** were visible within construction cut 43 (Fig. 5, S.11). This feature was constructed of stone with uneven coursing, and no visible bonding material. The full extent of feature **42** could not be determined as it extended beyond the footing trench; the visible dimensions were $\geq 0.71\text{m}$ (W) x $\geq 1.5\text{m}$ (L) x

0.25m (D). Feature **42** may be the same as wall/floor **37** within Footing Pad 2 (see below). Feature **42** overlaid cultivation soil (44) (probably the same as (02) and (36)); and was a friable mid-brown sandy silt with a thickness of 0.44m, and occasional sub-angular pebbles, 5-80mm in size. Cultivation soil (44) contained medieval pottery; animal bone; and glass.

At the southeastern corner of the footings, extant wall **45** was the boundary wall for property 64 High Street. Wall **45** was constructed of stones in uneven courses with cement bonding, and was partially rendered in places. The dimensions exceeded 3m in height and 8m in length, with an unknown width. Though the footings butt up against 64 High Street, the wall will not be damaged by the footings.



*Plate 4: Representative photograph of the modern disturbance on the site, showing modern extant outbuilding **40**; the extant wall **45** of 64 High Street; and the undated structure **42**.*

Across the footings, the lowest context reached was (24), which was a friable to compact mid-yellowish orange silty sand $\geq 0.12\text{m}$ thick, and is probably the natural geology or an alluvium layer. This deposit was largely below the depth of excavation; therefore, the true extent and character could not be determined.

4.2 Excavation of Footing Pad 1 (Figs. 2 & 5, S.09)

Within Footing Pad 1, the modern deposits that covered the majority of the general footings area had already been removed, therefore the first deposit encountered was cultivation layer (34). Layer (34) was a friable mid-brown sandy silt approximately 0.25m thick, which is probably the same as (02) and (36), and was characterised by occasional pebble and limestone rubble inclusions, 5-70mm in size. The cultivation layer (34) contained a possible iron floor brad; animal bone; and medieval pottery.

Deposit (34) overlaid probable occupation layer (35), which was a friable to compact dark greyish brown silty clay of 0.57m thickness, probably the same as context (14) and (39). The occupation layer (35) was above layer (24), which is probably the natural geology or alluvium (see above).

4.3 Excavation of Footing Pad 2 (Figs. 2 & 5, S.10, Plate 5)

As within Footing Pad 1, the modern deposits that covered the majority of the general footings area had already been removed. Therefore, the first deposit encountered in Footing Pad 2 was cultivation layer (36) which was a friable mid-brown sandy silt 0.32m thick, which is probably the same as (2) and (34). Again, cultivation layer (36) was characterised by occasional pebble and limestone rubble inclusions, 5-80mm in size.

Below this, was wall/floor **37**, which was an uneven coursed structure with no visible bonding, which extended beyond the limits of the Footing Pad, and is potentially the same as structure **42**. Structure **37** was formed from irregular thin limestone stones, positioned vertically, and was within construction cut 38. The dimensions for the feature were: $\geq 0.80\text{m}$ (W) x $\geq 0.89\text{m}$ (L) x $\geq 0.12\text{m}$ (D). No finds were recovered from this structure.



Plate 5: Representative section of Footing Pad 2, which shows cultivation layer (36) overlying structure 37, which in turn overlies deposit (39).

Structure **37** was above probable occupation layer (39), which was a friable to compact dark greyish brown silty clay, 0.27m thick. Occupation layer (39) contained animal bone and medieval pottery, and was probably the same as deposits (14) and (35). Occupation layer (39) was above deposit (24), which was probably the natural geology or alluvium (see above).

4.4 Reduction of ground within the Footings

After the concrete for the footings had been poured and dried, the area within the footings for 66a and 66b were reduced to the level of the concrete. During this reduction, the remaining modern deposits (01), were removed, revealing the cultivation layer (02) to be present across the site. No other archaeological horizons were encountered at this depth of reduction.

Well **10** was not visible in plan, which may indicate that it had been truncated during its modern infilling, prior to the monitored works.

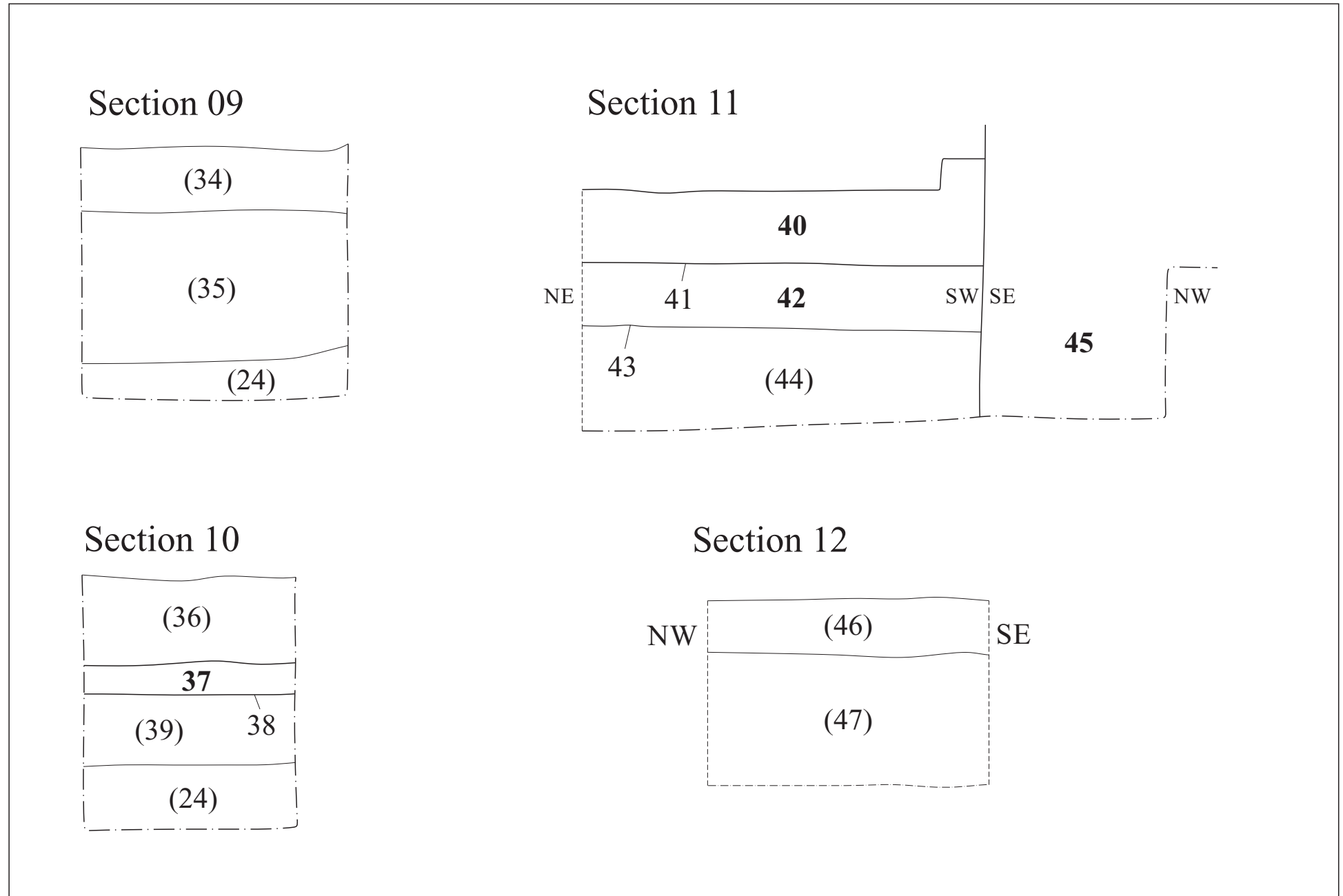


Figure 5: Sections 09, 10, and 12, showing representative sections of Footings Pads 1 and 2, and the service trench; and section 11 showing wall and floors **40, 42, and 45**

0 1 m
Section

4.5 Excavation of Drainage and Services

During the excavation of the drainage, no archaeological features or horizons were encountered, as the groundworks did not go below the modern made ground deposits.

The excavation of the service trenches also encountered no archaeological features (see Plate 6); The first deposit encountered, (46), was approximately 0.20m thick and comprised a layer of tarmac and concrete, overlying bands of friable to loose yellow gravel and hardcore, and a compact dark purple clay.

Below this was deposit (47), a friable dark greyish brown silty clay 0.50m thick, with frequent sub-angular limestone and gravel inclusions, 20-200mm in size. Deposit (47) was probably a cultivation soil, likely the same as deposit (02) (Figs. 2 & 5, S.12).



Plate 6: Representative section of the services trench, showing modern deposits (46) overlying cultivation soil (47).

Additional services were hand excavated along the north side of the existing property of 66 High Street to a maximum depth of 650mm. These services were not monitored, as the works were undertaken without the archaeologist being informed. Based on the monitored works for the other service and drainage trenches, and the proximity to the existing building and services, an excavation depth of 650mm would have likely only encountered made ground and modern deposits.

4.6 Reliability of Results

For the most part, the monitored work during the watching brief was undertaken in fair conditions, with good cooperation from site staff, ensuring that the archaeological investigation could be undertaken without impediment.

During the latter excavation of the footings, despite good cooperation from the site staff, the ground conditions were poor due to flooding caused by bad weather and a high water table. This resulted in areas of the excavated footings collapsing, and being partially underwater. Although unlikely, this may have impacted upon any archaeology present.

Furthermore, excavation of some of the services took place without an archaeologist present, therefore the stratigraphy encountered could not be recorded.

Finally, as discussed above, well **10** was uncovered and infilled during the shut-off of the water mains, without an archaeologist present, and therefore potentially suffered some truncation.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 20 sherds with a total weight of 525g. It was all medieval or later, and mostly post-medieval.

The medieval material was recorded using the conventions of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1994), as follows:

OXAC:	Cotswold-type Ware , AD975-1350. 2 sherds, 21g.
OXAM:	Brill/Boarstall Ware , AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherds, 6g.
OXBF:	North-East Wiltshire Ware , AD1050–1400. 1 sherd, 23g.

The late medieval and early post-medieval wares were recorded using the conventions of the Museum of London Type-Series (e.g. Vince 1985), as follows:

LMSR:	Late Medieval Sandy Transitional Redware , 1480-1600. 2 sherds, 78g.
PEAR:	Pearlware , 1770-1830. 1 sherd, 11g.
PMR:	Post-medieval Redware , 1550+. 9 sherds, 288g.
REFW:	Refined Whiteware , 1800-1900. 1 sherd, 59g.
STBL:	Staffordshire-type Black-glazed Earthenware , 1750-1900. 1 sherd, 23g.
TGW:	English Tin-Glazed Ware , 1600-1800. 1 sherd, 10g.
TPW:	Transfer-printed Whiteware , 1830-1900. 1 sherd, 6g.

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 range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region.

The medieval material consisted of fragments of jars, bowls and jugs, and two rimsherds were noted. The sherd of OXBF from context 39 is rim of a jar, and that of LMSR from context 44 is from a large bowl. These are all common forms.

The post-medieval assemblage comprised a mixture of utilitarian- and table-wares, the former mostly taking the form of internally-glazed PMR bowls. The sherd of TGW from context 48 is from the edge of a plain white plate, and is typical of the mid 17th – 18th century (Orton 1988, 321).

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

Cntxt	OXAC		OXBF		OXAM		LMSR		PMR		TGW		STBL		PEAR		REFW		TPW		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
2	1	12			1	6	1	24	1	76					1	11					L18thC
6	1	9											1	23							M18thC
14									4	114											M16thC
34									2	60											M16thC
39			1	23																	M11thC
44							1	54													L15thC
47									1	21											M16thC
48									1	17	1	10					1	59	1	6	MOD
Total	2	21	1	23	1	6	2	78	9	288	1	10	1	23	1	11	1	59	1	6	

5.2 Building Materials

5.2.1 Ceramic Building Material by Simona Denis with contribution by Paul Blinkhorn

A limited assemblage of 11 ceramic building material fragments, of a total weight of 1395g, was hand-collected from 6 different deposits. Although extremely fragmentary, the state of preservation of the material was good and allowed the identification of type for all of the examples. With the exception of the medieval roof tile fragments recovered from deposit (06), the material was dated to the Post-Medieval to Modern periods.

Table 2. Ceramic Building Material occurrence by context and type

Context	Type	No. of Items	Weight (g)	Comments	Date Range
02	Ridge tile	1	14	Malvernian glazed ridge tile	Post-Medieval
	?Pan tile	1	142	Shallow S-shaped cross section	Post-Medieval
	Sewer pipe	2	844	Salt glazed sewer pipe	Modern
06	Roof tile	1	75	Minety-type glazed roof tile	Medieval to Post-Medieval
	Sewer pipe	1	10	Salt glazed sewer pipe	Modern
14	Roof tile	1	28	Dark orange gritty fabric with frequent small inclusions	Medieval to Post-Medieval
48	Roof/Wall tile	1	170	White fabric and glaze	Post-Medieval
		2	24	Dark red fabric with white glaze	Post-Medieval
		1	88	Dark red fabric	Post-Medieval
Total					

Two fragments of glazed roof-tile were noted. A fragment of a Minety-type weighing 75g occurred in deposit (06). It was 12mm thick, and had runs of a dull green glaze on one surface. Such tiles are generally of 13th-16th century date (Mellor 1994, 100).

Cultivation soil (02) produced a small fragment (weighing 14g) of Malvernian ridge-tile. Such objects are generally of 15th-16th century date (Vince 1977, 274). It was 11mm thick, and had an orange-brown glaze on the upper surface.

5.2.2 Stone by *Simona Denis*

A small sample of 7 fragments of stone, of a total weight of 10714g, was found during the archaeological works. All of the examples were of greenish-grey mudstone, and were positively identified as originating from the underlying geology, Forest Marble Formation.

Roughly worked slabs were recovered from wall **3** and wall/floor **37**, and from well **10**; one of the fragments from the latter also presented one flattened face. A single, fragmentary peg tile was also recorded, preserving one circular peg hole.

It is not recommended to retain the stone fragments, due to their very limited potential for further analysis.

5.3 Faunal Remains

5.3.1 Animal Bone by *Claire Ingrem*

A small number of animal bones were recovered by John Moore Heritage Services during a watching brief at 66 High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire. Most came from cultivation and occupation soils which according to the ceramic evidence are dated to the mid 16th century.

Methodology

Anatomical elements were identified to species where possible with the exception of ribs and vertebrae which were assigned to animal size categories. Limb bones were recorded using the zonal method developed by Serjeantson (1996) which is based on the most numerous zone of a single element taking into account side. In addition, all bone fragments over 10mm in the hand recorded material were recorded to species or size category to produce a basic fragment count of the Number of Identified Specimens (NISP). Fragments categorised as large mammal are likely to belong to horse or cattle, those in the medium mammal category to sheep/goat or pig.

The presence of gnawing and butchery was recorded.

Measurements were taken according to the conventions of von den Driesch (1976). The fusion stage of post-cranial bones was recorded and age ranges estimated according to Getty (1975).

Condition of the bone and taphonomy

In order to estimate the potential of an assemblage to provide taphonomic information, the condition of the bone is graded on a scale of 1 to 5. That assigned to

'1' is deemed to be in excellent condition, demonstrating little post-depositional damage whilst bone material classed as '5' has suffered severe surface erosion and can be identified only as 'bone'. All the bones recovered from the deposits at Witney are in good (Grade 2) or moderate (Grade 3) condition so should preserve evidence for gnawing and other surface modifications (Table 3).

Table 3. Condition of the bone (NISP)

Condition	Mid 11 th C	Mid 16 th C	Modern	undated	Total
2		15	1	4	20
3	1	1			2
Total	1	16	1	4	22

Data

A total of 45 fragments were recovered by hand collection of which 17 are identifiable. Most of the identifiable remains belong to cattle and came from mid 16th century deposits (Table 4). The remaining fragments were unidentifiable.

Table 4. Taxa representation (NISP)

	Mid 11 th C	Late 15 th C	Mid 16 th C	Modern	undated	Total
Cattle	1		4		3	8
Sheep/goat			1			1
Large mammal			6	2		8
Unidentifiable		7	12	7	2	28
Total	1	7	23	9	5	45

Mid 16th century: 4 cattle bones (ulna, femur, tibia and metacarpal) and a sheep/goat radius came from mid 16th century deposits and 6 specimens belong to large mammal.

The cattle tibia and metacarpal came from an occupation deposit (Context 14) along with fragments of a large mammal scapula, a rib and a vertebra. The remaining identifiable specimens came from a cultivation soil (Context 34) whilst another soil context (47) produced a rib and a rib fragment belonging to large mammal. One phalanx was found in context (39).

The proximal epiphyses of one cattle femur and the ulna are unfused indicating that some animals were immature.

Table 5. Incidence of taphonomy in mid 16th century deposits

	gnawing	butchery		
		chop	cut	total
Cattle	1	2	1	3
Sheep/goat		1		1
Large mammal	1	2		2
Total	2	5	1	6

Evidence for canid gnawing is visible on the cattle femur and a large mammal rib. Butchery marks are preserved on several specimens with chops present on the cattle femur and metacarpal, and the sheep radius as well as large mammal rib and vertebra fragments. The cattle ulna has been cut.

A few bones preserve metrical data and this is given in Table 6.

Table 6. Mid 16th century metrical data

Taxa	Element	Measurement	
		SD	
Sheep/goat	Radius	14.9	
		Dd	
Cattle	Tibia	44.9	
		Bp	Dp
Cattle	Metacarpal	63.3	40.5

Modern: a fragment of large mammal rib which has been chopped came from the modern fill of a well (Context 48).

Undated: The upper fill (Context 27) of a pit (30) produced 3 cattle bones – two left femora and a horncore. Cut and chop marks are visible on one femur. The texture and shape of the horncore indicates that it belonged to a juvenile animal (Armitage, 1982).

Discussion and conclusion

The assemblage of animal bone recovered during the watching brief at 66 High Street Witney is insufficient in size to be able to provide reliable information concerning economic or cultural practices. It is only possible to be certain that cattle and sheep/goat were exploited during the mid 16th century and that some cattle were immature at the time slaughter.

5.3.2 Oyster Shell by *Simona Denis*

Eight shells, of a combined weight of 60.4g, were recovered from five different deposits. All of the items were positively identified as valves of British Native Oyster or European Flat Oyster (Winder 2011). The state of preservation of the items was generally fair, although very fragmentary; none of the examples was complete.

Table 7. Oyster Shell occurrence by context and type

Identification	Context	Type	No. of Items	Weight (g)
Oyster Shell	06	Right Valve	1	9.8
	14	Right Valve	2	23.7
		Left Valve	1	8.4
	27	Right Valve	1	8.3
	44	Right Valve	1	1.3
		Left Valve	1	0.9
48	Right Valve	1	8	
Total			8	60.4

Two of the examples recovered from cultivation layer (14) were found to have originated from a single individual.

It is not recommended to retain the oyster shell fragments due to their small quantity and very limited potential for further analysis.

5.4 Miscellaneous

5.4.1 Clay Tobacco Pipe by *Simona Denis*

A small assemblage of five clay tobacco pipe fragments, weighing 20g in total, was collected from three deposits. None of the examples found was complete, although the state of preservation was generally fair.

Table 8. Clay Tobacco Pipe occurrence by context

Context	Type	No. of Items	Weight (g)	Maker's Mark
02	Stem	1	3.4	
14	Stem	1	1	
48	Stem	2	10.1	
	Stem with heel	1	5.5	E C
Total		5	20	

The majority of the items (4 of the 5 objects recovered) were identified as clay pipe stem fragments. No decorations or marks were observed on these examples, and the mouthpieces were not preserved; furthermore, the fragmentary state of the objects precluded any attempt to reconstruct the original overall length or attempt a precise dating. Unmarked stem fragments without diagnostic features or decorations have very little dating value, and can only generally be assigned to the Post-Medieval period.

The remaining item was a fragment of stem complete with heel, measuring 49mm in length and 8mm in diameter. The type was tentatively identified as No. 12 or 13 of Oswald's simplified typology (Oswald 1975), dated between the late 18th and the early 19th centuries. However, the absence of the bowl prevented from a positive identification of the type. The moulded initials E C were observed on both sides of the heel; the maker was tentatively identified as Elizabeth Carty, operating in Neithrop, Banbury in 1847 (Oswald 1975).

The clay tobacco pipe stem fragments are not recommended for retention, due to their extremely limited potential for further analysis.

5.4.2 Glass by *Simona Denis*

Nine fragments of glass, of a combined weight of 482.4g, were recovered during the archaeological monitoring. The state of preservation of the items is generally mediocre; none of the examples was complete, and a most were severely affected by iridescence, a weathering phenomenon causing a series of very thin translucent degradation layers on the surface of the glass, which create a multi-coloured, opalescent appearance (<https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Iridescence>).

Table 9. Glass occurrence by context and type

Context	Type	No. of Items	Weight (g)	Comments	Date Range
02	?Mineral water bottle base	2	84.4	Conjoining. Embossing (...)NEY on body, (...) & S on base	20th C
44	Vessel	1	10.2	Iridescence	Post-Medieval
48	?Wine bottle body	1	26.6	Iridescence	
	?Wine bottle push-up base	1	246.9	Iridescence	
	Champagne bottle neck with finish	1	91.9		20 th C
	Window pane	2	12.2	Iridescence. Edges preserved	Post-Medieval
	?Window pane	1	10.2	Iridescence. Variable thickness	
Total		9	482.4		

Six of the fragments were positively identified as originating from bottles or vessels; two window pane fragments were also present. The remaining item, although tentatively identified as window pane due its flat surface, was found to be of unusually variable thickness.

The only bottle finish present, recovered from deposit (48), was a tooled champagne finish, typical of early 20th century wine bottles (<https://sha.org/bottle/finishstyles2.htm#Champagne>). The embossed bottle base found in cultivation soil (02) was also dated to the same period; embossed series of letters and numbers on the base of glass objects refer to individual mould numbers, and had the purpose of identifying a particular mould in an automatic bottle manufacturing machine. This type of machine was patented by Michael J. Owens in 1904 ([https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Automatic Glass-Bottle Machine](https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Automatic_Glass-Bottle_Machine)).

The glass object are not recommended for retention due to their poor state of preservation, incompleteness and very limited potential for further analysis.

5.4.3 Iron by Simona Denis

Five iron object, weighing 482.5g in total, were hand-collected from five different deposits. The state of preservation of the items was extremely poor, with severe oxidation preventing a positive identification of the type and function for most of the objects.

Two probable nails were recovered from cultivation soil deposits; the item found in deposit (02) was tentatively identified as a general purpose nail, weighing 16.3g and having a square cross-section. The example collected from deposit (34), a possible floor brad, had a rectangular cross-section and weighted 10.1g. The nails were tentatively dated to the Post-Medieval period.

Deposit (48) produced a possible hinge pivot, weighing 272g; one iron rod bent at one end, weighing 172g, was found in occupation layer (14) and tentatively identified as a possible hearth tool. The original function of the object from deposit (06), weighing 12.1g, remains undetermined.

The iron objects are not recommended for retention, due to their poor and unstable conditions, and their very limited potential for further analysis.

6 DISCUSSION

Archaeological investigation to the rear of 66 High Street, Witney, revealed activity relating to its medieval and post-medieval occupation, through to the modern use of the site.

The medieval and post-medieval activity at the site consisted of occupation layer (14)/(35)/(39); wall **03**; pit 26; pit 23/30; and cultivation soil (02)/(34)/(36)/(44)/(47). The site is located within the medieval borough of Witney, so these deposits and features relate to the historic occupation and use of the dwellings built along the High Street.

The borough of Witney is traditionally thought to have been established between the late 12th to early 13th centuries; however recent watching briefs on Witney High Street have revealed evidence of 11th and 12th century occupation (e.g. JMHS 2012; JMHS 2015), including the jar rim sherd recovered from occupation layer (39) of this watching brief, which dates to the mid-11th century.

The dwellings on either side of the development plot are both Grade II Listed Buildings; 64 and 68 High Street were constructed in the late 16th- and late 17th – early 18th century respectively, with later additions to both properties throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The outbuilding 20m south-southeast of 66 High Street is also a Grade II Listed Building, formerly a blanket-making workshop and warehouse constructed in the mid to late 18th century. Similarly, 66 High Street was constructed in the 17th century. The stratigraphic position of wall **03** below the extant foundations of 66 High Street suggests that wall **03** pre-dates the 17th century.

Wall **03** may have been constructed to demarcate a boundary between two plots, associated with the development of the dwellings lining the High Street during the medieval and post-medieval periods. The orientation of wall **03** appears to have the same alignment as the extant buildings and walls of the properties on either side of the development area, indicating that the land organisation was similar during the earlier periods. As this feature extended beyond the limit of excavation, its true dimensions and function could not be determined. However, due to the similarity of the later deposits on either side of wall **03**, it is likely that the use of the areas on either side were of a similar nature.

Though pits 23/30 and 26 provided no dateable material, it is likely that they both relate to late medieval or post-medieval activity at the site. Pit 23/30 cuts earlier 16th-century deposit (14), and the upper fill of pit 23/30 is overlain by post-medieval cultivation layer (02). Stratigraphically, it can be seen that pit 26 is contemporary or earlier than deposit (14); it is likely that the single fill of pit 26 is contemporary with

the formation of occupation layer (14) as the deposits are so similar. The occupation and use of the site throughout these periods can also be evidenced by the material assemblage recovered: domestic wares; building materials; and evidence of animal butchery and disarticulation all demonstrate the domestic use of the site.

Pit 19 is post-medieval to modern in date, as it cuts through cultivation layer (02), though its exact date could not be determined as it did not produce any dateable material.

The construction date of well **10** is unknown, though as it cuts through occupation layer (14) and cultivation layer (02), it must have been constructed during the post-medieval period or later, and probably relates to the continued occupation of the site. A well had not been previously recorded at the site, as the extant modern buildings overlaid it. However, post-medieval finds were found between the construction stones of well **10**. The true depth of the feature could be determined due to health and safety constraints.

Across the site, evidence of modern levelling and surfacing methods were abundant, which relate to the modern occupation and use of the site. The site also contained a lot of modern disturbance largely relating to the drainage and services for the pre-existing buildings on the development site, and those relating to the surrounding dwellings, which have been modified and added to in the 20th and 21st centuries. Additional evidence for the modern use of the site consists of walls/floors **15/31**, **37**, and **42**. Due to the modern levelling and construction methods used in the construction of wall/floor **15/31**, the feature probably relates to the buildings that previously occupied the site, which were demolished prior to the monitored works. Similarly, walls/floors **37** and **42** may relate to previous post-medieval to modern activity on the site, or may be related to the extant outbuilding **40**, which was still in use at the time of the monitored works.

In conclusion, the watching brief at 66 High Street, Witney, has revealed a series of features and deposits associated with the use of the site from the medieval to modern occupation of Witney.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire Museums Service under accession number OXCMS: 2021.27.

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OASIS ID: johnmoor1-421356

Project details

Project name	66 High Street, Witney
Short description of the project	John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief to the rear of 66 High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 35734 09991). The watching brief comprised the footings, two footings pads, and service trenches, in which a series of features and deposits relating to the medieval and post-medieval occupation of Witney were recorded.
Project dates	Start: 25-01-2021 End: 05-02-2021
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	4372 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	OXCMS:2021.27 - Museum accession ID
Any associated project reference codes	WYHS20 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	johnmoor1-421356 - OASIS form ID
Any associated project reference codes	20/01152/FUL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	WALL Medieval
Monument type	WELL Post Medieval
Monument type	WALL/FLOOR Post Medieval
Monument type	PIT Medieval
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Monument type	WALL Post Medieval
Monument type	BUILDINGS/SERVICES Modern

Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIALS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	ANIMAL BONE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	GLASS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	METAL (IRON) Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CLAY PIPE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	SHELL (OYSTER) Uncertain
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	OXFORDSHIRE WEST OXFORDSHIRE WITNEY 66 High Street, Witney
Postcode	OX28 6HJ
Study area	153 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 435712 209980 51.885397699736 -1.366870363313 51 53 07 N 001 22 00 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 79.24m Max: 79.36m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	John Moore Heritage Services
Project brief originator	West Oxfordshire District Council
Project design originator	John Moore Heritage Services
Project director/manager	John Moore
Project supervisor	Grace Griffith
Type of sponsor/funding body	client

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Physical Archive ID	OXCMS:2021.27
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
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Digital Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Stratigraphic","other"
Digital Media available	"GIS","Images raster / digital photography","Images vector","Spreadsheets","Survey","Text"

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Project bibliography 1

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