# LAND AT THE COTTAGE CHURCH LANE SOULBURY BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

# Albion archaeology





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#### Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Eliza Alqassar, Archaeology Officer of Buckinghamshire County Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Gareth Shane, Hanno Conring and Marcin Synus (Project Supervisors). The report was prepared by Hanno Conring and Gareth Shane, with finds input from Jackie Wells (Artefacts Officer) and Holly Duncan (Artefacts Manager), with illustrations by Joan Lighting (CAD Illustrator). The project was managed by Gary Edmondson (Project Manager). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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## Version History

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1.0	27/05/2016	n/a
1.1	20/06/2016	Incorporating comments for the Archaeological Officer

## Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

ALGAO Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers

AO Archaeology Officer

AVDC Aylesbury Vale District Council

ClfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

WSI Written Scheme of Investigation



## 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Planning Background

Planning permission was granted by Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) (15/02664/APP) for the erection of two dwellings and conversion of a stable block into a single dwelling, together with alterations to existing access to land at 'The Cottage', Church Lane, Soulbury, Buckinghamshire.

Because the proposed development had the potential to impact upon below-ground heritage assets, the Archaeology Officer (AO) of Buckinghamshire County Council advised that a scheme of archaeological works should be implemented at the site. In accordance with this advice, AVDC attached a condition (no. 6) to the planning permission.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared in response to advice from the AO, detailing the requirements for the archaeological work necessary to address the condition (Albion 2015).

Archaeological monitoring of the construction works took place intermittently between and early March and April 2016. The results are presented in this report.

## 1.2 Site Location and Description

The village of Soulbury is located in the Vale of Aylesbury, some 4km west of Leighton Buzzard and 11.5km SE of the centre of Milton Keynes. Situated on the SW margin of the village, the site is located to the south of the junction of High Road — the village's main thoroughfare — and Church Lane, centred grid reference SP (4) 8824681 (2)2685945 (Figure 1).

The village is located on high ground at the western edge of the valley of the Ouzel, with tributaries of the river creating valleys to the north and south. The site is on a SE-facing slope between 105m and 108m above OD. The underlying geology comprises sands and gravels of unknown age, with glacial Till to the south and east. To the south on the lower ground within the valley of the tributary of the Ouzel is a linear band of head deposit (BGS 1992).

The development site is located immediately to the south of the large dwelling known as 'The Cottage', which fronts Church Lane, and its associated rear garden. It is roughly rectangular in plan, extending 73m NNW-SSE by up to 72m wide in the north, reducing to a width of 44m in the south. The eastern boundary is defined by High Road; the southern boundary abuts another land parcel; whilst the western extent is sinuous, defined by trees located towards the western margin of the current land parcel, with agricultural land beyond.

The site is within the Soulbury Conservation Area, which extends roughly N-S along High Road, including the historic buildings forming the ribbon development, which characterises the plan-form of the village.



Prior to the commencement of the works, the site consisted of a number of elements: vacant buildings in the north-east (a two-storey barn and a single-storey stable), extending back from Church Lane; a formal gravel garden and pond to the south of the building occupies an elevated terrace (Plot1) up to c. 1.8m above the ground to the south-east; occupied by an extensive lawn with an orchard further to the south-east (Plot 2) (Figure 2).

# 1.3 Archaeological Background

A heritage statement was prepared to accompany the planning application (CgMs 2015); it is briefly summarised below.

The village has Saxon origins, the name referring to a 'stronghold in a gully'. By the time of the Domesday Book of 1086, the village was known as 'Soleberie'. It appears that the village originated on the higher ground, with the church of All Saints overlooking most of the village, which developed along the main routeway, the High Road, which runs roughly N-S. Farms and dwellings developed along the routeway, with a number of timber-framed buildings dating from the 16th and 17th centuries still surviving.

'The Cottage' and associated stable block are shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1881, with a 'Y'-shaped track extending to the NW. By the second edition map of 1899, the two smaller subdivisions had been created in the area to the south of the stable block, extending to the trackway. By 1925 the trackway was no longer shown, with the site subdivided into a series of land parcels extending from the High Road.

The heritage assets in the vicinity of the development site are exclusively medieval to post-medieval in date, comprising the Grade II\* church and the Grade II Manor Farmhouse and 'The Old Cottage'.

# 1.4 Project Objectives

The immediate objective of the archaeological fieldwork was to monitor and supervise all groundworks that had the potential to impact archaeological remains, and to investigate, characterise and record any archaeological deposits encountered within them.

The close proximity of known medieval and post-medieval remains indicated that there was potential for the investigation to contribute to regional research topics identified within the regional research framework. The site provided potential to look at the margins of the current settlement in the vicinity of the church, to determine if any traces of the expansion and contraction of the settlement from the medieval period onwards could be identified, or if this was always agricultural land on the periphery of the historic settlement.

The relevant research framework that has been devised for the region is the Solent Thames Research Framework, which is a vital tool for the assessment of any heritage asset within their local, regional and national historic environment setting.



The resource assessment indicates that village has its origins in the Saxon period, together with subsequent development in the later medieval period are a focus for investigation particularly expansion up to the 14th century and subsequent decline or shrinkage (Hey and Hind 2014, 240).

For the later medieval period the research framework lists a number of areas for further research had potential to be of relevance to this project. These include:

- The chronology of development and character of field systems and their relationship to settlement across the region;
- The origin and nature of rural settlements (of various types);
- Village shrinkage and abandonment; change from hamlets to farmsteads.

Any revisions to the project as it progressed would be based upon the Solent Thames Research Framework.

## 1.5 Methodology

The proposed development comprised the erection of two dwellings, each with an associated detached double garage to the rear and conversion of the vacant stable block to another dwelling, with the creation of an associated driveway from the High Road to the rear of the dwellings (Figure 2). This involved ground reduction and the excavation of footing trenches for the new dwellings, together with associated service trenches for both the new-build elements and the converted stable block. Creation of the driveways also required ground reduction.

Throughout the project the standards and requirements set out in the following documents were adhered to:

•	Albion Archaeology	Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork (2nd edn,	
		2001)	
•	BCC	Generic Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief	
•	CIfA	Charter and by-law; Code of conduct (2014) Standard and guidance for an archaeological	
		watching brief (2014)	
		Standard and guidance for the collection,	
		documentation, conservation and research of	
		archaeological materials (2014)	
•	Historic England	Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory	
	_	and practice of methods, from sampling and	
		recovery to post-excavation (2015)	
		Management of Research Projects in the Historic	
		Environment (2015)	



# 2. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 2.1 Introduction

The site was monitored during periods of ground reduction between 8th March and 4th April 2016, allowing the exposed deposits to be view under different lighting and moisture conditions.

In the following summary contexts in brackets refer to deposits recorded on site, with each area assigned a discrete block of contexts, with [111] defining a pit in Plot 1, whilst (212) defines the fill of ditch [211] in Plot 2. Figure 2 shows the proposed development plan, with Figures 3 and 4 comprising the all features plan and selected sections; Figures 5–8 contain selected images. Finds information is integrated into the text.

## 2.2 Plot 1

Occupying the higher ground adjacent to the stables block, the area of investigation extended some 63m NE-SW by 22m wide, sloping down gradually to the road. This was a defined terrace up to 1.8m above the ground to the south where Plot 2 was located. This terrace contained the formal garden and pond at the north-east end of the plot. This area was subject to extensive ground reduction.

Before ground reduction could begin, a large conifer tree was removed from the south-west limits of the plot; a hedge that extended along the southern margin of the terrace was also removed. The ground disturbed by the roots revealed no archaeological deposits or finds. The removal of the formal garden only revealed modern deposits associated with the creation of the garden in the later part of the 20th century.

Extensive ground reduction was carried out under close archaeological supervision, revealing both small clusters as well as more isolated rubbish pits, together with features associated with the garden. The ground was reduced by up to 1.8m into the undisturbed geological strata; for this reason the footing trenches for this plot were not monitored.

## 2.2.1 Soil profile

#### Topsoil / garden soil

The loose dark brown sandy silt (100) was up to 0.35m. The deposit contained a modern ceramic plant pot sherd (19g), which was not retained. This deposit was associated with the landscaping of the terrace.

#### **Buried topsoil**

Sealed beneath the dark topsoil was a lighter coloured deposit (101), comprising loose grey mid brown sandy silt. This buried topsoil was up to 0.4m thick, indicating that it was a former cultivation soil.



## **Made-ground**

Directly beneath the buried topsoil was made-ground (102) — a loose mix of mid reddish brown / bright mid orange silty sand, with a maximum thickness of 0.9m (Figure 4: section 3; Figure 5: images 1 and 2; and Figure 6: image 3). The variable appearance of this deposit suggests that it was formed of mixed, redeposited subsoil, probably associated with the building-up and creation of the upper terrace of the garden.

#### 2.2.2 Geological strata

This comprised a distinctive and compact light greenish yellow silty clay (103), which varied to light white grey silty clay (104).

## 2.2.3 Archaeological features

A series of features were revealed — mostly pits that extended across the area (Figure 3: brown features); both small clusters and isolated examples were identified. Other features included a terrace revetting wall, a drain and disturbance associated with the former garden, particularly linear bands of disturbance defining former hedge lines (Figure 3: green hatched features). All the features contained glass and stoneware bottles, pottery and other material dating to no earlier than the Victorian period. Most finds were examined on site and not collected. Retained artefacts from pits [105] and [111], and hedge line [109] are catalogued below.

## **Revetting wall**

Located at the southern edge of the terrace was a wall (123) aligned NW-SE (Figure 3: red arrow). It was two bricks thick and survived to at least eight courses (0.65m). A short distance to the north within the elevated terrace was a large diameter ceramic drain [124] that was traced for at least 9m (Figure 3: light blue line; Figure 6: image 4).

## **Hedge lines**

Two roughly perpendicular, slightly irregular linear features were identified (Figure 3: light green hatching). At the southern margin of the plot, feature [109] was aligned roughly NE-SW; it was at least 20m long by c. 4m wide and up to 0.4m deep. To the north, feature [113] was aligned NW-SE; it was at least 5m long and 1.3m wide, extending from the vicinity of the western end of the stable block. The loose dark brown sandy silt fills contrasted with the adjacent madeground (102) (Figure 4: section 3). A variety of finds were recovered from the fill of [109]:

- Two complete salt-glazed brown stoneware cylindrical blacking bottles (height 190mm; base diameter 80mm). Datable to the early 20th century (Figure 9: image 10).
- Complete salt-glazed brown stoneware cylindrical ink bottle with a lip (height 113mm; base diameter 54mm). Lower body stamped 'Doulton, Lambeth', and '40'. Produced by Doulton & Co. Ltd. Lambeth, London, *c.* 1858–1910 (Figure 9: image 12).



- Complete white porcelain perfume box stamped 'Gelle Freres Parfumeurs', manufactured by Gelle Bros. Paris. (Company founded 1826) - Figure 9: image 11).

It is assumed that material built-up against this boundary feature. These features appear to correlate with land divisions shown on historic maps from the first edition of the Ordnance Survey published in 1899.

## **Rubbish pits**

A series of seven pits were defined during removal of the buried topsoil (101); they contained similar dark fills (Figure 3: brown features). The pits were generally well-defined and circular to oval in plan. The circular pits were generally 1–2m in diameter, although one example was only 0.54m across. The oval pits in the east were much larger, ranging from 3–4.5m long by 1.5–2.1m wide. The pits had near vertical sides and were 0.6–0.8m deep, extending into the subsoil. They were filled with mixed dark brown and black sandy silt, with a variety of finds including whole glass and ceramic vessels, ceramic building material, pottery fragments and metal fittings (see below). There were three pits in the SW [117], [119] and [121]. To the NE were pits [105], [107], [111] and [115] (Figure 5: image 1).

#### Pit [105]

- Clear light green natural glass moulded cylindrical condiment/oil bottle, with surviving flat-topped cork stopper. Late 1800s to earlier 1900s.
- Clear light blue-green glass moulded cylindrical milk bottle. 1900s.
- Clear colourless glass moulded cylindrical bottle. Late 1800s to earlier 1900s.
- Clear blue-green glass. Part base and two walls of moulded rectangular bottle, with two raised measuring lines on one wall fragment. Base embossed K.8913. Late 1800s to earlier 1900s.
- Clear blue-green glass. Part base of flattened moulded oval body (case bottle type). Embossed diamond with dot on base. Late 1800s to earlier 1900s.
- Clear blue-green glass. Lower portion of rectangular 'case' bottle, with mould seam visible on surviving side edge. Late 1800s to earlier 1900s.
- Translucent cobalt blue glass moulded cylindrical pharmacy/poison bottle. Late 1800s to 1930s.
- Clear colourless glass moulded cylindrical body and short narrow neck. Embossed logo in lozenge G.S. with a possible J (or anchor?) through both letters. Base embossed G.B. Late 1800s.
- Clear blue-green glass moulded cylindrical bottle embossed with 'FLORIDA WATER MURRAY & LANMAN DRUGGIST NEW-YORK'; on base '1103'. Late 1800s+ (Figure 9: image 9).
- Clear colourless glass moulded oval bodied bottle with screw threads.
   'MACLEANS BRAND STOMACH POWDER' embossed below neck. Base embossed 'MACLEANS LONDON P6'. 1930s–1950s.

## Pit [111]

- Clear colourless glass moulded Heinz tomato Ketchup bottle, with eight facets on lower body and a narrowed tapering neck. Base embossed 'H.J. Heinz Co Patd 255' and dot in triangle. Tin(?) lid in situ with circular label - outer red



ring 'PURE FOOD PRODUCTS', white centre with black '57'. Embossed short horizontal line above facets, but lacks the '57' mark noted on other bottles. 1920s+.

The relationship of the pits with the buried topsoil was merging, suggesting that they were roughly contemporary, being dug through the soil, with subsequent redigging of the cultivation soil incorporating fragments into the deposit. The pits tended to contain unbroken or larger fragments of the bottles and vessels in contrast to the buried topsoil.

## 2.3 Plot 2

Situated on the lower ground, the area of investigation extended some 52m NE-SW by 23m wide. Initially the thin dark grey clay silt topsoil and turf was stripped to the underlying subsoil; the soil profile was much thinner in this area. The footing trenches were then excavated from this level and concrete was poured intermittently between late March and early April 2016. The ground between the footings was subsequently reduced to the geological strata.

Before ground reduction could begin, several trees were removed by mechanical excavator, disturbing the topsoil but not revealing any archaeological deposits or finds. The subsequent footing trenches were extensive in plan and dug to a depth of 1.8m, affording good coverage of the area and recording of the soil horizons present (Figure 7: image 5).

## 2.3.1 Soil profile

The dark grey-brown, friable silt clay topsoil (200) was 0.1–0.28m thick. Beneath this was friable mid brown-yellow silt sand clay subsoil (201) that was 0.17–0.4m thick (Figure 7: image 5).

#### 2.3.2 Geological strata

This was revealed directly below the subsoil, comprising firm light yellow-grey chalky clay (207); it was machined to a maximum depth of 0.8m.

#### 2.3.3 Archaeological features

Apart from evidence for root disturbance, a series of ditches were revealed (Figure 3: orange features).

#### **Ditches**

Revealed immediately below the shallow topsoil, a series of perpendicular ditches subdivided the investigation area into at least four parcels. Ditches [202] and [204]/[211] were elements of the same NE-SW boundary, traced for at least 45m. Ditches [208] and [209] defined perpendicular elements to the NW and SE respectively; the alignment of the main ditch was oblique to High Road. However, this alignment is parallel to both the edge of the terrace and the stable block further to the north.

The building footing trenches revealed the well-defined, 0.7m deep, concave profile ranging from 1.2–2m across for [211]; it was filled with light yellow-brown clay silt (Figure 4: sections 1 and 2; Figure 7: image 6). No reliable dating



evidence was recovered from the ditch fills. A small quantity of modern finds, including foil milk bottle tops, were recovered from the top of the exposed fill. No finds were recovered from the excavated material from the building footings. The modern finds could be residual and do not provide reliable dating for the features.

No further archaeological features or artefacts were observed in the rest of the footings.

## 2.4 Access Road

The shared drive area was machined to a depth of 0.1m into, though not through, the topsoil; no archaeological features were observed at this level (Figure 8: image 7).

# 2.5 Land Adjacent to the Access Road

Topsoil was removed from a roughly triangular area of the field immediately to the SE of the access off the High Road (Figure 3). However, only spreads of modern material were revealed. This is likely to be upcast material from the cleaning out of the adjacent road ditches (Figure 8: image 8).

## 2.6 Summary and Conclusions

The creation of the raised terrace in Plot 1 had masked the naturally rising ground in this area. This was occupied by a garden, which underwent change over time, including the creation of an ornamental garden.

This area contained a series of rubbish pits, which merged with a garden cultivation soil and were probably contemporary. The finds from these pits indicate domestic rubbish disposal; the material mostly dates to the Victorian period, though some 20th-century material was present, indicating limited continuation of this practice into recent times.

The made-ground deposits did not seal any earlier features or an earlier buried soil profile. No earlier residual finds were recovered, suggesting that this area was away from the focus of activity in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

There were fewer features in Plot 2, comprising a series of ditches containing relatively dark fills. The only finds were modern, recovered from the unexcavated surface of the fill, which does not provide reliable dating for the features. However the dark character of the fills and the common alignment with the terrace and stable block to the north may suggest that the features were relatively modern, possibly defining parts of a garden or small land parcels. There was no evidence of recutting to suggest that these features were open for an extended period of time. These ditches do not correlate to land divisions shown on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1899 onwards.

It is not clear if the lack of earlier features on the site was due to truncation by garden-related activity or due to the marginal location and sloping topography of this area, together with the relatively heavy nature of the underlying clays.



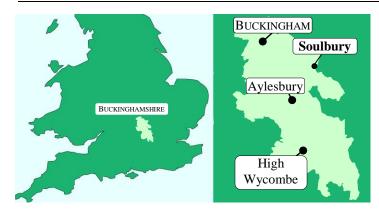
The site records do not merit any further analysis or reporting. The project archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum (accession no. AYBCM:2015.166). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (ref. no. albionar1-230198) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.

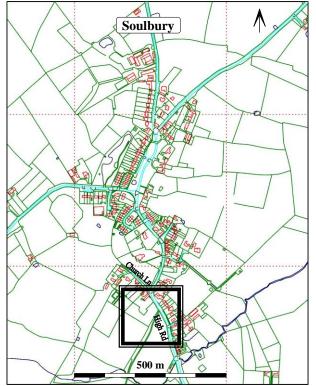


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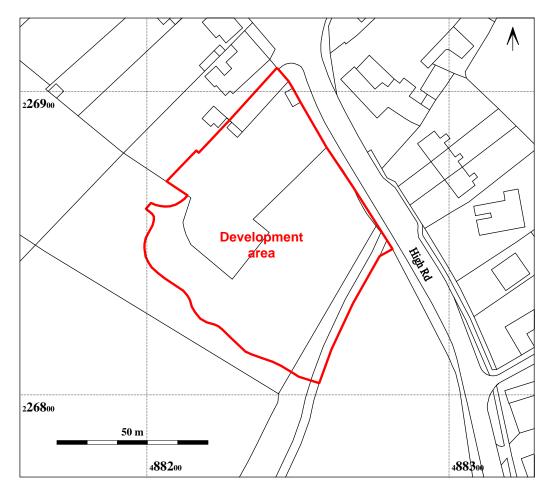


Figure 1: Site location

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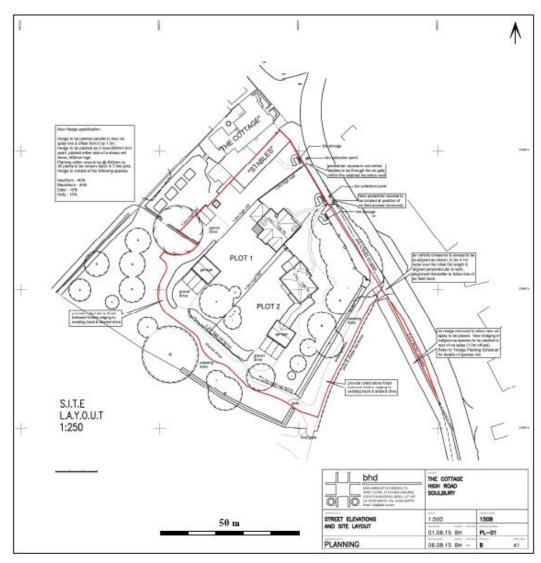


Figure2: Proposed development plan



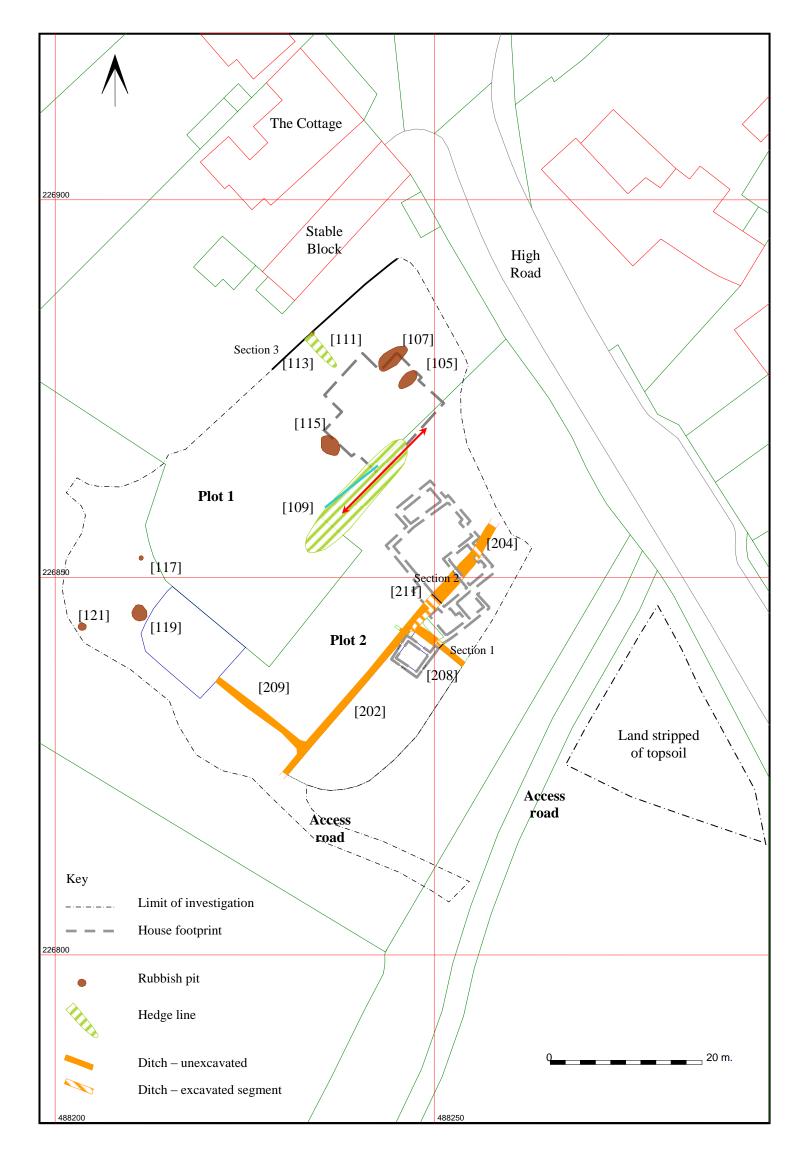
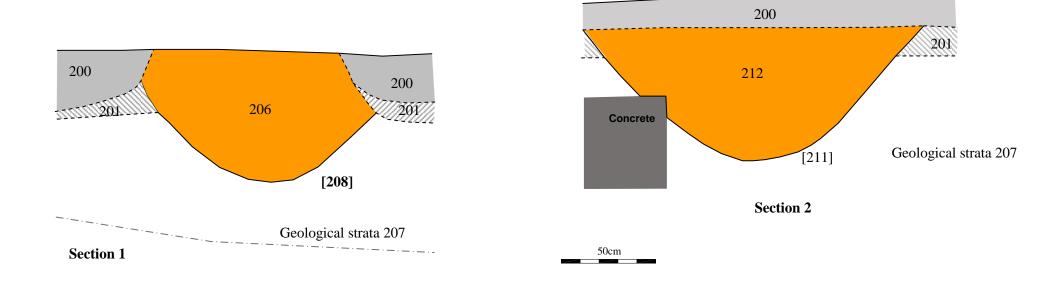


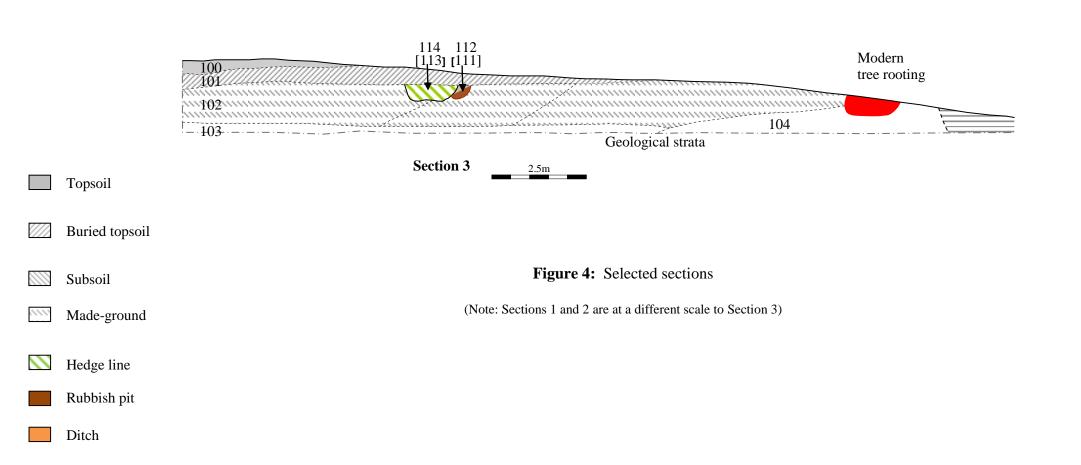
Figure 3: All features plan

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**Image 1:** General view of the north-east area of Plot 1, showing the profile of the terrace. Finds concentrations in the foreground define the tops of rubbish pits [105] and [107] being revealed as the buried soil (101) is removed.



**Image 2:** View of Plot 1 from edge of Plot 2, including remnants of the terrace in the foreground, with made-ground and stable block beyond.

Figure 5: Selected images 1 and 2 - Plot 1





**Image 3:** View across partly stripped terrace with Plot 1 to the right of the image and Plot 2 on the lower ground to the left. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.



**Image 4:** Section though the edge of the terrace in Plot 1 revealing the revetting wall (123) and the ceramic drain [124] to the right.

Figure 6: Selected images 3 and 4 - Plot 1





**Image 5:** Soil profile revealed in section of footing trench. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.



**Image 6:** Concave profile of undated ditch [208] revealed in a footing trench. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

**Figure 7:** Selected images 5 and 6 - Plot 2





Image 7: General view of access road after strip



**Image 8:** Topsoil strip in the area to the south of Plot 2, adjacent to access road

**Figure 8:** Selected images 7 and 8 - access road and adjacent area to south



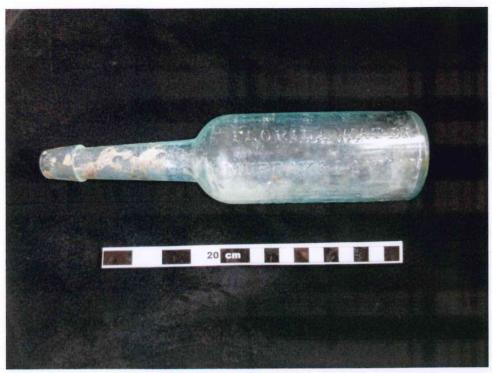
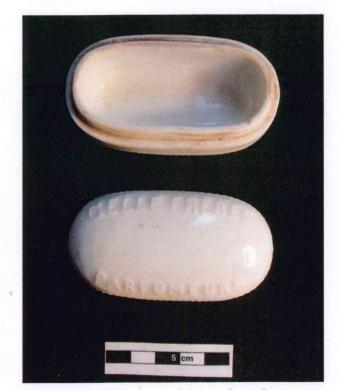


Image 9: Glass 'Florida Water' bottle from rubbish pit [105].



**Image 11:** White porcelain perfume box 'Gelle Freres Parfumeurs' from hedge line [109].



**Image 12:** A salt-glazed brown stoneware ink bottle with a lip from hedge line [109].



**Image 10:** Two salt-glazed brown stoneware blacking bottles from hedge line [109].

**Figure 9:** Selected artefacts - images 9 - 12



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