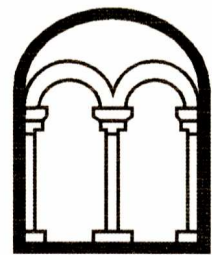


**LABURNUM COTTAGE
CHAWSTON LANE, CHAWSTON
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING
ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

Albion
archaeology



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Produced for:
Mr M Gavin
Laburnum Cottage
Chawston

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Contents

List of Figures.....	1
Preface.....	2
Key Terms.....	2
1. PLANNING BACKGROUND	3
2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION.....	3
3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	3
4. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.....	4
5. METHODOLOGY.....	5
6. RESULTS.....	5
6.1 Groundworks Undertaken	5
6.2 Soil Profile	6
6.3 Potential Quarry Pits and Tree Holes	6
6.4 Human Bones	6
6.5 Artefacts.....	7
7. CONCLUSIONS.....	7
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	7

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location and location of groundworks

Figure 2: New extension — architect's plan, showing approximate position of human bones

Figure 3: New extension — foundation trench looking north

Figure 4: New access drive — ground reduction revealing mixed gravel deposits and possible quarry pit

Figure 5: New extension — ground reduction revealing gravel and make-up deposits

Figure 6: Human bones

Figures are bound at the back of the report



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 Geoff Saunders, Archaeological Officer of Bedford Borough Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Christiane Meckseper (Project Officer). This report has been prepared by Christiane Meckseper with figures by Christiane Meckseper and Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

AO	Bedford Borough Council's Archaeological Officer
Client	Mr Mick Gavin
DA	Development Area
HER	Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Record
HET	Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Team
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NHLE	National Heritage List for England
Procedures Manual	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2nd ed, 2001 Albion Archaeology



1. PLANNING BACKGROUND

Planning permission (10/01736/FUL) was granted by Bedford Borough Council, for the replacement of a conservatory with an oak-framed garden room to the rear of Laburnum Cottage and the construction of a new access drive. The works included the demolition of the old structure prior to its replacement.

A brief for the archaeological work was issued by the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council (2010), detailing the requirements for a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording during the development works. In response to the brief, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared (Albion Archaeology 2011) and agreed with the HET.

Archaeological monitoring of the construction works took place intermittently between October 2011 and April 2012. The results are presented in this report.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Laburnum Cottage lies on the northern side of Chawston Lane, approximately halfway between its junction with Roxton Road to the west and the A1 to the east. It is part of the dispersed village of Chawston and lies close the medieval village's centre (Figure 1). The development site is located at grid reference TL 156881 561903.

The Development Area (DA) is a residential property and consists of a Grade II listed thatched cottage within a garden that is bordered by trees and shrubs in the east and west, by its garden and low fence in the north and by Chawston Lane in the south. The area immediately to the rear of the cottage consisted of a paved area, which was lifted prior to the start of the investigation.

The topography of the area is relatively flat at *c.* 21m OD. The superficial geology comprises 3rd River Terrace Deposits composed of silt, sand and gravel and overlying solid Oxford Clay Formation Mudstone.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Little is known about the archaeological potential of the area. A 1km-radius search of the Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Record revealed approximately 69 previously recorded heritage assets. The majority of these are of undesignated status but the area also contains designated assets in the form of two Scheduled Monuments and several Listed Buildings (all Grade II).

The River Great Ouse lies *c.* 1.3km to the east of the DA. Several concentrations of cropmarks have been recorded within the search area, most likely representing prehistoric enclosures, ring ditches and funerary monuments (HER 1651, HER 1833, HER 1836, HER 2664, HER 8818 and HER 17147). Cropmarks HER 1651 and HER 17147 are located a short distance to the east of the development site.

Prehistoric sites tend to be spread along river gravel terraces; comparable landscapes have been investigated in detail at Willington Quarry (Albion Archaeology in prep.) and at the Biddenham Loop (Luke 2008).



No Roman remains have so far been uncovered within the area. However, a small assemblage of metal objects consisting of a Roman strap end and two medieval buckles (HER 16193) were found *c.* 100m to the north-west of the development site.

The historic environment of the area was more noticeably shaped in the medieval period when two moated manor sites attracted linear medieval village development.

Laburnum Cottage lies close to the medieval centre of Chawston and *c.* 500m to the east of the site of Chawston Manor (HER 475). This is a designated Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1114919). The site comprises the remains of a medieval moated enclosure with an associated fishpond and supply channel forming the south and west sides of a subsidiary enclosure. It is first mentioned in documentary records in 1302 (Page 1912). The manor house within the moated enclosure is a Grade II listed building and dates from the 17th century (HER 1744).

The medieval settlement of Wyboston (HER 17149) and its manor site (HER 474) lie *c.* 750m to the north of the development site. The manor site includes a medieval moated enclosure and an adjacent series of building platforms. It is also a designated Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1012076).

Little evidence for the medieval settlements survives — earthworks of a deserted medieval village (HER 8816) to the east of the A1 may be part of the medieval settlement at Chawston; whilst the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation (HER 5209) indicate the agricultural exploitation of the landscape.

Most of the designated and undesignated buildings listed in the HER are of 17th-century and later date. They most likely date from the period when the turnpiked Great North Road (now the A1) gained importance as the major coaching route between London and the North. Laburnum Cottage itself is a Grade II listed building (HER 1746), built *c.* 1700.

Chawston is part of the parish of Roxton, which was enclosed in 1810 (Page 1912). A gravel pit, immediately opposite the development site and shown on the 2nd edition OS map of 1901, gives evidence of the recent exploitation of the underlying gravels for industrial purposes.

During the 1930s much of Chawston was incorporated into the Land Settlement Association, a scheme first set up to provide land for unemployed labourers and then to maximise food production for the war effort.

4. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The DA had the potential to reveal information on a number of research objectives identified in the research framework for Bedfordshire (Oake *et al* 2007).

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:



- the nature and date of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits present at the site.

The specific objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- if there was any evidence for medieval occupation relating to the village of Chawston;
- if any post-medieval remains relating to the first periods of occupation of Laburnum Cottage were present.
- to add to our knowledge and understanding of the utilisation of the valley of the River Great Ouse and the nature of medieval rural settlements.

5. METHODOLOGY

All groundworks were either undertaken by hand or excavated with a mini-digger driven by an experienced operator. They were observed, inspected and recorded by Albion Archaeology staff.

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

- IfA's *Code of Conduct (2010)*;
- IfA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs and Field Excavations (updated 2008) and finds (updated 2008)*;
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records (2001)*;
- English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects (1991)*.

6. RESULTS

6.1 Groundworks Undertaken

The nature of the works changed during the course of the development. The old garage remained standing and in place of the new garage a gravel driveway was constructed. The works for the proposed extension remained the same (Figure 2).

The groundworks were monitored intermittently between October 2011 and April 2012. They consisted of the excavation of foundation trenches plus reduction in ground level within the footprint of the new garden room at the back of the cottage, the insertion of a service run plus soakaway and the construction of a new driveway at the front of the building (Figure 1).

The foundation trenches of the new garden room were 0.5m wide and excavated to a maximum depth of 1.0m. The ground in the footprint of the new building was reduced by c. 0.50m.

The service trench was 0.4m wide and 0.7m deep (green L-shaped feature on Figure 1). It extended from a soakaway measuring 2m square and 1m deep, situated in front of the existing garage to a point halfway between the cottage and new driveway where it joined existing services.



Ground reduction for the new access drive at the front of the cottage ranged from 0.3m in the east to 0.5m in the west.

6.2 Soil Profile

The soil profile throughout the site consisted of *c.* 0.20–0.35m of garden turf and topsoil above 0.6–0.8m of made-up ground. Undisturbed geological strata, comprising clean orange gravels were observed at a depth of 0.8–0.9m below modern ground level (Figure 3).

At the front of the house, as observed in the service trench, soakaway and ground reduction for the driveway, the made-up ground consisted of dark brown humic garden soils with lenses of yellowish gravel. In the area of the driveway this was increasingly mixed with gravel and root disturbances. At the back of the house, as observed in the foundation for the new extension, it consisted of mid to light yellow and reddish sandy gravel with moderate flecks of dark brown gravelly silt.

6.3 Potential Quarry Pits and Tree Holes

In the area of the new driveway a number of sub-circular discolourations were observed. These are most likely the result of former root bowls of trees. According to the owner, Mr Gavin, a small apple orchard once stood on the site. Traces of rooting and disturbance along the western boundary of the DA correspond to a recently removed line of conifers. The formation level of the driveway was *c.* 0.5m below modern ground level and still consisted of mixed gravels disturbed by rooting.

At the back of the cottage the made-up ground was more gravelly and fairly loose, causing the sides of the newly-dug foundation trenches to collapse in several areas. No distinct features could be discerned within the trench sides, but the gravel tip lines and loose nature of the soils suggest that the area may have been subject to quarrying (Figure 3). Potential further quarry pits were revealed in the final formation level of the driveway at the front of the building (Figure 4).

To the rear of the cottage, above the possible quarry pits was a layer of dark brown sandy gravel *c.* 0.3m thick (Figure 5). This most likely represents a garden soil incorporating underlying deposits of quarry backfill.

6.4 Human Bones

Within the dark gravelly garden soil in the footprint of the new extension two human femurs and part of a skull (Figure 6) were discovered at a depth of *c.* 0.5m below modern ground level, which in this area was equal to 0.5m below the formation level of the removed former paved area.

The bones were examined and retained by Bedfordshire Police (reference no: URN 398 27/2/2012). Consultation by Bedfordshire Police with an external specialist¹ confirmed that the bones were of ancient origin, rather than of modern forensic interest to the police.

¹ Letter from Centre for Anatomy and Human Identification, University of Dundee, dated 28.02.2012.
Laburnum Cottage, Chawston Lane, Chawston, Bedfordshire: Programme of Archaeological



The origin of the bones is unclear. Their fragmentary nature and deposition in the mixed gravel deposits which form potential made-up ground or quarry pit backfill indicate that they do not represent part of a burial *in situ* but were brought to the site as part of previous earthmoving operations, possibly prior to the construction of the cottage. Mr Gavin indicated that disarticulated bone, probably human, had previously been recovered from the rear garden of an adjacent property, suggesting extensive remodelling of the area, probably in the post-medieval period. The source of these deposits and associated human bone is uncertain, though probably fairly local.

6.5 **Artefacts**

The *in situ* deposits and spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts, but both were devoid of archaeological material apart from a very small number of animal bone fragments retrieved from the spoil heaps. These were not retained.

7. **CONCLUSIONS**

The archaeological observations at Laburnum Cottage revealed that there are substantial areas of made-up ground, both at the front and the rear of the cottage. Mixed gravel deposits recorded in the footprint of the new extension may also be the result of backfilling of quarries in this area. The nature of the deposits suggest that this is the mixed overburden above good deposits of gravel, and so is likely to be derived from nearby quarrying; though the gravel pit opposite the DA is unlikely to be the source.

During the quarrying and earthmoving operations parts of a human skeleton were imported onto the site and dumped within the gravel deposits. This was most likely an inadvertent and not deliberate act. The date of the human bones is unclear.

The lack of artefacts within the deposits suggests that there was no nearby human habitation in the medieval period or earlier. The quarrying and earthmoving most likely took place in the post-medieval period prior to and as a preparation for the construction of Laburnum Cottage, which was built *c.* 1700.

The site records do not merit any further analysis or reporting; the project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM: 2011.20).

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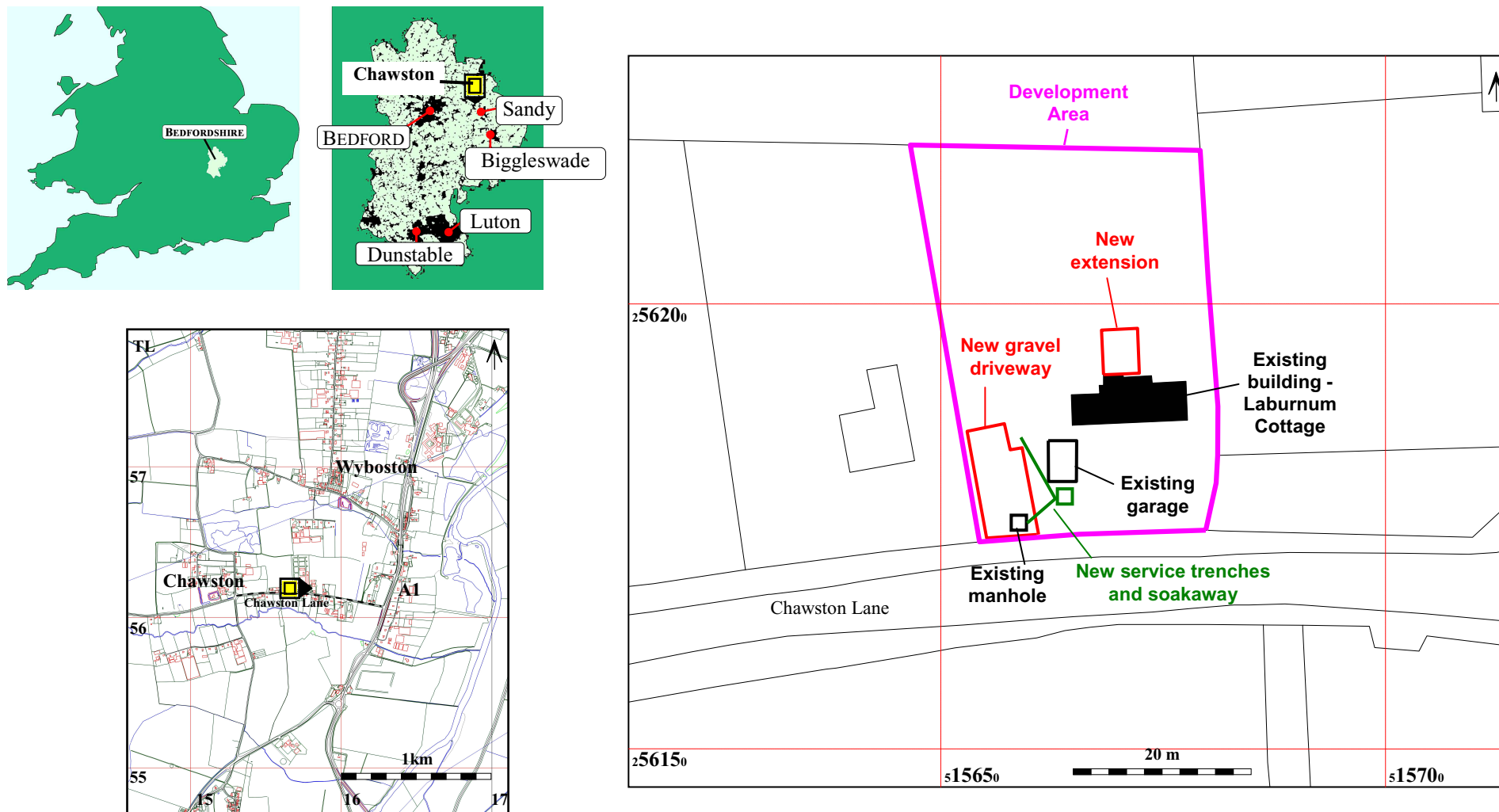


Figure 1: Site location and location of groundworks

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Figure 2: New extension — architect’s plan, showing approximate position of human bones.
 (drawing 8118PRJ contract GAV01 by Surrey Design Associates Ltd.)



Figure 3: New extension — foundation trench looking north.

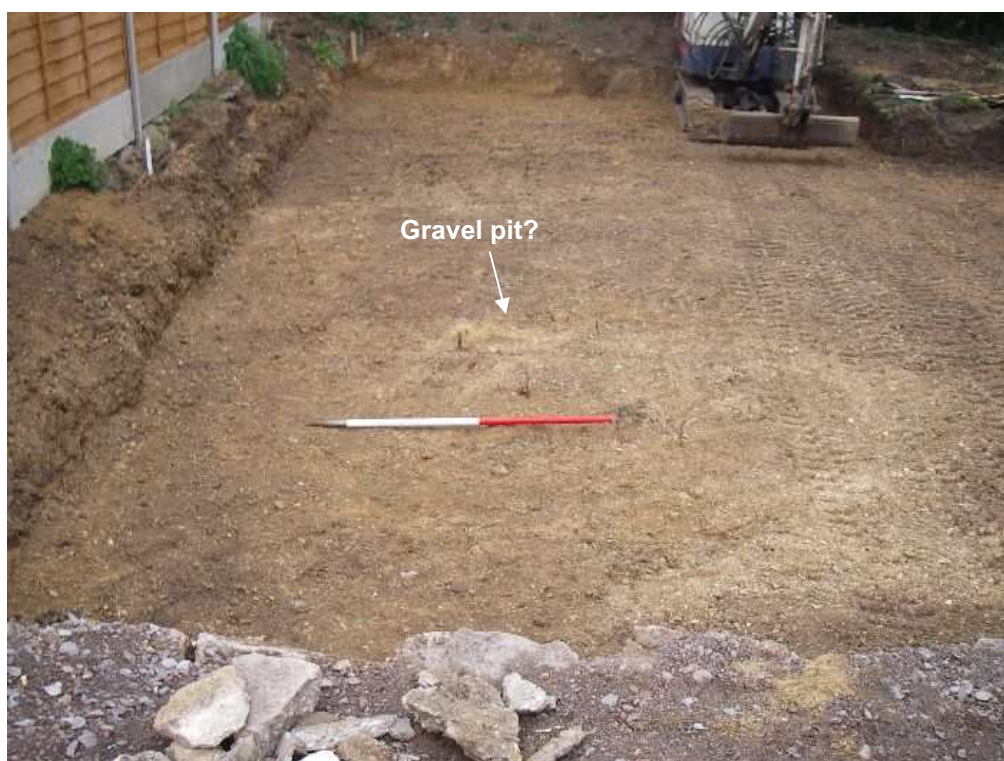


Figure 4: New access drive — ground reduction revealing mixed gravel deposits and possible quarry pit. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

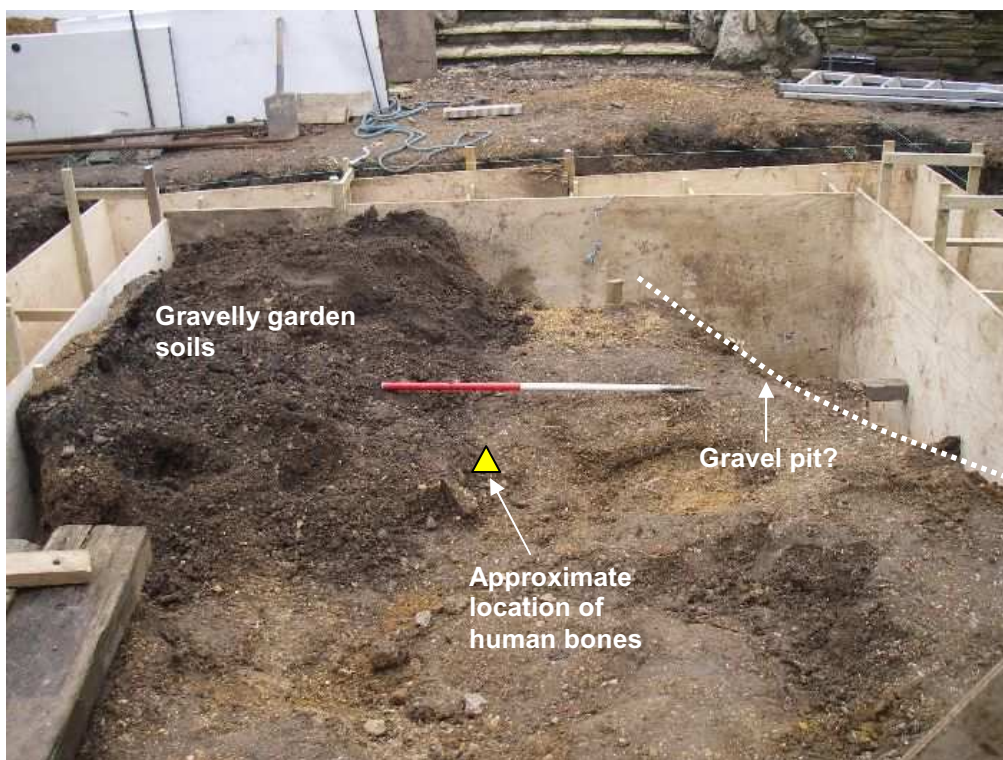


Figure 5: New extension — ground reduction revealing gravel and make-up deposits. Looking north. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.



Figure 6: Human bones (2 femurs and one skull fragment; other bones are animal)

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