

**Abbey Old House
Winchcombe
Gloucestershire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

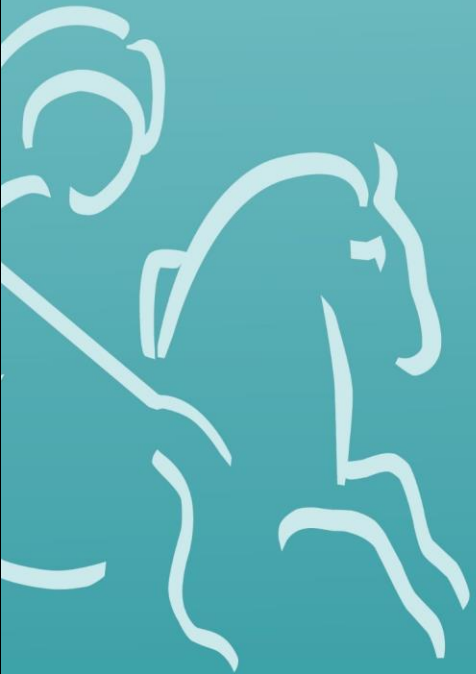


for:
Yiangou Architects Ltd

on behalf of:
Mr David Gray

CA Project: 6839
CA Report: 6839_1

August 2022



Abbey Old House
Winchcombe
Gloucestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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SUMMARY

Project name:	Abbey Old House
Location:	Winchcombe, Gloucestershire
NGR:	402357 228375
Type:	Watching brief
Date:	6 June – 12 June 2019
Planning reference:	Tewkesbury Borough Council 17/00187/FUL
SMC:	S00211137
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)
Site Code:	AOHW 19

In June 2019, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a single-storey extension at Abbey Old House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire.

The remains of two ovens, possibly of a medieval date, were identified during groundworks associated with the development. A further, albeit truncated, base of a structure was also identified and may represent the remains of a further oven.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In June 2019, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Abbey Old House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire (centred at NGR: 402357 228375; Fig. 1). This watching brief was undertaken for Yiangou Architects Ltd on behalf of Mr David Gray
- 1.2. Planning permission for the demolition of the single storey wing and lean-to glass house on the north-east elevation of the house, to be replaced by a new single-storey extension, creating a library/study, wine room and bathroom and some minor internal alterations was granted by Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC, ref: 17/00187/FUL). Following the required acquisition of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC), a subsequent programme of archaeological monitoring (watching brief) was recommended by Mel Barge, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England (HE), in conjunction with Charles Parry, Archaeologist, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), archaeological advisor to TBC
- 1.3. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CA (2019) and approved by Charles Parry and Mel Barge.
- 1.4. The watching brief was also in line with *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation* (Historic England 2015) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Historic England 2015).

The site

- 1.5. The development site is approximately 0.1ha in extent. It lies on the north of Gloucester Street, in the central part of Winchcombe. The site currently comprises a walled garden and shed. The site lies at approximately 95.2m AOD, with the ground sloping slightly to the west.
- 1.6. The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Charmouth Mudstone Formation of the Jurassic Period, with superficial Alluvium deposits (BGS 2021).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The site has been subject to an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA; RH 2016), and two archaeological evaluations undertaken by Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service (GCCAS, 2002) and by CA (CA, 2017).
- 2.2. The development site is located within the area of the Scheduled Monument of Winchcombe Abbey (SM28873). The monument is described as one of the chief royal centres of the Saxon period and was founded in AD 798, becoming a Benedictine abbey in AD 969. The site of the monastery is expected to preserve rare evidence for late Saxon religious building (RH 2016, 8). Much of the abbey is thought to have been rebuilt after being partially destroyed by a fire in AD 1151 (*ibid.*, 73) and, despite demolition following the Dissolution, the site of the monastic precinct has had only been subjected to limited disturbance.
- 2.3. Abbey Old House itself is a Grade II* listed building (HE List Entry: 1305465), with an upstanding 16th century core and 19th century façade (*ibid.*, 77). It lies at an obtuse angle to the only other remnant of the abbey, known as Winchcombe Abbey (HE List Entry: 1091539), which is Grade II listed and of 15th century origin with later modifications.
- 2.4. The evaluation undertaken by GCCAS in 2002 comprised the excavation of 24 trenches around Abbey Old House (GCCAS 2002). Remains of the former medieval buildings of the abbey were found at shallow depths (0.12m below present ground level (bpgl)). Trench 13 was excavated within the area of the proposed new extension and a wall was recorded at a depth of 0.27m bpgl (95.21m AOD), which was assumed to be part of a medieval building. The whole of the exposed area of wall was burnt and it was interpreted as an oven, kiln or fireplace. No dating evidence was found, but it was considered likely to be of medieval date and part of an ancillary abbey building (*ibid.*).
- 2.5. The evaluation undertaken by CA in 2017 consisted of the excavation of three test pits within the area of the proposed development (CA 2017). Test-pit 1 contained a north-west/south-east aligned wall, at a depth of 0.52m bpgl (94.58m AOD), which was interpreted as part of a medieval building most probably associated with the abbey. The other two test-pits contained flagstone flooring also likely associated with the medieval building, at depths of roughly 0.9m bpgl (94.3m AOD). These features were covered by demolition layers, attributed to the destruction of the building (*ibid.*).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1. The general objectives of the watching brief were:

- to monitor the development groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record any significant buried archaeological deposits/features thus revealed;
- at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated project archive and a report setting out the watching brief results and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. The watching brief comprised the observation by a competent archaeologist of all intrusive groundworks associated with the proposed development. These works comprised ground reduction, to the required formation level, for the extension to the existing building and associated garden landscaping (see Fig. 2 for location and extent).

4.2. Archaeological features/deposits were investigated, planned and recorded in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.

4.3. Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*. No deposits were identified that required sampling.

4.4. CA will make arrangements with Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum for the deposition of the project archive. A digital archive will also be prepared and deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). The archives (museum and digital) will be prepared and deposited in accordance with *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020).

4.5. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1. This section provides an overview of the watching brief results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are given in Appendix A. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits and features expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) are given in Appendix D.
- 5.2. The natural geological substrate was not revealed during the observed groundworks. The earliest deposit identified was layer 406 which comprised compact yellow brown silty sand rubble and occasional clay and may represent a rough surface. This deposit was cut by construction cuts 402 and 404 for ovens 403 and 405 respectively, and overlaid by rubble foundation 411 at the west of the site.
- 5.3. Oven 403 (Fig. 3) was built of roughly hewn limestone blocks forming a semi-circular superstructure and its location correlates closely to an oven identified during a preceding archaeological evaluation (GCCAS 2002; Trench 13). It survived to a height of 0.52m and measured up to 0.3m in width. The interior of the oven measured 2.04m in diameter and displayed evidence of heating/scorching which obscured any bonding material between the blocks. The base of the oven was not observed as it lay below the required formation level.
- 5.4. Backfill 407, of construction cut 402, was cut by construction cut 404 for oven 405. Oven 405 was previously identified during a preceding archaeological evaluation (CA 2017, oven 105/Trench 1).
- 5.5. Oven 405 (Fig. 3) was built of roughly hewn limestone blocks forming a semi-circular superstructure which survived to a height of 0.4m and measured 1.4m in diameter. The base of the oven, 409, was built of irregularly sized limestone blocks and displayed evidence of heating/scorching which obscured any bonding material between the blocks.
- 5.6. Burnt surface 412 was encountered to the north-west of oven 405 and may represent the base of a further oven. It was constructed from irregular sized limestone blocks measuring a maximum of 1.1m in length and 0.7m.
- 5.7. All identified structures were overlain by undated demolition deposit 401 which comprised mixed dark brown sandy clay and rubble. Layer 401 was overlain by

modern levelling deposit 400 comprising of re-deposited garden soil and building rubble.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. The exact function of surface 406 remains unclear, although its rough nature would suggest that it is located within part of a structure of a utilitarian nature. This surface, and ovens 403 and 405, lay close to the eastern end of a structure built in the 16th century as the Abbots House (CA 2011) and they may therefore be housed in a kitchen within, or an ancillary building, attached to this structure.

6.2. Ovens 403 and 405 both appear to correlate to structures identified during preceding archaeological evaluations undertaken at the site (see *Results* above). Whilst it remains possible that both ovens are broadly contemporary, it is also conceivable that oven 405 represents a later phase of activity or an increasing of capacity for the activity already taking place within oven 403. If it is accepted that surface 412 also represents the base of an oven, and is broadly contemporary, then this kitchen could be relatively substantial in nature given that a single medieval bread oven with an internal diameter greater than 1m is considered to be sufficient to supply commercial use (Davenport 2015).

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

7.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Havard. This report was written by Liam Wilson. The report illustrations were prepared by Ryan Wilson. The project archive has been compiled by and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neil. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young, MCIfA.

8. REFERENCES

- BGS (British Geological Survey) 2022 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2011 *Winchcombe Abbey, Winchcombe, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Evaluation*. Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, CA Report No. **11128**
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 *Abbey Old House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Evaluation*, CA Report No. **17574**
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2019 *Abbey Old House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- Davenport 2015 *Excavations at Newport Street, Worcester, 2005, Roman Roadside Activity and medieval to Post-Medieval Urban Development on the Severn Floodplain*. Cotswold Archaeology
- GCCAS (Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service) 2002 *An Archaeological Evaluation at The Abbey Old House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire*, unpublished client report
- RH (Rubicon Heritage) 2016 *Abbey Old House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Impact Assessment*

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Tr No.	Context No.	Type	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)
4	400	Layer	Levelling	Dark brown garden soils and rubble	>10	>10	0.2
4	401	Layer	Demolition	Yellow grey/ dark brown silt and rubble	>10	>10	0.4
4	402	Cut	Construction cut	Circular, not excavated	2.5	1.5	0.52
4	403	structure	Oven	Limestone semi-circular structure	2.5	1.5	0.52
4	404	Cut	Construction cut	Circular, not excavated	>1.9	>1.8	>0.3
4	405	structure	Oven	Limestone semi-circular structure	>1.9	>1.8	0.4
4	406	layer	Demolition	Dark yellow/brown rubble and soil	>5	>5	>0.3
4	407	fill	Backfill	Light grey mortar and Rubble	2.5	0.5	>0.1
4	408	fill	Backfill	Dark brown sandy silt and rubble	>1.9	0.5	>0.2
4	409	structure	Floor	Burnt limestone flag surface	>1.45	1.4	>0.01
4	410	cut	Construction cut	Modern foundation linear trench	>5	>1	>0.01
4	411	fill	Foundation	Modern rubble foundation	>5	>1	>0.01
4	412	structure	Floor	Burnt limestone flag surface	1.1	0.7	>0.1

APPENDIX B: LEVELS OF PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS AND STRUCTURES

Levels are expressed as metres below current ground level and as metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), calculated using the benchmark located at location (0m AOD).

	Trench 3	Trench 4	GCAS Trench 13
Current ground level	0.00m (95.1m)	0.00m (95.2m)	0.00m (95.5 m)
Top of oven 403	NA	0.1m (95.10m)	0.3 (95.2m)
Top of oven 405	NA	0.2m (95.00m)	NA
L.O.E of observed oven structure 403	NA	0.60m (94.60m)	NA
Top of surface 409	0.50m (94.6m)	0.65m (94.6m)	NA
Top of surface 304	0.60m (94.50m)	NA	NA

Upper figures are depth below modern ground level; lower figures in parentheses are metres AOD.

APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Abbey Old House	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of a single-storey extension at Abbey Old House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire. The remains of two ovens, possibly of a medieval date, were identified during groundworks associated with the development. A further, albeit truncated, base of a structure was also identified and may represent the remains of a further oven.	
Project dates	6 June – 12 June 2019	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	Test pitting Evaluation (GCAS 2002) Evaluation (CA 2017)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Abbey Old House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire	
Study area (m ² /ha)	0.1ha	
Site co-ordinates	402357 228375	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project brief originator		
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Richard Young	
Project Supervisor	Tim Havard	
MONUMENT TYPE	Abbey	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive	Content
Paper	Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum	Context sheets
Digital	Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum	digital photos and plans
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2021 <i>Abbey Old House, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report 6839_1		



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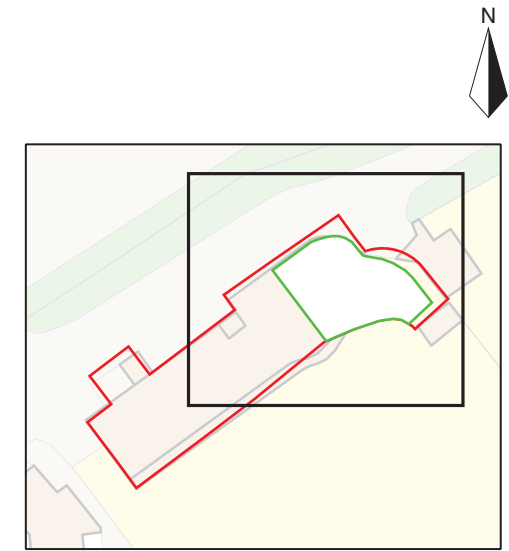
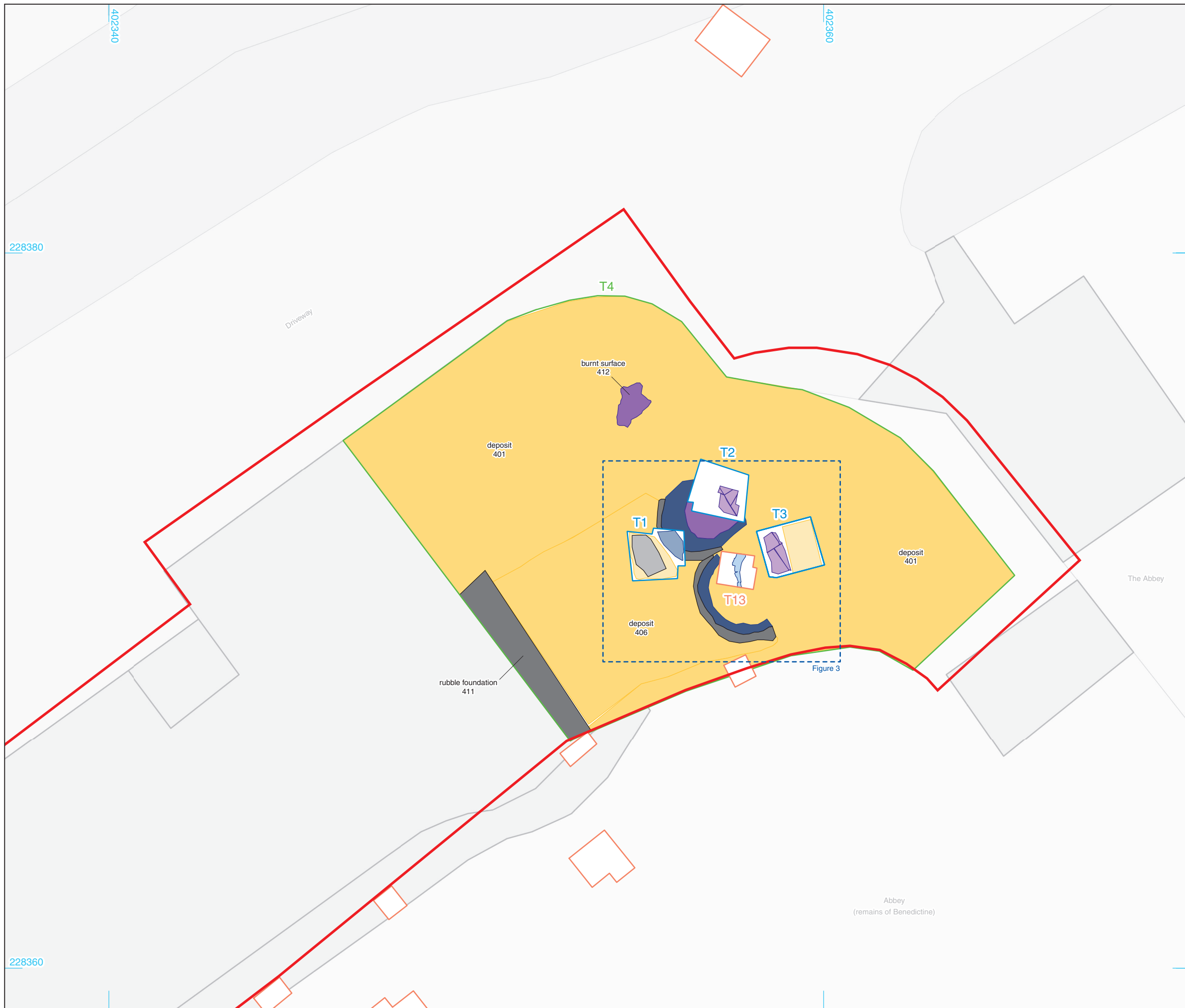
PROJECT TITLE
 Abbey Old House, Winchcombe,
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FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan



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- Site boundary
- Watching brief area
- Cut feature
- Structure
- Surface
- Deposit
- Previous evaluation trench (CA 2017)
- Previous cut feature (CA 2017)
- Previous structure (CA 2017)
- Previous surface (CA 2017)
- Previous deposit (CA 2017)
- Previous evaluation trench (GCAS 2002)
- Previous structure (GCAS 2002)



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PROJECT TITLE
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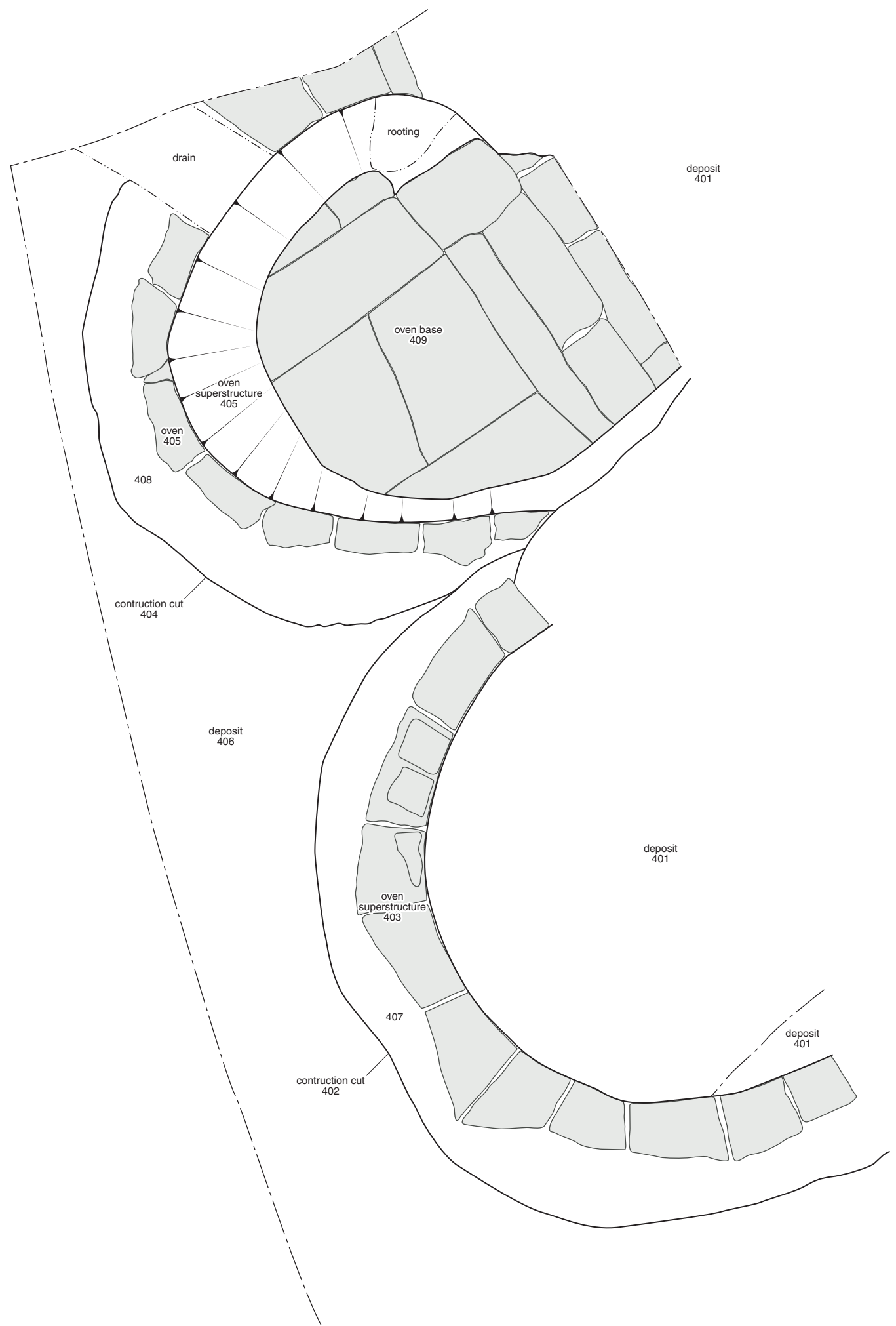
FIGURE TITLE
 Plan showing extent of observed
 groundworks and archaeological
 features






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402355

402360



-  Site boundary
-  Limit of excavation
-  Truncation
-  Cut line
-  Stone



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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
Trench 4: plan

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Oven 403 (foreground), looking north-west (1m scale)



Oven 405, looking south-west (0.3m and 0.4m scale)



Surface 412, looking north-west (0.4m scale)

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PROJECT TITLE
 Abbey Old House, Winchcombe,
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FIGURE TITLE
 Trench 4: photographs

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