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Prepared by: Steve Teague (Project Officer)
Checked by: Tim Allen (Senior Project Manager)
Edited by: Tim Allen (Senior Project Manager)
Approved for Issue by: David Score (Head of Fieldwork)
Signature:



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OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES

t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridge
CB23 8SQ

t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD

t. +44 (0)1524 880 250

e. info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w. oxfordarchaeology.com

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Chief Executive Officer
Ken Welsh, BSc, MCIFA
Private Limited Company, No: 1618597
Registered Charity, No: 285627
Registered Office: Oxford Archaeology Ltd
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Beech Court Pavilion, Abingdon School, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Steve Teague

With contributions from Anni Byard, Geraldine Crann, John Cotter, Rebecca Nicolson, Ruth Shaffrey, Kirsty Smith and illustrations by Caroline Souday and Sophie Lamb

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Summary

Between the 7th and 10th February 2022, Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation at Abingdon School, Oxfordshire in advance of a proposed new building. Four trenches revealed several ditches, one possibly of Roman date, the others undated, and several pits of post-medieval date, two probably quarry pits. Medieval pottery was also recovered, indicating domestic activity in the vicinity. A brick-built structure and a horse burial, both likely to have been associated with the late 19th school, were also revealed.

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Carl Champness. The fieldwork was directed by John Carne, who was supported by Ben McAndrew and Ines Matos Glover. Survey and digitising was carried out by Marjaana Kohtamaki. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Leigh Allen and prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Abingdon School to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed new building to be known as Beech Court Pavilion at Abingdon School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken to help inform a planning application (planning ref: P21/V3517/FUL - 9). Although the Local Planning Authority has not set a brief for the work, discussions with Steve Weaver, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), have established the scope of work required to inform the planning application and whether any further archaeological mitigation works may be required. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct (CifA 2014a) and Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (CifA 2014b).

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site is located within the grounds of Abingdon School, which lies just to the north-west of the historic core of Abingdon, in the Vale of White Horse District of Oxfordshire. The site is centred at NGR SU 49443 97349 (Fig. 1).

1.2.2 The 0.251ha area of proposed development is situated between the existing café and the Amey Theatre complex of Abingdon School. It currently contains a rectangular garden plot known as Jekyll Garden. The site directly abuts the main school driveway, which itself intersects with Park Road, roughly 70m to the south. The site lies approximately 59m above Ordnance Datum.

1.2.3 The town of Abingdon lies on a gravel terrace north of the River Thames at its confluence with a tributary, the Ock. An important ford over the Thames-bridged in 1416 (Burford Bridge)-has marked the area as an important route centre since early times.

1.2.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as mudstone of the Ampthill Clay and Kimmeridge Clay Formations, sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 152–164 million years ago in the Jurassic period (BGS 2022). This is overlain by superficial deposits of Summertown-Radley sand and gravel, formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary period (ibid.). This geology was confirmed during previous archaeological investigations undertaken in the area (Evans and Excell 1997; 1999).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in a desk-based assessment (DBA; OA 2021) and will only be briefly summarised here, together with the results of various archaeological investigations previously undertaken at Abingdon School (Evans and Excell 1997; 1999; TVAS 2002; OA 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019a; 2019b).

Prehistoric (10,000 BC – AD 43)

1.3.2 Evidence of prehistoric activity from the Palaeolithic period onwards has been recorded within the greater Abingdon area, as well as within the grounds of Abingdon School. Two Lower–Middle Palaeolithic hand axes were recovered 140m north of the site, while Mesolithic flint flakes were found c 30m south-east of the site within the school complex.

1.3.3 Excavations carried out in 1999 just to the north of the site uncovered a rubble spread from which a Bronze Age barbed-and-tanged-arrowhead was recovered, though this was considered to have been residual. A number of possible Bronze Age barrows, identified as cropmarks on aerial photographs, are recorded within the Abingdon area, including two that fall within the wider Abingdon School grounds c 150m north-west of the site.

1.3.4 There is no recorded evidence to suggest that the area immediately surrounding the site was occupied during the later Bronze Age and Iron Age periods. However, settlement activity of this date is known at Spring Road to the west and at Thornhill Walk to the north of the site. Cropmark linear features c 500m north-west of the site may also represent a later prehistoric settlement site, though a Roman date is also possible. To the south-east, Abingdon Town Centre was the site of a thriving settlement throughout the Iron Age period.

Roman (AD 43 – AD 410)

1.3.5 The Iron Age settlement in the area of Abingdon Town Centre continued to thrive throughout the Roman period. Settlement appears to have extended northwards along what is now Bath Street (B4017) to the east of the site. Cemeteries were often placed at the periphery of such settlements, and both cremation and inhumation burials have been found on the west side of Bath Street, including three inhumation burials within the school grounds just north of the site. Excavations in 1997 revealed an infant inhumation burial and a cist burial that had been disturbed and robbed out by later post-medieval activity (Evans and Excell 1997). A double row of stakeholes and a likely associated gully or ditch were also excavated. These features, running east–west, were interpreted to have been contiguous and may have delineated the possible extent of a burial ground (ibid.). The infant inhumation lay beyond the potential boundary. No remains of Roman date, however, were uncovered during recent trial-trench evaluations in the area of Crescent House and Austin House to the north of the site (OA 2019a; 2019b).

1.3.6 At the southern boundary of the site, pits, ditches and burnt material all associated with Roman pottery were recorded during the excavation of foundations for the construction of the Amey Theatre. Similar remains were uncovered during investigations west of Bath Street, approximately 60m south-east of the site. Evidence of further Roman activity was also found at Spring Road to the west, and the cropmark linear features to the north-west of the site may also be Roman in date.

Early medieval (AD 410- AD 1066)

1.3.7 Areas of Anglo-Saxon settlement are known within proximity of the site along Spring Road, c 720m to the west, and within Abingdon Town Centre, c 300m to the south-east. Inhumation burials dating to this period have also been uncovered at the Horse and Jockey pub c 150m to the south-east of the site and immediately east of Spring Road. Evidence of activity between AD 650 and the Norman Conquest is limited and largely concentrated in the town centre. No early medieval remains were identified during recent investigations carried

out in 2019 in the area of Crescent House and Austin House, suggesting that nearby Anglo-Saxon burial activity did not extend into this area (OA 2019a; 2019b).

Late medieval (AD 1066 – AD 1541)

1.3.8 Much of the late medieval settlement of Abingdon was focused on the present-day town centre to the south-east of the site and the area of the Fitzharris manor house and estate, c 240m north-east. South of Abingdon School, medieval buildings still survive along Bath Street, which is likely to have been a medieval routeway.

1.3.9 Lacies Court, a former farmhouse associated with the Fitzharris estate, is located c 30m to the north-east of the site, set along Bath Street. This building saw continued use throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods until it was sold in the 1880s to Roysse's School (precursor to the present-day institution) and subsequently enlarged and modernised. The area of the proposed development site was probably used as arable or pastoral land during this period, and possibly also for quarrying.

1.3.10 In 1998 archaeological excavations were conducted just to the north of the site (Evans and Excell 1999). A small trench excavated within the cellar of Waste Court did not reveal any clear archaeological features but recovered several finds including late medieval pottery, ceramic building material and animal bone. The excavation of a former tree-throw hole on the upper lawn also recovered medieval pottery sherds.

1.3.11 More recently, two evaluation trenches were investigated at the school in 2019 as part of the proposed redevelopment schemes of Crescent House and Austin House (2019a; 2019b). A dense concentration of medieval features, as well as post-medieval quarry pits, was recorded within the grounds of Austin House.

Post-medieval (AD 1541 – AD 1800)

1.3.12 Rocque's map of Berkshire in 1761 demonstrates that the site was located on the periphery of the north-west urban extent of Abingdon. It depicts buildings facing onto Bath Street to the east, with garden plots and outbuildings to the rear. What appears to be cultivated land lies to the west of the site.

1.3.13 The 1874 Ordnance Survey (OS) Town Plan of the site illustrates the continued use of these plots into the latter half of the 19th century. The site intersects with a gravel pit at its northernmost extent. Further evidence of quarrying in this area has been discovered during previous archaeological investigations. Several phases of archaeological monitoring carried out in 2016–18 at Beech Court, immediately north of the site, identified the remains of stone piers that may have formed part of a possible timber-arcaded structure of late 18th-/early 19th-century date, as well as a number of pits, a large quarry pit, and a brick surface dating to the later 19th century (OA 2016; 2017; 2018). The southernmost part of the site was also subject to an archaeological watching brief in 2002 (TVAS 2002). While no archaeological features were identified, the stratigraphic sequence was interpreted to represent the former plough-/topsoil overlying a gravel terrace.

1.3.14 As demonstrated by late 19th-century OS maps, the site was still in use as a series of plots at least until 1895, when Lacies Court was acquired by the school. The 1899 OS map depicts various extensions to the main school structure and shows that the site, along with similar plots in the area, had now been consolidated into the wider school complex. The plot

to the south of the present-day Jekyll Garden appears to have been kept separate and utilised as orchards or woodland.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present;
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains;
- iii. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains;
- iv. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;
- v. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy;
- vi. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present;
- vii. To determine the potential of the site to provide paleoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive;
- viii. To determine the implications of any remains with reference to the economy, status, utility and social activity of or at the site; and
- ix. To disseminate the results of the evaluation through the production of a fieldwork report.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The archaeological works comprised the excavation of four trenches, all of which measured c 14m by c 1.6m representing a c 4% sample of the proposed development area. The trenches were positioned to target areas of significant impact from the proposed development, including the proposed footprint of the building and two soakaways, whilst also providing an even coverage of the site and avoiding on-site constraints.

2.2.2 The modern overburden from each trench was removed using an eight tonne 360 mechanical digger under constant archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation proceeded by hand and recording was in accordance with methodologies set out in the WSI.

2.2.3 Where features extended more than 1m below ground level, hand-excavation ceased at 1m for Health and Safety reasons.

2.2.4 After recording the trenches were backfilled with materials arising.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological or other remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. No soils suitable for the recovery of environmental remains were encountered, and so no environmental samples were recovered.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of light yellowish-grey, sandy gravel was overlain by garden soil/topsoil. In Trenches 3 and 4, a modern levelling deposit lay between the topsoil and the garden soil.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 All trenches contained soilmarks indicating former features, but the majority of these proved to be quarry pits of post-medieval date. Features of more varied character were present in Trenches 2–4.

3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 Trench 1 contained two large pits (103 and 104). Three fragments of post-medieval roofing tile were recovered from the top of pit 103, and both features had the character of quarry pits of late post-medieval date, so neither was excavated.

3.5 Trench 2

3.5.1 Trench 2 contained three ditches and a quarry pit.

3.5.2 Ditch 202, located near the east end of the trench, was orientated NNW–SSE. It had a V-shaped profile and measured 0.78m wide and 0.38m deep (Plate 1 and Section 200). The single fill was a dark greyish-brown sandy clay with frequent gravel (203). A single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from the fill.

3.5.3 Ditch 202 was truncated by a shallow ditch (204) aligned ENE–WSW. This was 0.40m wide and only 0.1m deep, and no finds were retrieved from its dark grey sandy silt fill (205). A possible continuation of this ditch was seen against the southern edge of the trench further to the west, but only a little of this lay within the trench.

3.5.4 A third possible ditch (206) aligned NE–SW was evident against the north edge of the trench, but extended beyond the trench edge, and was truncated to the west by a pit (208). It had gently sloping sides to a concave base, measuring at least 0.50m wide and was 0.12m deep (Plate 2 and Section 201), and was filled with dark grey-brown sandy silt containing frequent gravel (207). There were no finds.

3.5.5 Sub-oval pit 208 occupied the west end of the trench, and measured at least 3.05m x 1.6m and was excavated to a depth of 0.35m, but was not bottomed (Plate 2 and Section 201). Its earlier fill (209), a firm dark green/grey sandy clay, contained a single sherd each of abraded Roman and medieval pottery. Its top fill (210), a loose yellowish-grey sandy silt with frequent gravel, contained pottery dated to c 1760–1830 and residual medieval pottery, together with fragments of roofing tile of medieval/post-medieval date and a fragment of 19th century bottle glass. This was probably a levelling layer, and does not necessarily reflect the date of the pit proper. This feature may have been a quarry pit.

3.6 Trench 3

3.6.1 Trench 3 contained a pit and a modern ditch

3.6.2 Pit 303 cut garden soil/levelling layer 301, and was partly exposed on the east side of the trench. It appeared to be circular, measured 1.25m in diameter and was at least 1.0m deep but was not bottomed (Plate 3 and Section 300). There were two fills, the earlier (307) was a loose, dark greyish-brown gravelly loam that contained pottery dated to c 1830–70 together with roofing tile, brick and floor tile fragments, all of post-medieval date. Also recovered from the fill was a probable iron chisel and a folded iron sheet, the former of 19th century or later date, together with a fragment from an oolitic limestone ashlar block. The fill also contained a few bones of sheep/goat and rabbit. Its later fill (304) was a loose greenish brown sandy loam.

3.6.3 Cut across the pit was a NW–SE aligned linear feature (305), probably a ditch, that contained a modern pavement brick.

3.7 Trench 4

3.7.1 Trench 4 had three fills overlying the natural gravel: topsoil 400 sealed a levelling layer (401), which in turn sealed a thick garden soil (402). Levelling layer (401) contained bones from a horse burial, and pottery dated to c 1820–1900 and post-medieval roofing tile fragments were recovered from the garden soil 402.

3.7.2 Rectangular structure 405 cut garden soil 402 and is likely to be late 19th/20th century in date. It measured 2.1m in length and 1.1m wide and had a narrower recess at east end (Plate 4). It was constructed of mortared machine-made bricks laid one brick width thick on the north, west and east sides, the bricks indicating a date in the later 19th or 20th century. The south side was a mixture of stone and brick, and had a foundation of undressed limestones extending south from it. The area of its recess had been filled with burnt material. Clinker/burnt coal and a sherd of pottery dated to c 1670–1800 was recovered from the structure.

3.7.3 Layer 402 overlay a pit 406 and a three-throw hole 407.

3.7.4 Quarry pit 406 extended beyond the limits of the trench on the north-east, but appeared to be oval, and measured at least 1.6m across. The fill exposed at the surface (404) contained pottery dated to c 1580–1800 and fragments of roofing tile of late medieval/post-medieval date. Due to the depth of the trench (see Section 400) this was not excavated further.

3.7.5 Feature 407 lay south-east of pit 406, and was irregular, measuring at least 1.6m across and 0.30m deep (Section 400). This was probably a tree-throw hole. It was filled with reddish-brown sandy silt with frequent gravel (408), but there were no finds.

3.8 Finds summary

3.8.1 A total of 19 sherds (371g) of pottery were recovered from seven contexts. This includes two small sherds of Roman pottery. There are also a few sherds of medieval pottery though most sherds are of post-medieval date. A small assemblage of ceramic building material (CBM) amounting to 19 fragments (5711g) was recovered and is mostly post-medieval in date with four fragments of types current in both the late medieval and early post-medieval periods. Two iron objects, one of which is probably a 19th century chisel, were recovered. A small fragment of oolitic limestone ashlar and a single sherd of 19th century bottle glass was also found. Twenty animal bones weighing a total of 1643g were recovered from two contexts, largely from an articulated horse burial. There was also a single oyster shell and a quantity of clinker/burnt coal.

4 FINDS REPORTS

4.1 Pottery

By John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

4.1.1 A total of 19 sherds (371g) of pottery were recovered from seven contexts. This included two small sherds (10g) of Roman pottery. There were also a few sherds of medieval pottery and rather more post-medieval pottery, as late as the 19th century.

4.1.2 All the pottery was scanned during the present assessment and spot-dates were provided for each context. Each context group was quantified by sherd count and weight and recorded on a spot-dating spreadsheet. The pottery is in a fragmentary condition, but some large fresh sherds are present.

4.1.3 The context spot-date is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types or fabrics are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the range of fabrics were recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (e.g. decoration etc.). Fabric codes referred to for the medieval wares are those of the Oxfordshire type series (Mellor 1994) whereas post-medieval fabric codes are those of the Museum of London (MoLA 2014). Roman fabric codes are those in Booth (nd). The range of pottery is described in some detail in the spreadsheet (Table 1) and therefore only summarised below.

Description

Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight	Comments
203	Roman	1	7	Fresh body sherd (bo) possibly from a jar, with a burnished external surface. The fabric is a Roman fine sand-tempered grey ware consistent with Oxford fine reduced ware (Fabric code R11). Not closely datable (E. Biddulph, pers comm)
209	c 1225–1500?	2	25	1x abraded rod handle from jug in Brill/Boarstall ware (OXAM) with specks of green glaze, row of stabbed or pricked pits down back of handle. 1x abraded jar rim in fairly sandy Roman greyware (R11, weight 3g), simple everted form
210	c 1760–1830	6	40	3x bos Developed Creamware (CREA DEV, 2 joining). 2x very abraded bos late medieval Brill/Boarstall ware (OXBX, c 1400–1625). 1x abraded sherd Ashampstead-type ware (OXAG) probably a short tubular spout from a tripod pitcher (c 1075–1250?) with traces of the spout rim, dark green glaze ext (extending partly over the breaks - possibly flawed?), possible traces of incised decoration at base of spout?
307	c 1830–70?	4	106	All transfer-printed whiteware (TPW). 3x joining sherds (incl 2 flanged rims) from profile of an oval dish. Ironstone-like fabric with floral dog-rose decoration in pale watery-blue transfer - mid 19C? 1x rim/profile from a small hemispherical punchbowl-type ladle with blue Willow Pattern dec border ext and traces of Chinese scene int. The latter sherd has been burnt. Mid 19C?

402	c 1820–1900	4	121	1x flat base/lower wall English brown salt-glazed stoneware (ENGS) cylindrical ink or blacking bottle (c 1820+). 2x fresh joining base sherds from oval dish in transfer-printed Pearlware (c 1780–1840) with blue Willow Pattern dec int - pagoda etc, and with scored grip-grooving underneath flat base. 1x flat/footring base from a small tankard in pale blue-tinted English tin-glazed ware (TGW) with base of handle with curled/scrolled terminal c 1700–50?
404	c 1580–1800?	1	55	Fresh sherd from flat base/lower wall of wide dish in post-medieval red earthenware (PMR, c 1580–1900). Light orange fabric with int orange-brown glaze (Brill product?)
405	c 1670–1800	1	17	Fresh bo from globular bottle-like form. English brown salt-glazed stoneware, pale grey fabric (ENGS, or possibly London stoneware LONS?)
TOTAL		19	371	

Table 1. Description of post-Roman pottery by context

Discussion

4.1.4 The pottery comprises ordinary domestic pottery typical of sites in the Oxford area. Two small sherds of Roman greyware (Fabric R11), from contexts (203) and (209), are almost certainly residual. There are four sherds of medieval pottery but three of these are definitely residual in post-medieval context (210). The fourth piece – an abraded jug handle in Brill/Boarstall ware (OXAM, c 1225–1625) – is the later of two sherds in context (209) but this is probably residual too. One of the medieval sherds is in Ashampstead-type ware (OXAG) and appears to be from the spout of a jug or pitcher dating from c 1075–1250.

4.1.5 The rest of the assemblage (13 sherds) is post-medieval and predominantly comprises refined Staffordshire-type tablewares (dishes etc) of the later 18th and 19th centuries including Developed Creamware (CREA DEV, c 1760–1830) and transfer-printed whitewares (TPW, mainly c 1830–1900). A few post-medieval sherds date from as early as the late 17th or first half of the 18th century.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

4.1.6 The pottery here has some, albeit slight, potential to inform research through re-analysis - particularly when reviewed alongside further assemblages from any future excavations in the area. It is recommended that it should all be retained.

4.2 Ceramic building material

By Kirsty Smith

Introduction

4.2.1 A small assemblage of ceramic building material (CBM) amounting to 19 fragments (5711g) was recovered from Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the evaluation. The CBM is mostly post-medieval in date with four fragments of a type manufactured in both the late medieval and early post-medieval periods. One whole brick from context 306 weighed 4.3kg. The other 18

fragments weighed 1397g with a mean fragment weight of 77.6g. Aside from the whole brick most of the fragments have only one complete dimension (thickness).

4.2.2 The assemblage has been fully recorded on an Excel spreadsheet in accordance with guidelines set out by the Archaeological Ceramic Building Materials Group (ACBMG 2007). Fabrics were characterised with the aid of x20 hand lens.

4.2.3 The forms and dating of the assemblage have been summarised in Table 2 below.

Fabrics

4.2.4 The majority of the fragments were made from a red orange or pink orange coarse or medium coarse sandy clay. The fabric contained occasional maroon iron oxide grits up to 2mm long and very occasional white limestone grits <3mm. This post-medieval fabric is very similar to fabric OXP3 of the Oxford Archaeology fabric series. Four fragments from contexts 210 and 404 were made from coarser sandy clay with more abundant white limestone grits <2mm. This may be equivalent to the medieval or early post-medieval fabric IIIB, which may be an earlier version of the slightly finer OXP3.

4.2.5 One small fragment of probable floor tile was made from fabric OXP4, an orange fine sandy fabric with occasional clay pellets and red clay pellets up to 6mm long. It also had a small area with streaks of white clay. One fragment of brick was made from dark red fabric OXP5. This had a speckly effect with occasional calcareous inclusions less than 1mm long, iron oxide inclusions less than 2mm long, red clay pellets up to 3mm long and voids less than 0.5mm

4.2.6 These fabric types (IIIB, OXP3, OXP4 and OXP5) are discussed in further detail in the forthcoming Oxford Archaeology Westgate monograph (Poole and Smith 2022).

Medieval/Post-medieval CBM

4.2.7 The majority of the fragments (14) comprised flat roof tile 12-15mm thick, which probably originated as peg tile. Other than the four fragments in fabric IIIB, all were post-medieval (fabric OXP3). One roof tile from context 103 had a full width of 164mm, most of the rest were fragments with one edge surviving. These fragments tended to be relatively regular with a neat finish, suggesting the tiles may have been manufactured in the later post-medieval period. Two fragments of peg tile were also recorded in the same fabric. The peg tile from context 307 had a peg hole which was 10mm diameter and the peg tile from context 402 had a peg hole which was 16mm diameter.

4.2.8 The flat tile and peg tile were recovered from contexts 103, 210, 307, 402 and 404. Two each of the four coarser roof tile fragments in fabric IIIB came from contexts 210 and 404, the fills of post-medieval quarry pits containing pottery dating to c 1760–1830 and c 1580–1800 respectively. The other tile fragments came from later contexts; contexts 307 (a pit fill) and 402 (buried soil) both contained pottery dating to the 19th century.

4.2.9 One fragment of probable floor tile made from fabric OXP4 was also recorded from 19th century context 307. This was 20+mm thick with one knife trimmed edge surviving. One fragment of poorly preserved brick came from the same context and weighed only 52g. This had one top surface and one creased side edge.

4.2.10 One whole fragment Staffordshire blue paviour brick (4314g) was recorded from context 306, the fill of ditch 305. This brick was 77mm thick (3 inches), 115mm wide (4.5 inches) and 227mm long (8.9 inches). This paviour also had two square projections 91mm x 91mm on the upper surface, raised 11mm higher than the rest of the brick and with chamfered corners. This type of paviour is still being manufactured and is called the Staffordshire two panel paver (chamfered). This paviour would have created a hard-wearing outdoor paved surface with grooves for drainage, and dates from the later 19th/20th century.

Form/Date	Med-Pmed	PM	L19/20	Total
Brick		1		1
Brick paviour			1	1
Floor		1		1
Roof - flat	4	10		14
Roof - peg		2		2
Total	4	14	1	19

Table 2. Summary of CBM and fired clay forms and dating

4.3 Metal and Glass

By Anni Byard

Introduction and methodology

4.3.1 A single small fragment of glass and a two iron objects were recovered during the evaluation.

4.3.2 All finds were scanned during the present assessment and where possible century, or broad period dates were assigned. Objects were quantified by type count and weight by context and recorded in the table below.

Description

Context	SF no.	Material	Count	Weight	Object	Date
210		Glass	1	3 grams	Bottle	L19C
307		Fe	4	317 grams	Cover	L19–20C
307		Fe	1	218 grams	Tool	L19–20C

Table 3. Description of metal and glass by context

Discussion

4.3.3 A single shard of thin, curved green glass was recovered from context 210. This is likely to be from the neck of a bottle, although it appears too thin for a wine bottle. It is probably of later 19th century date or later.

4.3.4 A possible tool was recovered from Context 307. The object is heavily encrusted, which obscures much of its form, however one end has an open socket and the other appears to be flat in section, so it is probably a large woodworking chisel of 19th century date.

4.3.5 Four fragments from the same iron object were recovered from Context 307. The object is folded iron, forming an L-shape in section, with an overlap on one fragment and several drilled holes along one side, presumably attachment points. The nature of the object is hard to determine however it appears to have served as some sort of cover. It is of 19th century date.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard, and retention of material

4.3.6 The glass and iron objects are relatively modern in date and hold no further interpretive value. However, the possible chisel should be x-rayed which may reveal more of its true form. The glass and remaining iron should be discarded.

4.4 Stone

By Ruth Shaffrey

4.4.1 A single piece of stone was retained and submitted for analysis. This was examined with a x10 magnification hand lens for signs of use. The item is a small piece of ashlar with two surviving flat faces and edges. It tapers slightly in thickness towards one end and both ends are missing. Some saw marks survive (context 307, 171g, 73mm in width by 20–22mm in thickness). It is an oolitic limestone with prominent ooliths, typical of Burford/Taynton stone types.

4.4.2 The stone should be retained.

4.5 Animal bone

By Rebecca Nicolson

4.5.1 Twenty animal bones weighing a total of 1643g were recovered from two contexts, both dating, or likely to date from, the 19th century (Table 4) and all collected by hand.

4.5.2 The specimens are generally in good condition and include the partial remains of a horse from garden soil layer 401 and fragments of sheep or goat and a fragment of rabbit tibia from context 307, a fill of mid-19th century pit 303.

4.5.3 The horse bones are largely complete which has permitted measurements to be taken (Table 5). Both metacarpals, one metatarsal, one radius and ulna and several vertebrae were recovered as well as the gonial angle and part of the ramus from both mandibles. Using the indices of May (1985), the horse would have had a withers height of c 1.4m, equating to a horse of c 14 hands.

4.5.4 The sheep/goat bones from pit 303 were a right and a left distal tibia, both unfused and therefore from animal(s) of less than 15–20 months old (Habermehl 1975), one of which had been sawn through mid-shaft.

4.5.5 An osseous lesion or callus on the lateral side of the horse left metacarpal, adjacent to the position of the missing (unfused) lateral splint bone seems likely to be a case of the pathological condition *desmoiditis ossificans ligamentum interosseum*, more commonly termed “the splints” which probably resulted from damage to the ligament through trauma or the repeated movements of the bones causing stress on the ligaments. While this is usually

interpreted as indicative of a working animal it has been observed on the bones of non-working animals (Bendry 2007). It is likely that this caused a degree of lameness in the animal.

4.5.6 It may be significant that previous trial trenches at Beech Court also recovered the remains of at least two horses, from contexts dated to the 18th–19th centuries. In that case it was speculated that the horses may have been fed to dogs (Broderick 2018), but the lack of any butchery marks or clear canine gnaw marks on any of the bones from layer 401 makes this explanation unlikely in this case.

Table 4. Number of Specimens (NSP) per context

	Context 307	Context 401
sheep/goat	2	
horse		10
rabbit	1	
large mammal		1
medium mammal	6	
Total	9	11

Table 4. Animal bones - Number of Specimens (NSP) per context

	Side	GL	Bp	Bd	SD
Radius		345	86.3	80.7	39.4
Metacarpal	right	228	56.5	49.8	34.8
Metacarpal	left	228	55.6	n/p	34.9
Metatarsal	right	272	52.8	51.2	33.7

Table 5. Horse Biometry measurements in mm after von-den Driesch 1976)

4.6 Shell

By Rebecca Nicholson

4.6.1 A single right valve oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) weighing 26g was recovered from context 402.

4.7 Clinker/burnt coal

By Geraldine Crann

4.7.1 Sixty-two fragments of coal/clinker weighing 257g were recovered from context 405, the fill of a later 19th or 20th century structure in Trench 4.

4.7.2 Having been recorded the clinker and burnt coal may be discarded.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Reliability of field investigation

5.1.1 The layout of trenches provided good overall coverage of the site and were located to maximise the potential for exposing archaeological remains.

5.1.2 The machining was generally carried out cleanly, providing good visibility of archaeological features and deposits against the underlying natural deposits within the evaluation trenches.

5.2 Evaluation objectives and results

5.2.1 The evaluation demonstrated the presence of archaeological pits and ditches, and of finds of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date. One shallow ditch may be of Roman date, and another possibly of medieval date, but the remainder of the features appear to be post-medieval, and mostly associated with post-medieval quarrying. The evaluation results are considered to provide a true reflection of the archaeological potential of the site as highlighted by the WSI (OA 2022).

5.3 Interpretation

5.3.1 The presence of two small sherds of Roman pottery indicates Roman activity in the vicinity of the site. One of the sherds was residual in a later feature, the other was retrieved from a shallow ditch 202 located on the southern side of the site. Although a single sherd does not provide clear evidence that the ditch is Roman, and could also be residual in a post-Roman feature, this area of the site is closest to the Amey Theatre, below which Roman settlement evidence that included ditches and pits was recorded. The small quantity of Roman pottery would suggest that the site lies of the periphery of this settlement.

5.3.2 The evaluation also produced a few abraded sherds of medieval pottery found in the fills of a pit in Trench 2. While the latest fill of this feature also contained post-medieval material, this does not necessarily date the main period of use of this feature, and the latest find from the main fill (209) was medieval, albeit abraded. Although no clearly medieval features were identified, the medieval pottery does indicate domestic activity in the vicinity, perhaps associated with the late medieval farm (as yet unlocated) at Lacies Court just to the north-east of the site. Medieval features may therefore still be found within the site.

5.3.3 Two very shallow ditches on ENE-WSW and NE-SW alignments in Trench 2 were without finds, but one cut the ditch of possible Roman date and the other was truncated by pit 208, which contained post-medieval finds. These may be of any date between Roman and the 19th century, but do indicate some activity on the site between these two periods.

5.3.4 A large quarry pit on the west side of the site is depicted on the First Ordnance Survey map of 1874, though it is not shown on the earlier Tithe map of 1843. The quarry pits found in Trenches 2 and 4 suggest that this activity was more extensive than depicted on the 1874 map. Pottery from pit 406 suggests that that quarrying may have commenced earlier, possibly earlier in the 19th century or even prior to that. The gravel was probably required for new building foundations, perhaps associated with the construction of Abingdon School in 1870, or if earlier for other nearby buildings. The brick footings of one of these buildings, possibly an outhouse, was located in Trench 4 and corresponds with a structure first depicted on the

Second Ordnance Survey map of 1899. The remaining area of the site at this time remained open, probably largely as gardens and available to bury horses such the remains found in Trench 4 and during earlier archaeological work on the site (OA 2018).

5.4 Significance

5.4.1 The evaluation has identified archaeological remains of low significance, the earliest a ditch tentatively of Roman date. Finds indicate medieval activity in the vicinity, but no features definitely of this date were found. The remaining evidence dates to post-medieval period, one feature being possibly of 17th or 18th century date, the remainder 19th century or later, the latter probably associated with the construction and use of Abingdon School from 1870.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1							
General description						Orientation	NE-SW
Trench presenting two large modern pits backfilled with construction waste material. Garden soil overlying levelling deposit overlying sandy gravel natural geology.						Length (m)	14
						Width (m)	1.6
						Avg. depth (m)	0.9
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer		1.6	0.46	Topsoil. Friable, Dark Brownish Grey, Clayey Silt Garden soil.		
101	Layer		1.6	0.42	Other Layer. Levelling deposit		
102	Layer		1.6	0.9	Natural. Loose, Light Orange Grey, Sandy Gravel Natural Geology.		
103	Unexcavated feature		1.6	0.9	Modern. Modern pit filled with construction waste material.	CBM	Pmed
104	Unexcavated feature		1.6	0.9	Modern. Modern pit filled with construction waste material.		

Trench 2							
General description						Orientation	E-W
Trench presenting three ditches, one of which is Roman, a second modern and third truncated by a post-medieval quarry pit. Garden soil overlying sandy gravel natural geology.						Length (m)	14
						Width (m)	1.6
						Avg. depth (m)	0.54
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer		1.6	0.54	Topsoil. Friable, Dark Brownish Grey, Clayey Silt Garden Soil		
201	Layer		1.6	0.54	Natural. Loose, Light Yellow Grey, Sandy Gravel Natural Geology.		
202	Cut		0.78	0.34	Ditch. NNW-SSE aligned Roman Ditch		
203	Fill	202	0.58	0.34	Secondary Fill	Pot	Rom
204	Cut		0.4	0.1	Ditch. ENE-WSW aligned modern ditch		
205	Fill	204	0.4	0.1	Secondary Fill		
206	Cut		0.5	0.12	Ditch. Undated possible linear feature		
207	Fill	206	0.3	0.12	Secondary Fill		

208	Cut		1.6	0.38	Pit. Post-Med quarry pit later used as refuse pit.		
209	Fill	208	1.6	0.38	Secondary Fill	Pot	Med
210	Fill	208	0.95	0.14	Secondary Fill	Pot, CBM, glass	c 1760–1830

Trench 3

General description						Orientation	NE-SW
Trench presenting a tree throw and a modern ditch. Garden soil overlying levelling deposit overlying sandy gravel natural geology.						Length (m)	14
						Width (m)	1.6
						Avg. depth (m)	0.52
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer		1.6	0.24	Topsoil. Friable, Dark Brownish Grey, Clayey Silt Garden Soil.		
301	Layer		1.6	0.28	Other Layer. Levelling Deposit		
302	Layer		1.6	0.52	Natural. Loose, Light Yellow Grey, Sandy Gravel Natural Geology		
303	Cut		1.25	1	Pit cut by ditch 305.		
304	Fill	303	1.25	0.6	Final fill. Loose greenish brown sandy loam		
305	Cut		1.35	0.6	Ditch. E-W aligned modern ditch		
306	Fill	305	1.35	0.6	Deliberate Backfill	CBM	L19/20 C
307	Fill	303	0.75	0.45	Fill below 304. Deliberate backfill? Dark greyish brown gravelly loam.	Pot, CBM, bone, stone, iron	c 1830–1870?

Trench 4

General description						Orientation	NW-SE
Trench presenting early 20th Century wall foundation at NW end. Contains garden soil, overlying construction backfill, overlying levelling deposit/buried soil, overlying the natural of sandy gravel.						Length (m)	15
						Width (m)	1.6
						Avg. depth (m)	0.9
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer		1.6	0.2	Topsoil. Friable, Dark Greyish Brown, Clayey Silt Garden Soil		
401	Fill		1.6	0.25	Other Fill. Modern backfill deposit - levelling material.	Bone	

					Consists of gravel, sand, rubble, degraded mortar		
402	Layer		1.6	0.45	Buried soil. Buried soil/levelling/ landscaping deposit	Pot, CBM, shell	c 1820–1900
403	Layer		1.82		Natural. Loose, mid to light brownish yellow sandy gravel natural geology		
404	Fill	406	1.6	0.9	Top Fill.	Pot, CBM	c 1580–1800?
405	Structure		2.1	0.2	Wall. Brick structure. 2 courses deep, 1 to 2 bricks wide with a void of 0.4m (w) X 0.8m (l) min to 0.82m (w) X 1.0m max	Pot, clinker /burnt coal	c 1670–1800
406	Cut		1.6	0.9	Pit. Post-Med quarry pit.		
407	Cut		2	0.3	Tree-Throw Hole. Found at SE end of Trench 4		
408	Fill	407	1.6	0.3	Reddish-brown sandy silt.		

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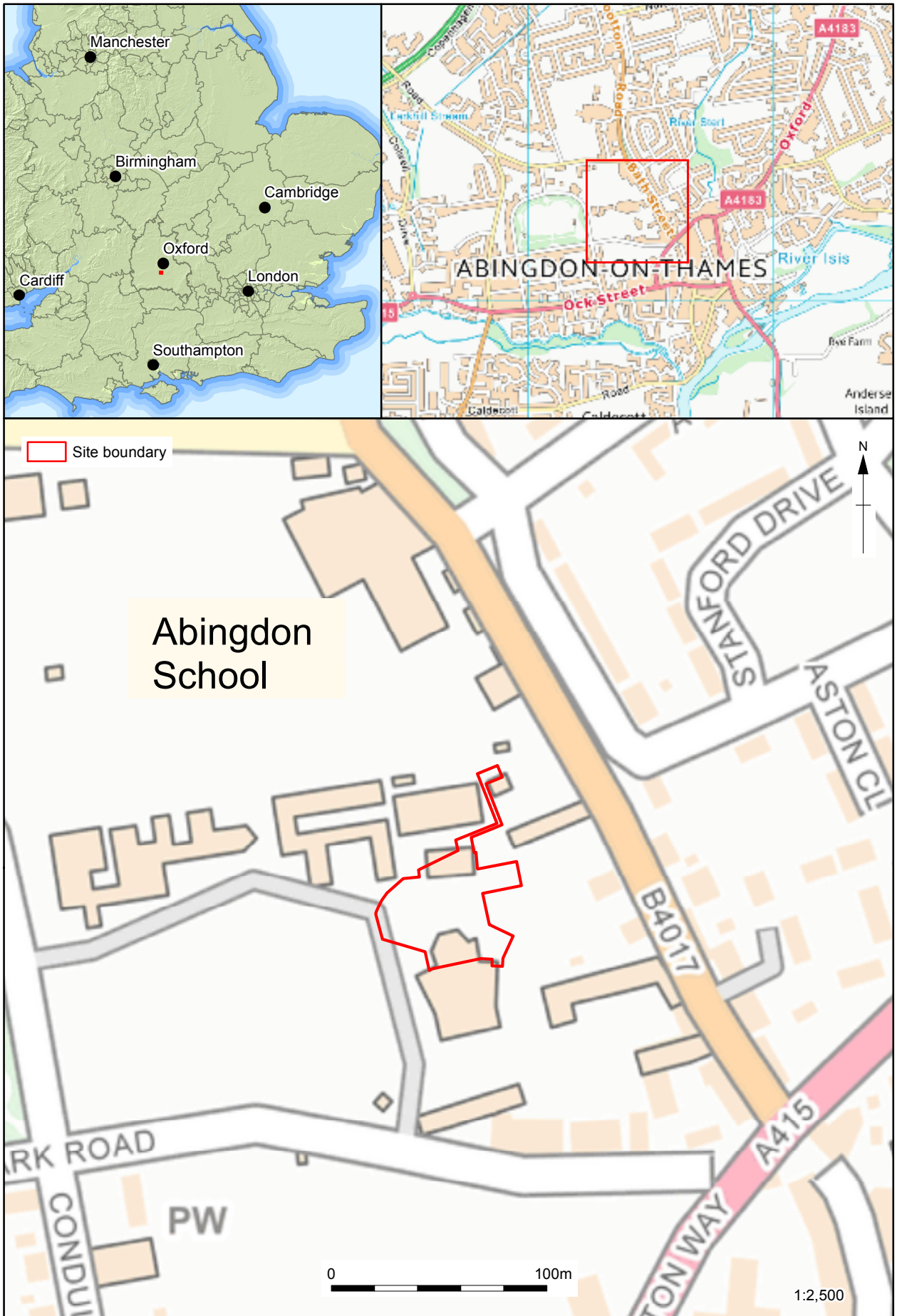
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APPENDIX C**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM**

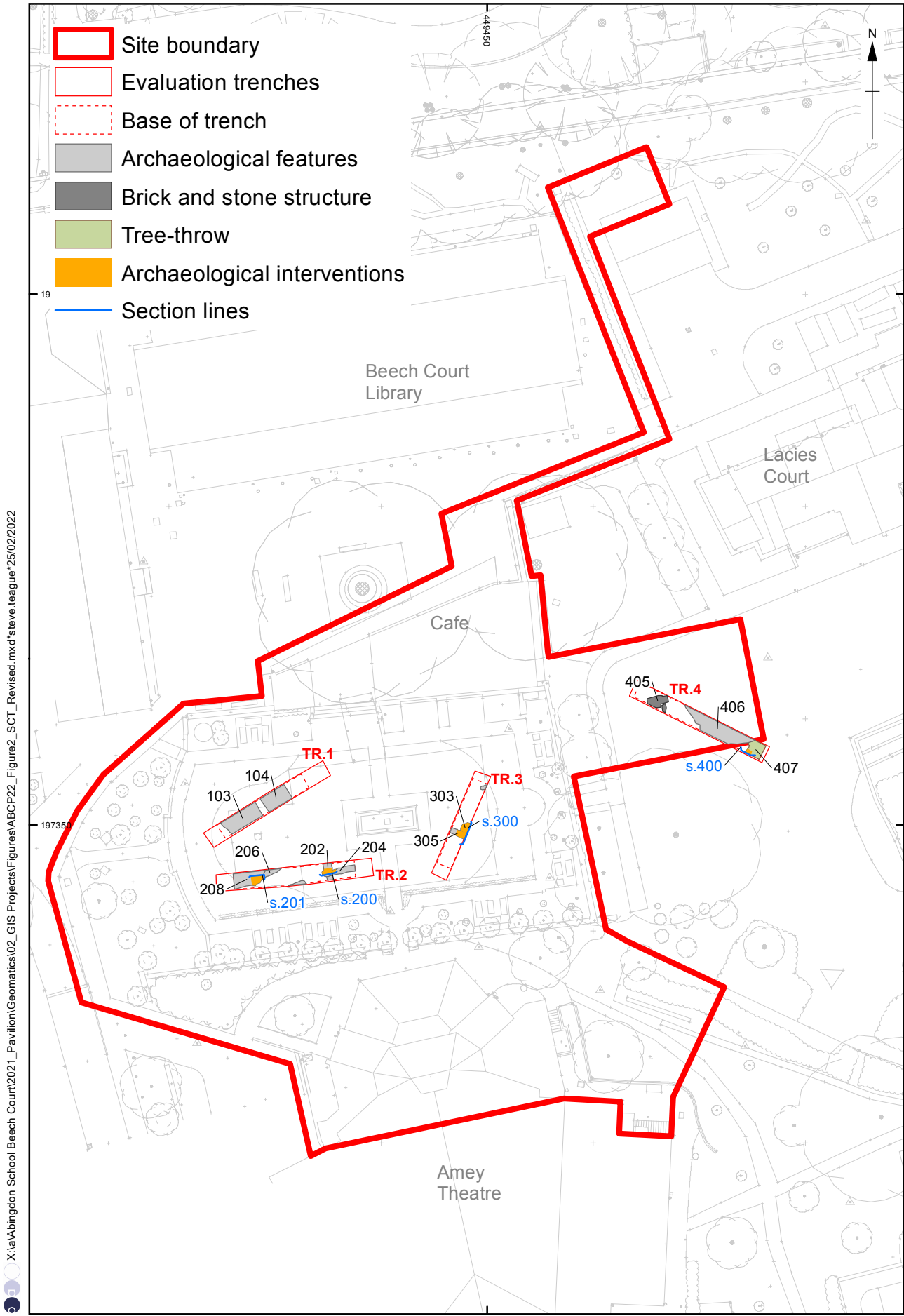
Site name:	Beech Court Pavilion, Abingdon School, Oxfordshire
Site code:	ABCP22
Grid Reference	NGR SU 49443 97349
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	7/2/22–10/2/22
Area of Site	0.251ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2022.23.
Summary of Results:	Between the 7th and 10th February 2022, Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation at Abingdon School, Oxfordshire in advance of a proposed new building. Four trenches revealed several ditches, one possibly of Roman date, the others undated, and several pits of post-medieval date, two probably quarry pits. Medieval pottery was also recovered, indicating domestic activity in the vicinity. A brick-built structure and a horse burial, both likely to have been associated with the late 19th school, were also revealed.

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Figure 1: Site location



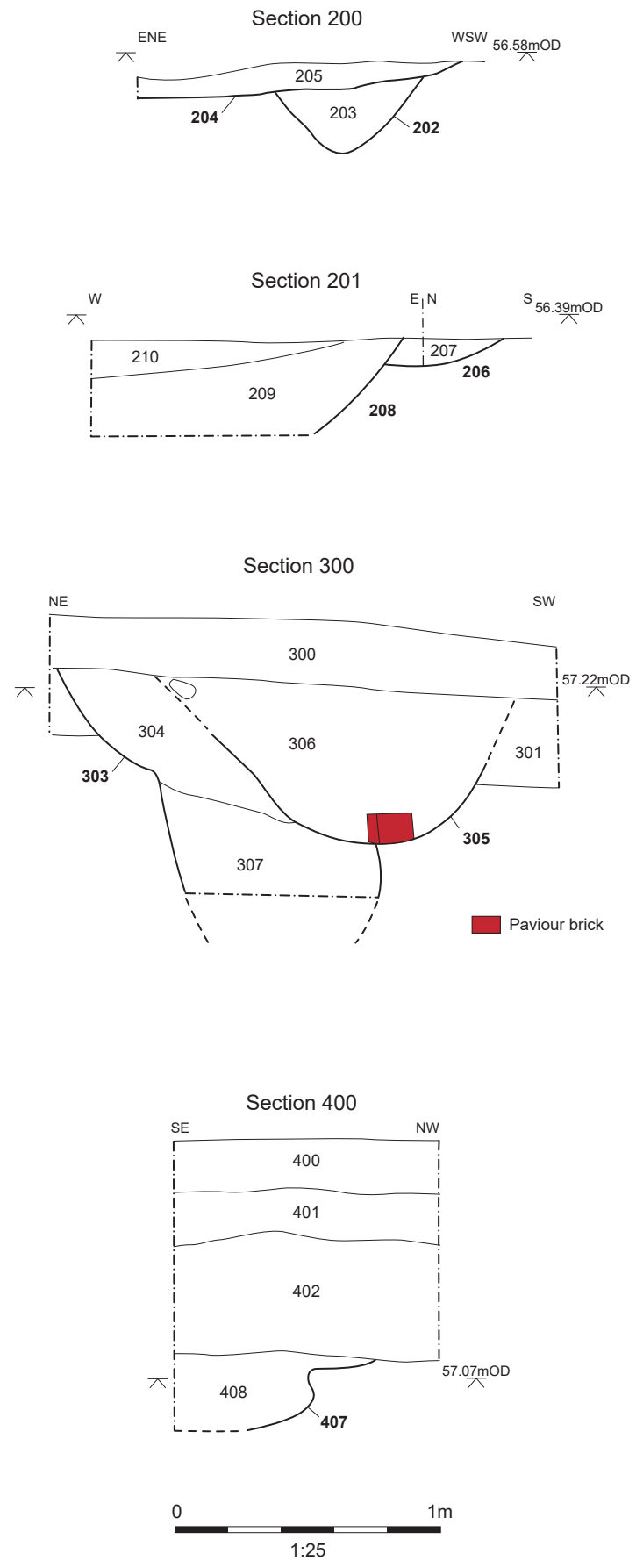


Figure 3: Sections



Plate 1: Ditches 202 and 204, view to SE



Plate 2: Feature 206 and quarry pit 208, view to NW



Plate 3: Pit 303 and modern linear 305, view to SE



Plate 4: Modern structure 405, view to N



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



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