

Abbey Centre Abingdon



Archaeological Excavation Report




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Abbey Centre, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

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Written by Robin Bashford

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Summary

In May 2012, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological excavation at the Abbey Centre, Abingdon (NGR SU 497 971). The work was commissioned by Hunter Evans Ltd on behalf of Scottish Widows Investment Partnership, and followed on from an earlier evaluation undertaken by OA in December 2011.

The results of the excavation broadly correlated with those from the earlier evaluation and revealed a loessic soil horizon overlying the natural terrace gravel. This was cut by pits dating to the 1st/2nd - 4th century AD, the fills of which were overlain by a homogeneous silty deposit which may have represented the re-worked upper fills of the earlier features. Following an apparent hiatus in the Saxon period, pit digging and domestic dumping suggesting nearby occupation was evidenced for the medieval and post medieval periods.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) were commissioned by Hunter Evans on behalf of Scottish Widows Investment Partnership to carry out an archaeological excavation at Abbey Centre, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (SU 497 971).
- 1.1.2 A planning application (11/02239/FUL) was submitted to the Vale of White Horse District Council to demolish two existing retail units and to redevelop units (29 - 33) as two new, two storey units. Due to the potential presence of archaeological remains, a requirement for programme of predetermination investigative works was set out in a brief issued by Hugh Coddington; Acting County Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC, 2011).
- 1.1.3 In response to the brief OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (2011a) and following approval of the WSI by OCC undertook a test pit evaluation of the site. The test pit evaluation (report OA 2011b) demonstrated the presence of Roman, medieval and post medieval remains on the site.
- 1.1.4 A condition requiring archaeological works was placed on planning consent for the development and the work required was detailed in a further brief issued by OCC (OCC 2012).
- 1.1.5 OA and Hunter Evans Ltd carried out an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development on the levels at which archaeological remains had been recorded in evaluation. Through redesign of the development foundations impact was limited to three lift pits across the site, some drainage works and very moderate truncation of the upper levels by ground beam trenches. A mitigation proposal expressing this information and proposing excavation of the lift pits and watching brief on the ground beams and drainage was set out in a Project Design (OA 2012) which was approved by OCC.
- 1.1.6 This document is the excavation report of the works.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies at approximately 55.50 m OD and is situated on second terrace river gravels overlying kimmeridge clay.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following section is reproduced from a desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site and the surrounding 0.5km area (the Study Area), carried out by OA. Full references can be found in the bibliography of that document (OA, 2011a).
- 1.3.2 The 'Site' as referred to below incorporates the entirety of the Abbey Centre, also known locally as 'The Bury'.

Prehistoric Period (500,000 BP - 43 AD)

The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods (c 500,000 BC to 4000 BC)

- 1.3.3 Isolated artefact finds in this area indicate a human presence during the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods. The earliest finds from within the Abingdon area are Lower Palaeolithic tools from the terrace gravels, one of which, a Lower Palaeolithic flake, was



found in 1985 on Stert Street within Abingdon Abbey (c 80m to the east of the Site). Two Palaeolithic handaxes are also recorded as having been found in Abingdon, but they do not have a clear provenance. A Late Mesolithic flint scatter was recorded during work at the Morlands Brewery site within the Tanneries area (c 230m to the south west of the Site). Mesolithic flints were also recovered in the Vineyard excavations.

The Neolithic and Bronze Age periods (c 4000-700 BC)

- 1.3.4 The Neolithic and Bronze Age periods are well represented in the wider Abingdon area, with a Neolithic Causewayed enclosure and a series of Bronze Age barrows having been identified c 1.5km to the north east of the Site. However, within the Study Area, there is less recorded archaeological evidence of these periods.
- 1.3.5 Neolithic flints have been found out of context within medieval layers during excavation to the north of Broad Street (c 40m to the north of the Site), and during work in the Merchants Quarter (c 65m to the south of the Site), while a small flint assemblage at Abbey House (c 100m to the east of the Site) suggested low level Neolithic activity in this area. This evidence suggests that although there has been Neolithic activity within the Abingdon area, it is not certain where exactly the focus of this activity was.
- 1.3.6 A possible Bronze Age barrow cemetery has been identified on aerial photographs just outside the Study Area (350m to the north west of the Site). Within the Study Area itself the finds of this period are limited to pottery found within an area south of the Site and sherds of a Bronze Age beaker were recovered in a buried prehistoric soil during archaeological work at Twickenham House (c 125m to the south of the Site), whilst pottery has also been recovered from excavations at East St Helen's Street, and from work at the Old Gaol.

The Iron Age (c 700BC- AD 43)

- 1.3.7 There is extensive archaeological evidence for Iron Age settlement within Abingdon. Early and Middle Iron Age settlement was found throughout the excavations under the Abbey House and car park to the east of the Site. To the south, an early-middle Iron Age inhumation and ditch were found at the Regal Cinema site, pits at West St Helen St and Lombard St and a buried soil at Twickenham House in East St Helen St. Pottery was also found at the west end of the Vineyard, and archaeology of this period is also likely within the Site.
- 1.3.8 Excavations under the Abbey Centre and at the former Regal Cinema have demonstrated the presence of a major defended late Iron Age settlement that includes the south-eastern half of the Site. Towards the end of the Iron Age a defensive circuit was constructed in a semicircle between the rivers Ock and Thames, consisting of two (or in places three) concentric ditches, each up to 12 m across. The ditches have been traced both to the south and to the east, and the alignments strongly suggest that the ditches run through the centre of the Site, and possibly through the main proposed area of development. Within the area enclosed by the ditch, excavations suggest a densely populated settlement, with Iron Age roundhouses, storage pits and post-hole structures. These appear to have been later replaced by rectilinear enclosures. The south eastern section of the Site is thought to be located within this area of settlement.

Romano-British Period (AD 43-410)

- 1.3.9 Archaeological evidence suggests that Abingdon retained its importance in the Early Roman period, with a continued presence within the limits of the Iron Age Oppidum. Roman buildings are known adjacent to Abbey House, under the former Railway Inn



and under Twickenham House and East St Helens Street, and other finds and features in every site that had Iron Age occupation.

- 1.3.10 In the 2nd century AD lengths of the defensive ditches were backfilled as the Roman occupation spread northwards. Between 50 and 100 m north of the Site between Broad Street and Stratton Way Roman occupation of the 2nd –4th centuries was found including 2 neonate burials, and from the tile, painted wall plaster and tesserae it is clear that another Roman building was very close by. Late Roman activity also continued within the line of the defences, both to the east and to the south in West St Helen Street.

The Medieval Period (AD 410-1550)

The Anglo Saxon Period (AD410-1066)

- 1.3.11 Two buildings of early Saxon date have been found within the town, under the Abbey House car park east of Stert Street some 100 m east of the Site. A number of early Saxon artefacts have also been found closer to the Site: baked clay loomweights and a spiral-headed bronze pin on the corner of Bath Street and Broad Street, a spearhead found during the demolition of 17 High Street (c. 25 m south of the site) and a bronze brooch also from the High Street.
- 1.3.12 Physical evidence for middle and late Saxon settlement is more limited, but both Abingdon Abbey and St Helens Church were founded within this period. The 'ten traders outside the abbey gates' recorded in Domesday Book presumably lived around the Market Place; Late Saxon pottery has been found at the north end of East St Helen Street on the edge of Market Square (OA unpublished archive). Late Saxon pottery has also come from West St Helen Street. Late Saxon brooches and belt-fittings have come from Abbey House and car park, and both an 11th century coin and a belt-fitting (this now in the Ashmolean Museum) from the area between Broad Street and Stratton Way. Saxon activity is therefore likely within the Site, particularly towards the southern end.

The Later Medieval Period (AD1066-1550)

- 1.3.13 Archaeological work within Abingdon has helped to map the extent of settlement by 1200AD. The current street layout of central Abingdon is still largely that of the medieval period, and the medieval layout was constrained by the line of the prehistoric defences, which survived in part as the medieval town ditch. The line of this ditch is preserved in property boundaries still visible on the Christ's Hospital map of 1844, and crosses the Site. The Bury was formerly known as Little Bury Street and Little Bridge St, presumably referring to a crossing of the town ditch. The layout of the Bury thus originated in the medieval period, and was presumably flanked by medieval properties, like those already excavated in Stert Street and in Broad Street to the east.
- 1.3.14 It has also been suggested that a possible medieval trackway ran through the Site in a north-south alignment, linking West St Helens Street with the northern half of Bath Street. This routeway is no longer recognised in the street layout of Abingdon.
- 1.3.15 Abingdon appears to have seen a peak of expansion and prosperity in the 12th and 13th centuries, by which time the town had grown considerably. However, the expansion seems to have stopped by the late 14th/early 15th centuries, with evidence of the abandonment of a number of properties in the town.



Post-Medieval Period (AD1550+)

- 1.3.16 Abingdon was initially an important garrison town for the Royalists during the Civil War, but it was lost to the Parliamentary forces in 1644. The effects of the war on the town have been identified during work at the West Central Redevelopment Area, and earthworks of Civil War defensive ditches remain to the south of the town. Archaeological evidence suggests that areas of the town were abandoned during the fighting, with evidence for the demolition of some buildings.
- 1.3.17 Rocque's map of 1761 shows the Site to be located within the centre of Abingdon, but the earliest detailed map of the Site to have been viewed for this project is the 1:500 scale Ordnance Survey map of 1874. It shows the Site to be centred around Bury Street with its terraced properties, which may have origins in the medieval period (see above). In addition, behind the terraced properties are a number of terraced settlements and isolated buildings, labelled as a school, a brewery and an iron works. The majority of the buildings within the Site are not shown to have backgardens, although the terrace leading away from Bury Street, 'Badcock's Row', does seem to be located next to some small plots of land, and further plots are seen to the north of the school. There is also some undeveloped land to the south of the Phoenix Iron Works, which may be a yard associated with the works, and between the Anchor Brewery and the Queens Hotel.
- 1.3.18 Although first seen on this 19th century map, the buildings on the 1:500 map may have been built much earlier than the late 19th century. A number of buildings shown on this map but outside of the Site, are still extant today and most have been designated Listed Buildings. The classifications for these buildings date them as mainly having been constructed in the 17th and 18th centuries, with only two recorded as having been built in the 19th century.
- 1.3.19 Subsequent Ordnance Survey maps of the Site show limited change within the Site to continue throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The 2nd Edition OS map of 1900 shows a terrace of buildings to the south of Bury Street to have gone. Further buildings in the same area have been removed by the 1912 edition, and appear to have been replaced by a series of enclosures, perhaps a cattle market. The 1st Edition OS map shows a cattle market in The Square, at the southern end of Bath Street, to the west of the Site, but this has gone by the 1912 map, and it is therefore possible it has been relocated within the Site.
- 1.3.20 The 1933 Ordnance Survey map shows further small scale change within the Site. A building shown on the 1912 map to the north of Bury Street, and south of the Abingdon Church/Bury Street School has been removed by the 1933 map. The 1936 map shows the terraced properties lining the south side of Bury Street to have been removed, and replaced by public lavatories. Early 20th century public lavatories were often built beneath ground level, although it is not clear from these maps or the Site whether this is the case here.
- 1.3.21 The 1967 OS map is the first to show parts of the current development within the Site, with the appearance of those on the southern half of the current Bury Street shown. The southern car park is also shown with the electricity substation. To the north remains the school, and older units, these are not seen to have been replaced until the 1973 OS map when the remainder of the current shopping arcade was constructed. The current shopping mall is therefore still aligned on the medieval route of Bury Street, although all the current buildings date to the 1960s and 1970s.



Evaluation

- 1.3.22 In December 2011, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at the site. The evaluation revealed pits dating to the 1st - 2nd century AD. The fills of the pits were overlain by a homogeneous silty deposit which may have represented the re-worked upper fills of the earlier features. A second phase of pit digging was dated to the 11th - 12th century, although the relationship between these later pits and the homogeneous silts was uncertain due to truncation from later features.
- 1.3.23 An east-west aligned limestone wall footing was also revealed, and was thought likely to date to the late 17th-early 18th century.

2 EXCAVATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The aim of the excavation was to mitigate the loss of historically informative Roman and medieval archaeological remains (due to construction impact) by replacement with archaeological record.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Site procedures followed standard OA practice as defined in Appendix 2 of the WSI.
- 2.2.2 Three trenches were excavated in the intended locations of lift pits
- 2.2.3 Initial excavation was carried out by a 3.5 tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All machine work was carried out under archaeological control.
- 2.2.4 Spoil excavated by hand was stored in areas adjacent to the trench. Sufficient hand-excitation was carried out in order to record and characterise the depth, date and type of archaeological remains present.
- 2.2.5 Visits to site were made subsequent to the excavation of the lift pits and during the construction work, in order to assess the remains that may be revealed by ground beam and drainage works. These works were generally (largely by design) to shallow to reveal archaeological remains and therefore further monitoring was abandoned.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The following section summarises the results from the earliest to the latest archaeological deposits encountered during the archaeological works. Detailed context descriptions are presented in the context inventory (Appendix A), and within the descriptive text where they are integral to the interpretation of the context in question.

3.2 Trench 1

- 3.2.1 Trench 1 (see location plan) was the trench carried out for evaluation purposes and is described in full in OA 2011. However the results of this trench are discussed below along with the excavation trenches.



3.3 Trench 2

- 3.3.1 Trench 2 measured 4.3 x 3.1 m in plan. The trench was irregular shaped due to the presence of several services which crossed the trench location.
- 3.3.2 A yellow sand (context 212) was revealed at the base of the excavation trench at 52.82 m OD. This was cut by two probable pit features (Cuts 208 and 210). The features were not excavated and retained *insitu* as they were below the depth of impact of the lift pit.
- 3.3.3 The pits were sealed by a thick homogeneous soil (206) which was interpreted as a garden soil partly derived from reworking of the upper pits fills at the archaeological horizon represented by 208 and 210. Pottery dated to c1170-1300 was retrieved from this layer.
- 3.3.4 The garden soil 206 was cut by a small stone-lined pit (Cut 205) and by a large stone wall (201) located to the west of the excavation trench and orientated approximately north-south.
- 3.3.5 A second possible but insubstantial wall (211) was recorded to the north of Pit 205.
- 3.3.6 The garden soil was sealed by the hardcore make-up (200) for the existing car park.

3.4 Trench 3

- 3.4.1 Trench 3 measured 4.1 x 3.4 m in plan. Part of the area of the excavation had already been excavated in the evaluation Trench 1. Natural gravel was revealed in the trench at 52.71 m OD. This was overlain by a 0.15 m thick reddish brown silt. The silt was cut by probable pits (unexcavated due to being below the construction impact level) represented by deposits (fills?) 317 and 314. Deposit 317 contained Roman pottery dating to AD 170-400. Deposit 314 contained Roman pottery dating to AD 200-400.
- 3.4.2 Deposit 314 was cut by a north west-south east aligned ditch cut (316). The upper fill of the ditch was overlain by a garden soil (309 = 312) which was probably partly derived from reworking of the upper fills of the pits at the archaeological horizon below. The garden soil contained Roman pottery (AD 100-200).
- 3.4.3 The garden soil was cut to the east of the excavation area by Pit 308. Pottery retrieved from the fills of pit 308 give a spot date of c1075-1300 for the infilling of the feature. A single sherd of residual Roman pottery was also present.
- 3.4.4 The fills of Pit 308 was partly removed by the construction cut (302) for a north west - south east aligned wall (301) which was heavily robbed and only survived as a single course.
- 3.4.5 The trench was sealed by hardcore and the existing tarmac surface of the car park.

3.5 Trench 4

- 3.5.1 Trench 4 measured 3.1 x 2.1 m in plan and was excavated to a depth of 53.17m OD.
- 3.5.2 Natural was not revealed in this trench. At 53.41 m OD a stone and clay structure (420) was recorded. This was possibly the remnant of a medieval wall. The structure was truncated by a series of intercutting late medieval/early post-medieval rubbish/cess pits (cuts 414 – filled by deposit 413, 409, 412, 406). These pits contained finds including quantities of pottery dating to the late 15th - late 16th century as well as bone, metal objects, roof stone fragments and dietary indicators – the whole artefact and ecofact assemblage suggesting domestic dumping/cess pits near to occupation.



- 3.5.3 The upper fills of pits were cut by a modern feature (403) which was possibly a drain. This was sealed by the modern make up and tarmac of the existing car park.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation

- 4.1.1 The excavation work revealed a limited window into a complex sequence of Roman, medieval and post medieval deposits features and structures that are characteristic of domestic occupation of the site for these periods.
- 4.1.2 The lack of any evidence for prehistoric (Iron Age) occupation is notable and could feasibly be due to the area being under the berm of the town oppidum, with this being removed during the Roman period allowing subsequent occupation of the area. The lack of Saxon evidence is reasonably concordant with the local and national urban population fluctuations associated with major historical events (i.e post-Roman ruralisation).
- 4.1.3 While the investigated areas are too small to allow major inferences on the nature of prehistoric-medieval activity in this part of Abingdon they do show that there is sufficient survival of archaeological strata to provide the basis of such work in the event of future opportunities for larger open area excavation. Specifically in relation to the presence/absence of prehistoric (Iron-Age) evidence and the spatial development and zoning of Roman-medieval occupation and thoroughfares, which is currently largely unknown in this part of the town.
- 4.1.4 Rocque's map of 1761 shows the area to be developed by this period. The limestone wall footings revealed in the northern part of Trench 1 and 2 could be slightly earlier than this. They are likely to be post medieval as their mortar is slightly cementous in appearance rather than the fine lime-rich mortar bonding that one may expect from substantial medieval buildings. However a rapid survey of all the listed buildings in the area indicates the dominance of brick by the late 18th century, so the footings would appear to pre-date this period.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 2					
General description				Orientation	N/A
				Avg. depth (m)	
				Width (m)	4.3 m
				Length (m)	3.1 m
Contexts					
context no.	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	Finds and spot date
200	Layer			Modern hardcore	
201	Wall			Stone wall	
202	Cut			Construction cut for 201	
203	Fill			Fill of 205	
204	Stone lining			Lining of pit 205	
205	Cut			Pit	
206	Layer			Garden soil	Pottery c1170-1300
207	Fill			Fill of 208	
208	Cut			Pit	
209	Fill			Fill of 210	
210	Cut			Pit	
211	Structure			Wall	
212	Natural				

Trench 3					
General description				Orientation	N/A
				Avg. depth (m)	
				Width (m)	4.1 m
				Length (m)	3.4 m
Contexts					
context no.	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	Finds and spot date
300	Layer			Modern overburden	
301	Structure			Wall footing	
302	Cut			Construction cut for 301	



303	Fill			Fill of 308	Pottery c1075-1300
304	Fill			Fill of 308	
305	Fill			Fill of 308	Pottery c1075-1300
306	Fill			Fill of 308	
307	Fill			Fill of 308	Pottery Roman. Piece of copper sheet
308	Cut			Pit	
309	Layer			Soil layer	
310	Fill			Fill of 311	
311	Cut			Eval trench	
312	Layer			Garden soil	Pottery: Roman AD 100-200
313	Layer			Disturbed upper ditch fill of 316	Pottery: Roman AD 100-250
314	Layer			Disturbed upper fills of pits (re-worked as garden soil?)	Pottery: Roman AD 100-400
315	Fill			Fill of 316	Pottery: Roman AD 250-400
316	Cut			Ditch cut	
317	Layer			Disturbed upper ditch fill of 316	Pottery: Roman AD 170-400
318	- Unused				
319	- Unused				
320	Finds ref				Pottery: Roman AD 150-200 Clay pipe. Iron nail

Trench 4					
General description				Orientation	N/A
				Avg. depth (m)	
				Width (m)	3.1 m
				Length (m)	2.1 m
Contexts					
context no.	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	Finds and spot date
400	Layer			Modern overburden	
401	Fill			Fill of 403	
402	Fill			Fill of 403	
403	Cut			Pit	
404	Fill			Fill of 406	Pottery c1550-1650?
405	Fill			Fill of 406	Pottery c1550-1650?
406	Cut			Pit	



407	Fill			Fill of 409	Pottery c1475-1550? Metal objects including buckle, iron nails and plain copper ring.
408	Layer			Make up/occupation? layer	Pottery c1475-1550
409	Cut			Pit	
410	Fill			Fill of 412	Pottery c1490-1550? Glass. Metal objects including dress pins, iron nail fragments, and copper wire.
411	Fill			Fill of 412	Pottery c1450-1600?. Iron strip and copper alloy lace tag.
412	Cut			Pit	
413	Fill			Fill of 414	Pottery c1450-1550?. Iron nails
414	Cut			Pit	
415	Fill			Fill of 414	
416	Fill			Fill of 409	Pottery c1450-1550? Iron nails
417	Unused				
418	Finds ref				Pottery c1475-1550?
419	Finds ref				Pottery c1450-1600?
420	Structure			Clay bonded stone structure	
421	Finds ref				Pottery c1450-1600?



APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Roman Pottery

by Edward Biddulph

A total of 122 sherds of Roman pottery, weighing 1287g, were recovered from seven contexts. A further four sherds were collected from two post-Roman contexts. Excluding this residual material, the small assemblage spans the 2nd to 4th centuries. Context 312 contained the earliest group, which was dated to the 2nd century on the basis of a flanged bowl in a fine white ware. Context 320 was broadly contemporary. A roughcast colour-coated beaker and a bowl that probably copied a samian prototype potentially date deposition to the second half of the 2nd century. It is possible that the pottery in context 313 was deposited in the 2nd century, although the presence of less diagnostic forms and fabrics places the group into a broader date range extending into the 3rd century. A BB1-style plain-rimmed dish in context 314 is likely to date the group to the 3rd or 4th century. The pottery from context 317, though dated to AD 170-400, may also date from the 3rd century onwards, as it included a grey ware jar rim that joined a sherd from context 314. The latest group was collected from context 315. This included a flanged bowl in Oxford red colour-coated ware, which dates deposition to the mid 3rd century onwards. Context 307, which contained white-ware, could not be dated closely within the Roman period.

Overall, the condition of the pottery was poor to moderate. Sherds were generally small, but surfaces were in reasonable condition and not overly abraded. For the size of the assemblage, a relatively wide range of forms and fabrics were encountered. These factors suggest that, while the pottery has probably been subject to multiple episodes of redeposition, areas of primary use and deposition are likely to be reasonably close to where the pottery was recovered. The date range of the assemblage suggests that there was settlement activity between the 2nd and 4th centuries.

Most of the pottery is of fairly local manufacture. The grey wares accord well with Oxford-industry forms and fabrics, and production of a colour-coated fine ware with roughcast decoration, like that found in context 320, is known at Lower Farm, Nuneham Courtenay (Booth 1993, 140). This fabric was also collected from an earlier phase of evaluation (ABESH 11), and overall the assemblage from the 2012 fieldwork is consistent with the material recovered in 2011.

4.2 Post-Roman pottery

by John Cotter

The post-Roman pottery assemblage comprised 86 sherds (1349g.). In addition, the sieved samples produced an extra 73 small sherds of pottery (230g.), nearly all post-Roman. This was briefly scanned and - if significant - mentioned in the spot-date comments but otherwise excluded from the assessment here. All the hand-excavated pottery was examined and spot-dated during the present assessment stage. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (e.g. decoration etc).

The assemblage is in a fragmentary condition with worn and fresh sherds present. Ordinary domestic pottery types are represented. The pottery is described in detail in the spreadsheet and is summarised below. Medieval pottery fabric codes are those of the Oxfordshire county type series (Mellor 1994) together with a few post-medieval codes as used by the Museum of London (MoLA).



The post-Roman sequence probably commences in the late 12th or early 13th century and probably ends in the mid 17th century. A group of three contexts are of similar early medieval date - probably late 12th or early 13th century (Ctx 206, 303 and 305). A cross-join between the latter two suggests they may be closely related. Pottery of this date includes cooking pots and glazed pitchers in Early Medieval Oxford ware (OXY, c 1075-1300) and cooking pots in East Wiltshire ware (OXAQ, c 1170-1350).

A glazed and slip-decorated jug rim in 13th/14th-century Ashampstead-type ware (OXAG, formerly Abingdon-type ware) is residual in one of the sieved samples (Ctx 411). A few pieces of Brill/Boarstall ware (OXAM) are probably also of this date ('high medieval') but these also occur in late medieval contexts. Nine other post-Roman contexts are all fairly consistently of late medieval or early post-medieval date, mainly within c 1450-1550, or possibly as late as c 1600 - although a date before c1550 seems more likely. Most of these contain distinctive sherds of late Brill/Boarstall ware (OXAM/OXBX, c 1400-1600) including many with a characteristically late pinkish-orange fabric and a clear orange glaze with green speckles. Characteristically late vessel forms including bifid rim jars and a rim from a large jar or cistern (brewing vessel) are present as well as a rim from a small dish or lamp (Ctx 407, with cross-join in 404). These occur together with fine-walled drinking vessels in shiny black-glazed Cistercian-type ware (CIST, c 1490-1600) and green-glazed Tudor Green ware (TUDG, c 1380-1525).

A German Raeren stoneware drinking mug (RAER, c 1475-1550) is also present plus a few late medieval Surrey whiteware jugs (OXBG) and other minor regional wares. These are the sort of late medieval wares one might find in monastic Dissolution deposits of the 1530s - although this may be purely coincidental. The latest two contexts (404 and 405) contain post-medieval glazed red earthenwares (PMR) which date them to c 1550-1650 (?) although they both contain residual late medieval wares. A single 17th-century clay pipe stem in Context (320) has been noted below - although it may be intrusive given that the 22 sherds of pottery in this context are Roman.

Pottery Spot Date Table

Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight	Comments
206	c1170-1300	7	93	Fairly fresh. 3x OXAQ incl thumbled cpot rim. 4x OXY cpot bodysherds (bss). Mostly sooted
303	c1075-1300	4	54	1x fresh bs thinly glazed yell-brown OXY jug , or poss ?OXAW (c1175-1300). 3x fairly fresh Roman bss burnished greyware (43g)
305	c1075-1300	1	7	Fresh bs prob from cylindrical jug neck glazed OXY or ?OXAW. Poss JOINS/same vess in (303)
307	Roman	1	8	Bs whiteware
312	AD100-200	12	106	1x fine grey ware bs; 1x grog-tempered ware bs; 4x grey ware bs; fine white ware curving-sided bowl with flanged rim, as Young O39; 2x fine white ware bs; 1x sandy white ware bs
314	AD200-400	20	217	Plain-rimmed dish with intersecting arc decoration in BB1-type fabric; 1x sherd from jar in BB1-type fabric; 2x grog-tempered ware bs; 11x grey ware, incl necked jar; 3x fine grey ware, incl jar/beaker rim; 1x sandy white ware bs; 1x sand/shell-tempered bs
313	AD100-250	29	235	3x grog-tempered ware bs; 10x grey ware bs; 10x fine grey ware, incl rim of narrow-necked jar; 1x



Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight	Comments
				samian footring frag; 2x sandy white ware; 1x fine white ware; 1x white-slipped oxidised ware
315	AD250-400	16	327	flanged bowl, Young C51, Oxford red colour-coated ware; 8x grey ware, incl pedestal base (?Young R14) and straight-sided bowl (?Young R43); 3x fine grey ware; 2x grog-tempered ware; 1x sandy white ware; 1x white-slipped oxidised ware; 1x dish sherd (? Drag. 31) in East Gaulish samian ware
317	AD170-400	22	225	5x grog-tempered ware; 7x fine grey ware, incl Young R30 beaker; 5x grey ware, incl necked jar (Young R24) – joins sherd in 314; 3x sandy white wares; 2x samian, incl Drag. 27 cup in South Gaulish samian ware
320	AD150-200	22	169	8x bs grey ware, incl bowl (Young R61) and necked jar; 8x fine grey ware bs; fine oxidised ware carinated or hemispherical bowl copying samian prototype; beaker base in brown/red colour-coated ware, underside of base is roughcast, ?Lower Farm fabric F59; 4x bs fine white ware; 1x clay pipe stem - 17C
404	c1550-1650?	6	102	2x vess early fine PMR incl flat jug/jar base with int glz. 1x late ?Brill small dish or lamp rim with glossy int greenish-yell glz & sooted ext (v prob JOINS (407) Sieved sample sherd). 2 bss (1 vess) transitional Lmed/pmed bowl with greenish int glz. 1x OXBG Surrey bs
405	c1550-1650?	6	26	1x early PMR bs w int metallic brown glz. Rest prob late med incl bs TUDG & late Brill OXBX
408	c1475-1550	10	245	1x Raeren stoneware mug rim/half profile with complete handle. Late Brill-type pink, white (or Cheam?), PMRE?
407	c1475-1550?	23	302	1-2 bss ?PMRE late med transitional glazed sandyware - poss incl drip pan handle (or CBM?). Late med pinkish Brill pedestal jug bases (JOINS 408) with speckled glz int & ext. Bifid OXBX jar rim Bss sandy gr-glz whiteware - poss Cheam? Rim from ?Brill Tudor Green-style cup/jar? 1-2 resid 12/13C. 1x Roman grey bs (14g)
416	c1450-1550?	6	100	Fresh late pink Brill incl clear orange-yell glz with green speckles. Fresh large ?jug bs in pinkish fabric with thin yell-green glaze ending in a horiz lines (glazed upper half only) - poss painted on or dipped? (Sieved incl flaring rim Tudor Green cup)
410	c1490-1550?	1	8	Bs Late pink Brill w ext clear orange-yell glz (Sieved sample includes 2x joining sherds incl rim Cistercian or Brill-type Cistercian over-fired cup rim, 1x small bs



Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight	Comments
				Brill/Tudor Green-type, base prob Coarse Border ware, rim late Brill jar plus resid med & Roman)
411	c1450-1600	3	130	Thick flat jug base & 2 bss pale pink sandy Brill/Cheam incl large sooted bs with green speckle glz (Sieved sample incl worn rim slip dec 13/14C OXAG jug)
413	c1450-1550?	16	219	Mostly late Brill &/or poss Nettleden-type? Incl large fresh frag ?cistern or storage jar rim in smooth cream fabric with v heavily thumbled applied rim/shoulder collar strip w specks green glz. Other highly fired smooth bss with ext brown glz (OXAP?). Unglz brown sandy ?tubular spout frag oxid sandy ? PMRE sooted base sherd. 1x worn glazed Minety ware base (Sieved incl small bs Brill/Tudor Green-type with int/ext green glz)
418	c1450-1600?	2	67	1 vess. Joining sl sagging base sherds transitional ? PMRE or late Brill? Oxid with grey core & allover int yell-green glz
419	c1450-1600?	2	28	Late Brill incl unglz fine flanged bowl/jar rim & sag base w int yell glz
421	c1450-1600?	3	25	Bss late Brill pink speckly ware

4.3 Clay pipe

by John Cotter

A single piece of clay pipe weighing 7g. was recovered from Context (320). This has not been separately catalogued but is described here. It is a burnished stem fragment in slightly worn condition and with some white mortar encrustation. The stem bore is c 3mm. in diameter suggesting a 17th-century date.

4.4 Glass

By Ian R Scott

The only glass comprises 2 small refitting sherds of vessel glass from context 410. The fragments form part of a folded horizontal footring. The metal is weathered and largely de-vitrified although the surviving core appears to be colourless or near colourless. The footring had a diameter of c 110mm to 120mm (sherd L: 28mm; W: 10mm). The glass is probably medieval and may have come from the foot of a high quality stemmed glass of 13th- to 14th-century date.

4.5 Metalwork

By Ian R Scott

The metal finds are limited both in number and in the range of finds recovered (see table below). There are 15 iron objects (34 fragments) and 12 copper alloy pieces (12 fragments). The copper alloy finds include 6 short pieces of wire (context 410).



Table: Summary of metalwork by Context and Function

Context		Function					Total
		Personal	Nails	Misc	Query	Undiagnostic	
307	Count			1			1
	Fragt count			1			1
320	Count		1				1
	Fragt count		1				1
407	Count	1	9	1	1		12
	Fragt count	1	17	1	1		20
410	Count	2	0	6			8
	Fragt count	2	3	6			11
411	Count	1		1			2
	Fragt count	1		1			2
413	Count		2				2
	Fragt count		2				2
416	Count		1			0	1
	Fragt count		5			4	9
Total	Count	4	13	9	1	0	27
Total	Fragt count	4	28	9	1	4	46

- **Context 307** The only metal find was a piece of copper sheet bent as if the form a rough cone-shape.
- **Context 320** 1 nail
- **Context 407** The finds comprise 1 small plain double loop buckle (L: 23mm; W: 21mm) in copper alloy, probably originally with an iron tongue. This is a form of buckle that remained in use from about the middle of the 14th century until the 18th century. There is also a segment of plain copper alloy ring (D: c 35mm) and 9 iron nails (17 fragments). Finally there is a flat fragment of corrosion encrusted iron (L: 84mm; W: 45mm) that cannot be readily identified.
- **Context 410** Finds comprise the tops of 2 small dress pins with wound wire heads, 3 nail stem fragments, and 6 short lengths of copper wire.
- **Context 411** The finds include a small lace tag formed from copper alloy sheet and secured to the lace by a pin or small rivet, and small narrow fragment of iron strip.
- **Context 413** 2 nails.
- **Context 416** The finds consist of 1 nail and 4 nail stem fragments, and 4 small undiagnostic fragments of iron.

Most of the finds are not closely datable and of strictly limited interest. The nails all appear to be hand made but otherwise cannot be closely dated. The 2 fragments of dress pin could be late medieval or post medieval in date, and a similar dating applies to the lace tag. The small double loop buckle is probably a belt buckle and could date typologically to any time between the mid 14th century and the 18th century.

4.6 Worked Stone

by Ruth Shaffrey

Five pieces of stone were retained of which two are worked and were examined with the aid of a x10 magnification hand lens.

Both items are fragments of roof-stones and are made of fine grain Jurassic oolitic limestone. One



is a wide rectangular example (416) but the other is a much smaller non-diagnostic fragment that retains only its perforation as evidence of its function (407). Both could be Roman or medieval/post-medieval in origin.

Catalogue of worked stone

Ctx	No	Descrip	Notes	Size	Lithology
407	1	Roofstone fragment	Small fragment with part of circular perforation		Measures 11m thick
416	1	Roofstone fragment	Incomplete stone - part with perforation does not survive.		Measures 210wide x >240 x 8mm
		Rectangular	well cemented slightly oolitic limestone		

4.7 Animal bone

by Lena Strid

A total of 891 animal bones were recovered from Roman, Medieval and Post-medieval features at this site. Of these, 253 bones could be identified to species (Table 1). A further 48 speciable bones were retrieved from the evaluation.

While small, the species distribution in the assemblage is typical for urban sites from these periods. Cattle, sheep/goat and pig dominate, while other mammals and birds are present in small numbers. The prevalence of sheep/goat in the late Medieval/Post-medieval period is connected to the important wool trade during this period. The nearby downlands would provided suitable sheep pastures. Dog was absent in the assemblage, but is implicitly present in the form of carnivore gnaw marks on a number of bones. The skeletal distribution suggest that the assemblage contains both butchery waste and kitchen waste. A single fallow deer antler fragment had been sawn off just at the palmate area, indicating that antler working may have taken place in the vicinity.

Due to the small assemblage size, an analysis of slaughter age pattern cannot be made for any of the three periods. However, judging by tooth wear, epiphyseal fusion and surface structure of the bones, most of the cattle, sheep/goat and pig bones derived from sub-adult or adult animals. Several bones from juvenile calves and piglets occurred in the post-medieval features.

Table showing Number of identified bones/taxon by chronological phase

	Roman			Medieval			Late Medieval / Post-medieval					
	Ditch 316	Layer	Total	Pit 308	Garden soil	Total	Pit 406	Pit 409	Pit 412	Pit 414	Layer	Total
Cattle	1		1	4		4	4	25	4	12	1	46*
Sheep/goat	1	1	3	10	1	11	10	68	6	14	4	102
Pig				4		4	1	35	3	12	2	53**
Rabbit				1		1		9	3			12
Cat									1			1
Fallow deer										1		1
Domestic fowl				1		1	1	12	2	5		20
Goose				1		1		4	1	2		7
Passerine										1		1
TOTAL	2	1	3	21	1	22	1	153	20	47	7	228

*: Including 10 bones from calves

**.: Including 2 bones from piglets



Environmental Samples

By Julia Meen

Five environmental samples were taken for the recovery of plant remains and artefacts from excavation works at the Abbey Shopping Centre, Abingdon. The sampled contexts were identified during excavation as fills of cess pits or middens. As the chemicals found in cess pits can induce mineral replacement within plant tissues that would otherwise decay, there is potential for the preservation of a range of plant material, through mineralisation, that would not normally come into contact with fire and so would not be preserved through charring. On the basis of associated pottery all the sampled features are Post-Medieval in age (c. 1450 onwards; see Table 1.).

All samples were processed using a modified Siraf style flotation machine. Sample volumes are given in Table 1. Each flot was collected on a 250µm mesh and the heavy residues were sieved to 500µm, after which both flots and residues were dried in a heated room. The residues were sorted by eye for artefacts and ecofactual remains. The flots were assessed for charred and mineralised plant remains using a binocular microscope at approximately x15 magnification. Plant nomenclature is based on Stace (2010) and identifications were made with guidance from K. Hunter and S. Boardman.

Assessment of the content of the five flots is given in Table 1. Each of the examined flots was found to be rich in charcoal. Sample <2>, from context (407), contained frequent cereal grain, of which the majority were wheat (*Triticum* sp.) or free-threshing wheat (*T. aestivum/turgidum*). The other cereals were some rare barley (*Hordeum* sp.) grains and a single grain of sprouted oat/brome grass (*Avena/Bromus* sp.). Only one incidence of chaff, a fragment of free-threshing wheat rachis, was observed. Other food crops represented were probable wild cherry (*Prunus* c.f. *avium*), broad bean (*Vicia faba*) and probable pea (cf. *Pisum sativum*). Although no mineralised remains were noted in the flot, a mineralised seed of grape (*Vitis vinifera*) was recovered from the heavy residues.

Sample <3> was taken from context (410). It contained abundant (>100 items) cereal grains in varying states of preservation. The majority could be identified as wheat, and where preservation allowed further identification, as a free-threshing variety. Free-threshing wheat rachises were also common. Occasional grains of barley and oat/brome grass, and a small number of barley rachis fragments, were also present. A small number of legumes included pea, as well as at least one other type which was too poorly preserved to be identified to species.

Sample <4> was taken from context (411). Cereal grains were common, with free threshing wheat the dominant type. Chaff was also common, with numerous fragments of free threshing wheat rachis and a lower quantity of barley rachis and a single rachis of rye (*Secale cereale*). The overall preservation was, however, poorer than that seen in sample <3>. A low number of legumes included examples of pea and broad bean. The heavy residues produced evidence of mineralisation, with a grape pip, a fly puparia, and occasional insect fragments observed. A small fragment of mineralised woven textile was also recovered from the heavy residue.

Sample <5> was taken from context (413). This sample proved to be particularly rich in well-preserved cereal grain. Many could be identified as free-threshing wheat. Rachis fragments of free-threshing wheat were also very common; although the fragments were generally small and specific identifications could not be made. Only one better preserved item was identified as bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*). Barley grain and rachis were also present in low quantity. Legumes were more numerous and were better preserved than in the other four samples from this site, and included examples of pea, broad bean, possible fodder vetch (*Vicia sativa*) and other unidentifiable legumes of >4 and >2mm size, including *Vicia/Lathyrus/Pisum* spp.

Sample <6> contained frequent cereal grain, a moderate quantity of which could be identified as



free-threshing type. A small number of grains of barley was also present. However, it was notable that the sample was very low in chaff, with only a single item each of wheat and barley rachis. A pea was amongst a small number of legumes present. This sample also displayed evidence of mineralisation, with a small number of seeds including fig (*Ficus carica*) preserved in this manner.

Discussion

There were some differences in the standard of preservation between the five samples, but the range of species represented is generally comparable. A recurring pattern can be observed: aside from charcoal fragments, the dominant component of each sample was cereal grain; of which a high number were of free threshing wheat. Both the hexaploid *Triticum aestivum* (bread wheat) and tetraploid *Triticum turgidum* (rivet wheat) species may have been present during the Post-Medieval period, but the preservation conditions are not sufficient to allow definite identification on the basis of chaff morphology. However, the presence of a more complete, hexaploid-type rachis from sample <5> demonstrates the presence of bread wheat at the site, whilst the additional utilisation of rivet wheat cannot be ruled out. Evidence for cultivation of barley, oat and possibly rye in lesser quantity also characterised the samples.

Other cultivated food plants noted in the samples include pea, broad bean, grape and fig. Together with the cereals, these species reflect a typical medieval plant assemblage. Comparisons can be made with charred, mineralised and waterlogged samples from the nearby Abingdon West Central Redevelopment (Pelling, 2007). Here, a series of contexts dating from the twelfth to the eighteenth century revealed a great deal of continuity in the main food species represented through time. As at the Abbey Centre site, the samples analysed by Pelling also produced large numbers of free-threshing wheat grains with low quantities of chaff, moderate quantities of legumes, including pea and broad bean, and some exotics, including fig and grape.

Charred seeds of dock (*Rumex* sp.) were the most common weed contaminant at the Abbey Centre site, appearing in moderate quantity in four of the five samples; small seeded legumes, a common inclusion in medieval arable assemblages, also occurred in several samples. The presence of rush (*Juncus* sp.) and sedge (Cyperaceae), both associated with wetland areas, may suggest cultivation of damp ground. Small numbers of other arable weeds typical of medieval fields such as Stinking Chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*), Field Gromwell (*Lithospermum arvense*) and Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*) suggests a continuation in farming methods from Medieval to Post—Medieval Abingdon. The observation of Pelling (2007) that this period also saw continuity in diet in the town is supported by the composition of the cereals and other plant foods in the five samples and their similarity to the assemblages from Medieval Abingdon.

All the sampled contexts were identified during excavation as probable cess pit fills, and three samples showed evidence of mineralisation of plant material. The presence of mineralised grape pips in two samples and fig in one sample supports the hypothesis that these deposits contained human waste. Meanwhile, the more abundant charred material recovered from all five contexts indicates that the pits were also used as dumps for food material, accidentally charred during processing, mixed with other domestic rubbish, including burnt wood fuel and animal bone.

**APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

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APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

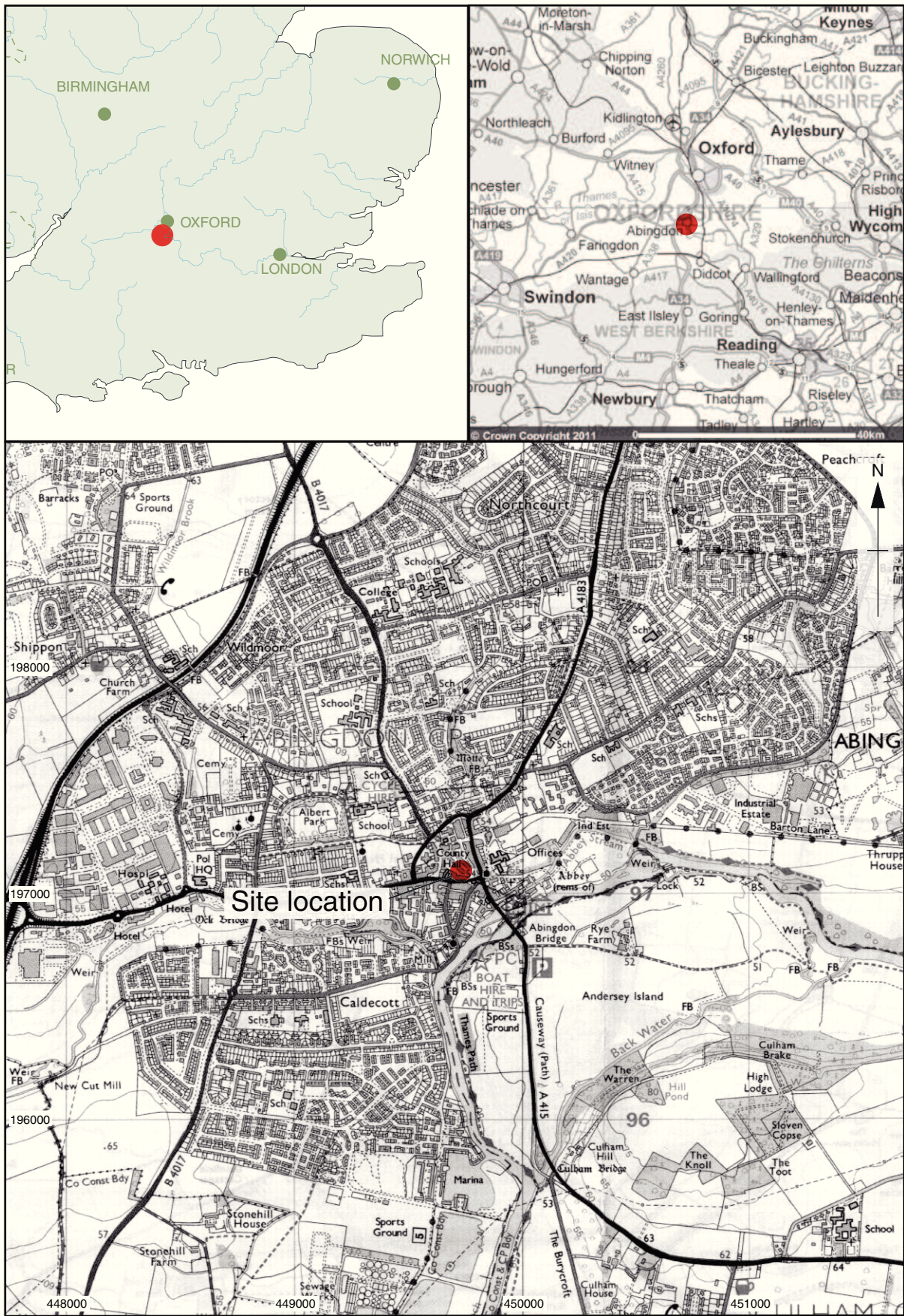
Site name:	Abingdon, Abbey Centre
Site code:	ABESH12
Grid reference:	SP SU 497 971
Type:	Excavation
Date and duration:	May 2012

Area of site:

Summary of results: During May 2012, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological excavation at the Abbey Centre, Abingdon (NGR SU 497 971). The work was commissioned by Hunter Evans Ltd on behalf of Scottish Widows Investment Partnership, and followed on from an earlier evaluation undertaken by OA in December 2011.

The results of the excavation broadly correlated with those from the earlier evaluation and revealed a loessic soil horizon overlying the natural terrace gravel. This was cut by pits dating to the 1st/2nd - 4th century AD, the fills of which were overlain by a homogeneous silty deposit which may have represented the re-worked upper fills of the earlier features. Following an apparent hiatus in the Saxon period, pit digging and domestic dumping suggesting nearby occupation was evidenced for the medieval and post medieval periods.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2011.212.



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Figure 1: Site location

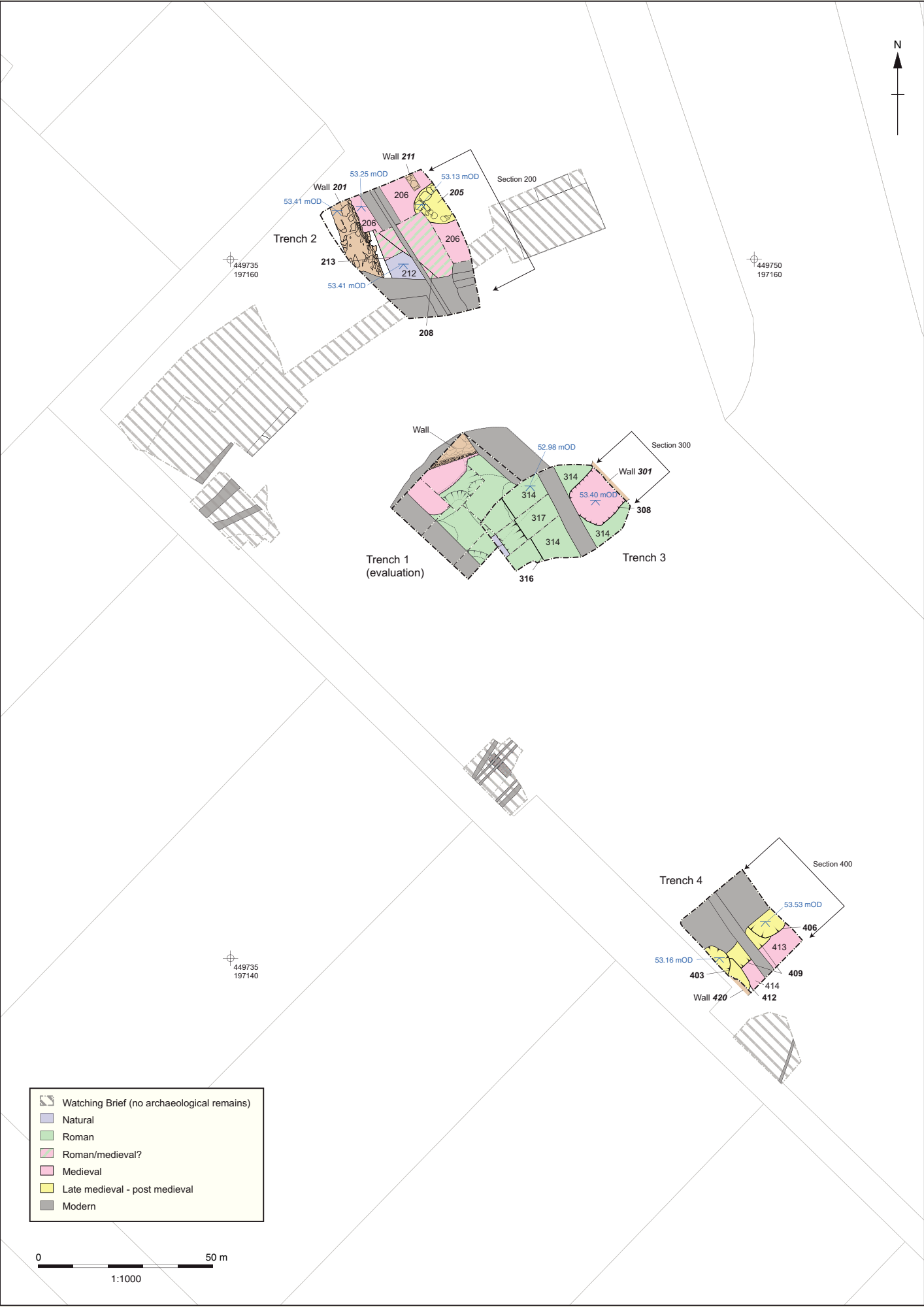


Figure 2: Archaeological features

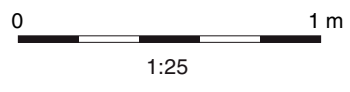
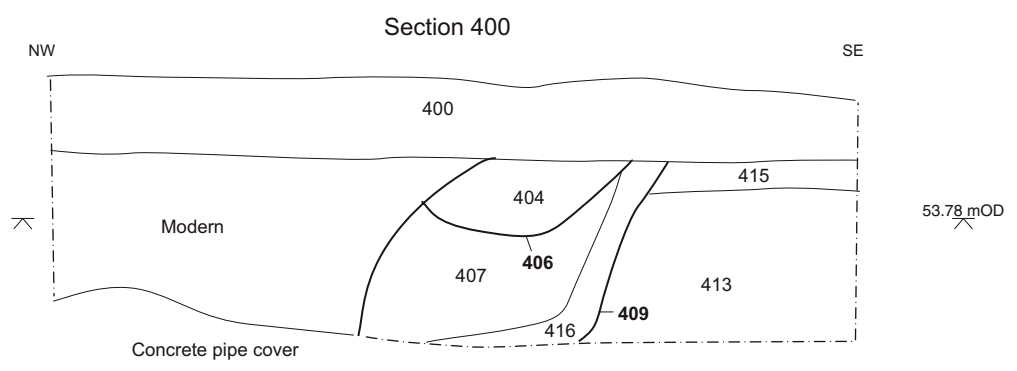
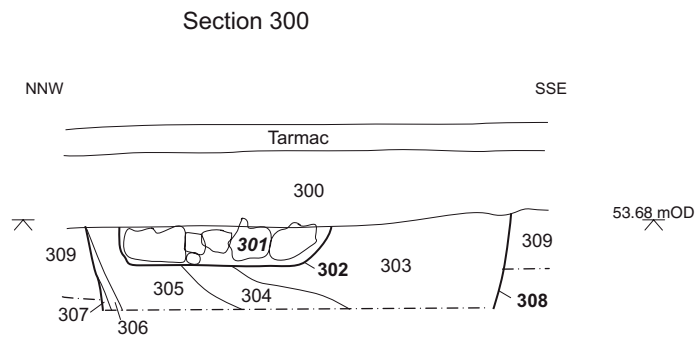
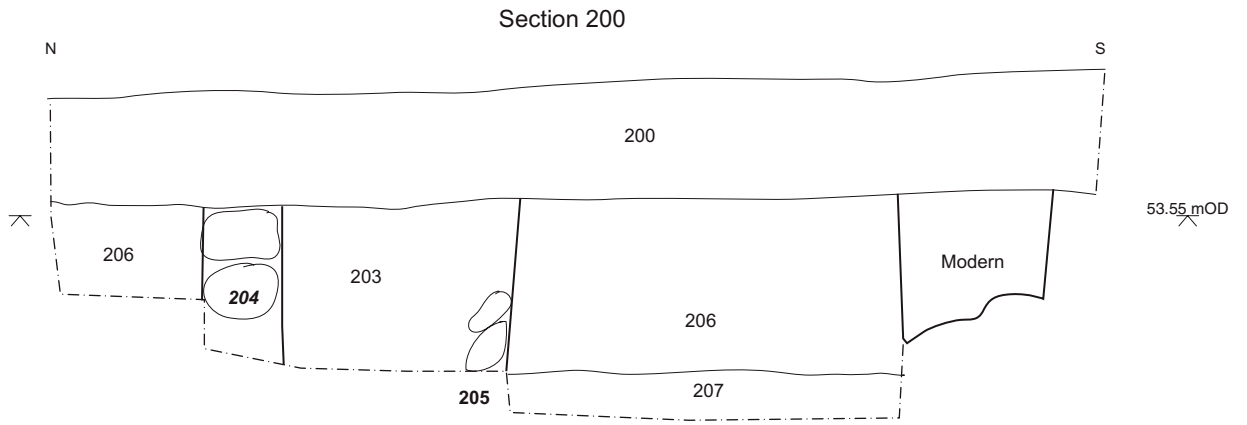


Figure 3: Sections