

# Dove House, Cassington, Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



September 2014

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1	Vix Hughes Project Officer	Edward Biddulph Post Excavation Project Manager	Gerry Thacker Senior Project Manager	

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Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263800  
f: +44 (0) 1865 793496

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

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## Dove House, Cassington, Oxfordshire

### *Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*Written by Vix Hughes*

*with contributions from John Cotter, Ian Scott, Lena Strid and Geraldine Crann and  
illustrated by Lucy Gane*

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## Summary

*Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by PCA Architects to undertake a watching brief of the site of a proposed extension to an existing residential property (Dove House), centred on NGR SP 4554 1058. The work was undertaken on 14th August 2014.*

*The work revealed the foundations of the current building and boundary wall, and a series of deposits which had been used to level the area. The small assemblage of artefacts recovered dates from the 16th century onwards. The original topography seen in the underlying gravels demonstrated a steeper original gradient, sloping down from north to south, which had been levelled by the addition of several layers of soil. No evidence of medieval settlement or associated features were uncovered during the watching brief.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project Details

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by PCA Architects to undertake a watching brief of the site of a proposed extension to an existing residential property (Dove House).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: P14/0585/P/FP). A brief was set by Joanne Robinson, Assistant Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC 2014), detailing the local authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition. The work was undertaken to an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2014); this document outlines how OA implemented those requirements.
- 1.1.3 The watching brief was required because of the potential for features associated with the former medieval manor house and its grounds to be disturbed by construction work associated with the new extension.
- 1.1.4 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located off Pound Lane, to the south of St. Peter's Church in Cassington (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The area of development consisted of the garden of the property to the south-west of the current Dove House, and a small store house (Fig. 2). The ground was higher on the northern side and graduated gently down-slope towards the house.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is River Terrace Deposits of sand and gravel overlying the Kellaways Formation and Oxford Clay.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The site is enclosed by a medieval moat that surrounded the original manor house, which was located around 18m east of the current 16th-17th century house, a mound being all that remains of the former building. A group of 'fish stews' (fish storage ponds) are located to the south of the site. Further to the south additional medieval features, including ditches and pits, have been uncovered, suggesting that the medieval manor complex may have been quite extensive.



## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 General Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were:

- (i) To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- (iii) To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- (iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- (v) To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- (vi) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- (vii) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- (viii) To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- (ix) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

### 2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the watching brief were:

- (x) To identify and record any remains associated with the former manor house and its grounds.

### 2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The watching brief involved the monitoring of any ground works with the potential to disturb buried archaeological features or deposits. This included excavations for wall footings, new services, surface stripping or landscaping.

2.3.2 Site specific methodologies were as follows:

- (i) All ground works were monitored initially, until consideration could be taken regarding further attendance in regard to specific ground work activities.
- (ii) Revealed features were hand cleaned, hand excavated and recorded as specified in the WSI.
- (iii) The foundation trenches were excavated using a 3 tonne mechanical excavator which was monitored continuously, in dry weather with good visibility. The excavation was concluded on the trenches within one working day.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 A full description of each context and their stratigraphic relationships can be found in Appendices A and B. A description and interpretation of all of the deposits uncovered forms the content of the sections below, and these are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3.

3.1.2 The earliest deposit identified was the natural gravel, 121, seen at the base of the foundation trenches at the northern end of the site.





- 3.1.3 Overlying gravel 121 was a series of deposits which appeared to be make-up layers to level the ground surface. The lower layers varied from small clay dumps (i.e. 120) to stone rich layers 112 and 113 and a layer of redeposited gravel 111 (Fig. 3). The stone-rich layers were potentially derived from building rubble, possibly originally derived from the former manor house. The stone fragments were not worked, but could have been wall core material. At the northern end of the area deposit 119 was a slightly humic layer, sealed by a gravelly silt 118. Both layers sat within a slight depression in the natural gravels (Fig 3, Section 3).
- 3.1.4 Above these were two fairly homogeneous layers 107 and 108. They were both relatively extensive and seen throughout the majority of the foundation trenches (Fig. 3). Layer 107 was marginally more brown in colour, and had a more clay rich composition than 108. The boundary between the two layers was diffuse. Both layers contained gravel and charcoal flecks, although the fragments in 107 were noticeably larger. The two deposits were difficult to interpret, but appear to be consistent with imported or disturbed material mixed with a small amount of natural gravels.
- 3.1.5 At the southern end the trench excavation revealed the foundations of the present stone built kitchen wall, 100 (Plate 1). The stone foundation was contiguous with the standing wall and was seen to have graduated steps outwards at the base, presumably to thicken the foundation and support the overlying building. The foundation appeared to have been dug through layer 107, then wall 100 constructed, and the void infilled with redeposited material 102 (Fig. 3, Section 1).
- 3.1.6 The foundation of the NE-SW aligned boundary wall 117 (Plate 2) was less substantial than that of wall 100 as it was not a load bearing wall.
- 3.1.7 There were a number of modern 20th-century disturbances to the deposits. At the southern end of the trenches deposits 106 and 105 were bedding material for a shallow concrete footing that ran northwards beyond the confines of the trench (Fig. 3, Section 1). A pipe trench (109) was seen throughout the central part of the works, and further pipe (124) was present towards the northern side. A brick-built manhole (116) was seen in the extreme northern section (Fig. 3, Section 1). The square manhole, 115, was constructed of red 'London Brick Company' bricks, and served the drainage system, now defunct.
- 3.1.8 The most recent deposits (101 and 104) were the overlying garden soils (Plate 3). At the northern end, adjacent to the boundary wall 117, where there was no existing garden soil there was a layer of mixed soils and gravel (122). This layer may have been reinstated after the store and/or the boundary wall were constructed.

## 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 A small assemblage of material was retrieved from the excavations. A complete catalogue can be found in Appendix C. The majority of the finds were from the topsoil (104) and were consistent with domestic activity and debris. The material included an iron nail, oyster shell, animal bones, glass and pottery. A complete glass bottle was found within the fill of the manhole.
- 3.2.2 Six fragments of pottery were recovered from layer 108. These dated broadly to the 18th century. The underlying layer 107, had two sherds of 16th-17th century pottery and a small fragment of brick.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The original building is probably 16th-17th century in date. The 19th century OS maps show it to be as it exists in its present state, including the kitchen and adjacent



boundary walls. The foundation of both walls (100 and 117) were seen in the excavations. Those of the kitchen are deeper and step outwards slightly. A fragment of pottery from the construction cut backfill (102) was of 16th-18th century date.

- 4.1.2 The presence of pottery in several of the deposits indicated that the layers were broadly 18th century in date. The finds assemblage was very small and but along with the stratigraphic relationships seems to suggest that layer 107 was 16th-17th century and was potentially truncated by the construction of wall 100, while the overlying layer 108 was of 18th century date. The earlier deposits had no artefactual material but were probably of a similar date.
- 4.1.3 The natural gravels would appear to slope downwards from the north to the south, but they were only seen in the northernmost part of the works. The subsequent layers were deposited to provide a more level area around the current building.
- 4.1.4 No layers or artefacts associated with medieval activity or occupation were encountered.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

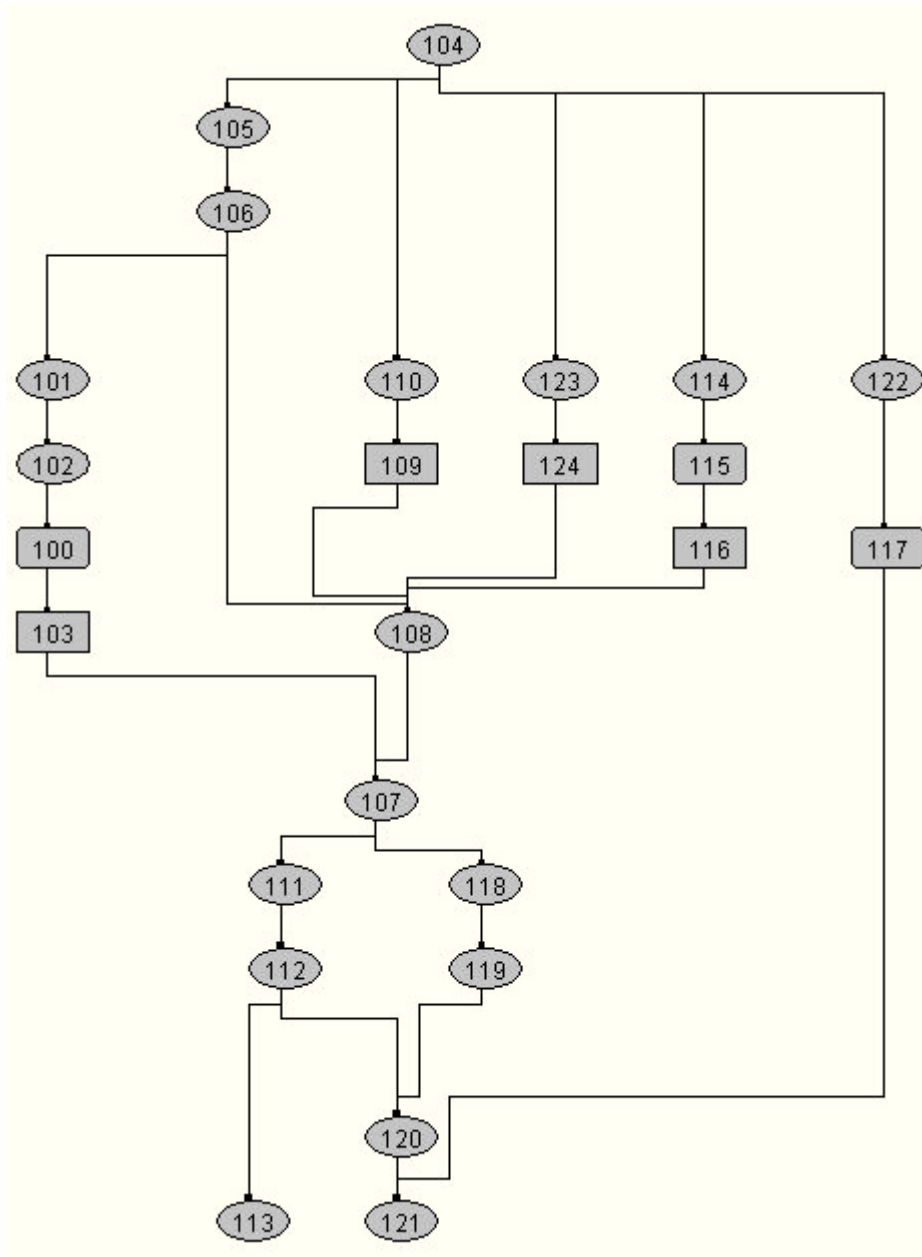
Context	Type	Depth /m	Description	Finds	Date
100	Structure	>0.66	Wall: stone wall of kitchen, consists of upstanding building element contiguous with the foundation. Same limestone material for both.	-	
101	Deposit	0.18	Topsoil: dark brownish grey, clayey silt, some humic material.	-	
102	Fill	0.45	Fill of construction cut 103: mid greyish brown clayey silt, 10% rounded gravel.	Pottery	16-18th century
103	Cut	0.45	Construction cut for wall 100. Filled by 102 and 100.	-	
104	Deposit	0.16	Topsoil: dark brownish grey, clayey silt, some humic material.	Pottery, glass, animal bone, iron nail	19th century
105	Deposit	0.13	Layer: bedding material for concrete footing, mid brown silty gravel.	-	
106	Deposit	0.03	Layer: bedding material for concrete footing, mid yellow rounded gravel, redeposited natural.	-	
107	Deposit	0.4	Layer: mid brownish grey silty clay, 10% gravel, moderate sized charcoal flecks throughout.	Pottery, ceramic building material	16-17th century
108	Deposit	0.22	Layer: pale-mid greyish brown clayey silt, 10% gravel, smaller charcoal flecks throughout.	Pottery	18-19th century
109	Cut	0.24	Service trench: N-S aligned pipe trench. Filled by 110.	-	
110	Fill	0.24	Fill of service trench 109: dark grey clayey silt with gravel inclusions, iron pipe.	-	
111	Deposit	>0.08	Layer: pale yellowish grey silty gravel.	-	
112	Deposit	>0.04	Layer: mid brownish grey silty clay, tacky with 15% angular medium stone fragments.	-	
113	Deposit	>0.03	Layer: mid reddish brown silty clay, occasional sub-angular stones small to large.	-	
114	Fill	0.7	Fill of manhole: debris within the square manhole, dark blackish grey clayey silt.	Glass	20th century
115	Structure	0.7	Manhole: red brick, 'London Brick Company', frogged bricks, 0.24mx	-	



			0.11m x 0.08m.		
116	Cut	0.7	Construction cut for the manhole 115. Filled by 115 and 114.	-	
117	Structure	>0.41	Wall: stone boundary wall, aligned NE-SW.	-	
118	Deposit	0.09	Layer: mid grey silt with 20% rounded gravel.	-	
119	Deposit	0.11	Layer: dark grey clayey silt, 5% humic silt.	-	
120	Deposit	0.12	Layer: mid grey clay, tacky, very small area.	-	
121	Deposit	>0.07	Layer: natural gravels, mid yellow rounded gravels, 20% sand.	-	
122	Deposit	0.3	Layer: dark grey clayey silt.	-	
123	Fill	0.6	Fill of service trench: dark grey clayey silt, 5% gravel inclusions and a steel pipe.	-	
124	Cut	0.6	Service Trench, aligned NNW-SSE.	-	



## APPENDIX B. STRATIGRAPHIC MATRIX



Stratigraphic Matrix for Foundation Trenches



## APPENDIX C. FINDS REPORTS

### C.1 Pottery

*Identified by John Cotter  
compiled by Geraldine Crann*

Context	Description	Date
102	2 sherds from the same vessel, post medieval redware (PMR), 13g	16th – 18th century
104	7 sherds including 1 transfer printed ware (TPW) plate rim, 1 sherd blue earthen ware, 3 sherds cream ware, 2 sherds century Staffordshire white stoneware tankard with iron-dipped rim, 28g	1830 - 1900 1830 - 1900  mid-18th century
107	1 sherd black glazed post medieval redware cup base, 1 late Brill (OXB) jug sherd. 39g	17th century 16th-17th century
108	1 Staffordshire mottled ware (STMO) cup/tankard sherd, 3 sherds from post medieval redware (PMR) vessels, 1 flower pot sherd, 1 green/black glazed post medieval redware (PMR) jug handle, 136g	1700 - 1800 1700 - 1800 1700 - 1900

#### ***Discussion and recommendations.***

C.1.1 The assemblage is of low potential but should be integrated into any further analysis arising from future archaeological work on the site.

### C.2 Ceramic building material

*Identified by John Cotter  
compiled by Geraldine Crann*

Context	Description	Date
107	1 very worn scrap post medieval brick in soft red fabric, 11g	16th – 19th century

#### ***Discussion and recommendations.***

C.2.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

### C.3 Glass

*Identified by Ian Scott*

Context	Description	Date
104	1 fragment window glass, 3g	Post medieval
114	1 bottle, brown glass, made by post WWI automatic bottling machine, 405g	20th century

***Discussion and recommendations.***

C.3.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

**C.4 Iron**

*Identified by Ian Scott*

Context	Description	Date
104	1 hand made nail, encrusted, 12g	-

***Discussion and recommendations.***

C.4.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

**C.5 Animal bone**

*Identified by Lena Strid*

Context	Description
104	1 chicken tibia/tarsus, 1 chicken sternum, 1 fragment juvenile medium mammal scapula. 8g

***Discussion and recommendations.***

C.5.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

**C.6 Shell**

*Identified by Geraldine Crann*

Context	Description
104	1 left valve oyster shell, 27g

***Discussion and recommendations.***

C.6.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.



## APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2014 Dove House Cassington, Oxfordshire, Written Scheme of Investigation for a Watching Brief

OCC 2014 Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief, Dove House, Pound Lane, Cassington. Oxfordshire County Council





## APPENDIX E. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Dove House, Cassington, Oxfordshire

Site code: CASSDO 14

Grid reference: Centred at NGR SP 4554 1058

Type of watching brief: Permanent presence

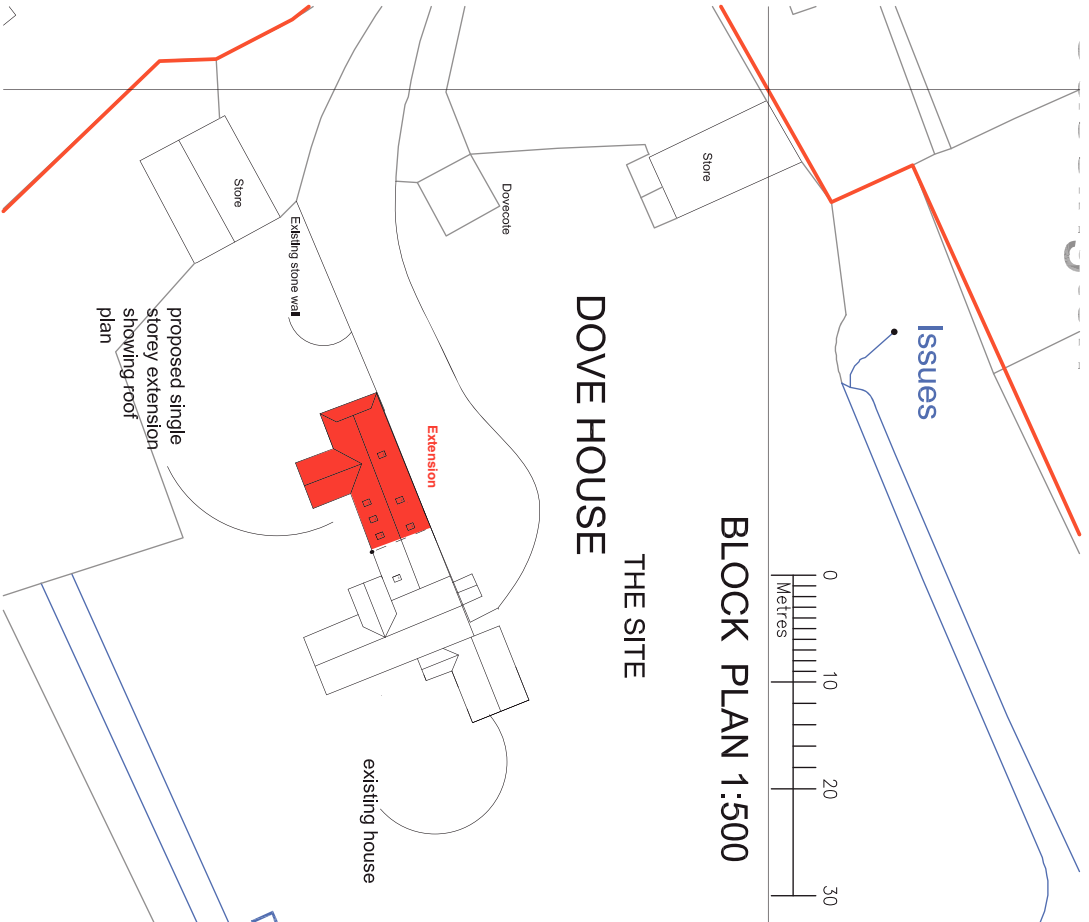
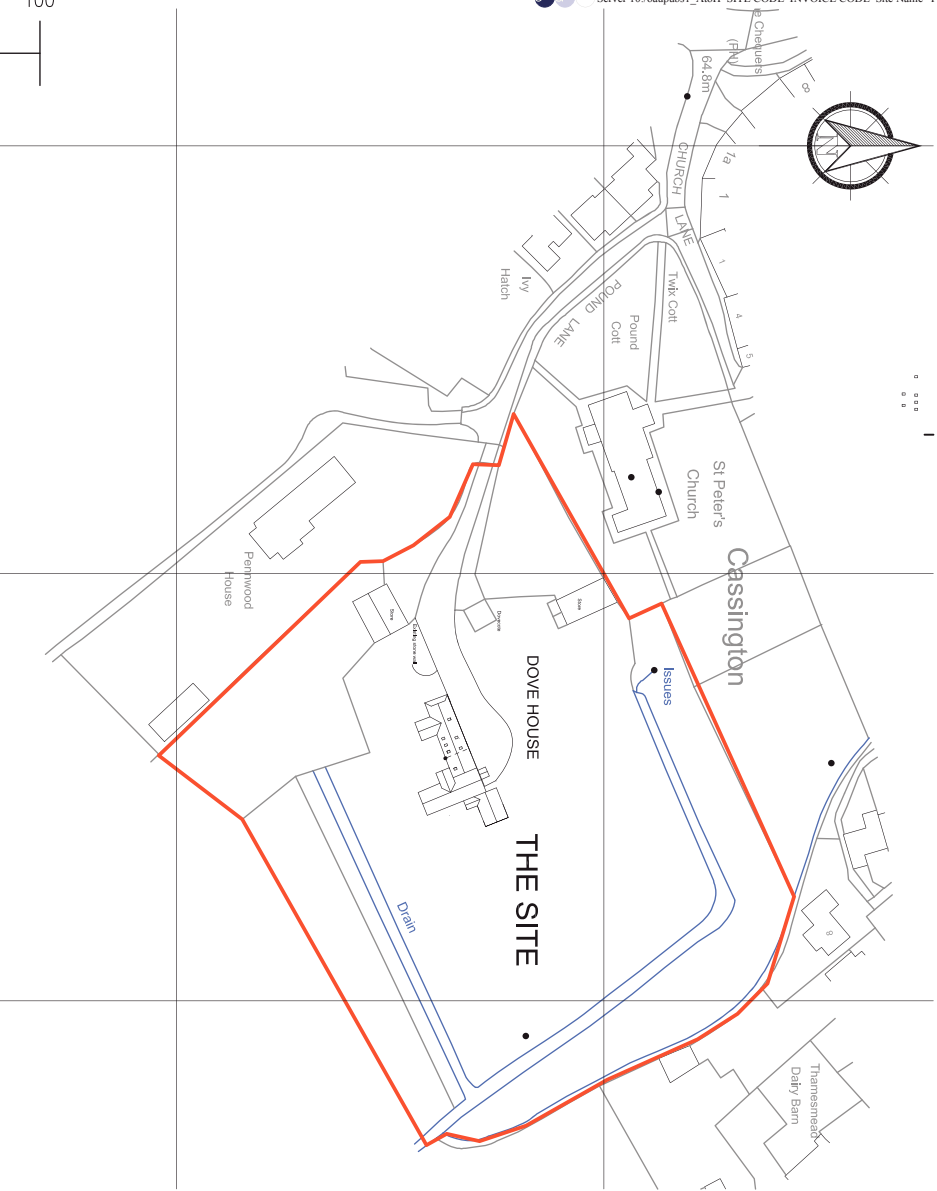
Date and duration of project: 14<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Area of site: 13.5m x 9m

Summary of results: Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) undertook a watching brief of the site of a proposed extension to an existing residential property (Dove House), centred on NGR SP 4554 1058. The work was undertaken on 14th August 2014.

The work revealed the foundations of the current house and boundary wall, and a series of deposits which had been used to level the area. The small assemblage of artefacts dates from the 16th century onwards. The original topography demonstrated a steeper gradient from north to south, which had been levelled by the additional deposits. No evidence of medieval settlement or associated features were recorded on the site.

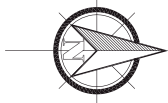
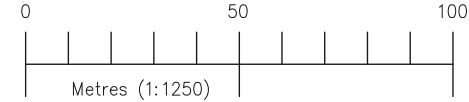
Location of archive: The archive is currently stored at Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.



**NOTE**

Roof plan added to western end & of extension area

<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	PROPOSED EXTENSION TO DOVE HOUSE POUND LANE, CASSINGTON, OXON
<b>DRAWING TITLE</b>	SITE LOCATION & BLOCK PLANS
<b>CLIENT</b>	MR & MRS S WALLS
<b>drawn</b>	PCA
<b>date</b>	April 2014
<b>scale</b>	1:500, 1:250
<b>drawing no.</b>	962-SL01



**SITE LOCATION PLAN 1:1250**

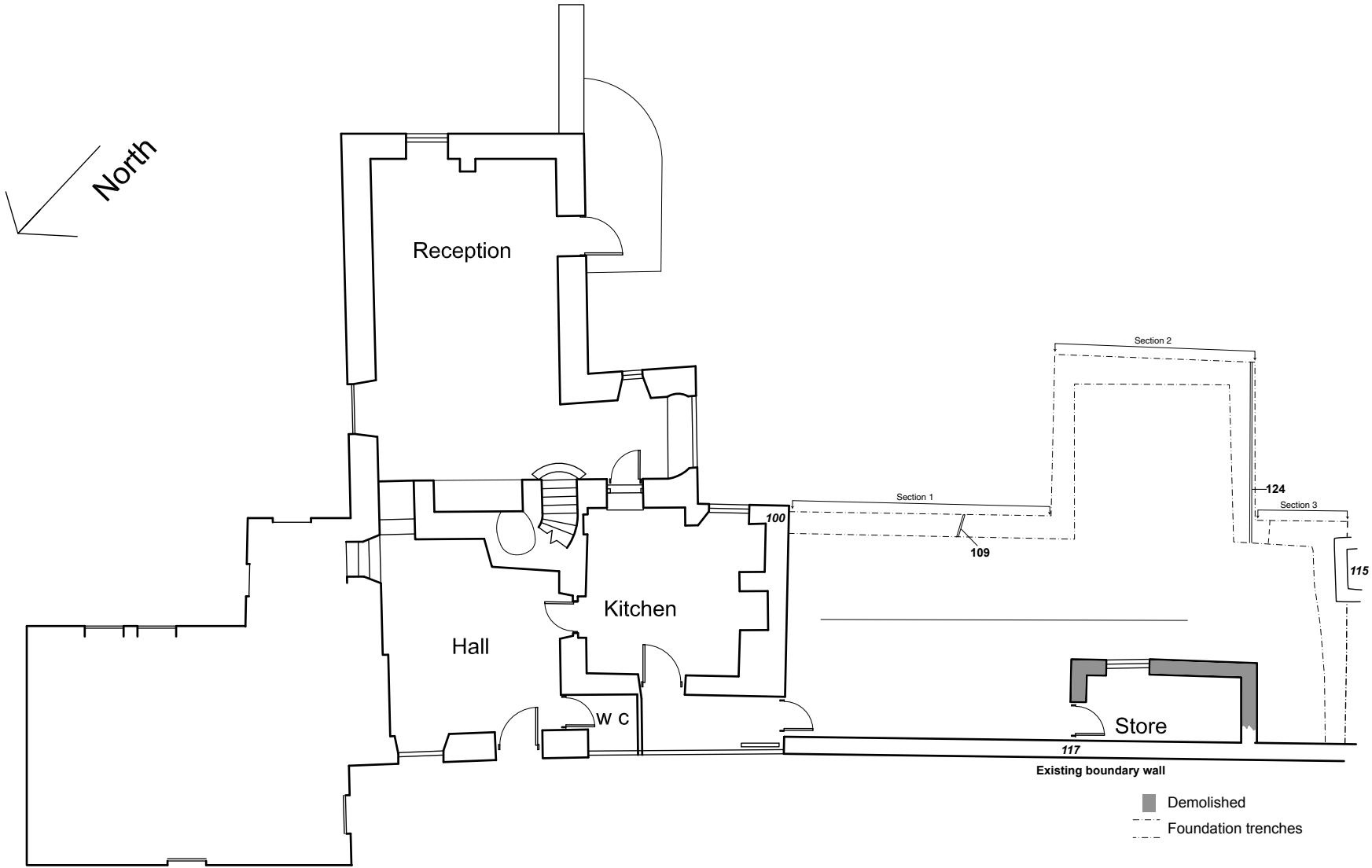
**PCA**  
LONDON

**ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS**

9 High Street, Eynsham, Oxford OX29 4HA  
 Telephone: 01865 882646 Fax: 01865 883219  
 email: PCA@PCA-Architects.com

Figure 1: Site location and location of extension

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EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN



Figure 2: Plan of the foundation trenches

**PCA**  
LONDON

**ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS**

9 High Street, Eynsham, Oxford OX29 4HA  
Telephone: 01865 882646 Fax: 01865 883219  
email: PCA @ PCA-Architects.com

PROJECT TITLE	PROPOSED EXTENSION TO DOVE HOUSE, POUND LANE, CASSINGTON OXON	drawn	PCA	scale	1:100
DRAWING TITLE	EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN	date	March 2014	drawing no.	962 AL01
CLIENT	MR & MRS S WALLS				

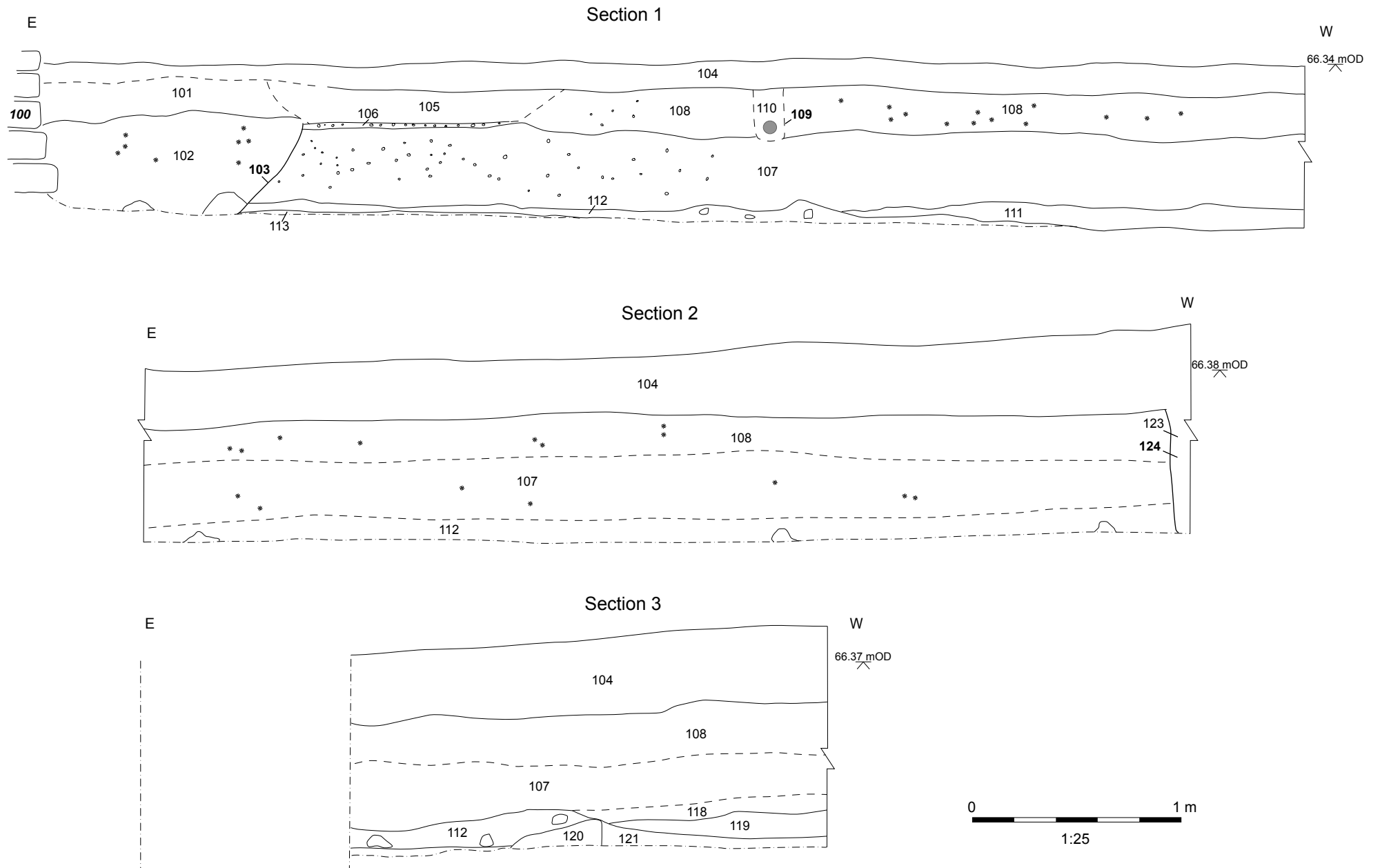


Figure 3: Compilation section



Plate 1: Foundation trench, eastern end showing wall 100, looking east



Plate 2: Foundation trench, northern end showing wall 117, looking west



Plate 3: Foundation trenches, looking east





**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](mailto: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 850 500  
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)  
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



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