

Land near Cribbs Causeway Bristol



Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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1	Mike Sims Project Supervisor	Carl Champness Project Manager	(name) (position)	

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Janus House
Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263800

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

f: +44 (0) 1865 793496

w: oxfordarchaeology.com

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Table of Contents

Summary	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Scope of work.....	1
1.2 Location, geology and topography.....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	2
2 Project Aims and Methodology	2
2.1 Aims.....	2
2.2 Methodology.....	3
3 Results	3
3.1 Description of deposits.....	3
3.2 Finds.....	4
3.3 Environmental remains.....	5
4 Discussion and Conclusions	5
Appendix A. Archaeological Context Inventory	7
Appendix B. Bibliography and References	8
Appendix C. Summary of Site Details	9

List of Figures

Front cover; Ground reduction on the site of the former mushroom farm

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Site plan

Fig. 3 Sections

Plate 1 Section 1

Plate 2 Section 3

Plate 3 Section 5



Land near Cribbs Causeway, Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Mike Sims

Summary

In January 2014 Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief during development work on land adjacent to Cribbs Causeway in South Gloucestershire, near to Bristol (centred on NGR: ST 5730 8038).

The watching brief observed 2 phases of post-medieval ploughsoil together with an undated ploughsoil horizon. Large areas of the site had been disturbed by modern activity associated with the 20th century demolition of the outbuildings adjacent to Cribbs Farm and a modern mushroom farm. No deposits or features earlier than the post-medieval period were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by NC Architects Ltd on behalf of Dick Lovett Companies Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief of the site proposed for the construction of a new Motorrad showroom on land at Cribbs Causeway, Bristol.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: PT11/3298/F). A brief was set by the Archaeological and HER Officer for South Gloucestershire Council (Evans 2012), detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition. OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) showing how it would implement those requirements.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The area of proposed development is in the county of South Gloucestershire to the north-west of Bristol, approximately 1 km beyond the city limits (centrepoint ST 5730 8038). It lies immediately to the east of the A4018, Cribbs Causeway, and south of the new Cribbs Causeway Centre.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology of the proposed site is entirely Keuper Marl, with large areas of the surrounding area being located on Keuper Marl. This was found at a depth of 0.2m below the surface in boreholes and trial pits on the site at the nearby Cribbs Causeway centre prior to development. Further from the site to the north and east the geology is clay, though there are areas of white lias and blue lias (mainly limestone).
- 1.2.3 The majority of the site is open fields. However, there are a number of buildings in the south and in the centre of the proposed development site, including Cribbs Farm. The site is situated on a fairly flat plateau c. 45 m above Ordnance Datum. It lies within the modern parish of Almondsbury, although historically the site lay within the parish of



Henbury. Along the eastern edge of the site runs a watercourse known as the Henbury Trym, which is a tributary of the River Avon.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Prior to the commencement of the fieldwork a Desk Based Assessment (DBA) had been produced (OA, 2010) and a short summary of the results is reproduced below:
- 1.3.2 As part of the DBA a gazetteer of known archaeological sites and finds within a 1km radius around the development area was compiled using the South Gloucestershire Council Sites and Monuments Record (SGCSMR) and the National Monuments Record (NMR) of English Heritage (EH) together with early map evidence, aerial photography and local knowledge.
- 1.3.3 This assessment identified twenty entries within the study area listed by SGCSMR and the NMR. Although no sites were identified within the development area the remaining sites of interest ranged in date from the Romano-British period to the post-medieval were identified in the vicinity.
- 1.3.4 Examination of the aerial photographs showed a group of cropmarks defining a medieval settlement approximately 400m south of the development together with associated ridge and furrow workings. Visual examination of the site prior to work starting identified north-south aligned ridge and furrow workings within the northern part of the site. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the debris from the demolition of the Cribb's Farm outbuildings (in the 20th century) had been buried within the central field, which was seen to be noticeably raised compared to the fields on either side.

Potential

- 1.3.5 Although development works on adjacent sites have not produced archaeological discoveries the development area is adjacent to Cribbs Farm which is of post medieval (and possibly earlier) date, so significant archaeology may be present.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aims of the investigation were:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- To record the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains affected by the proposed works.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features within the site and to take samples where appropriate.
- To prepare an appropriate archaeological archive of the site and make available the results of the investigation.

2.1.2 Site specific methodologies were:

- The requirement is for a formal programme of observation and investigation to be conducted during any operations on site that may disturb or destroy archaeological deposits.



- The watching brief will be maintained during any ground disturbance works including surface stripping, the excavation of foundations and service trenches, landscaping works and all other invasive work.
- Provision will be made for taking environmental/organic samples if appropriate.
- If archaeological deposits are noted the site contractor will make sufficient time available for them to be properly investigated and recorded.
- Significant features will be hand cleaned and sample excavated.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during those operations which had the potential to impact upon archaeological deposits. These operations included topsoil stripping, ground reduction and the excavation of service trenches.
- 2.2.2 These excavations were accomplished using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. Where the presence of services made this impractical, hand tools were used.
- 2.2.3 All spoil generated by both the machine and hand excavations was examined for the presence of archaeological artefacts.
- 2.2.4 During this work, any features and deposits observed were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OA practices (OA, 1992). Bulk finds were collected by context. Black-and-white negative photographs and a digital photographic record was taken of all excavations, general settings and archaeological sections.
- 2.2.5 Site plans showing the location of any excavations and any recorded sections were maintained (Figs. 2 and 3). Section drawings of features and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The work was undertaken in two phases. In the first phase the route of the access road was excavated and the roadway together with its associated services was constructed in order to facilitate the second phase of work which was the excavations for the new car parking area.
- 3.1.2 Each phase of work will be described separately followed by an overall discussion and conclusion.

Phase 1: The Access Road

- 3.1.3 The road ran from the corner of "The Laurels" located within the industrial estate on the crest of the rise, down the slope towards the Henbury Trym, before turning towards the south-west. The majority of the excavations measured 7m in width, increasing to 12m wide within the locations of the passing places.
- 3.1.4 At the highest point of the site (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, Section 1), the underlying natural, a reddish brown silty clay with weathered green sandstone inclusions (3) was encountered at a depth of between 0.4m and 0.5m below ground level.
- 3.1.5 Above this a 0.18m deep layer of dark reddish brown silty clay containing charcoal flecking, with occasional abraded fragments of brick and sherds of post-medieval pottery was recorded (2). This was overlain by a 0.28m deep deposit of dark grey-

brown silty loam, the present day topsoil and turf (1). This layer also produced charcoal flecking and contained abraded fragments of brick and sherds of post-medieval pottery.

- 3.1.6 The stratigraphy remained constant throughout the length of the slope. Similar stratigraphy was observed as the road turned towards the south-west and ran across the slope of the northern field (Fig. 5, Section 2).
- 3.1.7 As the access road crossed the central field the ground level was noticeably higher than in the adjacent fields, covering a width of approximately 65m.
- 3.1.8 Within this length of excavations the natural reddish-brown clay (3) was recorded at a depth of 0.65m below the current ground level (Fig. 3, Section 3). Lying above the natural was a layer of light yellow-brown silty clay measuring up to 0.18m in depth and which contained abraded fragments of brick and tile (6).
- 3.1.9 Above this deposit was a mixed layer of grey-brown and dark grey silty clays (5) between 0.25m and 0.4m in depth. Observed within this deposit were numerous examples of demolition debris including cement mortared brick, concrete, wooden beams, steel piping and sheeting together with plastic sheeting and rope. Sealing the demolition debris was a 0.18m deep layer of dark grey clayey loam containing occasional fragments of brick and tile (4).
- 3.1.10 Running along the western edge of the central field was an open ditch (Fig. 3, Section 4).
- 3.1.11 The natural clay, 3, was observed at a depth of 0.65m. The layer of light yellowish brown silty clay, 6, could be seen to overlie the natural and continue on both sides of the ditch. On the northern side of the sections continuations of the layer of demolition debris, 5, and the dark grey clayey loam, 4 were recorded.
- 3.1.12 On the south side of the section layer 6 was overlaid by a 0.4m deep layer of dark grey-brown clayey loam (9). Observed within this deposit were angular fragments of brick.
- 3.1.13 The open ditch measured 2.8m in width and 1m in depth (8), forming a distinct boundary between the differing stratigraphies. The ditch had been cut from the present day ground level. Although the majority of the ditch was open, at its northern end it was filled by an homogeneous deposit of dark grey-brown silty clay with organic inclusions (7).
- 3.1.14 Between the open ditch and the existing carpark the access road cut through a levelled area of rough grassland scheduled to become the new car park.
- 3.1.15 At the base of these excavations a layer of pale pinkish-brown clayey silt containing abraded fragments of green sandstone was exposed (11) (Fig. 3, Section 5). Within this area the natural clay, 3, had tapered down to a band 0.3m in depth and overlaid 11.
- 3.1.16 Above layer 3 was a 0.18m deep band of light yellowish-brown silty clay, a continuation of Layer 6. Overlying this layer was a disturbed layer of grey-brown clayey loam measuring between 0.3m and 0.45m in depth (10). Visible within this deposit were numerous lengths of wooden post together with corrugated iron, lengths of scaffold pole, fragments of brickwork and lumps of concrete.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Fragments of domestic refuse including clay pipe, shell and pottery were recovered from layers 1 and 2. This material was diagnosed to date between the late 18th and early 20th centuries and was retained.



- 3.2.2 Numerous examples of modern demolition debris such as corrugated iron sheeting, steel scaffold poles together with concrete blocks and cement bonded brickwork were observed within layers (5) and (10). The presence of this material was recorded but it was not retained.

3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The underlying natural deposits, the reddish brown marl (3) and the lighter coloured marl (11), were exposed throughout the length of the excavations. No truncated features were observed within these deposits confirming that there is no earlier archaeology covered by later soil horizons.
- 4.1.2 Within the northern, higher, parts of the site (Sections 1 and 2) the natural is overlaid by a clear deposit of ploughsoil (2). The dating evidence recovered from this context covers the period from the late 17th century to the first part of the 19th which suggests that it is probably associated with Cribbs Farm located to the west. Also observed within the same area is the later ploughsoil horizon (1) which produced evidence suggesting a late 19th or early 20th date. These activities have destroyed any earlier deposits overlying the natural. No truncated earlier features or residual finds were observed within this area which may possibly indicate that this area had been in pastoral use previously and not occupied.
- 4.1.3 Overlying the natural in the lowest, more level, parts of the site (Sections, 3, 4 and 5) is a layer whose composition is suggestive of a cultivated soil, (6). Its stratigraphic position may indicate that it represents a buried ploughsoil horizon, possibly associated with the medieval settlements located to the east and south of the development area, although no dating evidence was recovered from this deposit to confirm this.
- 4.1.4 The field to the south-east of the remains of Cribbs Farm appeared to be notably higher than the adjacent fields during the preliminary inspection of the site. Excavation of the access road showed that the field appeared to have been stripped of topsoil and possibly the top part of the ploughsoil, 6, and the area then used for the tipping of demolition debris (5), before being levelled and the topsoil re-instated, causing to increase in level within this area.
- 4.1.5 The composition of the demolition debris, including concrete, brick, wood, corrugated sheeting and plastic would indicate that this activity is of recent origin, probably when the modern farm buildings associated with Cribbs Farm were demolished when the present day trading estate was constructed.
- 4.1.6 Dividing this field from the area of the proposed car park was a large open drain or ditch, 8. This appeared to have been recently cleaned or widened, although its western end had been filled, 7, probably to provide a level platform for the construction of the present day showroom.
- 4.1.7 Within the area of the proposed carpark the buried ploughsoil, 6, was overlaid by a mixed layer of topsoil and demolition debris, 10. The debris included concrete, both brick and blockwork, wooden poles, corrugated sheeting, iron piping and numerous plastic containers. It is known that this area had been previously used as a mushroom farm and it is probable that this debris is the result of its demolition and levelling.



- 4.1.8 No evidence of occupation pre-dating the 17th century was observed throughout the area of the new access road. It was considered that the area monitored represents a representative sample of the development site and that the results would be similar elsewhere. No further monitoring of the phase 2 work was conducted.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	0.3m	-	Present day topsoil and turf	Clay pipe, shell. pottery	C19th/ C20th
2	Layer	0.18m	-	Earlier ploughsoil horizon	Shell, pottery	C17th/ C19th
3	Layer	> 0.5m	-	Natural clay marl	-	-
4	Layer	0.18m	65m	Landscaping layer of redeposited topsoil	Brick	C20th
5	Layer	0.25m – 0.4m	65m	Buried demolition debris	Brick, iron, concrete, plastic	C20th
6	Layer	0.18m	-	Probable earlier ploughsoil horizon	-	-
7	Fill	1m	2.3m	Fill of modern ditch 8	-	C20th
8	Cut	1m	2.3m	Modern boundary ditch/ open drain	-	C20th
9	Layer	0.35m	-	Present day topsoil and turf	Brick	C19th/ C20th
10	Layer	0.25m – 0.4m	60m	Disturbed layer of topsoil mixed with modern demolition debris	Brick, concrete, iron, wood, plastic	C20th
11	Layer	> 0.15m	> 55m	Natural, mix of marl and weathered sandstone	-	-



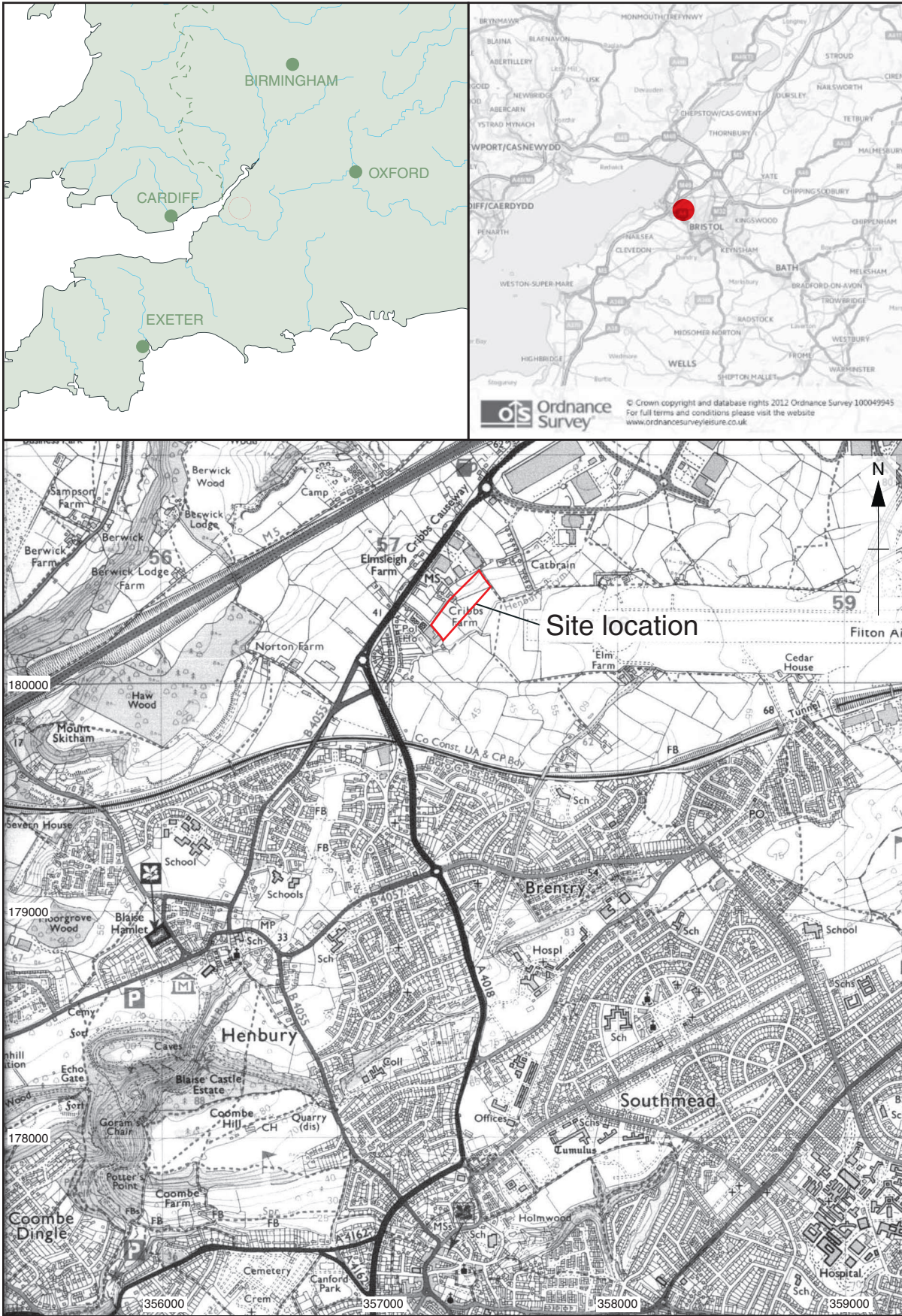
APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Evans D 2012 *Brief for a programme of archaeological work (SGSMR20051) to be undertaken at Land Adjacent to the Farmhouse Cribbs Causeway PT11/3298/F. Local authority planning document*
- OA 2010 *Cribbs Causeway, Filton, Bristol. Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment. Client Report*
- OA 2013 *Cribbs Causeway, Bristol, South Gloucestershire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- OAU 1992 *Field Manual (1st Edition, edited Wilkinson D)*



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Land near Cribbs Causeway, Bristol
Site code:	BRSMG:2014/1
Grid reference:	Centred at ST 5730 8038
Type of watching brief:	Machine excavation of new access road and associated services
Date and duration of project:	13th to 22nd of January 2014, 6 site visits.
Area of site:	Approximately 4200m ²
Summary of results:	The watching brief observed 2 phases of post-medieval ploughsoil together with an undated ploughsoil horizon. Large areas of the site had been disturbed by modern activity associated with the 20th century demolition of the outbuildings adjacent to Cribbs Farm and a modern mushroom farm. No deposits or features earlier than the post-medieval period were observed.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held in Janus House and will be deposited with Bristol Museum in due course under the Accession Code BRSMG:2014/1



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Figure 1: Site location

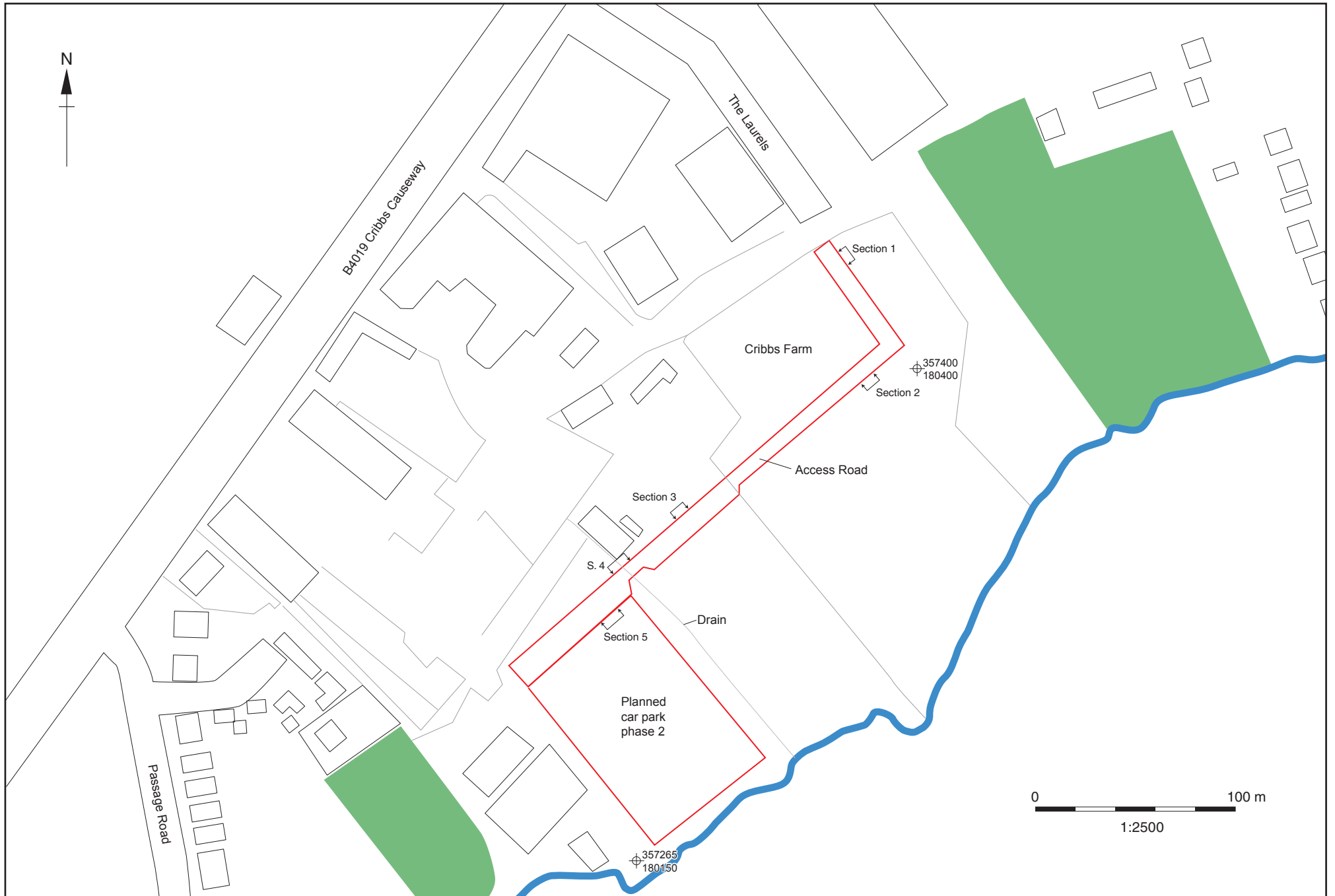


Figure 2: Site plan

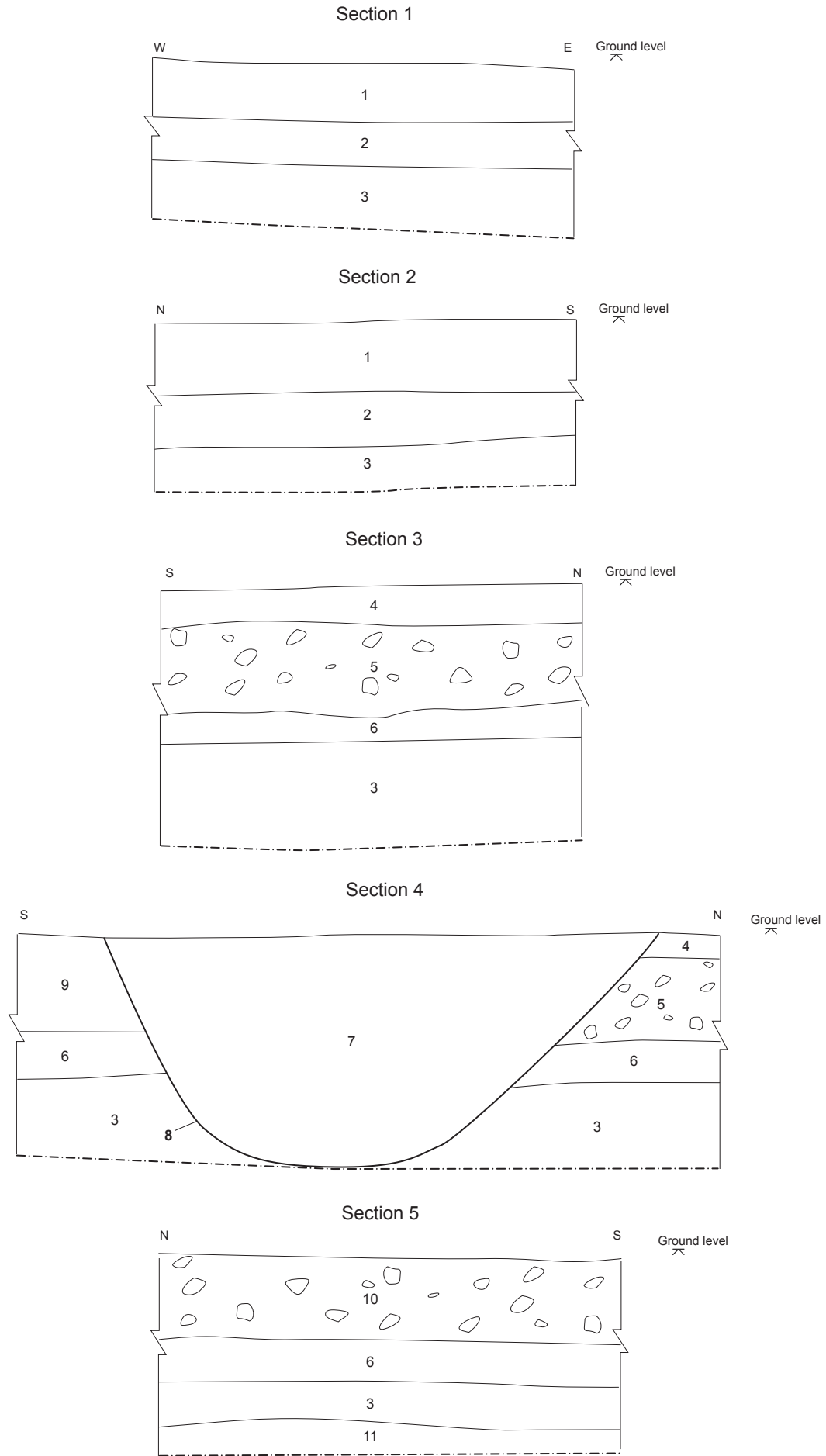


Figure 3: Sections



Plate 1: Section 1



Plate 2: Section 3



Plate 3: Section 5



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>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCifA
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