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## Beech Court, Abingdon School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

### *Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

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## Summary

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Beech Court, Abingdon School between 1st June 2016 and 3rd March 2018 in advance of the construction of a new classroom, access and garage.*

*Ground investigations, comprising test pits TP 1-9 and CBR 1-3, window samples WS 1-8 and boreholes BH 1-2, were monitored, but these were only occasionally deep enough to reach natural, and no archaeological features other than of recent date were found. A report was prepared (OA 2016) and approved by Hugh Coddington, Senior Archaeological Officer of Oxfordshire County Council.*

*In the western half of the site, Test Pits 10-12 were dug to investigate the spread of tree roots in the western part of the site, and TP 12 located a stone wall not visible on any historic maps. Three further trenches (Areas 5-7) were excavated along the projected line of the wall to clarify its character, date and extent.*

*These established that a series of three stone piers around 3.5m apart (centre to centre), and whose upper surfaces were all at similar heights above OD, had been constructed in the later 18th century. They are believed to represent supports for a timber-arcaded structure of late 18th to early 19th century date.*

*The southernmost trench (Area 5) did not find a continuation of the piers, but encountered two features cut into the natural gravel. The smaller of the two was excavated, and contained the partial skeleton of a dog, together with an 18th century sherd from a Chinese porcelain bowl. The larger feature was not excavated. What was believed to be the northern corner of this pit was also found in the corner of Area 7, suggesting that the feature was nearly 4m long and over 2m wide.*

*The finds and animal bones indicate activity concentrated in the late 17th and 18th centuries, probably related to occupation at Lacies Court adjacent. A concentration of horse bones, many of which were dog-gnawed, may indicate that horseflesh was used as dog-meat. A report on these investigations was prepared (OA 2017) and approved by Hugh Coddington.*

*In the eastern half of the site, two small areas (Areas 1 and 2) were investigated next to the wall fronting onto Bath Street to clarify the depth of foundations of the wall, which was being broken through for a new entrance to the site. Area 1 in the north-eastern corner exposed a brick surface dating to the later 19th century. Area 2 in the southern-eastern corner contained a pit which was only partly observed, but contained 19th century material.*

*Clearing of the new drive (Area 3) revealed the top of a known World War II bunker, around the edge of which were a number of pits and a tree-throw hole, all appearing to be post-medieval in date.*

*At the west end of the drive a soakaway and the foundations for a garage were monitored, together with service trenches 1-4 running from the western half of the site into the soakaway and up to the garage. These trenches revealed very little evidence of archaeology. Trench 3 included a construction cut and a tree-throw hole, both of which appeared to be 19th to 20th century in date. Trench 4 exposed part of a large quarry pit which was thought to be post-medieval in date.*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project details

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (hereafter OA) was commissioned by Ridge Property and Construction Consultants on behalf of Abingdon School to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Beech Court within the school, as a condition of planning permission (P16/V1801/FUL-5) for the construction of a new building, garage and vehicular access.
- 1.1.2 The watching brief followed the preparation and approval of the desk-based assessment (OA 2016a), which indicated the potential for the site to contain remains of Iron Age, Roman, medieval and early post-medieval date.
- 1.1.3 All work was carried out in accordance with local and national planning policies. All work also followed the MoRPHE Project Manager's guide (Historic England 2015), and the Code of Conduct of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), of which OA is a Registered Organisation. The archaeological works adhered to the Standards and guidance for archaeological evaluation, excavation and archiving (CIfA 2014a; 2014b).
- 1.1.4 The work was monitored by Hugh Coddington, Senior Archaeological Officer of Oxfordshire County Council.
- 1.1.5 The first part of the works involved monitoring ground investigation boreholes and test pits carried out by Listers Geotechnical Consultants Ltd. By agreement with Hugh Coddington, no written scheme of investigation (WSI) was required for this phase.
- 1.1.6 The monitoring was carried out in June 2016. The holes were mostly too shallow to reach natural gravel, but this was exposed in a few cases, although no archaeological remains were found. A report on this was prepared (OA 2016b) and approved by Hugh Coddington.
- 1.1.7 The main watching brief works were carried out in attendance of SDC, the principal contractor undertaking construction of the new buildings and associated works.
- 1.1.8 Phase 1 of the construction, which was limited to the eastern half of the site, involved the investigation and removal of part of the wall fronting onto Bath Street to create the access road (Fig. 2; Areas 1, 2 and 4), and the excavation of the line of the access road following demolition of a WW2 concrete air raid shelter (Area 3). A WSI for this was prepared (OA 2016c) and approved by Hugh Coddington of OCC. This work was completed in March 2017, but the report was delayed pending further watching brief.
- 1.1.9 The WSI was modified to include works proposed for the western part of the site (OA 2017a), and this was approved by Hugh Coddington of OCC. As part of the preparatory work for the Phase 2 construction in the western part of the site, OA was also asked to monitor the excavation of three test pits to examine the extent and depth of existing tree roots to be preserved along the north-west edge of the site.
- 1.1.10 A stone wall running north-south was identified in one of these test pits, which was not shown on the historic maps. With the agreement of Hugh Coddington, a series of further trenches (Areas 5-7) was dug to establish the extent, purpose and date of this wall prior to the main construction phase. A report on these investigations was prepared (OA 2017b) and was approved by Hugh Coddington.
- 1.1.11 Following this the excavation of the footprint of the new school building was monitored, but this only exposed a single ditch and parts of several quarries.

- 1.1.12 Further monitoring was carried out upon the excavation of services leading from the new school building to a soakaway/attenuation pond, whose excavation was also monitored. Finally, the foundations of a new garage at the west end of the access road were monitored. A plan showing all of these investigations is given in Figure 2.
- 1.1.13 This report includes the report produced previously upon work in the western half of the site (OA 2017b), and adds to it the monitoring of the footprint of the new school building, which overlaps with two of the areas already reported upon. It then presents the results of the initial watching brief in the eastern half of the site, together with the service trenches, the soakaway and the garage foundations. The results included in the geotechnical survey report (OA 2016b) are mentioned where necessary.

## 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development site is located on the north side of Abingdon, within the grounds of Abingdon School, west of Bath Street and east of the main school buildings (Fig. 1). It is immediately south of Roysse's Alley between Waste Court to the north and Lacies Court to the south (NGR SU4935 9739). The site is located within a Conservation Area.
- 1.2.2 The geology consists of superficial sand and gravel overlying Kimmeridge Clay.
- 1.2.3 The site lies at approximately 60m aOD, sloping slightly downwards to the south. It comprised a parking area surfaced with tarmac, a garden with composting plots surrounded by gravel paths to the east, small grassed areas and scattered trees. The Larkhill Stream lies about 750m west of the site.

## 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been detailed in the desk-based assessment (OA 2016a), and only a short summary will be presented here.
- 1.3.2 Prehistoric finds have been recovered in neighbouring properties, and Roman burials and other features were discovered in Waste Court immediately to the north of the site.
- 1.3.3 Lacies Court (including the area of Beech Court) was created in the 15th century from the property of Fitzharris Manor, when a homestead and farm buildings were built on the site. It passed to the ownership of Christ's Hospital after the Dissolution of Abingdon Abbey and was owned by a succession of prominent people. In the mid-17th century, a chapel was added for the owner Peter Heylin, a local royalist.
- 1.3.4 Historic maps that include the site begin with that of Rocque in 1751, though the first detailed map is the Tithe Map of the Parish of St Nicholas in 1843. This shows Beech Court as an open area without buildings. The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1874 provides further detail, showing Beech Court divided into a series of narrow strips aligned NNW–SSE parallel to Bath Street, and with a wall dividing the garden of Lacies Court (comprising the two easternmost strips) from those further west. The walled garden has a small building midway along the north wall and a pair of probable gate piers in its west wall.
- 1.3.5 The western part includes a small quarry, which has been in-filled by the time of the 2nd Edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1899. Little change is evident on subsequent maps in either part of the site until the later 20th century, when the existing temporary classrooms were built in the western part of the site.
- 1.3.6 The excavation of geotechnical test pits and boreholes was monitored archaeologically, and natural gravel was reached in boreholes WS 4-6 and Test Pit 9 at depths varying from 0.6m to 0.9m. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were observed or recovered.





- 1.3.7 The watching brief on the western part of the site exposed a line of three stone and brick piers of post-medieval date running north-south, some overlying large infilled features of post-medieval date, probably quarries.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

#### *General aims*

2.1.1 The general aims of the archaeological 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 palaeo-environmental 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.

#### *Specific aims*

2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation works were:

- i. to determine whether the burials found in Waste Court to the north represent part of a larger cemetery extending into Beech Court, or whether these burials are restricted to the north of the site;
- ii. to investigate whether Roman settlement extended this far north from central Abingdon, and if so, to characterise and date this within the Roman period;
- iii. to determine whether features of early or later prehistoric date are present within the areas to be excavated, as the residual finds from adjacent sites might suggest;
- iv. to look for evidence of early medieval (Saxon) activity;
- v. to look for evidence of the later medieval grange, known from documentary evidence to have existed at Lacies Court (OA 2016a), and if found, to characterise the activity and any structures that may be present;
- vi. to look for evidence of the early post-medieval use of Lacies Court and its buildings, and if found, to characterise it and relate it to the documentary record;
- vii. if evidence of post-medieval domestic occupation is found, to establish at what



date this ceased and the site became a garden.

## 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was carried out to the depth of impact of services, test pits and area excavations, not always to the natural gravel.
- 2.2.2 The stripping of all excavations that were monitored was carried out by machines using toothless buckets under close archaeological supervision to allow clear observation of any archaeological features that might cut the natural gravel or overlying layers.
- 2.2.3 Due to the restricted room within the site, and the consequent need to remove spoil from site at frequent intervals, work proceeded slowly, and was often interrupted. As a result, survey of exposed features was carried out by surveyors visiting from Oxford supplemented by hand-drawn plans, rather than using an OA surveyor on-site at all times. In the latter stages of the watching brief, plans were occasionally drawn by hand measured from fixed points, and were then checked against GPS surveys provided by the SDC surveyor.
- 2.2.4 Wherever present, finds exposed in the surface of exposed features or layers were retrieved by hand during the watching brief. In the area excavation for the footprint of the new building, any features that were not obviously due to quarrying were investigated and recorded by hand. No archaeological features meriting investigation were found within the area of the soakaway.
- 2.2.5 The service drainage trenches and the garage foundation trenches were narrow, but all excavated spoil was scanned for finds. Where features of possibly ancient date were revealed, the trenches were extended to allow access for hand investigation, but these were very few, and otherwise only large features with fills suggestive of post-medieval quarry backfill were seen.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The results of the watching brief in the western and eastern parts of the site are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the archaeological deposits identified. The western part has already been the subject of an interim report, and is reported on first, the watching brief on the eastern part following after this.
- 3.1.2 The full details of all deposits with dimensions, depths and descriptions are tabulated in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated below.
- 3.1.3 In the western part, three tree-root test pits (Test Pits 10–12) were monitored, and three additional trenches (Areas 5–7) excavated to trace the extent, character and date of the stone wall revealed in Test Pit 12. The first of these to be excavated was the southernmost, Area 5, and when this did not reveal a continuation of the stone wall, a second trench numbered Area 6 was dug close to Test Pit 12. This did locate the stone wall, so a third trench was opened between Areas 5 and 6 to clarify where it ended, and whether it turned west or east.
- 3.1.4 Following on from these investigations, the entirety of the footprint of the new school building was excavated for a pile mat.

## 3.2 Tree-root test pits

### *Test Pit 10*

- 3.2.1 Test Pit 10 was positioned in the south of the main construction phase area and was excavated by hand to a maximum depth of 1.02m below ground level (Fig. 2).
- 3.2.2 Layer 112 was identified at the bottom of Test Pit 10 and most likely represented a buried garden soil. The natural gravel was not reached.
- 3.2.3 Layer 112 was overlain by buried topsoil 111, which was subsequently overlain by a modern construction layer associated with a flagstone path, numbered 110.

### *Test Pit 11*

- 3.2.4 Test Pit 11 was situated in the east of the main construction phase and was hand excavated to a maximum depth of 0.50m below ground level (Fig. 2).
- 3.2.5 Natural gravel, here numbered 121, was observed at the base of Test Pit 11, and was directly overlain by topsoil 120.

### *Test Pit 12*

- 3.2.6 Test Pit 12 was situated along the northern boundary of the main construction phase and was hand-excavated to a maximum depth of 1.00m below ground level (Fig. 2).
- 3.2.7 Stone wall/pier 132 was identified running on a north-west by south-east alignment at a depth of 0.70m below ground level (Fig. 3). This structure comprised of at least two courses of roughly-hewn limestone blocks bound by a light orange-brown, sandy mortar (Fig. 4; Plate 1). The surviving top was at a height of 57.54m aOD.
- 3.2.8 Stone wall/pier 132 was overlain by buried garden soil 131, which was subsequently overlain by modern deposit 130. A sizeable collection of animal bones was recovered from buried garden soil 131.
- 3.2.9 The size of Test Pit 12 was not sufficient to expose the full width or depth of the wall, so the decision was taken to excavate further small areas to the south across the line of the wall to expose its full width, its extent, and to excavate the stratigraphic deposits associated with it to help establish its date.

## 3.3 Additional excavations: Areas 5–7 and footprint of the new building

### *Area 6 (Plates 2-4)*

- 3.3.1 Area 6 was machine-excavated and ran east–west some 2.4m south of Test Pit 12. This area was 2.8m long and 0.9m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.07m below ground level, bottoming at 57.12m aOD without reaching natural gravel.
- 3.3.2 Layer 1030 was the lowest deposit observed in Area 6. This was a mixture of redeposited gravel and grey silt at least 0.2m thick (Fig. 4 section 21). It contained a substantial animal bone assemblage, but was not otherwise dated. The surface of this deposit was not level, sloping down from the west to the middle of the trench, and rising again further east, suggesting that it was probably a fill of a large feature whose limits lay beyond the edges of the trench.
- 3.3.3 A sequence of four thin, levelling layers—1029, 1028, 1027 and 1026—overlay layer 1030 (Fig. 4, section 21). These constituted two firm deposits: a gravel-rich layer and a probable bedding layer. Layer 1029 produced animal bone, a 17th century clay pipe stem and pottery of the first half of the 18th century. Layer 1028 produced possible

ridge tile fragments dated to the late 12th–14th centuries, tile fragments dated to the 17th–19th centuries and animal bones, while layer 1027 only contained animal bones.

- 3.3.4 Structure 1025 was built overlying the probable bedding layer 1026, and measured 0.86m north–south and up to 0.72m east–west. It consisted of two courses of roughly-hewn limestone blocks bound by a light greyish-white and light yellowish-brown sandy mortar (Fig. 4 section 22; Plate 2). The top of the surviving stone structure was at a height of 57.52m aOD.
- 3.3.5 Structure 1025 did not run right across the trench, but was roughly in line with wall 132 in Test Pit 12. It was initially believed to represent a continuation of this wall, being robbed on the north side and continuing south beyond Area 6. There was, however, no sign of a robber trench in the north section (Fig. 4, section 21), and once it was realised that the structure in Area 7 to the south was a pier, not a wall, the southern edge of the area was cut back, revealing the end of the stonework. Thus, structure 1025 was also another pier (Plate 3).
- 3.3.6 This structure was truncated at the north-east corner by construction cut 1041 (Fig. 4, section 21), in which brick pier 1024 was built. The pier measured 0.45m north–south and 0.34m east–west, and was three courses high (0.2m). The courses were laid in Flemish bond, which became popular from the late 17th century onwards, but the bricks showed drag marks suggesting that they were machine-made and thus manufactured in the 19th century (see 4.3 below).
- 3.3.7 The pier was constructed as a hollow 'box' consisting of 19th century, unfrosted red bricks bound by a light buff sandy mortar (Fig. 3; Plates 3 and 4). The 'box' was then infilled with mortar and possibly rubble. The remainder of construction cut 1041 was filled with deliberate backfill, 1042.
- 3.3.8 Fill 1042 and brick pier 1024 were overlain by levelling deposit 1023, which was overlain by buried garden soil 1022 and modern garden soil 1021. Levelling deposit 1023 contained four clay pipe stems dated to the 18th to 19th centuries, a single fragment of 19th century peg tile, fragments of early 18th century bottle glass and animal bones.

#### **Area 5 (Plates 5 and 6)**

- 3.3.9 Area 5 was machine-excavated 9m to the south of Test Pit 12, and ran perpendicular east-west to stone wall or pier 132. It was 1m wide and just over 4m long (Fig. 3), and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.80m below ground level.
- 3.3.10 Natural gravel 1035 was observed at the base of the area, into which a large feature, 1036, and a small pit, 1038, were cut (Fig. 3; Plate 5). Only the southern part of feature 1036 lay within Area 5, and despite some irregularities on the south-east side, this appeared to be a sub-rectangular feature with rounded corners, whose long axis was on a south-west to north-east alignment. Feature 1036 was not excavated, and its visible upper fill, 1037, did not have any finds in its surface.
- 3.3.11 The northern corner of a feature with a very similar fill was seen in Area 7 to the north, believed also to be feature 1036 (Fig. 3). If so, it will have been approximately 3.8m long and between 1.8m and 2.6m wide. The irregularities on the south-east may represent extensions of the feature fill, or patches of clay in the natural gravel, cut by a more regular feature. The large size and irregular shape of this feature suggests that it was a quarry pit.
- 3.3.12 Pit 1038 lay at the west end of Area 5. It had sloping sides and a flat base, and contained two fills, 1040 followed by 1039 (Fig. 4, section 24; Plate 6). Basal fill 1040

was naturally deposited, while upper fill 1039 contained part of a dog skeleton and a sherd from an 18th century, Chinese porcelain bowl.

3.3.13 No trace of a further stone structure was found in this area.

3.3.14 Both feature 1036 and pit 1038 were overlain by a layer of buried subsoil, 1034, which was overlain by levelling deposit 1033. This was overlain by buried garden soil 1032 and subsequently by modern garden soil 1031. However, artefactual material was recovered from layers 1034 and 1033. These were found in Area 7 and will be discussed under that subsection.

#### **Area 7 (Plates 7-10)**

3.3.15 Area 7 was excavated by machine between Areas 5 and 6 to further explore the stone wall identified in Test Pit 12 and Area 6. This area was orientated east–west, measuring 2.3m long by 1.6m wide, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.81m below ground level. It encountered a stone pier 1043 (Plate 7).

3.3.16 Natural gravel 1035 was observed at the base of Area 7, into which the northern corner of a curving feature was cut. The fill of this was very similar to fill 1037 of feature 1036 in Area 5, and is believed to be the north end of the same feature. As in Area 5, no finds were visible on the surface of this feature, which was not excavated.

3.3.17 Fill 1037 was overlain by buried subsoil 1034, from which a single fragment of a clay pipe stem, dated to the late 17th century or 18th century, was recovered.

3.3.18 Layer 1034 was cut by feature 1044 (Fig. 4 section 25; Plate 8), which had a vertical-sided cut and lay on the north side of the area. Feature 1044 was not fully excavated, but a single deliberately-deposited fill, 1045, was identified. A single piece of struck flint and one small fragment of animal bone were recovered from this fill. No direct evidence for the function of feature 1044 was identified; its west edge ran north–south, parallel to the alignment of pier 1043 that overlay its fill, but it is unlikely to have been a construction trench, as it was much deeper than the pier, and was continuing northwards well beyond its limits. It was probably an unrelated, earlier feature.

3.3.19 Stone pier 1043 was built on top of fill 1045 with the bottom course of stone set into both this fill and layer 1034. No construction cut was observed, and it may be that the pier was originally built on the surface of these layers, but subsequently sank into them due to its weight. Pier 1043 was rectangular, 0.8m north–south and 0.63m east–west, and consisted of three courses of roughly-hewn limestones bound by a mid-orange brown, sandy mortar (Fig. 4, section 26; Plates 9 and 10). The top of stone pier was found at a height of 57.54m aOD.

3.3.20 Stone pier 1043 was overlain by levelling deposit 1033, which was subsequently overlain by buried garden soil 1032 and modern garden soil 1031. Layer 1033 was equivalent to layer 123 in Area 6, and similarly contained 18th–19th century tiles.

#### **Footprint of the new school building (Plates 17-19)**

3.3.21 The entirety of the footprint of the new school building, including Area 5 and part of Area 7, was stripped to a depth of at least 0.55m to establish a pile mat, and this excavation was monitored archaeologically (Fig. 2; Plate 17).

3.3.22 Down the west, south and much of the east sides of the site, natural gravel was not reached, but gravel was found at similar depth in the centre and most of the north edge of the site (Fig. 2). The soils that were exposed in the base of the excavation on the west, south and east were of mixed character (Plate 18), suggesting that they belonged

to quarries similar to that recorded in the middle of the southern side on OS maps of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- 3.3.23 A north-south ditch numbered 1053 was found in the north-east corner of the area, and was excavated. This was exposed over a length of over 6m, being truncated by a quarry on the south, and continuing beyond the stripped area to the north. It was 0.9m wide and 0.4m deep, and its single fill (1054) was a yellowish-grey sandy silt with frequent gravel (Plate 19). Following hand-excavation of a length of the ditch, the remainder was emptied by machine under close archaeological supervision to look for finds, but none were found. .
- 3.3.24 One very modern square pit filled with bricks, glass and sand was found. This was not recorded.

### **3.4 The eastern half of the site: Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4 and drainage works**

#### ***Area 1 (Plates 11-13)***

- 3.4.1 Area 1 was located in the north-east corner of the site against the east wall fronting onto Bath Street (Fig. 2), and was excavated by hand. It measured 1.40m by 1.10m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.15m.
- 3.4.2 A possible levelling or made ground layer numbered 1007 was encountered at the base of Area 1 (Fig. 5). This consisted of a friable brownish-grey silty sand with 10-15% gravel and occasional charcoal, whose depth was not established. This was overlaid by 1006, a firm buff sandy clay thicker on the east side, and interpreted as construction levelling associated with the wall fronting onto Bath Street. Layer 1006 was in turn overlain by 1005, a thin loose/friable dark yellowish brown silty sandy gravel, which was probably redeposited natural. Overlying 1005 was layer 1004, a friable dark grey silt only 0.04m thick, which may have been a buried topsoil. None of these deposits contained any finds.
- 3.4.3 Layer 1004 was covered by 1003, a friable brownish-grey clayey silt with orange-brown lenses of silty sand between 0.11 and 0.17m deep, interpreted as a levelling layer. This contained pottery and peg tile of post-medieval date, plus clay pipe stems of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was also a residual peg tile fragment of late medieval or Tudor date.
- 3.4.4 Overlying 1003 was a brick surface, 1002 (Fig. 5). This consisted of frogged bricks with a light white buff lime mortar compacted on the surface of the bricks. It consisted of a single course 0.05m thick course with no obvious bonding between the bricks. The bricks were of late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century type (Plate 11).
- 3.4.5 The brick surface was cut by foundation cut 1009 on the east, which had a flat base and vertical west side, and was 0.4m wide and 0.3m deep (Fig. 5). It bottomed on layer 1007, and severed any relationship between layers 1002-1006 with the walls on the east and the north (Plate 12). It was filled with 1008, a loose dark brownish-grey clay sandy silt with occasional well-sorted gravel. Removal of the fill revealed that the wall had been built in at least three stages. The earliest phase exposed was a wall of undressed limestones (up to 150mm across) in rough courses, bonded with a coarse cream mortar. The section indicated that the wall was not bottomed, continuing down below the base of foundation trench 109 and the base of the excavation, though this is not clear from the photographs (Plate 13).
- 3.4.6 Just below the level of brick surface 1002, the wall stepped inwards slightly, and then continued upwards, with similar but slightly larger limestones, again undressed and

roughly coursed, bonded with the same mortar. This upper part of the wall was 0.46m high. Above this was a single course of brick, after which the wall stepped in again slightly, continuing upwards in brick. The bricks were of later 19th century or 20th century character. The stone wall appeared to abut the northern stone wall bounding Beech Court, and the brick wall truncated it and abutted the truncated end.

- 3.4.7 Fill 1008 abutted and overlay the wider lower part of the stone wall, and abutted the base of the upper stone wall. This, and brick surface 1002, were overlain by garden soil 1001, a friable mid to dark brownish-grey clay sandy silt with pea gravel inclusions. This was 0.66m – 0.71m in depth, and abutted the upper part of the stone wall and the lower courses of the brick wall above. It contained post-medieval peg tile fragments and fragments of flowerpot of late 19th or 20th century date.
- 3.4.8 Brick surface 1002 was also cut by a trench on the north side, possibly dug at the same time as 1009 for access to construct and bond the east wall into the northern one.
- 3.4.9 A modern garden soil 1000, consisting of a friable dark grey clay sandy silt with 20-30% sub-angular well sorted stones, completed the soil sequence.

#### ***Area 2 (Plate 14)***

- 3.4.10 Area 2, which lay within Lacies Court, was also located against the eastern edge of the site and was hand-dug. The area measured 1.50 by 0.60m and was excavated to a depth of 0.90m.
- 3.4.11 The lowest deposit observed within area 2 was layer 1011, a mixture of friable mixed reddish-brown and mid to dark grey sandy clay silt with 5-10% detritus (charcoal, stones and patches of mortar/sand) some 0.65m deep.
- 3.4.12 This abutted the lower part of the wall forming the east boundary of the site, which was constructed of limestones bonded with mortar. The stone wall extended below the base of the excavation area, and was abutted by later 1011.
- 3.4.13 Pit 1012, which cut layer 1011, occupied the southern half of the excavation area, continuing southwards beyond it. The plan of the part that lay within the excavation suggested that it was ovoid in shape, with vertical sides (the east side formed by the stone wall), and a sloping base, which was not fully bottomed within the excavation. The greatest depth exposed was 0.64m deep. The lower rubble fill 1013 had a variable depth of 0.24 to 0.42m, and consisted of roof tiles and stones in a matrix of loose light to mid grey silty sand (Plate 14). Peg tile fragments of 19th century date came from this layer. This abutted the stone boundary wall.
- 3.4.14 Later 1013 was overlain by 1014, a friable greyish-brown clay silt up to 0.40m deep, and also abutting the stone wall on its east side. This fill was considered to have been the redeposited material removed during the excavation of the pit and then used to cap layer 1013.
- 3.4.15 The stone wall exposed in Area 2 was 0.78m high, and was constructed of limestones in the same manner as the wall seen in Area 1. It was topped by a single course of brick walling of the same width, above which the brick wall stepped in slightly before continuing upwards.
- 3.4.16 Layer 1011 and pit fill 1014 were overlain by modern garden soil, 1010, a friable dark grey clay sandy silt 0.25m in depth. This abutted the uppermost part of the stone wall, and abutted and overlay the single brick course above it.

#### ***Area 3 (Plates 15 and 16)***

- 3.4.17 Area 3 was located in the eastern half of the site and ran from the road to the front of the building, measuring 31m long and up to 7.50m wide (Fig. 2). It was excavated by machine under archaeological supervision. Much of the area was taken up with a World War II air-raid shelter (Plate 15)
- 3.4.18 East of the air-raid shelter a small area of surviving deposits was seen (Fig. 2 section 20; Fig. 6). Layer 1020 was the lowest deposit observed within Area 3, and within the excavated area measured 2.60m by 2m wide, but was not bottomed. This was a mix of friable, greyish-brown clay sandy silt containing 10 -15% sub-rounded to sub-angular well-sorted stones up to 40mm across, occasional pea gravel and infrequent charcoal. There were no finds.
- 3.4.19 This was overlain by 1017, which was a moderately firm mix of light yellowish-brown, reddish-brown and brownish-grey silty sand, containing frequent gravel (Plate 16). As exposed, the deposit covered an area 2m by 2m, and formed an intermittent surface, probably an external work surface whose highly mixed nature is suggestive of heavy use. Again there were no finds.
- 3.4.20 Layer 1017 was cut by pit 1018, only part of which lay within the area. It was however 0.77m wide and 0.28m deep (Fig. 6). The pit was filled by 1019, a friable brownish-grey loam with frequent small stones (10-50mm across), and occasional charcoal. A fragment of unfrosted brick, probably dating to the 18th or 19th century, was recovered from the fill.
- 3.4.21 Overlying pit 1018 was 1016, a friable mid to dark grey loam with inclusions of 10-15% small stones (up to 40mm across) and occasional charcoal. This covered an area of 2.6m by 2m and was up to 0.28m deep. It is interpreted as a buried garden soil, and contained a sherd of pottery of 18th or 19th century date.
- 3.4.22 Over this was layer 1015, a modern deposit surrounding the air-raid shelter adjacent to Bath street. This layer, which was a loose brownish-grey sandy silt with occasional small stones, contained iron, wood, plastic, and other detritus, and covered an area of 2.6m by 2m and was 0.88m in depth. This was clearly the fill of a construction cut for the air-raid shelter.
- 3.4.23 Area 3 was later excavated down to the natural 1046 over its full extent. The natural consisted of a friable light greyish-yellow fine gravel sand mix.

#### **Area 4**

- 3.4.24 Area 4 was located on the eastern side of the site, along the boundary next to Bath Street, and south of Area 1 (Fig. 2). This area, which measured 6m by 1.7m and was excavated to a depth of 0.90m, was excavated to reduce the ground level to allow access to the lowest course of the boundary wall. The work was carried out between the wall and loose deposits to the west, and access for detailed recording was not possible on Health and Safety grounds. The observed stratigraphy was the same as that seen in Area 3, to which it was joined at its southern end.

### **3.5 Drainage works and attenuation tank**

- 3.5.1 The drainage works were located to the east of the new school building and extended into the western part of Area 3. These works consisted of a number of service trenches leading to a soak away/attenuation tank (Fig. 2).

#### **Attenuation tank**

- 3.5.2 The attenuation tank was 9m long by 4.5m wide and 3.40m in depth. The lowest deposit encountered was 1058, the gravel natural. This was overlaid by 1057, a loose,



coarse yellow sand with small sub-angular pebbles. This deposit was observed across the whole of the excavated area. 1057 was overlaid by 1056, a loose greyish-brown fine sandy silt with occasional layers of small sub-angular pebbles varying in depth up to 0.30m. This layer, which was seen all across the attenuation tank excavation, contained a couple of fragments of animal bone, but there were no other finds from layers 1056-8.

- 3.5.3 Overlying 1056 was layer 1055, a compact dark brownish-grey clay sandy silt with inclusions of frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded pebbles and fragments of red brick (not recovered) and coal. A 20th century table knife was recovered from this layer, hence the decision not to retrieve any of the brick fragments. This was sealed by a layer of builders crush.

#### ***Drainage trenches***

- 3.5.4 A number of drainage trenches were excavated east of the new school building (within the eastern central area of the site) and within the western part of area 3. This also included four inspection pits.
- 3.5.5 Trench 1 was located to the south of the new building foundations, seen over two phases and measured 30m long, 0.8m wide and varied in depth from 1.1m to 1.2m.
- 3.5.6 Trench 2 was located from the south-west corner of the attenuation tank and ran on a north-south alignment to manhole 2. It was 6m long and was 1.8m wide and 2.7m deep.
- 3.5.7 Trench 3 ran between manholes 2 and 3 joining trenches 1 and 2. Trench 3 was on an east – west alignment and was 1.8m wide and was excavated to a depth of 2.5m. Within this trench feature 1063 was encountered, which was only partly exposed within the trench. It was clear in section, and measured 2m by 0.5m and 1.45m in depth. It was filled by 1062, a demolition backfilling of loose grey sandy rubble, 40% red bricks and brick fragments, mortar and cement. This was overlaid by layer 1055, a compact dark brownish grey with frequent sub-rounded and sub-angular pebbles and very frequent fragments of red brick, coal, clay and clay sandy silt. Also encountered within trench 3, and possibly cut by 1063, was 1065, a tree-throw hole, not fully exposed, measuring 1.3m wide, 1.35m deep and at least 0.5m long. It was filled by 1064, a loose friable dark brown sandy silt with root inclusions.
- 3.5.8 Trench 4 ran from halfway down the east side of new building to the attenuation tank on a south-west to north-east alignment. It was 1.8m wide and was excavated to a depth of 2.5m. Within this trench quarry pit 1069 was encountered, though the full extent was not seen. 1069 was 2.3m wide, 1.8m long and 1.35m deep with reasonably regular edges. The lowest fill of 1069 was 1068, a friable dark brown sandy silt with occasional gravel and roots. 1068 was 0.65m deep. Overlying 1068 was 1067, which measured 0.5m in depth, 2.3m wide and >1.8m in length. It consisted of friable-loose greyish-brown sandy silt with 20% gravel inclusions. This appeared to have been tipped in from the west. Overlying this was 1066, a friable dark brown sandy silt with 15% gravel inclusions which appears to be the result of rapid back filling. It measured 0.45m at maximum depth, 2.3m wide and at least 1.8m in length. 1066 appeared to have two tipped lenses up to 0.15m thick within it, again suggesting backfilling from the west. This was overlaid by 1055.
- 3.5.9 Trench 5 ran along the eastern side of the new building and crossed trenches 4 and 3. No archaeology was observed in this trench.
- 3.5.10 The foundation of the garage to the east of the new school building was 0.5m wide, and was dug to a depth varying between 1.3m and 2m. In total the four sides measured 9m



long. The deposits encountered appear to have been heavily disturbed during earlier works with modern pipes and other material seen extending from the trench sides. No archaeological features or finds were seen.

## 4 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

### 4.1 Pottery

*by John Cotter*

- 4.1.1 A small assemblage of fourteen sherds of pottery was recovered from the test pits and areas excavated across the site.
- 4.1.2 The material was identified to fabric group and vessel type where appropriate, and was spot-dated. Details are given in Table 1 below.

Context	Material	Fabric/ware	Type	Date
1001	Pottery	PMR - redware	Flowerpot	1875-1999
1003	Pottery	PMR - redware	Bowl glazed	1600-1799
1016	Pottery	PMR - redware	Bodysherd	1700-1899
1016	Pottery	TPW – transfer-printed ware		1830-1900
1028	Pottery	Roman?	Bodysherd	AD 50-250
1029	Pottery	TGW - Tin-glazed ware	Ointment Jar rim	1700-1750
1029	Pottery	TGW - Tin-glazed ware	Bodysherd	1700-1750
1033	Pottery		Bodysherd	A.D. 50-400
1033	Pottery	Samian		A.D. 50-250
1039	Pottery	CHPO - Chinese Porcelain	Bowl	1700-1799
1051	Pottery	TPW – transfer-printed ware	Dishes (2)	1830-1900
1051	Pottery	BONE – English bone china	Saucer	1830-1900



1051	Pottery	ENGS – English brown salt-glazed stoneware	Blacking bottle	1830-1900
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4.1.3 The assemblage consists three residual Roman sherds, including a sherd of samian ware and eleven post-medieval sherds, the three from the western part of the site all of 18th century date, comprising two from a tin-glazed ointment jar and one from a Chinese porcelain bowl. Three sherds of post-medieval redware, three sherds of Victorian transfer-printed ware, a sherd of English bone china and of English stoneware came from the eastern side of the site, spanning a date range from the 17th to the 20th centuries.

4.1.4 The post-medieval group indicates nearby domestic activity in the vicinity, presumably derived from Lacies Court.

## 4.2 Clay tobacco pipe

*by John Cotter*

4.2.1 Ten fragments of clay pipe stems were recovered from four contexts. These are listed in Table 2.

Context	Material	Type	Date
1003	Clay pipe	Stems (2)	1800-1899
1023	Clay pipe	Stems (2)	1700-1899
1023	Clay pipe	Stems (4)	1700-1799
1029	Clay pipe	Stem	1600-1699
1034	Clay pipe	Stem	1675-1799

4.2.2 One is an early 17th century type, and another of late 17th or 18th century date. The largest group of six are not closely datable, but belong in the 18th or 19th century. The associated peg tile (see report below) indicates that they were probably of 19th century date. The fragments from context 1003 are of 19th century type.

## 4.3 Ceramic building material (CBM)

*by John Cotter*

4.3.1 Eleven fragments of CBM were recovered, comprising four brick and seven roof tile fragments. These are catalogued in Table 3 below.



Context	Material	Comment	Type	Date
1001	CBM		Peg tiles (2)	1600-1899
1002	CBM		Brick- frogged (2)	1875-1999
1003	CBM		Peg tile	1400-1599
1003	CBM		Peg tile	1600-1899
1013	CBM		Peg tile	1800-1899
1019	CBM		Brick-unfrogged	1700-1899?
1023	CBM		Peg tile	1800-1899
1024	CBM	Machine-made?	Brick - unfrogged	1800-1899
1028	CBM		Ridge tile	1175-1399
1028	CBM		Tile scraps	1600-1899
1033	CBM		Tile	1700-1900

- 4.3.2 The ridge tile fragment is interesting as, according to the documentary evidence, the farmstead at Lacies Court was not established until the 15th century, i.e. after the end of the manufacture of such tiles. It is, however, not uncommon for tiles to be reused.
- 4.3.3 One of the peg tiles from layer 1003 is of late medieval/Tudor date, reflecting the early use of Lacies Court. The remainder were post-medieval fragments, and are generally not more closely datable, though that from context 1033 was 18th century or later, and that from 1013 of 19th century date.
- 4.3.4 The unfrogged brick from context 1024 was only 60mm thick, but although unfrogged, the drag marks along one face suggest that it was machine-made, in which case it probably dates to the Victorian period rather than earlier in the 19th century. This brick was part of the pier base found in Area 6. The other unfrogged brick (from context 1019) may have been of 18th or 19th century date.

#### 4.4 Glass

*by Ian R Scott*

- 4.4.1 There is single piece vessel glass from a thick-walled wine bottle.

**Context 1023:** (1) **Wine bottle.** Large sherd from the base of free blown broad squat bottle with

rounded domed kick. The base is a very thick, very dark green glass. D: c 120mm

The diameter of the bottle combined with the domed kick suggests that the sherd is from a bottle dating to the first half of the 18th century and very possibly to the 1720s or 1730s.

#### 4.5 Struck flint

by Tom Lawrence

- 4.5.1 A single flake was recovered from context 1045, fill of cut 1044. This was quite heavily corticated, and no cortex remained to assist in identifying the source of the grey flint.
- 4.5.2 The flake was struck with a hard hammer from a faceted platform. It was broken towards the distal end, the break possibly of more recent date, as the cortication was not as heavy across the break. Single flakes such as this cannot be dated with confidence, but the general character of the piece perhaps suggests a Neolithic or early Bronze Age date.

#### 4.6 Metal

by Leigh Allen

- 4.6.1 A plated iron table knife with moulded handle and floral decoration was found in context 1055. This is of 20th century date.

#### 4.7 Animal bone

by Lee Broderick

- 4.7.1 A total of 146 bone fragments were recovered from across the site, weighing just over 3kg. All were collected by hand. The breakdown by context is shown in Table 4 below.

Context	NISP	Weight (g)
131	4	103
1003	1	5
1023	63	1194
1027	6	22
1028	15	178
1029	2	29
1030	33	1402
1039	19	206
1045	1	2
1056	2	96
Total	139	3237

- 4.7.2 The specimens were generally in good condition and each of the principal domesticated mammals (cattle [*Bos taurus taurus*], caprines [sheep – *Ovis aries* and/or goats – *Capra hircus*], and pig [*Sus ferus domesticus*]) were present. Most numerous though were dog (*Canis familiaris*) and horse (*Equus caballus*) suggesting that most of the remains are not human food waste. Butchery marks were observed on three



specimens, including one horse ulna, but gnawing by canids was far more prevalent, observed on 11 of the specimens (8.8% of NISP). It therefore seems likely that much of the faunal material was deposited on the site by dogs and the high proportion of horse bones can be explained as the remains of dog food, as in the post-medieval period at the Witney Palace, also in Oxfordshire (Wilson and Edwards 1993).

- 4.7.3 The dog remains came from a single pit (1038) and consisted of much of the upper hindquarters of a male, as well as part of the left forelimb. It is possible that this is a burial of a companion animal. Pet burials became more common in later 18th and 19th century Britain, with the first documented case occurring in 1750 (Thomas 2005). Alternatively, this deposit may represent the deliberate disposal of noxious waste.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 Natural gravel was found in Area 5 at around 57.18 aOD, and at 57.14m aOD in Area 7. Area 6 was excavated to 57.05m aOD at the deepest without finding natural gravel, supporting the view that the lowest deposit seen in this area was the fill of a large feature. Test Pit 12 was dug to 57.10m aOD without encountering natural gravel, but it is unclear whether this simply bottomed just above the level of natural, or whether here too there was an earlier feature cutting the natural.
- 5.1.2 Subsequent lowering of the footprint of the new building confirmed the level of natural gravel around and south of Area 5, and indicated that this was cut away on the west, south and east by large features, probably quarries. The depth of soils found in boreholes WS01, WS03, WS07 and WS08 confirmed the presence of quarries in the west and southern parts of this area, though WS05, which found gravel at only 0.9m BS, suggests that some of the quarrying may have been shallow, unless this lay at the very edge of a deeper quarry. Significant disturbance in the western part of the site is however clear.
- 5.1.3 In the eastern half of the site quarrying was less evident, although much of the site was taken up with the air-raid shelter, destroying any evidence of earlier activity, and there were also other large disturbances, such as tree-throw hole 1065, west of this.
- 5.1.4 The test pits and further trenches in the western half of the site have demonstrated activity ostensibly of several periods.

### 5.1.5 *Prehistory*

A single struck flint flake was found in feature 1044. The corticated nature of this flake, and the more recent break, suggests that it was redeposited. The flake thus does not suggest that Neolithic or Bronze Age features are present on the site, but it does indicate some level of prehistoric activity in and around the site. Given the ring ditches known at the north end of Abingdon School (Benson and Miles 1974, map 30), and the evidence of activity of these periods from all around and within Abingdon (Allen and Kamash 2008, 67–72), this is not surprising.

### 5.1.6 *Roman period*

Several sherds of Roman pottery were found in the trenches, but were not associated with any archaeological features. The contexts in which these sherds were found either also contained post-medieval finds, or were stratigraphically later than other post-medieval deposits, and so the pottery is clearly residual. The Roman activity found further south and north along this side of Bath Street makes the presence of Roman pottery unremarkable at this site.

### 5.1.7 *Medieval period*

Fragments of a single ridge tile were found, and were associated with post-medieval tile fragments, so are probably residual in the context in which they occurred. As already discussed, this could represent the reuse of an earlier medieval tile when the late medieval farmstead was established at Lacies Court, or could have come from the medieval tenements known from both documentary records and excavation further south along Bath Street. One fragment of a late medieval or Tudor peg tile that probably came from the early use of the Lacies Court farmstead was also found, but again associated with much later post-medieval material.

### 5.1.8 *Post-medieval period*

The finds from the western part of the site indicate a fair level of activity in the 18th century, with some evidence of activity in the later 17th century, and a lesser quantity for the 19th century. The pottery suggests domestic activity; although the fragment of Chinese porcelain bowl was found with the partial dog burial, it is unlikely that this was a dog-bowl, as it was only a fragment and probably derived from occupation of Lacies Court.

- 5.1.9 The clay tobacco pipe stems may also reflect domestic activity, but together with the animal bones may instead suggest that Beech Court north and west of Lacies Court at this time was peripheral to the domestic focus of activity and perhaps contained kennels or stables, or was used for other farmyard activities. If the horse bones do represent dog food, as was the case at Witney Palace at a similar period (Wilson and Edwards 1993), this may indicate that hounds were kept, which would be consistent with the status of the documented earlier tenants of Lacies Court in the 16th and 17th centuries. It may, however, simply indicate the use of animals from a local knacker's yard in the town.
- 5.1.10 The stone structure found in TP 12 and in Areas 6 and 7 proved to consist of two stone piers in Areas 6 and 7, and either a wall or another pier in TP 12, spaced at intervals of 3.5m (or 11' 8") centre to centre. Excavation of Area 5 to the south did not find a continuation of these piers, and subsequent monitoring of the excavation of the footprint of the new building confirmed this. This structure therefore appears to have ended, or changed direction, in Area 7.
- 5.1.11 The structure may have been arcaded or (less likely) a series of free-standing piers. The piers were not positioned on firm natural between areas of feature fill, so this was not an attempt to bridge soft areas using this form of construction. The tops of all three groups of stonework were at similar heights above OD, and in one case (1025 in Area 6) included thin flat slabs, probably indicating that these were stone foundations for a timber structure, rather than truncated stone piers, though this is not certain. The piers in Areas 6 and 7 overlay contexts of 18th century date.
- 5.1.12 The stone structure in Area 6 was itself overlain by a brick pier. This was offset from the stone pier beneath it, so it is unlikely that the stone piers were simply foundations for a brick superstructure. Two separate phases of structure therefore seem probable. The bricks of the brick pier were unfrogged and only 60mm thick, but were probably machine-made, and so must date to the mid-19th century or later. No structure was evident on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1872, however, so the brick pier must have been constructed before this, in the mid-19th century. The date of the stone structure is therefore probably later 18th or early 19th century. Only traces of one brick pier were found, so this may have been a repair rather than a complete rebuilding.



- 5.1.13 In the eastern part of the site, the eastern boundary wall is likely to have been of at least two periods. The lower, stone, wall, while coarsely made, was exposed to a depth of 0.9m, and apparently continued down below the bottom of Areas 1 and 2. If so, then this is a very deep foundation for a boundary wall, and the fact that it was mortared throughout its depth makes it less likely that this was simply the stone foundation for the overlying brick wall. An earlier boundary than the late 19th century must have existed, but its date and dimensions were not able to be established within the scope of the watching brief work.
- 5.1.14 The finds from the eastern part of the site, north of the current Lacies Court, bear out its use as a garden during the later post-medieval period. The brick surface in the north-east corner may represent the base of a potting shed or other garden structure. The finds, as might be expected, include a scatter of residual earlier material and of 19th and 20th century items, some, like the knife, lost by accident, others, such as the flowerpot, relating directly to its use as the Headmaster's garden.

## CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The archaeological investigations showed that the site had been heavily truncated by quarrying, the construction of an air-raid shelter, tree-throw holes and other recent disturbances.
- 5.1.2 Other than a single struck flint and a few Roman pottery sherds, all residual, no evidence of earlier activity was observed. Despite the level of disturbance, the low level of residual finds, coupled with the scarcity of potential features of earlier date in those areas where natural gravel had not been significantly truncated, suggests that this area lay outside the limits of later prehistoric and Roman settlement.
- 5.1.3 No evidence of structures or significant activity relating to the late medieval grange belonging to Fitzharry's Manor was found, nor of the early post-medieval buildings known from documentary evidence to have been part of Lacies Court. It would appear that the structures of the late medieval farmstead lay entirely to the south under Lacies Court, as did those of the early post-medieval period.



**APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Context	Type	D (m)	W (m)	L (m)	Description	Findings	Date
110	Layer	0.41	>0.60	>1.00	Modern construction layers	-	-
111	Layer	0.60	>0.60	>1.00	Buried topsoil; friable, dark brown, silty clay	-	-
112	Layer	>0.04	>0.60	>1.00	Buried garden soil; friable, dark brownish grey, clay silt, rare charcoal inclusions	-	-
120	Layer	0.50	>0.60	>0.70	Modern garden soil; friable, dark greyish brown, clay sandy silt, frequent stone inclusions	-	-
121	Layer	-	-	-	Natural geology; loose, mid brownish yellow, silty sandy gravel	-	-
130	Layer	0.09	>0.60	>0.80	Modern construction sand	-	-
131	Layer	0.90	>0.60	>0.80	Buried garden soil; friable, dark greyish brown, clay sandy silt, frequent stone inclusions	Animal bone	-
132	Struct	>0.30	>0.30	>0.80	Stone wall/pier; limestone bonded with a light orange brown sandy mortar with very small stone inclusions, very roughly hewn finish, two courses thick	-	-
1000	Layer	0.20	1.10	1.40	Modern garden soil; friable dark grey clay sandy silt, frequent 20-30%, sub-angular well sorted stones <10-30mm	-	Modern
1001	Layer	0.66-0.71	1.10	1.40	Buried garden soil; friable mid to dark brownish grey clay sandy silt, 10-15% pea gravel	Pot, CBM	19th - 20th centuries
1002	Structure	0.45	0.36	0.97	Brick Surface; Single course of brick, some whole but others broken, no bonding, lime mortar compacted on to surface	CBM	Late 19th-20th centuries
1003	Layer	0.11-0.17	1.10	0.97	Leveling deposits/ made ground; friable mid brownish-grey with mid orange brown lenses. Sandy clay silt (lenses silty-sand).	Pot, Clay pipe, CBM, bone	17th - 19th centuries
1004	Layer	0.06	0.18	0.97	Buried top soil; Friable dark grey clay sandy silt. No inclusions observed	-	-
1005	Layer	0.08	1.10	0.90	Leveling deposit/ redeposited natural; loose/friable mid to dark yellowish brown silty sandy gravel	-	-
1006	Layer	c. 0.02-0.09	1.10	1.40	Leveling deposit; Firm mid buff sandy clay with no inclusions observed.	-	-
1007	Layer	-	1.10	1.40	Leveling deposit/ made ground/ buried garden soil; Friable mid brownish grey silty sand, stone inclusions- 10-15% subrounded to sub angular, well sorted <10 – 40mm. Layer observed at max depth of area 1.	-	-
1008	Fill	0.30	0.40	1.10	Foundation - Loose dark brownish-grey clay sandy silt, <5% rounded to sub rounded gravel (<10-30mm) inclusions.	-	-
1009	Cut	0.30	0.40	1.10	Foundation; NW-SE linear, flat base, vertical sides, BOS – top-bottom abrupt	-	-
1010	Layer	0.25	0.60	1.50	Modern garden soil; friable dark grey clay sandy silt, occasional 10-15% sub-angular to sub-rounded stone, well sorted	-	-
1011	Layer	0.65	0.60	1.50	Leveling deposit/made ground;	-	-



					friable mixed reddish brown and mid to dark grey sand clay silt. Detritus (charcoal, stone patches of mortar/sand), infrequent 5-10%		
1012	Cut	0.64	0.20	1.50	Pit; Ovoid ( only partly observed), base – not observed, variable sides; near vertical, straight and shallow, convex. BOS - varying	-	-
1013	Fill	0.24-0.42	0.20	1.50	Pit; Loose light to mid grey silty sand. Detritus abundant >50%, roof tiles, stone.	CBM	19th century
1014	Fill	0.40	0.20	1.50	Pit; Friable mid greyish brown clay sandy silt. Occasional (10-15% stone, sub-rounded to sub-angular well sorted, < 10-40mm	-	-
1015	Layer	0.88	2.0	2.60	Modern deposit; loose, mid brownish-grey sandy silt. Detritus (Fe, wood, plastic, etc), 15-10%. Occasional 10-15% stone, sub-rounded, well sorted	-	-
1016	Layer	0.20-0.28	2.0	2.60	Buried garden soil; Friable mid to dark grey clay silt. 10-15% sub-angular to sub-rounded stone, well sorted <10-40mm	Pot	19th-20th centuries
1017	Layer	0.09-0.16	2.0	2.0	External work surface; moderately firm, mixed light yellowish brown, mid reddish brown and mid brown-grey silty sand. Frequent (35-40%) gravel, sub-rounded to sub-angular, well sorted <10-30mm.	-	-
1018	Cut	0.28	0.77	-	Pit; shape not observed, flat base, side-moderate, stepped and steep, concave. BOS-varied	-	Post medieval
1019	Fill	0.28	0.77	-	Pit; Friable mid brown-grey clay sandy silt. Occasional stone (10-15%), sub-rounded to sub-angular, moderately sorted, <10-40mm	CBM	Post Medieval
1020	Layer	>0.24	>2.60	>2.00	Levelling deposits/made ground; friable, mid greyish brown, clay sandy silt, occasional stone and infrequent pea gravel and charcoal inclusions	-	-
1021	Layer	0.12 - 0.33	>2.75	>0.94	Modern garden soil; friable, dark greyish brown, sandy silt, occasional stone and infrequent detritus inclusions	-	-
1022	Layer	0.12 - 0.26	>2.75	>0.94	Buried garden soil; friable, mid greyish brown, clay sandy silt, infrequent stone inclusions	-	-
1023	Layer	0.20 - 0.27	>2.75	>0.94	Levelling deposit; friable, mid brown, clay sandy silt, infrequent stone inclusions	Clay pipe CBM  Glass Animal bone	18th-19th century 19th century 18th century
1024	Struct	0.20	0.45	0.34	Brick pier; unfrogged red brick bonded with a light to mid buff sandy mortar with small stone inclusions, three courses thick, brick dimensions (0.22 x 0.10 x 0.06)	CBM	19th century
1025	Struct	0.18	0.86	0.72	Stone pier; limestone bonded with a light greyish white and light yellowish brown sandy mortar with very small stone inclusions, very roughly hewn finish, two courses thick	-	-
1026	Layer	0.06 - 0.08	1.42	>0.48	Levelling deposit; friable, mid greyish brown, sandy clay silt, infrequent	-	-



1027	Layer	0.04 - 0.08	>2.00	>0.94	stone inclusions Levelling deposit; loose to friable, mid grey, sandy clay silt, occasional stone and infrequent pea gravel inclusions	Animal bone	-
1028	Layer	0.07 - 0.12	>2.54	>0.94	Levelling deposit; moderately firm, mid reddish brown, sandy clay silt, infrequent stone inclusions	Pottery CBM Animal bone	Roman? Late 12th-14th century / 17th-19th century
1029	Layer	0.08	>1.86	>0.94	Levelling deposit; moderately firm, light yellowish brown with mid greyish brown mottles, clay silt, rare stone inclusions	Clay pipe Pottery Animal bone	17th century 1700-1750 AD
1030	Layer	>0.20	>2.54	>0.94	Levelling deposit/made ground; loose, mid yellowish grey, silty sandy gravel	Animal bone	-
1031	Layer	0.15 - 0.20	>1.00	>1.00	Modern garden soil; friable, dark greyish brown, sandy silt, infrequent stone inclusions	-	-
1032	Layer	0.16 - 0.36	>1.00	>1.00	Buried garden soil; friable, mid greyish brown, clay sandy silt, infrequent stone inclusions	-	-
1033	Layer	0.20 - 0.30	>1.00	>1.00	Levelling deposit; friable, mid brown, sandy silt, infrequent stone inclusions	Pottery x 2	Roman
1034	Layer	0.09 - 0.10	-	-	Buried subsoil; loose to friable, mid reddish brown, sandy silt, occasional stone and abundant pea gravel inclusions	Clay pipe	Late 17th – early 18th century
1035	Layer	-	-	-	Natural geology; loose, light brownish yellow and light brownish orange, sandy gravel and pea gravel	-	-
1036	Cut	-	>3.59	2.84	Pit; irregular shape in plan, feature not excavated	-	-
1037	Fill	-	>3.59	2.84	Pit; moderately firm, mid reddish brown, clay sandy silt, infrequent stone and abundant (in lenses) pea gravel inclusions	-	-
1038	Cut	0.24	0.69	>0.20	Pit; ovoid, flat base, moderate straight sides	-	-
1039	Fill	0.16	0.55	>0.20	Pit; loose, mid greyish brown, clay sandy silt, occasional pea gravel	Pottery Animal bone	18th century
1040	Fill	0.11	0.62	>0.20	Pit; loose, mid yellowish grey, silty sandy gravel	-	-
1041	Cut	0.32	>0.66	0.49	Foundation cut; sub rectangular, flat base, near vertical straight sides	-	-
1042	Fill	0.32	>0.66	0.49	Foundation cut; friable, mid yellowish brown and mid brownish grey, clay sandy silt, infrequent stone inclusions	-	-
1043	Struct	0.45	0.79	0.63	Stone pier; limestone bonded with a mid orange brown sandy mortar with very small stone inclusions, very roughly hewn finish, three courses thick	-	-
1044	Cut	>0.44	>0.74	>0.58	Feature; linear N-S aligned, base not observed, vertical straight sides	-	-
1045	Fill	>0.44	>0.74	>0.58	Feature; friable, mixed colour (mid reddish brown, mid yellowish brown and mid brownish grey), silty sand, occasion	Animal bone	



					stone and frequent pea gravel inclusions	Flint	Neolithic or early Bronze Age
1046	Layer	-	-	-	Natural; Friable, light greyish brown fine sandy gravel	-	-
1047	Layer	-	-	-	Levelling Layer; Friable, mid to light grey silty gravel	Stones Refuse	Late 18th to early 20th century
1048	Layer	-	-	-	Levelling Layer/ made ground; Friable mid brownish grey sandy silt with c. 50% gravel	-	-
1049	Layer	-	-	-	Levelling Layer; Friable, light grey silty gravel with concrete inclusions within top of layer	-	-
1050	Cut	-	0.80	-	Pit; unexcavated, circular	-	Modern
1051	Fill	-	0.80		Pit; Loose dark brown sandy silt	Pottery	1830-1900
1052		-	6.0	4.0	Feature; contained mid brownish grey sandy silt with both bricks and concrete	-	Modern
1053	Cut	0.4	0.9	6.0	Ditch; Sloping sides, Concave base. West side partially stepped due to collapse.	-	-
1054	Fill	0.4	0.9	-	Ditch; Loose, mid yellowish grey silty sand with gravel inclusions	-	-
1055	Layer	4.5	9.0	4.0	Leveling Layer; Compact, dark brownish grey clay, sandy silt with frequent >20% sub rounded and sub angular pebbles, >30% red brick, coal	Plated iron knife	20th century
1056	Layer	0.3	-	-	Topsoil; Loose grey brown well sorted fine sandy silt, well tilled deposit, very homogenous.>10% 10 small sub-angular pebbles	Animal bone (2)	-
1057	Layer	-	-	-	Natural; loose coarse yellow sand, > 10% small angular pebbles	-	-
1058	Layer	-	-	-	Natural; loose coarse yellow sand, > 10% small angular pebbles	-	-
1059	Fill	0.45	3	3.5	Pit; Friable dark brown silty sand , occasional roots, occasional rounded gravels	-	-
1060	Fill	0.65	3	3.5	Pit; Friable- loose mid brown with yellow lenses silty sand, gravel frequent within lenses.Diffuse upper boundary	-	-
1061	Cut	-	3	3.5	Pit; unclear, amorphous, top and base gradual, side- moderate concave slope, concave base. Full extent not seen	-	-
1062	Fill	1.45	3	0.5	Discrete Feature; loose mid grey sandy rubble, 40% red bricks and brick fragments, mortar, cement	-	-
1063	Cut	1.45	3	0.5	Discrete Feature; Recti-linear, squared, Top and base – sharpe, vertical, flat base	-	-
1064	Fill	1.35	1.3	>0.5	Tree pit; Loose- friable dark brown sandy silt, roots	-	-
1065	Cut	1.35	1.3	>0.5	Tree Pit; Irregular, full extent not seen, top and base- gradual, moderately steep, irregular, concave base.	-	-
1066	Fill	0.45	2.3	1.8	Pit; Friable-loose dark brown sandy silt, occasional gravel lenses – 15%, diffused boundaries	-	-



1067	Fill	0.5	2.3	1.8	Pit; Friable-loose mid greyish-brown sandy silt, occasional gravel throughout fill 20%	-	-
1068	Fill	0.65	2.3	1.8	Pit; friable dark brown sandy silt, occasional gravel and roots	-	-
1069	Cut	1.35	2.3	1.8	Pit; amorphous (uncertain), top and bottom – sharp-gradual, straight, steep sides, flat base. Full extent not seen	-	-
1070	Structure	> 0.3	-	-	Structure; solid mid grey concrete.	-	-



## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Beech Court, Abingdon School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire
Site code:	ABBEAS16
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SU 4935 9739
Type of watching brief:	
Date and duration of project:	20/02/17 – 02/03/17; 9 days
Area of site:	0.11ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently stored at OA South, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museums Service at the conclusion of the project.

### Summary of Results:

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Beech Court, Abingdon School between June 2016 and March 2018 in advance of the construction of a new classroom, access and garage.

In the western half of the site, Test Pit 12 was dug to investigate tree roots in the western part of the site, and located a stone wall not known on any historic maps. Three further trenches (Areas 5-7) were dug across the projected line of the wall to clarify its character, date and extent.

The southernmost trench (Area 5) did not find the wall, but encountered one very large and one smaller feature cut into the natural gravel. The smaller feature was excavated, and contained the partial burial of a dog, together with a sherd of a Chinese porcelain bowl of the 18th century. The larger feature was not dug, and did not contain any surface finds. What was believed to be the northern corner of this pit was found in the corner of Area 7, suggesting that this was nearly 4m long and over 2m wide.

Area 6 close to Test Pit 12 found a rectangular stone pier roughly in line with the wall in Test Pit 12, overlying the fills and capping layers of a large feature. The capping layers contained finds of 18th century date. Area 7 was opened up between Areas 5 and 6, and located another rectangular stone pier, overlying the fill of a different, and undated, large feature that cut subsoil containing a late 17th or 18th century clay pipe stem. The piers were 0.8-0.85m by 0.63-0.72m, and survived two to three courses deep. That in Area 6 was truncated in part by a brick pier, probably a repair, of 19th century date.

These three stone structures were around 3.5m apart (centre to centre), and their tops were all at similar heights above OD. They are believed to represent supports for a timber arcaded structure, of later 18th to early 19th century date.

Stripping of the footprint of the new school building showed that quarrying had taken place over much of the area to the west, south and east of these piers, but confirmed that no further stone structures lay to the south. Only a single, undated north-south ditch lay within this area.

The finds and animal bones indicate activity concentrated in the late 17th and 18th centuries, probably related to occupation at Lacies Court adjacent. The dog burial and a concentration of horse bones, many of which were gnawed, may indicate that horseflesh was used as dog-meat.

One residual flint flake of probable Neolithic or early Bronze Age date, several residual sherds of Roman pottery and fragments of one medieval ridge tile were also recovered.

In the eastern half of the site, Areas 1 to 4 contained limited archaeology, all of post-medieval date, but did demonstrate that the wall fronting onto Bath Street was probably of more than one phase. Much of the area had been destroyed by the construction of a WW2 air-raid shelter.

Drainage works east of the new building in the centre of the site also showed evidence of post-medieval quarrying and disturbance from tree-throw holes, but where not disturbed, no archaeological features were observed.





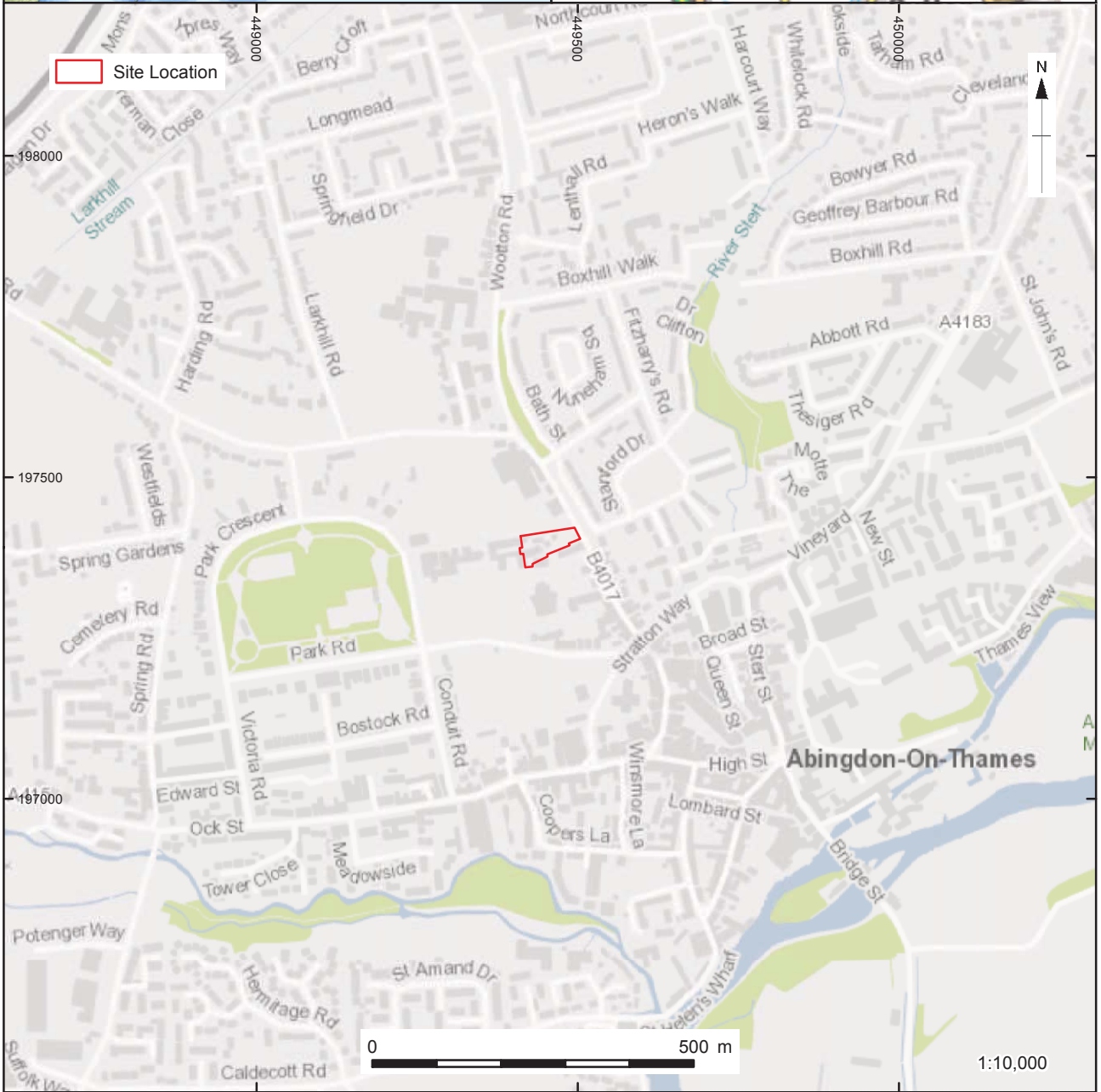
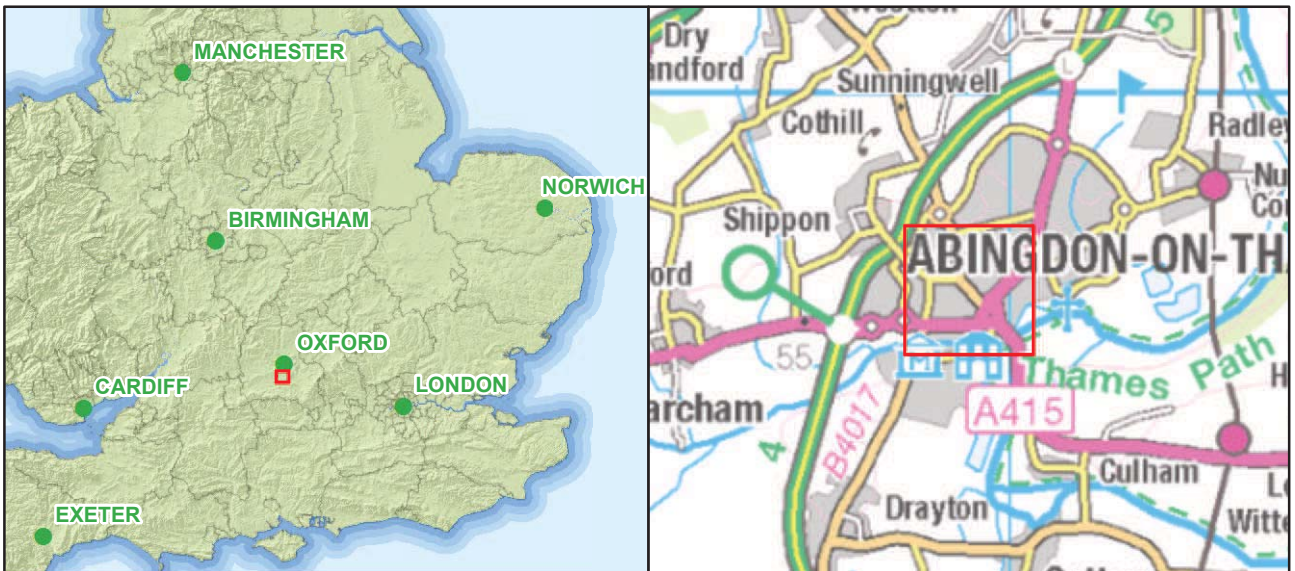


Figure 1: Site location

449395  
197430

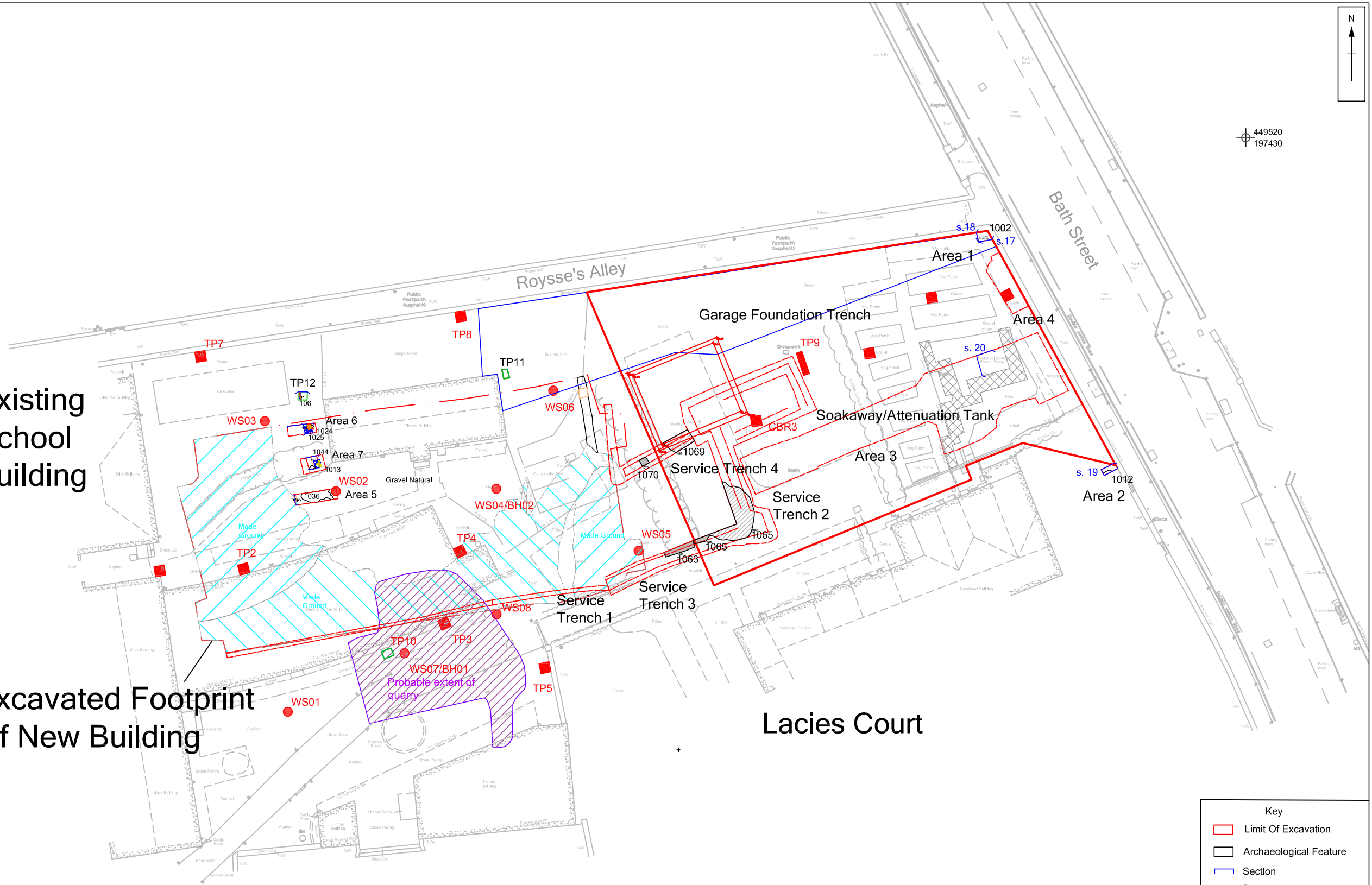
449520  
197430



Existing  
School  
Building

Excavated Footprint  
Of New Building

Lacies Court



Key	
	Limit Of Excavation
	Archaeological Feature
	Section
	Section number
	Archaeological Brick
	Stone
	Test Pit
	Bore Hole
	Quarry from Historic Map
	Made Ground

449395  
197355

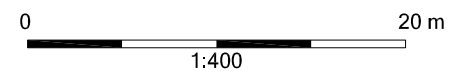


Figure 2: Overview of archaeological watching brief work completed on site

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X:\a\Abingdon School\Beech Court\10\Geomatics\02 CAD\ABBEASWB AS Beech Court 2016-06-31.dwg(Figure 3\_WSL\_2017-03-31)\*ABBEASWB\*Abingdon School, Beech Court\matt.bradley\* 31 Mar 2017

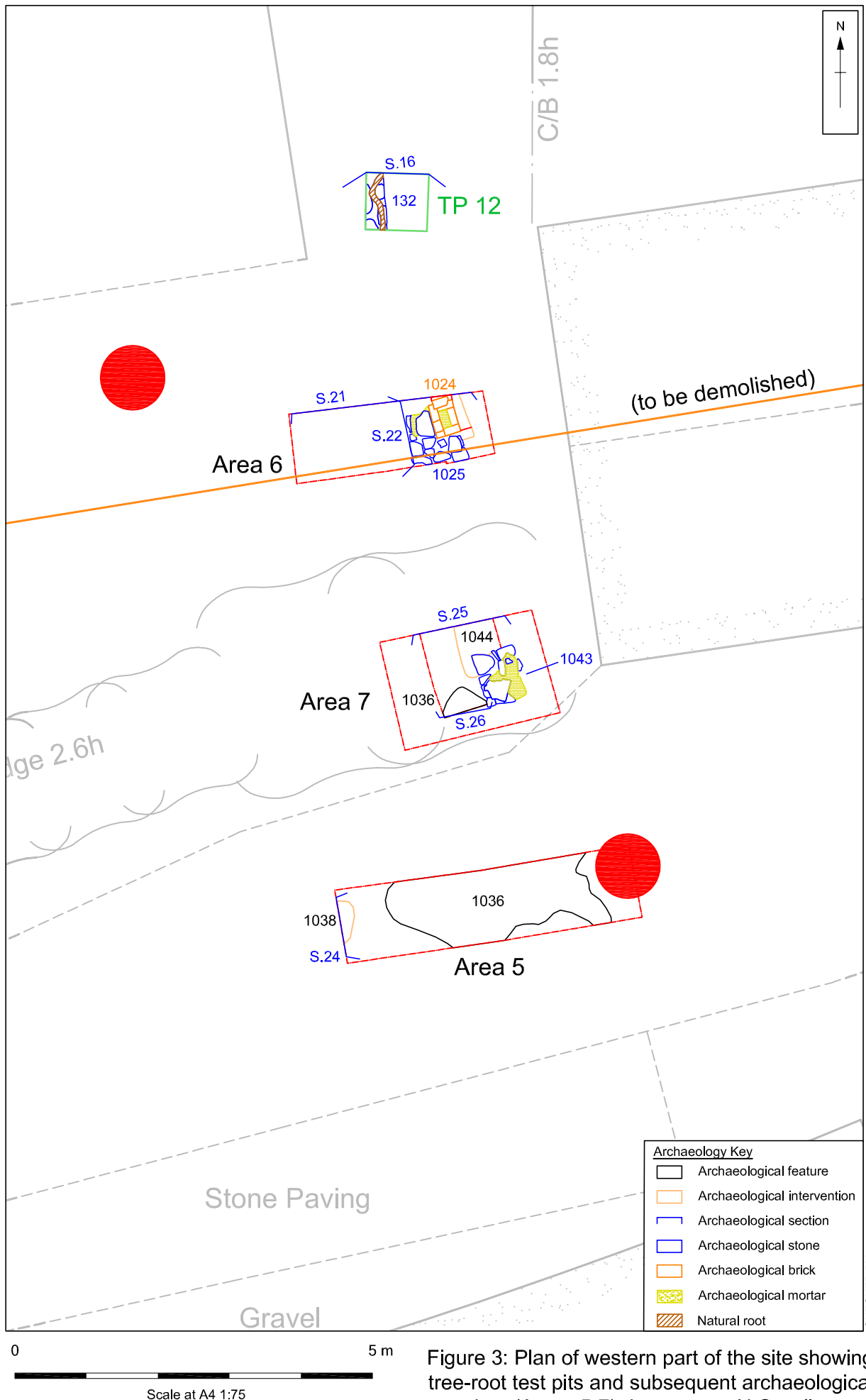


Figure 3: Plan of western part of the site showing tree-root test pits and subsequent archaeological trenches (Areas 5-7) dug to trace N-S wall

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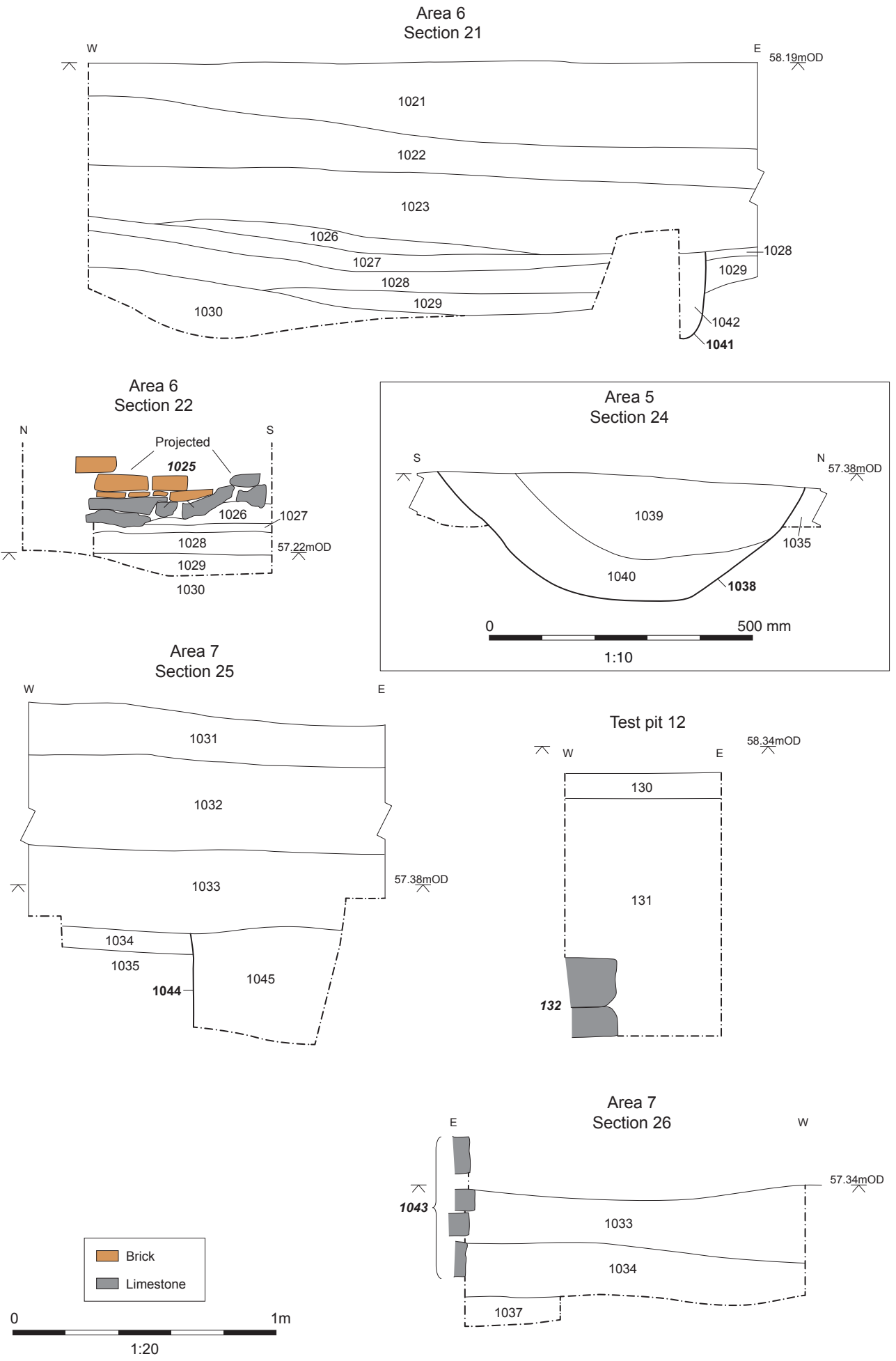


Figure 4: Areas 5, 6 and 7; sections 21, 22, 24-26 and test pit 12

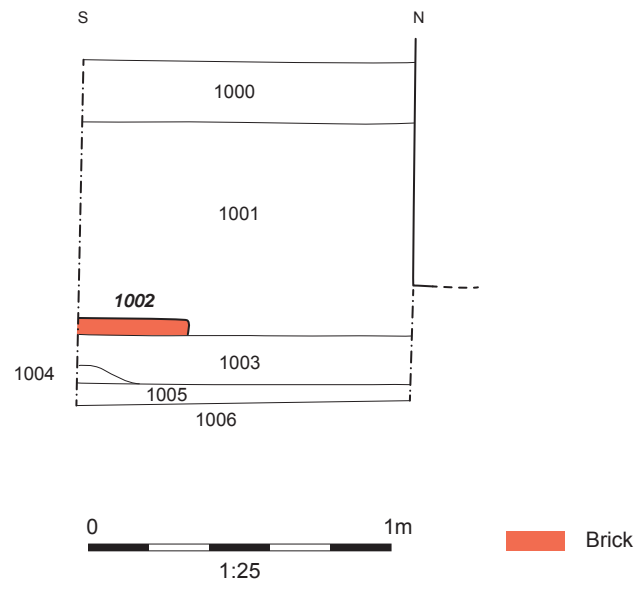
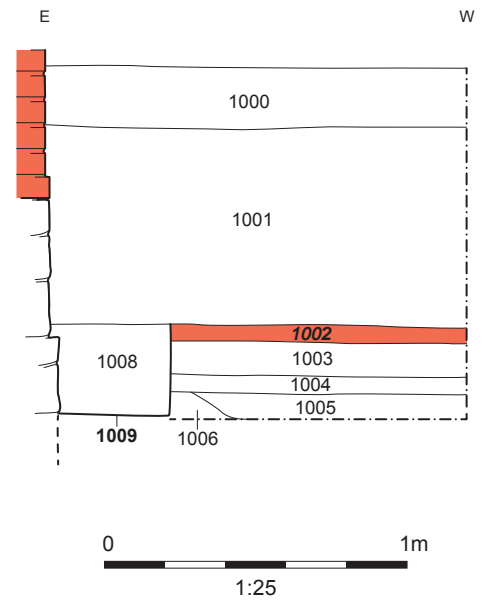


Figure 5: North facing and east facing section Area 1, showing foundation cut 1009 and brick surface 1002

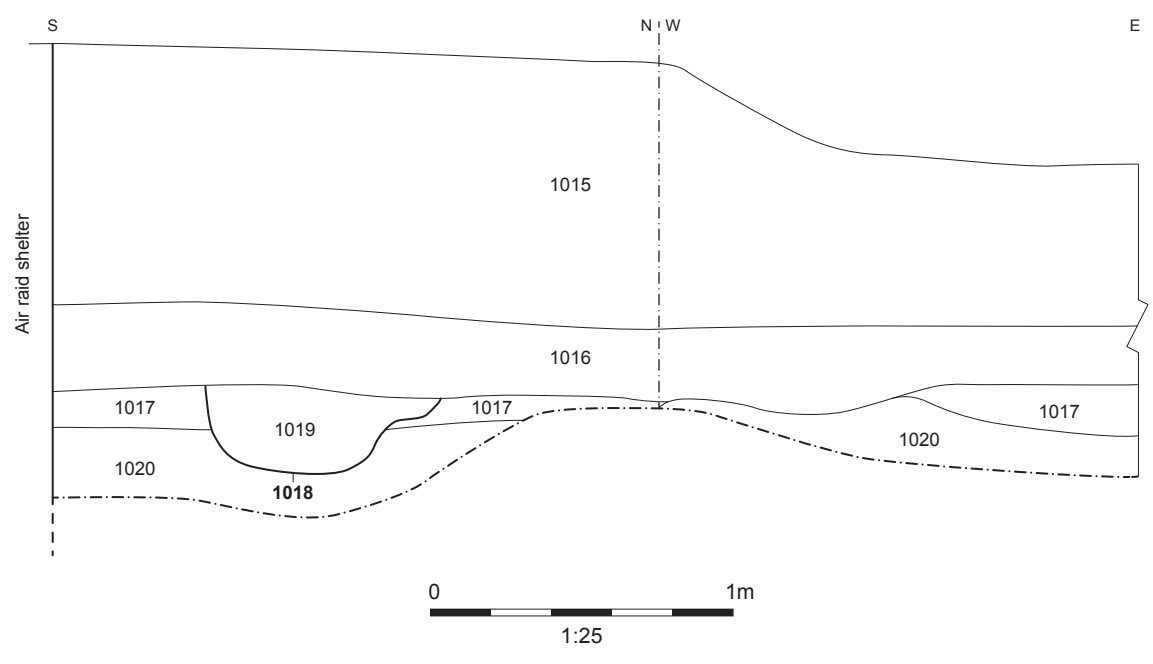


Figure 6: Area 3 section 20 showing deposits east of air-raid shelter





Plate 1: Test Pit 12, showing wall 132, looking west



Plate 2: Area 6, stone pier 1025 and brick pier 1024, looking east





Plate 3: Area 6, stone and brick piers, from above looking south



Plate 4: Area 6, brick pier 1024 detail, looking west





Plate 5: Area 5 with pit 1036, looking east



Plate 6: Area 5, pit 1038 in section, looking west





Plate 7: Area 7 excavated looking east



Plate 8: Area 7, cut 1042, looking north





Plate 9: Area 7, stone pier 1043 from above, looking south



Plate 10: Area 7, stone pier 1043 detail, looking east





Plate 11: Area 1: brick surface 1002, looking south



Plate 12: Area 1 fully excavated: south section, looking south





Plate 13: Area 1: east stone and brick wall, looking east



Plate 14: Area 2, looking south





Plate 15: Air-raid shelter exposed before demolition, looking north-east



Plate 16: Area 3, section 20, looking north-west





Plate 17: Stripping of the footprint of the new building, looking north-east



Plate 18: Footprint of new building showing quarry deposits on south side, looking south





Plate 19: Ditch 1053 excavated, looking south





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