

# Former Dairy Building, Court Farm, Wookey, Somerset.

## An Archaeological Evaluation



**Former Dairy Building, Court Farm, Wookey, Somerset.**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

for

**Mr & Mrs S Moore**

by



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**Front cover image:** The former dairy, from the east. © Context One Archaeological Services 2014

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## Non-technical summary

*Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation at the Former Dairy Building, Court Farm, Wookey, Somerset ('the Site') over 5 days between 6 August and 11 September 2014. The project was commissioned and funded by the Site owners, Mr & Mrs S. Moore.*

*The programme of archaeological works was requested by Ms Melanie Barge (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage) in order to inform a proposal for the re-development of the dairy building for residential accommodation. The Site is situated within the boundary of a Scheduled Monument (Scheduled Monument No: SM 27961) which includes the earthwork remains of a medieval bishop's palace and encompasses an extant farmhouse, a Grade II\* Listed building (List entry no.: 1058584).*

*Three features of archaeological interest were recorded during the evaluation comprising capping stones for a culvert, a further stone-lined culvert or drain and a wall. It is suggested that the culverts/drain may be associated with the medieval water system, perhaps as off-shoots from the substantial medieval stone-lined fresh water culvert identified during recent archaeological works along the eastern side of the former dairy (Green 2014). Both the culvert and the wall lie just below the proposed construction impacts for the areas within which they were identified. However, foundation trenches for a new extension would necessitate the removal of two short sections of the culvert/ drain, if indeed the feature is continuous given the heavy disturbance which was also evident.*

*The deposit sequence across the Site comprised 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century levelling and demolition layers below cobbling or directly beneath modern concrete or hardcore. The depths of these deposits fall within the impact range proposed for the construction methodology therefore any potential underlying archaeological remains would not be reached. No finds were collected during the evaluation.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation at the Former Dairy Building, Court Farm, Wookey, Somerset ('the Site') over 5 days between 6 August and 11 September 2014. The project was commissioned and funded by the Site owners, Mr & Mrs S. Moore. The Site is situated within a Scheduled Monument (Scheduled Monument no.: SM 27961) and the nearby extant farmhouse is a Grade II\* Listed building (List entry no.: 1058584).
- 1.2 Scheduled Monuments are archaeological sites and remains that are regarded as nationally important and which merit protection by statute (*The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as Amended* (1983)). Guidance notes concerning Scheduled Monument Consent (EH 2012) state that:

*'Written consent must always be obtained before any work on a scheduled monument can begin. Some development may also need planning permission, which will need to be obtained from the Local Planning Authority.'*

And that:

*'A monument which has been scheduled is protected against disturbance or unlicensed metal detecting. Application for Scheduled Monument Consent must be made to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport before any work can be carried out which might affect a monument either above or below ground level.'*

The field evaluation was requested by Ms Melanie Barge (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage) in order to inform an appropriate archaeological response for the proposed re-development of the former dairy building for residential accommodation. This forms the latest phase in a programme of archaeological works carried out by COAS comprising a desk based appraisal prior to the commencement of Site works (Tabor 2012) followed by field evaluation, historic building recording and archaeological monitoring and recording (interim report Tabor 2013; analytical report Green 2014).

- 1.3 The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and under the terms of the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as Amended* (1983).
- 1.4 The programme of archaeological works comprised four elements. This began with the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (McConnell 2014) which set out the project strategy. This complied with section b of Scheduled Monument Consent which states that:

*"No works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by English Heritage."*

The WSI was approved by Ms Barge prior to the commencement of any Site works. The fieldwork comprised field evaluation through test pitting followed by reporting and archiving.

## 2. Site location and topography

- 2.1 The Site (centred on NGR ST 51684 45741) comprised the former dairy building and land immediately to the north, east and west, situated within the grounds of Court Farm in the centre of Wookey, a village in the north-east of Somerset within the River Axe valley (**Figure 1**). Wookey is c. 3km west of the cathedral city of Wells and c. 6.5km north-north-east of the abbey town of Glastonbury. The scheduled area comprises the house, which appears to have origins no later than c. AD 1225, a group of mainly 19<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings to its west and extensive earthworks to the south. The former dairy lies c. 25m to the south-west of the extant farmhouse at c. 25m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), on land that slopes very gently towards the north.

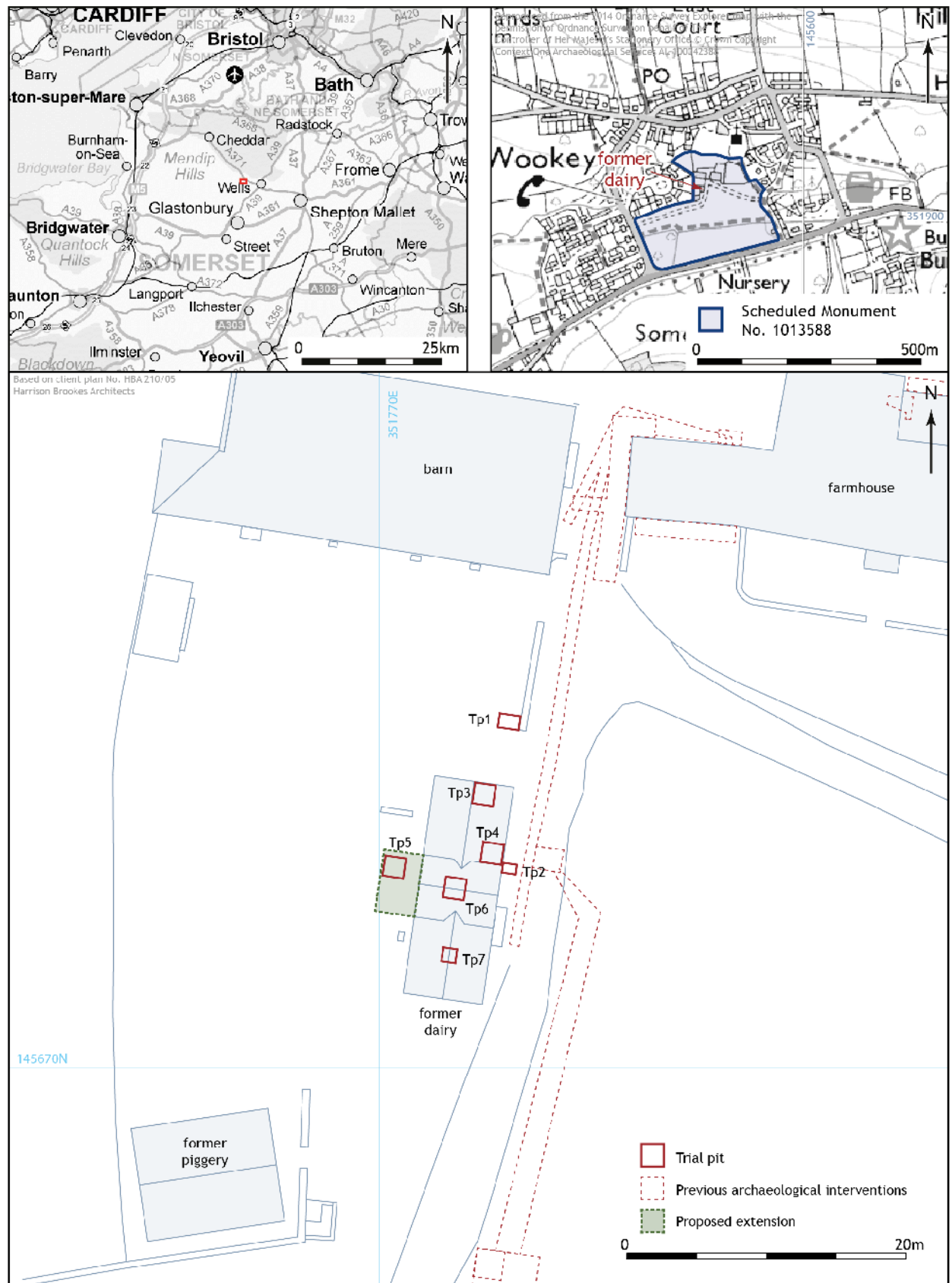


Figure 1. Site setting and locations of test pits



- 2.2 Court Farm is set on Quaternary head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel over solid geology comprising Mercia Group Triassic Mudstone and Halite stone (BGS 2014). The soil tends to be slightly acidic loam or clay with impeded drainage but moderate to high fertility (NSRI 2014).

### 3. Historical and archaeological background

- 3.1 The detailed historical and archaeological background for Court Farm has been set out in earlier reports, most recently by COAS in a desk-based assessment (Tabor 2012) and an analytical report covering the results of the field evaluation, historic building recording and monitoring and recording (Green 2014). These accounts draw on published work by Hasler (1995), which offers a valuable transcription of primary sources; Winstone (1998, 2009), which offers significant insight into the structure of the palace residence itself; and a PhD thesis by Payne (2003) which combines new research with a useful synthesis of other work. A summary from these accounts is set-out below together with evidence considered pertinent to the Site.
- 3.2 Wookey is likely to have belonged to the bishopric of Wells since the creation of the diocese in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century (Payne 2003, 139). Bishop Jocelin (1206-42) is believed to have built the palace in c. 1224, making it contemporary with that at Wells (Winstone 2009, 4.1). However, documentary evidence suggests that at least some of the work carried out by Jocelin was repair work or rebuilding of parts of an existing building (Payne 2003, 141-42). Successive bishops utilized the manor house to varying degrees and major repair work was carried out in 1461-2 (*ibid.*, 141). In 1548 the tenure of the bishops of Bath and Wells passed to the Duke of Somerset (*ibid.*) and by 1553 the manor was in the hands of landed gentry, remaining so until the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the later 18<sup>th</sup> century the medieval chapel, gatehouse, hall, solar and barn ranges decayed and were demolished (Winstone 2009, 4.2).
- 3.3 The palace precinct remains relatively intact (**Figure 1**) although many of the buildings which occupied the grounds of the episcopal moated manor house are no longer visible. A conjectured reconstruction of the medieval precinct (Bond; in Hasler and Luker 1994) depicts a moated enclosure with the manor house occupying the centre of the northern area; an outer gatehouse at the main south-east entrance with porter's lodge; an ox house and hay house, a stable and a hog sty to the north alongside the eastern bounds; a cowhouse and hayloft within the southern bounds; a dovecote at the western entrance; and a barn along the west side of the precinct. The manor house comprised four ranges, of which only the north range and parts of the northern ends of the west and east ranges survive. The former dairy building is one of several late 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuildings to the west of the manor house, depicted on the 1903 Ordnance Survey map but not present on the 1886 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map (Tabor 2012, 11).
- 3.4 Recent archaeological works by COAS have resulted in the discovery of a substantial stone-lined fresh water culvert running from the western side of the north range southwards, passing within 2m of the eastern side of the former dairy (Green 2014). It is assumed that the culvert continued south towards a former stone-lined fishpond however the course was not followed past the dairy. With intact sluices and off-shoots, the culvert (together with other culverts and drains identified during the same programme of archaeological works) provides significant evidence for medieval water management and the adaption and extension of this system during the post-medieval period (*ibid.*, 46).

### 4. Methodology

- 4.1 The trial pit edges were cut with a disc cutter and the concrete/modern hardstanding was broken up with a pneumatic breaker. Once this material was removed, manual excavation commenced until the proposed construction depths were reached.

#### Archaeological methodology

- 4.2 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook* issued by Somerset County Council in 2011, and the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 1985, rev. 2012; 1990, rev. 2008; 1994, rev. 2008). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.

- 4.3 The trenches comprised seven test pits (TP's) measuring 1.5m square, TP's 3, 4, 6 and 7 located within the former dairy building with TP1 positioned 2.5m to the north, TP2 immediately to the east of the building and TP5 located 1m to the west of the building within the proposed footprint of a new extension. All test pits were excavated to the proposed construction depths or just beyond. For TP's 1 and 2 this was 0.45m deep; for TP's 3, 4, 6 and 7 this was 0.30m deep; and for TP7 this was 1.00m deep. All trenches were either laid out using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System pre-loaded with Ordnance Survey grid co-ordinates derived from the WSI trench plan, or measured in from fixed points.
- 4.4 All features/deposits were recorded using standard COAS *pro forma* evaluation trench sheets. These included profiles to illustrate the soil morphology, recorded as a graphical representation of the deposit sequence across the Site accompanied by a brief description. A photograph including a suitable scale was also taken. Any dateable material found within a deposit was also noted.
- 4.5 All archaeological remains were sampled by manual excavation to establish stratigraphic relationships, recover sufficient artefacts to establish 'absolute' dates, and to determine feature/deposit morphology and character. All features and deposits were drawn on dimensionally stable media at scales of 1:20 (plans) and 1:10 (sections). All features/deposits were recorded using standard COAS *pro-forma* recording sheets. Stratigraphic relationships were recorded using a "Harris-Winchester matrix" diagram. Soil colours were logged using a Munsell soil colour chart.
- 4.6 A photographic record of the fieldwork comprised digital images in .jpg format. This included shots of the excavated area, individual trenches, individual features with suitable scales and working shots to illustrate the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.
- 4.7 The location, extent and altitude of the archaeological work, features and deposits were mapped relative to the National Grid and Ordnance Datum using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System receiving real-time calibrations to produce accuracies of 1-2cm.
- 4.8 Somerset County Historic Environment Service (HES) and EH were kept informed of progress.
- 4.9 On conclusion of the field evaluation, the test pits were backfilled, following agreement with EH.

## 5. Results

- 5.1 In the text, context numbers for cuts appear in square brackets, e.g. [1004]; layer, fill and structure numbers appear in standard brackets, e.g. (1002). The last two digits refer to a particular context and are prefixed by the number of the test pit. Where a feature is discussed, it is referenced with its cut and associated fill numbers. Test pit numbers are prefixed by the letters 'TP'.

### Deposit sequence

- 5.2 The stratigraphic sequence in all of the trenches was similar. Outside of the former dairy, in TP's 1 and 2 the modern concrete or hardcore (00) overlay a cobbled surface of an exterior yard at a depth of between 0.20m and 0.50m below the modern ground surface (**Plate 1**). The cobbled surface comprised rounded stones (101) in TP1 and sub-angular stones (201) in TP2 within a mid-brown silty matrix containing fragments of ceramic building material (CBM). In TP2 this surface overlay a stony redeposited natural (203) comprising orangey brown silty clay with frequent stones and angular gravels, probably a bedding or levelling layer for the cobbles. Both had been disturbed by a modern service trench (202).
- 5.3 In TP5, also outside the dairy, modern concrete/ hard core (500) overlay a modern pipe trench (503) and throughout most of the trench a mortary demolition layer (501) comprising light/ pale orange cream silt mortar with frequent gravels and CBM fragments (**Figure 2, Plate 2**). This was recorded at a depth of between 0.40m and 0.55m below the modern ground surface and was



thought to be the same as the mortar layers identified in TP's 4 and 7 (see below). This overlay a levelling/ make-up deposit (502) consisting of dark brown firm silt with charcoal flecks and occasional stones. This covered a cobbled surface (505) comprising rounded cobbles within a dark grey silt matrix.

- 5.4 Within the former dairy building, in TP3 the modern concrete or hard core (300) overlay a series of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century demolition/ levelling deposits at a depth of between 0.25m - 0.50m below the modern ground surface. These comprised a brownish red silty clay (301) containing frequent occasional lias stone fragments, above an off-white mortar layer mottled with brownish silt (302) containing frequent lias fragments, overlying a brown red silt clay with frequent lias stone fragments (303). In TP4 the modern concrete or hard core (400) covered a compacted mixed mortary surface (401) with frequent gravel, stone and CBM fragments to a depth of between 0.25m and 0.35m below the modern ground surface (**Plate 3**). This covered a compacted mixed deposit (403) of orange brown silty clay with frequent stones and gravels, probably a bedding or levelling layer for the surface (401). In TP's 6 and 7 (both within the dairy building) the modern brick stable floor ((600) (700)) overlay compacted gravelly lime mortar bedding ((601) (701)). In TP6 a modern drainage pipe and grate rested on this mortar bedding, which in turn covered a cobbled surface (602) comprising rounded cobbles within a dark silty matrix with fragments of CBM (**Plate 4**). In TP7 the mortar bedding overlay a very compacted deposit (702) of mixed grey/red/black silty clay with stone, mortar fragments and charcoal/coal at a depth of between 0.10m and 0.30m below the modern ground surface. This may represent a hard core layer for the modern brick surface or an earlier yard surface. Beneath was a mixed levelling deposit/ made ground (704) comprising orange brown silty clay with frequent stones and gravels.

#### Features

- 5.4 Two large lias slabs (304) were present in TP3 at a depth of 0.35m below the modern ground surface. Measuring 0.35m x 0.50m x 0.08m these were the capping stones of a culvert measuring 0.20m wide and 0.35m deep and aligned west-north-west to east-south-east (**Figure 2; Plate 5**).
- 5.5 An area of rubble (504) within the north-west quadrant of TP5 comprised lias stones and occasional slate fragments within a loose dark brown clay matrix (**Figure 2; Plate 2**). This was recorded at a depth of 0.7m below the modern ground surface and had been disturbed by the modern drain (503). The rubble continued beneath the drain to the base of the trench (1m below the modern ground surface) but had previously been disturbed. To the east of the modern drain (503) the archaeology was better preserved, the cobbled surface (505) overlying a 0.35m deep disturbed deposit (506) comprising large stones set within a mid-brown silty clay matrix (**Figure 2**). Some of the stones had been semi-dressed with some *in-situ* upright slabs aligned north-north-east to south-south-west (**Figure 2; Plate 6**) suggesting the remains of a drain or culvert. The surface of these remains were located at 0.50m below the modern ground surface. This feature was removed with the agreement of EH in order to reach the proposed construction depth of 1m. Just below this depth was a probable wall (507) aligned north-north-west to south-south-east constructed of semi-dressed blue lias and local yellow stone with no apparent bonding material (**Figure 2; Plate 7**). The disturbed rubble (504) in the north-west corner of the TP shared an identical alignment and is likely to represent a continuation of the same wall. The wall was set within a deposit (508) comprising compacted mid orange brown silty clay with moderate to small subangular stones; while no construction cut was discernible this may be redeposited natural associated with the wall construction.
- 5.5 Two voids lined with post-medieval brick ((402) and (703)) were recorded in TP4 and TP7 at a similar depth of c. 0.25m below the modern ground surface (**Plate 3**). Interpreted as post settings within the former dairy building, neither penetrated the bedding or levelling layers (403) (704) beneath surface (401) and hard core layer/ surface (701).



Plate 1. TP1, cobbled surface (from S; 1m scales)



Plate 2. TP5, part-excavation with modern drain, mortar, cobbling & disturbed ?wall (from S; 0.50m & 1m scales)



Plate 3. TP4, mortar surface & brick-lined post-setting (from W; 1m scales)



Plate 4. TP6, cobbling & mortar (from N; 1m scales)

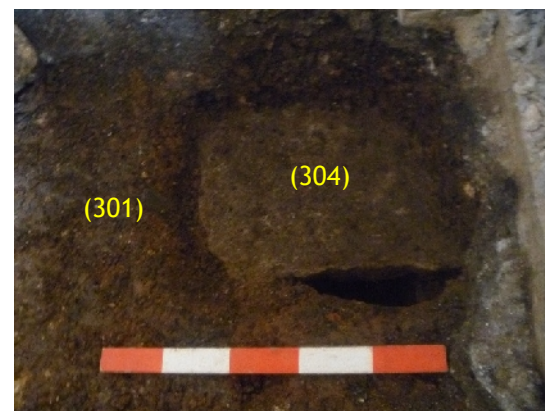


Plate 5. TP3, culvert (from W; 0.5m scales)



Plate 6. TP5, remains of disturbed culvert/drain (from WSW; 1m scales)



Figure 2. Locations of archaeology with plans of TP3 & 5 and section of TP5





Plate 7. TP5, base of wall (507) (from NE; 1m scales)

## 6. Discussion

- 6.1 The archaeological evaluation has identified three archaeological features. To the west of the former dairy (within TP5; **Figure 2**) a stone-lined culvert or drain (506) aligned north to south was recorded above a wall (507) aligned north-north-east to south-south-west. The culvert or drain may relate to the medieval water system, sharing the same orientation as the previously identified medieval culvert to the east. The surface of this feature was located at a depth of 0.50m below the modern ground surface and continued to a depth of 0.90m. Consequently, the culvert or drain falls within the proposed construction depth of 1m for this area and as such the foundation trenches would necessitate the removal of two short sections, if indeed the feature is continuous which heavy disturbance suggests it may not be. The surface of the earlier wall was located at a depth of 1m and therefore falls immediately beneath the proposed construction depth.
- 6.2 Two capping stones (304) in the north-east corner of the dairy (within TP3; **Figure 2**) are similar to the capping stones used for the substantial medieval stone-lined fresh water culvert running along the eastern side of the former dairy towards the farmhouse (Green 2014). As such, it may represent an off-shoot from the culvert, perhaps taking water to the medieval stone-lined fishpond once located to the north-west. However, as the surface of this feature lies at 0.35m below the modern ground surface it is located just below the proposed construction depth of 0.30m for this area.
- 6.3 The remaining test pits revealed a series of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century layers and deposits beneath modern concrete and hardcore, both within the former dairy and immediately outside. These include a brick-laid stable floor, cobbling for the former dairy floor (TP6) and the yard outside (TP's 1, 2 and 5), and mortar bedding for the flooring within the former dairy (**Figure 2**). Two brick-lined post-settings were also recorded within the former dairy and probably relate to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century structure. The depths of these deposits fall within the impact range proposed for the construction methodology therefore any potential underlying archaeological remains would not be impacted. Finally, no finds were collected during the evaluation.

## 7. Archive

7.1 An ordered and integrated site archive has been prepared to comply with guidelines set out in *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal 2001) and *Standards in the Museums Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992) / *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991).

7.2 The project archive is currently held by COAS and consists of the following:

Item	Number	Format
Evaluation trench sheets	7	Paper
Day record sheets	2	Paper
Photographic register	2	Paper
Digital images	58	.JPG

7.3 The paper archive has been scanned as a single file in .PDF format and will form part of the physical Site archive to be deposited with Somerset County Museum.

7.4 Copies of this report will be deposited with the client/agent, with English Heritage and with Somerset Historic Environment Service where it will be included as part of the Somerset Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of the report will also be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service, via OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations - <http://oasis.ac.uk/england/>). The OASIS entry will also be completed to include details of the archive contents.

## 8. COAS acknowledgements

8.1 We would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of this project:

Mel Barge (Inspector, English Heritage)  
 Keiron Dixon (Corbel Conservation Ltd)  
 Rebecca Harrison (partner, Harrison Brooks Architects)  
 Stuart Moore (owner, Court Farm)

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