Archaeological evaluation at 15/15A, Tetbury Street, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire







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Archaeological evaluation at 15/15A, Tetbury Street, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire

Andy Walsh and Nina O'Hare With contributions by Rob Hedge Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 15/15A, Tetbury Street, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire (SO 87271 00661). It was undertaken at the request of Orion Heritage Ltd on behalf of their client, to support and allow determination of a planning application for residential development.

The site lies on sloping ground on the east side of Minchinhampton, just beyond the settlement's historic medieval core. Three trenches were excavated, revealing a retaining wall, post-medieval rubble deposit and small pit. A series of levelling deposits and buried soils attest to several phases of post-medieval re-landscaping within the site. A small assemblage of 13th to 19th century finds, including glazed roof tile fragments, indicative of domestic refuse were recovered from several deposits and are likely to originate from this and adjacent properties, including those fronting Tetbury Street. The site appears to have been used for small scale activities associated with neighbouring households during the post-medieval period, before becoming the current garden.

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 15/15A, Tetbury Street, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire (SO 87271 00661). It was commissioned by Orion Heritage Ltd, to support and allow determination of a planning application to Stroud District Council for residential development.

The proposed development site is considered to include potential heritage assets with archaeological interest, the significance of which may be affected by the application.

The project conforms to a written scheme of investigation prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017) which has been approved by Charles Parry, archaeological advisor to Stroud District Council.

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014).

2 Aims

The aims of the evaluation brief were;

- to describe any heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to assess the nature, importance and extent of any heritage asset;
- to assess the impact of the application on any heritage asset (where the groundworks details are known).

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Andrew Walsh (BSc (hons.); MSc; ACIfA; FSA Scot); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2013 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Nina O'Hare (BA (hons.); PCIfA). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA (hons. Dunelm); MA; ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA) and Robert Hedge (MA Cantab; PCIfA) contributed the finds report.

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken on behalf of Partridge Homes Limited (Orion 2017), which included a search of the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 8 and 9 December 2017. The site reference number used by the Historic Environment Record to record archaeological "events", and site code used in the archive is yet to be assigned. The Worcestershire Archaeology project number used is P5230.

It was originally intended that 20m length of trenching was to be excavated, to cover a total area of 32m^2 , a sample of just under 3.5% of the total site area of c 920m^2 . In the event three trenches, amounting to 19.6m^2 in area, were excavated, representing a sample of just over 2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. The site was severely constrained by mature apple trees, leylandii hedges, and concrete paths which need to be retained. Consequently, the three trenches were excavated in the available areas.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded

according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

The following techniques were considered for use but were not considered to be appropriate for this project; geophysical survey, fieldwalking and topographic/earthwork survey.

3.4 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

3.5 Artefact methodology, by Rob Hedge

3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

3.5.2 Method of analysis

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and www.worcestershireceramics.org).

3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

3.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

Although the constraints on the site meant that just over half of the intended trenching could be excavated, WA are confident that the aims of the project have been met.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The application site lies behind residential housing to the north of Tetbury Street, on the eastern side of Minchinhampton. To the south, west and north the site is bordered by gardens, and to the east lies a rough pasture field. The ground slopes down from the south-east to north-west, although landscaping work associated with the present garden and car park have created several level terraces within the site. Houses to the south, along Tetbury Street, have been cut into the slope, meaning that the site is higher than the road and properties that front onto it.

The British Geological Survey has mapped the underlying site geology as limestone of the Athelstan Oolite Formation, although no superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2017).

A detailed summary of the archaeological context is given in the desk-based assessment (Orion Heritage 2017). No archaeological investigations have previously taken place on the site, although a geophysical survey and intrusive investigation of land immediately to the east revealed a large medieval ditch, thought to be part of a network of earthworks extending north, east and west out of Minchinhampton (GCC 1992; GHER 3493 and GHER 40098).

Two scheduled areas of earthworks exist within the wider landscape, at Glebe Farm (NHLE 1015422) and Minchinhampton Common (NHLE 1010433). It is uncertain whether these monuments date from the prehistoric or medieval period. Little Roman activity is known within the area and the application site is believed to lie just beyond the historic core of Minchinhampton. Cartographic evidence implies that the land remained open and undeveloped during the post-

medieval era. During the 19th and early 20th century the site was planted as an orchard and several small outbuildings were constructed.

4.2 Current land-use

The site is currently a communal garden with a tarmac area for car parking in the south-eastern portion.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was orientated north-west to south-east. It measured 2.6m by 1.6m, and up to 0.82m in depth. A sondage was hand excavated in the western half of the trench in order to expose earlier deposits, as the mechanical excavator was unable to reach these depths due to physical restrictions within the site. The earliest deposit identified was natural limestone (104), encountered at 0.82m below ground level (181.81m AOD) and cut by two possible pits (106 and 108) that yielded no finds but contained limestone rubble (Plate 1). These features continued beyond the limits of excavation, so their full extent was not exposed. However, 106 appeared to be a circular pit c 0.8m in diameter. Both features were sealed by a limestone rubble dump (103), which yielded finds including post-medieval and possibly later medieval pottery, as well as post-medieval glass and bone. The rubble consisted of large, flat pieces of limestone c 0.1-0.2m in length and was concentrated in the north-western corner of the trench, sealed below 0.62m of subsoil (101) and topsoil (100). Both layers 100 and 101 were c 0.30m thick and contained finds of post-medieval date.

5.1.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was orientated north-west to south-east, measuring 5.3m by 1.6m, and 1.3m in depth. The earliest deposit identified was natural limestone (206), encountered at the south-eastern end of the trench at 180.90m AOD. The natural topography of the ground appears to slope from east to west, and retaining wall (205) has been constructed into or against the natural (Plate 2). It was orientated north-east to south-west, at least 0.4m and five courses deep, constructed of small blocks of limestone. To the north-west of the wall the area had been reduced in height and then backfilled with loose limestone (204). A sondage up to 0.4m in depth was excavated through this material, which yielded post-medieval pottery, clay tobacco pipe, tile and bone. No other deposits were identified in the sondage. The area is considered to have been reduced to provide a level surface. The purpose of this was not established but given the location and position in relation to the historic layout of Minchinhampton, it was probably for yards or gardens at the rear of properties to the south or west.

No further excavation was undertaken in Trench 2 due to the depth of the trench and the loose nature of the material. The trench was sealed by a 0.8-1.1m thick sequence of a buried garden soil (203), a stoney levelling layer (202), a subsoil (201) and a dark loam garden topsoil (200) (Plate 3). No finds were recovered from these deposits.

5.1.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was orientated north-east to south-west, measured 4.35m by 1.6m, and was up to 1.0m in depth. The earliest deposit identified was natural limestone (302), which was encountered 0.7m below ground level at the north end of the trench (181.78m AOD) and 1.0m at the south end. Cutting the natural at the north end was a small oval pit (304; Plate 4), which yielded a piece of clay tobacco pipe and bone from the surviving 0.14m of dark sandy silt fill. The trench was sealed

by a buried garden soil that increased in thickness from 0.1-0.4m north to south (305), a subsoil (301) and garden topsoil (300). No finds were recovered from these deposits.

5.2 Artefact analysis, by Rob Hedge

5.2.1 Context summary

Subsoil (101) contained:

- fragments of post-medieval vessel and window glass;
- small, abraded sherds of post-medieval Ashton Keynes-type glazed red/orange earthenware (f90), of 16th to 19th century date;
- sherds of late 18th century creamware (f84) and mid-18th century white salt-glazed stoneware (f81.5);
- a single sherd of 18th century slipware (f91);
- post-medieval clay tobacco pipe stem;
- undiagnostic animal bone.

A terminus post guem (TPQ) date range of 1760-1900 is suggested based on the finds recovered.

Rubble deposit (103) contained:

- animal bone, including a lower left canine from a dog, a cattle phalange, and fragment of bird bone;
- post-medieval vessel glass;
- a single sherd of 16th to 18th century Ashton Keynes-type earthenware;
- two fragments of medieval roof tile: one is a glazed flat tile with sanded base, reduced core, and vesicules indicating dissolved limestone inclusions. The other is a thick curved fragment probably ridge tile with reduced core and no traces of glaze. These are considered likely to be 13th to 15th century in date.

A terminus post quem (TPQ) date range of 1500-1800 is suggested based on the finds recovered.

Rubble fill (204) contained:

- a variety of mammal bone fragments, largely sheep and cattle;
- mollusc: oyster and garden snail;
- fuel ash slag;
- post-medieval clay pipe stem;
- undiagnostic brick fragment;
- two abraded sherds of 17th to 19th century Ashton Keynes-type earthenware;
- a single sherd of late 17th to early 18th century manganese mottled ware;
- a fragment of glazed flat roof tile with oxidised surfaces and a reduced core. Although not closely dateable, this is considered likely to be late medieval or early post-medieval (late 15th to 17th century).

A terminus post quem (TPQ) date range of 1680-1900 is suggested based on the finds recovered.

Fill (303) of pit [304] contained:

- two small undiagnostic fragments of mammal bone;
- a single piece of post-medieval clay tobacco pipe stem.

A terminus post quem (TPQ) date range of 1600-1910 is suggested based on the finds recovered.

6 Synthesis, by Nina O'Hare and Rob Hedge

The rubble dump (103) and small pit (304) identified during the evaluation date to the post-medieval period, although the pit is likely to relate to a more recent phase of activity than the rubble deposit. Both features contained refuse material and are indicative of the small scale activity typically associated with domestic dwellings, such as the construction of outbuildings, small boundaries and light industry. The full extent of the rubble deposit is not known and it is difficult to assess whether the stones were awaiting use or demolition rubble. Given the inclusions of

domestic refuse and roof tile fragments and underlying features (106 and 108), the latter is potentially more plausible.

Whilst the wall has not been directly dated, the rubble deposit backfilled against it has a *terminus post quem*, earliest possible date, of 1680-1900. The wall is likely to have been constructed before this date range, as it must have fallen out of use before being backfilled. The retaining wall is the earliest phase of re-landscaping encountered on the site, with the backfill deposit (204) representing a later extension to or reversal of the terrace created by the wall. After a topsoil deposit had accumulated, or been imported, another layer (202) was deposited on top to level the sloping ground level. In both Trenches 2 and 3 buried garden soils were recorded (203 and 305), indicating further re-landscaping or levelling works, and in Trench 1 the rubble deposit (103) lay directly over natural limestone, suggesting that ground reduction works had taken place and removed all earlier deposits.

Thick accumulations of subsoil and rich loamy topsoil in all three trenches implies that the area was used to grow plants during the later post-medieval period and into the modern era, and may have been regularly improved. Finds from the subsoil in Trench 1 (101) indicate that late post-medieval domestic refuse was deposited on at least the southern portion of the site, presumably from the dwellings fronting Tetbury Street.

The finds assemblage is typical of that expected from the fringes of a medieval settlement, containing a broad range of domestic ceramics, glass, and butchery waste. Although largely post-medieval in date, it contains fragments of medieval building material. The presence of glazed roof tiles indicates a relatively high-status medieval building, although as they occur in mixed deposits of rubble, it is not possible to determine where the source structure was originally located.

No evidence of prehistoric, Roman or early medieval activity was found. No evidence of a bank associated with the medieval ditch revealed in the adjoining eastern field (Orion Heritage 2017) was identified, demonstrating that any potential bank does not extend as far west as Trench 3.

6.1 Research frameworks

The South West Archaeological Research Framework (SWARF 2012) includes Research Aim 36: Improve our understanding of Medieval and later urbanism. Of particular relevance within this research aim is the following point:

d. The transition from Medieval towns to their Post-Medieval and industrial phases needs to be documented and researched (SWARF 2012: 287).

7 Significance

7.1 Nature of the archaeological interest in the site

The application site contains archaeological deposits and features predominately dating from the post-medieval era, with a few residual medieval finds. Features encountered during the evaluation relate to landscaping works, small scale domestic or semi-industrial activities and the potential construction and demolition of structures, most probably outbuildings. Taken together with thick deposits of later sub and topsoils, the site narrative suggests that the area was used by adjacent houses during the post-medieval period for associated activities and later became a garden.

7.2 Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

Whilst individual features are of low importance, the site as a whole has the potential to contribute to Aim 36 of the regional research framework (SWARF 2012: 287) by adding to our understanding of post-medieval Minchinhampton. Despite lying on the fringes of the historic medieval core, the application site is still close enough to the centre to contain evidence from the medieval town, as attested by the recovery of several medieval artefacts. The site is located between the settlement and surrounding agricultural land, offering a relatively rare and locally significant opportunity to investigate this historical boundary zone.

7.3 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

A low density of archaeological features was encountered on the application site. Due to thick topsoil and subsoil layers, in addition to localised levelling deposits, archaeological features were present between c 0.7m and c 1.4m below the current ground level. Both structural and negative, cut features are vulnerable to destruction by the intrusive groundworks and levelling usually associated with construction.

8 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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The site lies on sloping ground on the east side of Minchinhampton, just beyond the settlement's historic medieval core. Three trenches were excavated, revealing a retaining wall, post-medieval rubble deposit and small pit. A series of levelling deposits and buried soils attest to several phases of post-medieval re-landscaping within the site. A small assemblage of 13th to 19th century finds, including glazed roof tile fragments, indicative of domestic refuse were recovered from several deposits and are likely to originate from this and adjacent properties, including those fronting Tetbury Street. The site appears to have been used for small scale activities associated with neighbouring households during the post-medieval period, before becoming the current garden.

9 Acknowledgements

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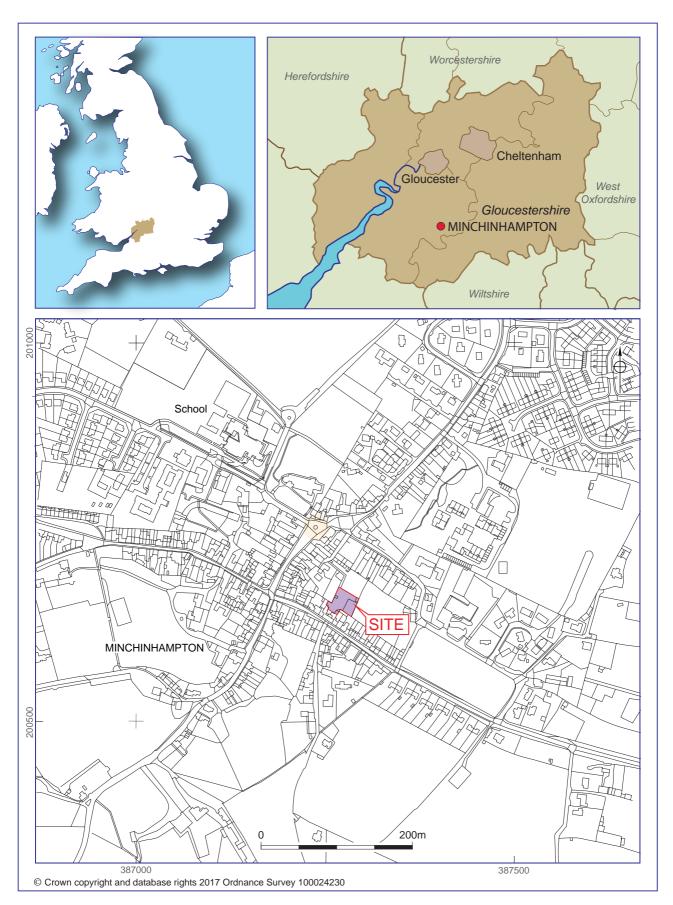
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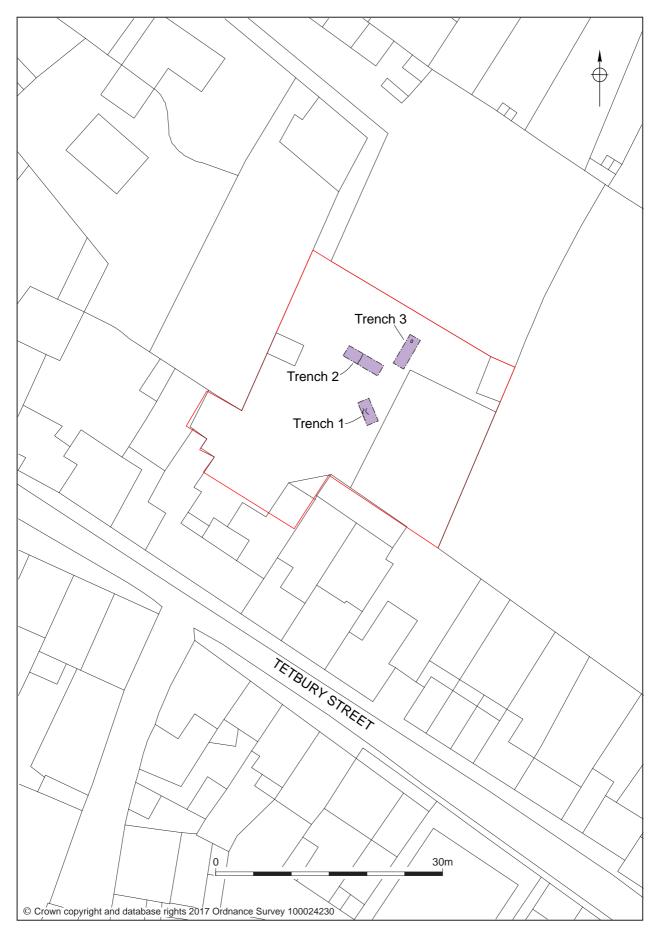
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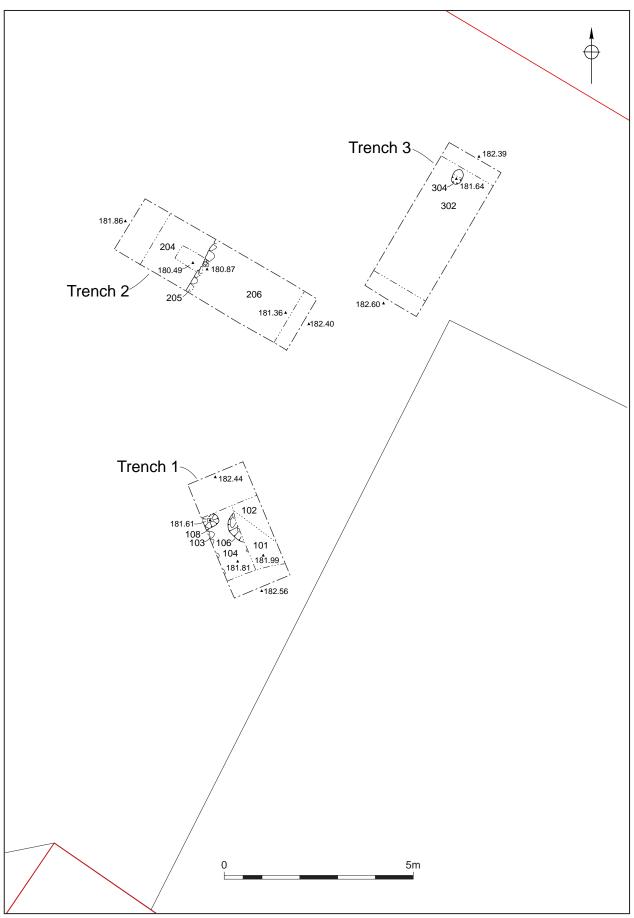
Location of the site

Figure 1



Location of trenches

Figure 2



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Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1, looking north-west. Possible pits 106 and 108, filled with limestone rubble are visible at the far end of the trench. On the right is deposit 102. 1m and 0.4m scales.



Plate 2: Trench 2, looking south-east. Retaining wall 105 is visible in the centre of the trench, with natural limestone beyond, and loose backfilled rubble in the foreground. 1m scales.



Plate 3: Trench 2, looking south-west. Above the backfill deep deposits of soil and rubble were identified. 1m scales.



Plate 4: Trench 3, looking north-east. Pit 304 is visible just beyond the scales. 1m scales.

Appendix 1: Context descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length – 2.6m Width – 1.6m Depth – 0.82m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Loose dark blackish brown silty loam with moderate rooting, charcoal flecks and occasional pottery. Thicker to the southwest.	0 – 0.23m (E section) 0 – 0.32m (W section)
101	Subsoil	Loose dark greyish brown sandy silt loam with frequent rooting, charcoal, occasional pottery, glass, clay pipe and bone. Very rare small pieces of limestone. Thicker to west and possibly cutting (102) as sharp change, perpendicular to garden wall seen – likely to be remains of a border/ vegetable patch where subsoil slightly deeper.	0.23 – 0.38m (E section) 0.32 – 0.62m (W section)
102	Stoney layer	Soft mid orangey brown clayey silt with frequent limestone fragments (<i>c</i> 3-10cm in length) and occasional rooting. Below subsoil, only seen in west facing section.	0.38 – 0.51m
103	Rubble dump	Randomly arranged stones of limestone (<i>c</i> 10-20cm in length) concentrated in northwest corner of trench. Pottery, bone, glas amongst stones. Sits directly on (104).	0.62 – 0.82m
104	Natural	Limestone – only exposed in west half of trench.	0.82m+
105	Fill of pit [106]	Mid greyish brown clay silt with charcoal flecks, no finds.	0.82m+
106	Cut of pit	Cut of possible pit on edge of sondage, under rubble (103) – 0.2 by 0.8m exposed.	0.82m+
107	Fill of pit [108]	Mid greyish brown clay silt with charcoal flecks, no finds but limestone fragments.	0.82m+
108	Cut of pit	Cut of possible small feature under (103) in north-west corner of trench – 0.2 by 0.4m exposed.	0.82m+

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length -5.3m Width -1.6m Depth -1.0 - 1.4m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Dark greyish black sandy silt loam.	0 – 0.3m
201	Subsoil	Dark greyish brown sandy silt.	0.3 – 0.5m
202	Levelling layer	Light slightly orangey brown limestone rubble in a slightly sandy silt matrix.	0.5 – 0.95m (W end)
203	Buried garden soil	Mid grey brown sand silt with occasional limestone and charcoal.	0.5 – 0.8m (E end) 0.9 – 1.1m (W end)
204	Rubble fill	Light grey brown limestone rubble in a loose sandy silt matrix – in/ backfill up to the top of wall 205. At least 0.4m deep but not fully excavated due to constraints, yielded post-medieval finds.	1.0 – 1.4m+
205	Retaining wall	Dry stone wall of roughly hewn limestone, constructed into natural (206) on N-S alignment. No dating evidence from the wall itself.	1.0 – 1.4m+
206	Natural	Limestone brash.	0.8m+

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length -4.35m Width -1.6m Depth -0.7 - 1.0m

Orientation: NE-SW

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil	Dark grey black sandy silt loam.	0 – 0.35m
301	Subsoil	Mid yellowish brown sandy silt.	0.35 – 0.60m
302	Natural	Limestone brash, no clay.	0.7 – 0.1m+ (N-S)
303	Fill of pit [304]	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal, small fragments of natural limestone and a clay pipe stem.	0.7 – 0.84m
304	Cut of pit	Cut of small pit at north end of trench, filled by (304). Sub-oval, 0.31m in width, 0.4m in length, 0.14m deep.	0.7m – 0.84m
305	Buried topsoil	Mid grey black sandy silt.	0.60 - 0.70m (N end) 0.60 - 1.0m (S end)

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 3 Context records AS1
- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 84 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 4 Scale drawings
- 3 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Museum in the Park,

Stratford Park,

Stratford Road,

Stroud,

Gloucestershire,

GL5 4AF

A copy of the report will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) as appropriate.