



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**THE FIRST STAGE OF
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT HAM COURT, BAMPTON
OXFORDSHIRE
NGR SP 31000 03070**

*On behalf of
CgMs Consulting*

JULY 2011

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the first stage of archaeological evaluation on land at Ham Court, Bampton. Evidence for the late medieval moat which is believed to surround the house was found on the south side of the property. No dating material was recovered. Cut into the top of the moat was a 19th-century boundary ditch. South of the late medieval moat, an earlier possibly prehistoric ditch was investigated.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site location (Figure 1)

The proposed development site is located at Ham Court, Bampton (NGR 431000, 203070) (Fig. 1). The surface geology is River Gravel Second Terrace Deposits, overlying Oxford Clay, with some alluvial deposits present in the area.

1.2 Planning Background

A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was produced by John Moore Heritage Services and CgMs Consulting to specify the nature of the first stage of archaeological investigations to be carried out to compliment the planning application submitted relating to the redevelopment at Ham Court, Bampton. The specific research issues relating to this site have been discussed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (OCAS), who have agreed that a trial trenched evaluation would be an appropriate means with which to address these questions. This was submitted by CgMs Consulting and approved by the County Archaeological Service. The *Written Scheme of Investigation* proposed the methodology by which the archaeological evaluation was to be carried out by John Moore Heritage Services to the satisfaction of OCAS. This stage of works relates specifically to the South Moat and Long Barn area of the site.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site has been the subject of a Desk Based Assessment (Pugh 2011), the results of which are summarised below:

The assessment has established that there are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Historic Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields on or adjacent to the study site. Ham Court is a Grade II* listed building.

The desk-based assessment has established that a high status building later known as Bampton Castle occupied the study site from at least 13th century, with Ham Court providing the only extant evidence for the structure. There is potential for further remains of the castle to survive below ground within the study site. The Lady Well, an enclosed structure, may also survive in the northwest corner of the study site. There is also potential for earlier remains from the prehistoric period onwards.

The above is taken from the *Written Scheme of Investigation*.

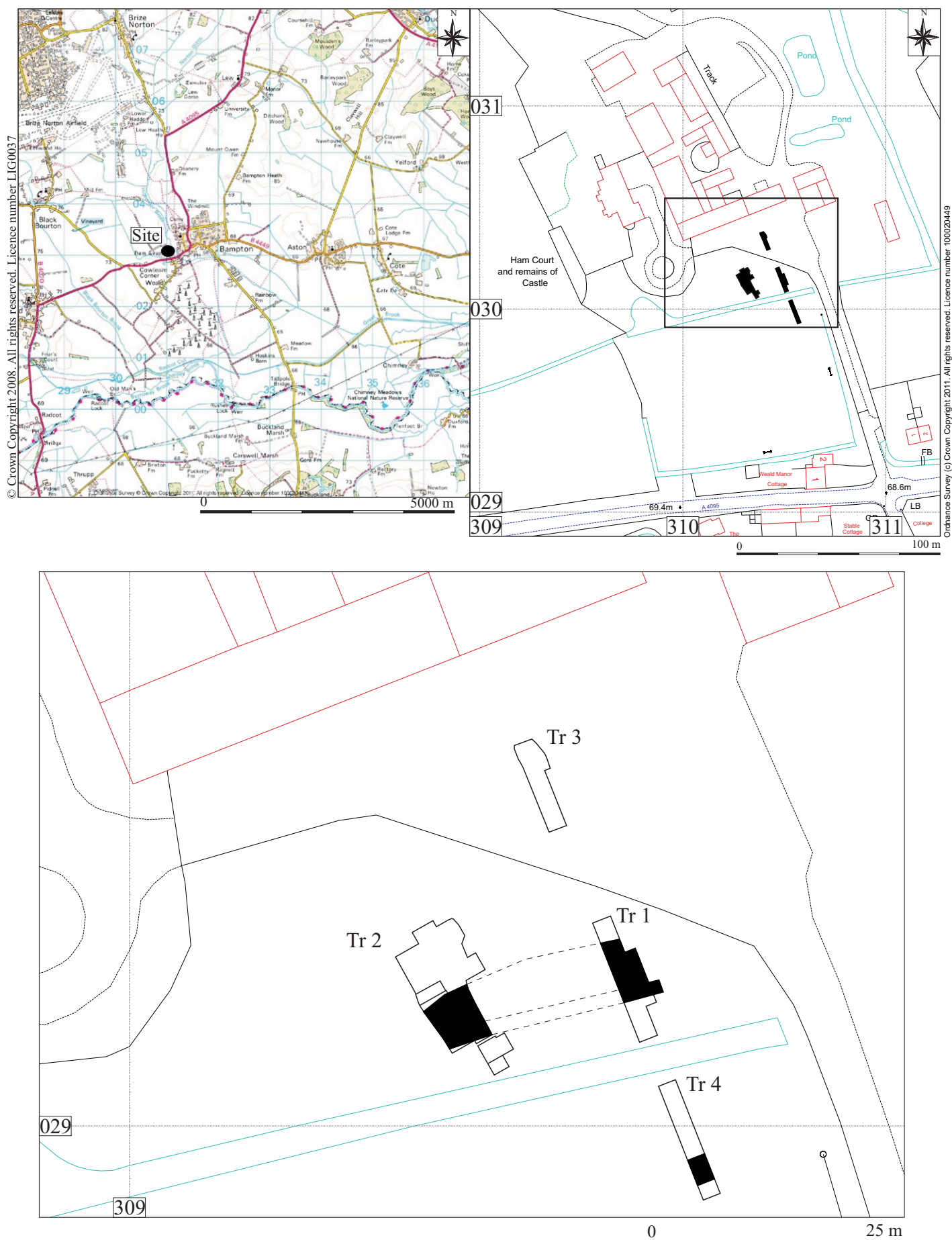


Figure 1. Site and Trench Location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.

In particular

- o To establish whether the moat is present in this area.
- o To establish whether features related to the medieval settlement survive in this area

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to instructions issued by CgMs Consulting in consultation with OCAS, JMHS carried out the work, which comprised the excavation of four trenches within the proposal area (Fig. 1). Originally, three trenches were proposed by CgMs Consulting, but due to site constraints excavation of a fourth was necessary.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *WSI* prepared by CgMs Consulting and JMHS agreed with OCAS.

3.2 Methodology

The investigation involved the mechanical excavation of four trenches of various lengths. Originally, two trenches measuring 30m each were proposed, but due to constraints on site – namely services – it was not possible to excavate two such trenches. The trenches were a minimum of 1.8m at the base, excavated by a 13-tonne excavator equipped with a ditching bucket, supplemented by hand investigation of the revealed deposits. This comprised a total of 40.5m of trenching, although Trenches 1 and 2 were significantly widened to further investigate deposits.

Site procedures carried out followed IfA guidelines. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results (Figures 2-3)

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. All context numbers are preceded by trench number and /. Details of individual trenches are in Appendix 1 – the context inventory – at the rear of report.

Trench 1 (Figures 2 & 3)

Trench 1 measured 12.5m in length, with a *c.* 1m × 6m extension on the east side to further investigate the moat. The trench was excavated onto Oxford Clay (1/10) at the south end of the trench and Second Terrace Gravel (1/11) at the north end of the trench, which overlay the clay.

Cut into the Oxford Clay was the moat cut 1/06 which was at least 9.5m wide; the southern edge was not found as this was probably beyond the southern edge of the evaluation trench. The southern edge of the evaluation trench was left high during machining in order to create a balk between the trench and the present stream. The moat was filled with compact black clay with organic material through it (1/09). No finds were recovered from the fill of the moat.

Cut into the top of the moat was the ditch 1/08, filled with compact black clay (1/07), containing 18th century or later brick and a 19th century stoneware inkpot, with a dump of sand (1/05) in the top. This was sealed by a sequence of dumps of mixed materials – a friable mid brown silt loam with 10% small stone (1/04); this was overlain by a compacted dump of limestone pieces in an off-white silt and sand matrix (1/03); the dump of limestone (1/03) was sealed by moderately compact yellow brown silty sand with brick, concrete, heavy-duty plastic bags, baling twine and other farm materials (1/02). The dumps of material (1/04), (1/03) and (1/02) all tipped from north to south. These were in turn sealed by the topsoil (1/01).

Trench 2 (Figures 2 & 3)

Trench 2 measured 16m in length, with a *c.* 2.5m × 11m extension on the west side to further investigate the moat and 1.5-2m × 6m extension on the east side to clarify masonry, which proved to be a french drain on the east side of the trench. The trench was excavated onto Oxford Clay (2/10) at the south end of the trench and Second Terrace Gravel (2/08) at the north end of the trench, which overlay the clay.

Cut into the Oxford Clay (2/10) was the moat cut 2/07 which was at least 8m wide; the southern edge was not found as this was probably beyond the southern edge of the evaluation trench as in Trench 1. The southern edge of the evaluation trench was left high during machining in order to create a balk between the trench and the present stream. The moat was filled with compact black clay with organic material through it (2/06). No finds were recovered from the fill of the moat.

To the east, cut into the top of the Oxford Clay (2/10) was the french drain 2/05 and associated masonry structure. The drain measured more than 4.7m long and was 0.4m wide. It comprised pieces of limestone pitched on end to form an inverted V, through which water trickled; at the southern end of the drain was an unbonded stone

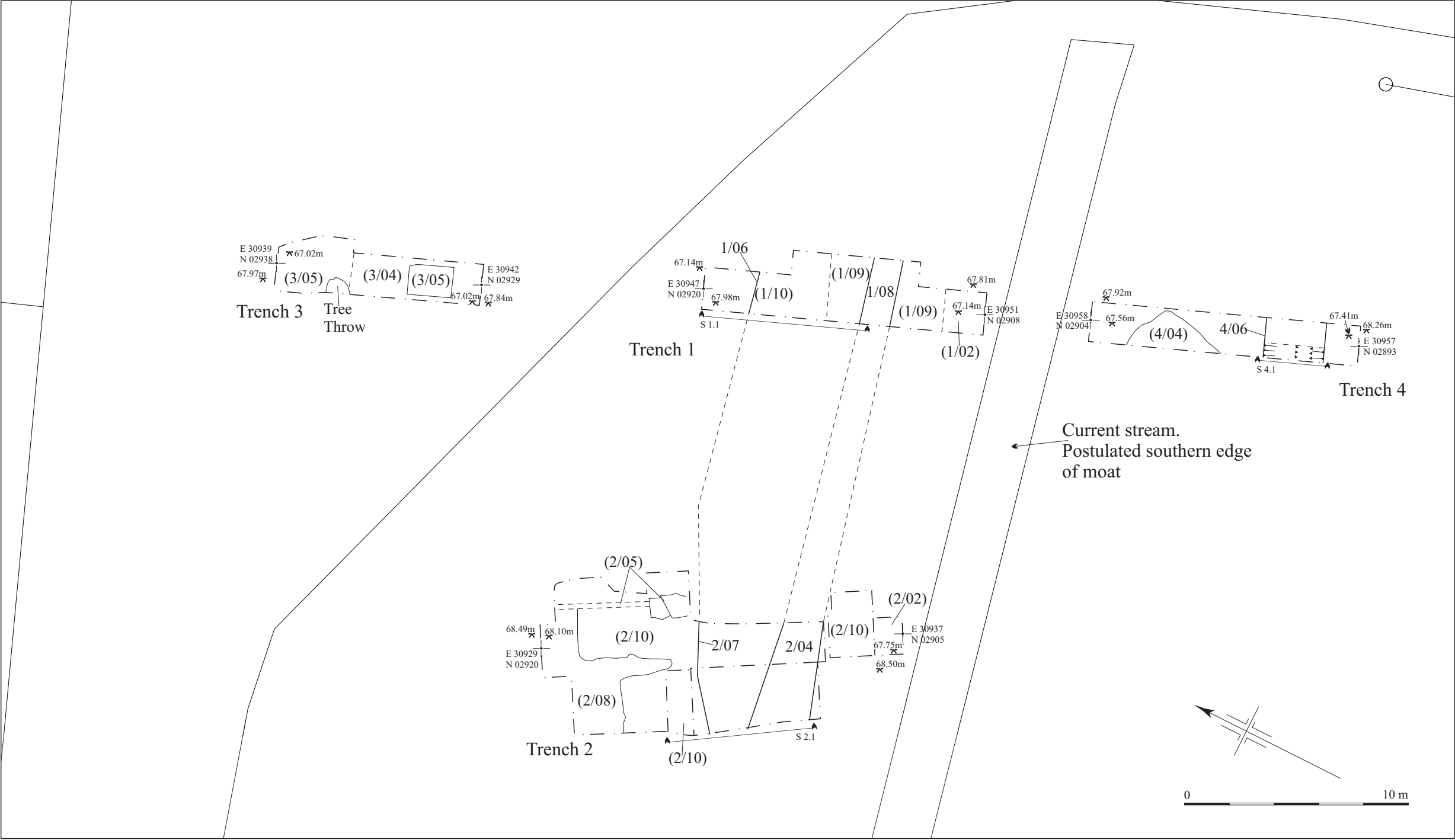


Figure 2. Trenches 1-4 plan

structure comprising two flat pieces of limestone $c 0.5\text{m} \times 0.5\text{m} \times 0.2\text{m}$ on stone packing. The mouth of the drain was not opened up to investigate within as water appeared to be running through it. This mouth appeared to have been located at the historic edge of the moat 2/07 and may well be contemporary with it.

Cut into the top of the moat was the ditch 2/04, filled with compact black clay (2/09), containing a range of 19th or early 20th-century whitewares and a broken, modern bottle, with a dump of sand (2/03), containing slate, in the top. This was sealed by a dump of loose mid brown silt sand with 10% small stone (2/02). This was in turn sealed by the topsoil (2/01).

Trench 3 (Figure 2)

Trench 3 measured 9m in length, with a berm approximately 4m from the south end where a tree stump was located. The trench was excavated onto Oxford Clay (3/04) at the north end of the trench with some remnant Second Terrace Gravel (3/05) at the south end of the trench, which overlay the clay.

Above the natural clay (3/04) and gravel (3/05) was a dump of mixed building materials in silty sand matrix (3/03) with brick and stone (3/02) grading into small gravel (3/01).

Trench 4 (Figures 2 & 3)

Trench 4 measured 12m in length. The trench was excavated onto Second Terrace Gravel (4/03), although Oxford Clay (4/07) was observed in the base of the ditch cut 4/06. Soft pale blue clay silt (4/04), representing alluvium which had pooled in the top of the gravel (4/03) was visible at the north end of the trench. Some burnt flint was recovered from the surface of the alluvium (4/04).

Cut through the gravel (4/03) was the ditch 4/06, which was oriented east/west parallel with the present stream – located to the north – and measured 2.75m wide and a maximum of 0.7m deep. It was filled with compact gravelly yellow brown clay which became darker and siltier (4/05) toward the base of the ditch. Sealing the ditch 4/6 was a layer of possibly alluvially derived gravelly clay silt (4/02), which was 0.6m thick. Sealing this was topsoil (4/01).

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The archaeological evaluation took place in clement conditions. Hugh Coddington, of OCAS, the County Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, monitored the work.

5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

5.1 Pottery by Gwilym Williams

The retained pottery assemblage comprised 7 sherds and a vessel with a total weight of 198 g. This assemblage consists of 19th Century domestic ceramic food related types. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

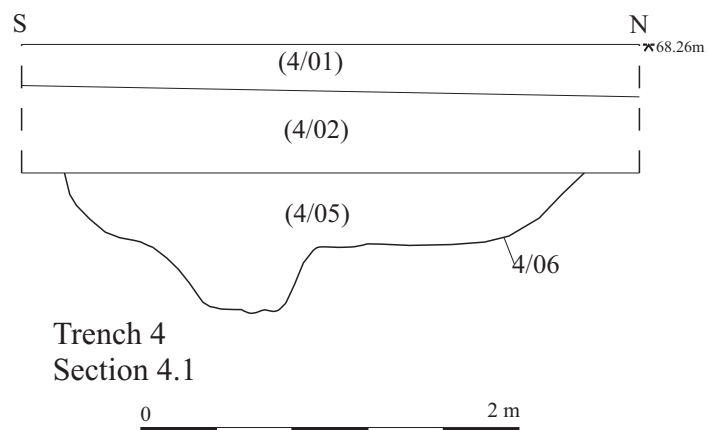
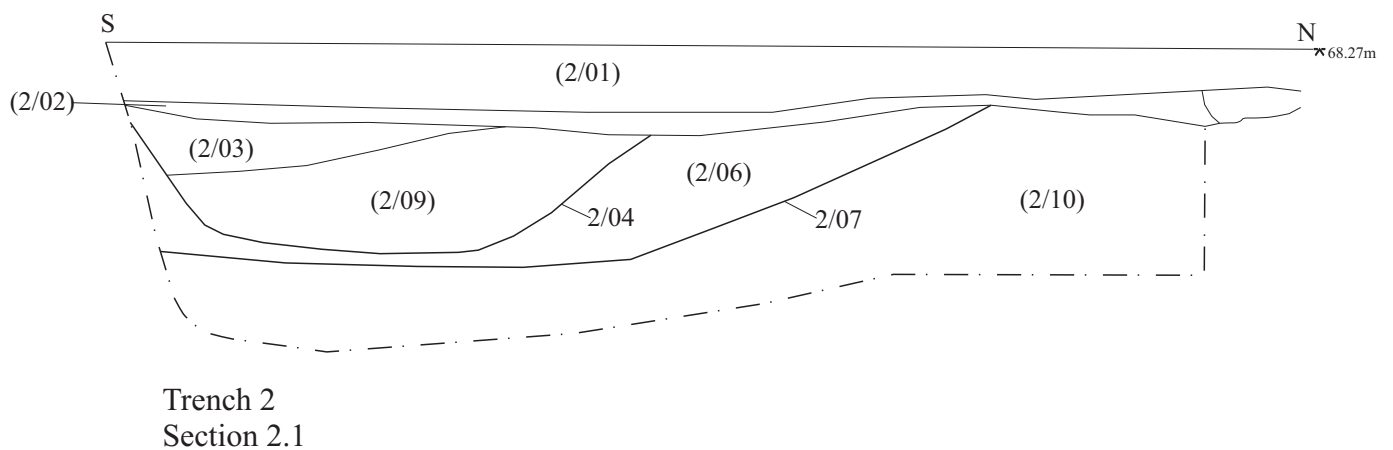
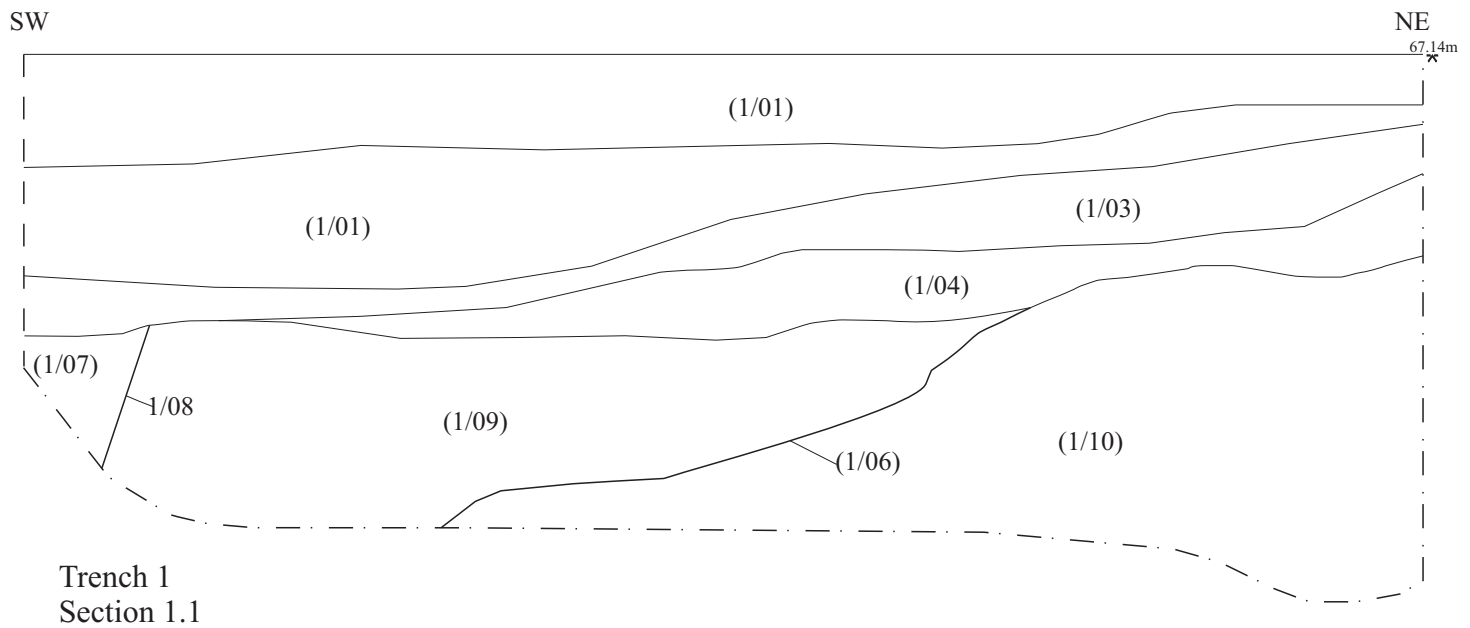


Figure 3. Sections

Fill (1/07) contained a near complete stoneware inkpot 123g. This consists of a grey fabric, with a brown glaze coating the exterior of the vessel. The vessel dates from the 19th century.

Fill (2/09) contained a single sherd of willow pattern transfer ware (10 g), three sherds of plain whiteware (11 g), and three sherds of a salt-glazed jar (57 g). The sherd of willow pattern transfer ware sherd dates to the 19th or 20th century AD.

The pottery sherds post-date most of the fabric types identifiable throughout the region (Mellor 1994, 17).

Cntxt	No	Wt	Pottery type number	Date
(1/07)	1	120	None	19 th C
(2/09)	7	78	WHEW	19 th C
Total	8	198		

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context

5.2 Brick by Gwilym Williams

A fragment of brick, weighing 1 433 g, was recovered from layer (1/07) in ditch 1/08. It was a partial brick measuring 125mm × 52mm; length unknown. The fabric was bright orange and well-fired. There was no frog and the surface was wiped smooth. There was mortar adhering to one end. The brick was made after the late 18th century.

5.3 Glass bottle by Gwilym Williams

Three fragments of a glass bottle, weighing 390 g, were recovered from (2/09), fill of the ditch 2/04. The bottle was machine made and is late 19th century or later.

5.4 Roofing slate by Gwilym Williams

A fragment of Welsh roof slate weighing 22 g was recovered from (2/03), fill of ditch 2/04. A small amount of mortar is adhering to it. Welsh date usually post-dates the 1830s

5.5 Burnt flint by Gwilym Williams

Four fragments of a burnt flint weighing 129 g were recovered from the alluvial surface (4/04) in Trench 4.

5.6 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken as the potential of the deposits was not felt to be sufficient to warrant sampling.

6 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

The first stage of the evaluation carried out at Ham Court, Bampton revealed good evidence for the existence of the moat associated with Bampton Castle, and showed that within the area examined it was probably no more than 12m-15m wide. No dating evidence was recovered from the moat. On the north side of the moat was a drain constructed from limestone pieces pitched to form an inverted V, which ran into

what appeared to be the capped mouth opening onto the moat. No dating was recovered from this feature.

The moat was subsequently recut in the 19th century as a field boundary. Such late silting up of this ditch was evidenced by the brick, slate, pottery and glass recovered from the ditch fill. The ditch was more recently covered with a sequence of dumps of rubble. Whether this was earlier or later than the recutting of the ditch as the present stream is unknown. This ditch is in line with ditch shown on the various OS maps since 1876, although the edition illustrated is from 1921 for clarity (Fig. 4).

An undated ditch was located in the field south of the present stream. This appeared to run parallel with the stream and the moat, although no dating was recovered from it. Unlike the ditches to the north which were very dark, frequently black in colour and obviously with a very high organic component, the ditch in Trench 4 was leached and quite clay, which may well indicate a greater antiquity than those to the north.

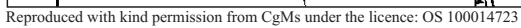
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1921 Ordnance Survey

Figure 4. Historic mapping

Appendix 1: Archaeological Context Inventory

Context	Type	Description	L (m)	B (m)	D(m)	Finds	Date	Interpretation	
Trench 1									
	(1/01)	Layer	Friable, loose, light brown, silt, 40% small stone	>12.6	>1..8	>0.20		Modern	Topsoil
	(1/02)	Layer	Moderate yellow brown slightly silty sand Limestone	>12.6	>1.8	>0.30		Modern	Make-up layer
	(1/03)	Layer	Compact, Cream limestone layer, with silt and sand 80%	>6.0	>1.8	>0.20		Modern	Make-up layer
	(1/04)	Layer	Friable, mid brown silt small pebbles 10%	>2.0	>2.0	>0.20		Modern	Make-up layer
	(1/05)	Fill	Compact Yellow sand	>3.4	>2.1	>0.50		Unk.	Fill of ditch
	1/06	Cut	Unknown shape in plan straight sides flat bottomed	>Unk	12-15	>0.50		Unk.	Moat cut
	(1/07)	Fill	Compact, black clay	>5.0	>1.8	>0.19	Y	19 th C	Fill of ditch
	1/08	Cut	Linear cut, shape in plan straight side <i>c.</i> 75°	>2.1	<i>c.</i> 3.0	0.19		19 th C	Cut of ditch
	(1/09)	Fill	Compact dense clay with organic material	>7.0	>3.0	0.70		Unk.	Fill of moat
	(1/10)	Layer	Very compact pale blue clay	>12.6	>2.0	Unk.		Natural	Oxford Clay
	(1/11)	Layer	Yellow brown gravel sand layer stone 60-90%	>12.6	>2.0	>0.40		Natural	Second Terrace Gravel
Trench 2									
	(2/01)	Layer	Friable mid brown silty sand with organic material	>15.9	>7.4	<i>c.</i> 0.20		Modern	Topsoil
	(2/02)	Layer	Loose mid brown silty sand small stones 70%	>15.9	>7.4	>0.80.		Modern	Make-up layer
	(2/03)	Fill	Moderate yellow sand with small stones 60-70%	>2.0	>1.8	>0.12	Y	19 th C	Fill of ditch
	2/04	Cut	Square cut curved corners shallow and concave sides	>3.0	>3.0	>0.12		19 th C	Cut of ditch
	2/05	Masonry	Limestone rocks, rough finish linear form unknown face	>.0.33	0.18	Unk		Unk.	French Drain
	(2/06)	Layer	Compact, dark grey clay with small stones 30%	>15.9	>7.4	>2.5		Unk.	Fill of moat
	2/07	Cut	Not fully revealed, rounded corners	>Unk	12-15	>2.5		Unk.	Cut of moat
	(2/08)	Layer	Compact yellow sand silt with stone and pebbles 80%	>15.9	>1.8	>0.40		Natural	Second Terrace Gravel
	(2/09)	Fill	Moderate mid yellow brown sand silt clay	>2.0	>1.5	>0.70		19 th C	Fill of cut 2/04
	(2/10)	Layer	Very compact pale blue clay	>15.9	>1.8	Unk.		Natural	Oxford Clay
Trench 3									
	(3/01)	Layer	Compact cream gravel layer stone 90%-100%	>10.8	>2.0	<i>c.</i> 0.30		Modern	Yard surface
	(3/02)	Layer	Compact red –brown brick and gravel layer with silt	>10.8	>2.0	>0.17.		Modern	Make-up
	(3/03)	Layer	Loose-moderate dry mid brown silt clay with small stone 10%	>10.8	>2.0	>0.17		Modern	Make-up
	(3/04)	Layer	Compact dense grey clay silt with organic material	>10.8	>2.0	>0.80		Unk.	Oxford Clay
	(3/05)	Layer	Firm yellow silt sand small stones 30%	>10.8	>2.0	>0.5		Natural	Second Terrace Gravel

Trench 4									
	(4/01)	Layer	Dark brown clay humus c.5% and gravel	>12.0	>2.0	<0.15		Modern	Topsoil
	(4/02)	Layer	Moderate dark yellow grey brown gravel c25% clay silt	>1.5	>2.0	<0.60		Modern	Subsoil
	(4/03)	Layer	Moderate bright yellow gravel and sand over laying oxford clay	>6.3	>2.0	<0.50		Natural	Second terrace gravel
	(4/04)	Layer	Soft pale blue slightly clay silt	>4.4	>2.0	>1.7	Y	Unk.	Alluvium
	(4/05)	Fill	Compact gravely yellow grey brown clay/slightly silty clay becoming darker and more silty to base of fill	1.8	c 3.0	>0.55		Unk.	Fill of ditch
	[4/06]	Cut	Linear sharp at top stepped and gentle to flat 45° base	>1.8	c 3.0	>0.55		Unk.	Cut of field boundary
	(4/07)	Layer	Compact dense grey clay	>12.0	>2.0			Natural	Oxford Clay