

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**SAINT THOMAS OF CANTERBURY PARISH CHURCH,**

**MANOR ROAD,**

**GORING, OXFORDSHIRE**

**NGR SU 59765 80715**

*On behalf of Saint Thomas of Canterbury Parish Church  
c/o Brian Loveridge*

**SEPTEMBER 2011**

**REPORT FOR** Saint Thomas of Canterbury Parish Church  
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services conducted an evaluation prior to the installation of lighting in the churchyard of Saint Thomas of Canterbury's Church, Manor Road, Goring on Thames, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 59765 80715). The cable runs failed to penetrate the topsoil in many places and where it did it extended into a layer interpreted as the remains of graveyard soils. Only in three of the very narrow sondages sunk for the erection of the lamp posts was any significant archaeology found, one a burnt deposit, the other a wall of the priory and the latter a significant rubble scatter. These deposits relate to activity on the former priory site.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The development site is located at Saint Thomas of Canterbury's Church, Goring on Thames, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 59765 80715). The site lies between 40-45m OD. The underlying geology is alluvium overlying gravel terrace. Excavations on the site of Mill Cottage adjacent to the churchyard identified the natural deposits 1.45-1.55m below the surface (Moore 2001).

### **1.2 Planning Background**

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the erection of lighting in the churchyard of Saint Thomas of Canterbury's, Goring on Thames (ref. P11/W0253). Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area a condition was attached to the permission requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of building operations or construction works on the site. This was in line with PPS 5 (the planning policy current at the time) and other Local Plan policies.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Prehistoric activity has been noted in the Goring area in the vicinity of Gatehampton Farm (HER PRN 15019.01), and prehistoric lithic scatters (HER PRN 15551). The remains of a Bronze Age cemetery has also been recognised at Gatehampton Farm (HER PRN 15019.03). There are an undated enclosure, field system, and pits near Grove Farm (HER PRN 8609), and a small prehistoric circular enclosure at Gore Farm (HER PRN 10963), besides an undated penannular enclosure (HER PRN 8617). Many of these features have been identified at Gatehampton Farm where there was a multi-period ritual and settlement site (Allen 1995; HER PRN 15019).

Roman activity has also been noted in the Goring area, for example a Romano-British farmstead at Gatehampton Manor (HER PRN 12468), a Roman enclosure at Friarhampstead Wood (HER PRN 2044), and a Roman villa at Gatehampton Farm (Allen 1995; HER PRN 15019.04).

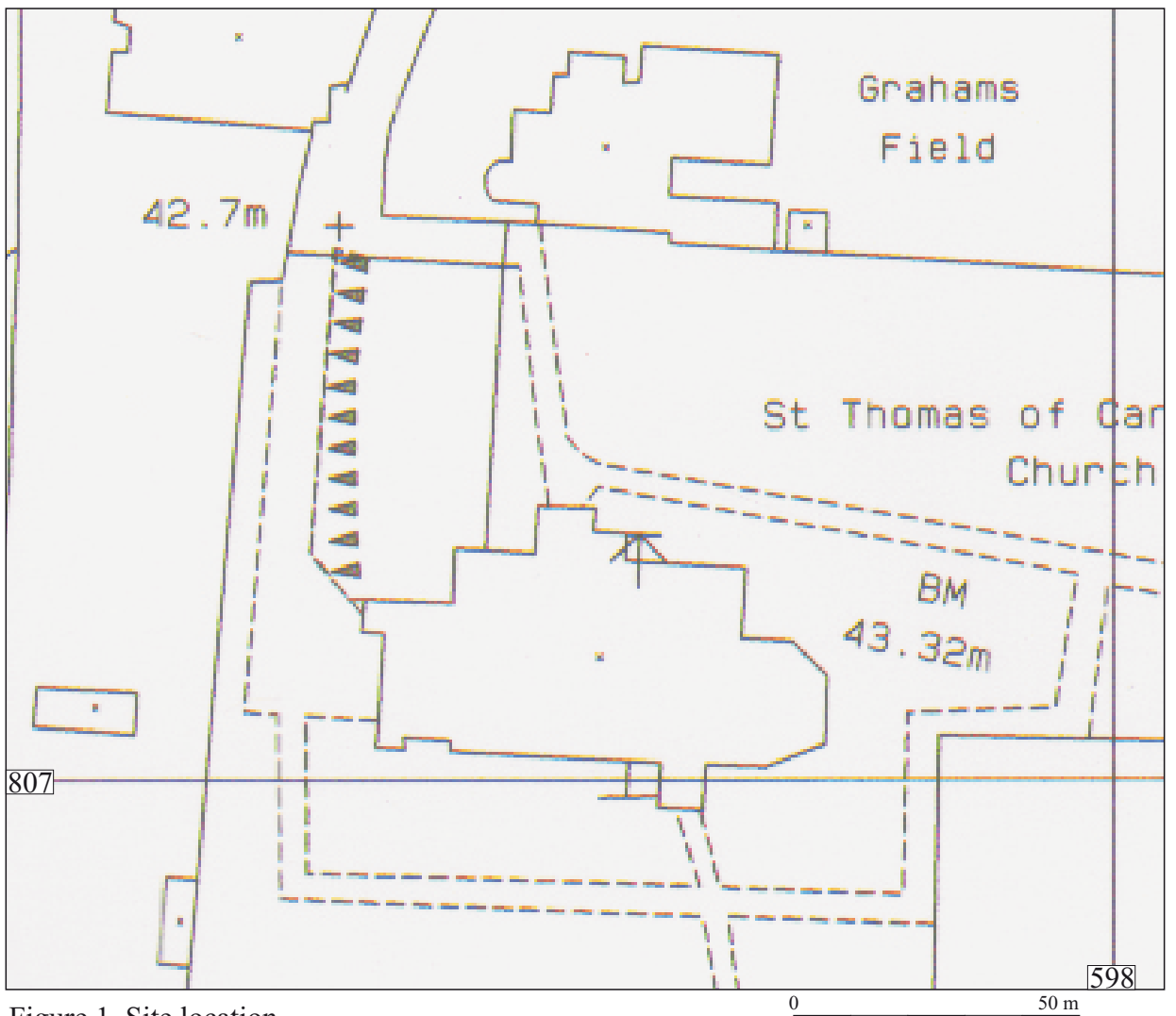
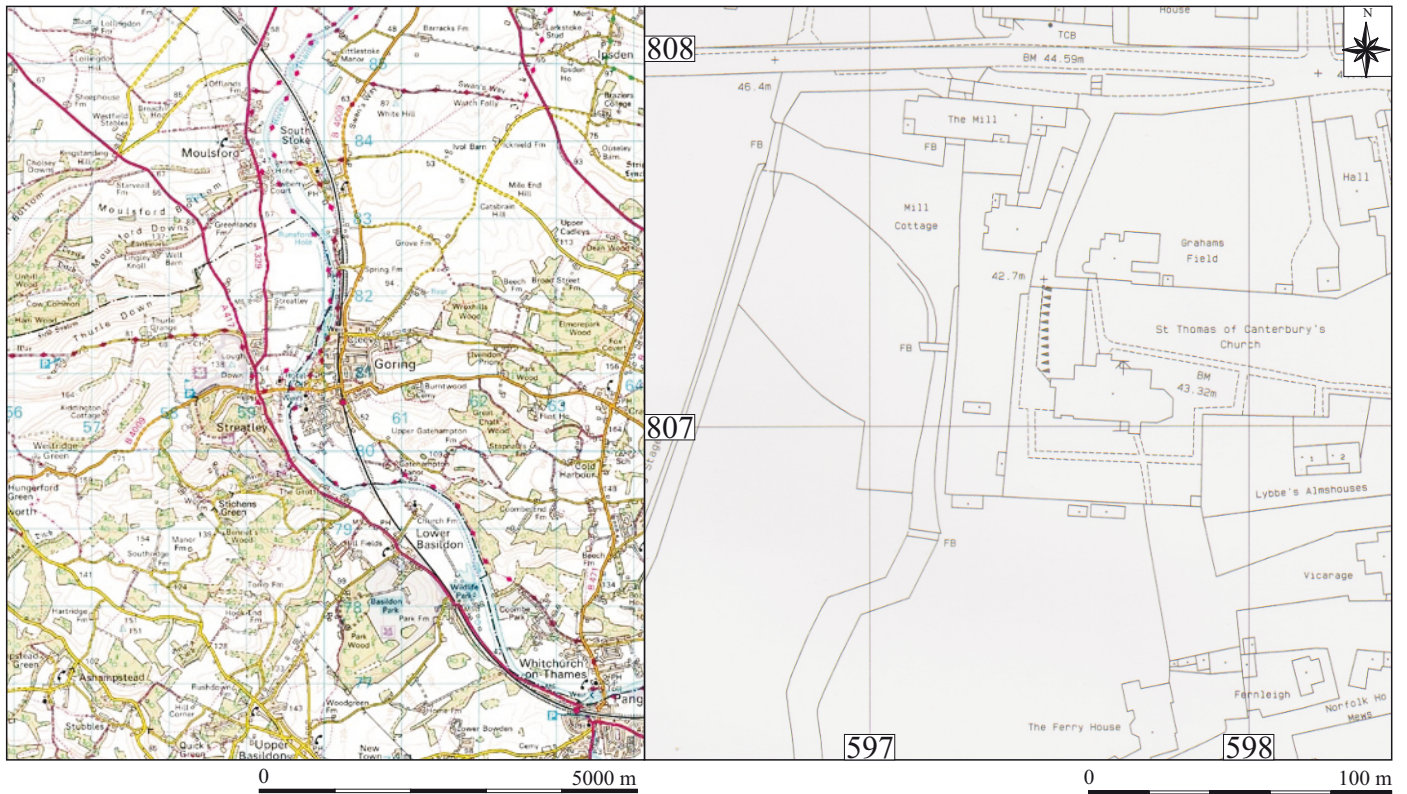


Figure 1. Site location

The place name Goring is first recorded in 1086 as Garinges. It is similar to a name recorded in Sussex and has the etymology of *the people of \*Gāra* (Gelling 1953, 51). The inga component clearly identifies this as a folk-name but the first part is obscure. Gelling dismisses Old English *gāra* as topographically inappropriate; it is likely that the name is derived from a Brittonic stream or hill name Garw.

The estate of Goring in 1086 covered an area of 20 hides (Morris 1978, 20.2). There were 21 villagers and 2 smallholders along with a mill, woodland of 5 furlongs. In 1066 Wigot held the manor of Goring. No church is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

Thomas de Druval in the reign of Henry I (1100-35) established a priory of Austin nuns at Goring (VCH 1902, 103-4), with the church being dedicated to Saint Mary. Confirmation of the grant was confirmed 1181 and it was at this time that it is apparent that the church was granted with a carucate of land at Goring. This last piece of information is indicative of the church having an earlier origin. Gifts to the church at various times included land at Crowmarsh, a hide at Nuffield, a further hide at Foxcott, and two hides at Stoke, plus a hide at Sulham. The priory was also awarded the church at Nettlestead (Kent), Hampstead Norreys (Berks), Stanton (Bucks) and Moulsoe (Bucks) besides a mill at Streatley. Bishop Hugh de Wells had allowed the priory to appropriate the churches of Goring, Crowmarsh, Nuffield, and Stantonbury in c. 1220. By 1535 the church of Hampstead Norreys had also been appropriated. The ties of land with Goring, Crowmarsh, Nuffield and Stoke are indicative of the priory being located on or taking over from a mother church in the area. In 1291 the priory had portions from the church at Moulsoe (Bucks) and Theale Chapel (Berks), the latter of which was probably associated with a hide of land in Sulham.

Even though the priory appeared to have a number of holdings the income from some of these were relatively small (VCH 1902, 103-4) and it seems to be the case that some of these estates had little associated wealth. The suggestion has been made that family members maintained some of the nuns through contributions.

Medieval archaeological features recognised in the area include the site of the medieval priory (HER PRN 2321), and the parish church (HER PRN 5998) that occupied the same structure. This building contains a nave, north aisle, chancel, apse and west tower all of a 12<sup>th</sup> century date and using Norman architectural style. The apse is 1887 and by Ben Corser of Birmingham. The remains of two burials were uncovered in the grounds of Goring Mill (HER PRN 16762), presumably medieval; indicating that the burials of the churchyard once extended further away from the property. Percy G Stone, a local resident, carried out excavations on the Priory during 1892-3. His report shows that he revealed foundations of almost the whole extent of the Priory complex. His plan is very comprehensive, showing only a few areas that he was unable to investigate. Stone found what he believed to be the hospitium range within the grounds of Mill Cottage (HER PRN 16418).

*'The most interesting find was perhaps the walls of the buildings to the west of the church. These were extensive, and probably comprised the lodgings of the Prioress, the workrooms of the nuns and novices, the guest chambers, and dining hall.'*

This area of Mill Cottage garden and the small area directly opposite on the west side of the Millstream were examined by Ground Probing Radar Survey (Moore 2001).

The survey confirmed that substantial remains of wall foundations survived within the area east of the Millstream. The walls traced were up to 2m in width and correspond closely to Stone's plan.

The smaller area west of the Millstream revealed deposits sloping westward away from the millstream, and possible diffractions from large cobbles or possible destruction rubble (Moore 2001). The main feature identified was thought to be an old infilled channel or hollow way. The feature could also have been a man-made cess/drainage channel from the *necessaria* of the Priory *hospitium*. The evaluation did not find evidence for the possible channel to the north of the ground probing survey area. However the evaluation did find evidence for medieval rubbish disposal within alluvial deposits.

A watching brief was carried out during the digging of foundations for a new build on the south side of the church and also the replacement of the flooring (HER PRN5998). Externally part of a wall foundation was discovered that belonged to the medieval priory, along with four inhumations considered to be medieval. The examination of drainage channels along the south wall and west porch failed to find features, but recovered 16<sup>th</sup> century material from the grave material. A watching brief in 2008 found only post-medieval deposits. A Desk-Based Assessment in 2008 considered that it was unlikely that features of prehistoric, Roman or early medieval would survive on the site due to the considerable disturbance from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Topographically it is apparent that the church of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, along with Mill Cottage, Grahams Fields, the Hall, the Rectory Garden, the Old Vicarage and the Lybbe's Almshouses lie in a D-shape area, of which roads and party boundaries may mark an earlier enclosure.

Outside of Goring there is evidence of a deserted medieval village at Gatehampton (HER PRN 1941).

The historic centre of Goring contains a concentration of 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings of which the nearest to the site is Goring Mill (HER PRN 14256), an 18<sup>th</sup> century building with 19<sup>th</sup> century alterations.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To record any evidence relating to any priory structures.
- To record any burials relating to the church.

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire Archaeological Services (*OAS*) the archaeological advisors to South Oxfordshire District Council. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

Due to the known presence of archaeological remains, including burials, on the site it was considered necessary to carry out an archaeological watching brief as the contractors disturbed the ground.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was to be produced if appropriate.

### **4 RESULTS (Figure 2)**

The natural was not reached across the site, but some archaeological remains were identified at certain locations across the site.

The sondages excavated for the lampposts were the only places where earlier archaeology was noted.

#### **4.1 Phase 1: Medieval**

The earliest recognised feature was a wall of the medieval priory 8/02. This feature was located on the south side of the church and the modern build in Post 8 (Figs. 1 & 2). The wall was constructed of chalk blocks roughly squared measuring approximately 0.2m x 0.15m x 0.1m. This was the remains of a foundation wall in which the mortar had decayed, and so the wall survived as a series of tightly packed stones. In the upper surface of this wall the remains of Brill Boarstall ware were recovered, either from the wall itself or an indistinct and narrow destruction layer above it. The pottery was dated to the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. The direction in which the wall ran, its depth and width, and even the nature of the cut were not ascertained.

#### **4.2 Phase 2: Medieval to early Post-medieval**

Sondages for Posts 1 and 7 identified the remains of deposits (1/04) and (7/03), which were similar if not the same; a compact brown-yellow silt sand over 0.35m deep. In



the upper part of the latter were the remains of tile and bone. The deposit was considerably cleaner than that of the disturbed material above, which means that it could be part of relatively undisturbed deposits on the north and west side of the church.

In the sondage for Post 1 a further relatively undisturbed deposit was noted (1/03); a compact layer of chalk nodules and excessive charcoal in a yellow-grey silt. This deposit was 0.11m thick. A small fragment of red tile was recovered from this deposit that appeared to have the shape and size of a Roman tessera, however, as no Roman material has been recovered from the site previously this can not be substantiated and it is only possible to claim that the deposit contained a tile fragment.

### **4.3 Phase 3: Post-medieval**

Sondage 7 had a deposit (7/02) which overlay (7/03), which was a compact yellow-grey sand layer containing much chalk and tile inclusions. The deposit was 0.27m in depth and was an extremely densely packed rubble layer.

In sondage 1 layer (1/03) was overlain by deposit (1/02), a compact yellow-brown silt sand containing numerous inclusions of brick, tile, chalk and flint. The depth of this deposit was 0.64m. This deposit was also evident in other trenches as (2/02), (3/03), (5/02), and (6/02). Disarticulated human bone was noted in the deposits, but reburied in the trenches. In sondage 5 a skull was encountered near the base of the sondage, and this was believed to be part of an *in situ* burial. These deposits were considered to be part of a highly disturbed graveyard soil, having the remains of the destruction deposits of the priory, through which numerous grave cuts had been inserted. So small were the sondages and mixed up and homogenous were the deposits that it was impossible to distinguish individual cuts. The pottery recovered from these deposits ranged in date from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In sondage 3 deposit (3/03) was covered by layer (3/02) a moderately yellow-brown silt sand but which was simply a matrix into which a dense deposit of tile had been deposited. A denser concentration of tile was also evident at the top of (2/02).

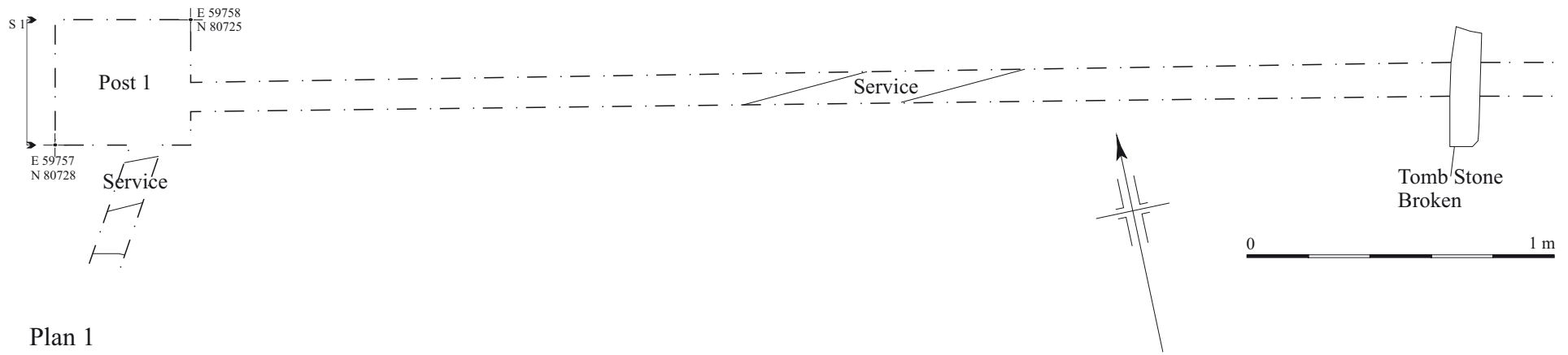
### **4.4 Phase 4: 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries**

The grave soils, medieval wall 8/02 and rubble scatters (7/02) and (3/02) were covered by topsoil (1/01) a moderately compact grey black silt sand containing chalk, flint, brick and tile fragments. The deposit was also numbered (2/01), (3/01), (4/01), (5/01), (6/01), (7/01) and (8/01).

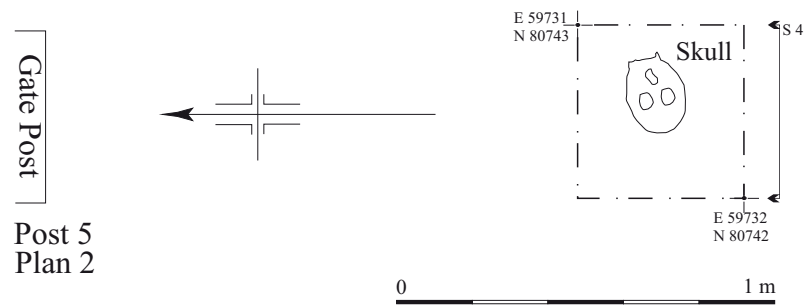
## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn**

The pottery assemblage comprised 29 sherds with a total weight of 250g. It was mainly post-medieval, although two sherds of late medieval material were also present. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:



Plan 1



Post 5  
 Plan 2

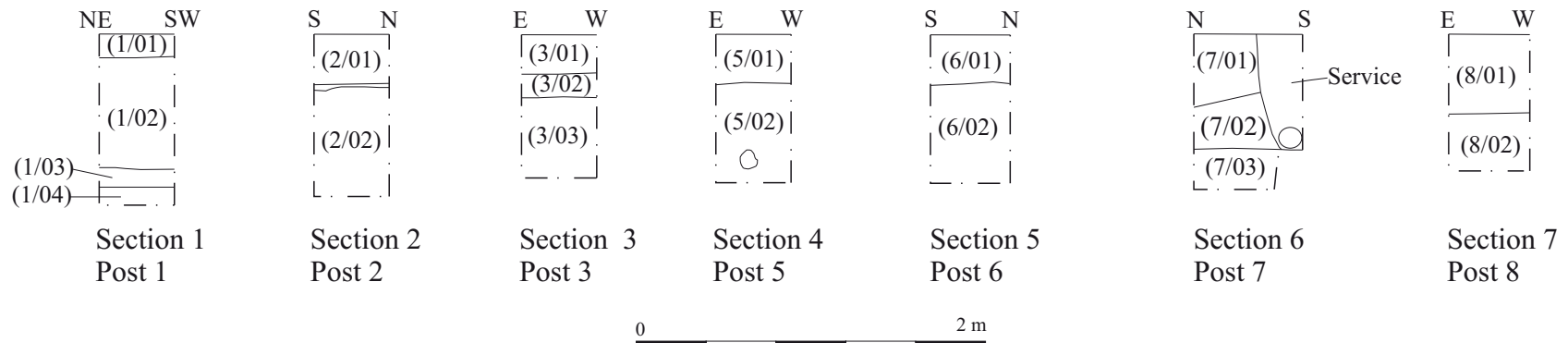


Figure 2. Plans & sections

OXAM:	Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 2 sherds, 41g.
OXDR:	Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 13 sherds, 157g.
OXRESWL:	Polychrome Slipware, 17 <sup>th</sup> C. 1 sherd, 7g.
OXFM:	Staffordshire White-glazed English Stoneware, 1730 – 1800. 1 sherd, 3g.
OXEST:	London stoneware. c. 1680 plus. 1 sherd, 11g.
WHEW:	Mass-produced white earthenwares, 19th - 20th C. 11 sherds, 31g.

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*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region, and the sherds are all in good condition, indicating that they are reliably stratified.

The two sherds of medieval OXAM ware are, on typological ground, no earlier than the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. One is a rim from a jar, the other from an internally glazed bowl. Both are common products of the later part of the Brill/Boarstall tradition (Mellor 1994). Common earlier medieval wares, most of which were not made after AD1350, are also absent, which supports this dating.

The post-medieval assemblage indicates that there was activity at the site throughout the period, and overall it seems that the site has been continually used since c. AD1400.

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

Tr	Cntxt	OXAM		OXDR		OXREWSL		OXEST		OXFM		WHEW		Date
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1	1			1	17									M16thC
1	2					1	7							17thC
2	1							1	11	1	3			E18thC
2	2			10	125									M16thC
3	1			2	15							11	31	19thC
8	2	2	41											L14thC
	Total	2	41	13	157	1	7	1	11	1	3	11	31	

## 5.2 Brick and Tile

Large quantities of brick and tile were present on the site, none of which was removed from site. Context (1/02) contained a large quantity of tiles. There were a number of orange fabrics some with micaceous inclusions, along with other light orange fabrics with micaceous inclusions and larger stone inclusions. Some of the paler tiles seemed abraded. A further piece of a light orange buff fabric was also extremely abraded. Other red fabrics contained many large inclusions, while a further group of tiles were over-fired containing a blue grey core, and in one case had taken on this hue throughout its form. Though the majority of the tiles recovered from this context, one fragment 23mm thick was probably the remains of a floor tile with fragments of a yellow glaze on its surface. Context (1/03) contained a small red-brown sandy tile, with inclusions, and which was roughly square at 25mm. The fragment could have been a piece of tesserae, but as no other Roman material was identified it is difficult to properly substantiate this claim and it is simply better to treat it as a broken fragment.

Context (2/01) contained brick fragments with sandy fabric red-orange with a depth of 57-58mm. Minimal larger inclusions, and no frogs evident, likely to be of about an 18<sup>th</sup> century date. A few of the bricks contained part of a blue vitreous surface. There were also tile fragments of a dark red colour with micaceous sandy surface with larger inclusions of yellow sand material. Context (2/02) produced a few fragments of tile mainly of a red orange fabric with a buff exterior and a number of inclusions. A further fabric from this context had a blue grey centre.

Context (5/02) contained a number of tiles of an orange fabric, with minimal inclusions. Many of them internally had oxidised a blue-grey. One fragment had evidence of a yellow glaze. A further type of tile recovered from the context was a darker red brown fabric with a dark-blue-grey centre with a micaceous exterior and some inclusions. Context (6/01) contained large tile fragments, one a bright red fabric smooth on the one side with a lip and rough and micaceous on the other, with few large inclusions. The depth of the tile is 14mm, while the depth of the lip 33mm. The others were an orange tile fabric with a micaceous surface, a few inclusions, and fired grey-blue internally.

Context (7/02) contained red-orange tile fragments that had oxidised to a blue-grey colour inside, and had a micaceous surface with a few larger inclusions. Context (7/03) produced a few fragments of tile mainly with a red-brown micaceous fabric, although a small red fragment was found also with a number of inclusions. Context (7/04) contained large red-orange tile fragments with micaceous surfaces and larger inclusions. There was only slight oxidised banding in the tiles. One tile contained two nail holes that were 75mm from centre to centre, with the nail holes 15-18mm in diameter. The tile depths were 14-15mm. Context (8/02) produced tile fragments of a probable medieval date with a pink-orange fabric with numerous inclusions. The nail hole diameters on the tile were 12-15mm in diameter and the tiles 12mm deep.

### **5.3 Slag**

Context (2/02) produced the remains of three pieces of iron slag. This is an unusual find for a church cemetery or priory site.

### **5.4 Clay Pipe**

Fragments of clay pipe were recovered from four contexts although most of these were un-diagnostic stems. Context (1/02) produced two stem fragments; one of these had a broad diameter and would have been located just below the bowl. Context (2/01) produced a thick stem fragment. Context (2/02) produced six fragments of pipe of which two contained fragmentary remains of bowls with maker's marks. One of the marks is an FP and the other an R?. Only one Berkshire clay pipe manufacturer fits the FP stamp a Francis Parker of Wallingford manufacturing in 1757 (Oswald 1975, 161). Context (7/04) contained a broad pipe stem fragment.

### **5.5 Iron**

The remains of a square headed nail were recovered from context (2/01). The nail measured 63mm in length.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Historically it is known that there has been a priory located on the site of Saint Thomas of Canterbury from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Investigation of the site was extremely limited, but it did show that in certain areas around the churchyard some archaeology does remain in fragmentary patches; a layer containing charcoal was evident to the south of the church, and walls of the priory to the north of the church. Walls to the north of the church had apparently been picked up during the construction of an extension of the church previously.

The material produced from these small sondages was in certain places quite prodigious, with the differing types of fabrics of roof tiles quite extensive and varied. The earliest pottery came from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and is undoubtedly associated with the priory. Much of the datable evidence was, however, of a post-medieval date and is associated with post-dissolution of the priory.

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