



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF AT CHESTNUTS, CHURCH LANE,
WENDLEBURY, OXFORDSHIRE**

NGR SP 5592 1966

On behalf of

Mr M Elston

OCTOBER 2012

REPORT FOR	Mr M Elston Chestnuts Church Lane Wendlebury Nr. Bicester Oxfordshire OX25 2PN
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at Chestnuts, Church Lane, Wendlebury, Oxfordshire (SP 5592 1966) during groundworks connected with a new extension/conversion of existing bungalow to form new 5 bed house (Planning Reference: 11/00400/F). A layer of stone was seen directly above natural clay across the eastern end of the site and within a service trench to the north of the site, which almost matches with the remains of medieval trackway recorded in the adjacent field (TVAS 2000). No dating evidence was secured across any part of the site, but the two trackways are considered to be medieval as medieval finds were recorded from the surface of the trackway in the adjacent field.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

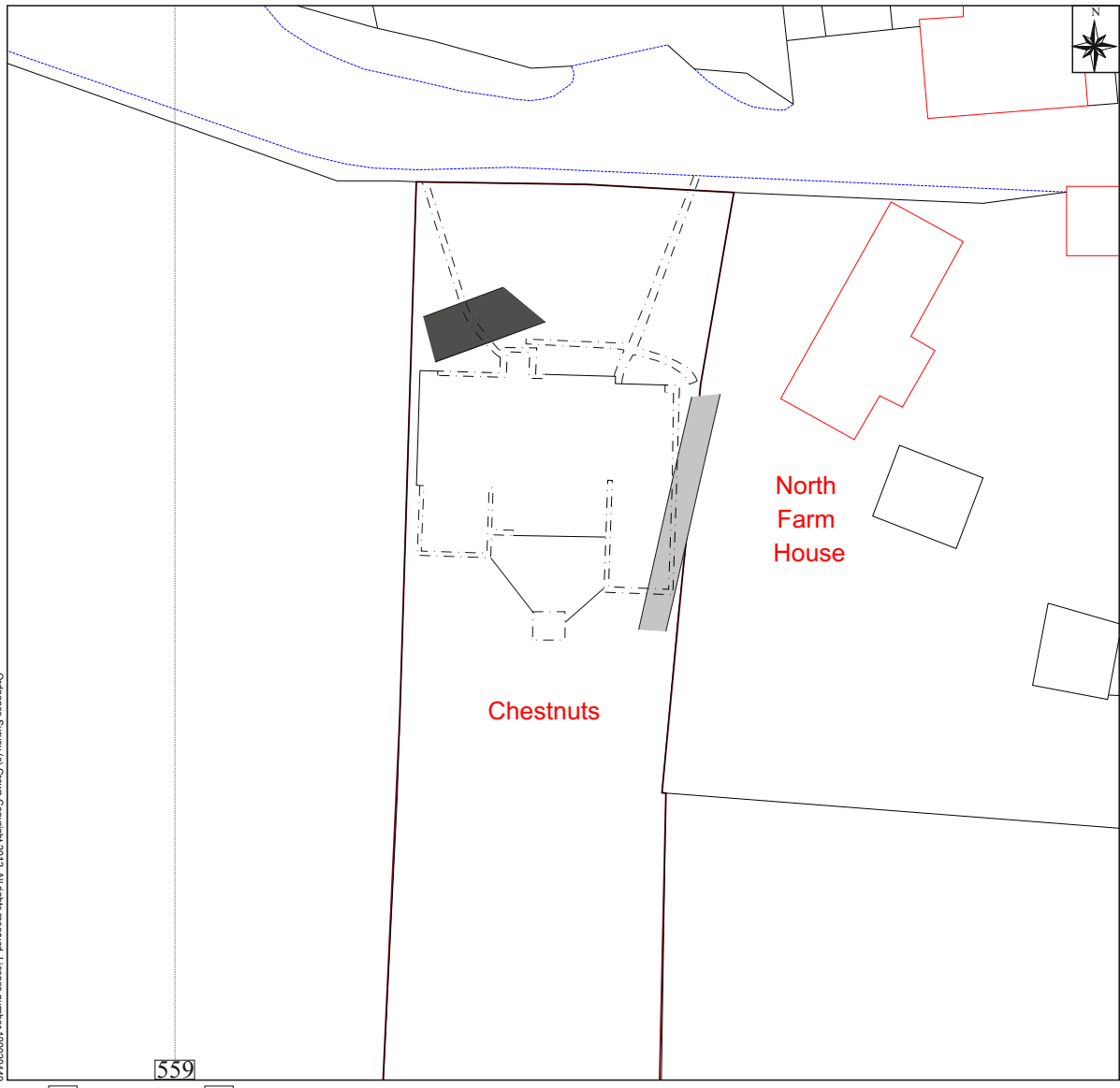
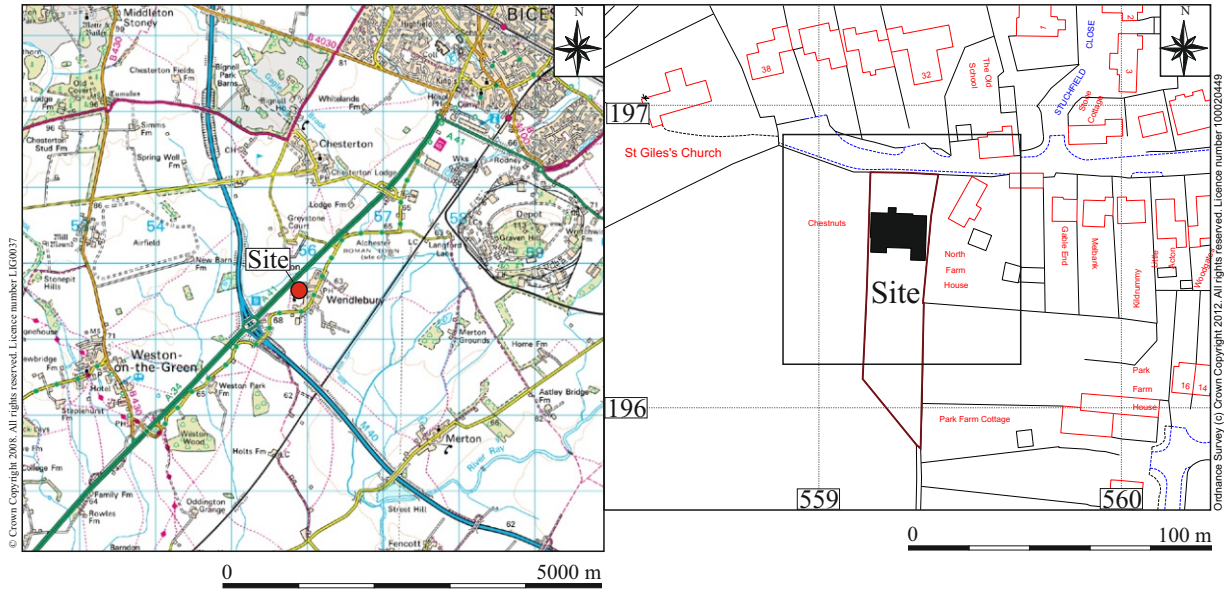
The site is located on the western side of the village, south-east of St Giles Church and south of Church Lane (NGR SP 5592 1966). The site lies at approximately 68m OD and is currently in residential use. The underlying geology is Oxford Clays (Peterborough Member).

1.2 Planning Background

Cherwell District Council granted planning permission for the proposed extension/conversion of existing bungalow to form new 5 bed house (11/00400/F). Due to the potential presence of archaeological remains an archaeological watching brief was required as a condition during the groundworks. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work. This was followed by a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI), which outlined the method by which the watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Wendlebury was mentioned in the Domesday book having a medium sized population of 12 households with a total taxable value of 12 geld units. The proposed development lies within an area of some archaeological interest located 90m south-east of the 13th century church of St Giles (County Historic Environment Record PRN 5235). The earthwork remains of a deserted medieval village have been recorded west and south of the application site (PRN 16195). Six evaluation trenches were excavated immediately to the west of the proposal area, which revealed a probable Iron Age pit, residual Roman pottery and 11th – 13th century medieval features (TVAS 2000). These features consisted of postholes, pits and ditches, wall foundations, a stonecapped well and metalled surfaces suggesting the possibility of a shrunken medieval village on the site (PRN 16216). In particular a metalled surface was recorded within Trench 4 just 14 metres east of the proposal site.



Key
 Site outline Limit of excavation
 Medieval trackway Possible medieval trackway

Figure 1. Site location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation were 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 associated with the medieval settlement, and any earlier remains of Iron Age or Roman date suggested by the evaluation on the adjacent site.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994), the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service prepared *Brief* and John Moore Heritage Services *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2012).

An archaeologist maintained a continuous presence on site during the course of all excavations that potentially would disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during all ground reduction connected to the new extension including all service trenches and a soakaway. All ground reduction was achieved using a combination of 360° tracked excavator fitted with a narrow bucket with a flat blade.

A journal, recorded on specially designed record sheets, was maintained which detailed times and durations of site visits as well as notes on areas monitored by the archaeologist. Deposits (overburden) were recorded on context recording sheets. A general photographic record of the work was kept and will form of the part site archive to be submitted to the Oxfordshire Museum Service.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results (Fig 2)

Individual context numbers were assigned on site to deposits encountered during the ground reduction. Context numbers in () indicate deposits of material.

The earliest deposit recorded was natural bright grey yellow clay silt (102). The depth at which this horizon was attained varied slightly across the site but was generally around *c.* 0.50m from the current ground surface.

Overlying the natural was a layer of dark blue grey clay silt with occasional stone fragments of varying sizes (101). This deposit did not contain any significant archaeological material and was interpreted as a layer of weathered natural.

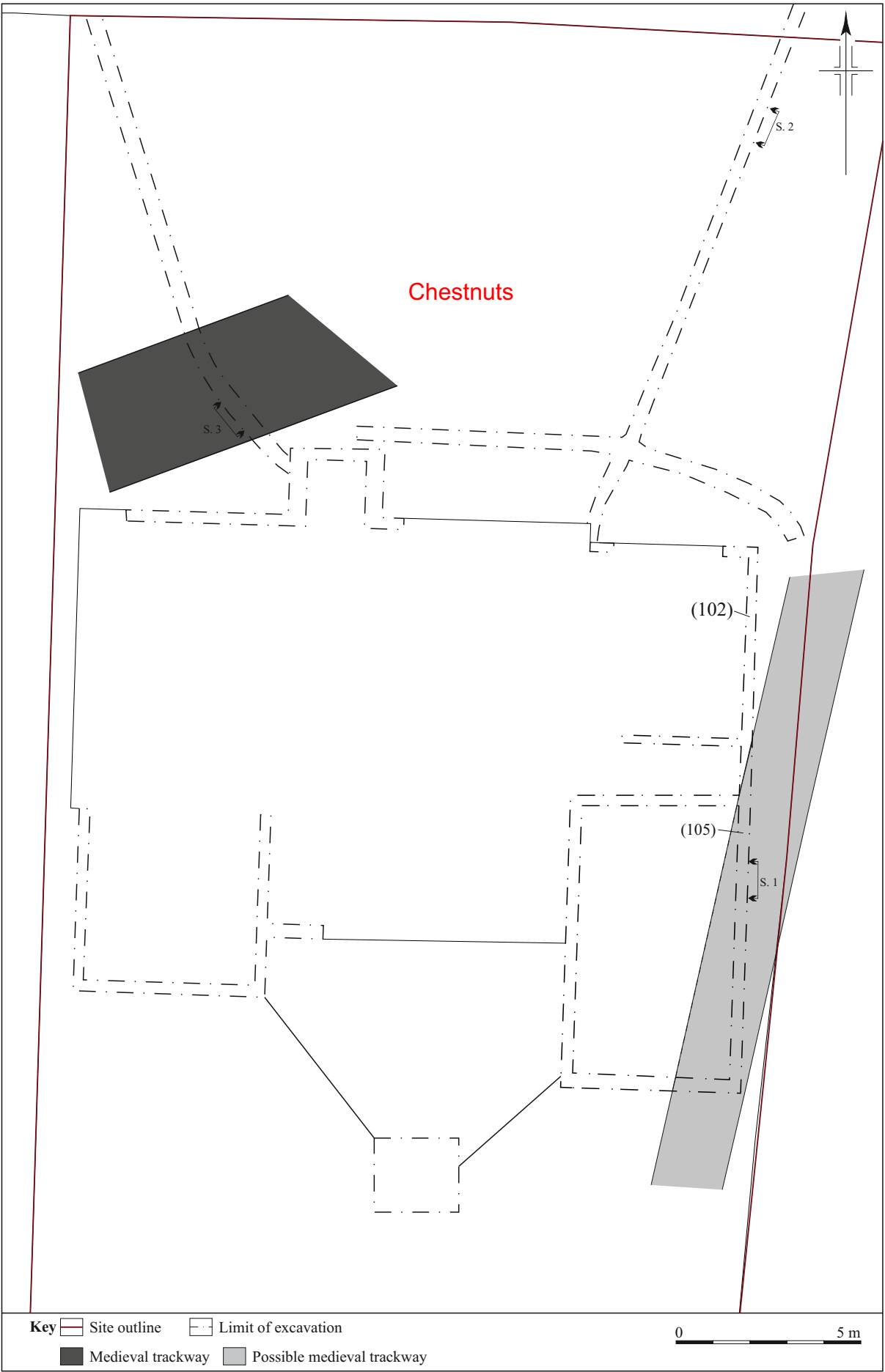


Figure 2. Plan

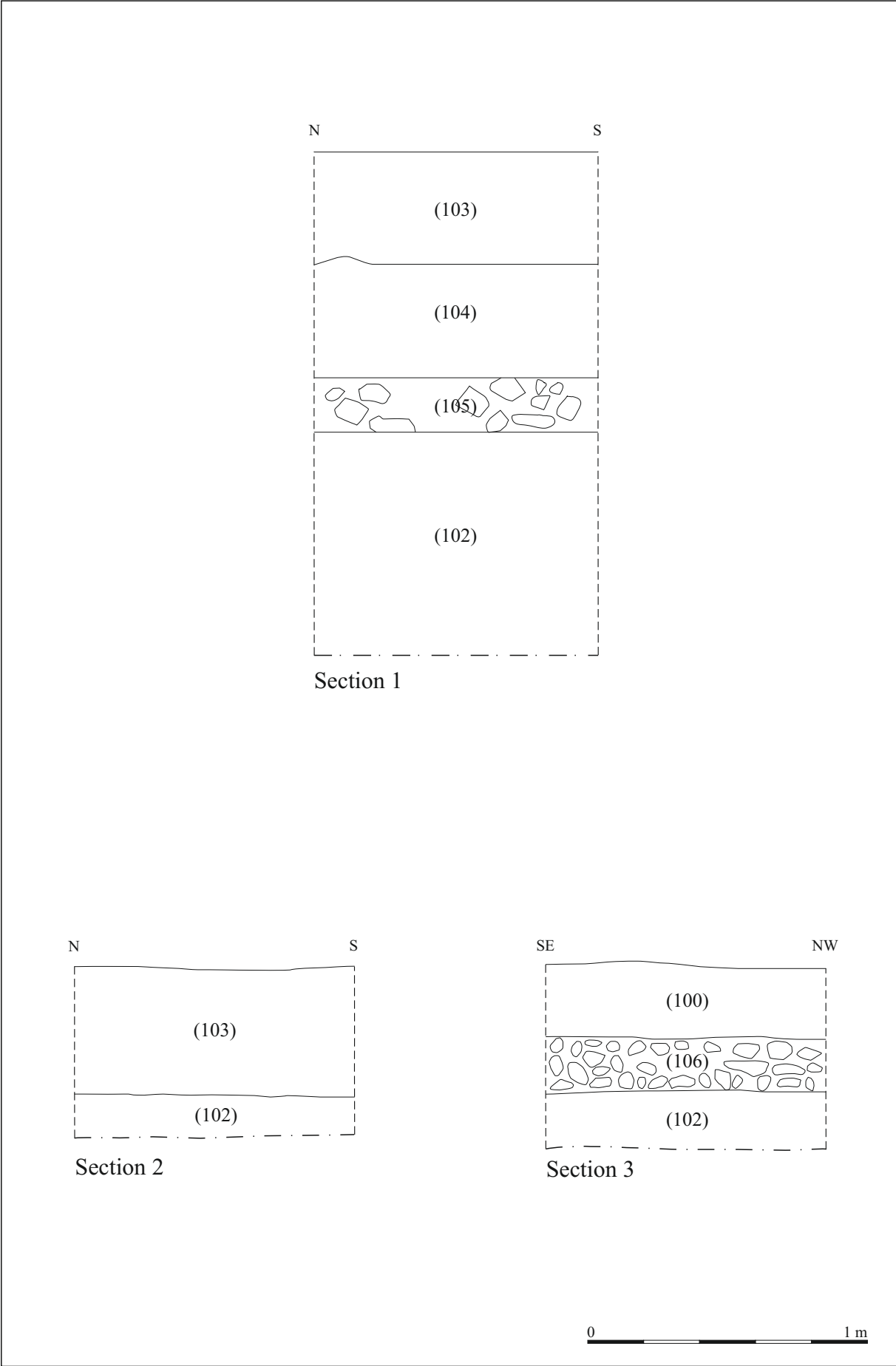


Figure 3. Sections

The latest deposit was the friable dark grey-brown silty loam topsoil (100). No finds of archaeological interest were collected or retained from this deposit.

Overlying the natural across the footprint of the previous extension was a layer of c. 0.20-0.30m thick modern rubble hardcore (103). This was associated with the construction and demolition of the previous extension.

4.2 The wall footing trenches

Trackway

Directly above natural clay (102) was a 0.20m thick layer of stone (105) recorded in section across the eastern side of the site considered to represent the surviving remains of a possible relic trackway of unknown date (Fig. 2; Fig. 3, Section 1). It was sealed by a c. 0.40m thick layer of mid greyish brown buried topsoil (104).

4.3 The service trench and soakaway

The earliest deposit encountered was the natural yellow clay (102). Overlying this was a 0.30m thick layer of topsoil (100).

A second trackway/ 'road' surface (Fig. 2: Fig 3, Section 3) was noted within a service trench to the north of Chestnuts directly above natural (102). The trackway was seen as a 0.20m thick layer (106) in section of the service trench. This trackway is almost certainly the same as the trackway discovered in the adjacent field in Trench 4 (TVAS 2012). It was sealed by topsoil (100).

4.4 Reliability of Results

The watching brief was carried out in winter conditions with good co-operation from the contractor carrying out the groundworks. The methodology employed during groundworks was appropriate considering the nature of the works.

5 FINDS

5.1 Finds

There were no finds of archaeological significance discovered during the excavation.

5.2 Environmental Remains

No features were considered to warrant environmental sampling.

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological work at Chestnuts, Church Lane, Wendlebury was successful in establishing a stratigraphic sequence across the site. The natural clay geology was encountered and no discrete archaeological features were seen cut into it. The only visible features were modern services such as existing manhole and drainage channels.

The topsoil and subsoil had been removed across most areas covered by the previous extension. The known medieval settlement in the adjacent field does not seem to have extended into the site, but the terracing from the previous extension could have removed any trace of shallow archaeology, if it ever existed.

In the new footing trench across the western edge of the site, a layer of stone 'metalling' (105) was recorded in section which may once have been the remains of a trackway orientated approximately north-south. A second trackway (106) was seen in section to the north of the house, which was directed towards the shrunken medieval village south of the church. This trackway is almost certainly the same as the medieval trackway (53) seen within Trench 4 discovered in the adjacent field. This trackway or 'road' probably went out of use in the 16th century. The rest of the settlement to the west of the site seems to have ended by the early 13th century AD. No further evidence of the stone lined and capped medieval drain (2) recorded in the adjacent evaluation was seen during this watching brief, indicating it did not extend the length of the trackway.

Conclusion

The site was probably just outside the main area of settlement and the discovered trackway (106) to the north of the house, seen within the service trench, was almost certainly the same trackway (53) discovered in the adjacent field (TVAS 2000). No earlier prehistoric or Roman features or finds were recovered. This trackway probably extended along the line of the present Church Lane towards the Red Lion Public House.

A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The drawn records	

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

English Heritage 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*

Institute for Archaeologists, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* Revised 2008

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Plate 1; South east facing section of trench showing modern footing disturbance (1m scale)



Plate 2; West facing section of trench showing trackway (105) (1m scale)

