

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF AT 51 EAST ST HELEN STREET,
ABINGDON, OXFORDSHIRE**

Su 4971 9688

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On behalf of
Taylor Services (Oxford) Ltd

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological watching brief as a condition of planning permission for redevelopment at 51 East St Helen Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire. The watching brief was successful in locating and recording archaeological features dating from at least the medieval period onwards. The pottery assemblage recovered suggests the site was used initially during the 2nd century AD and was then abandoned during the late Roman period. It was not re-occupied until the late medieval/ early post-medieval period and continued to be inhabited until the present day. The presence of a relatively large quantity of wine bottles and broken plates may suggest that the property was used as a public house during the early 19th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located on the west side of East St Helens Street (NGR SU 4971 9688). The site lies at approximately 53m OD and is currently in residential use. The underlying geology is First Terrace River Gravels.

1.2 Planning Background

The Vale of White Horse District Council granted planning permission for the demolition of the existing extension and lean to additions to 51 East St Helens Street and to erect a two story extension (11/01731/FUL). 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 (OCAS 2012). This was followed by a *Written Scheme of Investigation* which outlined the method by which the watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance (JMHS 2012).

1.3 Archaeological Background

The general archaeological background of Abingdon has already been explored in a number of individual publications (e.g. Biddle *at al* 1968; Barclay & Halpin 1999 & Allen & Kamush 2008) and should be consulted for a more detailed background to the archaeology of the Abingdon area.

In general, the site lies within the centre of the historic town of Abingdon, an area of significant archaeological interest. It is known from previous archaeological investigations that the centre of Abingdon was densely occupied during the Iron Age and later became an important Romano-British settlement (Henig and Booth 2000) with continuous occupation through the medieval period until the present day. A large excavation at the Vineyard in the early 1990's uncovered evidence of early Iron Age settlement with over a dozen round houses of middle to late Iron Age date (Allen 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 & 1998). A stone walled Roman building and later medieval pits were also discovered.

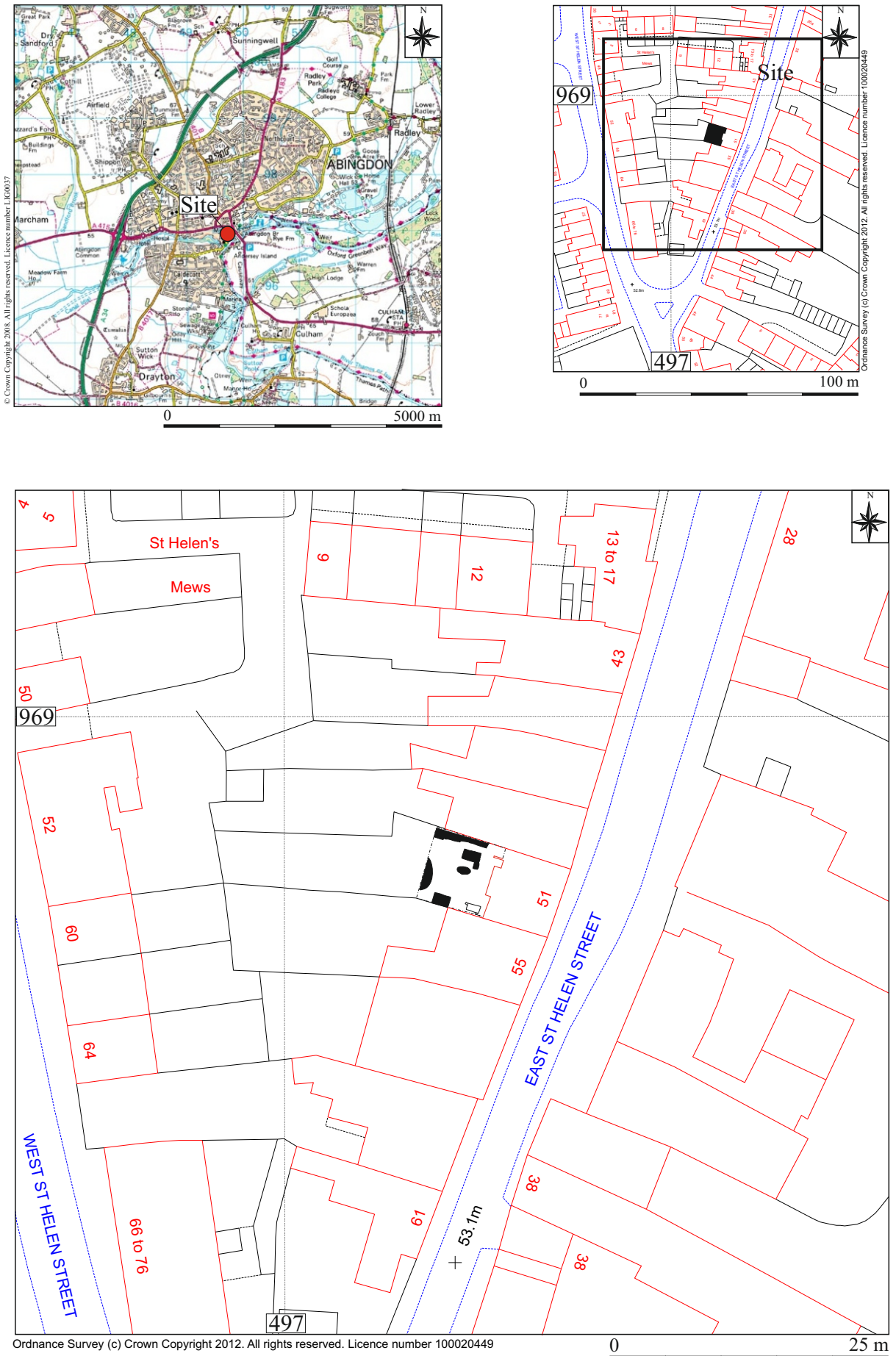


Figure 1. Site location

During excavations at the Old Gaol a remarkable sequence of well preserved stratigraphy (across the north-western area in particular) was recorded with the earliest features dating to the early Iron Age.

The prehistoric settlement evidence was most apparent during the early & middle Iron Age. Roman gravel surfaces covered the prehistoric settlement layers and features. Other Roman settlement features such as a stone walled building and deep quarry pit destroyed some of the earlier prehistoric evidence. In addition to the Roman evidence were medieval and post-medieval cess and general waste pits, which were spread across the development site within tenement plots marked by ditches and walls (Riccoboni 2010 & *forthcoming*). Later post-medieval cellars of properties, which used to front Turn Again Lane were also discovered.

The two roads which lead to St Helen's Church (first mentioned in a charter of 995) are the earliest referenced streets in Abingdon. East St Helen Street is mentioned in a deed of about 1245-50 (*in vico de Sancta Elena*) and in the mid 13th century deeds as *in Vico oriental sancte helene* or *Estsenthelenstret* (Miles 1975).

Across this part of Abingdon *c.* 1m thick garden soil accumulated in the post-medieval period. This post-medieval soil deposit seems consistent across this area of the town extending down East St Helen Street (Eeles 2005, Wilson 1979 & Wilson 1991, Riccoboni 2010) and seen during the excavations on West St Helen Street (Claydon 1972, Miles 1972, Parrington 1975 & Ainslie 1991). The gardens of the East St Helen Street are visibly raised with this soil accumulation.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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 remains relating to prehistoric or Roman activity on the site; and
- to record evidence of remains relating to the medieval and post-medieval settlement.

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 Services (OCAS) prepared *Brief* and John Moore Heritage Services *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2012).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the ground reduction and excavation of footing trenches. All excavation was by hand.

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 County Museum Service.

All artefacts were collected and retained except for concentrations of building material where a representative sample would be kept if apparent. Finds ranging from pottery, tile, bone, brick and clay pipe were recovered.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in () indicate feature fills or deposits of material. Those without brackets refer to features themselves. An archaeologist was present during the excavation of all ground reduction and foundation trenches associated with the new extension.

4.1 Excavation Results (Figure 2)

4.1.1 Roman (43-450AD); Period 1

The earliest deposit encountered across the site was 0.15m thick mid greyish brown silty clay (107) with two sherds of 2nd century Roman pottery (Fig 3; Section 1). The possibility that these two sherds are residual cannot be excluded. Small quantities of residual Romano-British pottery also occurred in medieval contexts. This layer was only seen within Test Pit 3 against the northern edge of the site.

4.1.2 Medieval (13th-15th century AD); Period 2

Layers

Deposit (107) was overlain by 0.45m thick dark greyish black silty clay (106)=(108) with two Roman pottery sherds and medieval peg tile (not retained). This layer was considered to be a medieval topsoil layer and was again only seen within the deeper test pits around the edge of the site.

Walls

Sealed by layer (100) was wall 102, constructed of roughly hewn ragstone (variable sizes <100-300mm) with a neat west face. The wall was set tightly within a construction cut 103 orientated on a north-west south-east alignment. The wall was probably stabilised on the western side with a narrow buttress providing an additional course of thickening to help support the structure. During its removal the wall could be seen extending beneath the adjoining property wall of No. 49.

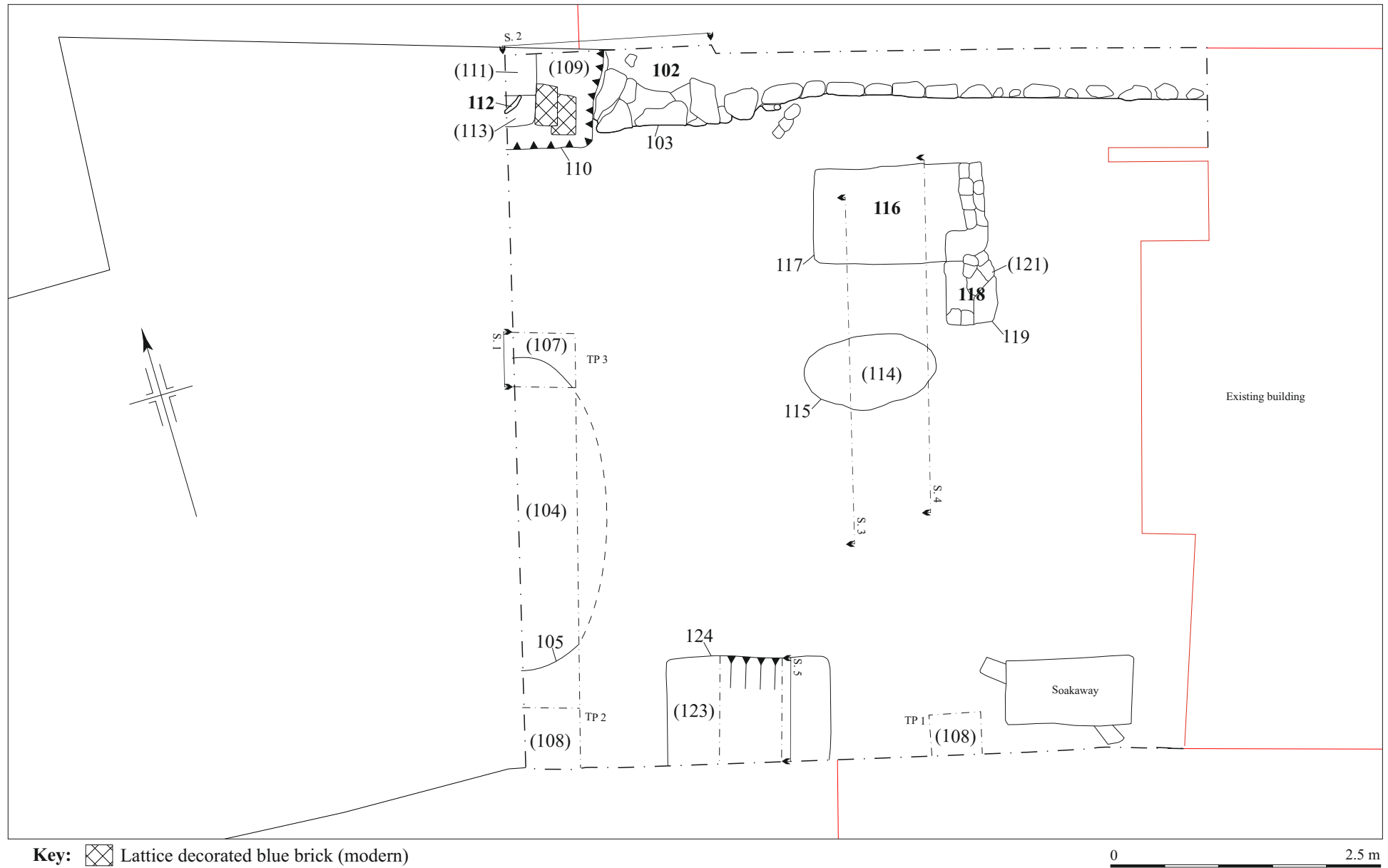


Figure 2. Plan of monitored area

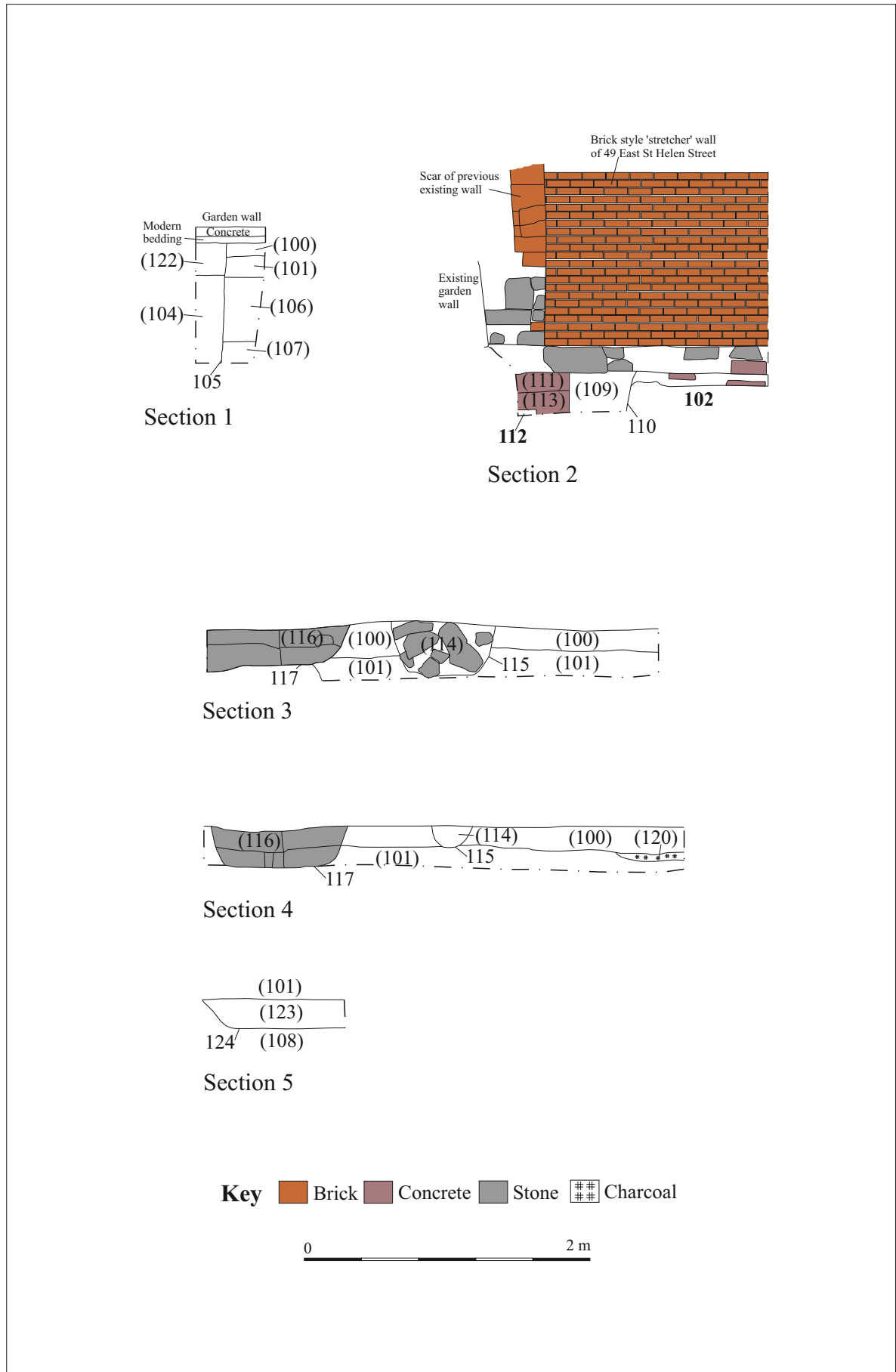


Figure 3. Sections

Pits

Pit 124 was sealed beneath (101) and cut into layer (108). It was 1.5m in length and 0.20m deep with sharp concave sides and a flat base. Pit 124 was filled by friable to soft light brownish cream silty sand (123) with occasional animal bones including a horn core.

Well

A stone well (112) was partially seen on the northern corner of site constructed of neatly dressed curving limestone blocks and had a surviving void of at least 1m diameter (Figure 3; Section 2). The stones forming the body of the well are considered to be medieval in origin. The top of the well cut 110, had been re-instated later than wall 102 which was backfilled with bricks and iron waste of a Victorian date (113). Cut 110 was probably associated with the later capping of the well, which disturbed the original medieval construction cut (not seen). The well had a concrete and iron cap of probable Victorian or later date (111). As there was no hand excavation across the well we only have limited observations.

4.1.3 Early post-medieval (15th-16th century AD); Period 3

Layers

The earliest post-medieval layer was friable dark grey brown sandy loam with frequent pottery sherds of Roman, medieval and early post-medieval date alongside frequent oyster shells (101). The latest deposit was friable to compact mottled dark brown with yellowish clay mottling sandy loam with Roman, medieval and early post-medieval pottery sherds (100).

Walls cut through layers (100) & (101)

A short stretch of wall 116 was recorded adjacent to Wall 102 (Figure 3; Sections 3 & 4). It was 1.60m long, 0.90m wide and 0.30m deep, constructed of large ragstone blocks (<200-500mm) bonded with sandy clay mortar. It had an additional piece of masonry on its southern side; 118, constructed of similar ragstone blocks. This masonry was set within construction cut 119.

Pits cut through layers (100) & (101)

Pit 115 of sub circular shape was located near the centre of the site (Figure 3; Sections 3 & 4). It was 1m wide and 0.30m deep with sharp concave sides and gently rounded base. The pit was filled with firm dark brownish grey silty clay (114) with frequent and compact stone blocks. It was assumed this pit was a waste pit for unwanted stone used in the adjacent walls.

A large waste pit 105 was recorded within the northern footing trench (Figure 3; Section 1). It had sharp sides and an unknown base filled by dark brownish black silty clay with dozens of broken wine bottles, broken crockery and drinking tankards and a clay pipe (104). This was overlain by 0.40m thick mottled yellow brown clay silt with gravels (122), which was assumed to be a clay cap for the pit after deposition of the waste.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good with excellent co-operation from the project manager and ground workers during the course of all excavations.

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

5 FINDS

5.1 The Roman Pottery *by Jane Timby*

5.1.1 Introduction

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 26 sherds pottery weighing 330 g dating to the Roman period.

Pottery was recovered from six individual contexts, thus the incidence of sherds per deposit is particularly low. This combined with few featured sherds means that dating can only be approximate.

The material is of mixed preservation; the sherds are fragmented but with relatively fresh edges. Surface finishes such as burnish have been preserved. The overall average sherd size is typical of rubbish material at 12.7 g.

For the purposes of the assessment the assemblage was scanned to assess the likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data is summarised in Table 1.

5.1.2 Description of wares

The assemblage mainly comprises wares of the local Oxfordshire industry; other wares probably also of local origin and two traded pieces: one a sherd of a Central Gaulish samian bowl, probably a Dragendorff form 37; the other the base of a Dorset black-burnished ware dish or bowl. Both these latter two pieces came from context (101).

The Oxfordshire products include grey wares, white wares and oxidised sandy wares (cf Young 2000). There are also two sherds of grog-tempered storage jar and some black sandy wares which are also probably local.

Where it could be determined most of the local sherds came from jars, but there is at least one flat-rimmed dish or bowl and the four white wares from (101) could be flagon. Two vessels, from (104) and (101) are sooted from use.

5.1.3 Chronology

Most of the assemblage would appear to be wares current in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The complete absence of any colour-coated wares suggests that there is no late Roman activity present (ie after *c* AD 240), and one or two pieces could be residual 1st-century types. The samian and BB1 are probably 2nd-century products.

5.1.4 Further work

The assemblage is too small to warrant further work unless additional material is recovered from the same locality in which case it should be added into any overview.

Table 1; Quantification of Roman pottery sherds

Context	sam	BB1	Oxford	Grog	Other	Tot No	Tot Wt	Date
100	0	0	3	1	1	5	79	?C2-C3
101	1	1	8	1	1	12	162	C2+
104	0	0	1	0	1	2	39	?C3+
106	0	0	2	0	1	3	26	C2?
107	0	0	2	0	0	2	10	C2
108	0	0	1	0	1	2	14	C2+
TOTAL	1	1	17	2	5	26	330	

5.2 The Medieval and Post-medieval Pottery (By David Gilbert)

5.2.1 Introduction

The pottery assemblage comprised 98 sherds with a total weight of 7,701g. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994). The material was not retained.

OXAG:	Medieval Abingdon Ware , 11 th – 15 th century.
OXAM:	Brill/Boarstall ware , AD1200 – 1600.
OXBG:	Surrey Whiteware . Mid 13 th – mid 15 th C
OXRESWL:	Polychrome Slipware , 17 th C.
OXBX:	Late Brill/Boarstall Ware , 15 th – 16 th century.
OXDR:	Red Earthenwares , 1550+
OXEST:	London Stoneware . c. 1680 plus.
CRM:	Creamware , mid 18 th - early 19 th C
WHEW:	Mass-produced white earthenwares , 19 th - 20 th C.

Table 2: medieval pottery occurrence and weight by context

	100	101	104
OXAG		2 / 43g	
OXAM	8 / 163g	26 / 539g	
OXBG		1 / 4g	
OXRESWL			1 / 6g
OXBX		3 / 28g	
OXDR	4 / 56g		34 / 4999g
OXEST			5 / 1143g
CRM			1 / 32g
WHEW			13 / 688g

5.2.2 Description of Wares

Many of the Brill/Boarstall ware sherds displayed a “Tudor green glaze” (c. 1475-1600). Sherds from an early post-medieval green glazed cistern were evident within context 101, and similar vessels are known from the excavations at Clarendon Hotel, Oxford (Jope & Pantin 1958, Sturdy D 1959). This would indicate that the deposit is likely to have a late 15th century *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is fairly typical of sites in the town, and can be paralleled at a number of sites (e.g. Blinkhorn 2006a; 2006b).

5.3 The Roman Coin by Andreij Celovsky

5.3.1 One Roman coin <1> was discovered from layer (101). It was 4mm in thickness and of a copper alloy. The coin was very abraded and illegible on the obverse. An analysis of size (26.9mm) and weight (16.79g) has enabled an identification of demonination; DUPONDIUS. On the reverse side was a seated personification.

5.4 The Worked stone by Paul Riccoboni

Figure 4; Architectural fragment



One fragment of worked stone was recovered from layer (101). This was likely an architectural fragment from a window moulding perhaps from a church (Fig. 4). Architectural fragments from parts of a church often have carved decoration, both inside and outside. Thus they can be parts of arches, piers, doorways, windows, screens, tombs and monuments. External embellishments include crockets, finials and parapets. (Schofield

& Samuel 2010).

5.5 The Animal Bone by Paul Riccoboni

5.5.1 A small assemblage of animal bone was collected from the excavations which was consistent with the previously excavated examples across the town (Wilson & Wheeler 1975). The most common identified animals were sheep and cattle. All animal bones were not retained.

Table 3; Quantification of retrieved animal bone

Context Number	Number of fragments	Weight (g)
116	1	47
104	1	88
123	5	103
101	11	210
100	5	42
106	6	12

5.6 The Glass by Paul Riccoboni

Context (104) produced a large assemblage of broken glass bottles. Of the many glass bottles seen only a small percentage was recovered for identification. Different types included vase shapes and short necked with flattened rims. The bases had bulged heel and two had conical push ups. All glass was not retained.

5.7 The Building Material by Gwilym Williams

Tile and brick was retained from four contexts during the watching brief at East St Helen's, Abingdon. A single brick was complete and appears to be post-medieval in date, with the rest of the brick not being datable, as no other full bricks were recovered; although all had complete thicknesses. At least two of these are feasibly late medieval if not early post-medieval. Two fragments of the tile are also potentially late medieval or early post-medieval in date, although as the fragments were small, the dating cannot be secure.

The tile was scanned, weighed and counted and a quick assessment of the six fabrics was made (Table 5). The tile recovered from the watching brief comprised nine fragments of ceramic roof, weighing 1301g (Table 4).

Table 4. Ceramic roof tile

context	frags	wt (g)	fabric	dims	comments
100	1	110	3	17	moderate abrasion
101	1	187	3	17	abraded; reduced core
104	1	27	4	12mm	
104	2	396	5	15mm	1 ridge tile; 1 peghole
104	1	287	6	14mm	1 peghole
116	1	27	1	12mm	
116	2	267	2	12-13mm	both have pegholes
Total	9	1301			

There was only a small quantity of roof tile, There were two fragments of tile from layers (100) and (101), both of which were fabric 1, which was late medieval or probably early post-medieval in date. There were four fragments of tile, in three fabrics, from fill (104) of pit 105, these are not closely datable but are later post-medieval in date; fabric 6 is perhaps as late as the early 19th century. The tile from the

Table 5. Ceramic roof tile fabrics.

Fabrics	Description
1	silty pinky orange to red orange with occ haematite and quartz pieces; some marling
2	marly pink with sand and haematite
3	silty orange to buff fabric; occasional small stone (c 1-2mm); reduced core; glaze traves on upper surface
4	pink orange surface; reduced core
5	silty orange fabric; occ haematite and chalky stone
6	dark red sandy well fired fabric; occ haematite

wall 116 comprises two fabrics, both of which are post-medieval in date, although probably earlier in date than the tile in fabric 6 from fill (104) of pit 105. A late 17th or early 18th-century date would not be inappropriate for this tile.

The brick (Table 6) recovered during the watching brief comprised a total of four examples in four fabrics (Table 7). The two fragments from layer 100, while in different fabrics, are likely to be late medieval or early post-medieval in date. Although, as these bricks were not complete, and only the thickness remained as a complete dimension, it cannot be entirely secure. There were two bricks from fill (104) of pit 105. The smaller fragment is feasibly late medieval or early post-medieval in date; however, the complete brick is undoubtedly late post-medieval, albeit hand-made. It is a very similar fabric to the tile in fabric 6.

Table 6. Brick

context	frags	wt (g)	fabric	dims (max)	comments
100	1	678	1	>130 × 106 × 41mm	mortar adhering
100	1	559	2	>142 × >87 × 43mm	
104	1	2692	3	>105 × >80 × 44mm	
104	1	348	4	225 × 108 × 62mm	
Total	4	4277			

Table 7. Brick fabrics.

Fabrics	Description
1	red marly occ small pebbles
2	orange red sandy fabric occ haematitechalky stone
3	red silty fabric
4	dark red sandy fabric

The small assemblage of tile and brick from layers (100) and (101) was late medieval or early post-medieval in date and might be suggestive of there being activity of that date on the site. It is possible that the wall 116 was late 17th or early 18th century in origin, or that roof tile dating from then was incorporated into the wall fabric. Later building materials – both brick and roof tile – dating from the late 18th or early 19th centuries were recovered from the pit 105, in addition to some earlier brick and tile. It is not recommended retaining the building materials, as they are small in size and of little further diagnostic value.

5 DISCUSSION

General

The watching brief recorded archaeological remains relating to the medieval and post-medieval settlement of the site. It would appear from the investigation that although some degree of terracing has taken place, presumably in advance of the original extension, the medieval and post-medieval archaeology was surviving at shallow depths.

Roman

In April 1977, a group of amateur archaeologists excavated a soakaway in the garden of 57 East St Helen Street and recorded its profile (Wilson *et al* 1979). Samples were

taken from layers F5 & F6. The stratigraphic sequence on the east facing section (Figure 3; Section 1) fits in well with the recorded section at 57 East St Helen Street. Deposit (107), which contained a fragment of Roman pottery would correspond well with suspected Roman layer F6 from No. 57 (Wilson 1979). The possibility this pottery was residual cannot be ruled out as Roman pottery has been found in medieval contexts across this site and many others in Abingdon. At 50 West St Helen Street Roman layers also survived (8), (9), (10) & (11) which were cut by a later post-medieval stone lined cess pit. All of the Roman pottery was mid 1st to mid 2nd century AD date (Ainslie 1991), which again fits in well with date of the Roman pottery recovered from this site. A thin pebble layer (11) recorded at West St Helen Street (Ainslie 1991) was similar to the gravel deposits recorded at the Old Gaol site (Riccoboni 2010 & *forthcoming*), but interestingly were not seen during the 1972 West St Helen Street excavation (Miles 1975). The excavations at this site were not deep enough to see any potential compacted gravel deposits, but the fact that they were also not recorded within the soil profile pit at No. 57 suggests any gravel layers were unlikely to have extended south along East St Helen Street. These gravel layers previously thought of roads or yard surfaces are now considered more likely the result of flooding events over this part of the town.

Medieval

Medieval layer F5 from the soakaway in the garden of 57 East St Helen Street was sampled and contained many fish bones, some species from salt water meaning supplies of fish were transported to Abingdon from the coast. The depth and profile of F5 corresponds well with deposit (106), although (106) lacked any fish bones.

Wall 102 was parallel and on a similar alignment to the present property boundary of 49 East St Helen Street and could be extending beneath the wall of the adjoining property. Wall 102 was probably the remains of the extension to the original dwelling which may have replaced an earlier timber structure. Evidence for medieval stone walled buildings replacing post built timber framed buildings has been seen at West St Helen Street. It would seem that 51 East St Helen Street was originally constructed in the late 15th century as one block with the neighbouring property No. 55. The reason there is not a 53 is because in the mid 20th century (around 1960) no.53 was merged with 51 (*Pers Comm.* David Clark 2012).

Pit 124 was stratigraphically of medieval or early post-medieval origin. It contained a horn core which is evidence of medieval industrial waste. Abingdon is well known for its tanning and skinning activities, especially so along Ock Street. There is limited evidence of tanning and skinning in this part of Abingdon, presumably as polluting industries were not common in medieval town centres. It is unlikely therefore that the horn core came from a tannery or horn workers premises. The excavations at 57 East St Helen Street revealed a 17th century pit with at least 11 horn cores, including one longhorn with the cores cut from the latero-ventral side (Wilson *et al* 1979). There was only one horn core from pit 124, which further indicates that this pit was not created by industrial work. Excavations at the Old Gaol, Abingdon did recover evidence of tanning and skinning but the evidence suggested smaller scale industry than recovered from Ock Street (Anthony (*ed*) *et al* 2006). Horn cores usually derive from butchers and we know Bridge Street was formerly called *butcherrow* in 1555. Other theories for the presence of horn cores in the archaeological record relate to horn working. The horns once removed from hides were boiled and then the outer

skins were removed, they were then pressed into square shapes and used in medieval windows.

Post medieval

Layers (101) & (100) are of early post-medieval origin although both layers contained Roman pottery sherds. Similar medieval soil deposits have been recorded at West St Helen Street where Roman pottery, including samian, was found generally distributed through the medieval and later levels (Claydon 1972).

The other recorded masonry 116 & 118 is somewhat ambiguous as although on a similar alignment to Wall 102 it was wider and shorter in length and could be seen to cut through layers (100) & (101). Perhaps this formed a later structure of some kind or perhaps formed part of a narrow corridor with wall 116. The tile recovered from this wall would suggest a late 17th or early 18th century date for wall 116. Pit 115 was filled with stone waste and seems to have been contemporary with the construction of the post-medieval extension or tenement garden boundary. Some parts of the original house could be seen exposed when the later extension was demolished. A stud wall with cross beam was photographed (Plate 1). There had been considerable re-building and re-modelling in the 17th and 18th centuries, but wooden joints, which formed the original roofs, can still be clearly seen in the top floor of No. 55.

In the north-west corner of the site was a stone well which was considered to be later than Wall 102 at the surface: cut 110. The body of the well is likely to be medieval in origin and was constructed of neatly dressed curved limestone blocks. It was probably used by the inhabitants of the post-medieval building.

To the rear of 30 East St Helen Street, the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society (AAHS) were invited to complete a Trench (Trench 1) begun by the house owner in an area on the eastern side of the rear wing. This trench was enlarged and excavated to undisturbed natural gravel. The first c. 0.9m of mixed soils contained recent backfill. Undisturbed archaeology was reached at a depth of between 0.9 m. and 1.2 m (Eeles 2005). The build up of garden soil during the post-medieval period is therefore remarkably similar on both sides of East St Helen Street, although terraced away at this site to accommodate the previous extension. The deep soil accumulation can still be seen across the rest of the garden, where the ground level clearly rises.

Pit 105 was a large waste pit of early 19th century date with dozens of broken wine bottles, broken plates, tankards and a clay pipe. The excavations did not reach the base of the pit and the recovered assemblage was only therefore only a small representative sample. The waste artefacts from this pit would be consistent with a public house. It is possible therefore that the building was used as a public house during the early 19th century. Abingdon is well known for its brewery and taverns of which only a few remain. Although in Oxford taverns were granted licences to sell alcohol in the mid 17th century (Leeds 1941) it was not until the Beer Act of 1830 that new lower tier of premises was permitted to sell alcohol, called Beer Houses. Under the 1830 Act any householder who paid rates could apply, with a one-off payment of two guineas equal in value to £159 today, to sell beer or cider in his home (usually the

front parlour) and even to brew his own on his premises. The permission did not extend to the sale of spirits and fortified wines, and any beer house discovered selling those items was closed down and the owner heavily fined. Beer houses were not permitted to open on Sundays. The beer was usually served in jugs or dispensed directly from tapped wooden barrels on a table in the corner of the room. Often profits were so high the owners were able to buy the house next door to live in, turning every room in their former home into bars and lounges for customers. In the first year after the 1830 beer act, 400 beer houses opened and within eight years there were 46,000 across the country, far outnumbering the combined total of long-established taverns, public houses, inns and hotels. As it was so easy to obtain permission and the profits could be huge compared to the low cost of gaining permission, the number of beer houses was continuing to rise and in some towns nearly every other house in a street could be a beer house. Finally in 1869 the growth had to be checked by magisterial control and new licensing laws were introduced. Only then was it made harder to get a licence, and the licensing laws, which operate today were formulated.

Although the new licensing laws prevented new beer houses from being created, those already in existence were allowed to continue and many did not close until nearly the end of the 19th century.

David Clarke President of Vernacular Architecture Group and who occupies 55 East St Helen Street searched the census transcriptions and can find no reference to an innkeeper anywhere near no.51. However his search only went back to 1840, if the site was used as beer house it could have been from 1830. David Clarke did find reference to a 'whitesmith'. A Whitesmith is a person who works with "white" or light-coloured metals such as tin and pewter. The forge was probably in the centre of the house. The excavations did not recover any evidence of the whitesmith.

Conclusion

The dense presence of prehistoric and Roman features both at 30 East St Helen Street (Eeles 2005), West St Helen Street (Miles 1975 & Ainslie 1991) and the area surrounding the Old Gaol (Riccoboni 2010 & *forthcoming*) indicate this area was densely settled from c. 500 BC until the 3rd century AD. If the excavations at 51 East St Helen Street were deeper then it is almost certain that prehistoric and Roman settlement would have been uncovered, but instead will be preserved *in situ* beneath the new extension. The only possible surviving evidence for Roman activity was a soil layer. The medieval and early post-medieval walls and layers which were discovered during this watching brief fit in well with the known medieval and post-medieval intensive occupation of the town and add to the growing understanding of the history of East St Helen Street.

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

7. ARCHIVE

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 Finds

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services but will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course under accession number OXCMS: 2012.57.

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Appendix 1; Context inventory

Context	Type	Description	Width (m)	Length (m)	Depth (m)	Finds	Date
100	Deposit	Dark grey brown sandy loam	Site	Site	0.20	Pottery	Roman & medieval & post medieval
101	Deposit	Dark grey brown sandy loam	site	Site	0.20	pottery	Roman & medieval & post medieval
102	Masonry	Roughly hewn stone wall N-S aligned	1.10	4.70	0.20	None	Medieval?
103	cut	Construction trench for 102	1.10	4.70	0.20	n/a	n/a
104	Deposit	Dark grey brown silty clay	0.60 (min)	2.90	0.55 (min)	Pottery & glass bottles & clay pipe	Post-medieval
105	Cut	Large pit	0.60 (min)	2.90	0.55 (min)	n/a	n/a
106	Deposit	Dark greyish black silty clay	0.60 (min)	1.70	0.45	pottery	Roman

Context	Type	Description	Width (m)	Length (m)	Depth (m)	Finds	Date
107	Deposit	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.60 (min)	1.70	0.15 (min)	pottery	Roman
108	Deposit	Dark greyish brown silty clay	0.60 (min)	Site	0.30	Pottery, & tile	Early post medieval
109	Deposit	Mid-dark brownish grey gravelly silt	0.60 (min)	Site	unknown	Bricks, asbestos	Modern
110	cut	Sub rectangular construction cut for 112	0.90	0.90	at least 1m	n/a	n/a
111	Deposit	Concrete cap for well 112	0.25	0.35	0.10	None	Modern
112	masonry	Well	/	/	c. 1m	None	Medieval
113	Deposit	Concrete with iron fitting	0.25	0.25	0.10	n/a	None
114	Deposit	Dark brownish grey silty clay	0.25	0.25	0.30	Pottery	Medieval
115	Cut	Pit	0.75	1.25	0.30	n/a	n/a
116	Masonry	Wall	0.90	1.60	0.30	none	Medieval?
117	cut	Construction trench for 116	0.90	1.60	0.30	n/a	n/a
118	Masonry	Buttress?	0.60	0.50	0.12	None	None
119	Cut	Construction trench for 118	0.60	0.50	0.12	n/a	n/a
120	Deposit	Dark brownish black ashy silt	c. 0.20	1.0	0.05	None	None
121	Deposit	Dark brownish grey clay silt mortar	0.50	0.50	0.02	None	None
122	Deposit	Mottled yellow brown clay silt	0.60 (min)	c. 2.90m	0.40	None	Post-medieval
123	Deposit	Light brown cream silty sand	1m (min)	1.5	0.20	Animal bone	early post medieval
124	Cut	Pit	1m (min)	1.5	0.20	n/a	n/a

Plate 1; showing original stud wall on left side of photo



Plate 2; Layer (108) and Pit [105] (site code ABESH 12)



Plate 3; Wall 102 looking east (site code ABESH12)



Plate 4; Section 1.4 showing pit 114 & Wall 116 (Site code ABESH12)

