

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

GABLE COTTAGE, MAIN STREET, FRINGFORD

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 6049 2891

On behalf of

Banks Design Architects

AUGUST 2012

REPORT FOR Banks Design Architects
2 The Granary
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services during ground works at Gable Cottage, Main Street, Fringford, Oxfordshire (SP 6049 2891). A total of five site visits were made during the excavation of wall footing trenches across the site of the new build (Planning Ref: 11/00999/F). Five late 18th – early 19th century wall foundations, two late 19th – early 20th century pits and four undated pits were recorded. No other features or finds of archaeological significance, in particular Roman or medieval were present, although this absence may well be due to the sides of the footings trenches collapsing.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located in the centre of the village, on the southern side of Main Street (NGR SP 6049 2891). The site lies at approximately 75m AOD and is currently in domestic use. The underlying geology is Glaciofluvial Deposits of sand and gravel, which were seen during the trench excavations as orange mid brown fine sand with no inclusions in it.

1.2 Planning Background

Cherwell District Council granted planning permission for the demolition of the existing sub-standard dwelling and construction of 1 no. detached house and garage (11/00999/F).

Due to the potential presence of archaeological remains an archaeological watching brief was required as a condition of planning permission during the groundworks. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work. Based on the *Brief* a *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS 2011). This document 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

The archaeological *Brief* (OCAS 2011) and the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2011) set out the archaeological background to the site and detailed the known Historical Environment Record (HER) assets located within a radius of the site.

The development site lies within an area of some archaeological interest located within the core of the historical village. One hundred metres north of the site Roman settlement evidence has been recorded during the development of Crosslands and the Paddock (HER PRN 15925). Excavations revealed a long-lived and complex sequence of Romano British occupation from the late 1st – 2nd century until the 4th century, mostly comprised of low status settlement. An early medieval element, dated to the 10th and 11th centuries, consisted of field boundaries, which are close to the alignments of major late Roman ditches. There is clear evidence of the survival of these boundaries into the 19th century. A continuation of both the Roman and medieval settlements was recorded in further archaeological investigations 150m of the relatively application site.

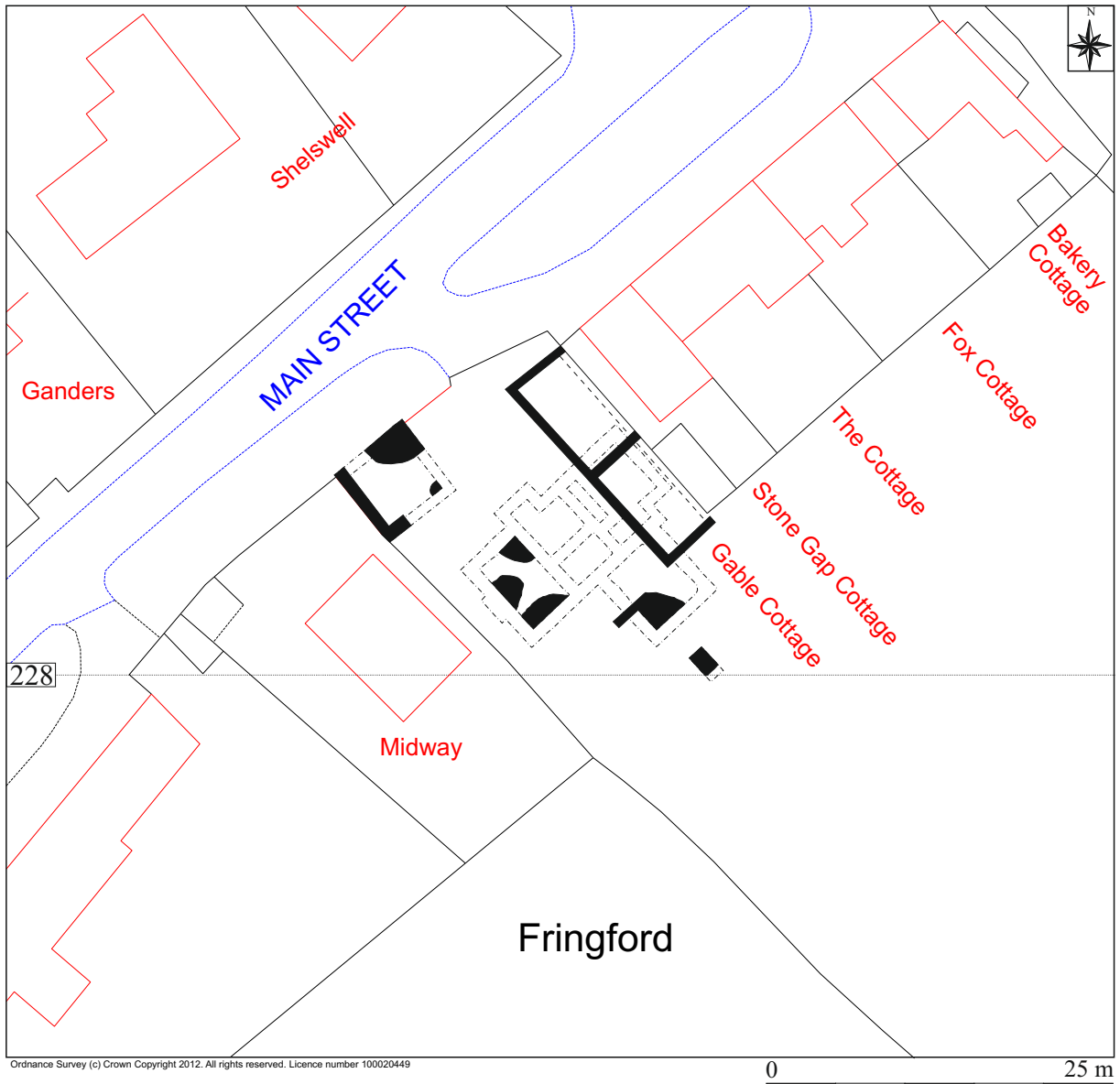
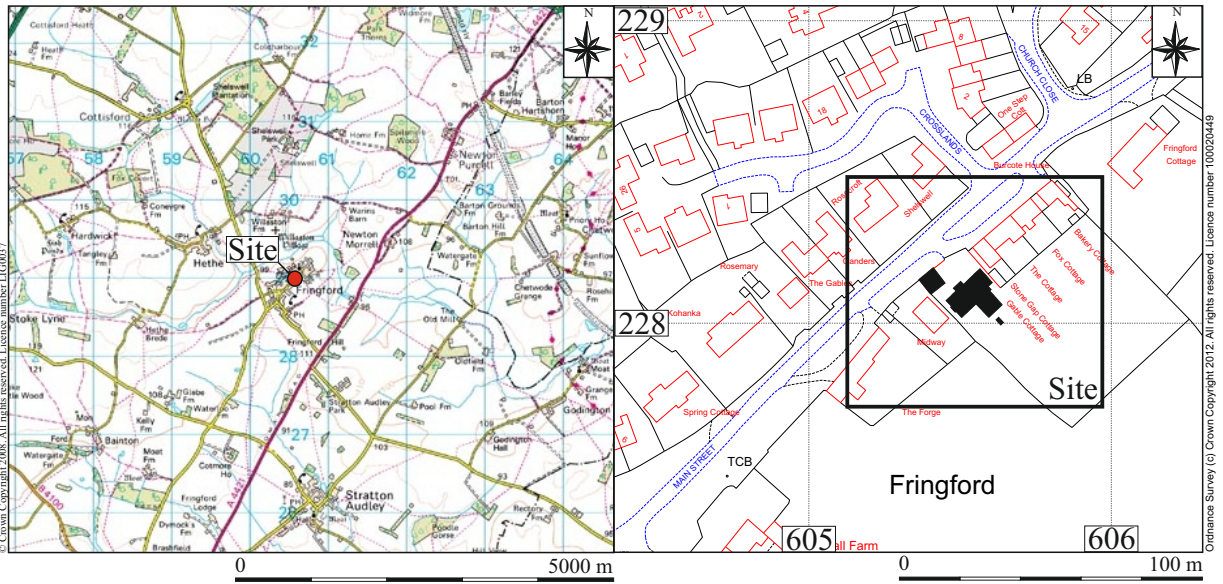


Figure 1. Site location

The site is shown as undeveloped on the early edition Ordnance Survey maps. However the Davis map of 1797 shows a number of cottages in the vicinity.

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.

And in particular:

- To record any evidence associated with the known Roman settlement, and the medieval and post-medieval village.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a *Written Scheme of Investigation* agreed with OCAS. 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 (2008).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of ground works associated with the development. This included the excavation of a geotechnical pit, footings for the house and garage.

All ground reduction was achieved using a combination of a tracked excavator Kamatsu PC 78MR fitted with a ditching bucket and limited hand excavation.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded in accordance with all accepted professional standards. A general photographic record of the work was kept and will form of the part site archive.

4 RESULTS

All features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers with no brackets indicate feature cuts, numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material and numbers in bold indicate any form of masonry.

4.1 Field Results (Figure 2 & 3)

The excavated footing trenches for the two new-builds were 97.5m long in total, 0.8 – 0.9m wide and 1.20 – 2.10m deep from the present ground surface. A geotechnical pit measuring 2.30 × 1.20m, was excavated to a depth of 1.20m.

The natural ground was orange mid brown sand (103), 0.70 – 0.90m below modern ground level. Overlying the natural was 0.45 – 0.50m thick reddish mid brown sandy silt with up to c. 35% gravel (102), it was interpreted as subsoil.

Cut through deposit (102) into the natural (103), was linear stonewall **115**, which measured 1.80m deep, 0.60m wide and 2.20m long (as observed) (*Fig. 3, S.1*). It was built of sub-angular randomly or uncoursed stone with a maximum size of c. 200 x 300 x 100mm. Construction cut 116 was not clearly perceptible. Wall **115** was interpreted as the possible northwest wall of a post-medieval cellar.

Also cut through subsoil (102) into the natural (103) was a group of three large pits located in the southwest part of the site (*Fig. 2*). There were no stratigraphic relations present between the pits. Description of pits: sub-circular 1.10m deep pit 109 (*Fig. 3, S.2*) with steep sides and concave base, was fill by 0.64m thick mid brown sandy silt (107) and 0.56m thick greyish light brown clay (106), which frequently contained sub-angular medium sized stone. Northeast of the pit 109 was located a possibly sub-circular 0.84m deep pit 110, fill by 0.84m thick greyish light brown silty clay, which contained small and medium size sub-angular stones, and occasional charcoal. Southeast of the pit 109 was located large sub-oval 1.08m deep pit 123 (*Fig 3, S.2*), with steep sides and flattish concave base. Its lowest fill was 0.20m thick organic bluish dark grey silty clay (108), overlies by 0.39m thick mid brown sandy silt (124). The upper fill was formed of the 0.85m thick greyish light brown clay (125) containing moderate sub-angular small and medium size stones. These three undated pits are interpreted as sand and gravel quarry pits.

The above described features were overlain by 0.20 – 0.50m thick dark greyish brown silty topsoil (101), which covered entire site.

The sub-circular pit 112=104, measuring approximately 6.70m wide and 1.50m deep was cut through the deposit (102) and into the natural (103); it was possibly cut from the topsoil (101), although this was not clear during the investigation (*Fig. 3, S.1 & S.3*). The lower fill of the pit 112, was 0.40m thick dark grey clay (114), contained a large amount of late 19th and early 20th century pottery sherds, bottles and a leather shoe. Overlying context (114) was light brown to mid grey silty clay (113)=(105) 1.10m thick, which formed the upper fill of the pit. The assemblage of finds recovered from this context was similar to that from the lower fill (114), except for a few residual 18th and early 19th century sherds. The pit was located next to wall **115** and interpreted as a rubbish pit.

A second early 20th century pit was seen in the footing trench for the new garage. Pit 132 (*Fig. 3, S.4*) was sub-oval/irregular in shape and had steep concave sides and a concave base. The pit was 2.58m wide, 3.40m long (as seen), and 1.08m deep. The lower fill was 1.08m thick mid grey silty clay (133), which contained two lumps of yellowish light brown sand (134) and occasional small and medium size sub-angular stone. From the primary fill (133) three fragments of early 20th century bricks were recovered.

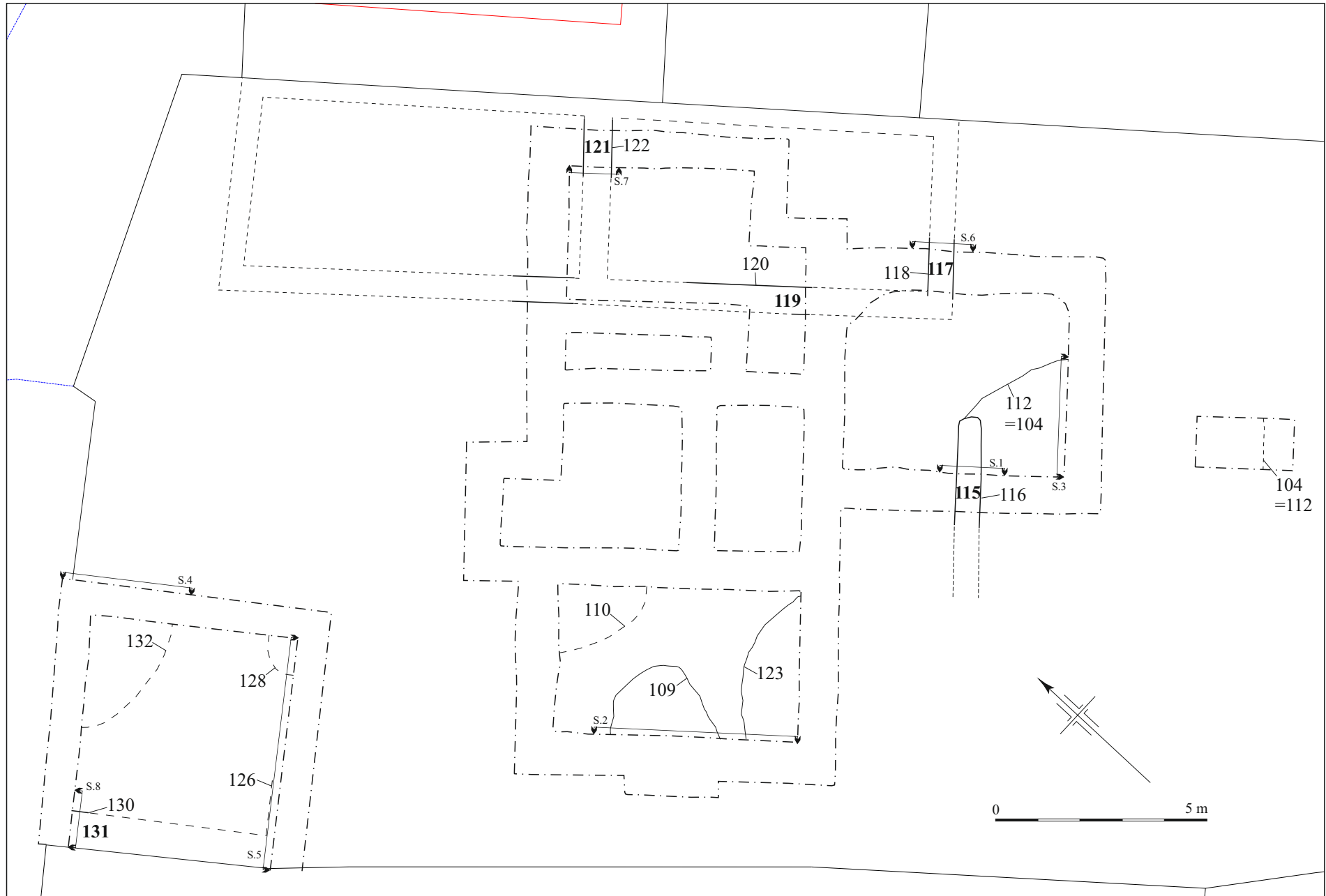


Figure 2. Site plan

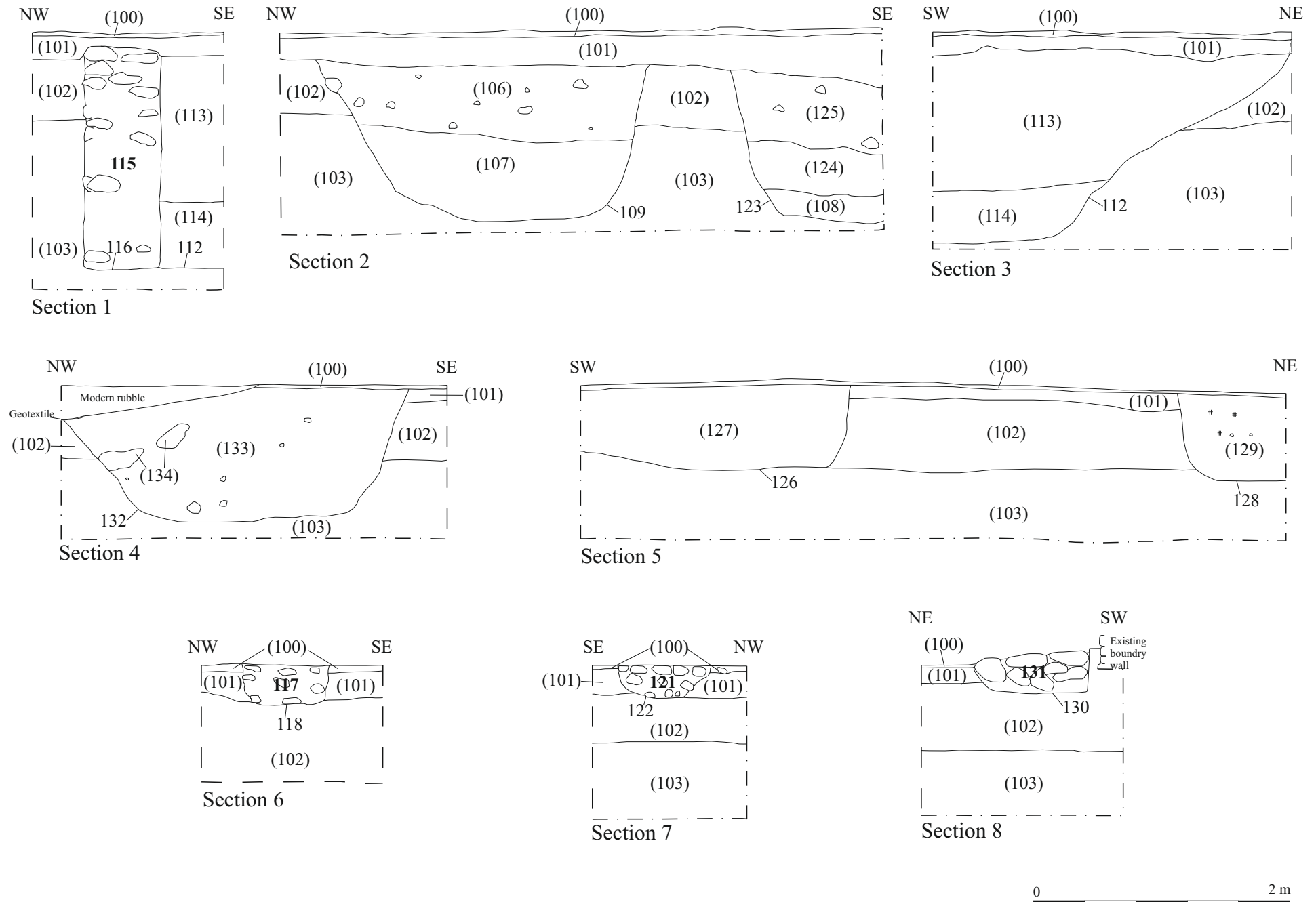


Figure 3. Selected sections

Adjacent to pit 132 was a small circular pit 128, 0.65m deep (*Fig. 3, S. 5*), with vertical sides and a flattish base. It was filled by mid grey silty clay (129) containing occasional charcoal. No dating evidence was obtained.

Within the monitored area shallow wall foundations **117, 119, 121** and **131** (*Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, S.6, S.7 & S.8*) were recorded of the recently demolished Gable Cottage and additional buildings. All wall foundations were built of the sub-angular randomly coursed stones of maximum size *c.* 200 x 400 x 280mm, and bonded with yellowish light brown sandy lime mortar. The wall foundation construction cuts 118, 120, 122 and 130, were *c.* 0.70m wide and *c.* 0.30m deep, except cut 126 (*Fig. 3, S.5*), which was 0.66m deep and backfilled with mid greyish brown sandy silt (127). Foundation cut 126 is of the same building as wall 131. No dating evidence was obtained from these walls; however Gable Cottage is dated to the late 18th century.

The entire monitored area was covered by the recent demolition layer (100), which was comprised building material and 20th century pottery sherds and glass.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The reliability of the results is considered to be good. The archaeological watching brief took place in clement, dry conditions with very good light and visibility. However the depth of the footing trenches, up to 2.10m, and nature of geological conditions meant they could not safely be entered. On occasion access was limited due to trench collapse. Excellent cooperation from the ground workers ensured that sufficient time was allowed to investigate and record the archaeological features to the appropriate standards.

5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

5.1 Pottery by David Gilbert

A large quantity of pottery sherds was recovered from contexts (105=113 and 114); a representative sample was examined in the field. These were recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994) and not retained.

Fabrics included:

OXEST:	Late English Stoneware. 1750 +	(113)
CRM:	Creamware, late 18 th – early 19 th century	(113)
WHEW:	Mass-produced white earthenwares, 19 th - 20 th C.	(105=113 & 114)

5.2 Glass by David Gilbert

Several intact and semi-intact bottles were recovered from contexts (105=113 and 114), these included:

Three rectangular in section bottles from context (105), moulded with the inscription “Califig” on the side and “Successors to the California Fig Syrup Co.” on the front. This dates after 1879.

Three square-section “Garston’s HP Sauce” bottles were recovered from context (113); this product was first registered in 1895.

A “Daddies Sauce” bottle that dates to post 1904 when the product was first registered was recovered from context (113).

These were not retained.

5.3 Ceramic Building Materials (CBM) by Gwilym Williams

Several small and medium size fragments of bricks were recovered from the main fill (133) of pit 132. All fragments were of modern origin. None of these finds were retained.

5.4 Environmental Remains

No deposits suitable for environmental analysis were identified, and no samples were taken

6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief revealed five wall foundations, as well as two dated and four undated pits. All features were related to buildings dating from late 18th century to the mid 20th century.

The stratigraphy indicates that the first stage of construction is possibly wall **115**, which was probably the northwest external wall of a late 18th century cellar. The three large possible sand and gravel quarry pits 109, 110 and 123 were perhaps contemporary.

The shallow wall foundations **117**, **119**, **121** of the recently demolished Gable Cottage, and the wall foundation **131** of the additional building represent a second stage of building activities. The building associated with wall foundation **131** is visible on the 1881 1st Ed. Ordnance Survey map. Another building to the northeast fronted Main Street but no remains of it were seen during the watching brief. As there is no indication of any pits for gravel or sand extraction marked on the 1st Ed OS map, it is most likely that these were earlier.

The third stage of activity on site included the falling out of use of the late 18th century cellar and the establishment of a large rubbish pit 112=104 in its place. There was a large quantity of pottery sherds, glass and a leather shoe, dating pit 112=104 to the late 19th or the early 20th centuries. Pit 132, which contained fragments of early 20th century brick, was possibly of the same date as was pit 128. These two pits might indicate rebuilding works on additional building.

No other features or finds of archaeological significance, in particular Roman or medieval were present.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

Physical record

None of finds were retained

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire County Museums' Store with the accession code 2011.177.

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