

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

46 ACRE END STREET, EYNHAM, OXFORDSHIRE

SP 4318 0933

On behalf of

Wychwood Homes

AUGUST 2006

REPORT FOR Wychwood Homes
Wychwood House
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FIELDWORK 20 - 21 July 2006

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Summary

An evaluation of this site was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services. The site had been ploughed prior to the expansion of Eynsham in the medieval period. The ploughing may be of Romano-British date. A ditch, probably an internal boundary within a burgage plot, was dated to the 14th century. Boundary ditches at the rear of the burgage plots were found. These had been recut. One may have been deliberately backfilled in the 17th century. Another one may have been earlier and of 14th century date.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located on the north side of Acre End Street and west of Mill Street in Eynsham (NGR SP 4318 0933). The area to be developed is approximately 0.3ha in area. The underlying geology is Second Terrace Gravels and the site lies at approximately 67m OD. The existing use is an overgrown garden with a series of outbuildings and sheds.

1.2 Planning Background

A planning application has been submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council to develop the site for residential purposes with nine dwellings with associated garaging and car parking (06/0574/P/FP. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) advised that an archaeological field evaluation should be carried out prior to the determination of the application.

1.3 Archaeological Background

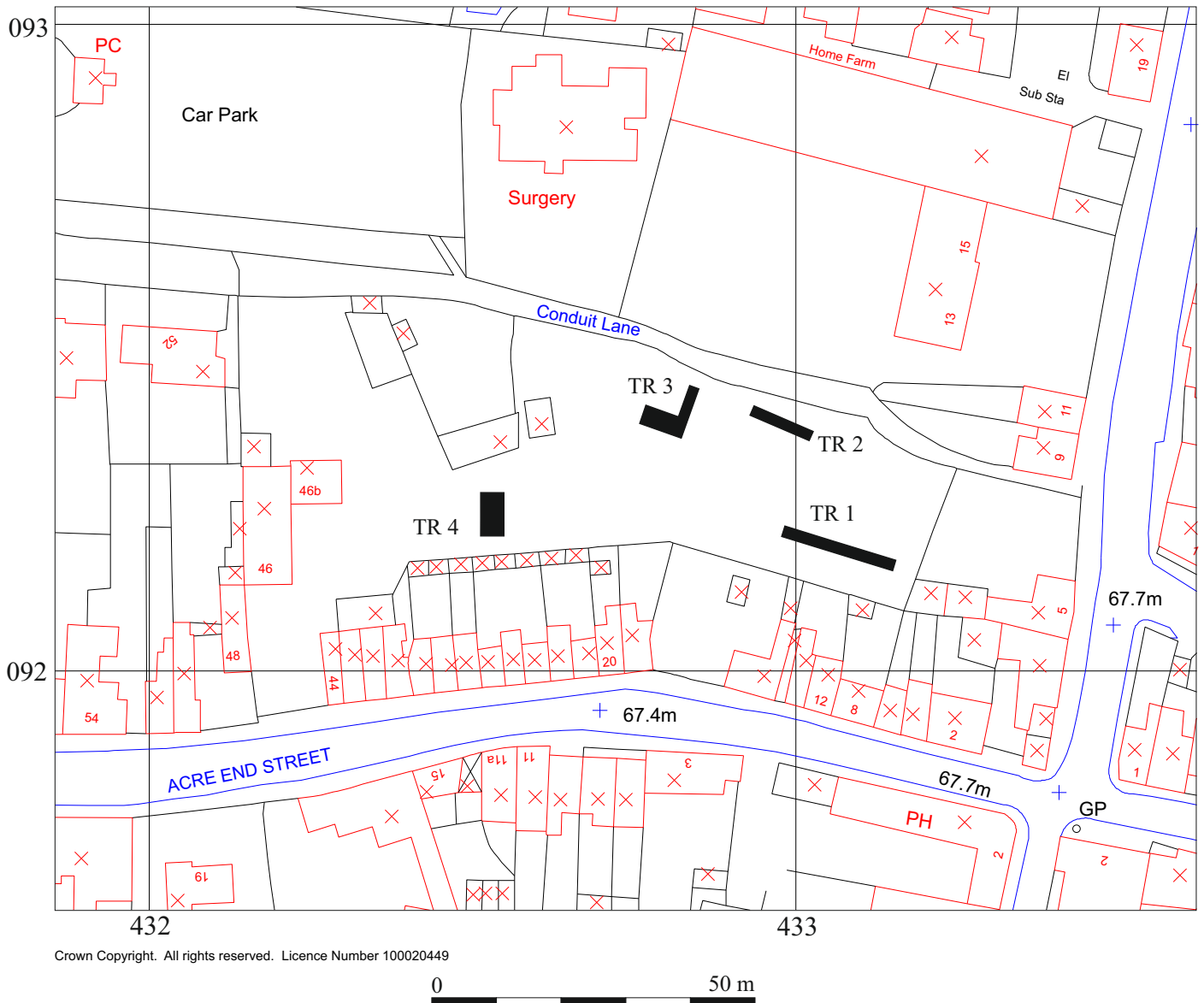
The site of the proposed development lies just to the north-west of the north side of Eynsham Abbey and near to the market place, adjacent to which stand the thirteenth century Parish Church and a fourteenth century market cross. The centre of Eynsham appears to retain most of the elements of its early twelfth century development. The site appears to lie within this area (Rodwell K ed. 1975, *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire. A Survey of the New County*. Oxon Archaeological Unit Survey No. 3).

The site appears to lie in the former rear of burgage plots fronting Acre End Street. The lane on the north side of the site may have been a back lane to these plots. A brewery was formerly on part of the site and one existing building is associated with this. A small structure is shown on the 1st edition Ordnance survey map of 1876 in the extreme southeast corner of the site. This had gone by 1913.

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.



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Figure 1. Site and trench location

- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.
- In particular to obtain sufficient information on the significance, character, state of preservation and extent of deposits in order that a suitable mitigation policy can be drawn up.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* issued by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and was to involve the excavation of a total of five trenches across the site (Fig. 1).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in a *Written Scheme of Investigation* agreed with the OCAS. 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).

3.2 Methodology

The sample level was to be achieved by the excavation of 60m of trenching 1.6m wide. However the presence of trees and vehicles on the site restricted the amount of trenching possible. Three trenches each 1.6m wide and 18m, 10m and 3.5m in length were excavated. It had been the intention to excavate Trench 2 longer but as the trench was filled by a single ditch it was curtailed. In addition Trench 3 was 8.2m long with an area of 5.4 x 3m attached to the southwest end (Fig. 1).

The trenches were excavated by a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological deposits.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. The trench number precedes the individual context number so (1/03) is deposit 03 within Trench 1.

4.1 Trench 1 (*Figure 2*)

The natural comprised loose to compact mixed gravels with occasional larger stones (1/06). This varied in colour from dark orange to light cream-brown. Shallow plough marks orientated east/west were visible in the top of the natural.

Cut into the natural was the terminal of a ditch orientated east/west. The east end was an irregular rounded terminal that was only 40mm deep [1/11]. Further along the ditch was 800mm deep with a near vertical side and a rounded base [1/14]. The ditch was at least 800mm wide with the northern side under the trench balk. The feature was filled by compact dark brown-grey silty clay with 90% by volume of small gravel (1/12, 1/15).

Also cut into the natural gravel was a small circular pit [1/10] with a diameter of 450mm and a depth of 170mm. The sides varied from 45-60° and the pit had a rounded base. It was filled with a firm mid grey-brown slightly clayey sandy silt with 10% small gravel (1/09).

Overlying the features described above was a ploughsoil (1/05) composed of friable mid grey-brown sandy silt with 5% gravel and occasional pieces of ceramic building material (cbm) and mortar flecks. The deposit was 380mm thick. This was overlaid at the east end of the trench by a fairly loose layer of cbm and limestone rubble in a grey silty matrix (1/04). This was a make-up layer for a rough compact surface of light yellow-brown sandy silt with c. 30% mixed gravels, small limestone blocks, cobbles, and frequent sandy mortar (1/03). The west end ran at an angle to the trench extending 3.70m into the trench on the north side and 3m on the south side. The deposit was 80-100mm thick.

Cut into the surface (1/03) was a small posthole [1/08]. This was roughly oval in plan (380 x 540mm) and 180mm deep with a steep west side (75°) and elsewhere irregular sides and a flat base. It was filled by compact dark grey-brown sandy silt with occasional brick pieces (1/07).

Overlying the surface and the ploughsoil was a topsoil of friable dark brown-black sandy silt with c. 10% small gravel (1/02). This was 200mm thick at the east end of the trench increasing to c. 300mm at the west end. Cut from within this material was a large well [1/13] that also cut into the gravel. The well was c. 1.6m in diameter. The top 600mm of the well was constructed from flat blocks of limestone. It had been capped with limestone that had collapsed. The well was 2m+ deep. The well lay to the south of the trench with only part of the north side within the trench.

At the extreme east end of the trench was a layer of limestone rubble with the occasional piece of cbm. This overlaid the topsoil and extended 2.3m into the trench. It was up to 300mm thick.

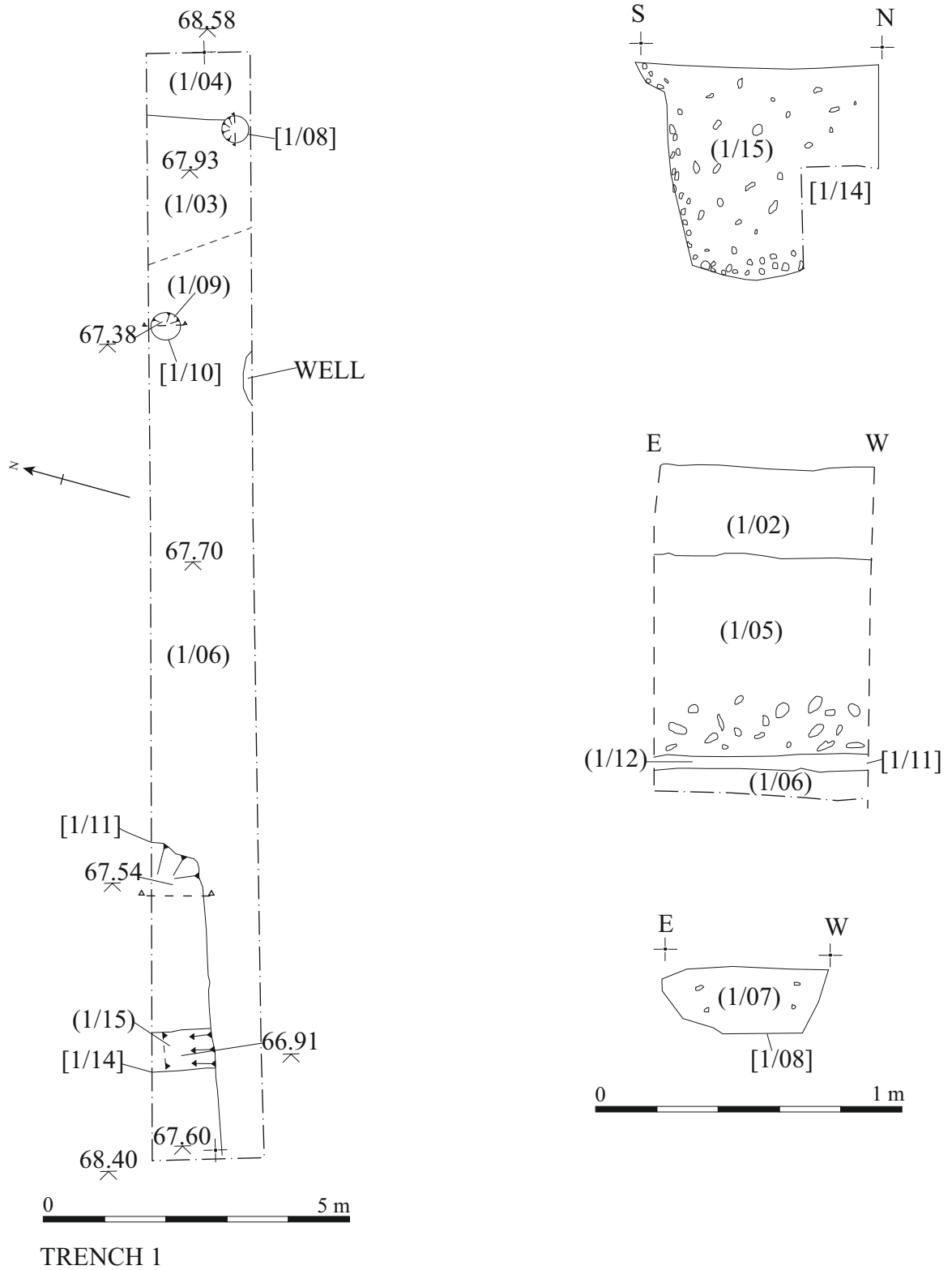


Figure 2. Trench 1 Plan and Sections 5

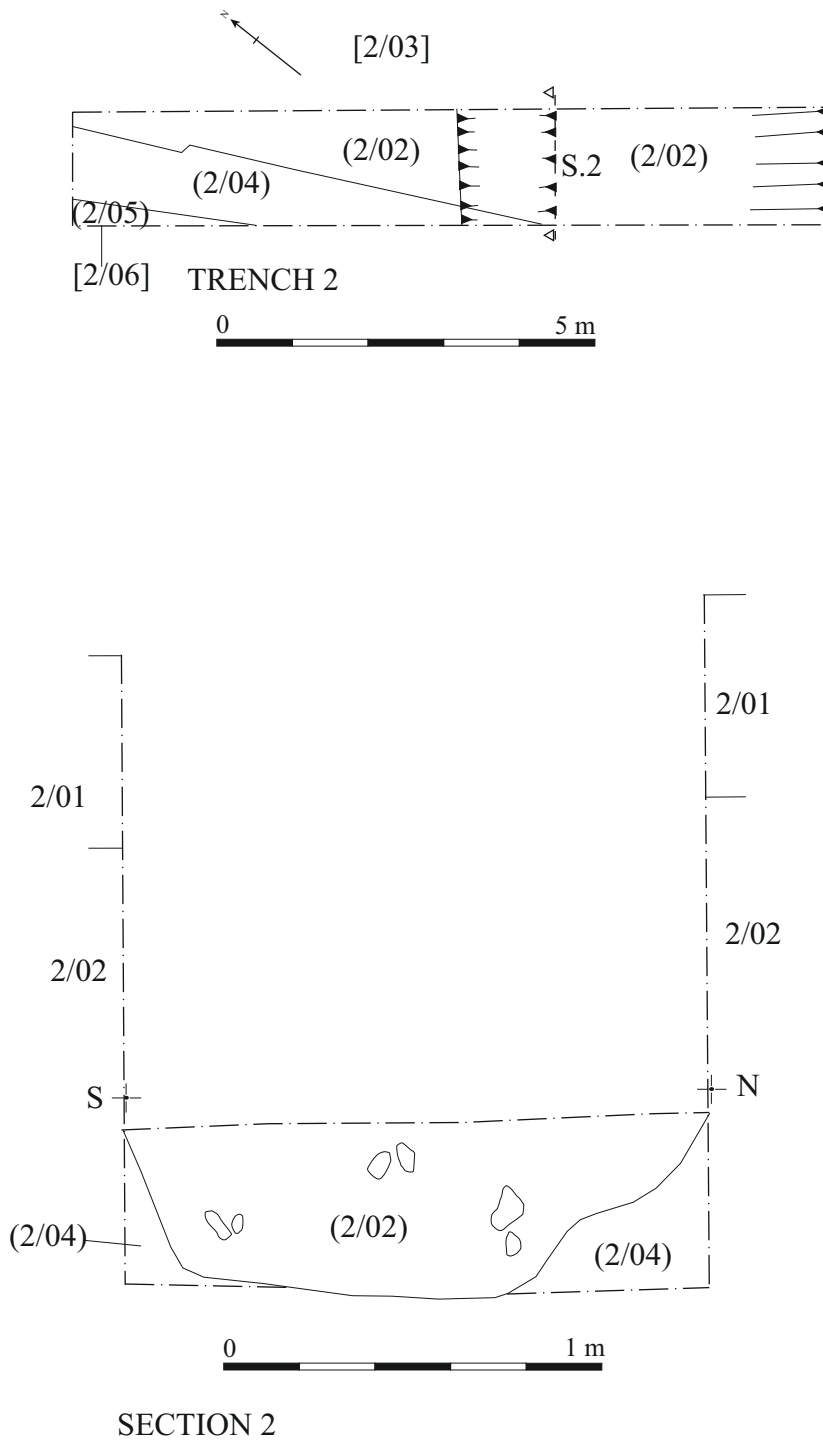


Figure 3. Trench 2 Plan and Sections 6

4.2 Trench 2 (*Figure 3*)

The natural gravel was a dark orange in colour (2/04). This was cut by two apparently parallel ditches orientated northwest/southeast. Ditch [2/06] was only seen in the extreme northeast corner of the trench. It only extended 350mm into the trench and was seen over a 2.5m length. It was at least 700mm deep and filled with compact mid orange-brown sandy silt with frequent mortar and limestone fragments (2/05).

The other ditch [2/03] mostly filled the trench although at a slight angle to it. This was 1.55m wide and *c.* 1.12m deep. Only the lower parts of the sides were seen. The south side was at *c.* 65° while the north side was irregular but generally at 45°. It was filled with fairly compact mid orange-brown slightly clayey sandy silt with 5% mortar flecks/small fragments, and limestone fragments (*c.* 80mm long), with 10% gravel (2/02). Sealing the ditch fill was 300-450mm of topsoil (2/01). The homogenous fill of the ditch suggests a deliberate backfilling.

It was not possible to keep the finds separate from the two ditches during machining. The seventeenth century pottery may be related to the deliberate backfilling of one of the ditches.

4.3 Trench 3 (*Figure 4*)

The natural within this trench was a dark reddish-brown silty sandy clay mixed with gravel (3/02). This was at 68.05-68.16m OD and cut by a recut ditch. The original ditch [3/08] was more than 3m wide being truncated on its north side. The lower part of the south side was at 45° increasing to 60° on the upper part. The base was slightly rounded and the ditch was 950mm deep. The dryness of the fill prevented differentiation of all fills. The general fill was a dark brown-grey sandy earth with 20% gravel (3/05). Within this was a dump of angular limestone in a matrix of dark brown-grey sandy earth (3/06) and a layer of gravel (3/07) deposited when the ditch was redug as [3/04].

The redug ditch [3/04] was much smaller being only 800mm wide and 700mm deep with near vertical sides. It was filled by dark brown-grey earth with 30% gravel and occasional pieces of limestone.

The ditches were sealed by 300mm of topsoil (3/01).

4.4 Trench 4 (*Figure 4*)

The natural was gravel (4/06) at a depth of 67.20m OD. Overlying this was a 360mm thick ploughsoil containing some brick fragments (4/05) which in turn was covered by a hard mortar floor (4/04). This floor was 60mm thick. Overlying the floor was a 500mm thick deposit of brick and stone demolition rubble including parts of brick walls (4/03). This was covered by 420mm of topsoil (4/02) and sand (4/01). Cut into the ploughsoil (4/05) and sealed by the floor (4/04) was a salt-glazed drain [4/07].

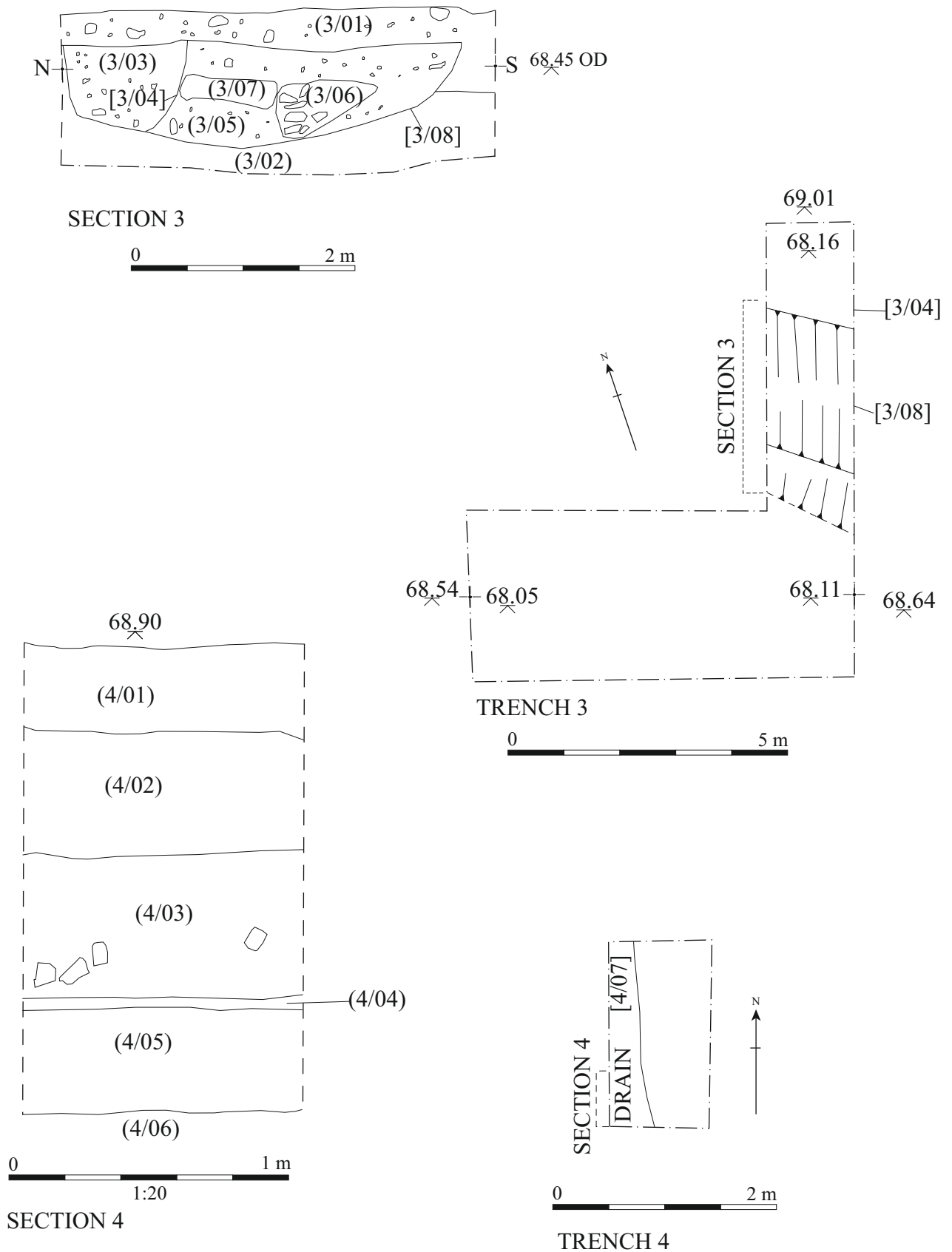


Figure 4. Trench 3 & 4 Plans and Sections 8

5 FINDS

5.1 The Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 15 sherds with a total weight of 170g. Other than a single residual sherd of Romano-British ware, it was all medieval or later, with the range of ware types present suggesting that there was activity at the site throughout the medieval period from the 14th century onwards.

The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 3 sherds, 17g.
 OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050 – 1400. 2 sherds, 55g.
 OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 1 sherd, 5g.
 OXBB: Minety-type Ware, Mid 12th - 15th century. 1 sherd, 6g.
 OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 4 sherds, 41g.
 OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 2 sherds, 33g.
 OXFH: Border wares, 1550 - 1700. 1 sherd, 5g.

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*.

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

Tr	Context	RB		OXAC		OXBF		OXY		OXBB		OXAM		OXDR		OXFH		Date
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1	7											1	2			1	5	M16thC
1	15	1	8	3	17			1	5	1	6	3	39					14thC
2	2+5					2	55							2	33			17thC
	Total	1	8	3	17	2	55	1	5	1	6	4	41	2	33	1	5	

6 DISCUSSION

The site appears to be in the rear of medieval burgage plots stretching back from Acre End Street. Within Trench 1 was a ditch that may have been a division in one of the burgage plots. While the area had been ploughed it was not possible to determine whether the ditch had been dug prior to the ploughing or after. It is likely that the area was ploughed before the medieval settlement extended this far from the centre of Eynsham. Given the residual sherd of Romano-British pottery it is possible that the ploughing is of this date. The ploughsoil is likely also to have been cultivated within the burgage plot. The 14th century date for the ditch within Trench 1 shows that the medieval settlement had extended this far by that date. The number of sherds within the small section excavated indicates occupation of the site as opposed to the ditch relating to an enclosure or paddock. Again the pit seen cut into the natural within the same trench is likely to be associated with the medieval use of the burgage plot.

The surface and the associated posthole at the east end of Trench 1 must have been associated with the small building shown on the 1st edition OS map. This would have been an external surface. Either this was a relatively early building of mid 16th-17th

century date or the pottery within the backfill of the posthole is residual. However it is probably of around the mid 16th century although the posthole may be later than the construction of the building and the building could have been built slightly earlier. The rubble overlying the topsoil may be associated with the demolition of this building or more likely the refurbishment of the building on the adjacent land to the east. The well again must have been associated with this building.

The rear of the burgage plots was defined by ditches presumably associated with a bank. From the different size of the ditches seen in Trenches 2 and 3 it appears that the owners of individual burgage plots were responsible for their own sections. Whether one ditch within Trench 2 is of 14th century date while the other is 17th century or later is uncertain. The two earlier sherds may be residual. As noted above the finds could not be kept separate from the two ditches during machining.

The only other archaeological remains seen were the floor in Trench 4. This and the demolition rubble must be associated with a brewery building. However no building is shown in this location on the OS maps of 1876, 1899 and 1913.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Very little remains associated with the medieval and later use of the site appear to be present on this site. The results confirm the use of the site as the rear of burgage plots extending back from Acre End Street. The rear parts of these were probably used for horticulture or as orchards. There is no sign of industrial or craft activities being carried out.

The site has been ploughed and this probably pre-dates the medieval settlement..

Whilst any decision regarding further work on the site must rest with Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services, it is the opinion of John Moore Heritage Services that no further archaeological work needs to be conducted regarding the development of the site.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217

APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
Trench 1				1.6	18		
1/01	Layer	Rubble	0.30	Tr.	2.30	cbm	?Modern
1/02	Layer	Topsoil	0.20-0.30	Tr.	Tr.		Modern
1/03	Layer	Surface	0.08-0.10	Tr.	3.00-3.70		?Post-medieval
1/04	Layer	Make-up	0.10	Tr.	3.00		?Post-medieval
1/05	Layer	Ploughsoil	0.38	Tr	Tr		
1/06	Natural	Gravel	-	Tr	Tr	-	
1/07	Fill	Fill of 1/08	0.18	0.38	0.54	Pot	Mid C16th
1/08	Cut	Posthole	0.18	0.38	0.54	-	?Post-medieval
1/09	Fill	Fill of 1/10	0.17	0.45	0.45		
1/10	Cut	Pit	0.17	0.45	0.45	-	
1/11	Cut	Ditch	0.04	0.90+	5.30	-	
1/12	Fill	Fill of 1/11	0.04	0.90.	5.30.		
1/13	Feature	Well	2m+	1.6	1.6		?Post-medieval
1/14	Cut	Ditch	0.68	0.80+	5.30+	-	
1/15	Fill	Fill of 1/14	0.68	0.80+	5.30+	Pot	C14th
Trench 2				1.6	10		
2/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.30-0.45	Tr	Tr		
2/02	Fill	Fill of 2/03	1.12	0.70+	Tr		?C17th
2/03	Cut	Ditch	1.12	0.70+	Tr	-	
2/04	Gravel	Natural	-	-	-		
2/05	Fill	Fill of 2/06	0.70+	0.35+	2.5+	-	?C17th
2/06	Cut	Ditch	0.70+	0.35+	2.5+	-	
Trench 3							
3/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.30	Tr	Tr		
3/02	Gravel	Natural	-	Tr	Tr		
3/03	Fill	Fill of 3/04	0.70	0.80	Tr		
3/04	Cut	Ditch	0.70	0.80	Tr	-	
3/05	Fill	Fill of 3/08	0.30	1.70	Tr		
3/06	Fill	Fill of 3/08	0.60	0.65	Tr		
3/07	Fill	Fill of 3/08	0.25	0.75	Tr		
3/08	Cut	Ditch	0.95	3.00	Tr		
Trench 4				1.60	3.50		
4/01	Layer	Sand	2.80	Tr	Tr		
4/02	Layer	Topsoil	0.42	Tr	Tr		
4/03	Layer	Rubble	0.50	Tr	Tr		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	 Finds	 Date
4/04	Layer	Floor	0.06	Tr	Tr		
4/05	Layer	Ploughsoil	0.35	Tr	Tr		
4/06	Gravel	Natural	-	Tr	Tr		
4/07	Cut	Drain	-	0.80	Tr		