



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT**  
**ABBEY FARM BARNS,**  
**STATION ROAD, EYNHAM**  
**OXFORDSHIRE**  
**NGR SP 4318 0913**

*On behalf of*

*Rivar Ltd.*

**FEBRUARY 2013**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>REPORT FOR</b>       | Rivar Ltd.<br>5 West Mills,<br>Newbury,<br>Berkshire,<br>RG14 5HG  |
| <b>PREPARED BY</b>      | Gwilym Williams  |
| <b>ILLUSTRATION BY</b>  | Andrej Čelovský & Gwilym Williams  |
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| <b>ENQUIRES TO</b>      | John Moore Heritage Services<br>Hill View<br>Woodperry Road<br>Beckley<br>Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ<br>Tel/Fax 01865 358300<br>Email: <a href="mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk">info@jmheritageservices.co.uk</a> |
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief during groundworks at Abbey Farm, Station Road, as the former agricultural barns were converted to domestic units. Archaeological remains comprising remains of potentially Roman activity, as well as a medieval road, and cobbled surfaces, a number of walls indicating the former existence of buildings, ditches and pits were present. Possible plots contained pits and postholes, although it is not clear whether these are indicative of occupation predating the absorption of this part of Eynsham into the abbey precinct in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The site is located to the east of Station Road, and south of the farmhouse (NGR SP 4318 0913). The underlying geology is Oxford Clay overlain by Second Gravel Terrace. The site was previously a farmyard with barns.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

West Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for conversion of barns to form eight dwellings (11/0131/P/FP). Due to the presence of archaeological remains a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission. This was due to the advice given to West Oxfordshire District Council by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS). A condition of the permission required an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during the work. OCAS prepared a *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. A *Written Scheme of Investigation*, which proposed a suitable methodology to satisfy the requirements of the Brief, was submitted to and accepted by the planning archaeologist. This is in line with PPS5 and Local Plan Policies.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The development site lies within an area of archaeological interest. It was located within the precinct of the former Benedictine abbey. Part of a large Neolithic enclosure was found in excavations to the east within parts of the churchyards of St Peter's Church and St Leonard's Church. Features belonging to an early Saxon settlement in the form of sunken-featured buildings, pits and hearths were found. The later Saxon settlement was in the form of timber halls and boundary ditches possibly associated with the minster church which documentary sources suggest was founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> of 8<sup>th</sup> century.

The minster was re-founded as a Benedictine abbey in 1005. This development site lies in the area the 11<sup>th</sup> century Abbey Farm and the later grange of about 13<sup>th</sup> century. Remains of the Saxon settlement were believed likely to exist within the site along with remains of buildings within this part of the Abbey precinct.

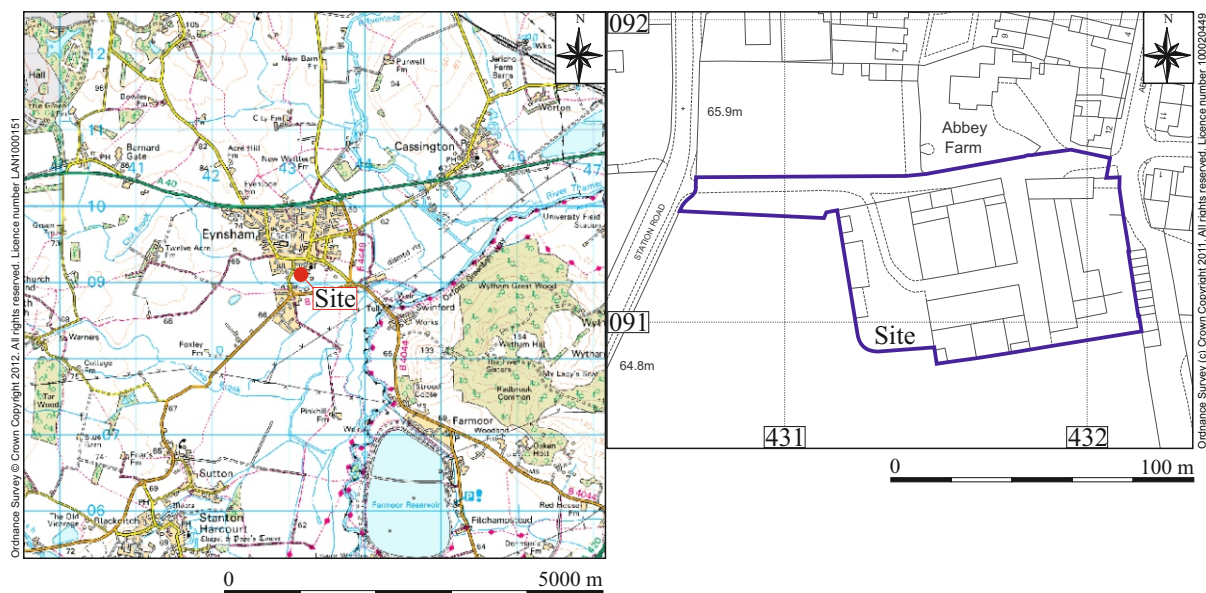


Figure 1. Site location

## 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 associated:
  - o with the Neolithic enclosure or landscape
  - o the Saxon settlement
  - o the Abbey buildings

## 3 STRATEGY

### 3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* from OCAS a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services and agreed with OCAS.

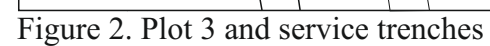
Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2008) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

### 3.2 Methodology

Excavation of the various archaeological impact zones within the proposal area was carried out by the main groundworks contractor with a 5-tonne, or smaller, 360° usually under archaeological supervision. An archaeologist was present on site during the course of most of the groundworks which had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains. This included surface stripping (internal and exterior), excavation for new foundations and services, and other invasive works; unmonitored areas are indicated above (Fig. 1).

## 4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material. Structural features such as walls and stone surfaces are indicated in **bold**.





#### 4.1 Field Results

For the most part, the watching brief consisted of monitoring or inspection of service-trenches with a limited number of areas of ground reduction. The report is laid out to illustrate and describe the various parts of the investigation area starting in the northeast with a concluding discussion.

##### **Plot 3 (200) and service trenches (3000) to the north**

Plot 3, which comprised a 19<sup>th</sup>-century barn (PRN 23935) with some standing remains of its medieval origins, was located in the northeast corner of the development area (Fig 2; P1). To the north of the putative medieval barn, two service trenches for incoming clean water and outgoing foul were monitored; limited ground reduction was also carried out in the eastern half of the barn. A road, pits (including one possible Romano-British example, predating the abbey), ditches and postholes were found within this area, potentially evidencing burgage plots and occupation within part of the post-Conquest new town of Eynsham.

Overlying the natural gravel (3017) was an intermittent deposit of red brown clay silt with moderate gravel (3016), which represented a former cultivation soil (Fig. 2; S1-4).

Cut into the cultivation soil (3016), was the edge of a possibly Romano-British pit 3005 (Fig. 2, S. 1), which was present in the southernmost service trench, measuring at least 1.75m, extending *c.* 0.3m into the trench, and 0.8m deep. The fill consisted of stiff dark grey silty clay and gravel (3004).



Figure 3. Ditch 3008

There were two features dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards: the ditch 3008 (Fig. 2; S1; Fig. 3) and the pit 3014 (not illustrated). The ditch 3008 was located in the southern service trench, extending into Plot 3 within the barn as ditch 203. The ditch was oriented at rough right angles to the road (3015) located along the whole of the northernmost of the two service trenches. The ditch 3008 was filled with dark brown to black clay sand and gravel – (3007) – yielding a single sherd of Cotswold-type ware.

To the east the pit 3014, which contained soft grey brown clay silt with gravel (3013), also yielded a sherd of Cotswold-type ware. It measured 2.2m long in section (east/west), more than 0.6m (north/south) and 0.4m deep. The gentle break of slope and rounded sides and base suggests that it might have been dug for gravel. It was not present in the northern service trench.

To the north, the road comprised layers of gravelly clay sand with less frequent clay sand layers interspersed (3015), the latter functioning as bedding layers prior to a new layer of metalling (the former) being laid down (Fig. 2; S 2; Fig. 4). There were at least 14 such layers, although as this was the side of the road, one should expect fewer repairs than towards the centre, where the road may well prove to be thicker, due to potentially being cambered, as well as more heavily rutted and consequently subject to more repair.



Figure 4. Road (3015).

It was not possible to explore the relationship between the road (3015) and the ditch 3008/203 as the ditch was only present in service trench and the barn; the road (3015) was only present in the northernmost service trench.

East of the ditch 3008/203 were two features 3012 and 3010 (Fig. 2; S3) which extended beyond both edges of the south service trench but were not present in either the north service trench or the Plot 3 barn to the south. The earlier feature, ditch 3012, which was at least 1.4m wide and 0.7m deep, extended beyond the edges of the service trench and was filled with dark brown to black clay silt and gravel (3011). Pottery – two sherds of Medieval Oxford Ware – dating from the late 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards was recovered from the fill. Cut into the east edge of the ditch 3012 was a large relatively shallow feature, pit 3010, which measured at approximately 3.1m east/west and 0.7m deep; it too extended beyond the edges of the service trench. It was filled with stiff grey dark silty clay and

gravel (3009), yielding a single sherd of Medieval Oxford Ware. It is quite possible that the comparatively smaller sherd from fill (3009) is residual and the pit that much later.



Fig 5. Cobbling 3006 associated with barn.

The features were overlain by the compacted dark brown to black gravelly clay sand (3001), which probably represents a post-medieval metalling of the access road; cut into this layer in front of the barn north entrance was a layer of rounded medium-sized cobbles (3006), the width of the barn door (Fig 2, S1; Fig. 5). This can clearly be associated with the barn. Sealing the post-medieval metalling (3001) and the later cobbles (3006) was the modern access road surface, compact yellow grey gravelly clay sand with occasional large flat stones measuring  $80 \times 60 \times 30\text{mm}$ .

| Context | L(m)  | B(m) | D(m) | Fill description                                  | Interpretation  |
|---------|-------|------|------|---|---|
| 3003    | >0.6  | 1.3  | 0.7  | (3002) red brown sandy clay, mod. gravel          | Possible ditch (Fig 2)  |
| 201     | 3.2   | >2.5 | Unk. | (202) firm mid brown sandy silt, occ. gravel      | Pit   |
| 205     | 1.6   | 1.1  | Unk. | (206) firm dark grey clay                         | Pit   |
| 207     | 0.5   | 0.5  | Unk. | (208) firm mid grey brown silt, freq. gravel      | Posthole  |
| 209     | 0.4   | 0.4  | Unk. | (210) firm mid grey brown sandy silt, occ. gravel | Posthole  |
| 211     | >6.25 | >2   | Unk. | (212) firm dark grey sandy silt, occ. gravel      | Difficult to interpret due to low lighting condition and that not excavated |

Table 1. Undated contexts in Plot 3 and service trenches

There were a total of six features in the Plot 3 barn (Table 1). The pit 205 was cut into the top of the ditch 203; it is undated. The pit 201 is also undated. Postholes 207 and 209 were located to the east of the ditch, but they do not comprise a clear structure. The feature 211 cannot be easily characterised as the feature was revealed at the level of ground reduction and could not be further investigated. Moreover, the light quality in the barn was too poor to easily define soil colour differences. Concrete overlay the archaeological deposits in the barn.

To the southeast of the Plot 3 barn, Soakaway 6 (Fig. 2; P2) revealed an irregular sub-rounded pit 645, with a diameter of *c.* 1.5m and 0.3m deep, filled with gravelly firm red brown sandy silt (644), which yielded a date after the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 2; S4). Immediately adjacent was the undated posthole 643 (Fig. 2; S5), with a diameter of 0.3m and a depth of 0.1m, filled with mid grey sandy silt (642). The pit 645 may well represent a planting pit for a small tree or similar within a garden, although within the limited constraints of the watching brief its function remains ultimately unknowable.

### **Plots 4, 5 & 6**

To the south of Plot 3, the medieval barn, the north/south post-medieval barn comprised Plots 4, 5 and 6. The context numbers were assigned according to area, so that within the north/south barn a sequence starting from 100 was used; externally the sequence was 600s.

#### *Plot 4 (northern boundary): 19<sup>th</sup> century*

In Plot 4, access pit 4 (not illustrated) in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century barn revealed natural gravel (100) below the concrete; to the east outside, the natural gravel (602) was also revealed in the boundary wall footings trench (Fig. 6; P3), overlain by a former cultivation soil (601). There was only one datable feature in Plot 4, the large pit 611 (Fig. 6; S6), with two fills, which measured 3.4m by more than 0.6m by 0.7m, and cut the old cultivation soil (601). The earlier fill of dark grey gravelly sandy silt (612) was thicker than the trench depth of 0.7m and yielded two small sherds of 19<sup>th</sup>-century or later whiteware. In the top of the fill (612) was a layer of grey yellow clay (613) with a maximum thickness of 0.5m and extending 1.9m east/west; it extended beyond the edges of excavation. This feature appears to represent a possible tree pit.

#### *Plot 4: Undated*

Other features (Fig. 6; S7) present in the trench were undated and are presented below (Table 2). All features were cut through the old cultivation soil (601). The posthole 603 was clearly modern.

| Context | L(m) | B(m) | D(m)  | Fill description                           | Interpretation              |
|---------|------|------|-------|--|-----------------------------|
| 603     | 0.55 | 0.55 | >1    | (604) modern wooden post                   | Posthole; wood present      |
| 605     | 0.7  | >0.6 | 0.45  | (606) light grey brown sandy silt          | Pit                         |
| 607     | >0.6 | 1.6  | >0.7  | (608) mid grey sandy silt; occ. stone      | Possible ditch; brick frag. |
| 609     | >4   | >4   | >0.65 | (610) mid-dark grey sandy silt, mod. stone | Large pit                   |

Table 2. Undated contexts in Plot 4 wall-footing trench (northern boundary)

#### *Plot 4 (southern boundary): 11<sup>th</sup> century*

The southern boundary wall-footing trench was partially pulled and concreted prior to the site-monitoring visit (Fig 7; P4). Natural gravel (602) was revealed, overlain by orange brown gravelly sandy loam (601), a former cultivation soil. Modern topsoil (600)

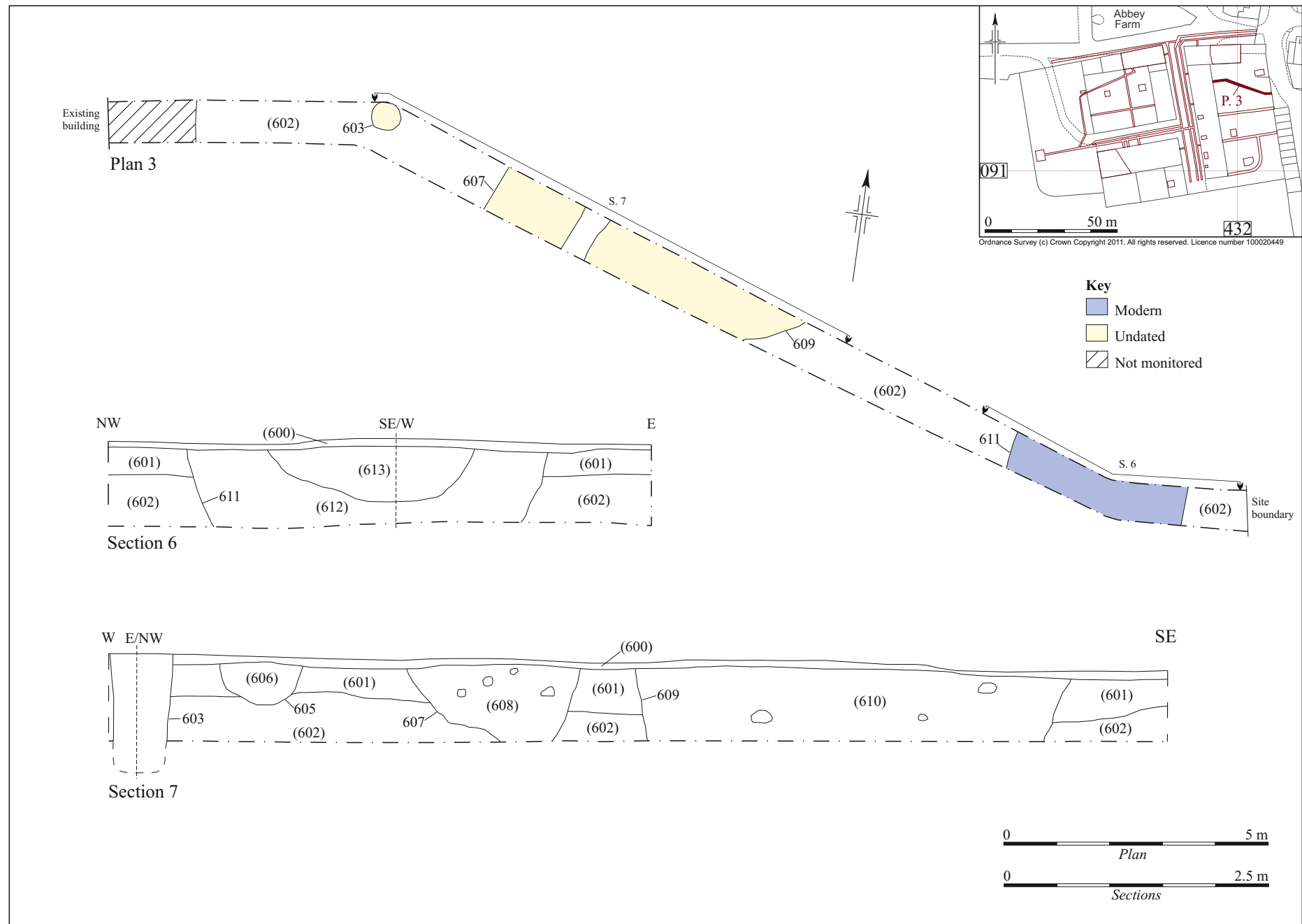


Figure 6. Plot 4; wall-footing trench (northern boundary)

associated with the farm sealed the trench. The east end of the trench revealed a large pit 621, itself cut by a later feature 649 (Fig. 7; S8), cut through the buried cultivation soil (601). The pit 621 was at least 2.85m wide by over 0.6m and at least 1.1m deep. Its form is unknown. There was a single fill: dark grey sandy silt (622)/(650), yielding pottery dating from after the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. Cut through this fill was the ?pit 649 of unknown form. The fill was red brown clay sand with occasional daub (648), yielding pottery dating from after the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Plots 5 & 6: Medieval*

To the south Plots 5 and 6 revealed further early medieval remains (Fig. 7). In Plot 6, access Pit 1 (not illustrated) was excavated revealing the presence of natural gravel (100) with a levelling deposit of gravelly mid brown sandy silt (108) forming the contemporary floor level of the barn.

In access Pit 3, a deposit of dark grey brown clay silt and occasional gravel (109) was revealed at least 0.3m thick, which yielded pottery with an 11<sup>th</sup>-century date (Fig. 7; P5). In access Pit 2, a similar deposit (101) also yielded pottery with the same date range.

On the south side of Pit 2 (Fig. 7; P6; Fig. 8) the deposit (101) was cut by the construction cut 106, into which the east/west wall 107 was built; the construction cut could not be seen. The wall 107, which comprised at least two courses of limestone fragments, the uppermost visible pieces pitched vertically with more random rubble infill and no apparent mortar, was built tight to the construction cut (Fig. 8). South of the wall 107, the deposit (101) was identified as (102), but no finds were recovered from it.



Figure 8. Wall 107 in Pit 2



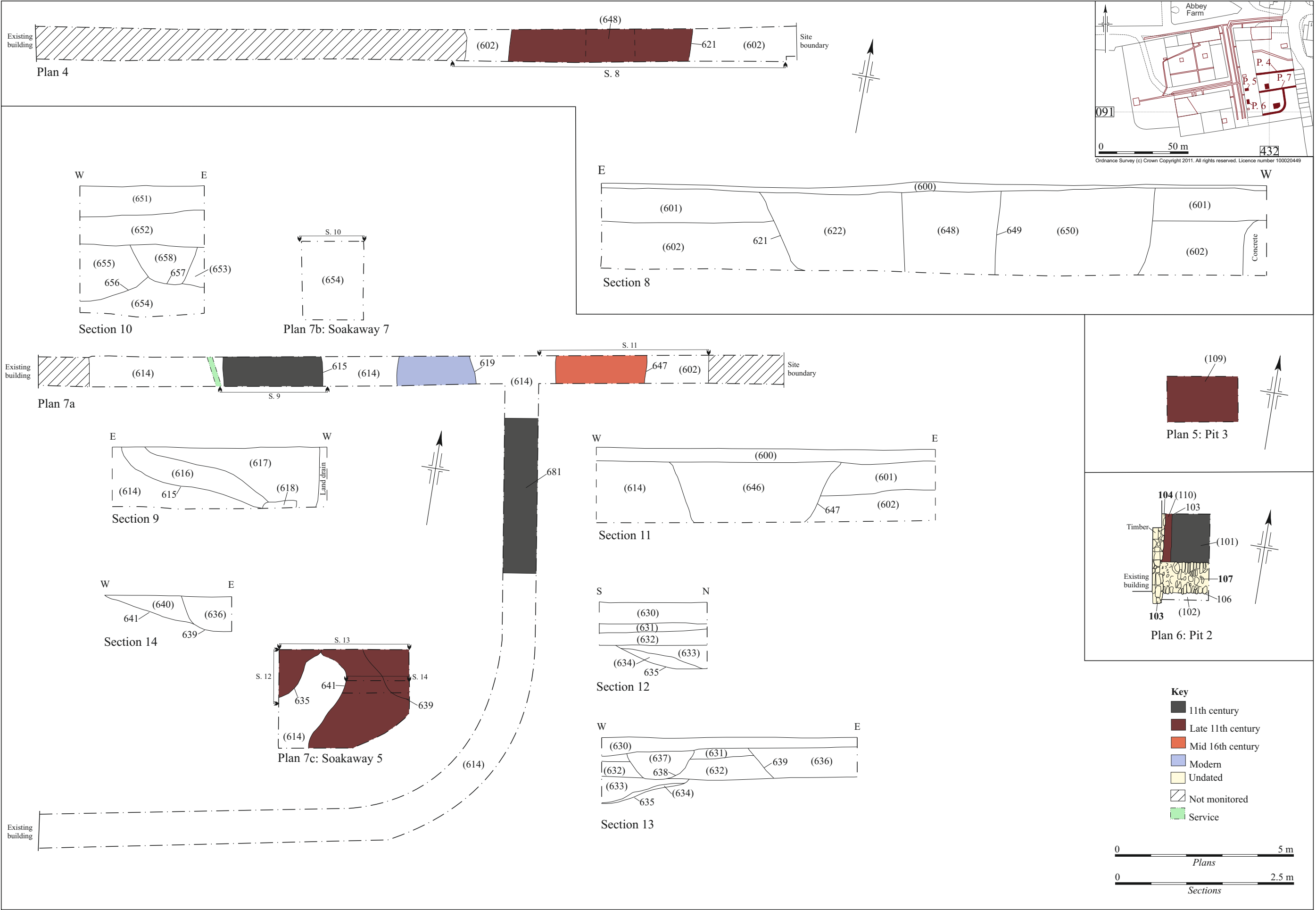


Figure 7. Plots 4 (continued), 5 & 6. Plans & sections.

To the west, the wall 107 was cut by the construction trench 103, into which the earlier north/south wall 104 was built. The wall 104 was made of roughly worked to roughly dressed limestone pieces with sandy lime mortar; evidence for some string-coursing was present. The construction cut fill was dark grey clay silt (110) and yielded a large sherd of Medieval Oxford Ware.

Built on top of the wall 104, the wall 105, which was roughly coursed with roughly worked stone was un-bonded, but appeared to be the footings for the present barn. Butting up against the wall 105 was the levelling deposit (108).

To the east outside the barn, in the wall-footing trench separating Plots 5 and 6 (Fig. 7 P7; S9), two features, dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, cut the natural gravel (614). The pit 615 which had been truncated on the west edge by a land drain had a gently sloping side and base on the east side; it was filled with a layer of ?slumped gravelly brown grey sandy silt (616) overlain by stony dark grey slightly sandy silt (617) from which two sherds of 11<sup>th</sup>-century or later pottery, and a fragment of very worn floor-tile, and a piece of roof-tile were recovered; a stone (618) was found at the base of the pit, but it is not clear whether this was structural or not. Bone and building materials were also observed in this deposit; but they were not retained. To the east of pit 615 was a large ?midden 681, measuring approximately 4.5m north/south, and more than 600mm deep; its width is unknown. It was filled with dark brown loam (680), yielding four sherds of Cotswold-type ware.



Figure 9. Soakaway 5

The soakaway 5 (Fig. 7; P7c; Fig. 9), which measured 3.7m × 2.7m, was located at the rear of Plot 6. The natural gravel (614) was revealed. Cut into the gravel (614) were two amorphous apparently shallow features 635 and 641. The pit 635 was located on the northwest side of the soakaway and contained two fills (Fig. 7; S12 & S13): the lower ?slumping fill of mid grey brown gravelly silt (634), which was sterile, was overlain by firm mid grey silty loam (633), yielding four sherds of pottery in a range of fabrics. To the east the possible ?linear cut 641, oriented northeast/southwest with a possible return



to the northwest, was filled with dark grey sandy silt (640); pottery dating from after the 11<sup>th</sup> century and roof tile were recovered from the fill (640). Sealing both of these features was a deposit of mid grey green sandy silt, with occasional stone (632), c. 0.35m thick, extending beyond the edges of the soakaway. Pottery dating from after the late 11<sup>th</sup> century was recovered from what was potentially a cultivation soil. A thin layer of mid grey blue sandy silt with occasional well-worn stone (631), c. 0.11m thick, sealed the cultivation soil; it too yielded pottery dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The precise nature of the upper layer is uncertain, but probably also represents a cultivation soil.

Cut through the layers of cultivation soil (631) and (632) were two ?pits, 638 and 639. The former was only seen in section (Fig. 7; S13). The pit 638 – which was feasibly a gully terminal, extending as it did beyond the edges of the intervention – was 0.9m wide and 0.35m deep and filled with mid grey sandy silt (637) yielding a single sherd of pottery dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and a fragment of roof tile. The adjacent feature ?pit 639, which extended beyond the eastern edge of investigation (Fig. 7; S14), was filled with dark grey sandy silt and small stone (636) yielding floor and roof tile and 14 sherds of pottery, most of which was Cotswold-type ware dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

A layer of modern soil (630), up to 0.3m thick and associated with the previous use of the site as a farm, sealed the archaeological features.

#### *Plots 5 & 6: 19<sup>th</sup> century*

To the northeast in the footings trench was the large pit 647 (Fig. 7; P7 & S11). It was filled with mid grey sandy silt (646), yielding pottery dating from after the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and a fragment of land-drain, indicating a date after the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

To the west of the post-medieval pit 647 was the 19<sup>th</sup>-century sub-rounded pit 619, containing dark grey sandy silt (620) and yielding much whiteware and ceramic building materials.

#### *Plot 5: undated*

The soakaway 7 in Plot 5 (Fig. 7; P7b & S10) was excavated to the gravel (654); cut into the top of the gravel (654) and through a layer of black organic silty clay (653) was the pit 656, filled with a mix of grey brown silty clay and black loam (655), which was in turn cut by the posthole or gully terminal 657, filled with red brown clay silt (658). Both were sealed by dark brown humic loam (652), overlain by farm-associated soils (651). An unstratified fragment of glazed ridge-tile, and a sherd of Cotswold-type ware were recovered from the soakaway.

#### **Plot 2**

There was only limited ground reduction within the accommodation unit of Plot 2 (Fig 10; P8; Fig. 11). These works revealed areas of natural gravel (400) at the west end of the building, cut by the construction trench 401 for the wall **402**, measuring approximately 14m long and 300mm wide, comprising roughly hewn limestone pieces

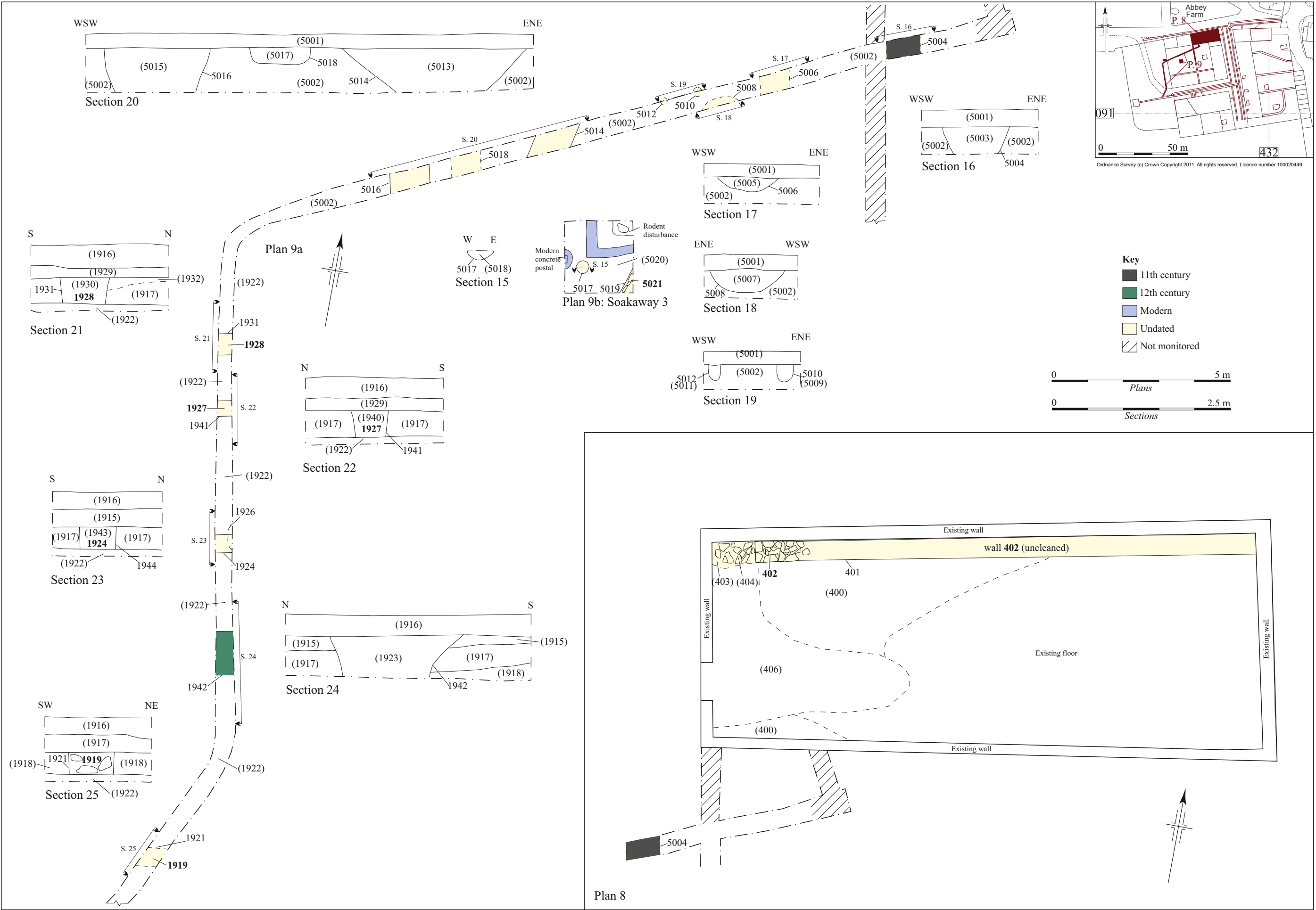


Figure 10. Plot 2 and service trenches Plots 1 & 2.

250 × 250 × 150mm and bonded with hard sandy yellow mortar (Fig. 11). The wall was clearly visible over half the length of the room; the eastern half was visible as a shadow, although later reduction in the northeast corner confirmed that the wall was present here.

At the west end of the wall was a break, *c.* 600mm wide, with a spread of firm white sandy mortar rubble (403); overlying this were loose fragments of limestone in clay packing (404). The mortar layer (403) appears to have represented a mortar lintel at the entrance to a room defined on its north side by the wall **402**.



Figure 11. Wall 402, with mortar lintel (403) and stone blocking (404)

The entrance was blocked by the rubble (404). It also appeared that the present west wall of the accommodation unit was overlying the corresponding western jamb blocked by (404); it was not possible to discern whether the wall returned to the south or continued to the west; ground reduction in the adjacent Plot 1 was limited and did not reveal any remains of archaeological significance. It was clear, however that the present north wall **405** of the structure did not overlie the wall **402**.



Figure 12. Unmonitored wall-footings trenches.

The layer of natural gravel (400) was overlain by a deposit of dirty natural gravel with charcoal flecking and comminuted ceramic building material (406) which abutted the lintel (403) and overlying blocking (404). It was not possible to ascertain a stratigraphic relationship between the lintel (403) and the redeposited natural (406), but the deposit (406) would appear to represent trample brought about by use of the door. The wall was undated, as were all the deposits within the structure.

To the south in the garden of Plots 1 and 2 wall-footing trenches and services were investigated. The northern wall-trench footings were excavated without archaeological monitoring and the archaeological impact is unknown (Fig. 12). The service trench, which ran from the southwest corner of Plot 2 across the rear of Plot 3 accommodation unit (Fig 10; P9), revealed a number of undated features and a single dated feature.

Two soakaways were also excavated. Soakaways 3 and 4 were excavated to the rear of Plots 1 and 2 respectively. Soakaway 4 (not illustrated) was excavated straight onto natural gravel (5020), and monitoring was discontinued.

Excavation in Soakaway 3 revealed a number of features (Fig. 10; P9b & S15; Fig. 13). Most were modern, including animal disturbance, but some were undated – 5017 and **5021**. The posthole 5017 was located on the southwest side of the soakaway, measuring c. 0.35m diameter and 0.16m deep. The fill of the posthole 5017 was mid grey slightly gravelly silty clay (5018). To the east was the edge of the cut 5019 for a stone drain **5021** which ran diagonally across the southeast corner of the soakaway; the drain was made of limestone pieces set into the cut 5019, approximately 60mm deep, and backfilled with mid grey brown silt (5020).



Figure 13. Soakaway 3

In the gravity sewer service trench, which ran across the rear of Plots 1 and 2, only a single feature was dated; the rest are undated and are presented as a table below, from

east to west and extending as far as the connection to the main gravity sewer service trench. A single dated feature was present at the south end of the gravity sewer service trench where it connects with the main gravity sewer into the pump pit (see below).

The dated possible ditch 5004 (Fig. 10; P9 & S16) was located due south of accommodation unit Plot 1, but was not seen to the north within the building. Natural gravel (5002) was revealed. The ditch was approximately 0.9m wide and 0.45m deep, filled with dark grey brown sandy loam (5003), yielding pottery dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It was sealed by modern farm-demolition related deposits (5001), yielding 19<sup>th</sup>-century pottery.

There were four parallel walls and a postulated robber trench present on the western gravity sewer service trench. It is not possible to be sure whether these were internal or external walls, nor whether these were structures associated with the abbey grange or predating it. The only dated feature was a ?robber trench (1942) which yielded a date after the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The details of the features are below (Table 3).

| Context | L(m) | B(m) | D(m) | Fill description   | Interpretation                           |
|---------|------|------|------|--|--|
| 5006    | >0.6 | 0.85 | 0.2  | (5005) pale grey brown sandy silt  | ?gully (Fig. 8; P9 & S17)                |
| 5008    | >0.2 | 1    | 0.35 | (5007) grey brown sandy silt, peagrit and limestone fragments                                  | ditch terminal or pit (Fig. 8; P9 & S18) |
| 5010    | 0.2  | 0.2  | 0.25 | (5009) grey brown sandy silt, peagrit and limestone fragments                                  | posthole (Fig. 8; P9 & S19)              |
| 5012    | 0.2  | 0.2  | 0.25 | (5011) grey brown sandy silt, peagrit and limestone fragments                                  | posthole (Fig. 8; P9 & S19)              |
| 5014    | >0.6 | 2.5  | >0.6 | (5013) dark brown-black clay silty sand & peagrit  | ?ditch (Fig. 8; P9 & S20)                |
| 5018    | >0.6 | 0.85 | 0.2  | (5017) mid grey brown sandy silt & peagrit   | ?gully (Fig. 8; P9 & S20)                |
| 5016    | >0.6 | 1.5  | >0.6 | (5013) dark brown-black clay silty sand & peagrit  | ?ditch or pit (Fig. 8; P9 & S20)         |
| 1928    | >0.6 | 0.45 | 0.35 | limestone frags. in cut 1931, backfilled (1930) dark brown-black humic silty clay with peagrit | wall (Fig. 8; P9 & S21)                  |
| 1927    | >0.6 | 0.45 | 0.35 | limestone frags. in cut 1941, backfilled (1940) dark brown-black humic silty clay with peagrit | wall (Fig. 8; P9 & S22)                  |
| 1926    | >0.2 | 0.7? | 0.3  | (1925) dark brown-black silty clay   | ?pit (Fig. 8; P9 & S23)                  |
| 1924    | >0.6 | 0.5  |      | limestone frags. in cut 1944, backfilled (1943) dark brown-black humic silty clay with peagrit | wall (Fig. 8; P9 & S24)                  |
| 1919    | >0.6 | 0.6  | 0.25 | (1920) dark brown clay silt with peagrit in cut 1921   | wall (Fig. 8; P9 & S25)                  |

Table 3. Undated contexts in Plots 1 & 2 service trench

The three east/west oriented walls **1928**, **1927** and **1924** are all undated. They are cut through the cultivation soil (1917), seen elsewhere within the site. Centre to centre the northern pair – walls **1928** and **1927** – are approximately 1.75m apart, and 3.75m distant

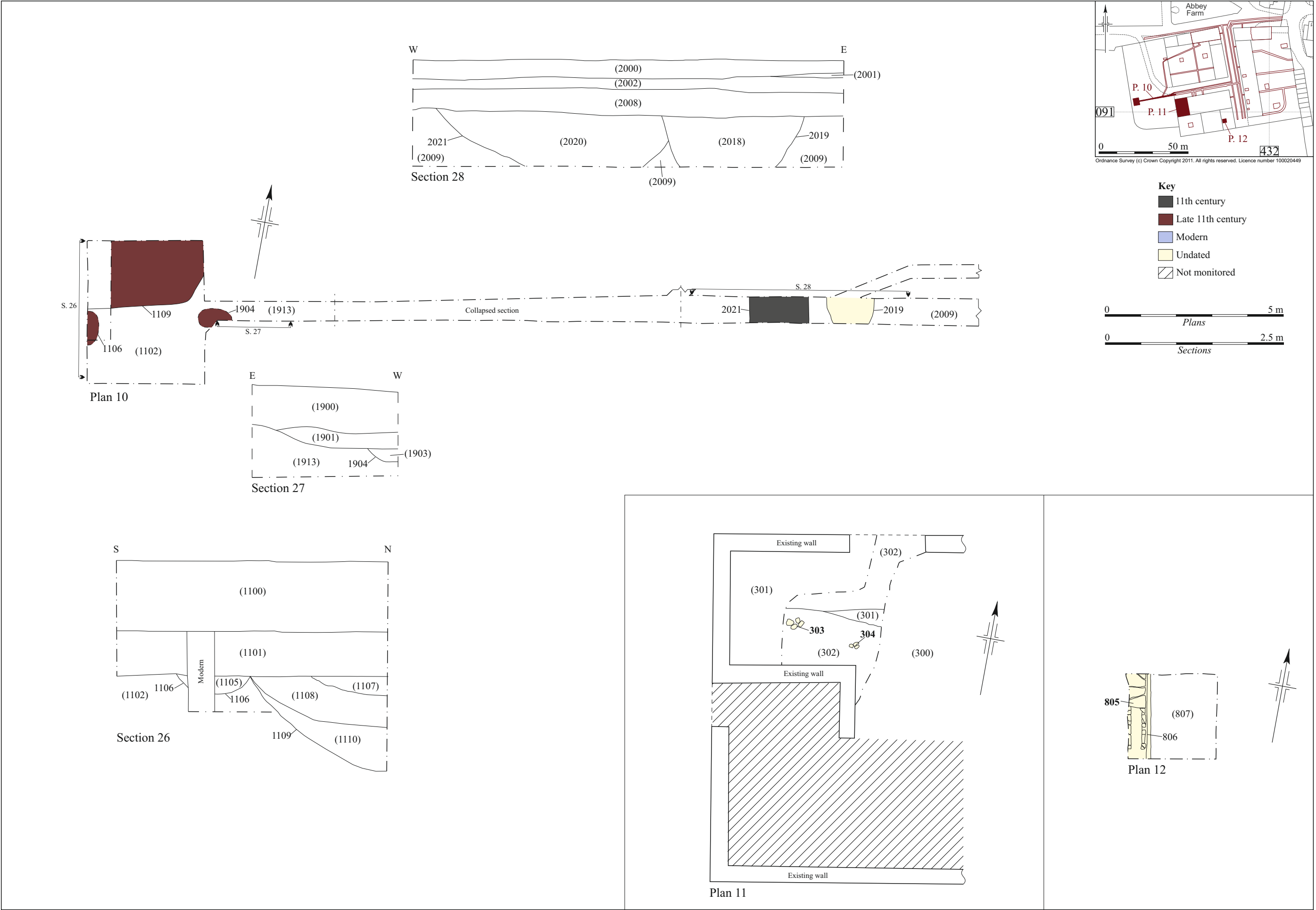


Figure 14. Pump pit and associated service trenches; Plots 8 & 7. Plans & sections.



from wall **1924**. The robber trench 1942 is a further 3m south of wall **1924**. The northernmost, wall **1928** also cut through the gravelly humic deposit (1932), 0.1m thick, which overlay (1917), and extended for approximately 1.5m to the north.

The possible robber trench 1942 which measured approximately 1.8m across was filled with dirty brown occasionally black gravelly silty sand and stone fragments (1923) containing pottery dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards; the ?robber trench was oriented east/west and may well be associated with the walls **1927** and **1928** to the north.

The undated wall **1919** was sealed by the cultivation soil (1917).

South of the undated wall **1919** the western gravity sewer service trench connected to the main gravity sewer service trench and the pumped sewage service trench (Fig. 14; P10; Fig. 15). At the west end of these service trenches was the pump pit, which measured 4m × 3.25m. Cut into the natural gravel (1102) were a large pit 1109 and a large ?posthole 1106 (Fig. 14; S26). The pit which measured more than 3.52m × 2m was located on the north side of the pump pit; it may well have been originally dug for gravel. It was filled with brown gravelly clay silt (1110), which may well have been redeposited natural gravel; overlying this deposit was dark brown to black clay silt (1108), which yielded pottery dating from after the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. A further gravelly deposit (1107) was in the top of the pit.



Figure 15. Pump pit.

Adjacent to the pit 1109 was the ?posthole 1106, which measured 1m diameter and 0.3m deep, filled with gravelly pale brown loam (1105), yielding a sherd of pottery dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It was sealed by red brown sandy silt (1101), a former cultivation soil, which corresponds to the cultivation soil seen across the site. Residual Romano-British pottery was recovered from the cultivation soil. The posthole 1106 was cut by a modern posthole which also cut the cultivation soil (1101). Crushed concrete sealed the cultivation soil. Approximately 3.5m to the east in the sewer trench was the pit 1904, (Fig. 14; S27), also filled with gravelly pale brown loam (1903), yielding pottery dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It was sealed by cultivation soil (1901) which corresponds to cultivation soil (1101). Modern soils (1900) associated with the farm overlay cultivation soil (1901). Much of the posthole 1904, which also was cut into

the gravel, was destroyed during machining as the edges of the pit/service trench collapsed. It is possible that these postholes are part of a building here in the southwest of the grange.

To the east, the trench collapsed beyond here. Beyond the collapsed section, approximately 15m east of the posthole 1904 was the pit 2021 (Fig. 14; S28); the pit 2021 was filled with gravelly dark brown humic clay silt (2020), which yielded a single sherd of pottery dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It was cut by the ?pit 2019, which was filled with dark brown gravelly humic clay sand with notable charcoal flecking and burnt clay (2018), containing pottery dating from after the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Cultivation soil (2007), which corresponds to (1901) sealed the pits. Sealing the former cultivation horizon (2008) was a black sticky clay and stony deposit (2002), associated with the site's use as a farm, containing pottery dating from after the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This was sealed by undifferentiated materials (2000) used to level the area prior to the previous concrete track being laid.

### Plot 8

To the south of the pits 2021 and 2019 was Plot 8, and adjacent to the east, Plot 7. There was only limited ground reduction in Plot 8, largely concentrated at the west end of the development. Ground reduction in the northwest corner of the accommodation unit was monitored; however, the southwest was unmonitored.



Figure 16. Plot 8 structure.

Only a limited area was revealed (Fig. 14; P11; Fig 16). The earliest deposit exposed was a compacted gravel surface in brown loam matrix (302) forming a gravel surface onto which two postpads (303) and (304), approximately 1.75m apart, were set. These were oriented east by southeast west by northwest; it could not be ascertained whether these were gable end postpads or part of the long side of a building. These features were overlain by a brown loam buried soil horizon (301), which was overlain by the concrete and make-up associated with the barn (300). It is not clear the function or date of the postpad building although it is likely to be associated with the abbey grange, and probably represents a craft or farm building.



Soakaway 1 (not illustrated) to the south of the accommodation unit only revealed natural gravel (300) overlain by mid brown loam (305) and modern farm soil (306).

### **Plot 7**

Ground reduction was limited within Plot 7 and only layer (300) was exposed; no archaeological remains were revealed.

To the south and in the garden Soakaway 2 which measured approximately 2.5m × 2.5m was excavated under archaeological control to the top of the natural gravel (800). Cut into the gravel, on the west side of the soakaway was the linear cut 806 for the stone drain **805**, oriented north/south (Fig. 14; P12; Fig 17). The drain was over 2.5m long, and approximately 0.5m wide with a depth of 0.37m comprising four to five courses of roughly laid stone, and capped with stone flags **804**. The cut 806 was backfilled with mixed natural gravel (802). The drain was partly backfilled with soft pale brown silt (803). The whole was sealed by mid brown loam (801) and modern farm soil (800).



Figure 17. Stone drain 805.

### **East/west service trenches (Area 2000)**

In the access road between the rear of Plots 1 and 2 (fronting onto the main access road to the development) and Plots 7 and 8 (on the south side of the development), service trenches were excavated which connected to further north/south service trenches between Plots 2 and Plots 3, 4, 5 and 6 (Fig 18; P13 & 14). The service trenches revealed a number of negative features, the full understanding of these is constrained by the limited view afforded by the intervention. Trench collapse and machining through deposits of archaeological potential within trenches of only c. 0.6m wide reduced the potential of the archaeological data-capture. Small features are rarely visible in these situations and it is to be expected that a number of features were not seen.

The natural (2009) was revealed in places along the length of the east/west service trenches, with the earliest archaeological features present being pits and/or ditches (Fig 18; P13 & S29). At the east end of the trench runs, and cutting through the natural gravel (2009) was a vertical-sided pit 2006, which due to trench collapse was not seen in its entirety, filled with dark brown clay silt with moderate to frequent gravel and occasional



large fragments of apparently roughly worked stone (2005); pottery from the pit 2006 indicated a date after the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 18, S29).

To the west of 2006 and also cutting the natural gravel (2009) were the undated feature 2016, and features 2021 and 2019 (Fig.14, S28). The undated feature 2016 was possibly a pit, filled with soft dark grey silty clay sand (2015). To the west were two further features: the probable ditch 2021, filled with mid brown humic clay silt with frequent gravel (2020), yielding a single sherd of pottery dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, which was cut by a later feature 2019. The cut 2019, characterised by its almost vertical edges, was probably a pit, and filled with dark brown humic clay sand with gravel through it, and containing moderate to frequent charcoal and burnt clay. Pottery from the pit 2019 dated from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

These features were sealed by a layer of mid red brown clay silty sand (2008), a cultivation soil which extended for over 30m from east to west; its western extent is uncertain as the trench walls were collapsing and the deposit was not identifiable. A single sherd of pottery dating from after the 11<sup>th</sup> century was recovered from the layer, which elsewhere within the trench sat directly over the natural gravel (2009). A thin layer of stony clay (2013) appeared to have been dumped to level up the ground.



Figure 19. Road surface 2004

At the east end of the trench was a cobbled road and an associated area of metalling. Cut into the natural gravel (2009) and the eastern edge of the cultivation soil (2008) was a shallow cut 2011, filled with grey clay and gravel (2010) overlain by a well-laid road surface 2004 set into grey clay (2012) comprising limestone fragments laid on the long axis (Fig. 19). Bordering the road on the west side was a deposit of clay (2012) with further to the west was a layer of limestone fragments (2007) which were not set as the road, although formed a surface; these presumably functioned as a metalled yard, abutting the road.

Sealing the metalling (2007) and the road (2004) was a layer of mortar rich pale grey clay and stone with occasional brick (2003) extending from the corner of Plot 7 for *c.* 12m west, measuring between 0.1m and 0.25m in thickness, and largely concentrated on the south side of the service trench. It is not entirely clear what this undated deposit represents, but it may well be demolition materials from the dismantling either of the abbey grange or indeed the abbey itself, following the dissolution of Eynsham Abbey in 1538. On the north sides of the trench overlying the metalling (2007) was a layer of stony black clay (2014). A layer of sticky brown clay silty sand and small stone (2002), which yielded pottery dating from after the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, overlay the demolition layer (2003). Overlying the sticky brown clay layer (2002) was a similar layer of sticky black humic clay (2001), associated with the use of the site as a farm, containing residual 11<sup>th</sup>-century pottery. A levelling deposit of undifferentiated materials including brick and concrete (2000) had been dumped over the black humic clay (2001).

The three north/south trenches were all excavated through the natural gravel (1001), to a depth of at least 700mm (Fig 18; P14 & S30-31). At the south end of the trench run all the features were cut through only the natural gravel (1001); north of the east/west service trenches the natural gravel (1001) was overlain by a red brown silty clay (1023), the deposit of former cultivation soil present across the site. The majority of contexts were undated and are presented below in Table 4. The dated or clearly structural contexts are described in the text.

| Context | L(m) | B(m) | D(m)  | Fill description  | Interpretation |
|---------|------|------|-------|---|----------------|
| 1006    | >0.6 | 3.5  | >0.35 | (1005) grey brown gravelly sandy silt                           | ?pit           |
| 1013    | >0.6 | 2.75 | >0.35 | (1012) yellow brown clay silt; (1011) dark grey brown clay silt | ?pit           |
| 1015    | >0.6 | 4.25 | >0.35 | (1014) light brown grey, gravelly sandy silt                    | ?pit           |
| 1017    | >0.6 | 2.5  | >0.35 | (1016) pale grey brown gravelly sandy silt                      | ?pit           |
| 1019    | >0.6 | 4.25 | >0.35 | (1018) grey brown clay silt                                     | ?pit           |
| 1021    | >0.6 | 1    | 0.3   | (1020) dark brown black silty clay                              | ?pit           |
| 1025    | >0.6 | 4.8  | 0.6   | (1024) grey brown silty sand                                    | ?pit           |
| 1027    | >0.6 | 0.7  | 0.7   | (1026) grey brown silty sand                                    | ?ditch         |
| 1029    | >0.6 | 0.6  | 0.3   | (1028) grey brown silty sand                                    | ?ditch         |
| 1031    | >0.6 | 2.9  | >0.5  | (1030) pale grey clay silt & peagrit                            | ?ditch         |
| 1033    | >0.6 |      |       | (1032) grey brown clay silt; peagrit & limestone fragments      | ?pit           |

Table 4. Undated contexts in north/south service trenches



The earliest dated feature was at the south end of the service trench (Fig. 18; P 14a), a large pit 1008, filled with black brown, clay silt with charcoal flecking (1007). It measured at least 2.5m wide and 0.7m deep; pottery dating from late 11<sup>th</sup> century was recovered from the fill. On the west side of the trench was the gravel extraction pit 1010 (not illustrated), filled with sticky black brown gravelly clay silt (1009), which yielded a sherd of 11<sup>th</sup>-century pottery. Cut into the top of the pit 1008 was a shallow scoop 1006 (see Table 4). The construction cut 1003 for wall **1002** was cut into the fill of pit 1006; the wall was made of rough-hewn uncoursed limestone fragments bonded with yellow brown silty clay (1004). The date of this wall is uncertain, although was thought to be reasonably recent, predating the construction of the south end of the barn. To the north was a large gravel extraction ?pit 1015 which had been subsequently recut by pit 1013, which was cut by pit 1017 (Table 4; Fig. 18; S30).



Figure 20. Service trench looking south.

To the north the red brown clay silt (1023), a former cultivation soil, overlay the gravel. Pits, cutting the cultivation soil (1023), were present along the easternmost service trench (Table 4; Fig. 18; P14a). Three of the cuts – 1027, 1029 and 1031 – may well represent ditches or gullies, although the limited view afforded means that it is not possible to be sure. All features were sealed by a mix of demolition materials and dark brown to black clay sand (1022), which derives in part from farm activities.

Four lengths of probably medieval wall were present in the central and western service trenches. The construction cuts for the walls (Fig. 18; P14 & S31) were also cut through the cultivation soil (1023). Two of the walls – **1060** and **1065** – were undated but shared similar construction to walls **1050** and **1052**, which yielded pottery dating from the late 11<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards, respectively. The wall **1050** is in line with the wall **1060** and all walls were made with roughly worked stone in a yellow hard mortar, which was mixed with stone and clay to form the fills of the cuts above the robbed out stone (Fig. 15; S 31). The walls **1050** and **1052** are approximately 3.5m (centre-to-centre) distant from one another. Wall **1065**, which is approximately 0.5m from **1060**, appeared to be at a right angle; it was truncated to the south by unmonitored service-trenches. The walls were sealed by the demolition/farm-associated layer (1022).

#### 4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good in the circumstances.

The methodology of a watching brief was not particularly well-suited to this project. Repeated excavation of adjacent areas resulted in a significant loss of data-capture, particularly in the locations of the service trenches in the east/west and north/south access roads. The potential for potentially significant archaeological remains was underestimated. Unmonitored excavation by the sub-contractors also impacted negatively on the data-capture. Furthermore, small features are not easily seen during machining with a toothed bucket.

The watching brief took place between December 12<sup>th</sup> 2011 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012.

### 5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

#### 5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 104 sherds with a total weight of 1531g. It comprised mainly early medieval material, along with small quantities of Romano-British, early/middle Anglo-Saxon and post-medieval material. It 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. 51 sherds, 631g,.

OXBF: **North-East Wiltshire Ware**, AD1050 – 1400. 2 sherds, 33g,.

OXY: **Medieval Oxford ware**, AD1075 – 1350. 19 sherds, 401g,.

OXBK: **Medieval Shelly Coarseware**, AD1100-1350. 1 sherd, 5g,.

OXAM: **Brill/Boarstall ware**, AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherd, 3g,.

OXDR: **Red Earthenwares**, 1550+. 2 sherds, 262g.

WHEW: **Mass-produced white earthenwares**, 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> C. 21 sherds, 172g.

In addition, three sherds (15g) of Romano-British pottery and 4 sherds (10g) of early/middle Saxon hand-built material was also present. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 5. Each date

should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region.

The pottery indicates that the main period of activity at the site was from the early-mid 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The main pottery type here, OXAC, was noted in contexts as early as the early 10<sup>th</sup> century at previous excavations at Eynsham Abbey (Blinkhorn 2003), but at that same site, St Neots Ware (Oxford fabric OXR) was also present.

St. Neots Ware appears to have fallen from use at Eynsham Abbey by the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, so the lack of it from this site suggests that there was no medieval activity here before that time. The end date is suggested very strongly as the early years of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Certainly, Brill/Boarstall Ware (OXAM) was very common at the previous Abbey excavations (ibid.), so the fact that only one sherd occurred here indicates that there was no pottery deposited at the site from around the time of the first arrival of OXAM at the site.

The sherds of early/middle Saxon hand-built pottery are typical of the tradition in the area, comprising sandy wares with small quantities of organic temper. Similar wares occurred at the previous Abbey excavations.

The range of medieval vessel types is also typical of the period in the region, consisting mainly of fragments of unglazed jars, along with a few bowls and a small number of fragments of glazed OXY tripod pitchers. Overall the assemblage is in good condition, with little sign of abrasion and appears to be generally reliably stratified.

|            | RB |    | E/MS |    | OXAC |     | OXBF |    | OXY |     | OXBK |    | OXAM |    | OXDR |    | WHEW |     |        |
|------------|----|----|------|----|------|-----|------|----|-----|-----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|--------|
| Cntxt      | No | Wt | No   | Wt | No   | Wt  | No   | Wt | No  | Wt  | No   | Wt | No   | Wt | No   | Wt | No   | Wt  | Date   |
| Soakaway 6 |    |    |      |    |      |     | 1    | 21 |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | U/S    |
| Soakaway 7 |    |    |      |    | 1    | 5   |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | U/S    |
| 101        |    |    |      |    | 1    | 33  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | 11thC  |
| 109        |    |    |      |    | 2    | 5   |      |    | 1   | 42  |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | L11thC |
| 110        |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    | 1   | 63  |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | L11thC |
| 204        |    |    | 1    | 2  |      |     |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | E/MS   |
| 612        |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    | 2    | 5   | 19thC  |
| 617        |    |    |      |    | 2    | 48  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | 11thC  |
| 620        |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    | 12   | 110 | 20thC  |
| 622        |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    | 4   | 17  |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | L11thC |
| 631        |    |    |      |    | 1    | 8   |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | 11thC  |
| 632        |    |    |      |    | 1    | 3   |      |    | 1   | 2   |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | L11thC |
| 633        |    |    |      |    | 1    | 4   | 1    | 12 | 2   | 120 |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | L11thC |
| 636        |    |    | 2    | 5  | 12   | 81  |      |    | 2   | 8   |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | L11thC |
| 637        |    |    |      |    | 1    | 6   |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | 11thC  |
| 640        |    |    |      |    | 3    | 114 |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | 11thC  |
| 646        |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    | 1    | 49 |      |     | M16thC |
| 648        |    |    |      |    | 2    | 18  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | 11thC  |
| 680        |    |    |      |    | 4    | 40  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | 11thC  |

|       | RB |    | E/MS |    | OXAC |     | OXBF |    | OXY |     | OXBK |    | OXAM |    | OXDR |     | WHEW |     |        |
|-------|----|----|------|----|------|-----|------|----|-----|-----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|------|-----|--------|
| Cntxt | No | Wt | No   | Wt | No   | Wt  | No   | Wt | No  | Wt  | No   | Wt | No   | Wt | No   | Wt  | No   | Wt  | Date   |
| 1007  |    |    |      |    | 1    | 11  |      |    | 1   | 3   |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | L11thC |
| 1009  |    |    |      |    | 3    | 10  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| 1050  |    |    |      |    | 1    | 4   |      |    | 1   | 75  |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | L11thC |
| 1051  |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    |     |     |      |    | 1    | 3  |      |     |      |     | 13thC  |
| 1052  |    |    |      |    | 1    | 26  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| 1101  | 1  | 3  |      |    |      |     |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | RB     |
| 1105  |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    | 1   | 5   |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | L11thC |
| 1108  |    |    |      |    | 3    | 34  |      |    | 1   | 6   |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | L11thC |
| 1903  |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    | 1   | 25  |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | L11thC |
| 1923  |    |    | 1    | 3  |      |     |      |    |     |     | 1    | 5  |      |    |      |     |      |     | 12thC  |
| 2001  |    |    |      |    | 1    | 6   |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| 2002  |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    | 1    | 213 |      |     | M16thC |
| 2005  |    |    |      |    | 1    | 26  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| 2008  |    |    |      |    | 1    | 18  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| 2018  |    |    |      |    | 3    | 89  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| 2020  |    |    |      |    | 1    | 5   |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| 3004  | 2  | 12 |      |    |      |     |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | RB     |
| 3007  |    |    |      |    | 2    | 26  |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| 3009  |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    | 1   | 7   |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | L11thC |
| 3011  |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    | 2   | 28  |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | L11thC |
| 3013  |    |    |      |    | 1    | 3   |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| 5001  |    |    |      |    |      |     |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     | 7    | 57  | 19thC  |
| 5003  |    |    |      |    | 1    | 8   |      |    |     |     |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |     | 11thC  |
| Total | 3  | 15 | 4    | 10 | 51   | 631 | 2    | 33 | 19  | 401 | 1    | 5  | 1    | 3  | 2    | 262 | 21   | 172 |        |

*Table 5: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type*

## 5.2 Ceramic building materials

18 fragments of mixed ceramic building materials, weighing 1213g in a range of fabrics, were recovered during the intervention. The assemblage is too small to comment on the differences in the fabrics.

Most of this, which comprised in large part roof tile, could easily be assigned a probable medieval date, with only a couple of fragments being ambiguous, and a single fragment of modern field drain. One definite fragment of very worn floortile was recovered.

The ceramic building materials were by and large rolled and clearly residual. A single tile fragment appeared to comprise a counter, or foot or a lid, with clipped edges making a roughly circular object *c* 60mm across; other examples of this type of object have been found at Bordesley Abbey (Astill 1993, 127-9), where their function was not elucidated. The only other unusual tile was of a corky fabric, similar to that recovered during a watching brief at Christ Church, Oxford (Williams 2012, 167).

It is not recommended retaining the assemblage.



| Context | Type       | Number | Wt (g) | Comments  | Date     |
|---------|------------|--------|--------|---|----------|
| 608     | Brick      | 1      | 52     |   | ?PMed    |
| 617     | Floortile  | 1      | 95     | Very worn; no decoration or glaze; cut narrow bar c 37mm wide                 | Med.     |
| 617     | Rooftile   | 1      | 65     | Reduced core; nipped edges? Slightly rounded – possibly counter, foot or lid? | Med.     |
| 619     | Brick      | 1      | 23     | Fritted glaze   | ?(P)Med. |
| 619     | ?Tile      | 1      | 58     | Thin floortile/thick rooftile   | ?Med.    |
| 636     | Floortile  | 1      | 184    | Corky looking fabric with reduced core; calcined ?limestone temper            | Med.     |
| 636     | Rooftile   | 2      | 125    | 2 with reduced fabric   | Med.     |
| 636     | Rooftile   | 2      | 60     |   | ?Med.    |
| 637     | Rooftile   | 1      | 17     | Glaze splashing   | Med.     |
| 640     | Rooftile   | 4      | 368    |   | Med.     |
| 646     | Drain      | 1      | 31     |   | Mod.     |
| 6007    | Rooftile   | 1      | 80     | Very reduced, corky fabric  | Med.     |
| U/S S.7 | Ridge tile | 1      | 55     | Brown glazed ridge tile   | Med.     |

Table 5. Tile by fragment and weight per context

### 5.3 Environmental Remains

No palaeoenvironmental samples were taken as the potential was not felt to be sufficient.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The investigations carried out at Abbey Farm Barns during the watching brief on services, wall-footings trenches and ground reduction confirmed that significant remains were present.

No indication of Neolithic or Saxon potential was encountered. Paul Blinkhorn suggests that the absence of St Neots ware from the site may well be indicative of a lack of Saxon activity at Abbey Farm Barns. This must be qualified by the limited view of the buried archaeological resource. Such a caveat would also need to be applied to the apparent absence of prehistoric, and particularly Neolithic remains, which are reasonably frequent in the local area. Roman pottery, some of which was residual, but some of which may derive from Roman features was an unexpected feature of the watching brief. The remains of the medieval activity indicated a high survival rate. Post-medieval use of the site was also present, although this remains poorly understood, consisting of some planting pits and rubbish pits.

Pits and ditches dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards were present across the investigation area, in addition to several stone structures. The pits included possible rubbish pits, filled with dark humic soils, as well as what looked more like gravel extraction pits, filled with leached sandy fills. Although the dates of almost all of these features is 11<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century, the date ranges of the fabrics extends into the 14<sup>th</sup> century at least although Blinkhorn above suggest an end date of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. To the south of the development area, extensive areas of dark soils/pitting only hint at the archaeological potential of the area. The postulated extent of this activity was already hinted at previously (Hardy 2003, Fig. 15.1) where the 11<sup>th</sup> century abbey farm is shown within the development area.

As a consequence of the date range of fabrics, it is not possible to easily associate these features with pre-abbey activities with any great certainty. The frequently limited quantity of sherds recovered can only be indicative rather than prescriptive of the quality of the remains. It is of course possible that some – or all – predate the acquisition of the land in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is tempting to pose the question as to whether some of the postulated ditches were associated with burgage plots on the south side of the medieval road which ran east/west between the abbey gate and what is now Station Road, parallel with Swan Street. The evidence is too limited and fragmentary to be certain of such a possibility.

Certainly, the stone buildings represented by the various lengths of stone wall present could be easily part of the abbey grange complex, the details of which layout are unknown. All the walls present had been robbed for stone to ground level, and indeed in at least one case, appeared to have been robbed out entirely, leaving only the robber trench. It was not possible to identify all floor surfaces in section; those in rammed earth would have looked like undifferentiated dumps of soil. Clearly, where stone surfaces had been laid they were recognisable in section, and where ground reduction – in Plots 2 and 8 – opened areas in plan, it was possible to identify areas of floor levels.

Seen in section, such putative floor layers, unless they had been subject to several phases of relaying (as opposed to patching), would not have been necessarily evidently *in situ* floor layers. The very limited view of the walls and the near impossibility of understanding their relationships with each other impede too detailed an interpretation of the archaeological remains. It is very probable that floor levels were present in the north/south service trench corridor which was excavated on at least three separate occasions, impacting negatively on relationships between walls and postulated floors, as well as external and internal areas within the grange complex. Equally, the cobbled road with a stone surface to the west undoubtedly formed part of the grange complex. Its relationships with the buildings cannot be expanded upon in any detail.

It is clear from the watching brief exercise that both negative features such as pits and ditches survived relatively well beneath the farm, and that the medieval grange could well have comprised a number of potentially large stone structures. Alan Hardy (2003, 511) discusses the possible potential structures in *Aelfric's Abbey* but unfortunately the watching brief can only hint at the potential, and indicates little of the layout. The standing staff of 26 persons, and presumably some if not all had families, could feasibly have lived within the abbey barton, or home farm. Certainly the postholes in Plot 3 and the postulated building in Plot 7 could well be indicative of structures associated with secular settlement, west of Abbey Street. Evaluation at Minchery Farm (Williams 2006) indicated that even small establishments could be well endowed with well-built stone buildings. The walls potentially associated with stone buildings within the complex appear to have extended west of Plot 1. Here in the area of the pit for the sewage pump, further features including postholes and pits were present.

While the full extent of the buildings and the associated parts of the complex are at present unknown, it is clear that this area was reasonably densely occupied in the

medieval period. The subsequent transition of the site, from monastic grange to secular farm is not at all well understood either from the documentary sources (Hardy 2003, 518-21), nor from the archaeology. The dump of mortar-rich clay and stone seen in the southernmost east/west service trench may well be associated with the second phase of demolition of the abbey during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century (Hardy 2003, 518) when the west side of the cloister and west range of the abbey were used for salvage materials. It is very possible that at this point, when the footings of the abbey buildings were robbed for stone, the grange buildings were also subject to the same process. After the robbing of the abbey for stone in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the farm passed to the Marlborough family who held it until 1920.

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