

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
WATLINGTON CHURCH HALL
WATLINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE
NGR SU 6852 9469**

*On behalf of
Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance*

May 2014

REPORT FOR Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance
Diocesan Church House
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CONTENTS

	Page	
<i>SUMMARY</i>	1	
1 INTRODUCTION	1	
1.1 Site Location	1	
1.2 Planning Background	1	
1.3 Archaeological Background	1	
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	1	
3 STRATEGY	3	
3.1 Research Design	3	
3.2 Methodology	3	
4 RESULTS	3	
5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS	6	
5.1 Tile	6	
5.2 Other finds	6	
6 DISCUSSION	6	
7 ARCHIVE	7	
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	7	
Appendix 1: Trench context inventory	8	
 FIGURES		
Figure 1	Site location	2
Figure 2	Trench plans and Sections	5
Plate 1	Section 1.2	6
Plate 2	Section 4.1	6

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to the church hall in Watlington. Several features were identified but identified as natural on examination. A narrow drainage gully was identified in Trench 1, towards the north east of the site and a layer of Medieval or Post Medieval tile rubble was identified in the top of the subsoil in Trenches 1 and 2. In Trench 3 a dip within the subsoil was filled with a layer of Medieval or Post Medieval tile rubble. This was identified as a tile fill within a trodden track way. A small fragment of late 19th century stoneware was recovered from the topsoil in Trench 5. Wide possible linear features in Trench 3 were identified as possible furrows or maybe banding within the natural.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The proposed development area is located on the north western side of Watlington, on the south east side of St Leonard's Church (NGR SU68529469). The site is currently in use as a community centre and car parking. The geology is Younger Coombe Deposits.

1.2 Planning Background

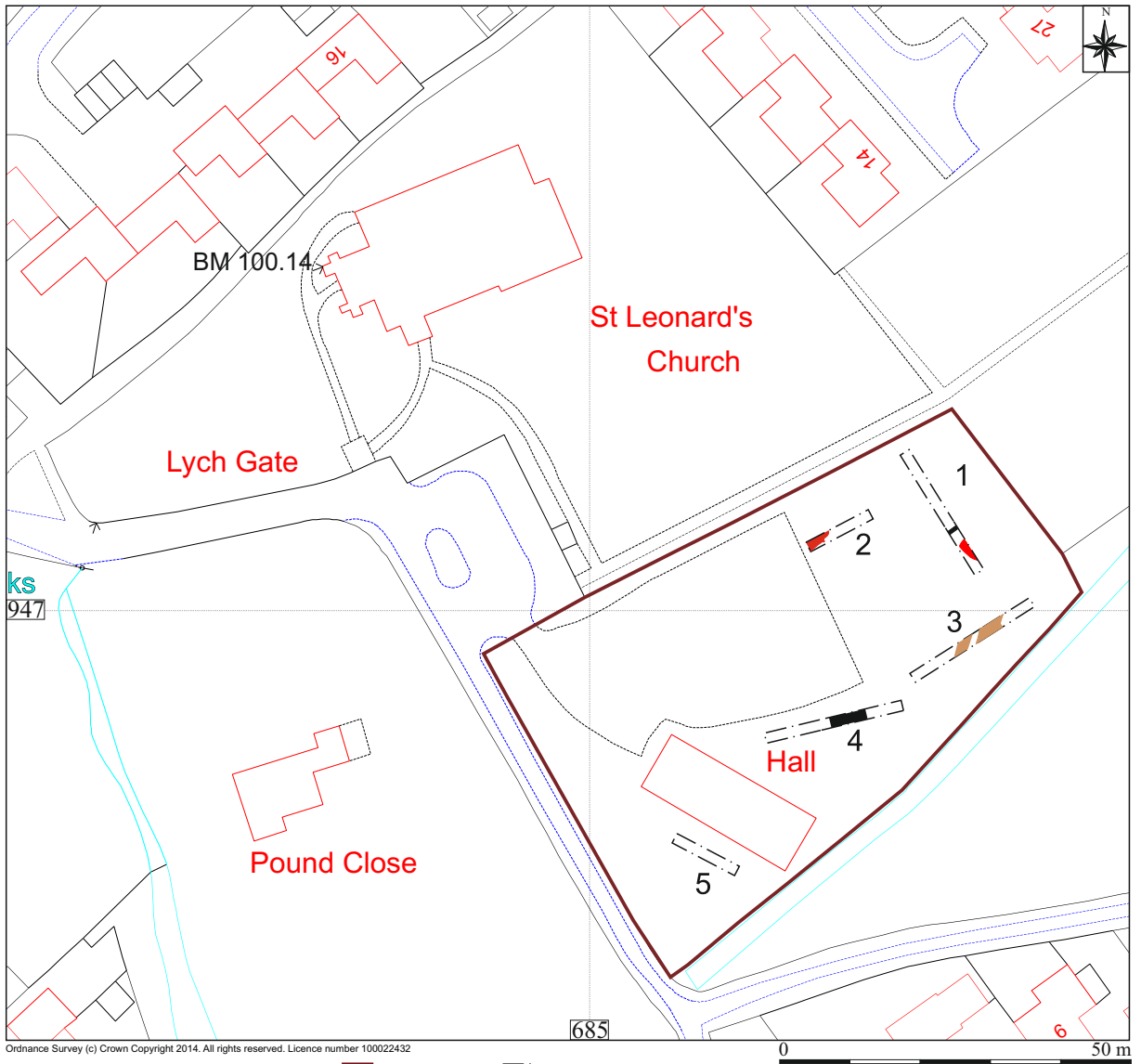
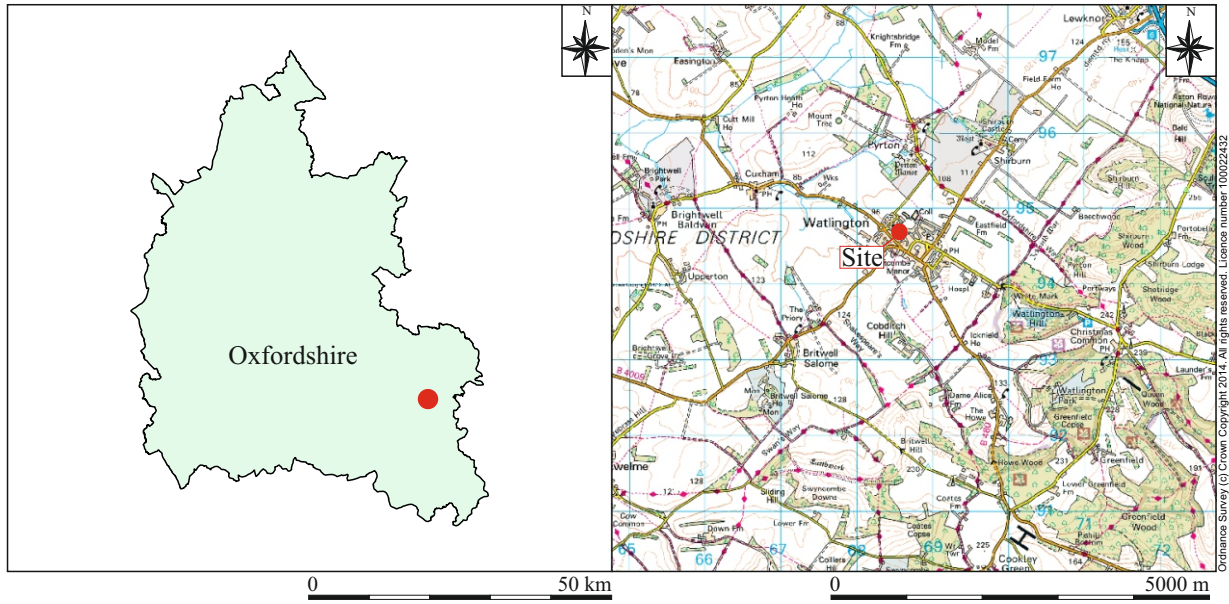
Planning permission is to be sought to demolish the current church hall and redevelop the site for housing. Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) produced a Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation. A Written Scheme of Investigation produced by John Moore Heritage Services, was approved by OHaNET.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site is located approximately 50m south east of the 12th century St Leonard's Church (County Historic Environment Record PRN 3983). The site of a medieval chapel, added in the 15th century is also recorded to the south of the Church, 12m north west of this proposal site (PRN 2061). The site of a medieval manor house is located 70m north of the site (PRN 3984). The manor house is first mentioned in AD 1250 and granted a licence to crenellate in AD 1338. A moat was recorded by AD 1442.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.



- Key**
- Site boundary
 - Evaluation trenches
 - Archaeological features
 - Natural Features
 - Plough Furrows

Figure 1: Site location

In particular:

- To establish if features related to the medieval development of the settlement exist on the site.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

JMHS carried out the work, which comprised a scheme for the mechanical excavation of five trial trenches with a combined length 80m. Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the Written Scheme of Investigation.

3.2 Methodology

An excavator fitted with a toothless 1.5m wide ditching bucket was used to excavate five trenches each with a width of 1.6m wide. There were three trenches of 20m length and two 10m long trenches.

Archaeological deposits and features revealed were then cleaned by hand and recorded at an appropriate level. Archaeological features were recorded by written, drawn and photographic recording. All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1 (Figure 2)

Trench 1 was 20m long and 1.6m wide. The lowest layer (1/03) was a yellow sandy layer with white chalk patches and a large amount of angular flint and chalk inclusion. The inclusions were ill sorted and the layer was patchy in appearance. Context (1/03) was identified as a natural layer and deposited above this was context (1/02). Context (1/02) was identified as the subsoil and was 0.3m deep. The composition of this layer was a light grey sandy loam with medium sized, rounded and sub rounded stones. Towards the south half of Trench 1 at around 13m from the north end, context (1/02) contained a large proportion of broken tile. The majority of the tile was deposited in the upper half of context (1/02) and may have been a layer above the subsoil, although some tiles had infiltrated the lower depths of the subsoil layer. Deposited above context (1/02) was context (1/01), which was a black, humic, loamy topsoil with moderate amounts of small, angular flint inclusions.

Cut into context (1/03) was context 1/04, a narrow and shallow ditch with a soft mid brown silt loam fill (1/05) (Fig. 2, section 1.2; plate 1). Context 1/04 was identified as a possible drainage gully. Further south and also cut into the natural (1/03) was context 1/06 (Fig. 2, Section 1.3). This was an ill defined feature, and the cut was difficult to define from the surrounding natural. The fill was a firm mid to light brown silty sand (1/07) and was not dissimilar to the variations identified in the natural soil layer. The edges of the feature were not well defined and it was considered that

context 1/06 may have been the depression of a tree bowl or related to plant rooting activity.

4.2 Trench 2 (Figure 2)

Trench 2 was 10m long and 1.6m wide. The lowest layer (2/03) was a natural layer of light yellow clayey sand with chalk patches and flint and chalk inclusions. Cut into (2/03) was context 2/04 which was an irregular shaped feature identified as relating to plant rooting or maybe a subsoil fill within an undulation in the natural (Fig. 2, Section 2.2). The fill was a heavily rooted mid brown sandy silt loam (2/05). Deposited above (2/05) was a mid brown silt loam (2/02), and above this was context (2/01), a black, humic topsoil.

4.3 Trench 3 (Figure 2)

The lowest layer in Trench 3 was context (3/03) a clayey layer of yellow sand with chalk patches flint and chalk inclusions. As with the rest of the site the natural layer was quite patchy making identification of features difficult in some light. Context 3/04 was a possible linear feature, maybe a furrow. It was however difficult to define the edges of the feature. The possible fill of 3/04, context (3/05) was a compact sandy, clayey fill and was not dissimilar to the natural. On attempting to excavate (3/05), there were rises in the natural chalk through to the surface of the fill. No edge could be established on the west edge of the feature and it was hard to identify any boundary between this feature and context 3/06. Context (3/06) was identified as a possible furrow and it proved equally difficult to define any edges to this feature.

4.4 Trench 4 (Figure 2)

In Trench 4 the lowest layer, context (4/03) was the same mixed natural layer of clayey sand, chalk and flint as found across the rest of the site. The subsoil (4/02) was a mid to light, yellow brown, silty clay. Above (4/02) was context (4/01), a dark topsoil layer. Towards the center of Trench 4 there was what appeared to be a dip in the subsoil which was approximately 2m in width. The dip was filled by context (4/04). Context (4/04) was a mid greyish brown, silty clay dominated by peg tile inclusions (figure 2, Section 4.1; Plate 2). There did not appear to be any strong signs of a cut and it was considered that (4/04) was a leveling deposit, maybe deposited in a trodden trackway through the field.

4.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was 10m long. The lowest layer context (5/05) was light orange with patches of grey white chalk and flint gravel. Deposited above was (5/04) a light grey chalky clay with very frequent flint inclusions. Above (5/04) was context (5/03) a dark grey silty loam which was identified as a buried soil layer. At 1.2m from the east end of the trench was a 5m length of orange sand. The sand layer was very diffuse and was identified as a dump of builder's sand (5/02). The uppermost layer was context (5/01) a dark grayish brown friable topsoil which contained a single fragment of Nineteenth Century stoneware.

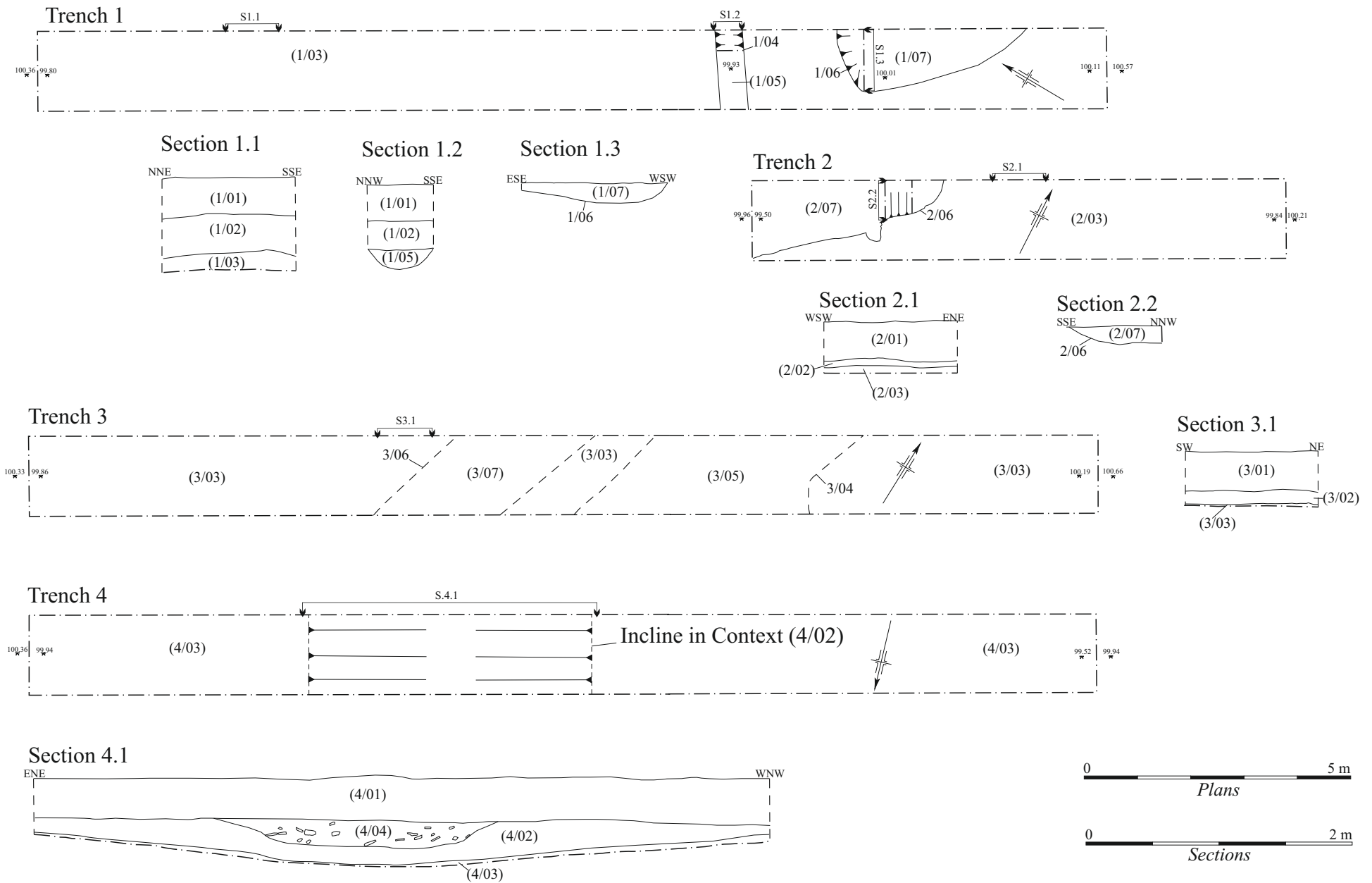


Figure 2: Trench plans and sections

5 FINDS

5.1 Tile by *Gavin Davis*

Samples of peg tile were examined from contexts (1/02), (3/02) and (4/04). All samples were considered to be late Medieval or early Post-medieval in date. Two fabric types were identified from contexts (1/02) and (3/02) and three fabrics from contexts (4/04). None of the tile was retained.

5.2 Other finds by *Gavin Davis*

A fragment of 19th century stoneware was recovered from the topsoil, Context (5/01) but was not retained.

6 DISCUSSION

The natural soil layer across the site was patchy, changing from chalky deposits, flint and gravel deposits, and sand and clayey-sand deposits. Within this layer in Trenches 1 and 2 were two features, contexts 1/06 and 2/04, whose cuts were identified as natural and probably related to tree or other plant rooting. Two possible furrows in Trench 3 were hard to define and may have been banding within the natural. A concentrated layer of pegtile was identified deposited within or above the subsoil in Trenches 1 and 2. There was no other rubble, brick or otherwise identified within these deposits and it considered that the tile was dumped after being removed from a roof, rather than being the result of demolition rubble. In Trench 4, context (4/04) appeared to be deposited within an incline in the subsoil and it is possible that it was a levelling layer maybe relating to a trodden trackway. Fragments of tile were also abundant in the gravel of the stream running along the south of the site. In Trench 1 a narrow gully was identified, Context 1/04. No features were identified in Trench 5 and no other archaeological features were identified.



Plate 1. Section 1.2



Plate 2. Section 4.1

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site records

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to Oxfordshire Museum Service under accession number OXCMS: 2014.104

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage 1991. *Management of Archaeological Projects 2*. London: English Heritage.

Institute for Archaeologists 2008. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*. Reading: IfA.

Appendix 1: Trench Context Inventory

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 1								
1/01	Deposit	Black humic loam with small angular flint inclusions	0.3m	>1.6m	>20m	-	Topsoil	Modern
1/02	Deposit	Light grey sandy loam with medium sized, rounded and sub rounded stones and broken tile toward the South of the trench.	0.3m	>1.6m	>20m	Peg tile	Subsoil	Late Medieval - Post Medieval
1/03	Deposit	Yellow sandy layer with white patches with frequent , angular flint and chalk. gravel	-	>1.6m	>20m	-	Natural	-
1/04	Cut	Linear ditch with concave base and sides	0.15	0.5m	>1.6	-	Drainage gully	Medieval-Post Medieval
1/05	Fill	Soft mid brown silty loam	0.15	0.5m	>1.6	-	Fill of 1/04	Medieval-Post Medieval
1/06	Cut	Sub oval with poorly defined edges	0.15m	1.1m	3.5m	-	Possible tree throw or natural undulation	-
1/07	Fill	Firm light to mid brown silty sand	0.15m	1.1m	3.5m	-	Fill of 1/07	-

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 2								
2/01	Deposit	Black humic loam	0.26m	>1.6	>10m	-	Topsoil	Modern
2/02	Deposit	Mid brown silty loam	0.6m	>1.6m	>10m	-	Subsoil	
2/03	Deposit	Light yellow clayey sand and chalk with angular chalk and flint gravel	-	>1.6m	>10m	-	Natural	-
2/04	Cut	Irregular shaped	0.12	>1.5m	>3.6	-	Plant rooting or natural undulation	Undated
2/05	Fill	Heavily rooted sandy silt loam	0.12	>1.5m	>3.6	-	Fill of 2/04	Undated

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 3								
3/01	Deposit	Blackish grey friable, silty loam	0.3m	>1.6m	>20m	-	Topsoil	Modern
3/02	Deposit	Mid yellow brown and light brown silty clay	0.1m	>1.6m	>20m	Peg tiles	Subsoil	Late Medieval Post Medieval

3/03	Deposit	Mid yellow clayey sand and chalk with angular chalk and flint gravel	-	>1.6m	>20m	-	Natural	-
3/04	Cut	Possible linear cut with poorly defined edges	-	c. 2.5m	>2m	-	Possible furrow or maybe banding in the natural	Undated
3/05	Fill	Mid yellow brown compact sandy silty clay and gravel	-	c. 2.5m	>2m	-	Fill of 3/04	Undated
3/06	Cut	Possible linear cut with poorly defined edges	-	c.1.6	>2m	-	Possible furrow or maybe banding in the natural	Undated
3/07	Fill	Mid yellow brown compact sandy silty clay	-	c.1.6	>2m	-	Fill of 3/06	Undated

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 4								
4/01	Deposit	Blackish grey friable, silty loam	0.3m	>1.6m	>20m	-	Topsoil	Modern
4/02	Deposit	Mid yellow brown and light brown silty clay	0.1m - 0.24m	>1.6m	>20m	-	Subsoil	Late Medieval Post Medieval
4/03	Deposit	Mid to light yellow clayey sand and chalk with angular chalk and flint gravel	-	>1.6m	>20m	-	Natural	-
4/04	Deposit	Firm, grey brown silty clay with a high proportion of peg tile rubble.	-	2m	>1.6m	Peg tile	Broken tile dumped in the depression of a trodden path	Late Medieval Post Medieval

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 5								
5/01	Deposit	Blackish grey friable, silty loam	0.15	>1.6m	>10m	Pottery	Topsoil	Modern
5/02	Deposit	Soft, fine orange sand	0.1m - 0.2m	>1.6m	c.5 m	-	Dump of builders sand	Modern
5/03	Deposit	Dark grey silty loam with frequent flint	0.2m	>1.6m	>10m	-	Buried soil	undated
5/04	Deposit	Mid to light grey chalky clay with frequent flint	0.3m	>1.6m	>10m	-	Subsoil	-
5/05	Deposit	Light orange sand with patches of greyish white chalk and flint gravel	-	>1.6m	>10m	-	Natural	-