

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

THE RECTORY, HIGH STREET, CHINNOR

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 7570 0098

On behalf of

Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance

JUNE 2015

REPORT FOR	Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance Diocesan Church House North Hinksey Oxford OX2 0NB
PREPARED BY	Andrej Čelovský with contributions from Paul Blinkhorn and Simona Denis
ILLUSTRATION BY	Andrej Čelovský
EDITED BY	John Moore
AUTHORISED BY	John Moore
FIELDWORK	15 th May 2015 Andrej Čelovský and Alex Guaggenti
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ENQUIRES TO	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ Tel/Fax 01865 358300 Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological field evaluation at the Rectory in Chinnor, Oxfordshire. Two machine-dug trenches with a total length of 20m were excavated across the footprints of the proposed dwelling and garage (Fig. 1). During the fieldwork one pit, and a limestone wall foundation and associated demolition layers were investigated. The finds recovered from the pit, fragments of probable 15th – 16th century pottery and animal bones showing slice marks, were clearly related to the domestic activities in the late medieval period within the site. The limestone wall foundation and associated demolition layers presumably represents remains of a late medieval or early post-medieval structure. On-line available historic maps of Chinnor, does not show any standing structure on the site, which suggest that it was demolished before 1881.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located north of the Church Road and on the west side of High Street on the eastern side of Chinnor, Oxfordshire (SP 7570 0098). Topographically the site is reasonably level and lies at an approximate height of 122m above OD. The underlying geology is West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation. The site is currently in use as garden.

1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for construction of a two-storey 4-bedroom dwelling and erection of detached double garage in the existing garden (P15/S0413/FUL).

Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological features, the Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) on behalf of the Local Planning Authority required an archaeological field evaluation in advance of the development commencing. OHaNET prepared a *Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (OHaNET 2015).

John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) was commissioned to undertake this work, and a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2015) was prepared to satisfy the requirements of the *Design Brief*.

1.3 Archaeological Background

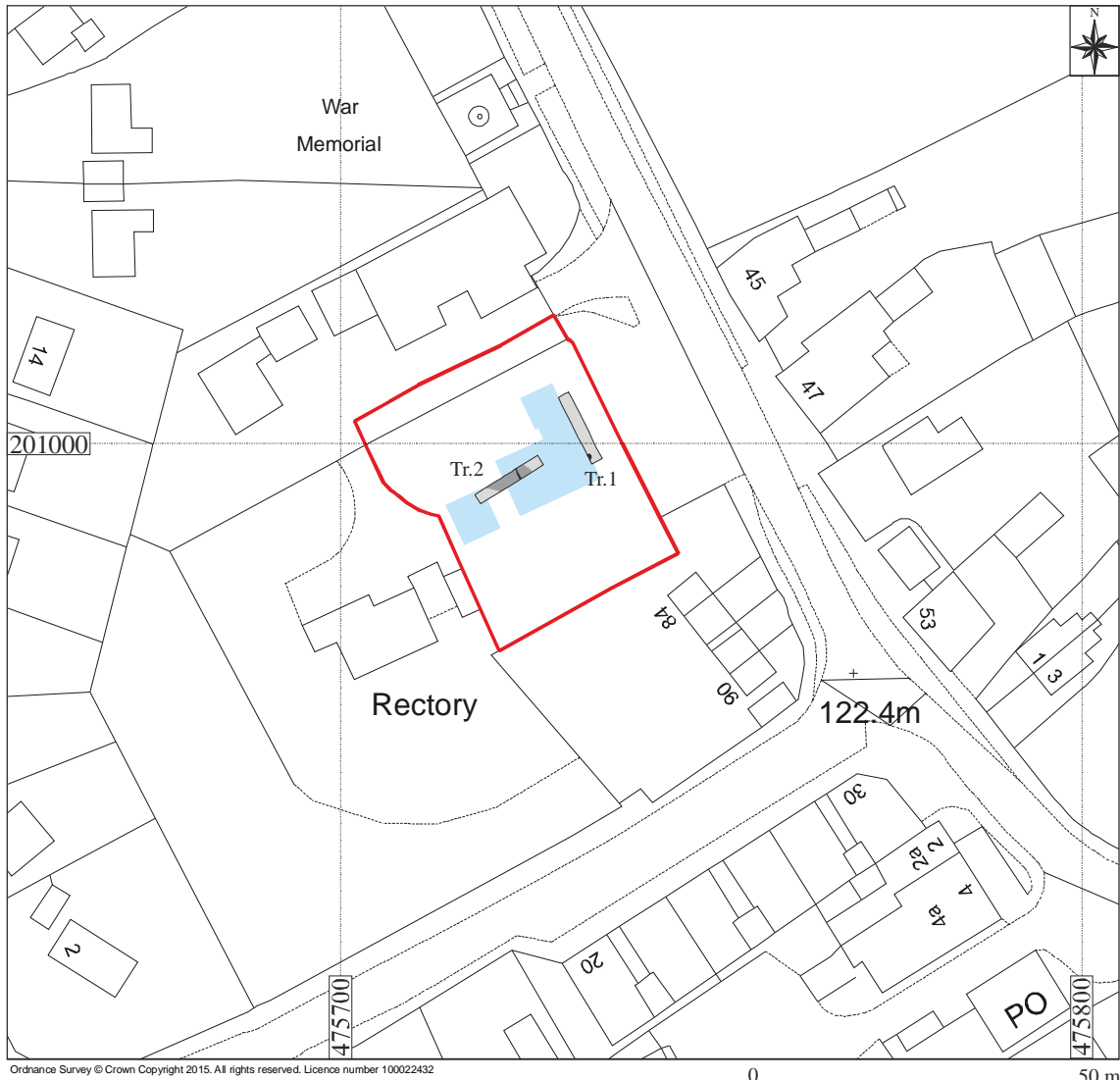
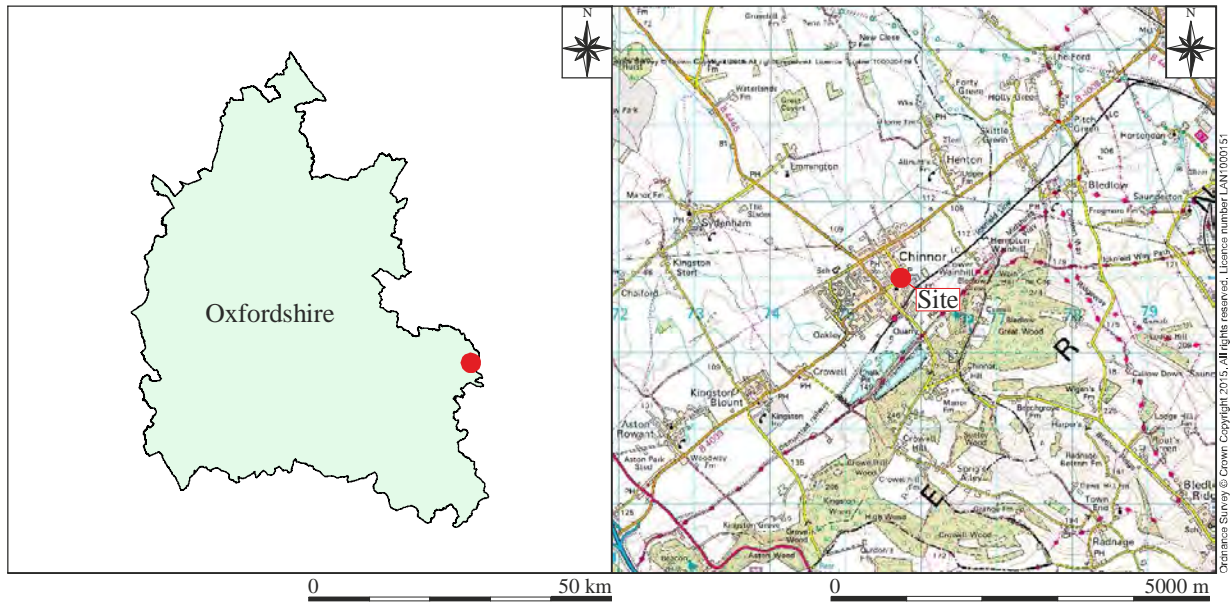
The proposed development lies in an area of considerable archaeological potential, located immediately north of the Church of St Andrew which has early 13th century elements. The full extent of the earlier church is unknown, particularly the extent of the early burial ground. Undated burials are recorded to both the south, and south-west of the site, although at least one of these is potentially of a much earlier date based on the urn found associated with the inhumation.

An archaeological evaluation and subsequent watching brief undertaken to the south-west of this site recorded a concentration of archaeological features including gullies and field boundaries of probable Roman date (JMHS 2015, OHaNET 2015, 2).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) were:

- 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.



Key Site boundary Evaluation trench Archaeological feature Footprint of proposed building

Figure 1: Site location

- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.

In particular:

- To establish if features related to the nearby Roman and medieval activity are present in this area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

JMHS carried out the archaeological field evaluation in accordance with the WSI (JMHS 2015). Fieldwork comprised a scheme for the mechanical excavation of two trial trenches across the site. Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the WSI (Sections 3.1 – 3.21).

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014) and the principles of MoRPHE (Historic England 2015).

3.2 Methodology

A five tonne excavator fitted with a toothless 1.5m wide ditching bucket was used to excavate the two trenches each 10m long across the footprint of proposed dwelling and garage. Due to presence of garden features within evaluation area, trenches were slightly relocated from proposed trench locations. The ground was reduced down to the archaeological horizon and/or top of natural deposit.

Archaeological deposits and features revealed were then cleaned by hand and recorded at an appropriate level. Archaeological features had written, drawn and photographic records made of them, and all deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. All artefacts were collected, except ceramic building material where representative samples were taken, analysed and not retained.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results

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

4.2 General deposits

The lowest deposit encountered during the evaluation was a layer of light grey sandy lime clay and limestone with occasional flints (1/03) and (2/03), interpreted as the natural geology. In the northeast end of Trench 2 deposit (2/07) described as mid

yellow-brown sandy gravel which seems to represent natural deposit as well was encountered. In Trench 1, natural ground (1/03) sloped down significantly towards the northwest. Natural deposits were overlaid by up to 0.32m thick layer of mid brown-grey sandy silt with occasional small well-rounded stones and fragments of limestone (1/02) and (2/02); a subsoil. In Trench 1 fragments of post-medieval roof tiles and animal bones (see 5.2 & 5.3) were recovered from this deposit. The entire site was covered by up to 0.35m thick layer of dark grey-brown sandy loam (1/01) and (2/01) which represents modern topsoil (Fig. 2; S. 1.1 & 2.2, Pl. 1).



Plate 1: Representative section 2.2, looking northwest

4.3 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 10m long and 1.60m orientated northwest to southeast and located 3m to the southwest from the existing boundary wall (Fig. 1 & 2; Pl. 2).



Plate 2: Trench 1, looking southeast

Cut into the natural formation (1/03) in the southeast end of the trench a sub-oval pit 1/05 was located. It was 1m long, 0.50m wide and 0.40m deep with steep concave sides and a concave base (Fig. 2: Tr. 1, S. 1.1 & 1.2; Pl. 3). The fill (1/04) was a dark grey clayey silt that contained five pottery sherds of probable 15th – 16th century date (see 5.1) and animal bone (see 5.3). The pit 1/05 was sealed by deposit (1/02). No further archaeological features were present within Trench 1.



Plate 3: Pit 1/05, looking southwest

4.4 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 10m long and 1.55m wide. It was placed across the footprint of proposed dwelling and garage, and aligned northeast to southwest (Fig. 1 & 2; Pl. 4).



Plate 4: Trench 2, looking southwest

It Trench 2 a wall foundation and demolition layers presumably related to the same structure were investigated.

Cut in to the natural ground (2/03) was 1.55m long, 0.30m wide and 0.08m high/deep linear wall foundation **1/09** presumably set within construction cut 1/08, aligned northwest to southeast. Wall foundation **1/09** was built of roughly worked and sub-angular limestone of maximum dimension 180×250×80mm (Fig 2: Tr. 2, S. 2.1; Pl. 5).

The wall foundation was overlain by three demolition layers covering an area of 6m×1.55m within the trench. On site they were assigned with a cut number 2/04 (Fig 2: Tr. 2), which represents the space of the demolition layers rather than a cut feature. Stratigraphically, demolition area 2/04 seems to be later than deposit (2/02). However there is possibility that these two contexts were contemporary.

The lowest demolition layer (2/10) was 0.08m thick light grey lime sandy silt with occasional fragments of limestone and roof tiles. This deposit was very similar to natural deposit (2/03), however less compact. It was overlaid by 0.14m thick layer of high concentration of fragment of medieval/post-medieval roof tiles in date (see 5.2) in a matrix of mid grey-brown sandy silt (2/06). Within this deposit a solitary roughly worked sandstone block (290×410×90mm) was found located closely to the wall foundation **2/09** (Fig 2: Tr. 2, S. 2.1; Pl. 5). This may have been a threshold stone. The uppermost demolition layer (2/05) was up to 0.25m thick mid grey sandy silt with frequent fragments of limestone, occasional fragments of medieval/post-medieval roof tiles (see 5.2) and animal bones (see 5.3). Layer (2/05) was overlaid by topsoil (2/01).



Plate 5: Wall foundation **2/09**, looking northwest

4.5 Reliability of Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The archaeological field evaluation took place in very good weather conditions with excellent light and visibility.

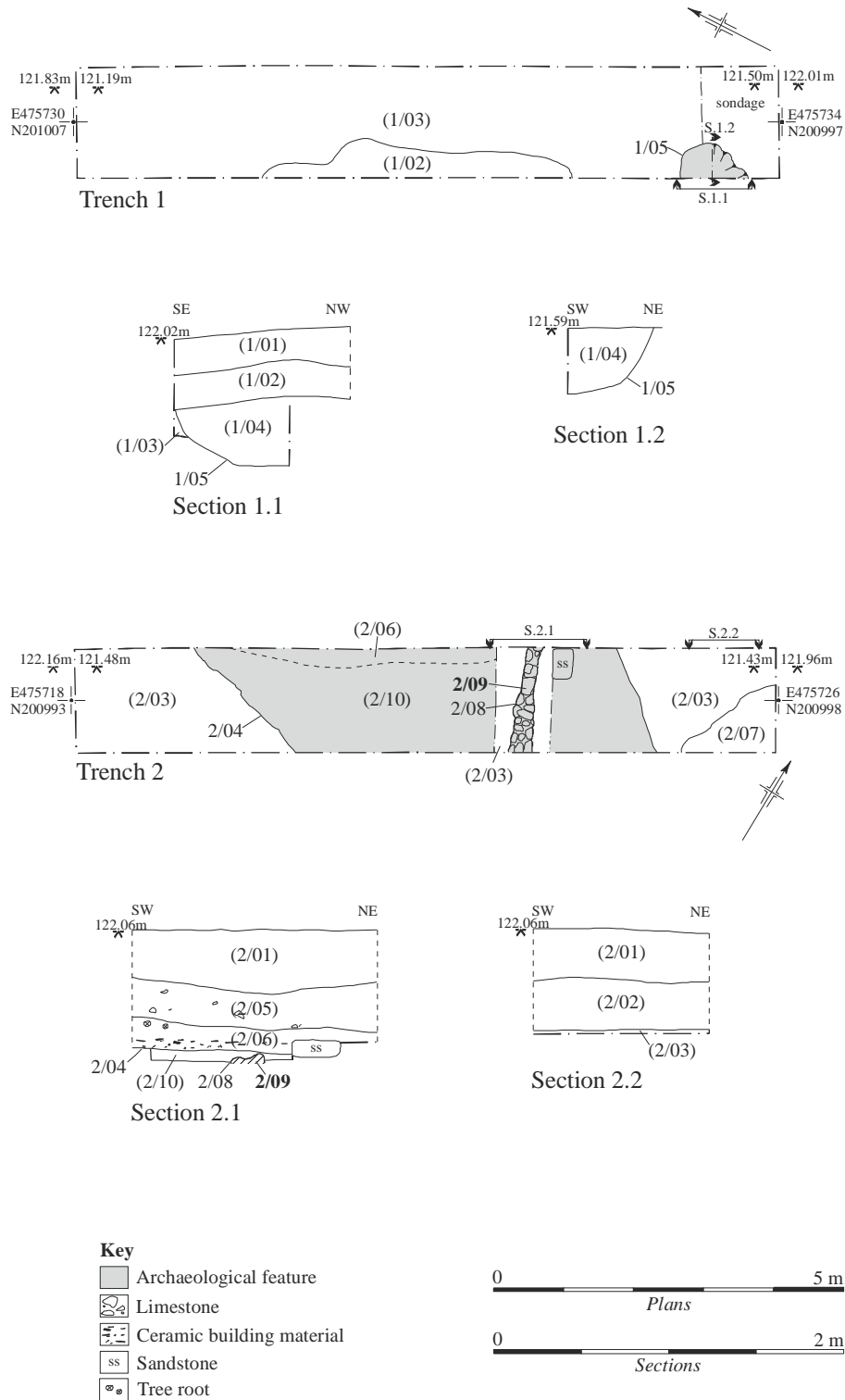


Figure 2: Trenches 1 and 2 - plans and sections

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised five sherds with a total weight of 228g. It was all medieval, and all occurred in Trench 1 context (1/04). It was recorded using the conventions of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXY: Medieval Oxford Ware, AD1075–1350. 3 sherds, 29g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall Ware, AD1200 – 1600. 2 sherds, 199g.

The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. All the sherds are in good condition, and appear reliably stratified. The two sherds of OXAM are both from late medieval vessels in a pale, fine fabric typical of the later products of the industry, with an internal apple-green glaze. One is a large fragment of a dripping pan, a specialist vessel used in the kitchen for catching the fat from spit-roasting meat, and usually of 15th – 16th century date (ibid. 1994, fig. 68.1). They can be a sign of high-status at rural sites. The other sherd is from the base of a drinking jug.

5.2 Ceramic Building Material (CBM) by Simona Denis

The ceramic building material assemblage recovered during the excavation comprises 15 fragments of flat roof tile, with a combined weight of 1513g. None of the items is preserved to their original dimensions; only three of the fragments show one complete corner. Traces of lime mortar were observed on three examples, while two fragments revealed imprints.

Three peg tiles were found; the items from contexts (2/05) and (2/06) show a partial peg hole, while one fragment from context (1/02) preserves the complete peg hole.

Nine different fabric types were observed:

1. Orange-pink coarse sandy fabric
2. Red-orange, very gritty silty fabric with occasional small inclusions
3. Red-orange, similar to 2 but with a higher percentage of inclusions
4. Red-orange, clean-looking sandy fabric
 - a. Light red-orange, very similar to 4
5. Red-orange sandy fabric
6. Orange-pink, similar to 1 but with a higher percentage of inclusions
7. Dark pink sandy fabric, similar to 5
8. Orange-pink silty fabric with occasional inclusions
9. Orange-pink, fine sandy fabric with rare medium-sized inclusions

Overall, the assemblage can be dated to the medieval/post-medieval period. Undiagnostic fragments are not recommended for retention and so none will be retained.

5.3 Animal remains by Simona Denis

A small group of 6 animal bone fragments was recovered from three different contexts. The totality of the assemblage was identified as belonging to a bovine; three of the fragments show possible butchering marks (Table 1).

The cow femur fragment found in context (1/02) shows a moderately deep, possible chop mark perpendicular to the bone that removed part of the cortical surface and two small, shallow marks produced by a fine blade as a result of slicing or skinning. A single shallow slice mark was observed on the long bone fragment recovered from (1/04), while the rib from the same context shows a deep chop mark resulting in the typical smooth surface at the point of impact with corresponding fragmented surface at the opposite end (Seetah 2006).

Context	Genus	No. of Fragments	Weight (g)	Type	Marks
1/02	Bovine	3	106	Femur diaphysis	Shallow slice, moderate ?chop
1/04	?Bovine	1	12	Rib	Deep chop
	Unidentified	1	7	Unidentified diaphysis	Shallow slice
2/05	Bovine	1	70	Femur diaphysis	None
		1	39	Rib	
	?Bovine	1	11	Unidentified diaphysis	

Table 1: Animal remains

5.4 Palaeo-environmental Remains

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

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological field evaluation was successful and meets the aims of the investigations, which were laid out in the WSI.

Pit 1/05 investigated in Trench 1, which contained probable 15th – 16th century pottery and animal bones showing slice marks, is clearly result of domestic activities in the late medieval period within the evaluated site.

Limestone wall foundation **2/09** and the demolition layers investigated in Trench 2 presumably represent the remains of the same structure. The dimension of the wall foundation suggests that its may possibly be related to an internal wall of a larger building or the outer wall of a small outbuilding. Dating evidence recovered from the demolition layer points to a late medieval or early post-medieval origin for the investigated remains. On-line available historic maps of Chinnor (NLS, OM), does not show any standing structure on the site, which suggest that the remains of the wall foundation and the demolition layers are related to a structure which was demolished before 1881.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site record

Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to Oxfordshire Resource Centre under accession number: awaited

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Appendix 1: Trench Context Inventory

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Length	Width	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 1								
1/01	Deposit	Dark grey-brown sandy loam	0.30m	10m	1.60m	-	Topsoil	Modern
1/02	Deposit	Light to mid brown-grey sandy silt with rare small well-rounded stone and occasional fragments of limestone	0.20-0.32m	10m	1.60m	Roof tile, bone	Subsoil	Post-medieval
1/03	Deposit	Light grey sandy lime clay and limestone	0.16m (as exca)	10m	1.60m	-	Natural chalk	Formed c. 94-100 million years ago
1/04	Fill	Dark grey clayey silt with moderate limestone and occasional charcoal	0.40m	1m	0.50m	Pottery, bone	Fill of pit 1/05	Medieval
1/05	Cut	Sub-oval (?) cut with steep concave sides and concave base	0.40m	1m	0.50m	n/a	Pit	Medieval
Trench 2								
2/01	Deposit	Dark grey-brown sandy loam	0.27-0.35m	10m	1.55m	-	Topsoil	Modern
2/02	Deposit	Mid brown-grey sandy silt with occasional fragments of limestone	0.30m	10m	1.55m	-	Subsoil	Post-medieval
2/03	Deposit	Light grey sandy lime clay and limestone with occasional flints	0.05m (as exca)	10m	1.55m	-	Natural chalk	Formed c. 94-100 million years ago
2/04	Cut	Wide linear (?) feature	0.45m	6m	1.55m	n/a	Limit of demolition area	Post-medieval
2/05	Layer	Mid grey sandy silt with frequent fragments of limestone and occasional fragments of CBM	0.25m	6m	1.55m	Roof tile, bone	Demolition layer	Post-medieval
2/06	Layer	High concentration of fragments of roof tiles in a matrix of mid grey-brown sandy silt	0.14m	6m	1.55m	Roof tile	Demolition layer	Post-medieval
2/07	Deposit	Mid yellow-brown sandy gravel	0.18m (as exca)	1.30m	1m	-	Possible natural deposit	-
2/08	Cut	Linear cut, not clearly visible. Orientation: NW-SE	0.08m	1.55m	0.30m	n/a	Construction cut of wall foundation 1/09	Medieval/Post-medieval
2/09	Masonry	Line of roughly worked and sub-angular limestone, max. dimensions 180×250×80mm	0.08m	1.55m	0.30m	-	Wall foundation	Medieval/Post-medieval
2/10	Layer	Light grey lime sandy silt with occasional fragments of limestone and CBM. Very similar to natural deposit	0.08m	6m	1.55m	Roof tile (not retained)	Demolition layer	Post-medieval