

1512

**JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**LONDIS STORE, MARKET SQUARE,**

**BAMPTON, OXFORDSHIRE**

**SP 3150 0134**

*On behalf of*

*Oakshower Services Ltd*

**MAY 2005**

**REPORT FOR**

Oakshower Services Ltd  
Londis  
Market Square  
Bampton  
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## **Summary**

*A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation for foundations for a new store and office. The investigation revealed numerous pits of early and late medieval and post-medieval date. The site appears possibly to have been occupied during the 11<sup>th</sup> century and then continuously from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is argued that structural remains of the 11<sup>th</sup> century were present.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development site was located on the south side of Market Square in Bampton (NGR SP 3150 0134) to the rear of the Londis Store. The underlying geology is Second Terrace Gravels overlying Oxford Clay and the site lies at c. 70m OD. A number of outbuildings had recently been demolished.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission had been granted for the demolition of existing outbuildings and construction of a new store and office and refurbishment of the adjoining shop. Due to the potential of the development to affect archaeological deposits a condition had been attached requiring the implementation of a watching brief during groundworks. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services prepared a Brief for the work.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Bampton was a large and wealthy market town (one of only three markets mentioned in the area with Oxford and Wallingford), which had achieved considerable importance by the time of the Domesday survey of 1086, though there is no earlier documentary evidence to suggest how it achieved its wealth. It may have been as a result of a saltworks in the town, mentioned for the first and last time in the Domesday survey. Prior to this date the town is known in documents only for a battle that took place in AD614. Its prosperity increased in the 14th century with the growth of the wool trade, but suffered a decline, probably as a result of the Black Death and its repercussions on agriculture.

The original layout of the settlement is centred on two points. The parish church of St Mary appears to stand on the site of an earlier Minster church and associated ecclesiastical complex, and the later triangular Market Place that was laid out in 1241 with three converging streets fronting a network of lanes to the rear.

The properties fronting the south side of the Market Place still appear to respect the medieval tenement/burgage boundaries. To the south of the development archaeological evaluation revealed an Anglo Saxon sunken feature building dating to the sixth or seventh centuries. Twelfth and thirteenth century pottery was found extensively across the area amongst pits, walls and ditches. This suggested therefore that the development site was within the area of medieval activity.

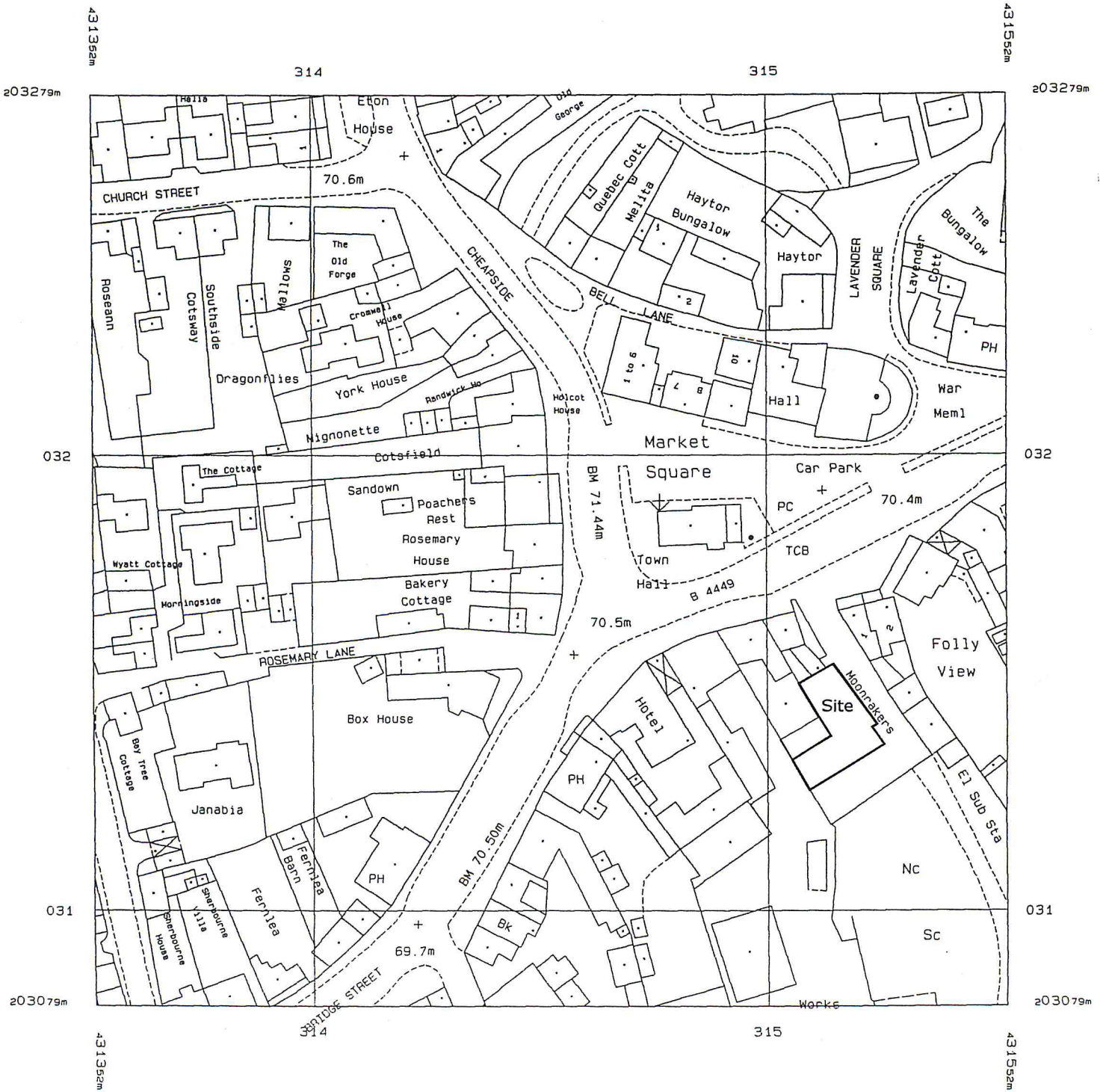


Figure 1. Site location.

## **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.
- any evidence for the Anglo Saxon and/or medieval settlement of Bampton
- The results of the investigations will be made public.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

### **3.2 Methodology**

The excavations for the new foundations were monitored. These were excavated using a 2.5 tonne excavator.

## **4 RESULTS (Figure 2)**

All features were assigned individual context numbers. This number covered both the feature cut and the fill for pits. All measurements are given in mm. A general description of the feature fills is given. The pits and walls were buried by a homogenous layer of mid brown very sandy silt with pieces of brick (context 02). This incorporated demolition rubble from the clearance of the outbuildings and was on average 600mm thick.

The remains were found to fall into three periods: early medieval, early post-medieval and post-medieval. A lot of the features could not be dated.

### **4.1 Early medieval**

Two pits produced sherds of pottery dating to the early medieval period. However, the sherd from pit [30] is possibly residual and the pit could be later. The reason for this is that the pit cuts a sequence of two pits. Given the lack of other pits dating to the early medieval period it seems unlikely that this is of 11<sup>th</sup> century date unless these three pits were on the edge of a plot further to the east, which was occupied at this time. The group of three pits is described here. The fact that three of the pits have sides at an angle of 45<sup>o</sup> is interesting. The only other pits with this type of

profile are pit (53), which predates a 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century pit and an undated pit (33). Both of these therefore may be of early medieval date.

Cntx	Type	Width/Dia.	Depth	Comments
21	Pit	750+	450	Sub-circular; sides 55-60 <sup>0</sup> ; slightly rounded base.
21	Fill	750+	450	Pale grey-brown sandy silt + 2% (by volume) gravel.
30	Pit	2000	700+	Sub-circular; sides 45 <sup>0</sup> ; not bottomed. Cuts (31)
30	Fill	2000	700+	Lower fill; pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel. Upper fill; pale-mid reddish brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
31	Pit	1300+	700+	Sub-circular, sides 45 <sup>0</sup> , not bottomed. Cuts (32)
31	Fill	1300+	700+	Lower fill: pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel covered by a layer of sand and gravel in turn overlaid by pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
32	Pit	1100+	550	Sub-circular, sides 45 <sup>0</sup> , flat base
32	Fill	1100+	550	Not recorded

#### 4.2 Late medieval and early post-medieval

Again few features produced pottery of the late medieval or early post-medieval period. The pits (11, 13, 49) containing material dating to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century+ are dated by Cistercian ware (AD1475-1700) and Brill/Boarstall ware (1200-1600). The mid 16<sup>th</sup> century+ feature (22) is dated by Red Earthenwares that date from 1550 onwards and therefore could belong to the later post-medieval period. This last cuts pit (23) and therefore is later than (23). Pits (52 and 53) pre-date pit (51), which is dated to the mid 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. While they could be of the mid 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century they could be earlier (see above for comment on pit 53).

Cntx	Type	Width/Dia.	Depth	Comments
11	Pit	1400	1100+	Sub-circular; near vertical sides; not bottomed. Cut by 19 <sup>th</sup> century pit (12)
11	Fill	1400	1100+	Lower fill; pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt +20% gravel. Upper fill; dark grey-brown sandy silt + charcoal flecks + 5% gravel.
13	Pit	750+	c.1100	Sub-circular; sides vertical
13	Fill	750+	c.1100	Not recorded
22	Pit	1100	850+	Sub-circular: sides 55-60 <sup>0</sup> , not bottomed
22	Fill	1100	850+	Pale grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
23	Pit	450+	450	Sub-circular; sides near vertical, slightly rounded base
23	Fill	450+	450	Pale grey-brown sandy silt + 5-10% gravel
49	Pit	800+ NS – 1450 EW	400+	Oval; sides 60 <sup>0</sup> ; not bottomed. N side against wall foundation (48).
49	Fill	800+ NS – 1450 EW	400+	Mid grey-brown slightly sandy slightly clayey silt + 5% small gravel
52	Pit	1200+	300+	Sub-circular, sides 60 <sup>0</sup> , not bottomed
52	Fill	1200+	300+	Pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
53	Pit	800+	300	Sub-circular; sides 45 <sup>0</sup> , slightly rounded base
53	Fill	800+	30+	Pale grey-brown sandy silt + 30% fine gravel

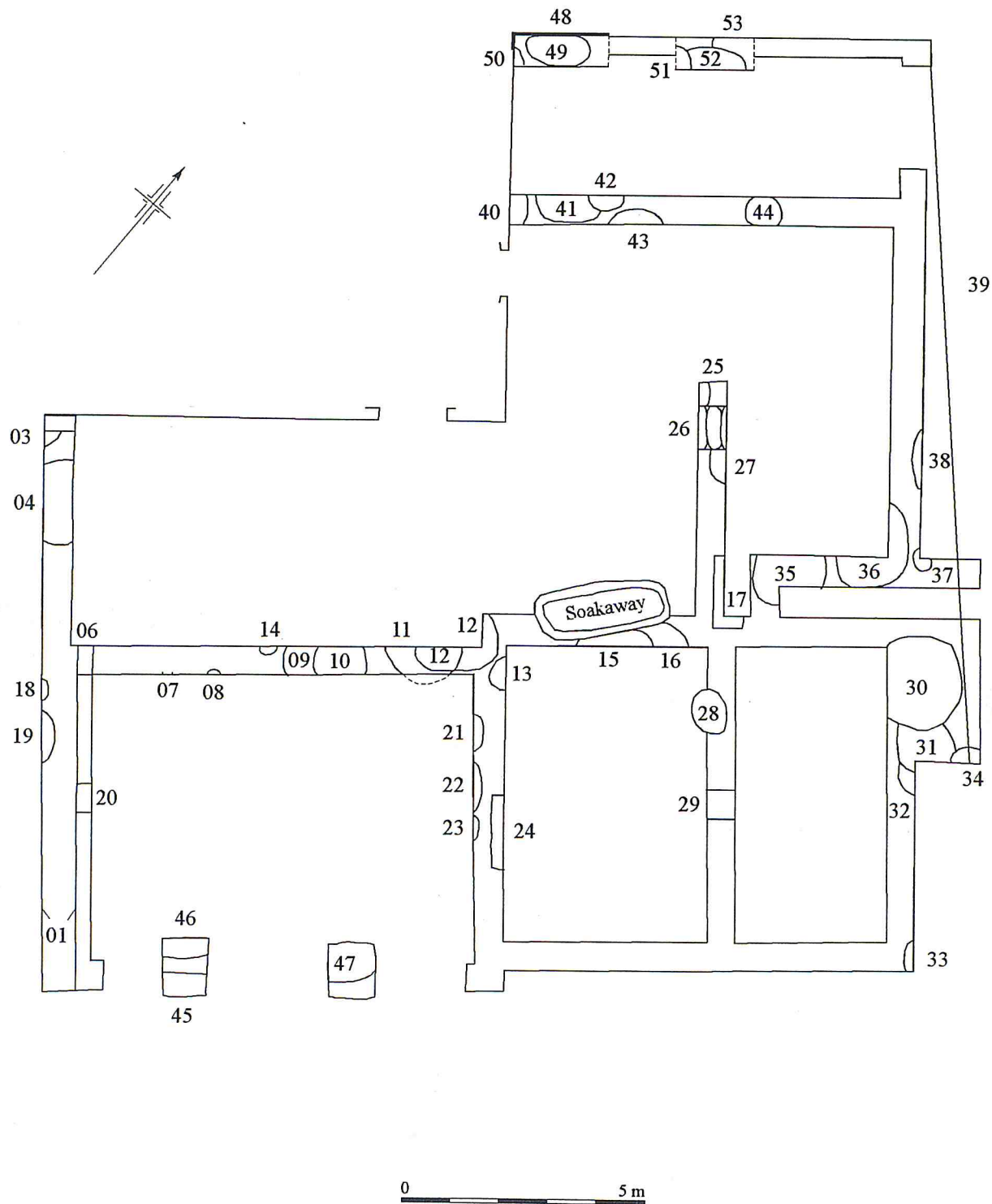


Figure 2. Plan of features



On the extreme north edge of the site were two short lengths of wall footing (48). The east-west length was under the present north boundary wall, which overlaps the earlier wall by 70-100mm to the south. The present wall foundation extends 800mm below modern ground level. The earlier wall was 550mm high (6 courses) and only extended for 1.20m east of the north-south length where it appeared to purposely end. It was bonded into a north-south section of wall footing, which was directly under the east side of the rear extension to the Londis Store. The north-south length only extended 400mm south of the east-west length and survived two courses (100mm) high. The foundations were constructed of limestone pieces 210mm long by 100mm thick to 230 by 50mm. As pit (49) respected the wall, the walls must be of 15<sup>th</sup> century or earlier date. No traces of a continuation of the east west wall were seen further to the east where the excavation was slightly further to the south of the line of the wall.

#### 4.3 Later post-medieval

Three features are dated to before the 19<sup>th</sup> century: pit (04) late 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century; pit (35) 18<sup>th</sup> century; pit (51) mid 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century. The other dated features (10, 12, 16, 25, 43) are of 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century date. Pit (41) contained abundant sherds of mass-produced white earthenwares (not retained) and was cut by, and therefore is earlier than, pit (42) that therefore must be of 19-20<sup>th</sup> century date. Pit 40 again contained numerous sherds of the same type of pottery. Pit (36) contained a piece of clay tobacco pipe stem that was seen but could not be retrieved and is therefore of post-medieval date. The soakaway cutting pits (15 and 16) was of 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

Cntx	Type	Width/Dia.	Depth	Comments
04	Pit	1700	?	Sub-circular; sides 80°, not bottomed
04	Fill	1700	?	Pale-mid grey-brown very sandy silt = 10% gravel.
10	Pit	1100	900	Sub-circular; vertical sides, flat base
10	Fill	1100	900	Mid-dark grey-brown sandy silt + 5-10% gravel
12	Pit	1650	750	Sub-circular; sides near vertical, flat base
12	Fill	1650	750	Mixed fill but generally mid grey-brown sandy silt with 15% gravel. Lenses of mid yellow-brown sandy silt + 20% gravel
15	Pit	1600	1000	Sub-circular; near vertical sides, very slightly rounded base. Cuts 19 <sup>th</sup> century pit
15	Fill	1600	1000	Mid grey-brown sandy silt with some limestone pieces in lower fill + 10-15% gravel
16	Pit	1100+	1350+	Sub-circular; undercut east side, not bottomed
16	Fill	1100+	1350+	Mid grey-brown very sandy silt + 10% gravel
17	Man-hole	1500 by 700	1100	Rectangular; limestone block-lined.
25	Pit	1000 estimated	600+	Sub-circular, sides near vertical, not bottomed
25	Fill	1000 estimated	600+	Mid grey-brown sandy silt with a band of dark grey sandy silt + ash
35	Pit	1500	700+	Sub-circular; sides near vertical, not bottomed
35	Fill	1500	700+	Upper; pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt = 30% gravel Lower; red-brown slightly silty sand
36	Pit	1450	700	Sub-circular; sides vertical, flat base

36	Fill	1450	700	Mid-dark grey-brown slightly clayey sandy silt + 10% gravel. Lenses of gravel in lower fill
40	Pit	600+	500+	Sub-circular; sides near vertical, not bottomed
40	Fill	600+	500+	Pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 2% gravel
41	Pit	1300+	500+	Sub-circular; sides 70 <sup>o</sup> , not bottomed
41	Fill	1300+	500+	Lower; mid grey silt Upper; pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 2% gravel
42	Pit	500+	500+	Small circular; vertical sides
42	Fill	500+	500+	Mid grey-brown very sandy silt + 2% small gravel. Cuts 41
43	Pit	1200+	500	Sub-circular; sides near vertical; slightly rounded base
43	Fill	1200+	500	Pale grey-brown sandy clay + 2% gravel
51	Pit	550+	250+	Sub-circular, side near vertical, not bottomed
51	Fill	550+	250+	Lenses of: sand + gravel; dark grey-brown slightly sandy silt; mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel

Plot boundary walls were found on three sides. The foundation for the west boundary wall (01) was formed from limestone blocks (average 350x250x60mm) in drystone construction. The wall varied from 550 to 800mm deep except where it was founded over pit (04) where it was 1100mm deep. It was founded on the river gravel deposits. The wall was 800mm wide. The wall post-dates the late 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century pit (04). The south boundary wall (45) was only seen in pad foundation pit where it was of a similar construction and 1100mm deep. The east plot wall foundation (39) was only 600mm wide and 1000mm deep.

Two short lengths of the same wall foundation orientated east-west were seen on the west side and middle of the site. These (20, & 29) were of similar construction to wall (01). No relationship to wall (01) could be discerned during the machining. It was narrower at 600mm and was again founded on the river gravels at 550-600mm depth.

Ditch (26) orientated east-west was 1000mm wide and 650mm deep with a V-shaped profile. It was filled with a single deposit of pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt. This ditch has to be of 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century date as it cut pit (25) that is dated at the earliest as mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 4.4 Undated features

Pit (50) is later than wall (48) - see above. This wall is either earlier than, or is dated to 15<sup>th</sup> century as pit (49) respects the wall. Pit (09) pre-dates the 19<sup>th</sup> century as it is cut by pit (10). The two post-holes (08 and 14) may be associated with each other. Pit (34) was recorded as probably late in date although the relationship with wall 39 was not recorded.

Cntx	Type	Width/Dia.	Depth	Comments
03	Pit	400+	1100+	Sub-circular, near vertical sides
03	Fill	400+	1100+	Mid grey-brown sandy silt + 10% gravel
08	Post-hole	250	300	Circular; vertical sides, slightly rounded base
08	Fill	250	300	Pale grey-brown slightly sandy clayey silt with limestone packing. Clay derives from lens of

				clay within natural gravels at this point
09	Pit	1300	900	Sub-circular; sides near vertical, flat base
09	Fill	1300	900	Ginger sandy silt + 10% gravel
14	Post-hole	300	300	Sub-circular; W side near vertical, E side 45 <sup>0</sup> , slightly rounded base
14	Fill	300	300	Mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
18	Pit	450	400	Sub-circular, sides 65-70 <sup>0</sup> , slightly rounded base
18	Fill	450	400	Pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
19	Pit	1100	500	Sub-circular; sides 75-80, flat base
19	Fill	1100	500	Pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
24	Pit	1450 N/S	450	Rectangular; sides vertical, flat base
24	Fill	1450 N/S	450	Pale grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
27	Pit	700+	Not record-ed	Sub-circular; sides near vertical, slightly rounded base
27	Fill	700+	''	Mid-dark grey-brown sandy silt
28	Soakaway	c. 1000	1000	Lined with hand made bricks, inverted u-shaped drain leads into it
33	Pit	c. 1000	300	Sub-circular, sides 45 <sup>0</sup> , slightly rounded base
33	Fill	c. 1000	300	Pale-mid grey brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
34	Pit	450+	550	Sub-circular; sides 60-65 <sup>0</sup> , slightly rounded base
34	Fill	450+	550	Mid-dark grey-brown slightly clayey sandy silt + 10% gravel
37	Pit	500	250	Small circular; sides near vertical, very slightly rounded base
37	Fill	500	250	Mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% gravel
38	Pit	1200+	400+	Sub-circular; sides 60-70 <sup>0</sup> , not bottomed
38	Fill	1200+	400+	Mid-dark grey-brown sandy silt + 15% gravel
44	Pit	888	460	Circular; sides near vertical, rounded base
44	Fill	800	460	Pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 2% small gravel. Some burnt material from high degree burning and moderate medium sized limestone pieces
46	Pit	800+	400+	Sub-circular; sides 45 <sup>0</sup> , not bottomed
46	Fill	800+	400+	Mid grey-brown sandy silt + 5% small gravel
47	Possible soakaway	800+	700+	Sub-circular; near vertical sides, not bottomed
47	Fill	800+	700+	Pale-mid grey-brown sandy silt + 60% medium sized limestone
50	Pit	400+	300+	Sub-circular
50	Fill	400+	300+	Not recorded

A further short length of wall foundation was undated. This (06) was narrow at 300mm wide and survived as a single course only 100mm high. It was formed from limestone rubble of average size 150x100x60mm. It was founded on the top of the gravel. 1.2m to the east was a feature (07) comprising two pieces of limestone (100x100x40mm) set slightly into the top of the gravel. This may have been a post pad or the base of a truncated posthole. This feature and the two postholes (08 and 14) to the east and the wall footing were probably associated. The wall footing (06) is narrow and may have been a base for a sill beam with the postholes/postpad either representing internal partitions or relating to industrial/craft structures in an outbuilding.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 28 sherds with a total weight of 1,251g. The bulk of the assemblage was late- or post-medieval in date, and the range of fabrics and forms indicates that there was virtually continuous occupation at the site from around the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Two sherds of Saxo-Norman (11<sup>th</sup> century) material were noted, but 'high' medieval (12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century) wares, common in Oxfordshire, were entirely absent, indicating a break in occupation from around the time of the Norman Conquest until the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

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

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 2 sherds, 83g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 2 sherds, 20g.

OXCL: Cistercian ware, 1475-1700. 2 sherds, 70g.

OXDR, Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 12 sherds, 911g.

OXBEWSL: Staffordshire slip-trailed earthenwares, 1650-1800. 1 sherd, 36g.

OXFG: Staffordshire Manganese Glazed ware, late 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> century. 2 sherds, 31g.

OXFM, Staffordshire White-glazed English Stoneware, 1730 – 1800. 2 sherds, 13g.

WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> C. 5 sherds, 87g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. All the fabrics are common finds in the region.

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

Context	OXAC		OXAM		OXCL		OXDR		BEWS L		OXFG		OXFM		WHEW		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
4							6	620			2	31					L17thC
10															1	31	19thC
11					1	25											L15thC
12							1	66					1	5	1	5	19thC
13					1	45											L15thC
15							2	114									M16thC
16															1	10	19thC
21	1	56															11thC
22							1	5									M16thC
25															1	2	19thC
30	1	27															11thC
35													1	8			E18thC
42							1	100									M16thC
43							1	6							1	39	19thC
49			2	20													15thC
51									1	36							M17thC
Total	2	83	2	20	2	70	12	911	1	36	2	31	2	13	5	87	

## 6 DISCUSSION

The early medieval pottery indicates use of the site in this period; however the lack of features definitely dated to this period makes it difficult to understand the nature of this use. The possible group of pits (30-32) of this date and the similarly profiled pit (33) directly to the south on the east edge of the site may indicate that the area to the east was occupied. A plot boundary, that did not survive later use of the site, may have existed just to the west of this line of pits.

The structural remains (wall 06, postpad/posthole 07, and postholes 08 and 14) are probably of medieval date due to their truncation; whether earlier or later is unknown. The pottery assemblage from the investigations shows occupation in the area during the 11<sup>th</sup> century with a break until the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The two short lengths of wall footing on the north edge of the site either belong to this reoccupation of the site or the earlier phase of occupation. The east west orientated length may be the rear of a building with the east end of the wall representing the west side of a doorway. The north south length may have been part of an extension to the building. Alternatively the structure was some form of wind break although the depth of foundation would appear to be excessive for such a structure. Whether part of a building or a wind break it is unlikely that a pit would have been dug against the footing. The pit is dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and therefore it is more likely that the structure is earlier and therefore of 11<sup>th</sup> century date.

From the 15<sup>th</sup> century the site has been continuously occupied through to the present day. The plot boundaries (01, 39, and 45) appear to have been constructed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century as they are built over pit (04). This shows that a rearrangement of the plots was carried out at this time. The plot was sub-divided by wall (20, 29).

## 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 records  
Finds contents list  
Pottery report

#### Finds

Pottery  
Animal Bone

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services. The archive will be transferred to:

Oxfordshire Museums Resource Centre, Cotswold Dene, Standlake, Witney OX29 7QG under accession number OXCMS: 2005.12.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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