

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

AT

CUMNOR PLACE COTTAGE, ABINGDON ROAD,

CUMNOR, OXFORDSHIRE

SP 462 040

On behalf of

Brookworth Developments Ltd

November 2004

REPORT FOR

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out as part of a consideration of a planning application for the construction of three new detached dwellings. Mechanical trenching found two ditch-like features and four pits all considered dating to the 17th century. The features have been interpreted as planting pits and trenches within a garden.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins of the Project

A planning application has been submitted for the construction of three new detached houses with associated garaging, means of access and private drive (CUM/18781). Due to the presence of potential remains of archaeological interest in the proposal area, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) advised that an archaeological evaluation of the application site should be undertaken prior to the determination of the planning application. OCAS prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work. John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by OCAS. This set out the methods to be employed for demonstrating whether or not any archaeological remains survived on the site, and for establishing their significance in relation to the development proposal.

1.2 The Site (Figure 1)

The site of the proposed development lies to the west of Abingdon Road in the centre of Cumnor (NGR SP 462040). The geology is Corallian Limestone and the site lies at approximately 121m OD. The site is currently a garden.

1.3 Archaeological Background

To the north of the application site is the location of Cumnor Place that was the scene of the death in 1560 of Amy Dudley (Robsart), wife of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. The Cumnor estate was originally part of the estate of Abingdon Abbey and was managed from a grange at Cumnor from at least the late Anglo-Saxon period onwards. The site of the early domestic buildings have not been located but the large courtyard house erected in about 1330 west of the (former Minster) church is known from surviving remains, descriptions and drawings. After the Dissolution the property passed through a series of private owners before being purchased in 1561 by Anthony Forster, a household officer of Robert Dudley. He substantially extended the house and the gardens. The full extent of the monastic grange site is unclear and features dating to this and the later formal Tudor gardens may be disturbed by this proposed development.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 shows a building in the same place as Cumnor Place Cottage although its format appears different from today.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the evaluation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.



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Figure 1. Site and trench location

- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- In particular to establish whether late Saxon and /or medieval occupation or boundary features are present and, if so, their likely relationship to the settlement layout.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

A scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and subsequently agreed with OCAS and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of five trenches.

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 (1994).

3.2 Methodology

The field evaluation comprised the excavation of five trenches totalling 95.5m in length (Figure 1). Trench dimensions are given in Appendix 1. The trenches were excavated using a 3 tonne mini-excavator equipped with a 1350mm wide toothless bucket. Trenches were excavated down to the natural geology under direct archaeological control. Archaeological features present were sampled by hand excavation.

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.

Mr Hugh Coddington of OCAS monitored the works.

4 RESULTS

Deposits and fills are referred to in the text and figures in brackets: (02), cut features: [03]. Trench numbers precede deposit and cut numbers i.e. (1/02) is deposit 02 in Trench 1.

The Corallian Limestone was exposed in all trenches where it consisted of white and yellow fractured and bedded limestone (1/03, 2/03, 3/14, 4/03, 5/03). This was overlaid by a subsoil of compact pale yellow-brown sandy clay with 5-10% small

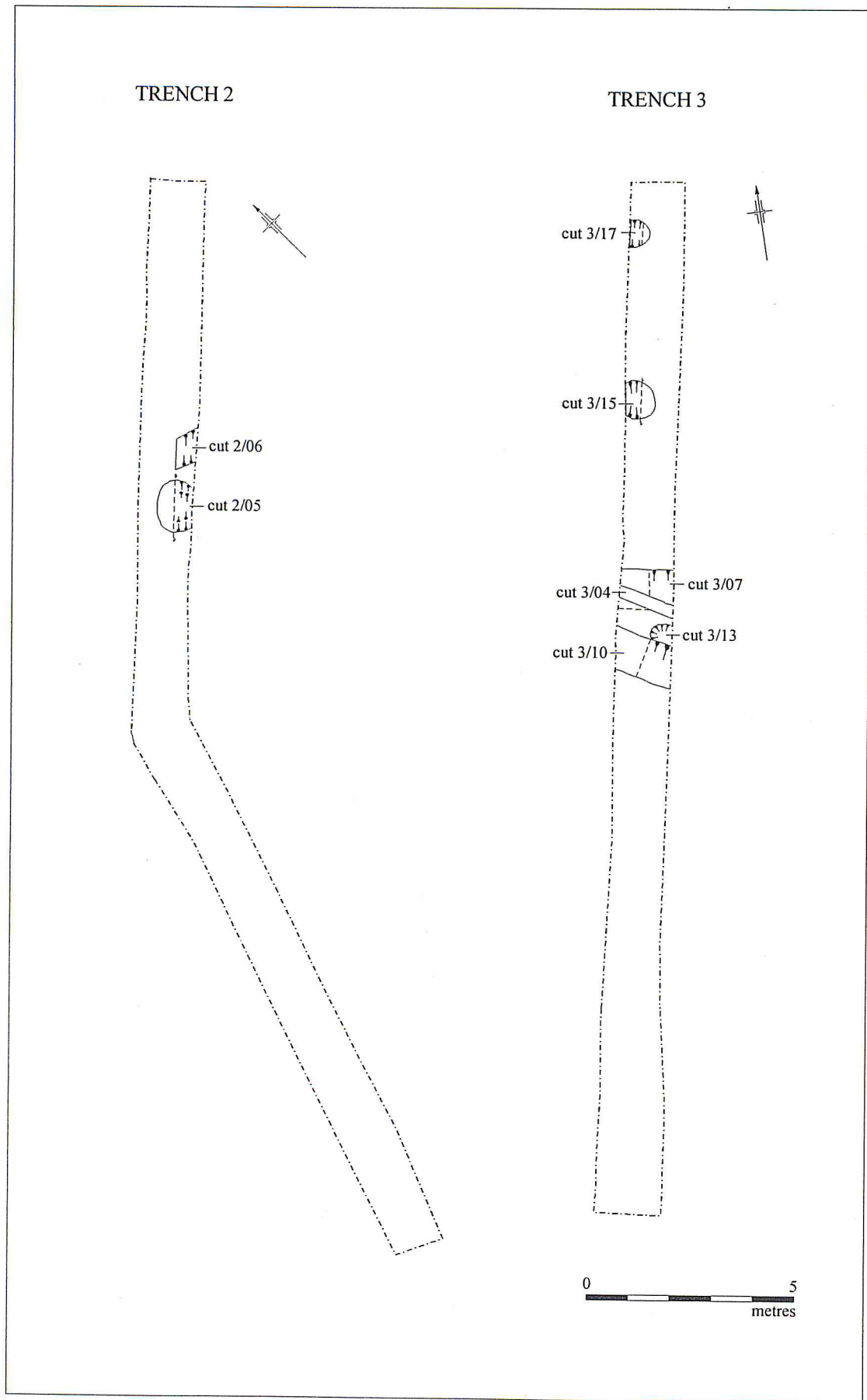


Figure 2. Plans of Trenches 2 and 3

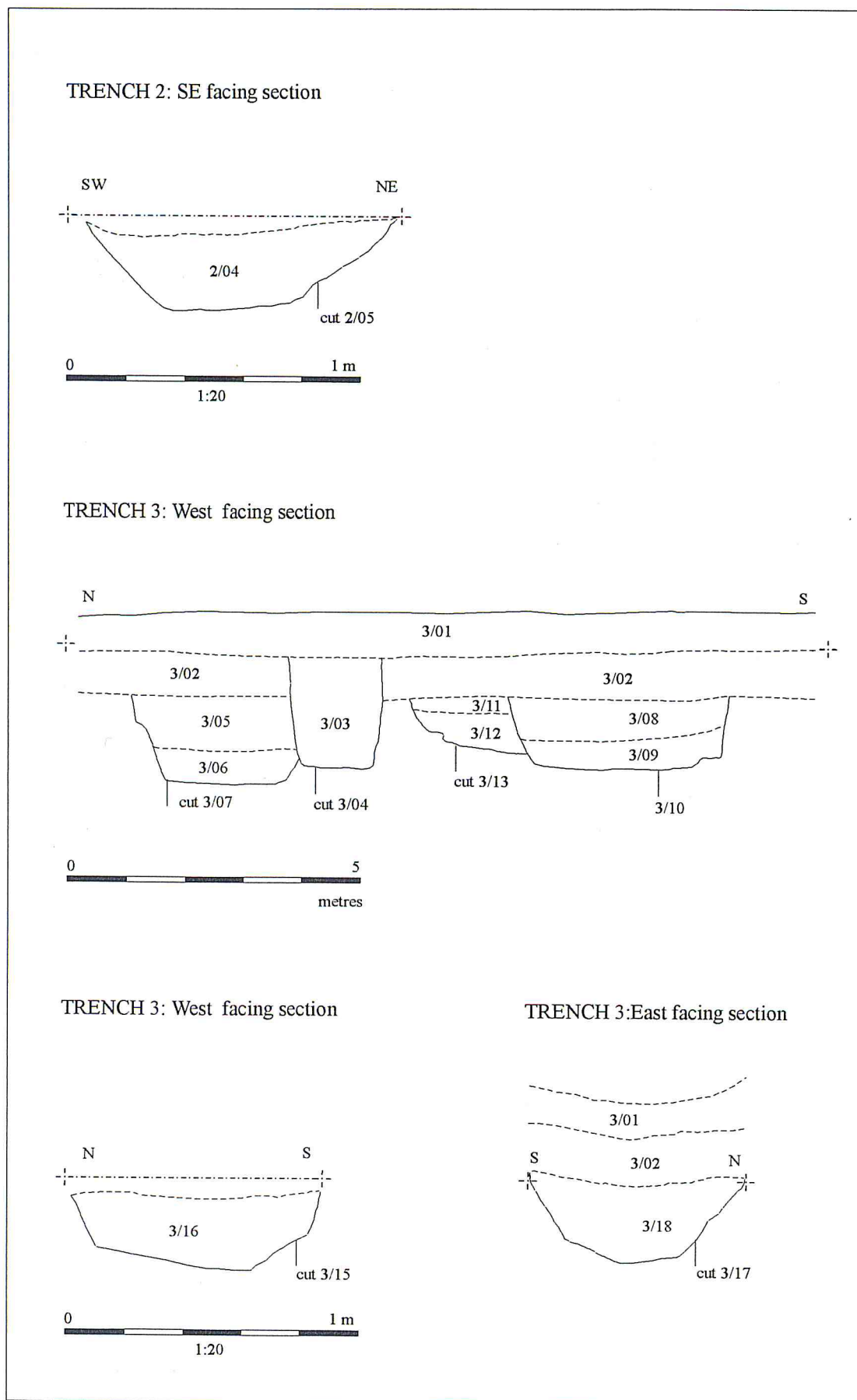


Figure 3. Sections of features

pieces of limestone (1/02, 2/02, 3/02, 4/02, 5/02). This deposit was either a ploughsoil or a horticultural soil and varied in thickness from 150 - 260mm. The uppermost deposit was topsoil (context 01 in all trenches); covered with grass in Trenches 3-5 and the north-east arm of Trench 2. This varied in depth from 220 - 330mm

Cut into subsoil (2/02, 3/02) was a salt-glazed drain within a trench [2/06, 3/04]. This drain cut through an earlier ditch [3/07].

Several features were sealed by the subsoil and cut into the limestone (Fig. 2). Within Trench 2 was a pit [2/05]. This was an apparent sub-circular feature that was partly outside the limits of the trench. It measured 1.04m NE-SW and 800mm+ NW-SE and was *c.* 280mm deep. The sides were generally at a 45° angle although slightly irregular due to the removal of bedded pieces of limestone. The base was flat (Fig. 3). It was filled (2/04) by firm dark brown silty clay with the occasional pebble and charcoal flecks and moderate amounts of medium sized limestone pieces (brash). The pit fill contained two sherds of pottery dating at the earliest from the mid 16th century. Two further pits were present towards the north end of Trench 3 (Fig. 2). The southernmost [3/15] was sub-circular with a maximum diameter of 800mm and a depth of 200mm. The sides were slightly concave and varied from 30 – 45° from the horizontal (Fig. 3). The pit had a flat base and was filled by dark brown silty clay with charcoal flecks, occasional pebbles and moderate amounts of brash (3/16). The pit contained four sherds of pottery dating at the earliest from the 17th century, animal bone and a copper alloy coat hook. The other pit [3/17] was sub-circular with a maximum diameter of 500mm and a depth of 250mm. It extended under the west baulk of the trench and had sides at 45° and a tapered base. The fill of the pit (3/18) was very soft dark brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and pebbles.

Two ditch-like features were present in Trench 3 (Figs. 2 & 3). These were close together and although not appearing to be parallel may have been. The trench width was only 1.35m and the northern feature was cut through by the later drain [3/04]. The northern ditch-like feature [3/07] was 1.05m wide at the top, narrowing to 650mm at the bottom. The north side was at an angle of 60° while the lower part of the south side was 45° (the top was truncated by [3/04]). The base was flat and the feature was 460mm deep. The lower fill of the feature was compact pale grey-brown very sandy clay with 40% (by volume) small and medium brash (3/06) that was *c.* 150mm thick. The upper fill was a compact mid grey-brown sandy clay with the occasional very small pieces of limestone (3/05). This upper deposit was *c.* 250mm thick. The only artefact recovered from this feature was a piece of bone from the upper fill (3/05).

The other ditch-like feature [3/10] was 1.10 – 1.15m wide and 360mm deep. The south side was vertical with the north side near vertical and the feature had a flat base. The lower fill was compact yellow and yellow grey very sandy clay with 50-60% small limestone and the occasional medium sized brash (3/09). This deposit was 120mm thick and was overlaid by moderately compact pale yellow brown sandy clay with 10% small brash (3/08). The finds recovered from the upper fill were a piece of clay tobacco pipe stem and two sherds of 17-18th century bottle glass. This ditch cut a small pit [3/13] which was at least 500mm in diameter (truncated on the south side by ditch [3/10]). Only 380mm of the pit extended into the east side of the trench. The pit appeared to be circular although slightly irregular with 35-40° sides and a slightly rounded base. The pit was 380mm deep. The lower fill was some 180mm thick and

was a compact pale yellow-grey sandy clay and 40% small brash (3/12). This was covered by a deposit of mid-dark grey-brown sandy clay with 5% fine pieces of limestone that was 70mm thick (3/11).

5 FINDS

5.1 The Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 6 sherds with a total weight of 106g. It was entirely post-medieval in date, and was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 5 sherds, 90g.

OXRESWL: Polychrome Slipwares, 17th century. 1 sherd, 16g.

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

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

Context	OXDR		OXRESWL		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	
2/04	2	53			M16thC
3/16	3	37	1	16	17thC
Total	5	90	1	16	

5.2 Other finds

A piece of animal bone was recovered from the fill (3/05) of ditch-like feature [30/7] while two sherds of post-medieval bottle glass and part of a stem from a clay tobacco pipe were present in fill (3/08) of the other ditch-like feature [3/10]. Pit fill 3/18 contained four small pieces of animal bone, part of a clay tobacco pipe stem and a copper alloy coat hook.

6 DISCUSSION

The sherd of polychrome slipware dates to the 17th century while the red earthenwares start in the mid 16th century but continue much later. The two pieces of clay pipe stem are later than the 16th century and the bottle glass is typical of bottles of the 17-18th centuries. It would appear that the features are of a similar date and date to some time within the 17th century.

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 shows a building in the same place as the present cottage. However the shape is not the same, even allowing for a later extension on the west side. It is unlikely to be an error in mapping and therefore the present cottage may be replacement for an earlier building.

The features could all be a type found in gardens with the pits being for planting shrubs or similar. The two ditch-like features may have been parallel and do not

extend eastwards to Trench 2. They may have been planting trenches for a decorative hedge or for deep rooted vegetables. It is possible that the features relate to the presumed earlier building shown on the 1886 OS map.

It would appear that, from the results of the evaluation, the proposed development will not impact on any archaeological remains of significance.

7 THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of the following:

The project brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site records
The photographic and drawn records

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: 2004.151.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mellor, M, 1984 A summary of the key assemblages. A study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century in TG Hassall et al, Excavations at St Ebbe's *Oxoniensia* 49, 181-219.

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

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (mm)	Width (mm)	Length (mm)	Finds	Date
Trench 1 15.5m x 1.35m							
01	Deposit	Topsoil	220-250	Trench	Trench	None	Modern
02	Deposit	Subsoil	200	Trench	Trench	None	Post C17 th
03	Deposit	Natural	-	Trench	Trench	-	-
Trench 2 10m x 1.8m -2.0m							
01	Deposit	Topsoil	220-250	Trench	Trench	None	Modern
02	Deposit	Subsoil	200	Trench	Trench	None	Post C17 th
03	Deposit	Natural	-	Trench	Trench	-	-
04	Fill	Fill of 2/05	300	1.04	800+	Pottery	Mid C16 th +
05	Cut	Pit	300	1.04	800+	-	Mid C16 th +

06	Cut	Pipe trench	520	400	Trench	None	Modern
Trench 3 25m x 1.35m							
01	Deposit	Ploughsoil	330	Trench	Trench	None	Post-medieval
02	Deposit	Old ploughsoil	200-270	Trench	Trench	Pottery, bone and tile	Medieval to post-medieval
03	Fill	Fill of 3/04	520	400	Trench	None	Modern
04	Cut	Pipe trench	520	400	Trench	-	Modern
05	Fill	Fill of 3/07	250	1.05	Trench	Bone	?
06	Fill	Fill of 3/07	150	1.05	Trench	None	?
07	Cut	?Ditch	460	1.05	Trench	-	?
08	Fill	Fill of 3/10	200	1.10	Trench	Glass, clay pipe	C17 th +
09	Fill	Fill of 3/10	120	1.10	Trench	None	
10	Cut	?Ditch	360	1.10	Trench	-	C17 th +
11	Fill	Fill of 3/13	70	500+	380+	None	?
12	Fill	Fill of 3/13	180	500+	380+	None	?
13	Cut	Pit	280	500+	380+	-	?
14	Deposit	Natural	-	Trench	Trench	-	-
15	Cut	Pit	250	800	700+	-	C17 th +
16	Fill	Fill of 3/15	250	800	700+	Pottery, bone, coat hook	C17 th +
17	Cut	Pit	200	500	400+	None	?
18	Fill	Fill of 3/17	200	500	400+	-	?
Trench 4 21m x 1.35m							
01	Deposit	Topsoil	230	Trench	Trench	None	Modern
02	Deposit	Subsoil	260	Trench	Trench	None	Post C17 th
03	Deposit	Natural	-	Trench	Trench	-	-
Trench 5 7.5m x 1.35m							
01	Deposit	Topsoil	230	Trench	Trench	None	Modern
02	Deposit	Subsoil	150-250	Trench	Trench	None	Post C17 th
03	Deposit	Natural	-	Trench	Trench	-	-