



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**AT**

**96 WALTON STREET, OXFORD**

**(NGR SP 506 072)**

*On behalf of*

*Riach Architects*

**DECEMBER 2015**

**REPORT FOR** Riach Architects,  
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**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b><i>SUMMARY</i></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
<b>2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 STRATEGY</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
<b>4 RESULTS</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1 Trench 1	5
<b>5 FINDS</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1 Pottery	5
5.2 Other finds	7
<b>6 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7 ARCHIVE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>7</b>
 <b>FIGURES AND PLATES</b>	
Figure 1. Site location	2
Figure 2. Plan and Sections	6
Plate 1. Trench 1 Pre-excavation, showing upper course of 1/05 brick arch	4
Plate 2. Trench 1, Pit 1/03 and brick arch 1/05	4

## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an evaluation within a cellar at 96 Walton Street, Oxford (NGR SP506072). The trench contained one late Post-Medieval pit cut into the natural sand and was overlain by two layers of made ground and the stone and brick floor of the cellar. A brick relieving arch was noted as forming part of the front wall of the cellar that was created to span the infilled pit and stop subsistence of the foundations.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The proposed development site is located at 96 Walton Street, Oxford (NGR SP506072). The underlying geology consists of Summertown-Radley Second Terrace Gravels. A spot height c. 10m to the NW of the site is 62.4m AOD

### **1.2 Planning Background**

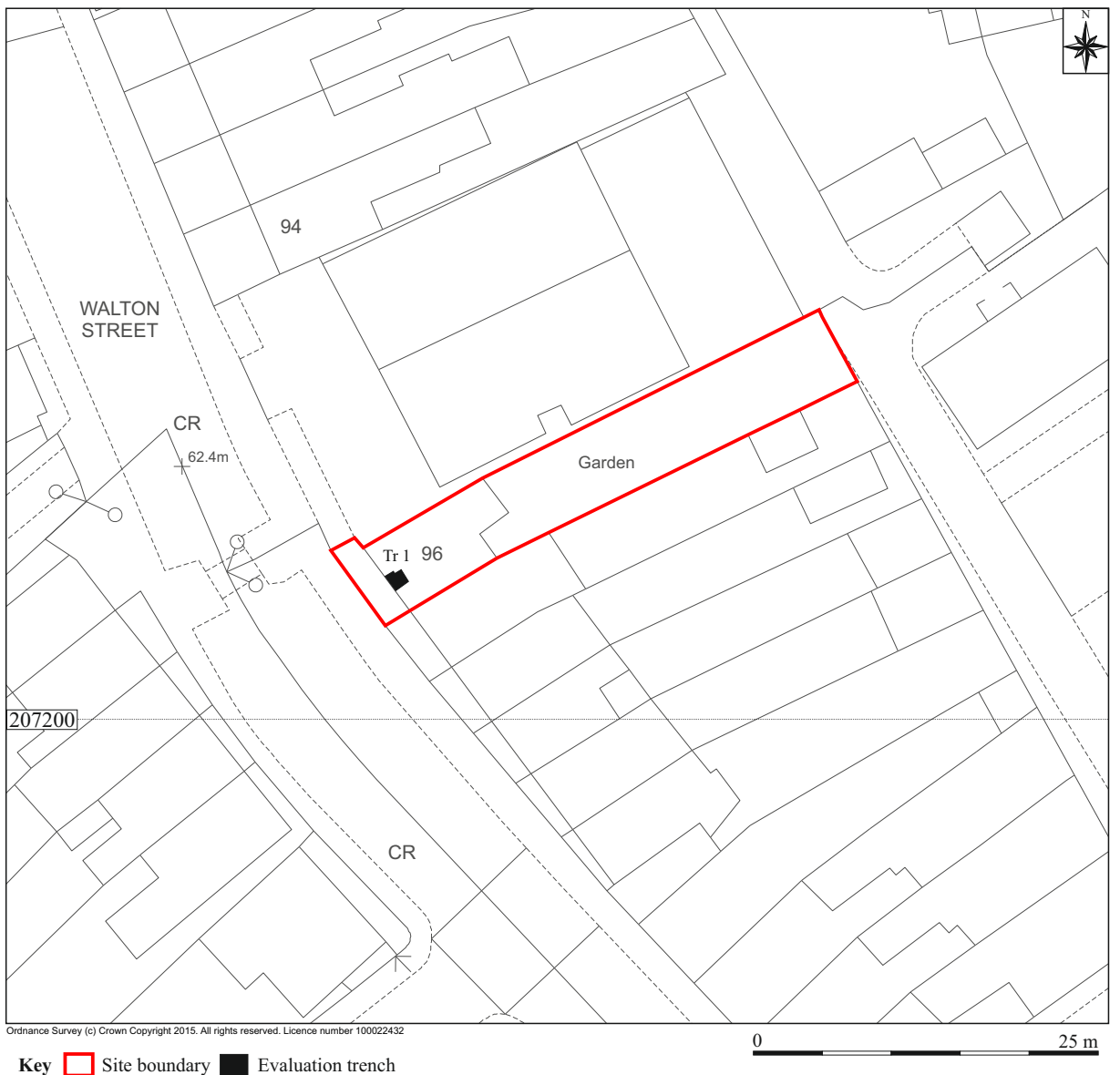
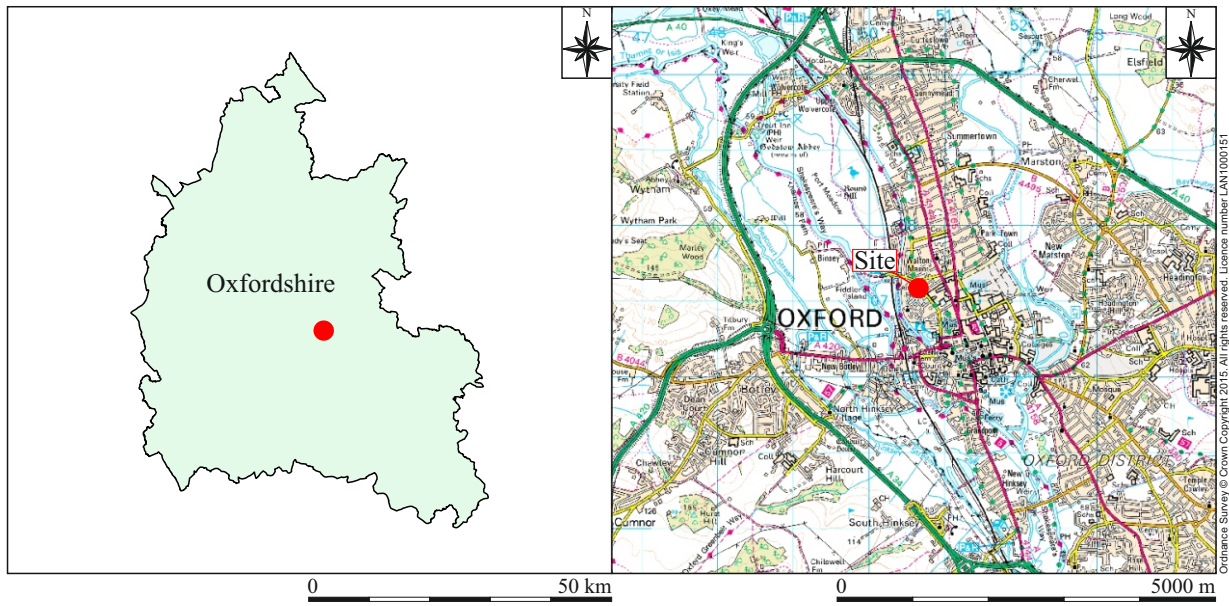
It is the intention to submit an application to make alterations to 96 Walton Street, Oxford. This will include the lowering of the present cellar floor. The City Archaeological Officer has indicated that as part of this application an archaeological evaluation should be carried out as part of the determination. This was in line with PPG 16 (the planning policy current at the time) and other Local Planning policies.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The site is located within the historic core of the medieval settlement of Walton and involves floor reduction work to a Grade II listed 19th century building. Furthermore stone flags and a relieving arch within the cellar where the floor is to be lowered may be indicative of buried detail (perhaps a well) that requires further investigation.

By the late medieval period Walton Manor formed part of the estate of Osney Abbey. The Hundred Rolls of 1279 recorded some 46 dwellings in the hamlet with later references to a grange belonging to the Abbott of Osney. By the 14th century, Godstow also held land in the village although there is evidence of some decline in the later medieval period with just eight tenants registered in the Godstow Manor in 1541. This decline was likely reflected in the Osney estate and the village appears to have been deserted altogether by the end of the 16th century.

In 1975 a 'midden' or 'pit' to the rear of 75 Walton Street was recorded and included a quantity of sheep and cattle bones, 11th-13th century pottery and a ridge tile post-dating the 12th century, suggesting a substantial dwelling nearby. Medieval pottery was also recovered from upper levels. The site of the manor and later Walton Farmhouse may be located nearby at No 73 Walton Street as this had been recorded as a three-storeyed timber-framed building, out of keeping with the others around it. This difference may reflect its earlier position as the house for the medieval farm. Further medieval finds were made at 82 Walton Street (Inskeep 1998).



Key  Site boundary  Evaluation trench

Figure 1: Site location

No 96 is listed as part of a group of a terrace of 19th century town houses. Nothing is specifically known of the terrace's origins, through its date, character, and location its place in the development of north Oxford can be read architecturally. The listing description notes that 'This is a pleasing and simple terrace with distinctive diaper decoration to the front (used on a good number of buildings of about this date in north Oxford) which survives in a little-altered condition. Because of its architectural quality and distinctiveness, and as a survival of the early growth of north Oxford, the terrace merits being added to the list at grade II'.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the site and the depth of soil deposits that overlie these remains, also to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.

In particular:

- To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- To determine whether the relieving arch is because there is a well in that part of the cellar.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Oxford City Archaeological Officer.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

### **3.2 Methodology**

One evaluation trench 1.3m long by 1.2m wide was excavated along the southwestern front wall of the cellar, next to the southeastern extent of the brick relieving arch set into the front cellar wall.

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. A photographic record was also produced.



Plate 1. Trench 1 Pre-excitation, showing upper course of 1/05 brick arch



Plate 2. Trench 1, Pit 1/03 and brick arch 1/05

## 4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

Trench 1 was 1.3m long, 1.2m wide and up-to 0.8m deep and contained a mostly limestone flagstone floor with some bricks included (1/00) and was 0.1m thick. This overlay a layer of made ground, a dark grey silty clay (1/01), with fragments of limestone and brick that tapered in thickness from 0.06m in the northeastern extent of the trench to 0.4m in the southwestern extent of the trench.

Layer (1/01) overlay a further layer of made ground consisting of redeposited natural gravels (1/02) that was 0.35m thick and contained no finds. The made ground layers overlay pit 1/03, where only the southeastern quadrant was exposed. Pit 1/03 (Fig. 2) was cut into the natural sand (1/06), it was 0.7m long and 0.7m wide and excavated down to a depth of 0.45m (not bottomed), sub-circular in shape with vertical sides. It was filled by a brown grey silty clay (1/04) that contained fragments of limestone and brick together with two fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery, roofing slate and an iron nail.

Brick relieving wall arch 1/05 was incorporated in the lower cellar wall at the front of the property (Plates. 1 & 2) (Fig. 2) It comprised a two course thick Victorian brick shallow arch that had a two course thick brick arch situated on-top of it. Relieving arch 1/05 was 2.5m long and was visible to a depth of 0.25m below the cellar floor.

The evaluation was conducted in a cellar with a single electric light on the ceiling. The feature edges and the natural sand were clear, thus the reliability of the results is considered to be good.

## 5 FINDS *By Simone Denis*

### 5.1 Pottery

Two fragments of pottery, of a combined weight of 38.7 gr, were recovered from context (104).

Context	Type	No. of Items	Weight (gr)	Fabric	Date Range
104	Base	1	34.5	OXDR	M16 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> C
	?Rim	1	4.2	WEWH	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> C

*Table 1: Pottery*

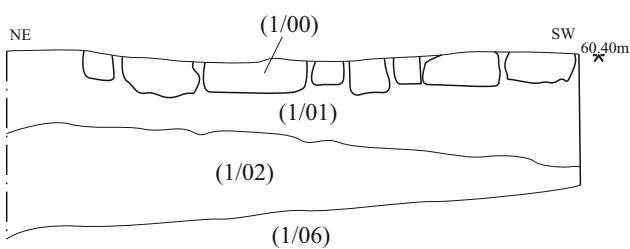
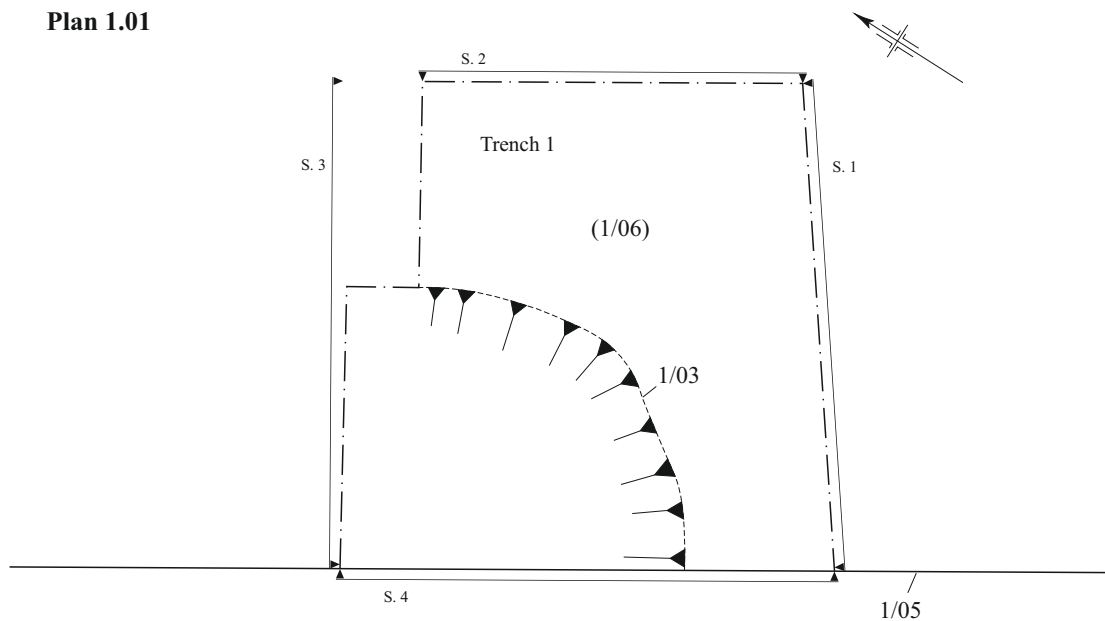
The fragment of Glazed Red Earthenwares (OXDR) is made of a brick red, very smooth fabric with good quality brown glaze on the inner surface. The curved shard comprises part of the base and the body, with a reconstructed diameter of *c.* 13 cm, and can be dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Victorian shard (WEWH) shows the characteristic hard white fabric and was identified as a fragment of rim belonging to a small pot.

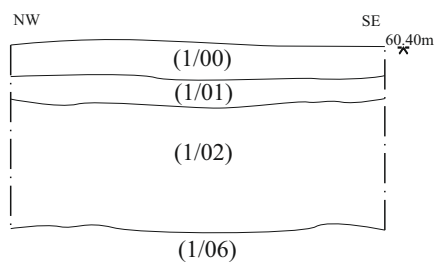
It is not recommended to retain the pottery assemblage due to its very limited potential for further analysis.



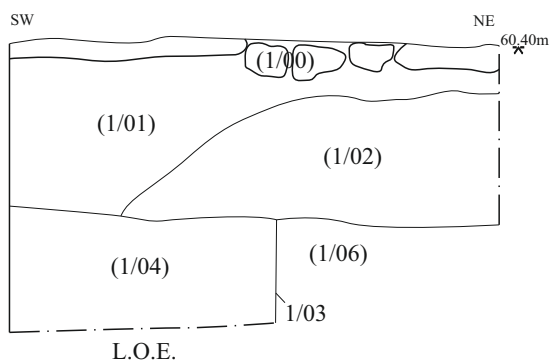
**Plan 1.01**



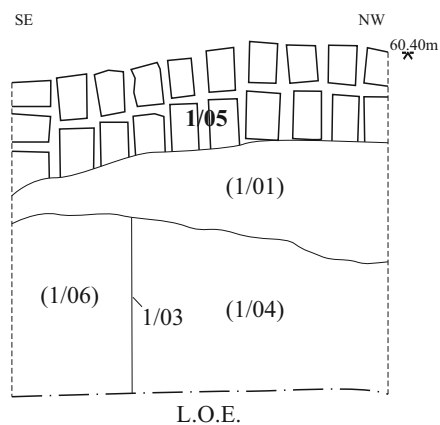
Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



Section 4



Figure 2: Trench 1 plan and sections

## 5.2 Other finds

### Iron

A single iron nail was found in context (104). The object is complete and fairly preserved, although showing extended oxidation. The item weights 10.6 gr and measures 75 mm in length. The shaft has a rectangular cross-section and a flat point; the T-shaped head is slightly eccentric. The nail was positively identified as a machine-cut clasp, commonly used in carpentry and masonry, and dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The nail is not recommended for retention.

### Slate

One fragment of slate measuring 98x72 mm and weighing 40.3 gr was recovered from context (104). It was identified as part of a slate roof tile, preserving one edge. The item was tentatively dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when slate roof tiles became extremely common.

Due to its fragmentary nature, the item is not recommended for retention.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Pit 1/03 in trench 1 was possibly a backfilled borrow / quarry pit resulting from the extraction of the natural sand that the pit was cut into during the construction of the row of houses in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The natural sand present on the site was fine grained and suitable for construction purposes. During the building works it may have been decided to extend the terrace to include no. 96. Thus brick relieving arch 1/05, was probably constructed to spread the weight of the house foundations across the backfilled pit at the front of the property.

## 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

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire Resource Centre with the accession number 2015.250

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accessed 02/09/2015)

Context	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
<b>Trench 1</b>								
1/00	Layer	Limestone and brick cellar floor	0.1	1.2	1.3	-	Floor layer	
1/01	Deposit	Dark grey silty clay with inclusions	0.06-0.4	1.2	1.3	-	Made ground	
1/02	Deposit	Yellow / brown redeposited natural gravels	0.35	1.2	1.3	-	Made ground	
1/03	Cut	Southeastern quadrant of pit	+0.45	0.7	0.7		Pit	19 <sup>th</sup> Century
1/04	Fill	Brown / grey silty clay with inclusions	+0.45	0.7	0.7		Pit fill	19 <sup>th</sup> Century
1/05	Wall arch	Two brick course thick brick arch set in front wall	0.25	-	2.5		Relieving brick wall arch	19 <sup>th</sup> Century
1/06	Layer	Yellow sand					Natural	