JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

THE SHRUBBERY, 26 HIGH STREET,

EYNSHAM, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 4344 0922

On behalf of
Dr D J M Peterson

JUNE 2016

REPORT FOR	Dr D J M Peterson The Shrubbery, 26 High Street, Eynsham, Witney, Oxfordshire OX29 4HB
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief on the south side of High Street, Eynsham in the grounds of the Shrubbery, 26 High Street (NGR SP 4344 0922). Foundation trenches for a new property and an attached terrace, a soakaway trench and two service trenches were monitored. Three archaeological features were revealed; one Roman ditch and one un-dated ditch and a pit were present in the foundation trench. The service trenches cut through previously disturbed ground.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located on the south side of High Street, Eynsham in the grounds of the Shrubbery, 26 High Street (NGR SP 4344 0922). The site lies at about 65m OD and the underlying geology is limestone terrace gravel overlying Oxford Clay.

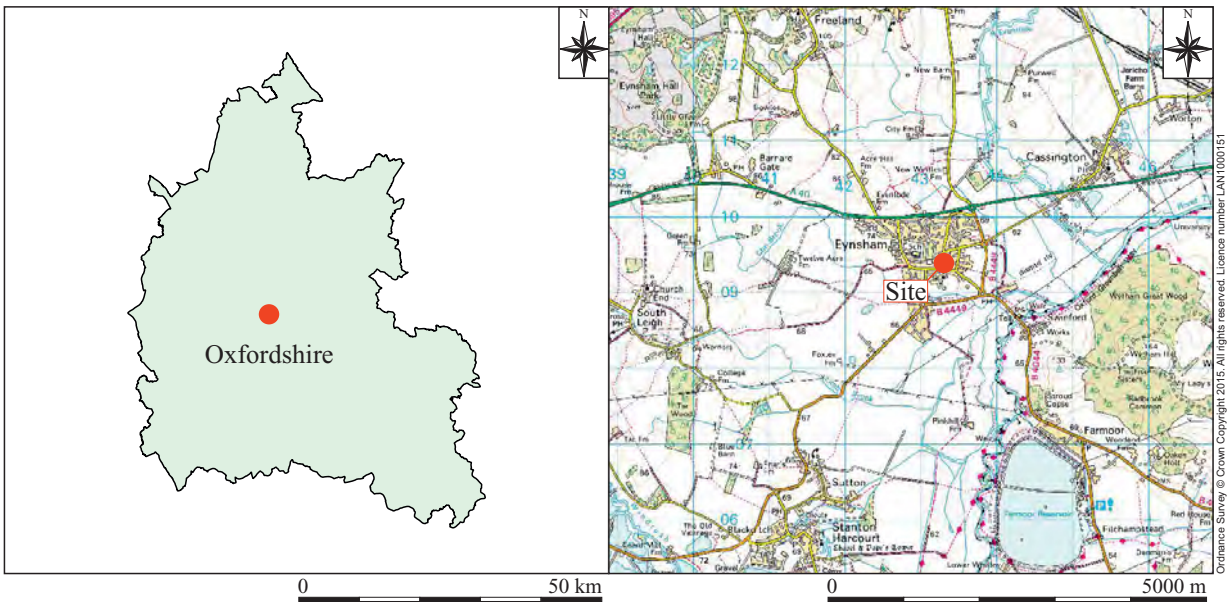
1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the erection of a new dwelling (14/02018/FUL). Due to the potential disturbance of archaeological remains conditions were attached requiring archaeological monitoring and recording in accordance with permission of Historic England on behalf of the Secretary of State. The proposed development lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Eynsham Abbey (site of), Scheduled Monument No. SM OX 118, HA 1006332. Scheduled Monument Consent for the work was been granted: ref S00099024.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The development site lies partly in the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Benedictine Abbey of Eynsham (SM OX 118), which was founded in 1005 towards the end of the period of late Saxon monastic reform. King Aethelred granted authority to Aethelmaer, one of his elder statesmen, for the establishment of a Benedictine House. The new foundation replaced an existing Minster Church. The uncertainty of the Norman Conquest affected Eynsham Abbey and it was deserted for about fifty years. In 1109, Henry I confirmed a Charter of Foundation, which led to a complete rebuilding of the Abbey. Thereafter Eynsham Abbey prospered becoming the third richest religious house in Oxfordshire.

After the Dissolution, the Abbey and all its lands passed into private hands. No trace of the Abbey complex survives above ground. Archaeological excavations by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in the area of St Peters Church and the adjacent graveyard have established that well-preserved archaeological features relating to the Abbey survive below ground (Keevill 1995).



Key Site boundary | Archaeological features | Evaluation trench (1992) | Monitored area (2013) | Monitored area (2015-16)

Figure 1: Site location

An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken in the grounds of 'The Shrubbery' by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in 1992. A prehistoric subsoil was cut by several early Anglo Saxon features, which included ditches and postholes. The subsoil was overlaid by a thick medieval ploughsoil sealing the Anglo Saxon features at depths of 650 and 800mm. This suggests that The Shrubbery grounds are located within a field system providing produce for the Abbey.

Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief in 1975 during the construction of the swimming pool. Stake and postholes and a possible sunken featured building were located. These features contained early Anglo Saxon pottery.

A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services (2004) during the conversion of old outbuildings into a dwelling. At least one pit found was presumed to be associated with the Anglo Saxon occupation known in the immediate area. The medieval ploughsoil was dated to before the 13th century suggesting that this site was in agricultural use up to sometime in the later 12th century and earlier 13th century as Newland was laid out by the abbot in 1215 (Rodwell 1975, 109). A ditch cutting the ploughsoil was considered to be a burgage plot boundary. Further pits may have dated to the 15th century and clay-lined pits indicated a specialist use. A watching brief in 2005 found two undated pits during the construction of a replacement garage (JMHS 2005).

A recent watching brief for a new garage (JMHS 2013) only recovered pottery of Roman, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval date, along with animal bone and metalworking slag.

A more recent evaluation at 4 Oxford Road, the adjacent plot to the east, found a substantial ditch, some 2.2m deep which probably represents the northern boundary to the medieval Eynsham Abbey grounds. Evidence of Mesolithic activity in the form of two worked flints was recovered and additionally a ditch, shallow parallel features and a gully of possible Roman date were identified.

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.

In particular:

- To record any further evidence of the known Roman, Anglo Saxon and medieval occupation in the area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2015b) agreed with Historic England. 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 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

Between the 5th and the 7th of October 2015 a foundation trench for the new property was monitored (Fig. 2); the trench was 0.6m wide and 1m deep. Further work involving the excavation of various services (Fig. 4) were monitored from the 16th to 18th of May 2016.

Where archaeological horizons were encountered they were cleaned by hand and excavated appropriately. 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.

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating to Roman, Anglo Saxon and medieval occupation

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts, numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material, while numbers in bold indicate structural features.

Prior to the excavation of footings trenches topsoil (1) was stripped from the site – an area of approximately 35m^2. This was a friable dark greyish brown sandy silt loam, 0.1m in thickness.

The excavation of the foundation trench of the new property that was 0.6m wide and 1m deep cut through three layers of subsoil (2), (3) and (13) overlying the natural gravels (4). Cut through these various layers were two ditches, one pit and two backfilled evaluation trenches forming part of the earlier phase of work undertaken by Oxford Archaeology in 1992.

Underlying the removed topsoil (1) (Fig. 3, S.04) was an up-to 0.3m thick layer of dark brownish grey sandy silt (2) that was a Post-Medieval garden soil containeing two sherds of Romano-British pottery, one sherd of AD 975 – 1350 pottery, one sherd of +1550 pottery and four sherds of 19th – 20th century pottery together with two fragments of animal bone. Underlying this was an up-to 0.3m thick layer of mid-yellowish brown sandy silt (13) that contained one sherd of late 8th to early 11th centuries pottery together with one sherd dated to AD1075 – 1350. This is interpreted as a remnant ploughsoil. Underlying this was an up-to 0.4m thick layer of mid-reddish brown sandy silt (3) that contained one fragment of worked flint and was either a lower layer of remnant cultivation soil or occupation layer.

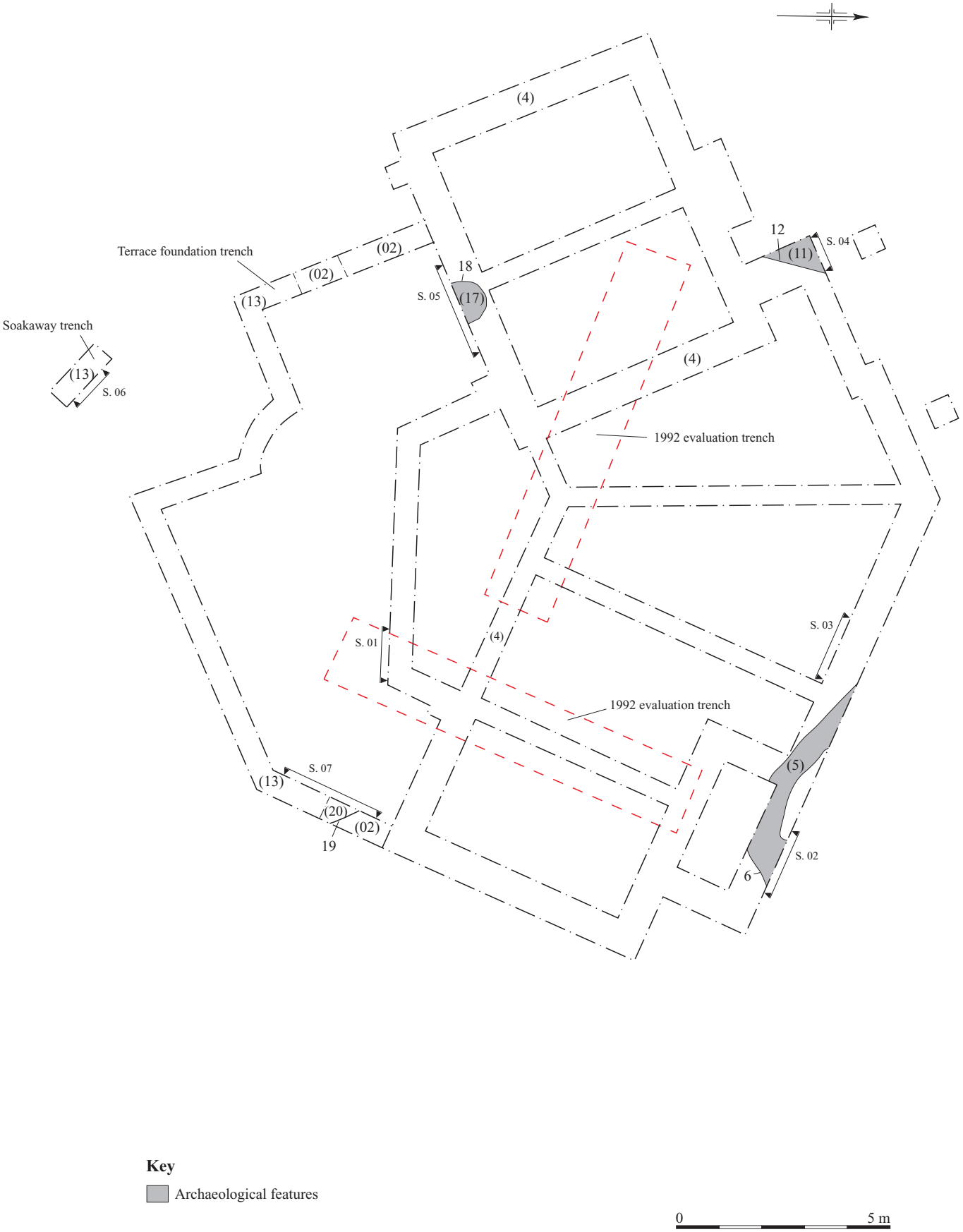
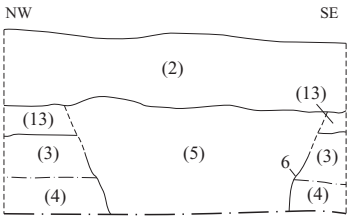


Figure 2: Plan of foundation trenches and soakaway trench



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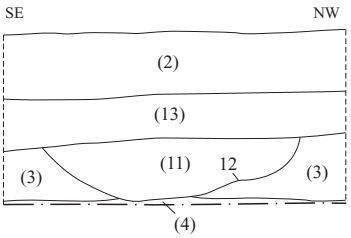

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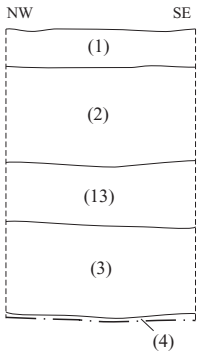

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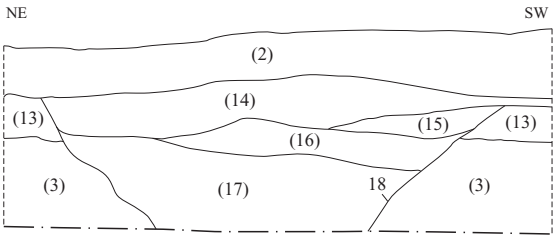

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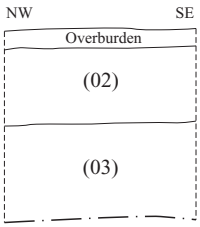

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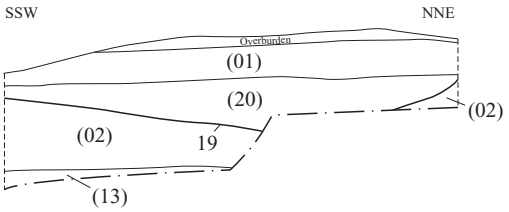

Section 07

0 2 m

Figure 3: Sections

Located in the northeastern extent of the foundation trench was ditch 6 (Figs. 2 and 3, S.03) that cut through layers (13) and (3) and was overlain by (2). It was orientated northwest – southeast for 3m and then turned to the northeast for a further 1m. It was 1.4m wide, over 0.6m deep with steep sides and the base remained unexcavated as it was below the level of impact. It contained a single fill of a mid-greyish brown sandy silt (5) that contained one sherd of Roman pottery and one fragment of animal bone.

Located 10m west of ditch 6 was ditch 12 (Figs. 2 and 3, S.03), the ditch was cut through layer (3) and sealed by layer (13). It was orientated northeast – southwest, extended for a length of 0.8m (as seen), and was 1.37m wide and 0.32m deep with moderately sloping sides and concave base. It was filled by a single fill of a mid-grey silt (11) that contained one sherd of Romano-British pottery.

Located in the southwestern extent of the foundation trench was pit 18 (Figs. 2 and 3 S.05) that cut through layers (3) and (13) and was overlain by (2). The pit was sub-oval in shape, 2.4m wide, at least 0.6m long and over 0.83m deep with moderately sloping sides; the base remained unexcavated due to being below the level of impact. It contained four fills; the upper fill was a 0.27m thick layer of a dark grey silt (14) with frequent charcoal inclusions, underlying this was a thin lens 0.15m thick of mid-brownish yellow sand (15) mixed with a mortar-like material, underlying this was a 0.21m thick layer of a dark reddish brown silty sand (16) - a deliberate backfill of material into the pit. The lowest layer seen was a +0.52m thick layer of a dark brownish grey sandy silt (17). No artefacts were recovered from any of the fills of the pit.

The excavation of the foundation trench for an outside terrace located on the southern side of the property (Fig. 2) was 0.5m wide and up-to 0.6m deep and cut through the upper subsoil layers (2), 0.4m thick and (13), 0.05m thick. A possible pathway / shallow sunken feature was noted cutting the upper extent of layer (2). No archaeological features were present in the trench.

The excavation of a soakaway trench located 3m southwest of the terrace foundation trench (Fig. 2) was 0.6m wide, 1.6m long and 1m deep. It contained a 0.1m thick layer of modern overburden that overlay a 0.4m thick layer of (2) that overlay a 0.5m thick layer of (13). The trench was devoid of any archaeological features or finds.

A service trench for gas pipes was located (Fig. 4) running from the High Street to the northern side of the new property along the gravel driveway. It was 0.3m wide and 0.5m deep and contained a 0.1m thick layer of modern gravels of the driveway (21) overlying a 0.2m thick layer of modern made ground (22) that contained two sherds of pottery dating to the 15th – early 17th centuries. Underlying this layer were various made / disturbed ground layers; (23), (24) and (26) that overlay the natural gravels (4). Various active modern services were encountered along the trench and it was devoid of any archaeological features.

A service trench for the water pipe also followed a similar route as the gas service trench (Fig. 4). It was 0.45m wide and up-to 1.4m deep. It contained the same sequence of deposits as encountered within the gas service trench. Layer (22) overlay three layers along the trench. Layer (23) was between 0.5m and 0.95 m thick, a mid-greyish brown silty sand disturbed ground containing; one sherd of Romano-British pottery, nine sherds dated to AD 975 – 1350, two sherds of AD 1050 – 1400, three

Figure 4: Service trenches

sherds of AD 1075 – 1350, four sherds of AD 1200 – 1600 and two sherds of pottery dated to 1680+, together with seven fragments of animal bone, two oyster shells, two copper alloy objects and a lead musket ball. Layer (24) was a 1.1m thick layer of a greenish brown clay. Layer (26) was 0.2m thick and was very similar to layer (22) thus likely the same deposit. A large modern intrusion 27 was noted cutting layer (22). Various active modern services were encountered along the trench and it was devoid of any archaeological features.

Plate 1. Ditch 6

Plate 2. Representative section

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery *By Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 47 sherds with a total weight of 494g. It comprised a mixture of Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval material and, where possible, was recorded using the conventions of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXR: **St. Neots Ware**, AD850-1200. 2 sherds, 15g.
OXB: **Late Saxon Oxford Shelly Ware**, late 8th– early 11th century. 1 sherd, 13g.
OXAC: **Cotswold-type Ware**, AD975-1350. 14 sherds, 60g.
OXBF: **North-East Wiltshire Ware**, AD1050–1400. 6 sherds, 34g.
OXY: **Medieval Oxford Ware**, AD1075–1350. 4 sherds, 32g.
OXAM: **Brill/Boarstall Ware**, AD1200 – 1600. 4 sherds, 28g.
OXBX: **Late Medieval Brill/Boarstall Ware**, 15th – early 17th century. 2 sherds, 24g.
OXDR: **Red Earthenwares**, 1550+. 1 sherd, 13g.
OXEST: **London Stoneware**, 1680 +. 2 sherds, 80g.
WHEW: **Mass-produced White Earthenwares**, 19th-20th century. 4 sherds, 92g.

In addition, the following were noted:

RB: **All Romano-British**. 6 sherds, 96g
E/MS: **Early/middle Anglo-Saxon hand-built wares**, 5th – 9th century. 1 sherd, 7g

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

	RB		E/MS		OXB		OXR		OXAC		OXBF		OXY		OXAM		OXBX		OXDR		OXEST		WHEW		
Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
U/S	2	39	1	7			2	15	4	22	4	16													U/S
2	2	44							1	3									1	13			4	92	MOD
11	1	6																							RB
13					1	13							1	17											L11thC
22																	2	24							15thC
23	1	7							9	35	2	18	3	15	4	28					2	80			L17thC
Total	6	96	1	7	1	13	2	15	14	60	6	34	4	32	4	28	2	24	1	13	2	80	4	92	

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*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region (e.g.. Blinkhorn 2003), and suggests that there was activity at the site throughout the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods. The stratified material is all in fairly good condition, although the general sherd size suggests that it is all the product of secondary deposition.

Roman pottery *By Jane Timby*

Summary

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of a very small group of four sherds of Roman pottery weighing 37 g. Single sherds of pottery were recovered from two individual contexts with two unstratified pieces. The incidence of sherds per deposit is thus quite low.

For the purposes of the assessment the assemblage was scanned to assess the likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. Known, named Roman traded wares were coded using the National Roman fabric reference series (Tomber and Dore 1998) (codes in brackets).

The sherds are all products of the local Oxfordshire grey ware industry with sandy sherds (OXF RE) and finer grey wares (OXF FR) (catalogued below). The only featured sherd is from the unstratified collection and this is decorated with barbotine dots indicating it is from a beaker and likely to date to the later 1st or 2nd centuries. The other pieces are not closely dateable other than late 1st-4th century.

This is a very small assemblage which has no potential for any additional work.

Catalogue

1. One bodysherd, fabric OXF FR. Wt. 2 g. Context (2).
2. One basesherd from a closed form. Fabric: OXF RE. Wt. 18 g. Context (5).
3. One bodysherd. Fabric: OXF RE. Wt. 13 g. U/s.
4. One bodysherd from a beaker with barbotine dot decoration. Fabric: OXF FR. Wt. 4 g. U/s.

5.2 Animal Bone *By Simona Denis*

A small assemblage of 11 animal bone fragments, of a combined weight of 224.6g, was recovered from 3 individual contexts.

The state of preservation of the items is generally good, although very fragmentary; no examples were found complete. The limited size and the lack of diagnostic features prevented from positive identification for the largest part (81%) of the collection; in these cases, the fragments were divided by size range and attributed to small (*ovis*) or large (*bos*) mammals.

- Species identification

Two *taxa* were recorded, the most represented being small-sized mammal (tentatively identified as sheep/goat) with a total of 10 fragments (90% of the assemblage), and a single example of large mammal (tentatively identified as cow).

Due to the variable sizes and robustness of animal bones taphonomic factors may favour preservation of certain species, resulting in the under-representation of other, smaller animals (Kasumally 2002).

- Cut Marks

Three of the fragments tentatively identified as sheep/goat showed possible evidence of butchering. Recorded marks include impact marks, cut marks and fracture patterns relative to both primary and secondary butchering. Primary butchering consists of hide removal, joint dismemberment and meat removal, whereas secondary butchering involves detailed meat and smashing the bone into smaller portions for marrow extraction and grease rendering (Watts 2004).

A single chop mark was recorded on the proximal ulna found in context (05), while one blade insertion was observed on the possible mandibular fragment from context (23). A combination of knick and point insertion was observed on the costal groove fragment recovered from context (02).

Context	Identification	Type	No. of items	Weight (g)	Marks	Comments
02	?Sheep/Goat	Costal groove	1	1.9	?Knick ?Point insertion	
	?Cow	Costal groove	1	42.4		
05	Sheep/Goat	Proximal ulna	1	36.6	?Chop	
23	Sheep/Goat	Mndibula with P1, P2, P3, M1	1	67.5		
	?Sheep/Goat	Innominate	1	15.2		Young individual
		Costal groove	2	7.9		
		Axis	1	23.8		
		Long bone epiphysis	1	14.8		
		Long bone cortex	1	9		
		?Mandibula	1	5.5	?Blade insertion	

Table 2: Animal bone occurrence by context

Oyster Shell *By Simona Denis*

Context (23) yielded two oyster shells, of a combined weight of 23g. The items were positively identified as one left and one right valve on the basis of the aspect of the surfaces; the lower tends to be shallowly concave, while the upper valve is usually flat (Winder 2011). The two valves belong to two different individuals.

It is not recommended to retain the marine shells due to their very limited potential for further analysis.

5.3 Metalwork *By Simona Denis*

A small assemblage of four metal items were recovered from two different contexts. The most represented material was copper alloy (3 items), while the remaining object was made of lead.

Copper Alloy

A collection of 3 copper alloy objects, of a combined weight of 16g, was recovered from 2 different contexts. The objects are in a good state of preservation and mostly complete, although severely affected by *verdigris*.

Context	Type	No. of items	Weight (g)	Dimensions (mm)	Comments	Date range
U/S	Button	1	1.6	L:17 W:13 T:1	Back stamp: THE CASTLE	?19th C
23	?Sewing pin Δ2	1	0.2	L:27 D:1	Cast pin with sharp point and blob head	?19th C
	?Chatelaine Δ3	1	14.2	L:47 W:23 T:2.5	Gilded, decorated	Undetermined

Table 3: Copper alloy objects occurrence by context

- Button

A complete, unstratified button was recovered during the excavation. The object is an oval, 2-piece button with a floral moulded decoration on the face. The back of the item bears the stamped maker's mark THE CASTLE. The general aspect and the manufacturing technique indicate a modern dating for the object, possibly to the 19th century.

It is not recommended to retain the copper alloy button due to its very limited potential for further analysis.

- Sewing pin Δ2

One complete copper alloy pin, measuring 27mm in length, was found in context (23). The item has a sharp point and a blob head, and is very similar to Norwich pin no.48 (Margeson 1993), identified as a sewing pin and dated to the 19th century.

- Gilded object Δ3

One copper alloy, decorated and gilded object was collected from context (23).

Plate 3. Gilded object Δ3

The item is composed of plate measuring 47x23mm, made of a folded sheet of copper, and has a series of 7 hooks on one side. The front face of the plate is decorated with a series of 11 circular, punched elements, while the central part of the plate shows a series of 7 square elements, possibly quatrefoils.

Dating and the purpose of the object remain undetermined, although the general aspect suggests a function of belt decoration or chatelaine, a set of short chains for carrying keys, thimbles, or sewing kits.

Lead

A single lead item, positively identified as a musket ball weighing 15.5g, was collected from context (23), analysed and not retained.

The object, dated between the 15th and the 18th century, is cast and made of soft lead; no obvious impact deformations were recorded, although the bullet shows flattened surfaces on two sides. The superficial corrosion of the object prevented from the observation of any firing marks (https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/719966).

5.4 Miscellaneous *By Simona Denis*

Clay Tobacco Pipe

A single clay tobacco pipe fragment, weighing 1.9g, was found in context (22). The item is a plain, undecorated and unmarked stem measuring 28mm in length and 7 mm in diameter, with a centred bore hole. Plain stem fragments without diagnostic features or decorations have very little dating value; however, a slightly later dating to the 18th century is generally suggested for stems with a centred bore hole (Ayto 1994).

The stem fragment was not retained due to its extremely limited potential for further analysis.

Flint

A single flint fragment, weighing 8.4g, was collected from context (03). The item, measuring 80mm in length and 28mm at its maximum width, was tentatively identified as a possible discarded flake. The bulb of percussion is partially preserved, although no ripples were clearly visible.

Roman coin *By Pierre-Damien Manisse*

A single coin was recovered with a metal detector from the spoil. It is a really worn late 4th century AD small denomination belonging to the Valentinian dynasty (*Gloria Romanorum* type). Its presence is not surprising as evidence of Roman occupation was found in the neighbouring property (4 High Street), as well as some Romano-British potsherds being recovered in this project.

1. AE3 364-392 AD
O/ illegible - Radiate head right of emperor
R/ illegible – Emperor advancing right, holding a standard in left hand and dragging a kneeled captive
1.9g 19x16mm 12h
Ref. : -

Plate 4. Coin

6 DISCUSSION

The site has been prone to extensive truncation from the Post-Medieval period onwards. The first phase of work monitoring the excavation of the house foundations identified two ditches and one pit. Ditch 12 may belong to the Romano-British period and be part of the system seen next door to the east. The deposit it cuts may be an occupation or cultivation deposit of similar date. It was sealed by a medieval remnant ploughsoil layer (13) that contained two sherds of pottery, one of a 8th – 11th Century date and one +AD 1075 - 1350. The ditch possibly represents part of a Romano-British field system.

Both ditch 6 and pit 18 cut medieval layer (13). Pit 18 was undated and ditch 6 contained one sherd of residual Roman pottery. These possibly represent activities on the site during the later medieval or post-medieval period.

The second phase of work monitoring the outside terrace trench, soakaway and two service trenched did not identify any archaeological features, however, residual finds recovered from the various deposits encountered suggest the truncation of earlier features dating from the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents
The archive consists of the following:

Paper record	Physical record
The project brief	Finds
Written scheme of investigation	

The project report
The primary site record

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire Resource Centre under accession number OXCMS: 2015.58

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