

**JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION  
ON LAND AT  
BRASENOSE CENTRE, BRASENOSE DRIFTWAY  
OXFORD.  
OXFORDSHIRE.  
SP 5540 0485**

*On behalf of  
Leadbitter Construction*

**November 2003**

**REPORT FOR**

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological field evaluation took place prior to redevelopment on the site of the former Brasenose Centre, Brasenose Driftway, Oxford. From the results of this archaeological field evaluation it is apparent that the site has been severely landscaped; probably during the construction of the Brasenose Centre in about the 1970's, thus destroying any potential significant archaeological deposits. One small possible feature of unknown quantity in Trench 1 produced a sherd of heavily abraded undateable pottery.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development site is the former Brasenose Centre situated on the north side of Brasenose Driftway, Oxford (NGR SP 5540 0485). The development area is *c* 4,400m<sup>2</sup> and lies *c*.85.00m OD. The development area was a demolition site during the evaluation with the former L-shaped building already demolished only leaving the ground slab and foundations *in situ*. The underlying geology is of Coral Rag and Oolites of the Corallian Beds.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Under planning application number 03/01180/FUL the developers Leadbitter Construction undertook the demolition of the former Brasenose Centre for the construction of 17 houses and 6 flats. The archaeological officer of Oxford City Council (OCC), advised that an archaeological Field Evaluation should be undertaken prior to development of the site, and that an archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken during the slab breaking of the former building.

John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) in accordance with OCC prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation for the works.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background (JMHS 2003)**

An archaeological evaluation at the nearby Eastfield House site, Brasenose Driftway, exposed features of prehistoric or Roman date. The site lies less than 300m west of the Dorchester to Alchester Roman road. During construction in 1960 of the Eastern By-Pass Road, 150m east of the current proposal area, sherds of 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century Romano-British coarseware pottery were found (PRN 6157 – SP 556048). Two extended human burials which may also have been of Roman date were also discovered during the cutting of a drainage trench for a nearby car park (PRN 1868 – SP 557046). Extensive remains of Roman settlement and activity associated with the Roman pottery industry are known in the Littlemore, Cowley and Headington areas of Oxford, including remains at the former Slade Hospital site *c*. 350m to the north.

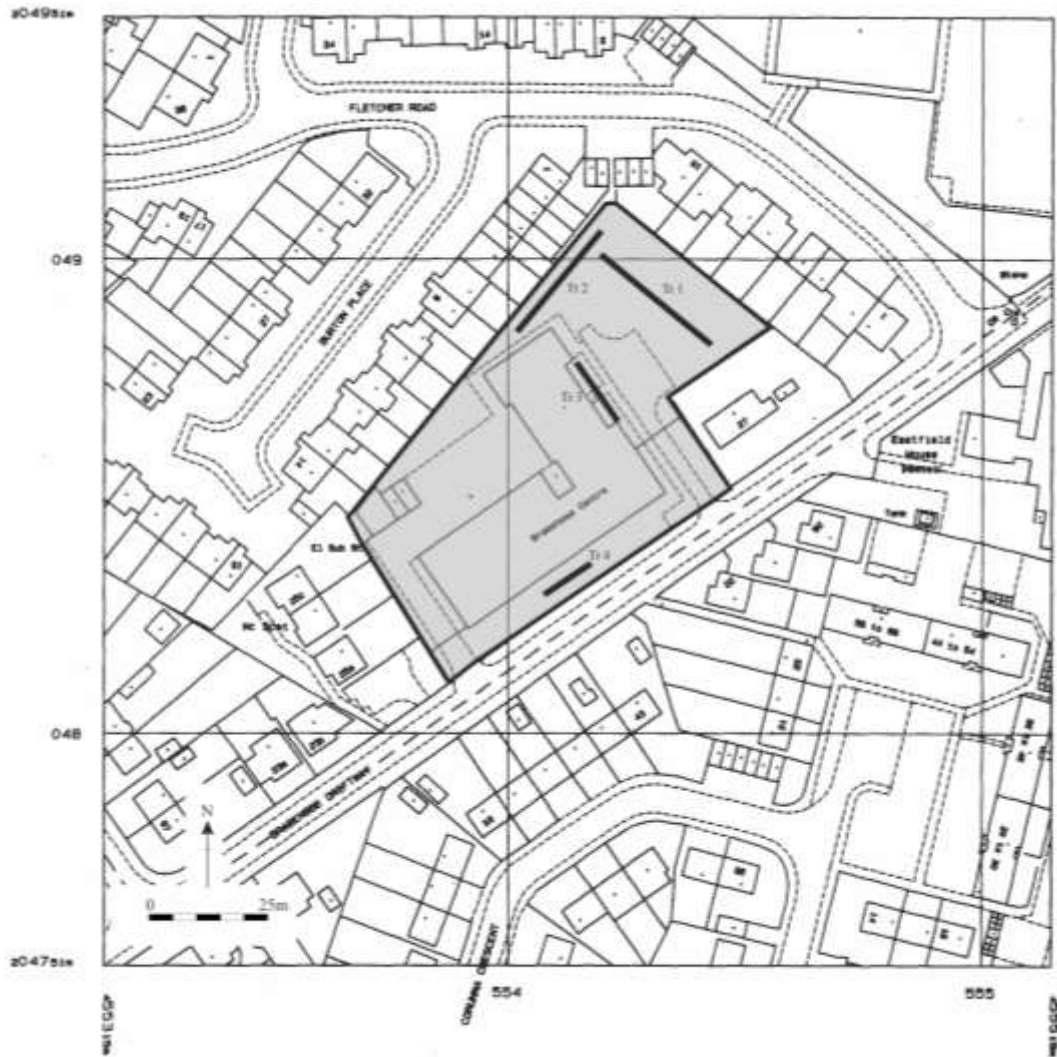


Figure 1. Site and Trench Location Plan

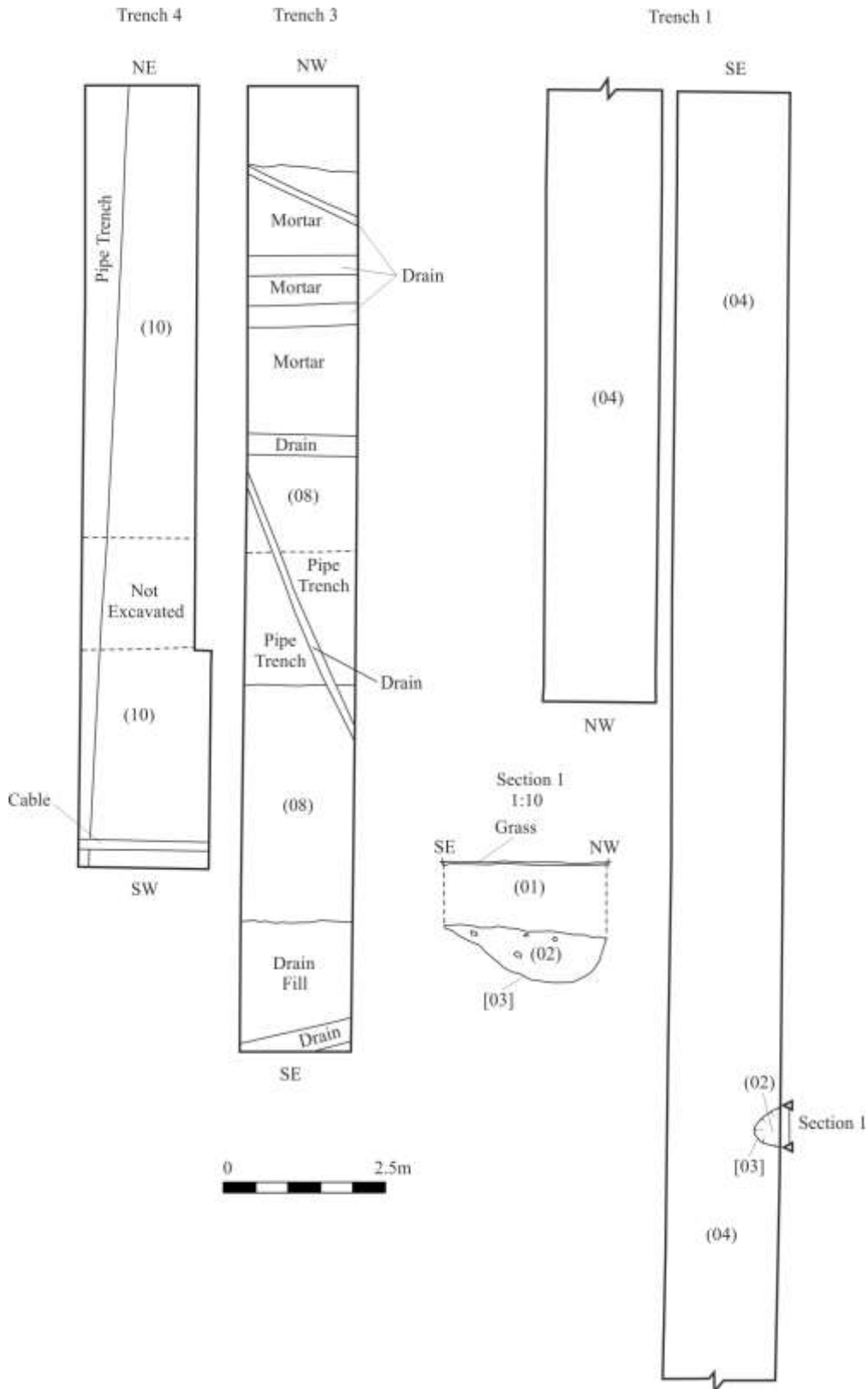


Figure 2. Trench Plans

## **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/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- 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.
- To determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.
- In particular to establish whether remains associated with the known Roman settlement and pottery industry are present on the site.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Archaeological Officer of Oxford City Council (OCC). 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 of two elements, one the partial watching brief during slab removal; and two, the excavation of four trenches. These trenches totalled 80.00m in length and were each 1.65m wide covering 132m<sup>2</sup>, 3% of the development area. The trenches were positioned outside the footing of the former building as these areas may not have been disturbed by its construction and also for health and safety reasons as live services were also known on the site area.

All trenches were excavated using a 360° mechanical digger with a non-toothed ditching bucket. A professional archaeologist also monitored the removal of parts of the ground slab of the former building.

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 work was monitored by Brian Durham of OCC.

## 4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

Deposits and fills are referred to in the text and figures in brackets: (02), cut features are numbered in square brackets: [04], and masonry is shown in bold print in brackets: **(05)**.

The watching brief during the concrete slab removal, revealed rubble bedding to a depth of 0.45m below the base of the slab this was not removed as the natural geology was known to exist 0.10m below the slab and any significant archaeology would have been destroyed.

### Trench One

Trench one was positioned in the northern corner of the site and was 29.50m long, 1.65m wide and was aligned northwest-southeast. The natural geology (04) of stiff orange/brown clay with 60% coral fragments was truncated by a possible posthole [03] 0.54m wide and 0.13m deep with a fill (02) of mid brown clay silt 5% fine gravel and occasional coral fragments. Overlying the natural was the modern topsoil (01) of dark brown clay silt with 5% small gravels and occasional charcoal flecks up to 0.25m deep.

### Trench Two

Trench two was positioned in the northern corner of the site and was 27.75m long, 1.65m wide and was aligned northeast-southwest. The natural geology (06) of stiff orange/brown clay with 60% coral fragments was overlaid by the modern topsoil (05) of dark brown clay silt with 5% small gravels and occasional charcoal flecks up to 0.23m deep. No cut features were recorded truncating the natural geology. No significant archaeological deposits were encountered in this trench.

### Trench Three

Trench three was positioned alongside the former building on the eastern side and was 15.00m long, 1.65m wide and was aligned northwest-southeast. The natural geology (08) of stiff orange/brown clay with 60% coral fragments was heavily truncated by pipe trenches and live services. The length of the trench was overlaid by the modern topsoil (07) of dark brown clay silt with 2% small gravels and occasional charcoal flecks up to 0.26m deep. No significant archaeological deposits were encountered in this trench.

### Trench Four

Trench four was positioned on the site frontage and was 12.00m long, and up to 2.00m wide and was aligned northeast-southwest. No natural was encountered within this trench. A layer of made ground (10) of mixed dumps of grey ash, grey brown silt clay 30% coral fragments with frequent charcoal and iron wire, 0.70m of this layer was removed. This deposit was not bottomed due to live gas and electric cables in the trench. Overlying the made ground was the modern topsoil (09) of dark brown clay silt with 4% small gravels and occasional charcoal flecks up to 0.22m deep. No significant archaeological deposits were encountered in this trench.



## **5 FINDS**

One sherd of Brill/Boarstall ware, Oxford fabric OXAM, 13<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> C, weighing 10g was recovered from the topsoil (01) in trench one, and one heavily abraded unidentifiable sherd weighing 1g was recovered from feature fill (02).

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

No significant archaeological deposits or horizons were encountered within the field evaluation trenches in the development area. One possible posthole of unknown date was located in Trench 1.

Natural geology was recorded within most of the trenches below the modern topsoil.

It is evident from the results of this field evaluation that the development area has been heavily landscaped, probably during the construction of the Brasenose Centre, thus destroying any possible earlier archaeological deposits.

The trench on the frontage revealed a deep layer of made ground. This layer maybe within a trench for the many services to the former building as no other building is known on this land prior to the Brasenose Centre.

## **7 CONFIDENCE RATING**

Cut features were very easily observed truncating the natural geology.

It is very doubtful whether any significant archaeological deposits would exist underneath the former building unless these were very deep, as the natural geology would have existed just below the depth of the ground slab.

The areas covered by the evaluation show a large amount of the total area not truncated by the former building and its associated services, other areas could not be trenched due to live services ( Gas and Electric Mains).

## **8 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*.

John Moore Heritage Services. 2003. *Archaeological Field Evaluation Written Scheme Of Investigation*

**APPENDICES****APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Date</b>
01	Topsoil	Dark brown clay silt 5% small gravel	0.12m	1.65m	29.50m	Pottery	Modern
02	Fill of (03)	Mid brown clay silt 5% fine gravel	0.13m	0.54m	0.54m	Pottery	Unknown
03	Cut	Possible Posthole	0.13m	0.54m	0.54m	None	Unknown
04	Natural	Orange brown clay 60% Coral		1.65m	29.50m	None	
05	Topsoil	Dark brown clay silt 5% small gravel	0.23m	1.65m	27.75m	None	Modern
06	Natural	Orange brown clay 60% Coral		1.65m	27.75m	None	
07	Topsoil	Dark brown clay silt 2% small gravel	0.26m	1.65m	15.00m	None	Modern
08	Natural	Orange brown clay 60% Coral		1.65m	15.00m	None	
09	Topsoil	Dark brown clay silt 4% small gravel	0.22m	2.00m	12.00m	None	Modern
10	Made ground	Orange brown silt clay 20% flint	0.70m NFE	2.00m	12.00m	None	Modern