

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

1-7 LONGWALL STREET,

OXFORD

SP 5193 0634

On behalf of

Magdalen Development Company

October 2002

REPORT FOR A J Leeming
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Summary

The evaluation carried out on the area of development to the rear of numbers 1 to 7 Longwall Street, has revealed a considerable depth of deposits filling the city ditch. In addition to this, a rubble built stone culvert was located adjacent to, and disturbed by, the current building extension. This culvert is believed to have contained the ‘Crowel’, a watercourse depicted on Agas’ 1578 map.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Fig. 1)

The development site lies to the rear of numbers 1 to 7 Longwall Street, Oxford (SP 5193 0634). The site is situated over the infilled city ditch adjacent to the city wall and is opposite Magdalen College. The site lies at approximately 59 m OD, and the underlying geology is Oxford Clay overlain by Alluvium and 1st Terrace River Gravels. The site is currently student accommodation.

1.2 Planning Background

A planning application (02/538/FUL) has been granted to develop the site to the rear of numbers 1 to 7 Longwall Street, Oxford, by the demolition of existing rear extensions and the construction of new ones.

Due to the potential for archaeological remains in the proposal area, the Archaeologist for the City of Oxford advised that an archaeological evaluation of the site should be undertaken prior to development.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The development site lies over the infilled city ditch outside the city wall, which forms the rear boundary of the site. Agas’ map of 1578 plots a watercourse from the spring at ‘Crowel’, running obliquely across what may have been an orchard in this location. There were no buildings between the city wall and Longwall Street at this time. However, by 1675, there are buildings on the Longwall street frontage and more to the rear against the city wall. The watercourse shown on the 1578 map is no longer indicated.

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.

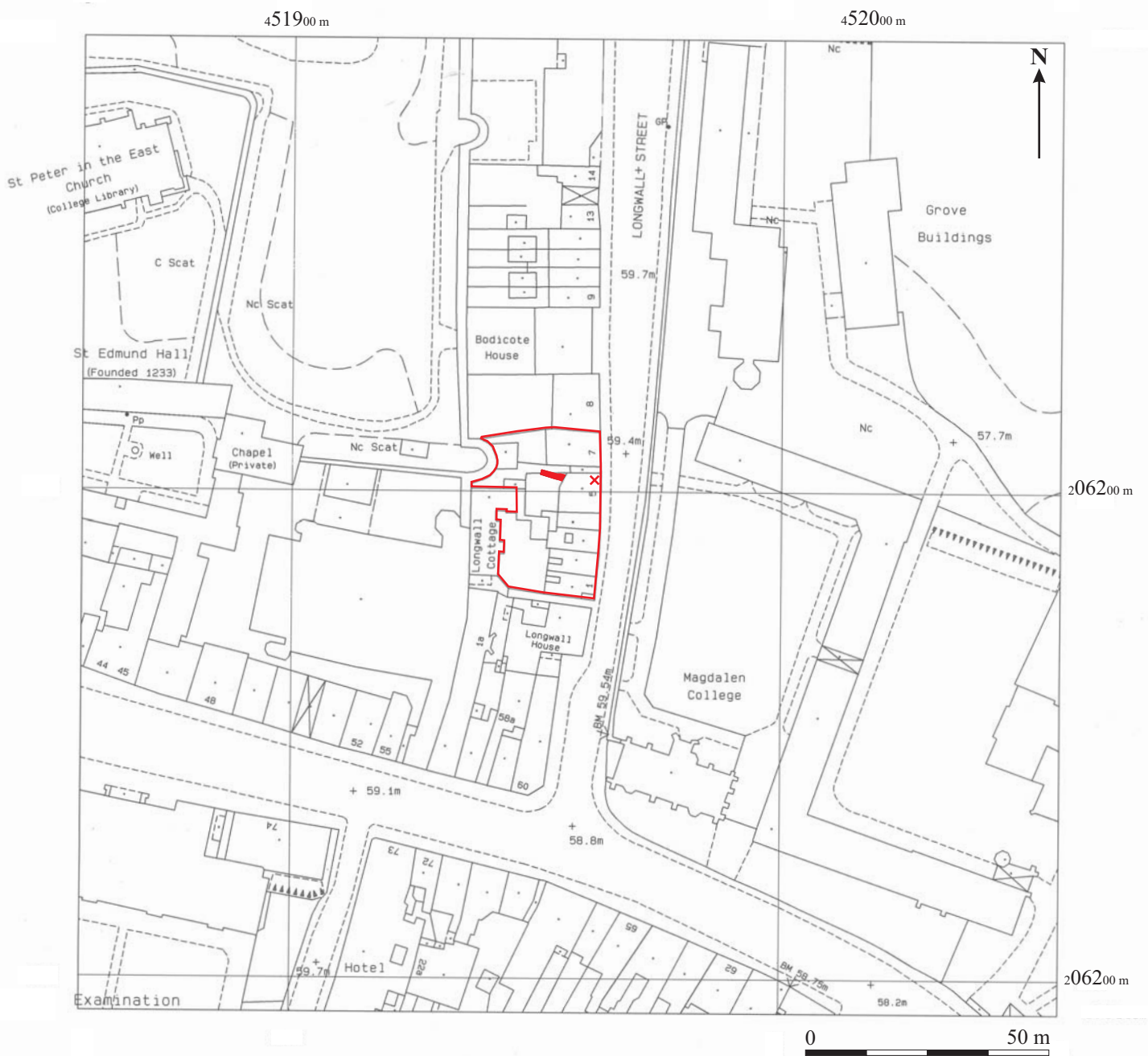
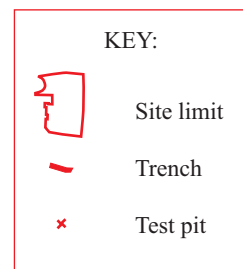


Figure 1: Trench and Test-pit Location



- 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 determine whether the watercourse is present in the area of alterations.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

A scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the Archaeologist for the City of Oxford and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of a single trench 4 m by 1 m, and a test pit measuring 0.4 x 0.35 m.

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), and was monitored by Brian Durham, City Archaeologist.

3.2 Methodology

A single trench was excavated within the development area (Fig 1). The trench was 4 m in length by 1 m width and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.7 m. Excavation was carried out by mini excavator (1.5 tonne) fitted with a 24" grading bucket. The trench was backfilled after recording. In addition to this a small test pit measuring 0.8 x 0.6 m was hand excavated through the brick cellar floor underlying a room in number 5 Longwall Street. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced.

Deposits and fills are referred to in the text and figures in brackets: (02), cut features are numbers in square brackets: [09] and masonry is shown in bold print in brackets: **(05)**.

4 RESULTS (Figures 2 and 3)

The trench was excavated through modern surfaces comprising concrete tiles and slab (01) overlying a thin sandy levelling layer (02) to a depth of 0.22 m. Directly under the current surfaces was a compact greenish grey-brown sandy silty clay (03) to

a maximum depth of 0.84 m containing rubble, fine gravels and charcoal flecks and fragments. This deposit overlay a thick layer (>0.92 m) of blue-black peat (04) containing frequent animal bone, occasional bottle glass, frequent oyster and scallop shell and frequent wood. There were also sherds of glazed pottery, iron nails and a clay pipe bowl. This deposit (04) extended for three metres of the trench but was disturbed adjacent to the current building extension by masonry feature (05) and at the north western corner by a modern ceramic pipe.

Feature (05) is of dry-stone construction consisting of irregularly shaped rubble masonry (average dimensions: 0.3 m x 0.20 x 0.18 m) with the appearance in plan of a pair of parallel linear masonry ‘walls’ 0.6 to 0.8 m apart. There was no bonding material. The feature was orientated northeast - southwest and the eastern side had been interrupted recently by the siting of a geological test pit (TP3: Geo-Testing Services Ltd 2002), and in the past by the construction of the current building extension. The gap created by the walls was bridged by a series of roughly hewn capstones. Within the area of excavation only a single capstone survived *in situ*. The interior of this masonry feature was filled by a yellowish grey-brown wet sandy silty clay (06). Within this fill were occasional fragments of pottery, brick rubble, glass and iron-stained gravels. A further deposit was visible within the structure, directly abutting the side adjacent to the extension wall. This deposit consisted of clean fine greenish-grey sandy silty clay (10) and was visible for 0.2 x 0.38 m in the eastern corner of the feature.

Within the house at number 5 Longwall Street a small test pit was hand excavated at the foot of the front wall to investigate the depth of foundations and establish the nature of the deposits underlying the brick cellar floor. The foundation cut for the wall [07] was revealed to be 0.12 m wide x >0.15 m deep and filled by a medium compact yellowish brown sandy gravel containing medium sub-angular packing stones. The fill (09) contained a sherd of pottery dated to the 16th century. Deposit (08) which was cut through by [07] consisted of medium compact greenish grey-brown sandy silty clay containing c. 5% fine gravels and several sherds of pottery. The pottery dated to the 17th century.

5 FINDS

The site produced a quantity of modern material from contexts (03) and (06), this included brick rubble, roof slate, window glass and plastic. Below these deposits, context (04) contained a number of peat stained animal bones, oyster and scallop shell which were not retained, and a sherd of 18th century pottery. Deposit (04) also contained a clay pipe bowl dated to the late 17th century, an iron masonry nail, and several fragments of thick bottle glass. Within the building, the excavated test pit produced two sherds of 17th century pottery in deposit (08) sealed by the current brick floor. Deposit (09), the fill of the construction cut of the building, produced a single sherd of pottery of 16th century date.

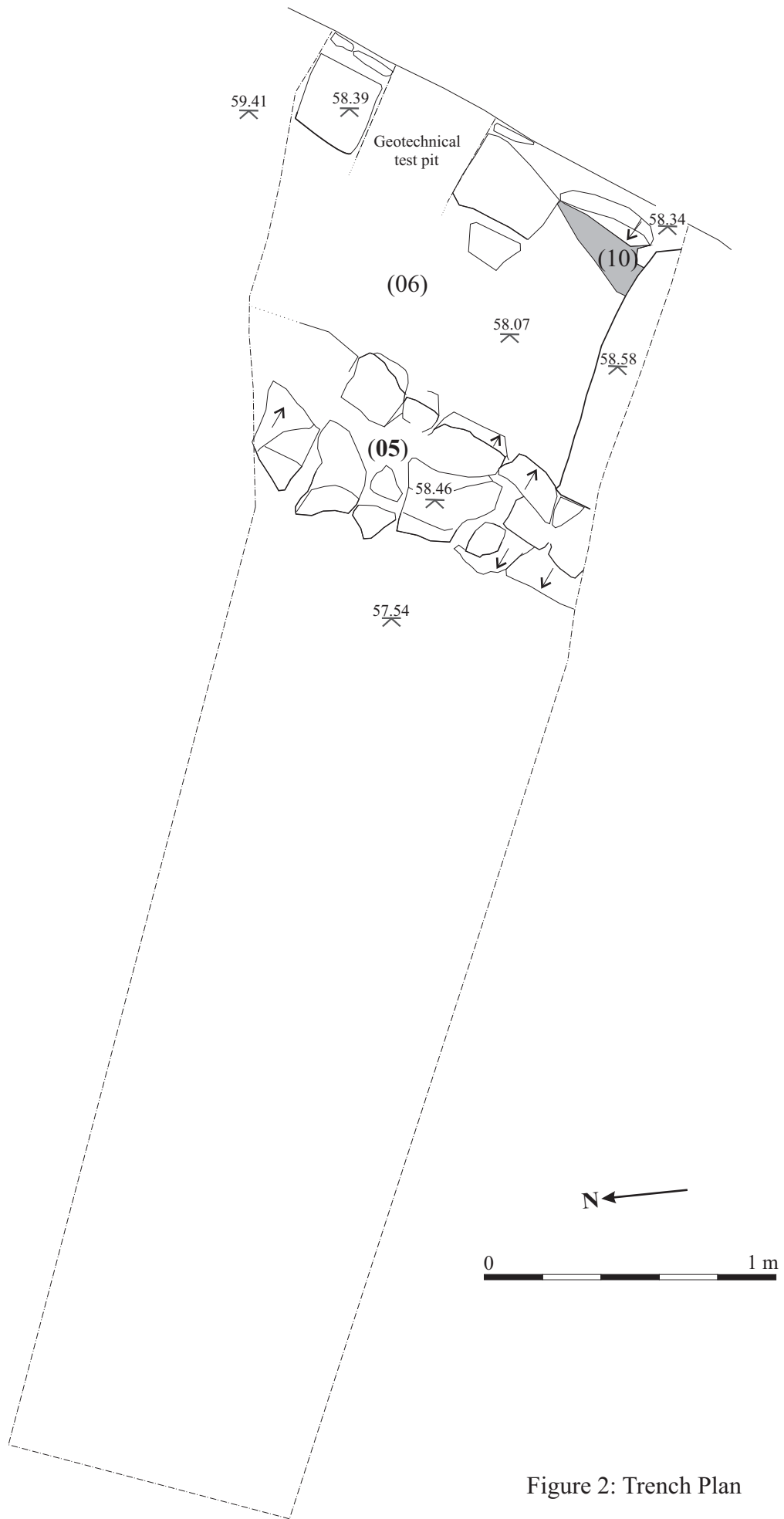


Figure 2: Trench Plan

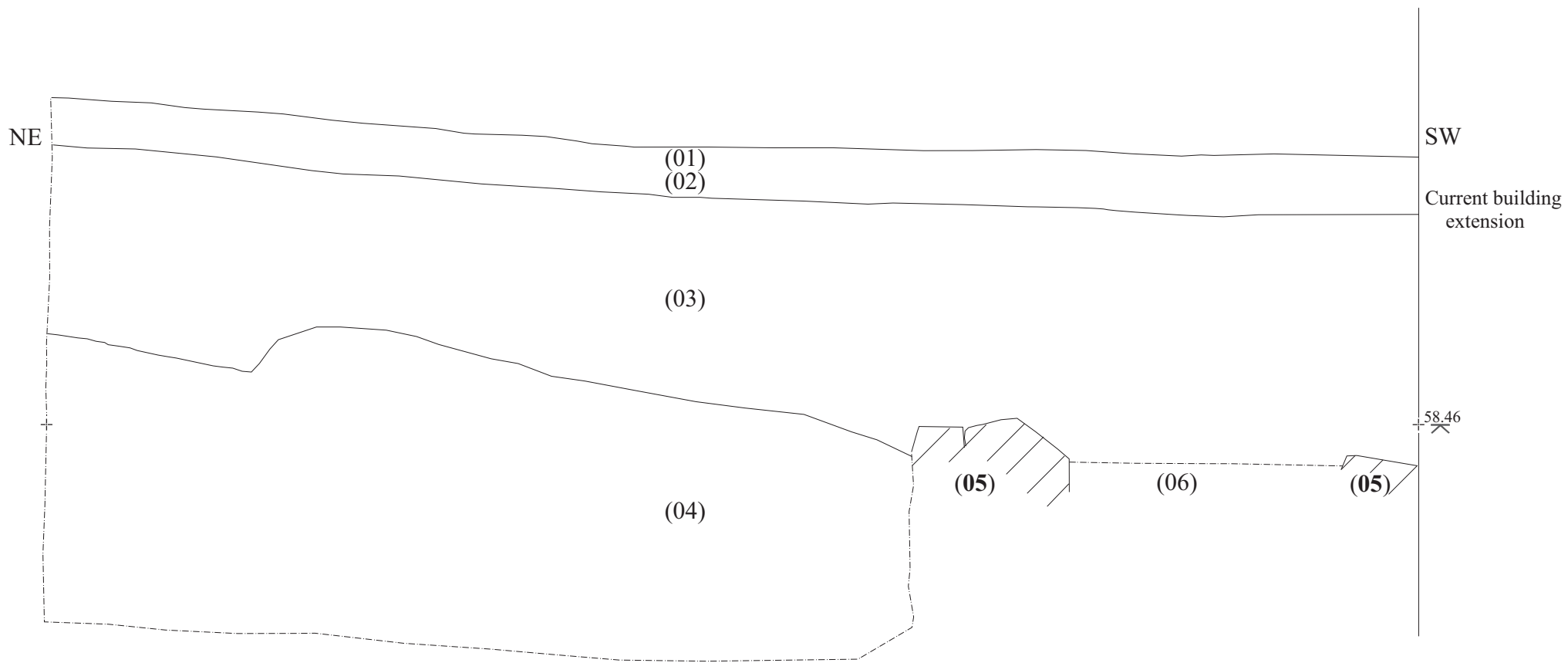


Figure 3: Trench Section



Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 6 sherds with a total weight of 189g. It was all of post-medieval date. The material was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1989; 1994), as follows:

OXST, Frechen Stoneware, AD1550 – 1700. 1 sherd, 18g.

OXDR, Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 2 sherds, 97g.

OXREWSL, Slipped Red Earthenware, 17th – 18th century. 1 sherd, 15g.

OXCE, Tin-glazed Earthenware, 17th–18th century. 1 sherd, 12g.

OXEST, Late English Stoneware, M18th-19th century. 1 sherd, 47g.

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

Cntxt	OXDR		OXST		OXREWSL		TGE		LES		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	N o	Wt	No	Wt	
4	1	81							1	47	M18th C
6					1	15					17thC
8	1	16					1	12			17thC
9			1	18							16thC
Total	2	97	1	18	1	15	1	12	1	47	

6 DISCUSSION

The investigation was over the line of the infilled medieval Oxford town ditch, sections of which are known to have been cleaned out in the Civil War. It is likely that the houses on this site appeared between 1650 and 1675, as they do elsewhere round the outer edge of the ditch (information from B. Durham).

Masonry feature (05) is a culvert probably used to divert the ‘Crowel’ whose course was plotted on Agas’ map of 1578 prior to its disappearance on later 17th century maps. The lowest fill seen of (05) was the fine sandy silty clay of (10), which was probably due to natural silting up of the watercourse within the culvert (05). Deposit (06) was the uppermost layer of the interior of the disturbed culvert. Fill (06) appears to be the same in content and character as deposit (03) and may have intruded into the interior of (05) due to the missing capstones. However a sherd of pottery recovered from 06 was 17th century in date. This would accord with buildings being erected on this site in the later 17th century and the culvert being associated with this period of building.

The fact that several of the capstones were missing, that the interior of the feature contained rubble and general building debris, and the fragmentary nature of the eastern side of the feature suggests that the culvert was disturbed by the construction of the rear extension to 6 Longwall Street, and that the building itself required more robust foundations to compensate for the void created by the underlying masonry feature. This argument is supported by the fact that in plan, the extension has a marked angle to the northern corner of the building, as shown on the Ordnance Survey Superplan (2002). This angle respects that of the culvert, suggesting that the location and existence of the culvert was known at the time the extension was constructed.

Deposit (03) was made ground forming the upper layers of the city ditch in this area. The deep peaty deposit (04) may be made ground, derived from infilling as reclamation prior to house building, in addition to natural silting up over time. The 18th century sherd recovered from (04) occurred near the top of the deposit in the northwest corner where a service pipe was visible in the trench section (figure 3) and may be intrusive therefore giving a 17th century date to 04.

Within the house, the test pit revealed a construction cut [07] for the current building, filled by deposit (09), which contained a sherd of 16th century pottery. The construction trench for the building is cut through a layer (08), an upper fill of the city ditch that contained several sherds of post-medieval pottery; this suggests that the comparatively early sherd recovered from context (09) was residual.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has proved the presence of a stone built culvert within the development area. This culvert is thought to be of later 17th century date has already been disturbed by the construction of the present building extension. All dates obtained from the pottery recovered from the features are of post-medieval date. It is known that the city ditch was cleaned and re-dug in preparation for the siege of 1646 (Hassal 1987). There remains the possibility of an earlier culvert on a different alignment for the pre-Civil War period although it may have been destroyed in the Civil War cleaning out, allowing the Crowel to flow into and through the ditch.

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APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench1			1.7	1.0	4.0		
01	Layer	Concrete tile and slab	0.22	1.0	4.0	-	Modern
02	Layer	Levelling deposit					
03	Layer	Made ground	0.84	1.0	4.0	-	-
04	Layer	Made ground/ natural silting up of ditch	0.92	1.0	>3.0	Pot, bone, glass, shell	18 th century
05	Masonry	Culvert	>0.3	1.4	>1.0	-	-
06	Layer	Made ground	0.84	0.7	>1.0	Pot, glass	17 th century
10	Layer	Natural silting in culvert 05	-	0.2	0.4	-	-
Test Pit			>0.15	0.8	0.6		
07	Cut	Construction cut for building	>0.15	0.12	>0.8	-	-
08	Layer	Made ground/upper ditch fill	>0.15	>0.6	>0.8	pot	17 th century
09	Fill	Fill of construction cut 07	>0.15	0.12	>0.8	pot	16 th century