

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

GRANGE NURSING HOME, CHURCH GREEN,

STANFORD IN THE VALE, OXFORDSHIRE

SU 3410 9350

On behalf of

Bonneycourt Ltd.

May 2003

REPORT FOR

Bonneycourt Ltd
The Grange Nursing home
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28 April – 13 May 2003

REPORT ISSUED

21 May 2003

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Summary

The archaeological watching brief revealed several pits of the medieval and post-medieval periods. In addition the footings of a wall shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey was located.

1. Introduction

1.1 Site Location (Fig. 1)

The site of the development lies to the north of the parish church of St Denys and is on the west side of Church Green in Stanford in the Vale (NGR SU3413 9353 centred). The village of Stanford in the Vale is located on the east side of the A417 between Wantage and Faringdon. The site lies at approximately 75m OD on geology of Corallian Limestone.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission had been granted to extend the existing Nursing Home. These works included a new dining room, hair salon and eight en-suites (STA/7828/6). Due to the presence of archaeological remains in the area an archaeological watching brief during the course of groundworks was required as a condition of planning consent. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (CAS) prepared a *Brief* for such a watching brief. The work was carried out to a *Written Scheme of Investigation* that was agreed with the CAS on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The area in which the site of proposed development was located is one of archaeological potential for it lies to the north of the Church of St. Denys, parts of which date to the 12th century. The church appears to have been extensively rebuilt in the 14th century. Stanford in the Vale is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and therefore there may have been an earlier church in the later Anglo-Saxon period. Pottery of Roman and medieval date along with a virtually complete bronze skillet dating to the 14th century have been found in the area around the church and the nearby Manor House, which lies to the south of the church.

2. Aims of the Investigation

The aims of the work were, as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation:

- 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 relating to the Roman and medieval activity in the area.
- to make public the results of the investigations.

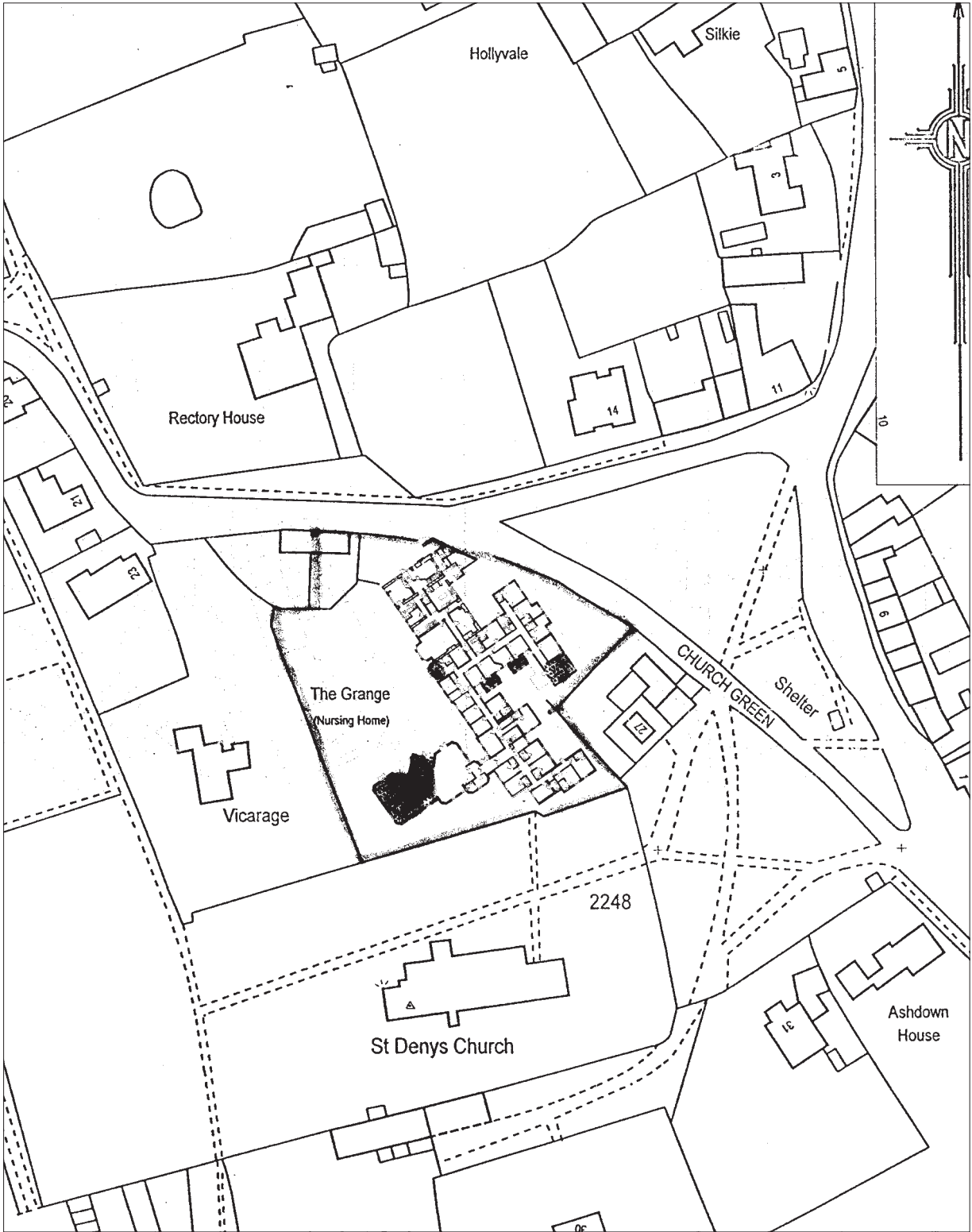


Figure 1: Site location

Scale 1:1250

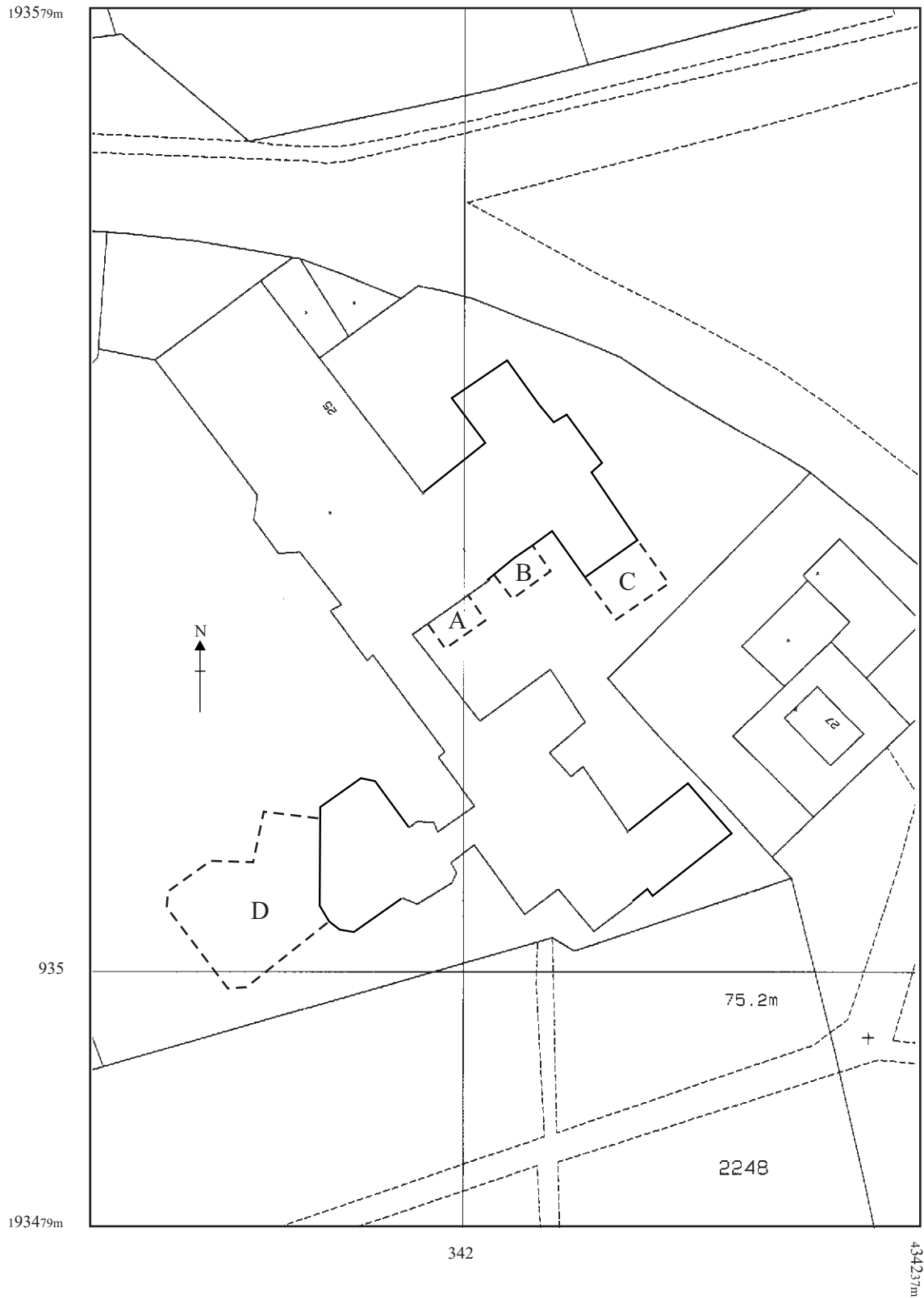


Figure 2. Areas of investigation

Scale 1:500

3. Strategy

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the CAS. 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.

The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

Four areas (Fig. 2, A-D) were monitored. The foundation trenches for Areas A and B were examined after their excavation. The excavation of the foundation trenches for Area C was monitored, as was the ground reduction and foundation trench excavation in Area D.

A small excavation to extend a room to form a bedroom at the rear of the property was not monitored, as the ground would have been heavily disturbed during the building works for the existing building.

4 Results

4.1 Areas A, B and C

The natural Corallian Limestone (context 23) was encountered in all areas at a depth of 700-1000 mm below existing ground level. It was higher in the west side of Area A. The limestone was overlaid in part by compact pale grey orange-brown (20:80) slightly silty clay (22). This was up to 200mm thick and was absent where the bedrock was higher. This appeared to be natural subsoil. Overlying the last was compact mid-dark grey brown silty clay with lenses of charcoal and occasional medium sized pieces of limestone (21). In places it incorporated elements of the underlying material (22) and was 150-200 mm thick. Context 21 was interpreted as a cultivation horizon. The highest horizon was mostly made ground (20), mixed material derived from building operations associated with the existing building. The exception to this was in the southern third of Area C where topsoil was found. Context 20 was 300-500mm thick while the topsoil was 580 mm deep, suggesting that the latter was imported.

Area B was heavily disturbed by intercutting pits, which were impossible to identify singly (24). Their depth exceeded 1.15 m from present ground level, cutting into the top of the limestone (23). The pits at the southeast end were of post-medieval date due to the small fragments of brick that were seen. No other finds were seen in the sections of the foundation trenches of Area B.

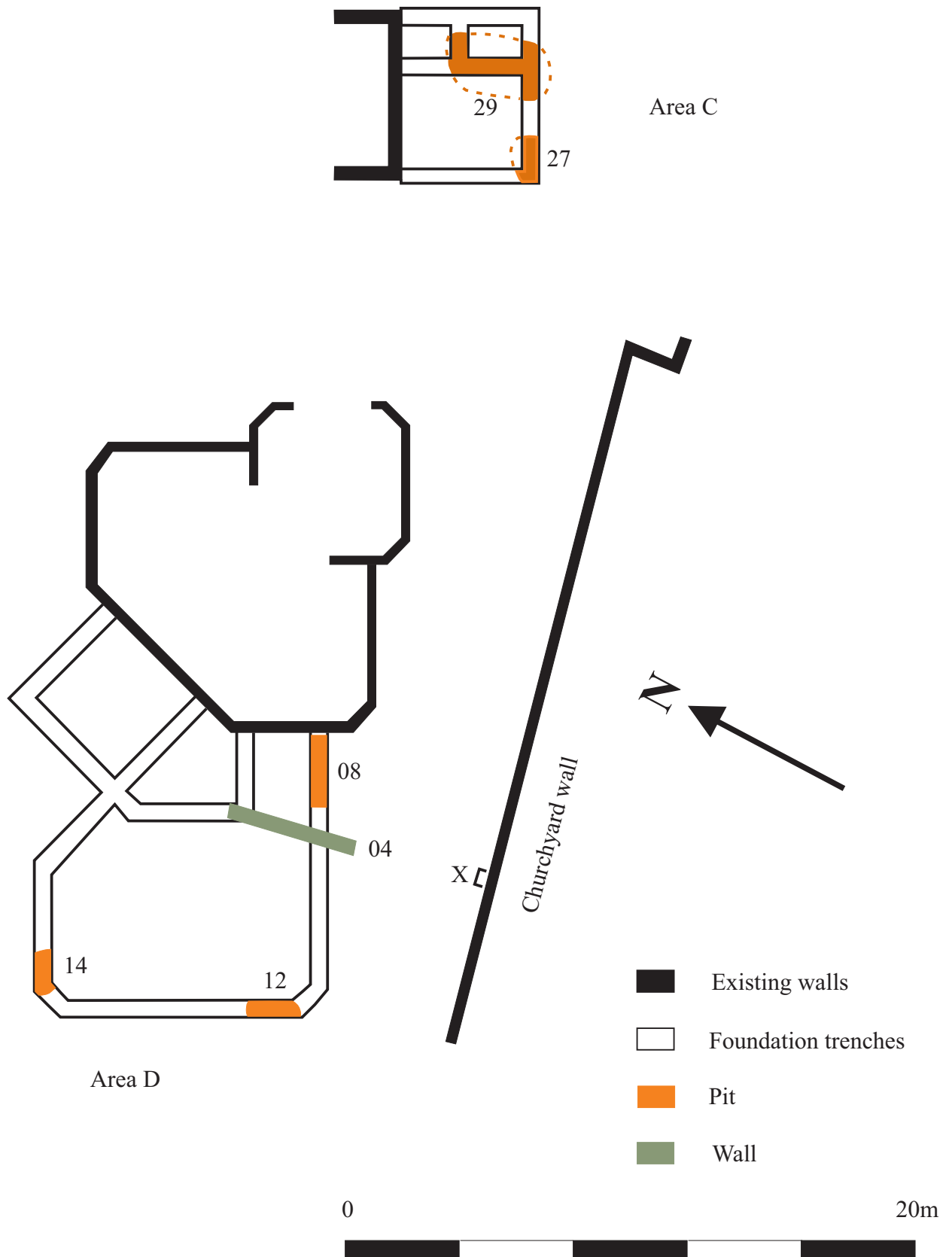


Figure 3a. Area C. New bedroom

Figure 3b Area D Dinning room and hair salon

Two pits were present within Area C (Fig. 3). The first (29) was large and ovoid in shape, and estimated to be 2.6 m wide and 3.2 m long. It had sides of c. 70° from the horizontal and a flat base dictated by the level of the top of the bedrock. It was filled by dark grey brown slightly sandy, slightly clayey silt containing 70% by volume small and medium sized pieces of limestone (28). This pit was dated to the 19th century. The second pit (27) was sub-circular and at least 1.65 m in diameter. It continued outside the southwest limit of the excavation. The pit was 550 mm deep, cut into the cultivation horizon (21). The side varied from 45 – 60° and again it had a flat base lying on top of the bedrock. The primary fill (26) was loose mid-dark grey brown clayey silt with 5% fine/small pieces of limestone. The upper fill (25) was moderately compact sandy silt with 15% small pieces of limestone. No finds were recovered from the second pit.

4.2 Area D (Fig. 3)

The top of the Corallian Limestone (23) sloped up slightly from the southeast to the northwest. In the western part of the area the bedrock was overlaid by red brown silty clay and yellow white decomposed limestone plus pale grey brown sandy silt (ratio 4:3:3). This deposit (10) was 150-200 mm thick and appeared to have been slightly cultivated. Overlying this and west of wall 04 was a 150 mm thick deposit of loose pale grey brown moderately sandy silt with 10% small limestone fragments (09). It may have continued under 04 but this was uncertain. It did not extend quite to pit 12 or further northwest. Pottery recovered from the lower part of 09/upper part of 10 (context 0 in pottery report) is dated to the earlier medieval period. Above 09 was moderately compact mid brown slightly clayey silt with 20% limestone rubble (02). This covered the whole area west of wall 04 and was 300-350 mm thick. East of the wall (04) pale grey brown slightly sandy silt with occasional small fragments of limestone (05) overlay the natural bedrock. It also sealed the fill of a pit (08), see below. Overlying deposits 05, 02 and wall 04 was a turfed topsoil of dark grey brown sandy silt with occasional pieces of roof tile and small pieces of limestone (01). This was 300 mm thick and probably had been imported onto the site when the garden was landscaped.

Pit 08, east of wall 04, was c. 2.4 m in diameter with near vertical lower sides and a flat base cut into the Corallian Limestone. The upper part was not easily distinguished and the level that it was cut from was not exactly ascertained. The pit is dated to the mid to late 16th century by the finds from contexts 06 and 07 (see below).

On the west side of wall 04 were two further pits. Pit 12 was presumed to be sub-circular in shape, with vertical side and a flat base. It was 1.80 m in diameter and 800 mm deep. It was cut through deposit 10 into the top of the limestone. The pit was filled by mid-dark grey brown sandy, slightly clayey, silt with 5% fine and small pieces of limestone (11). The pottery from the fill dates this pit to sometime from the mid 11th to late 14th century as is the other pit. This other pit (14) again was sub-circular with a diameter of 1.4 m and a depth of only 350 mm. It had sides of 45° and a slightly rounded base.

Wall 04 was orientated north - south.. The foundations were 550 mm wide and survived up to 5 courses high. It was constructed from limestone blocks 190x130x40 mm – 240x240x50 mm in size bonded by bright orange clayey sand. A slight change in angle

within the churchyard wall to the south (X on Figure 3b) marks where the junction of the two walls.

5 Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 20 sherds with a total weight of 495g. All the pottery was medieval or later, and comprised small sherds from individual vessels, with the exception of a profile of a small OXAM jug from context 7.

The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050 – 1400. 13 sherds, 90g.

OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 3 sherds, 22g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherd, 277g.

OXDR, Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 2 sherds, 22g.

WHEW: mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19th - 20th C. 2 sherds, 76g.

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 | OXBF | | OXY | | OXAM | | OXDR | | WHEW | | Date |
|---------|------|----|-----|----|------|-----|------|----|------|----|---------|
| | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | |
| 0 | 1 | 30 | 2 | 22 | | | | | | | U/S |
| 1 | 1 | 10 | | | | | 1 | 12 | | | M16thC |
| 2 | 4 | 17 | | | | | | | | | M11thC |
| 6 | | | | | | | 1 | 10 | | | M16thC |
| 7 | | | | | 1 | 277 | | | | | 13thC |
| 11 | 3 | 8 | | | | | | | | | M11thC? |
| 13 | 4 | 25 | | | | | | | | | M11thC? |
| 28 | | | | | | | | | 2 | 76 | 19thC |
| Total | 13 | 90 | 2 | 22 | 1 | 277 | 2 | 22 | 2 | 76 | |

6. Conclusion

The watching brief has shown that the site has been occupied from the earlier medieval period through to the present day. In the earlier medieval period Area D appears to have been in the rear of a plot perhaps fronting on to Church Green. The two pits dated to the mid 11th to late 14th century may be for cess as little rubbish was recovered their fills.

Wall 04 appears to form a boundary between two different areas of use. To the west of it no pottery later than the earlier medieval period was seen. This suggests that

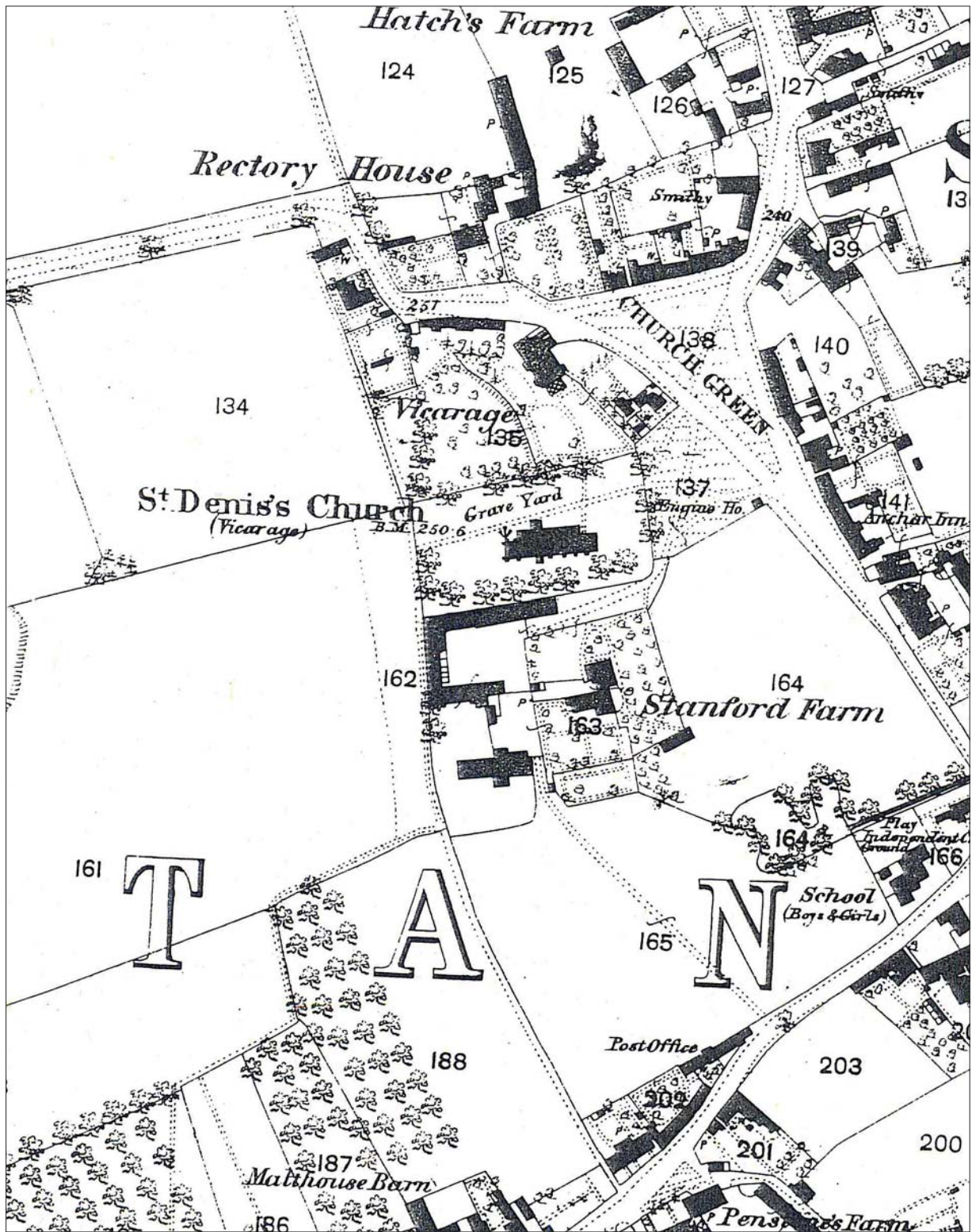


Figure 4: 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1878.

from the 15th century onwards that the land was not cultivated, perhaps being used as an orchard or as pasture. To the east pits from the 16th century onwards indicate 'back-yard' use. The wall appears on the 1878 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 4) where it forms a division in the Vicarage property separating a formal garden to the east from an informal garden to the west. The wall is still present on the 1912 edition. The positioning of a mid to late 16th pit (08) by the wall suggests that the wall has been in existence from at least that period.

7. Bibliography

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