



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

**LAND TO THE REAR OF 24-26 BELL STREET,
PRINCES RISBOROUGH, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

NGR SP 80850 03245

On behalf of

Henry Douglas Homes Ltd

FEBRUARY 2018

REPORT FOR Henry Douglas Homes Ltd
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SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at the rear of 24-26 Bell Street, Princes Risborough (NGR SP 80850 03245). The watching brief consisted of the monitoring of the initial ground reduction and excavation of the foundation trenches. Excavations revealed Post-medieval disturbed ground layers directly overlying the natural. Cutting these layers were one small pit, one garden feature and one tree throw hole.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site was to the rear of 24-26 Bell Street, Princes Risborough (NGR SP 80850 03245). The site was a narrow rectangular grass area bounded on all sides by residential areas. Topographically the site is located on a northwest facing slope at the foot of the Chiltern Scarp. The height of the site is between 101m and 148m Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation; a chalk sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 94 to 100 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period.

1.2 Planning Background

Wycombe District Council granted planning permission for erection of 1 x 3 bed detached dwelling with associated parking and external works (15/07096/FUL). Condition 5 stated:

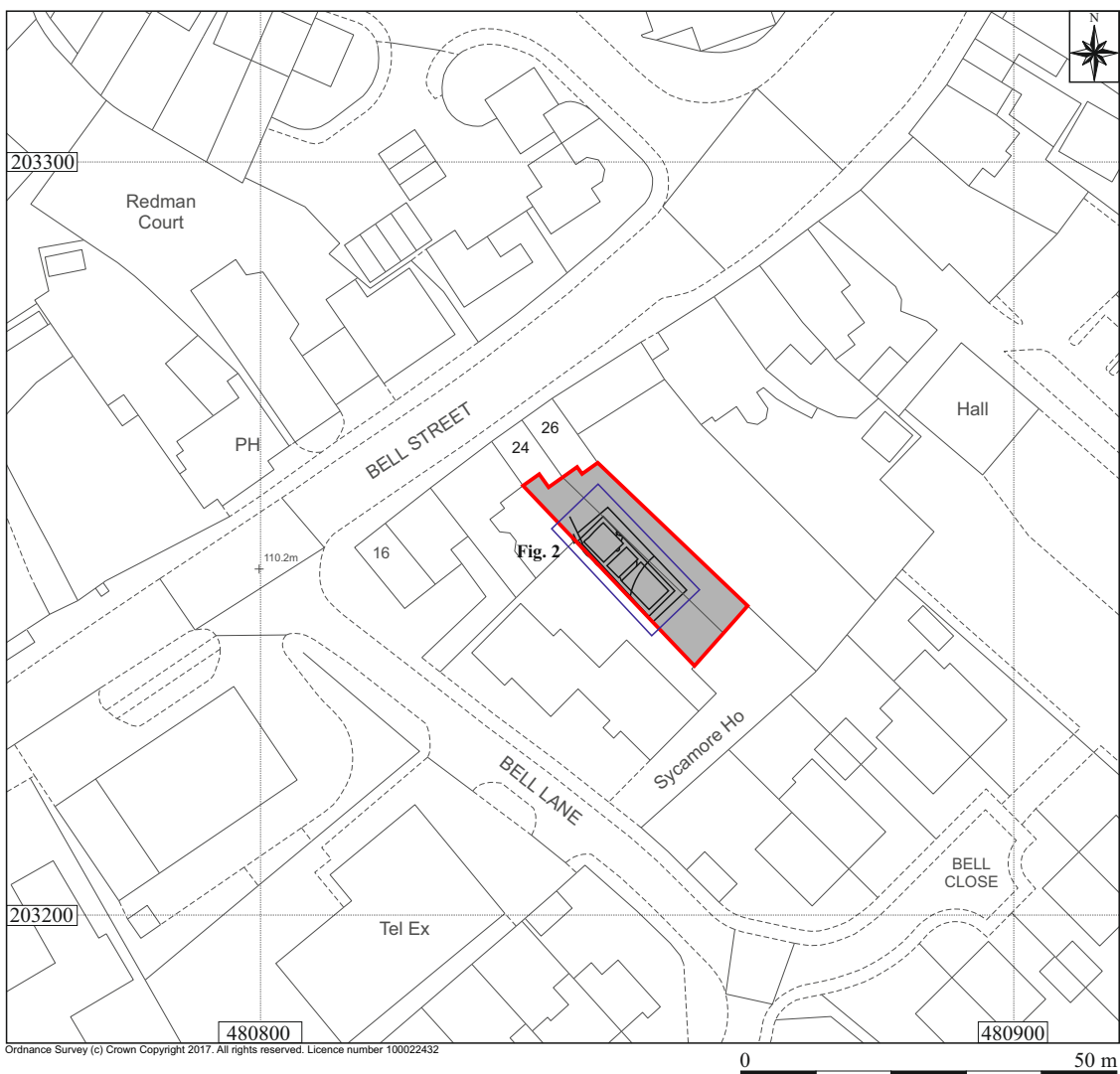
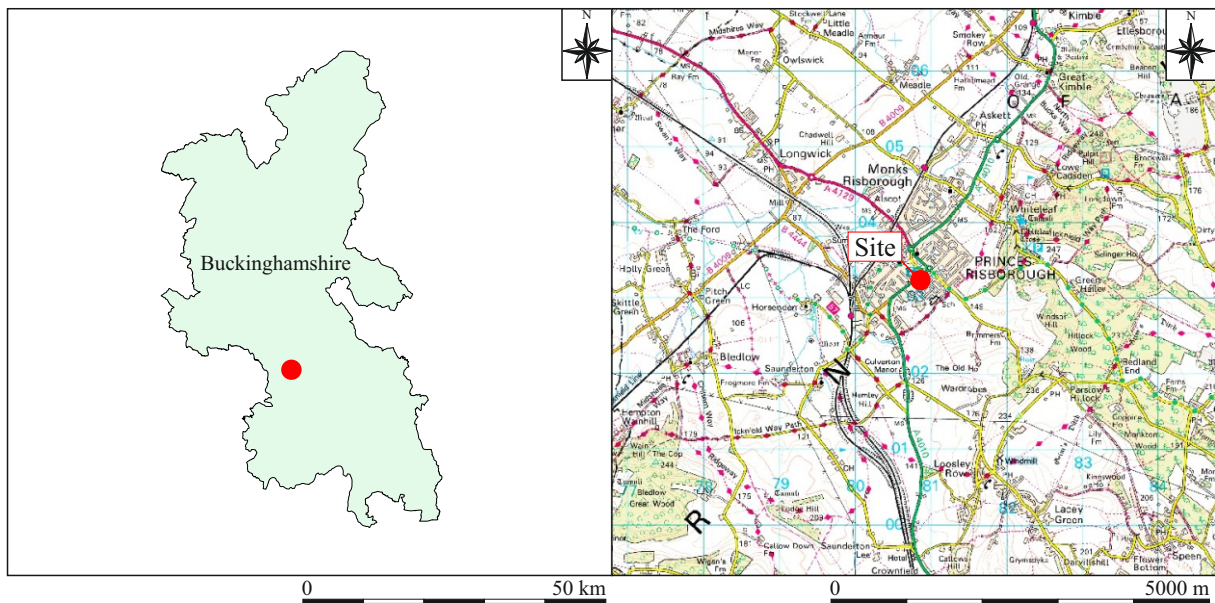
No development shall take place until the application or their agent or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In view of the history of the site and the desirability of recording any items of interest. A pre-start condition is necessary as it is essential that the archaeological investigation is carried out prior to any work to construct the development, including ground works.

Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) has advised that the programme of archaeological work should comprise a watching brief and subsequent report on the findings. This was in line with NPPF and Local Planning policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

A Heritage Impact Assessment of the site was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services (2015) which summarised the results as the earliest activity within the Princes Risborough area is dated to the Prehistoric period, although it was sparse with only a few finds having been recovered. The evidence of activity during the Roman period is also very limited with only one Roman find recorded. Activity within Princes Risborough appears to have been based around the development of the manor and church in the medieval period and then the town from the Post-medieval period.



Key Site boundary Monitored area

Figure 1: Site location

This is made evident by the high number of existing buildings within the town that is dated from the post-medieval period. The site is located in an area on which burgage plots were laid out, however, the proposal site lay within one of these plots and would not disrupt them any further. Development in and around the 1980s essentially destroyed this historic component of the town, only leaving the row of buildings along Bell Street.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To investigate any surviving remains that would be affected by the development.

In particular:

- To understand the type of activities undertaken in the Medieval and Post-medieval periods.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS), the archaeological advisors to Wycombe District Council.

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

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of any significant groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains. This was for removal of a garden wall and its foundations during demolition, excavation for ground reduction and excavations for new foundations (Fig. 2).

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 Medieval and Post-medieval periods.

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.

4.1 Deposits and features

The first phase of work involved monitoring the initial ground reduction of c.0.3m within an area 15m long and 6m wide (Fig. 2). This work removed the topsoil, a 0.2m thick layer of a dark brown silty loam (01), a modern brick garden wall **03** and a 0.3m thick layer of mid brown sandy silt with frequent gravel inclusions (09). This exposed two layers; the upper layer an up to 0.6m thick layer of a dark brown silty loam (02) these layers contained frequent amounts of modern rubble and debris. This overlay a 0.18m thick layer in the southern extent of the trench to 0.63m thick in the northern extent. The layer was a brownish grey sandy silt (05) that contained one sherd of 19th century pottery and one fragment of Post-medieval roof tile and was considered to be a layer of made ground.

The second phase of work involved the excavation of the house foundation trench (Fig. 2 & Plate. 1). The trench was 0.6m wide and 1.6m deep and cut through layers (01), (02) and (05) together with exposing brick garden wall **06** that was underlying garden wall **03**. Layer (05) directly overlay the natural clay (08).



Plate. 1 Foundation trench looking southeast

Cut into layer (05) was pit 11 (Fig. 2) that was only visible in section; it was 0.75m wide and 0.58m deep with steeply sloping sides and a concave base and contained a single fill of a yellowish brown sandy clay with frequent gravels (10) that contained

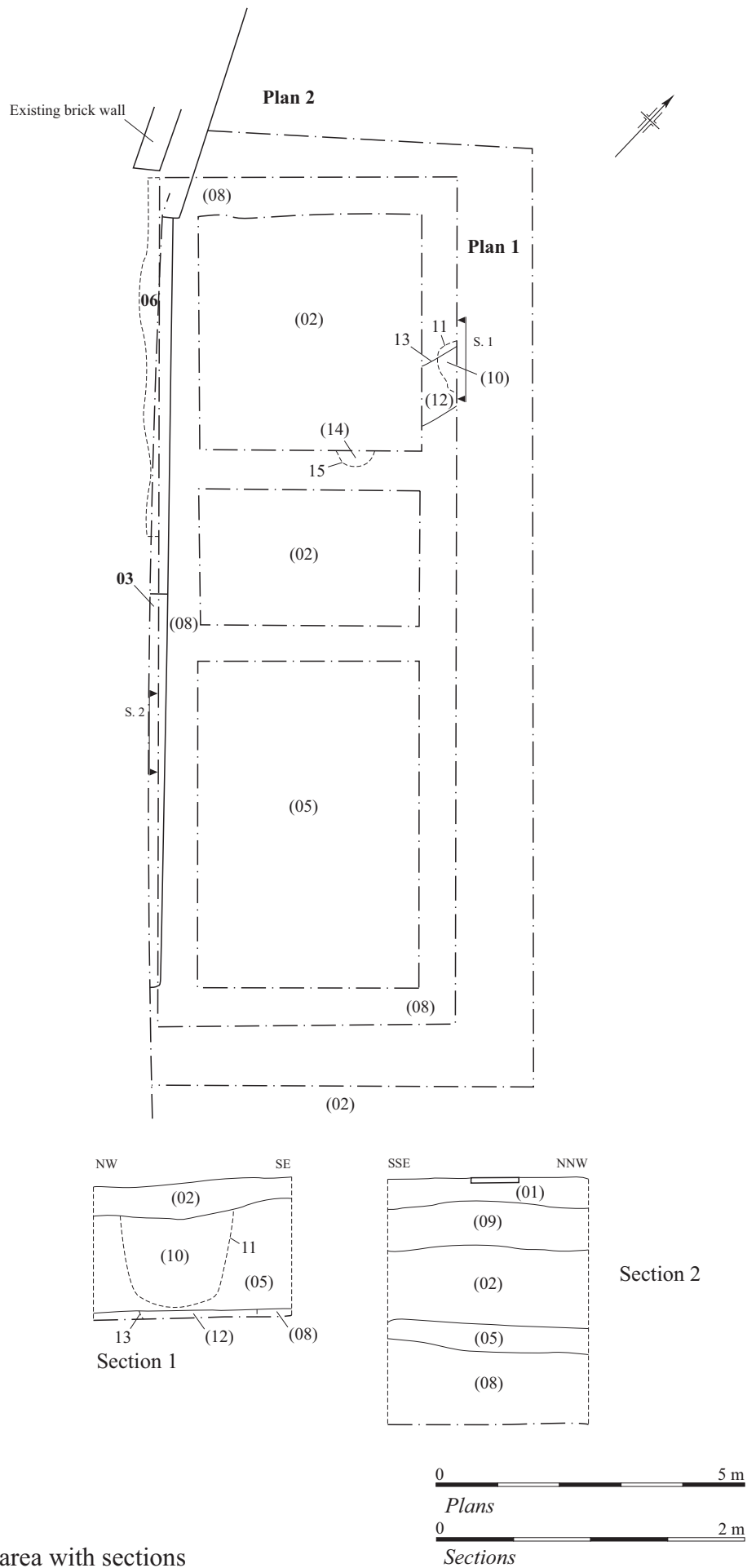


Figure 2: Site area with sections

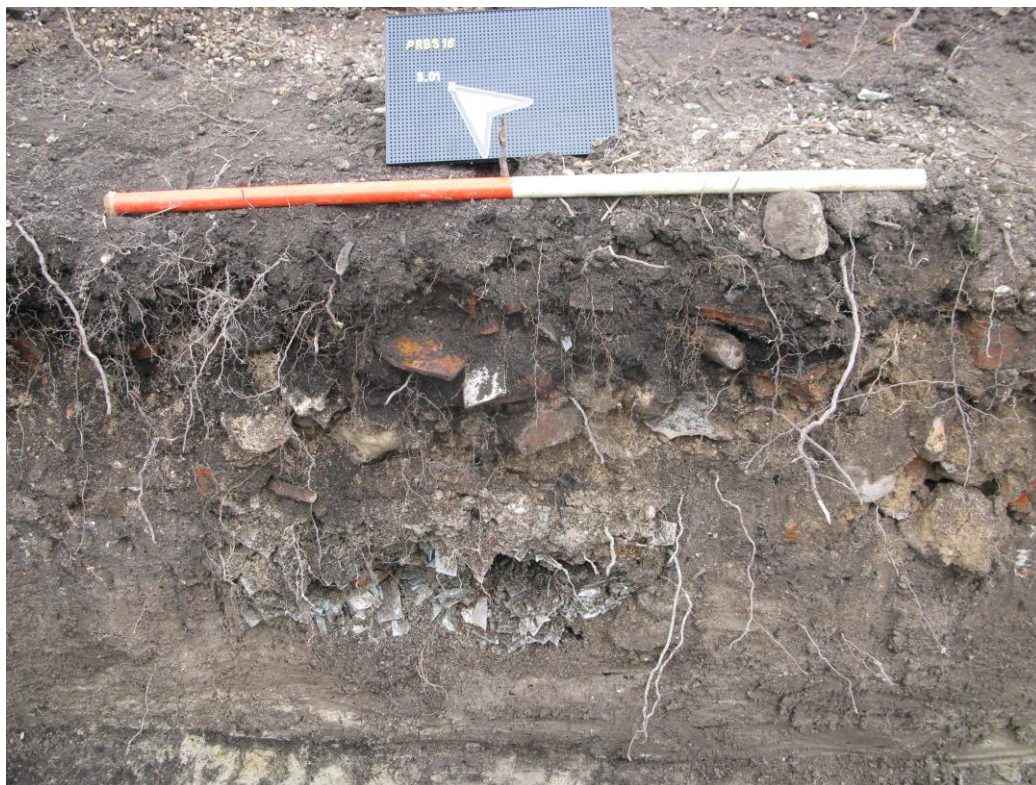


Plate. 2. Section 1

eight sherds of modern pottery, 14 fragments of glass, four fragments of copper alloy slag and one iron knife blade.

This pit cut a robbed out wall trench 13 (Fig. 2, Plate 2)); this feature was situated below the level of impact of the trench and recorded in plan only and cut the natural chalk (08) and was overlain by layer (05). Wall trench 13 was orientated north – south, 0.8m wide and extended for a length of 0.9m within the trench. It was filled by a mid- brown / grey silty clay (12) that contained four sherds of 16th – 19th century pottery and one fragment of Post-medieval brick. This feature must have terminated under the baulk of the trench south southwards as it was not seen in the rest of the trench.

Cut into layer (02) was tree throw hole 15 (Fig. 2) that was sub-circular in shape, 1.5m wide, + 0.6m wide and 0.9m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It was filled with a single fill of a dark brown silty loam (14) that contained two sherds of modern pottery.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The work was carried out in reasonable weather conditions and the archaeological and natural horizons were clear, thus the reliability of the results is considered to be good.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkthorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 30 sherds with a total weight of 1525g. It was entirely post-medieval, and mostly modern. It was recorded using the conventions of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat et al. 1994), as follows:

PM8: **Red Earthenware**, 16th – 19th century. 17 sherds, 1196g.

PM25: **White Earthenware**, late 18th – 20th century. 11 sherds, 126g.

PM38: **Yellow-Glazed Whiteware**, 19th century. 2 sherds, 103g

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*. All the fabrics are common finds in the region.

All the PM8 sherds are from bowls, jugs or jars, including a handled vessel from context (10) which has a thick white residue on the inner surface and a row of post-firing drilled holes below the rim. It appears to have been used as a container for paint or similar. The small group of sherds from context (3) are all from the rim of a jug which is a typical 16th – 17th century form. The other earthenwares (fabrics PM25 and PM38) are all fragments of tablewares.

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

Context	PM8		PM25		PM38		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
2	4	516	1	3	5	61	MOD
3	4	19					16thC
5					1	3	MOD
9	1	9			1	4	MOD
10	4	416	1	100	2	38	MOD
12	4	236					16thC
14					2	20	MOD
Total	17	1196	2	103	11	126	

5.2 Other Finds by Simona Denis

1. Ceramics

Ceramic Building Material

A very limited assemblage of 3 ceramic building material fragments, of a combined weight of 1240.2g, was recovered from three individual contexts.

Context	Type	No. of Items	Weight (g)	Dimensions (mm)	Comments	Date Range

05	Roof tile	1	20	L:48 W:25 T:12	Sandy fabric. Edge preserved	Post- Medieval
12	Brick	1	1193	L:100 W:104 (complete) T:66 (complete)	Gritty fabric. Frog	?18 th C
14	Roof tile	1	27.2	L:55 W:35 T:12	Gritty fabric	Post- Medieval

Table 2: Occurrence of Ceramic Building Material by context and type

Two of the items were positively identified as roof tiles, although the extremely small size of the fragments, and the lack of any diagnostic feature prevented from the identification of the type.

Roof tiles were produced with virtually unchanged methods from the 12th to the middle 19th century (van Lemmen 2003), and can therefore be only generically attributed to the Post-Medieval period.

The fragment recovered from the fill of linear feature [13] was identified as a partial brick. The object was preserved to its complete width (104mm) and thickness (66mm), and showed a shallow frog on the upper face. The fabric is gritty, with frequent medium to large stone inclusions.

The overall aspect of the brick and its preserved dimensions (Sharpe 2011) suggest it was produced in the 18th century.

It is not recommended to retain the post-medieval roof tile fragments, due to their very limited potential for further analysis.

Clay Tobacco Pipe

A single fragment of clay tobacco pipe, weighing 01.4g and measuring 34mm in length, was recovered from modern rubble deposit (02). The item, largely incomplete, positively identified as a stem fragment; no marks, decorations or diagnostic features were observed. Plain stem fragments have very little dating value, and can only generally be assigned to the Post-medieval period.

It is not recommended to retain the plain, unmarked and undiagnostic clay tobacco pipe stem fragment due to its very limited potential for further analysis.

2. Metalwork

Iron

A single iron object, weighing 56.3g, was collected from deposit (10), the fill of pit [11]. The item, in a poor state of preservation, was fragmentary and showed extensive oxidation.

The object was identified as a knife blade, measuring 96mm in length and 19mm at its widest, tapering to the point and bent in a U-shape. The blade was tentatively dated to the post-medieval period.

It is not recommended to retain the iron object due to its extremely poor state of preservation and its very limited potential for further analysis.

Copper Alloy

Context (10), fill of pit [11], contained 4 small fragments of copper alloy, of a combined weight of 1.2g. The items were tentatively identified as possible offcut or casting waste.

The copper alloy items are not recommended for retention due to their extremely limited potential for further analysis.

3. Miscellaneous

Glass

A small collection of glass fragments, weighing 558.1g in total, was recovered from 2 different contexts. The items, although extremely fragmentary, were in a fair state of preservation.

The vast majority of the fragments (13 items, or 87% of the assemblage) were identified as plate glass, possibly part of a single window pane. The remaining two examples belonged to bottles/vessels.

Context	Type	No. of Items	Weight (g)	Colour	Dimensions (mm)	Comments	Date Range
02	Vessel/Bottle base	1	20.2	Clear	L:72 W:50 T:2-6	Curved	Modern
10	Window glass	13	69.9	Clear	Max L14 W:58 T:1.5-3	Edge preserved on 3 fragments	?19 th C
	?Wine-style quart bottle base	1	468	Olive green	D:88	Push-up base; pontil mark; orange-peel surface	?L18 th C

Table 3: Occurrence of Glass by context and type

The items recovered from context (10), the fill of pit [11], were tentatively dated to the late 18th–19th century, and comprised window glass as well as the base of a possible Wine-style quart bottle (Jones 1988, figure 57).

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

6 DISCUSSION

The excavations for the house foundation trench revealed various phases of ground disturbance from the Post-medieval to the modern periods. There was no presence of any un-disturbed deposits overlying the natural clay (08). Cut into the Post-medieval layers were small pit 11, a robbed out wall trench 13, that could have been a garden feature which is at angle to the garden plot layout, and tree throw hole 15. All these features provided a Post-medieval to Modern date.

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

Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Buckinghamshire County Museum with accession number AYBCM: 2017.6

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