

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

THE WHITE HART HOTEL, HIGH STREET

CHIPPING NORTON,

OXON.

SP 31442712

On behalf of

Wonderglen Ltd

AUGUST 2002

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Summary

The evaluation carried out on the proposed area of development to the rear of the White Hart Hotel, Chipping Norton, found the remains of two stone built buildings. One of the buildings included a possible basemented lean-to attached to its southern side. In addition to this, there was a large linear cut feature and evidence of terracing. Artefacts recovered from the site dated the remains to a period between the 12th and 14th centuries.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Fig. 1)

The proposed development site is at the White Hart Hotel, Chipping Norton (SP 31442712). This is situated between the High Street (A44 and A361) and Albion Street, which run on a north/south axis. The site lies at approximately 205 m OD, and the underlying geology is Chipping Norton Limestone. The site is currently occupied by a hotel fronting High Street with outbuildings and car parking space to the rear.

1.2 Planning Background

A planning application has been submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council to develop the site of the White Hart Hotel by the demolition of existing chalet bedrooms and flat roofed extensions at the rear of the hotel, and the conversion of the hotel, wings and other outbuildings together with new build to create a total of 20 dwelling units and two retail units (seven new build dwellings in total).

Due to the presence of potential remains of archaeological interest in the proposal area, the County Archaeological Services (CAS) advised that an archaeological evaluation of the rest of the site should be undertaken prior to the determination of the planning application. The CAS produced a *Brief* for such an evaluation (CAS 2002). John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* agreed with the CAS carried out such an evaluation.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The development site is located in the historic core of Chipping Norton, which is entered in the Domesday Survey of 1086, and therefore would have had its origins in the later Anglo Saxon period. The White Hart Hotel is a Grade II* Listed Building. The timber frame structure appears to date to the sixteenth century (CAS 2002) and was refronted in 1725 in a Baroque style. At the rear, there is a fifteenth century wing with a jettied first floor (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974: *The Buildings of England. Oxfordshire*). Certain architectural features including panelling suggest an Elizabethan origin (OCAS *ibid*). Trade tokens dating to 1666 were issued by William Diston from the White Hart.



Figure 1: Site and Trench Location

Cartographic evidence shows well-defined burgage plots extending eastwards from High Street, which were enclosed to the rear by Albion Street. The development area appears to have formed a single Burgage plot that contained the original coaching inn and any other associated activities.

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.
- In particular to establish when the earliest use of the burgage plot was.
- To establish whether there were other activities or outbuildings connected with the use of the coaching inn.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* issued by the CAS a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the CAS and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of four trenches.

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 Hugh Coddington of the CAS.

3.2 Methodology

Four trenches were excavated within the proposed development area (Fig 1). The lengths of the trenches were as follows: Trench 1: 4 m, Trench 2: 17.5 m, Trench 3: 10.5 m and Trench 4: 4.5 m. All trenches were 1.65m wide. Excavation was carried out by JCB fitted with a 5' grading bucket. Excavation proceeded in spits until the top of undisturbed natural subsoil (Chipping Norton Limestone) or any higher archaeological horizons. The trenches were backfilled after recording. 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: (07).

4 RESULTS

Asphalt and a levelling layer formed the uppermost deposits in Trenches 2 to 4. Trench 1, nearest to the main hotel buildings cut through a brick ground surface and associated levelling layer (20).

Trench 1 (4 m x 1.65 m)

At the southern end of Trench 1, the present brick built ground surface and levelling layer directly overlies a masonry feature (27). This feature appears to be of dry-stone construction consisting of flat angular to sub-angular limestones (average dimensions: 0.2 m length, 0.07 m thick). The feature lies at the extreme southern limit of the trench and was visible mainly in the section, 0.27 m below current ground level.

Perpendicular to this along the west side of the trench was a wall of similar construction (22). This feature stood to a depth of six dry stone courses (to a height of 0.46 m) at the southern end and rested upon a layer of small flattish stones (25), 0.02 m to 0.08 m along their greatest axis. It was impossible to determine whether wall (22) abutted or was keyed in to feature (27) due to the small area of (27) exposed in the southern section of the trench.

A further stone built feature (21) occupied c. 2.8 m of the trench along the north/south axis, and c. 1.0 m east/west, emerging from the eastern trench section. This feature was edged with large sub-rounded to sub angular boulders (maximum dimensions along greatest axis: 0.5 m to 0.8 m). Contained by this edge of boulders was an apparently unbonded surface of similarly sub-rounded to sub- angular stones with average dimensions 0.1 x 0.2 m.

Between the masonry features (21), (25) and (27), was a cut feature [23]. L-shaped in plan, this feature is filled by a loose dark brown sandy silty soil (24). This soil contained frequent fragments of limestone, frequent fragments and flecks of charcoal, rare bone fragments and pottery sherds.

Trench 2 (17.5 m x 1.65 m)

There were three features of interest in this trench. At the eastern end of the trench and visible in plan 0.15 m wide and c. 2.0 m in length at a depth of 0.26 m below present ground level, was cut feature [32]. This feature was cut into the natural subsoil comprising a thin band of reddish brown silty clay overlying the Chipping Norton Limestone. This feature was filled with a wet mid to dark brown soft silty clay (paler when dry). The fill (31), contained frequent angular and well-packed stones with average dimensions 0.18 m x 0.08 m. No artefacts were recovered from this feature.

A further feature also emerging from the southern section, occurred c. 6.5 m from the eastern end of the trench. This feature (34) was of drystone construction comprising angular, flattish limestones (average dimensions 0.3 m x 0.2 m). The masonry feature stood only one course high and was cut into the natural Chipping Norton Limestone and backfilled with a pale yellow clayey sand deposit. The fill layer (36) also appears to underlie the masonry and may act as a levelling or bedding layer for the feature. The cut [35] and fill (36) were only visible for the final 1.0 m of the 4.5 m long feature, towards the western end of the trench.

One final feature was observed in this trench, situated adjacent to the masonry (34), c. 10.75 m from the eastern end of the trench. This consisted of a steep almost vertical cut oriented north/south across the trench [37]. The cut was edged with shaped stone and filled with manganese stained fine gravel (38). This feature was also visible in the southern trench section where it cuts steeply down to a depth of 0.17 m and gradually rose to a tapering end 1.75 m in length and 0.03 m thick at the western limit of the feature. The northern side of the feature appeared to be truncated by [35]. Feature [37] cut through the natural geology and marked a change in that geology from the limestone to a reddish silty clay subsoil (the weathered top of the limestone geology).

Trench 3 (10.5 m x 1.65 m)

At the west end of the trench, directly underlying the asphalt and levelling layers (01) was a pale yellowish brown sandy deposit (04) maximum thickness of 0.2 m.

Oriented east/west, and continuing for 5.3 m from the eastern end of the trench was a linear cut feature [12] filled by a medium compact mid-brown silty clay (11). This feature lay directly under the modern ground surface at the east end but was truncated by a masonry feature (07) at the west end of the trench. Feature [12] was cut into natural limestone to a depth of 1.54 m below present ground level (206.21 m OD). One sherd of pottery was found in the fill (11) and is dated to 12th century.

At the west end of the trench a stone built feature was uncovered. This structure (07) consisted of rough-hewn limestone of rubble construction with a possible clay bond (average size of material: 0.7 x 0.7 x 0.3 m). The structure stood to a minimum height of 0.4 m over several courses. No construction cut was visible, but this may be due to cut [08] at the south face.

Feature (06)[08] abutted the south face of the masonry (07). Fill (06) comprised firm mid brownish yellow silty clay (c. 40 %). There are abundant thin angular to sub angular limestone fragments in the fill together with many 19th century inclusions: abundant pottery, frequent oyster shell, slate and glass and occasional clay pipe stems. Feature (06) has many cavities within it due to the quantity of stone and artefacts included in the fill. The deposit was excavated to a depth of 0.4 m, but not bottomed due to the nature of the fill and the narrow area open to investigation.

Fill (06) abuts a further masonry feature (05) at the west end of the trench. This structure appears to consist of rough rubble masonry and appears to be keyed in, at a right angle to feature (07).

Two final features occurred at the west end of the trench, one running east/west [09], and the other roughly north/south [13]. Feature [13] was cut into the natural limestone to the east side, but was delimited on the west side by a rubble-built structure (02). The rubble formed the western edge of the cut feature and contained edge-set stones dipping steeply down into the cut. The cut itself was filled with a mid-brown, friable silty clay (03). At the northern end of the feature, there was a cavity that runs under the masonry (02). In alignment with this cavity, and possibly a continuation outside the rubble structure (02), was cut [09] and fill (10). The fill of cut [09] was also a mid-brown silty clay.

Trench 4 (4.5 m x 1.65 m)

This trench consisted of asphalt and levelling layer over garden soil, in turn directly overlying the natural Chipping Norton Limestone geology. These deposits extended over the entire trench and were a maximum of 0.48 m deep. There were no features of archaeological significance within this trench.

5 FINDS

A large quantity of artefacts were recovered from context (06) in Trench 3. This included glass, oyster shell, tile, slate, pottery and clay pipe stems. 31 sherds of pottery were collected from this feature and have been dated to the 19th century. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from context (11), also in Trench 3 and has been dated to the 12th century.

A rim sherd and two body sherds were also recovered from the drainage feature in Trench 1 (context 24). These had been identified on site as 12th to 14th century Banbury Ware. Unfortunately these sherds were lost during the evaluation.

Pottery by *Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 32 sherds with a total weight of 663g. The majority of the assemblage is of 19th century date, although a single sherd of ?local medieval material was also noted.

The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1989; 1994), as follows:

OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+.

OXNOTTS: Nottingham stonewares. c. 1690-1800.

OXBEW: Manganese-glazed Earthenwares, 18th century

OXEST: Later English Stoneware, c 1750+

WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19th - 20th C.

In addition, a sherd of what appears to be a medieval ware was noted. It is not present in the Oxford type-series, and may be local to Chipping Norton. The fabric is soft, orange-brown with a dark grey core, with sparse to moderate quartz sand up to 0.5mm. It is provisionally dated to the 12th century.

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

	Medieval		OXDR		OXBEW		OXNOT TS		OXEST		WHEW		
Context	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
6			7	276	2	32	4	15	1	177	17	151	19thC
11	1	12											12thC ?
Total	1	12	7	276	2	32	4	15	1	177	17	151	

6 DISCUSSION

Trench 1 (Figure 2)

This trench contained a number of stone built features: Feature (21) is a floor surface, with remains of walls at its south (27) and western sides (22). All three masonry features had a levelling course of smaller stones underlying them. Between the walls and the floor surface a cut feature occurred [23]. This appeared to form an L-shaped drain, and contained artefacts such as bone fragments and pottery sherds. These features and the rough construction of the floor surface, suggests that a small outbuilding for animals would have stood here. Artefacts recovered from the drain fill (24) were of 12th century date.

Trench 2 (Figure 3)

The majority of this trench contained Chipping Norton Limestone geology. This brashy natural ended where feature [37] was cut. To the west of this feature the geology exposed consisted of lenses of clean pale yellow shell encrusted clayey sands. There was no topsoil in the entire trench, with the features or geology directly underlying the modern asphalt surfaces. There were no artefacts recovered from any of the deposits.

Of the features, it was not possible to determine the true function of cut [32] due to its location against the trench section, and the small area of the feature actually exposed. Although the form and orientation of the feature running down slope (east-west), suggests that it may be for drainage purposes.

Stone built structure (34) was also difficult to investigate due to a similar location against the trench section and small proportion of the feature exposed. Cut [35] may be the construction cut for the stone feature, possibly a wall, and fill (36), the backfill of the construction cut.

Cut [37] adjacent to the wall feature, had a series of moulded stones along its edge (north-south). The cut was almost vertical and was filled by black manganese stained gravel forming a layer tapering to the west. The lack of material overlying the features and natural geology suggests that ground reduction to create terracing has occurred.

Trench 3 (Figure 4)

A number of features were uncovered in this trench. Running roughly east/west was a large cut feature [12]. This feature was not fully exposed in the excavated area, so extent could not be determined. One sherd of 12th century pottery was recovered in the fill of the feature (11), but no other artefacts were found. The cut feature may be a ditch, or some form of extraction pit for the quarrying of the limestones.

At the western this feature was truncated by structure (07), also oriented east/west. This structure was a large well-made rubble constructed wall with a clay bond standing several courses high.

Outside this wall were two drainage features cut into the natural geology. Feature [09] is orientated east-west and runs downslope, while feature [13] cuts across the gradient of the slope, bounded by a rubble built structure, before curving off towards the west end of the trench.

Feature (07) was probably the outside wall of a building extending to the north, with associated drainage features [13] and [09]. This building truncates cut feature [12], which was dated to the 12th century. Fill (06) contained a large quantity of modern artefacts which dates the masonry to between the 12th and 19th centuries, the absence of artefacts in direct association with the drains and masonry prevent the establishment of a narrower date.

A further wall (05) appears to be keyed into (07) and forms a return at the western end. The resulting 'dog-leg' in (07) and less well-made construction of (05) could suggest a later addition formed by removal of parts of structure (07) to allow (05) to be built into it forming a securely anchored wall.

Feature (06), bounded on the west side by (05) and the north side by (07) is cut into the natural limestone (cut [08]). A quantity of rubble, with no obviously coherent form filled the cut at the eastern end. This rubble may be the base of a wall feature similar in form and running parallel to wall (05).

The fill of the feature suggests tipping or demolition due to the abundant artefacts: the edge set tile, stone and pottery abutting walls (05) and (07), and the many cavities present within the fill. This deposit together with the wall (05), which was keyed into (07) but set back from the its western end, and the cut [08], occupying a similar position set in from the eastern end, may represent a basemented lean-to or outbuilding that was later demolished and backfilled with the demolition debris. All the artefacts recovered from this feature date to the 19th century.

Trench 4

This area appeared to be beyond the limit of the occupation of the site. No archaeological remains or artefacts were recovered from this trench.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has proved the presence of archaeological remains in the area of the proposed development. Artefacts recovered from several of the deposits date from the 12 to the 14th century.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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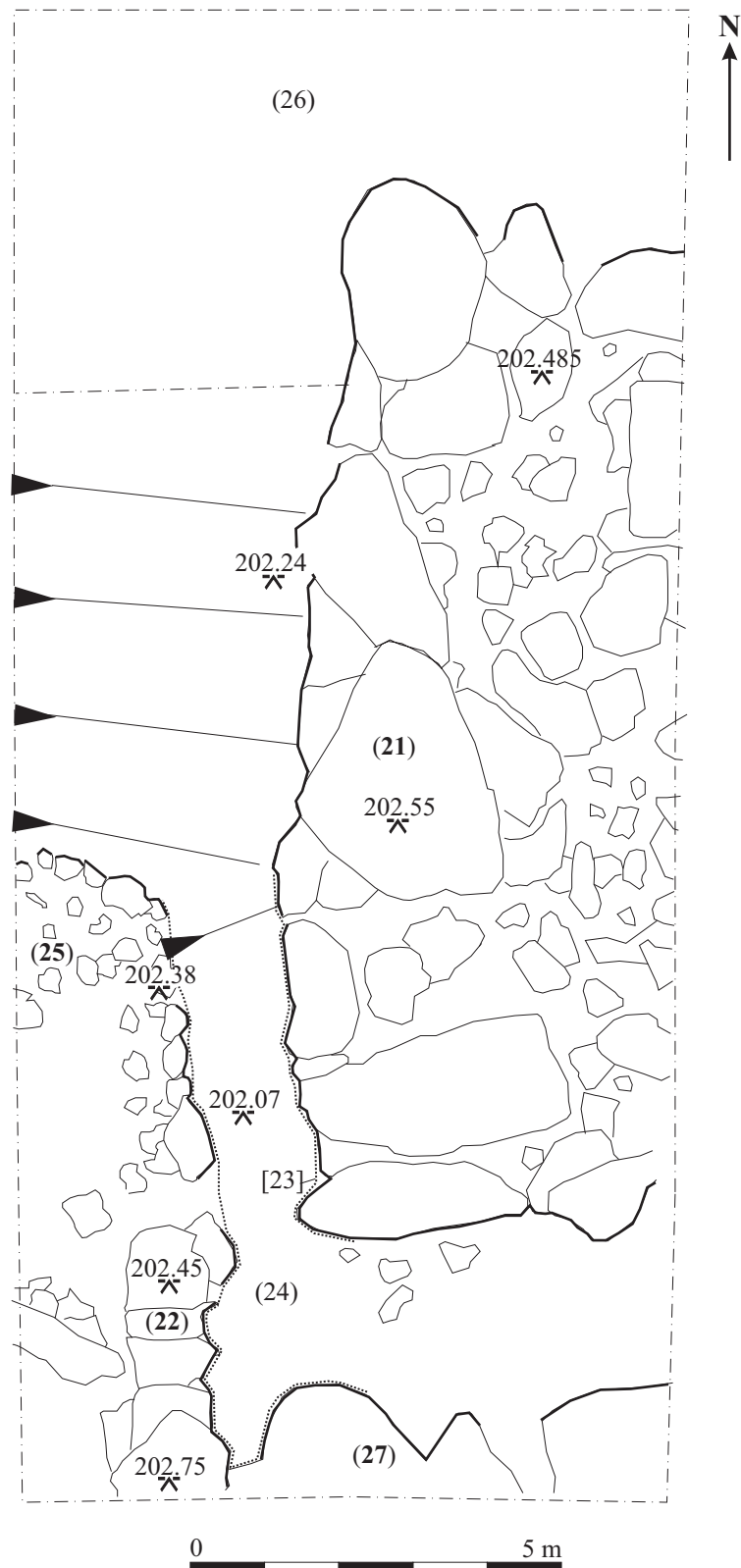


Figure 2: Plan of Trench 1

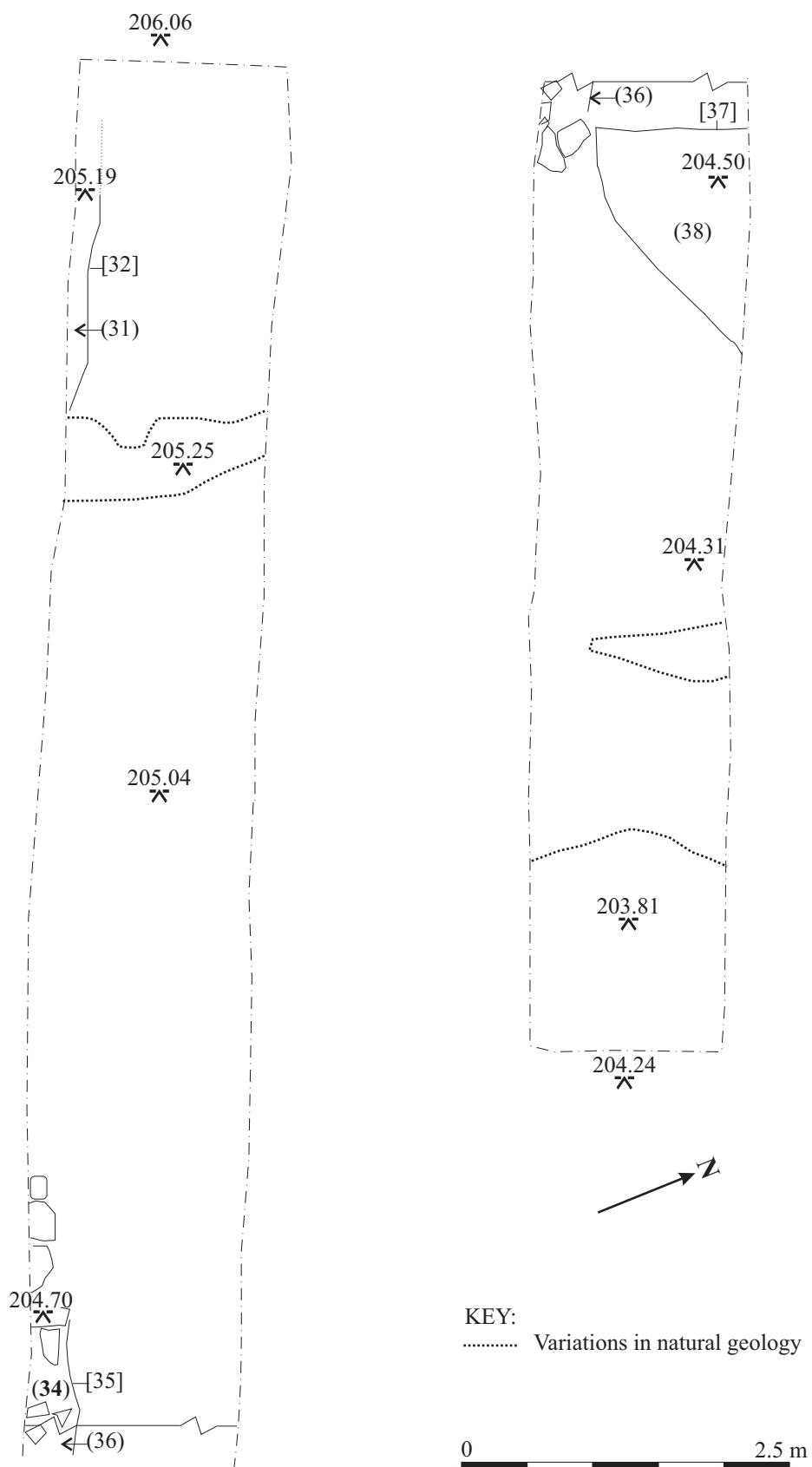
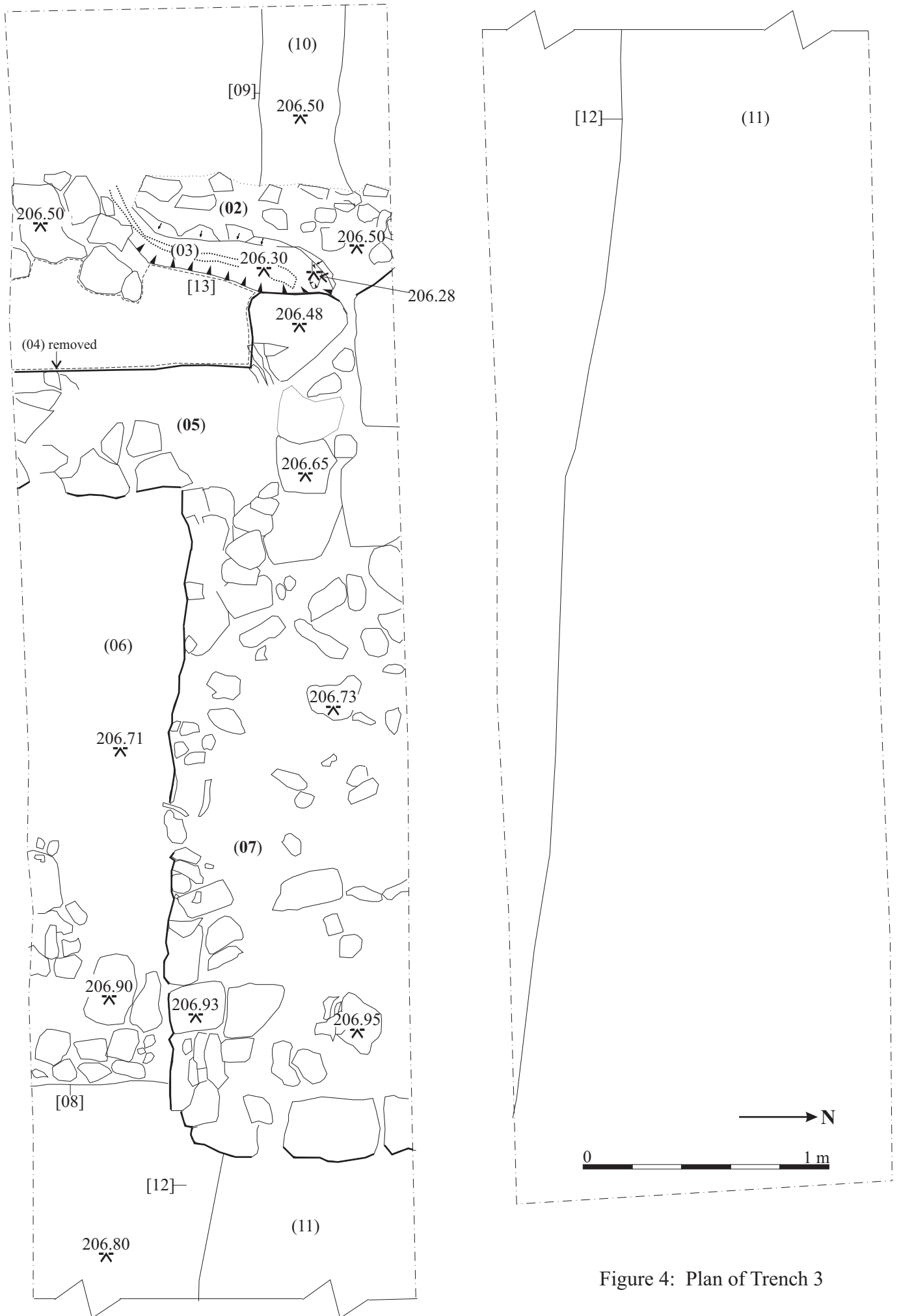


Figure 3: Plan of Trench 2



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench1				1.65	4.0		
20	Layer	Brick paving & levelling	0.13	1.65	4.0	None	Modern
21	Masonry	Floor surface	-	1.0	2.8	None	12 th -14 th century
22	Masonry	Wall	0.46	0.5	1.9	None	12 th -14 th century
23	Cut	L-shaped drain	-	0.3-0.4	>1.6 N-S, >1.3 E-W	-	12 th -14 th century
24	Fill of 23	L-shaped drain	-	0.3-0.4	-	Pottery	12 th -14 th century
25	Masonry	Levelling layer	0.10	0.5	1.9	None	12 th -14 th century
26	Layer	Natural	-	-	-	None	-
Trench2				1.65	17.5		
30	Layer	Asphalt & levelling layer	0.13	1.65	17.5	None	Modern
30	Fill	Drain	-	0.2	2.0	None	Unknown
32	Cut	Drain	-	0.2	2.0	None	Unknown
34	Masonry	Wall	>0.13	0.4	>2.75	None	Unknown
35	Cut for 34	Construction cut	-	>0.55	<1.25	None	Unknown
36	Fill of 35	Construction cut	>0.13	>0.55	<1.25	None	Unknown
37	Cut	Terracing	0.17	>1.2	1.7	None	Unknown
38	Fill of 37	Terracing	0.17	>1.2	1.7	None	Unknown
39	Natural	-	-	-	-	None	-
Trench 3				1.65	10.5		
01	Layer	Asphalt & levelling layer	0.13	1.65	10.5	None	Modern
02	Masonry	Drain	-	0.3	1.04	None	Unknown
03	Fill	Drain	0.22	0.2	>1.04	None	Unknown
04	Layer	Levelling	0.2	>.5	>0.8	None	Unknown
05	Masonry	Wall	-	0.5	>1.0	None	Unknown
06	Fill	Demolition/backfill	-	>0.6	<2.4	None	Unknown
07	Masonry	Wall	>0.4	>1.0	3.5	None	Unknown
08	Cut	Construction cut	-	>0.58	-	Pottery bone etc.	19 th Century
09	Cut	Drain	-	0.32	>1.1	None	Unknown

10	Fill of 09	Drain	-	0.32	>1.1	None	Unknown
11	Fill of 12	?Ditch	1.54	>1.65	>5.8	Pottery	12 th Century
12	Cut	?Ditch	1.54	>1.65	>5.8	-	12 th Century
13	Cut for 03	Drain	0.22	0.2	>1.04	None	Unknown
Trench 4				1.65	4.5		
40	Layer	Asphalt and levelling layer	0.13	1.65	4.5	None	Modern
42	Layer	Garden soil	0.25	1.65	4.5	None	Modern
43	Layer	Natural	-	1.65	4.5	None	Modern