



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT
THE WOODYARD, BANTON, BICESTER,
OXFORDSHIRE

SP 5769 2705

On behalf of
Mr & Mrs Blake

AUGUST 2008

REPORT FOR	Mr & Mrs Blake c/o Kernon Countryside Consultants Brook Cottage, Purton Stoke, Swindon SN5 4JE
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological evaluation of the proposed development site on 8th August 2008. Three trenches, totalling approximately 20 metres in length, were excavated to reveal the underlying natural geology.

All three trenches recorded archaeological remains. There would appear to be at least two phases of occupation present, foundations for two stone built buildings were recorded as well as pits and a possible well.

The features are all of a probable 10th to 12th century date. Although some material could date as late as the mid 14th century the lack of Brill/Borstal ware, usually so common in the region, would suggest the earlier date range.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

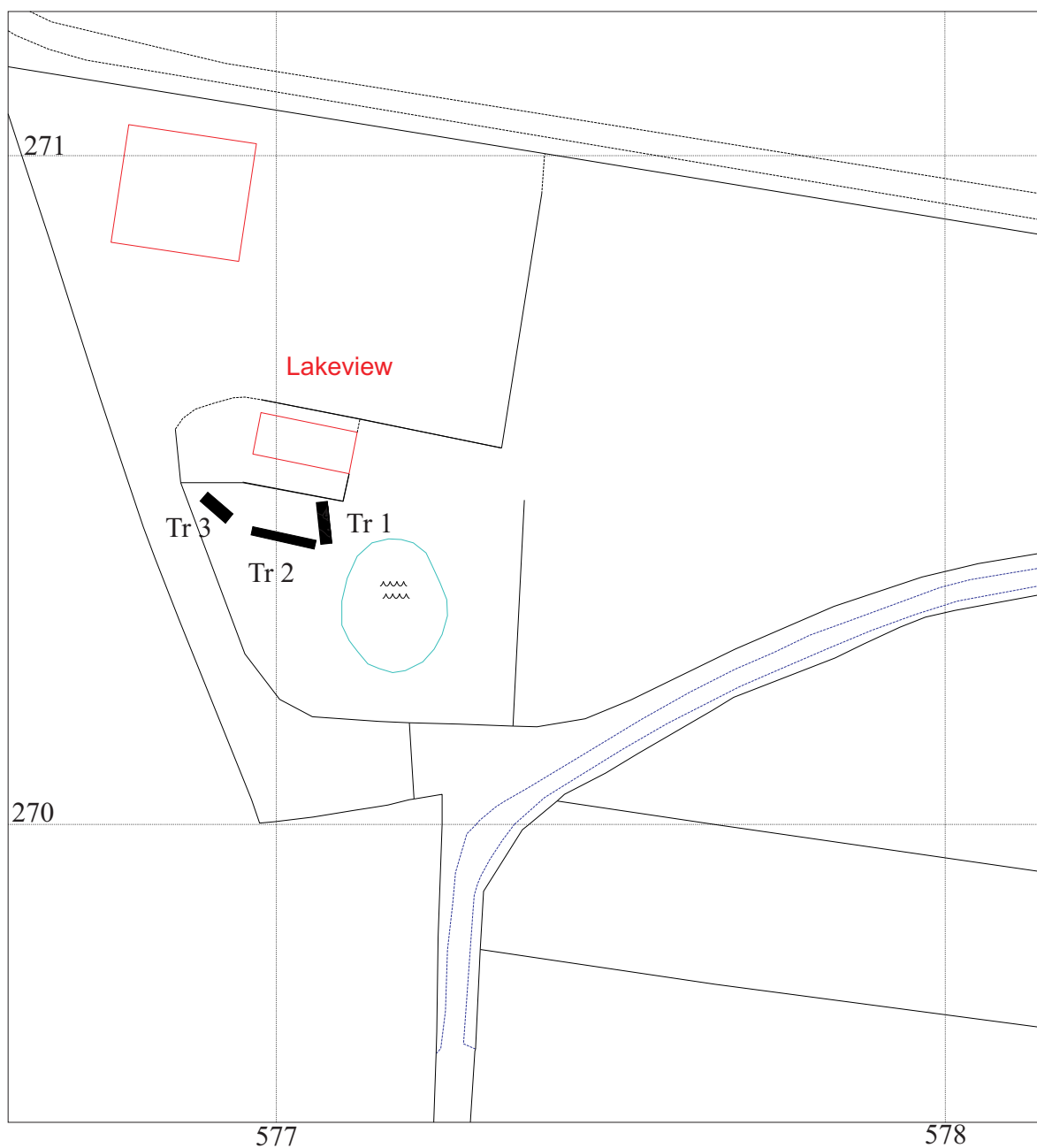
The site of the proposed development is located on the west side of the village, and south-east of Stoke Lynn (NGR SP 5769 2705). The geology is Cornbrash and it lies at approximately 105m OD. The site is currently part of an existing farmyard and a mobile home is present in part of the site.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission is being sought from Cherwell District Council for the construction of a workers dwelling. Due to the presence of known archaeological remains Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) has advised that a predetermination field evaluation is required. This is in line with PPG16 and Local Plan Policy.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The proposal site is located in an area of considerable archaeological potential lying on the northern side of the deserted medieval village of Bainton (PRN; SP 5783 2698). The village was depopulated between 1450 and 1700 and four farmhouses remain along with excellent quality earthworks. A clear pattern of earthworks is recognisable as road and croft boundaries with house platforms, under grass visible on the 1961 Fairey Aerial Survey. A number of features are visible on these photographs on the location of the proposed dwelling and so it is highly likely that well-preserved deposits related to the medieval village survive on the site. A possible house platform appears to lie partly in the area under consideration for the location of the new house.



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0 50 m

Figure 1. Site Location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To determine as far as reasonably practicable, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features encountered.

In particular:

- To determine the type of medieval remains on the site and the degree of their preservation
- To determine what type of medieval activity took place on the site
- To date the remains

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services' (OCAS) request a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with OCAS and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of trial trenches across the site (Fig. 1).

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 (1999) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

The trenching sample required was achieved through the excavation of three trenches: one 10m in length and two 5m in length.

All trenches were 1.6 m wide and were excavated by a 3T 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological deposits.

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. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

Mr Richard Oram of OCAS monitored the work.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 Excavation Results

The lowest deposit recorded was the orange-brown Cornbrash (1/14), (2/05) & (3/04).

Trench 1 (Figure 2)

The natural in this trench was only seen at the base of cut [1/15] elsewhere the lowest deposit encountered was a stone rubble spread (1/08) to the south of the trench and a stone built wall (1/12) to the north. These were seen under the cut of two ditches [1/05] and [1/10] when the fills had been removed.

The rubble spread (1/08) was not fully excavated; it was at least 1.2m wide by 0.5m long. It may have been truncated by the cut of ditch [1/05] and was certainly disturbed by pit [1/15]. It would appear that the base of ditch [1/05] rested on this spread, possibly because of the difficulty to excavate deeper.

The wall (1/12) was constructed of roughly dressed stone and was excavated to reveal two courses. It was constructed with larger facing stones and what appeared to be a rubble core of smaller stones. It measured at least 3.5m in length and was 1m wide.

Covering the wall and the area on either side of it was a mid-brown silty-clay (1/13) at least 0.3m thick. It was only seen after the removal of the ditch fill (1/11). Above (1/13) was a 0.05m thick layer of orange-brown clay (1/04) with considerable charcoal flecking.

Cut into this layer (1/04) were two linear ditches both aligned roughly north to south. The first ditch [1/05] was over 1.6m long, 1.2m wide and 0.15m deep. It appeared to have steep sides and a flattish base. The southern side was not seen. It was filled by dark brown silty clay (1/16). Cut into the ditch fill was a later pit [1/15]. It was irregular in plan roughly 2m long by 0.8m wide with steep sides. The lowest fill was light brown silty-clay (1/09) 0.03m thick. This was overlain by a 0.15m thick deposit of mid-brown silty-clay (1/07). The uppermost fill was a dark brown clay (1/06) with charcoal flecks 0.05m thick. The second ditch [1/10] was at least 1.6m long, 0.8m wide and 0.2m deep with a shallow U-shaped profile. This was filled with a compact dark brown clay (1/11).

Sealing these features was a layer 0.12m thick of mid brown silty-clay (1/03) with some small stones. This probably represents a buried land surface.

The ground surface sloped up from south to north in the area of this trench. This was due to a layer of modern made ground above deposit (1/03) that was thicker towards the north. It consisted of a compact mid-brown silty clay (1/02) with large quantities of stone and flecked with charcoal that was up to 0.6m thick. Also noted within this deposit were fragments of brick, tarmac and wood. The uppermost layer was an imported dark greyish-brown silty-clay (1/01) garden topsoil 0.15m thick.

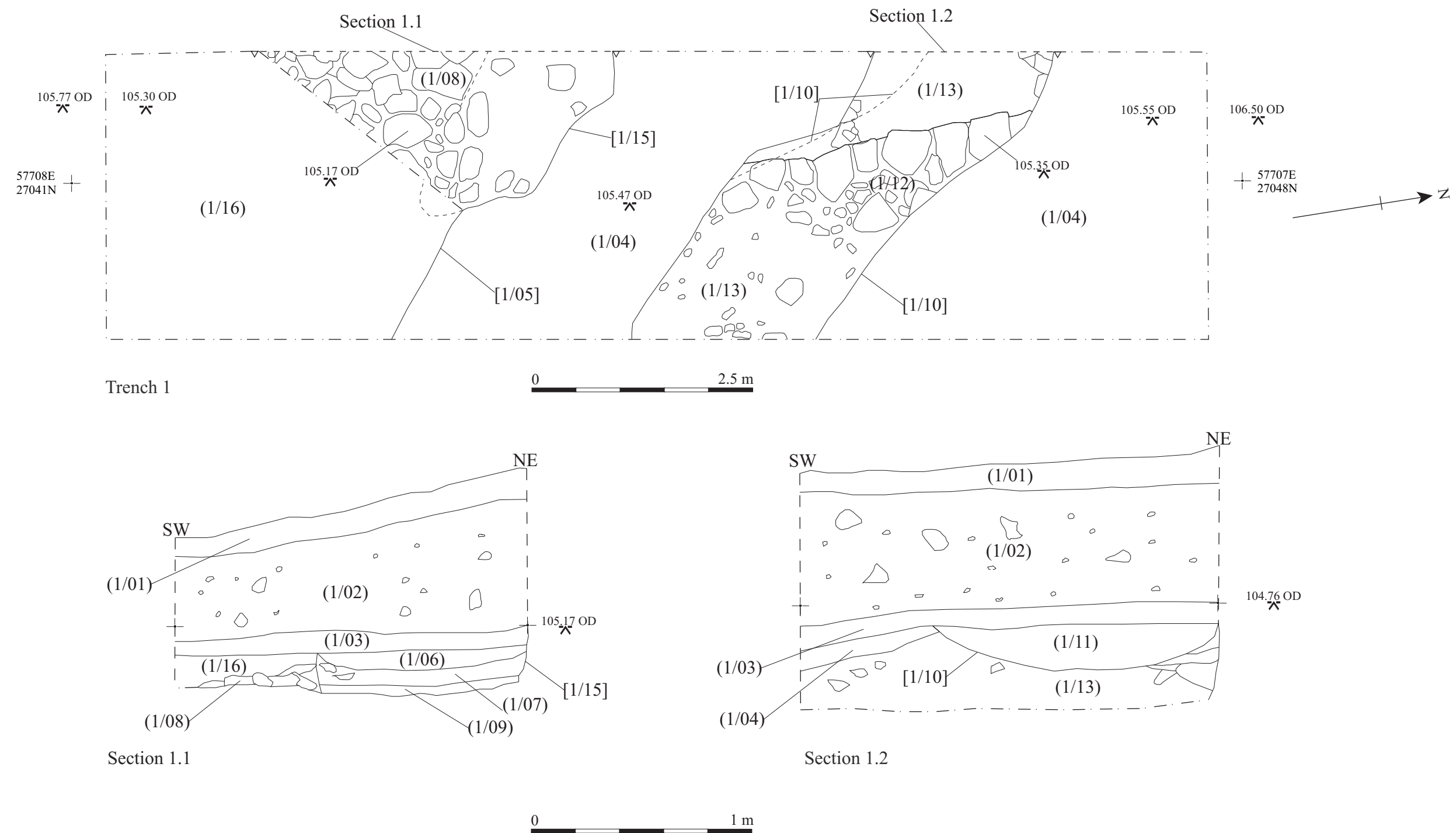


Figure 2. Plan and Sections of Trench 1

Trench 2

Cut into the natural (2/05) near the centre of the trench was a large circular pit [2/06]. This was approximately 2.2m wide and over 0.8m deep, it was not fully excavated and the bottom of the feature was not seen. It was filled with a friable reddish-brown clay (2/08) with the odd charcoal fleck.

An L-shaped cut [2/10] was observed running W-E from the western end of the trench and turning 90° north near the centre, to cut the early pit [2/06]. It was at least 0.6m wide, over 4m in length and at least 0.1m deep. It was not fully excavated, as it was obviously a foundation trench for a wall. The W-E portion of the cut contained the stone rubble foundations of a wall (2/09), which was at least 0.3m wide and over 0.1m thick. The gap between foundations and cut edge was backfilled with a red-brown clay (2/11) at least 0.1m thick.

Where the wall line turned northwards across the earlier pit [2/06] the cut of the foundation trench was difficult to distinguish. Its western edge was not discernable from the possible edge of pit [2/06]. On the line of the wall was a rubble deposit (2/07) that included mortared stone. However this deposit did not appear formally laid and may have subsided into the soft fill of the earlier pit.

At the eastern end of the trench the natural appeared to slope down, although it may have been due to some type of landscaping. The depression created was filled with a mid reddish-brown clay (2/04) with stone, some burnt, charcoal flecks and pottery. This deposit was a shallow wedge shape in section up to 0.2m thick.

Over this was a layer of firm dark red-brown clay (2/03) with the occasional small stone up to 0.18m thick. Above this was a layer of mid brown silty clay (2/02) with considerable amounts of stone inclusions up to 0.3m thick. The uppermost layer was an imported dark greyish-brown silty-clay (2/01) garden topsoil 0.1m thick.

Trench 3

Cut [3/05] into the natural (3/04) was a shallow pit or perhaps ditch, only a small portion of the feature was revealed by the trench. It was at least 1.1m long, 0.7m wide and 0.15m deep with shallow sides and a flattish but rather irregular base. This was filled with a dark grey silty clay (3/06) flecked with charcoal 0.15m thick. Pottery and animal bone was retrieved from the fill.

Overlying the pit was a layer of compact darkish grey-brown clay (3/03) containing the odd small stone and flecks of charcoal, this was up to 0.2m thick. Over this was a 0.15m thick layer of stone in a yellow sand and mortar matrix (3/02) forming a modern hard-standing that had recently gone out of use. The upper most layer was an imported dark greyish-brown silty-clay (3/01) garden topsoil 0.15m thick.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The excavation of the trenches took place during periods of good weather with only a few showers.

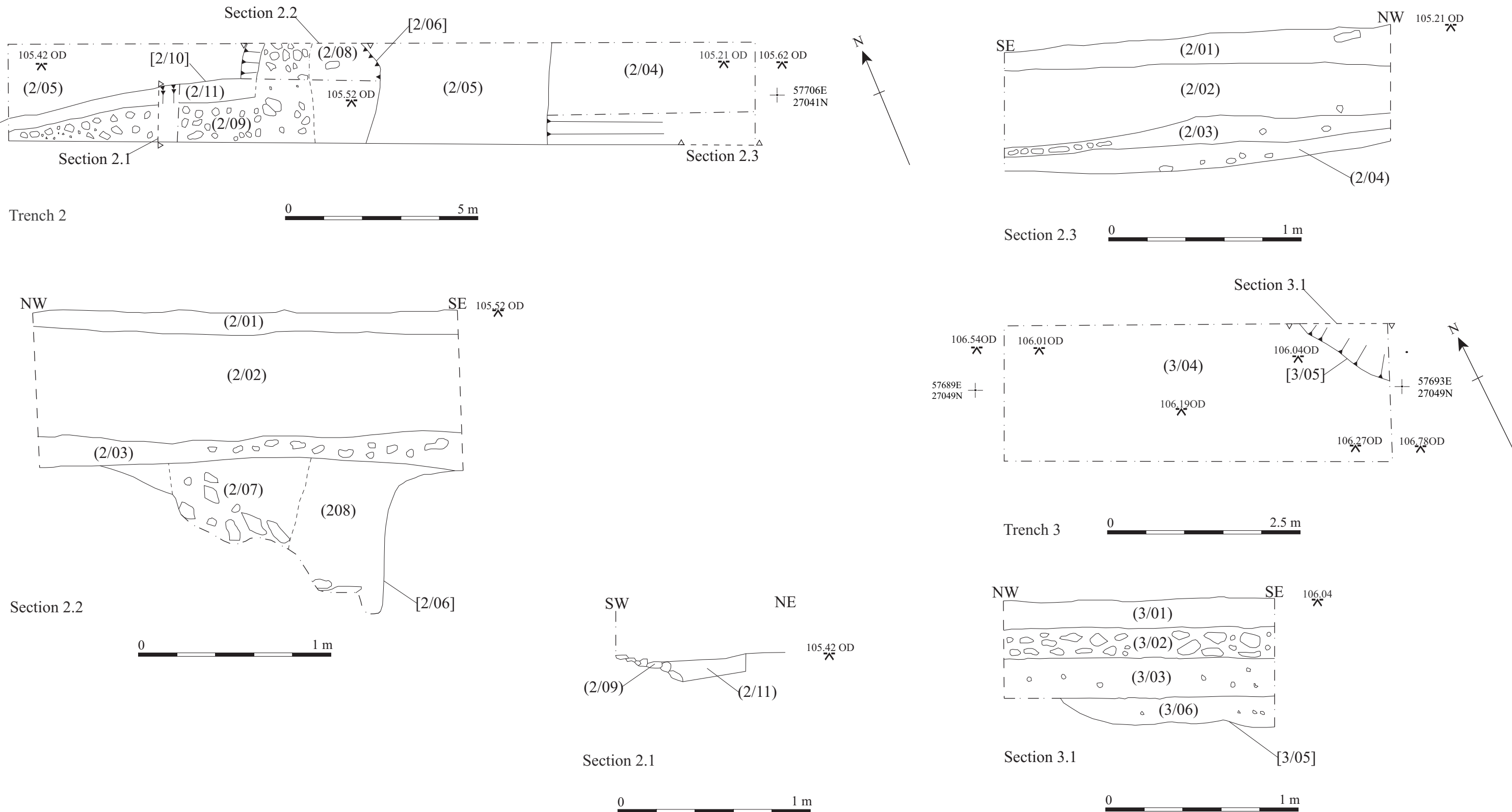


Figure 3. Plans and Sections of Trenches 2 and 3

The edges of certain features were difficult to spot, such as the cut [2/10] of the foundation trench in Trench 2 where it crossed the earlier pit [2/06] and the eastern end of this cut.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery (By Paul Blinkhorn)

The pottery assemblage comprised 60 sherds with a total weight of 477g. The range of fabric types present indicates that there was activity at the site during the 10th – 12th centuries.

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

OXR: St. Neots Ware type T1(1), AD850-1100. 5 sherds, 58g.

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 8 sherds, 50g.

OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 29 sherds, 201g.

OXBK: Medieval Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1350. 18 sherds, 168g.

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*. The range of fabric types are well-known in the region, and show that there was activity at the site from the 10th to the 12th centuries. Brill/Boarstall ware (Oxfordshire fabric OXAM) is entirely absent, despite being extremely common at medieval sites in the area from the 13th century onwards, which suggests very strongly that activity at the site had ceased sometime before AD1200.

The sherds are all generally in good condition, and the sherd size reasonably large, indicating that there was activity in the immediate vicinity of the excavations. The rimsherds are all from jars, apart from a single OXR bowl from Tr. 3 context 6. This is a typical vessel consumption pattern for the late Saxon and early medieval periods in the area.

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

		OXR		OXAC		OXY		OXBK		
Tr	Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
1	3					1	2			L11thC
1	4			1	4					11thC
1	6					1	19			L11thC
1	7			2	12	16	87			L11thC
1	9					5	16			L11thC
1	13					2	25			L11thC
2	4	1	1	5	34			10	64	12thC
2	8	2	5			4	52	7	99	12thC
2	9							1	5	12thC
3	6	2	52							10thC
	Total	5	58	8	50	29	201	18	168	

5.2 Environmental Remains

Due to the nature of the deposits encountered no environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION

Well-preserved deposits relating to the medieval village do survive across the site. The foundations of probably two buildings as well as a rubble spread that may relate to a floor or yard surface were recorded.

The earliest pottery dates from the late 9th century, while the majority of the assemblage date to the 10th to 12th centuries. The absence of Brill/Borstal ware is suggestive that the site had been abandoned before the thirteenth century.

Medieval Shelly Coarsewares were not present in the layers overlying the wall (1/12) in Trench 1. This may indicate that the area of this building was deliberately covered prior to the 12th century. If this deposit built up slowly over time one would expect a greater range of fabrics to be present.

Stones seen apparently within (1/13) on the western side of the wall could be collapse from the wall, but could possibly be a continuation of the stone spread (1/08). It is possible that this spread represents a surface either an internal floor or an external yard. Although the possibility that it is rubble built up for a house platform should not be ruled out.

The pottery sherd recovered from the wall foundations (2/09) in Trench 2 is possibly residual, although if so it is not heavily abraded. It may indicate that the associated building was constructed during the last phase of occupation on the site possibly in the 12th century.

The pit [2/06] had vertical sides and appeared to be exceptionally deep, it is possible that it may be a well. This feature was filled in probably in the 12th century before the construction of the wall (2/09).

The deposits within Trenches 1 and 2 would suggest at least 2 phases of settlement. The earlier structure in trench 1 being replaced by the later one recorded in Trench 2. Excavations at Wharrah Percy in North Yorkshire have shown that numerous dwellings were built on top of each other, with an estimated rebuilding phase every 30 years (Sawyer 1976).

Bainton lies in the parish of Stoke Lyne within the Hundred of Ploughley. The sometime manor house is the present Bainton Manor Farm, a late 16th-century or early 17th-century house. In 1086 the tenant of Bainton was Erchenbald and by the 12th century it was the Carbonel family. The first Carbonel that was connected with Bainton was Richard, who was already dead by 1198, when his widow Maud, remarried to Geoffrey de Upton, claimed her property against her brother-in-law, Hamon Carbonel. Among other things, he granted Maud a third of Bainton, including the capital messuage (VCH 1959).

Hamon Carbonel's son Peter was holding Bainton in 1255. His wife Isabel was still alive in 1346. In 1364 John Kentwood and Alice, his wife, held it. He died around

1392, but Alice was still alive in 1404. In 1471 it came into the hands of Sir Edmund Rede of Boarstall, and his grandson Kenelm was holding Bainton in 1525 (VCH 1959). The history of the manor suggests that occupation here was continuous from the 11th century until the 16th century and beyond, however this may only refer to the manor house itself.

Some villages display abandonment patterns in the 13th to 14th century where the entire settlement is demolished and rebuilt at some considerable distance, such as at Wawne on Humberside or Seacourt in Oxfordshire (Rowley 1978). Numerous villages on the Warwickshire-Oxfordshire boarder were wiped off the map in the late medieval period, due to economic opportunism by local lords taking advantage of high wool prices.

The conversion from arable to pasture proceeded so rapidly in Bainton manor that by the mid-17th century all its land had been turned into meadow and pasture and the village had been depopulated. By 1775 the lands of Bainton manor had been partly sold to Joseph Bullock of Caversfield and consisted of one large farm (VCH 1959).

It would appear the settlement pattern at Bainton was fluid; its lack of a centralising church facilitated this. It would seem likely that the hamlet was in the immediate vicinity during the 11th to 12th centuries but had moved location or contracted by the 13th century.

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APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
Trench 1			0.9	1.6	5		
1/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.15	Tr	Tr		
1/02	Deposit	Firm Mid Brown Silty Clay	0.4-0.6	Tr	Tr	Pottery	Modern
1/03	Layer	Firm Mid Brown Silty Clay	0.12	Tr	Tr	Bone	
1/04	Deposit	Firm Orange Clay with Occ Med Size Stone	-	Tr	Tr	Pottery	C11th or later
1/05	Cut	Linear Ditch	0.05	0.9	1.6		
1/06	Fill of [1/05]	Firm Dark Brown Clay With Occ Sandstone	0.05	0.9	1.6	Pottery, Bone, Metal	C11th or later
1/07	Fill	Friable Mid Brown Silty Clay	0.10-0.15	1.6	1.6	Pottery, Bone	C11th or later
1/08	Fill	Friable Mid Brown Silt With Stone Rubble	0.08m	1.2	1.6		
1/09	Fill	Loose Light Brown Silt With Occ Small Stone	0.03	0.03m	1.6	Pot, Bone, CBM	C11th or later
1/10	Cut	Linear Ditch	0.2	1.3	1.6		
1/11	Fill of [1/10]	Firm Dark Brown Clay With Occ Small Stone	0.2	1.3	1.6		
1/12	Masonry	Stone Wall	0.2	0.15	0.2		
1/13	Deposit	Firm Mid Brown Silty Clay With Occ Stone	0.2	1.8	1.6	Pottery	C11th
1/14	Natural	Firm Orange Clay	-	Tr.	Tr		
1/15	Cut	Pit	0.23	0.8	2		
1/16	Fill	Dark brown silty clay	0.15	0.9	1.6		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 2			0.7	1.6	10		
2/01	Layer	Dark Brownish Grey Sandy Silt	0.15 - 0.2	Tr	Tr		Modern
2/02	Layer	Mid Reddish Brown Sandy Silt With Stone	0.3	Tr	Tr		Modern
2/03	Layer	Firm Dark Brownish Red Clay With Occ Sm Stone	0.18	c. 8.0	1.6		
2/04	Layer	Brownish Red Clay Sm Stone	0.1	2	1.6	Pottery, Bone	C12th
2/05	Natural	Brownish Red Clay Brash	-	Tr	Tr		Natural
2/06	Cut	Linear Feature	0.8	2.2	1.6		
2/07	Fill of [2/06]	Reddish Brown Clay With Rubble	0.2	0.4	1.6		
2/08	Fill of [2/06]	Friable Mid Reddish Brown Clay	0.8	1.7	1.6	Pottery, Bone	C12th
2/09	Masonry	Uncoursed Wall	0.1	0.1	0.5	Pottery	C12th
2/10	Cut	Foundation trench	0.1+	0.6+	4+		
2/11	Fill	Reddish Brown Clay	0.1+	0.3	4+		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 3			0.5	5	1.6		
3/01	Layer	Dark Greyish Brown Silty Loam	0.15	Tr	Tr		Modern
3/02	Layer	Stone with yellowish Sand/Mortar	0.15	Tr	Tr		Modern
3/03	Layer	Firm Dark Greyish Brown Clay	0.2	Tr	Tr		
3/04	Natural	Orangey Brown Brash	-	Tr	Tr		
3/05	Cut	Linear Feature	0.15	0.7	1.1		
3/06	Fill of [3/05]	Dark Grey Silty Clay	0.15	0.7	1.1	Pottery, Bone	C10th