

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
SHREWSBURY PLACE, BAMPTON
OXFORDSHIRE**

SP 3128 0311

On behalf of

Mouchel

SEPTEMBER 2008

REPORT FOR

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an evaluation on land adjacent to Shrewsbury Place, Bampton. The evaluation revealed undated features comprising a ditch, a gully and two postholes sealed by a post-medieval cultivation soil and the wall of a building associated with the former school. Only one sherd of pottery was recovered during the evaluation, from the cultivation soil.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site location (Figure 1)

The evaluation site was located at the west end of Shrewsbury Place, Bampton to the rear of Bampton C of E School (NGR SP 3128 0311). The geology is Second Terrace Gravels and it lies at approximately 69m OD. The site is currently a hard surfaced area with a single large tree on the south side.

1.2 Planning Background

Mouchel, on behalf on Oxfordshire County Council, is looking at the potential of disposing of land to the rear of Bampton C of E Primary School. Whilst no planning application has been made the archaeological potential of the site is being considered. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was submitted and accepted by OCAS which proposed a suitable methodology to satisfy the requirements of the Brief.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site lies to the south of the Church of St Mary, the site of a minster church that is first mentioned in AD 956-8, although it was probably in existence from the eighth century. The original settlement would appear to have been centred on the southern side of the minster enclosure and several grubenhaus have been found in the area. The focus of the settlement shifted in the thirteenth century when the current market place was laid out. There is also evidence of prehistoric activity on the site of the minster enclosure with evidence of a Bronze Age ring ditch.

In 1999 archaeological excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on the adjacent site to the north in advance of a housing development (Mayes *et al* 2000). This revealed a possible ritual pit and gully which perhaps is related to the other prehistoric features in the area. Anglo-Saxon pottery was also found. A series of ditches dating from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries was also revealed along with a later medieval barn.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

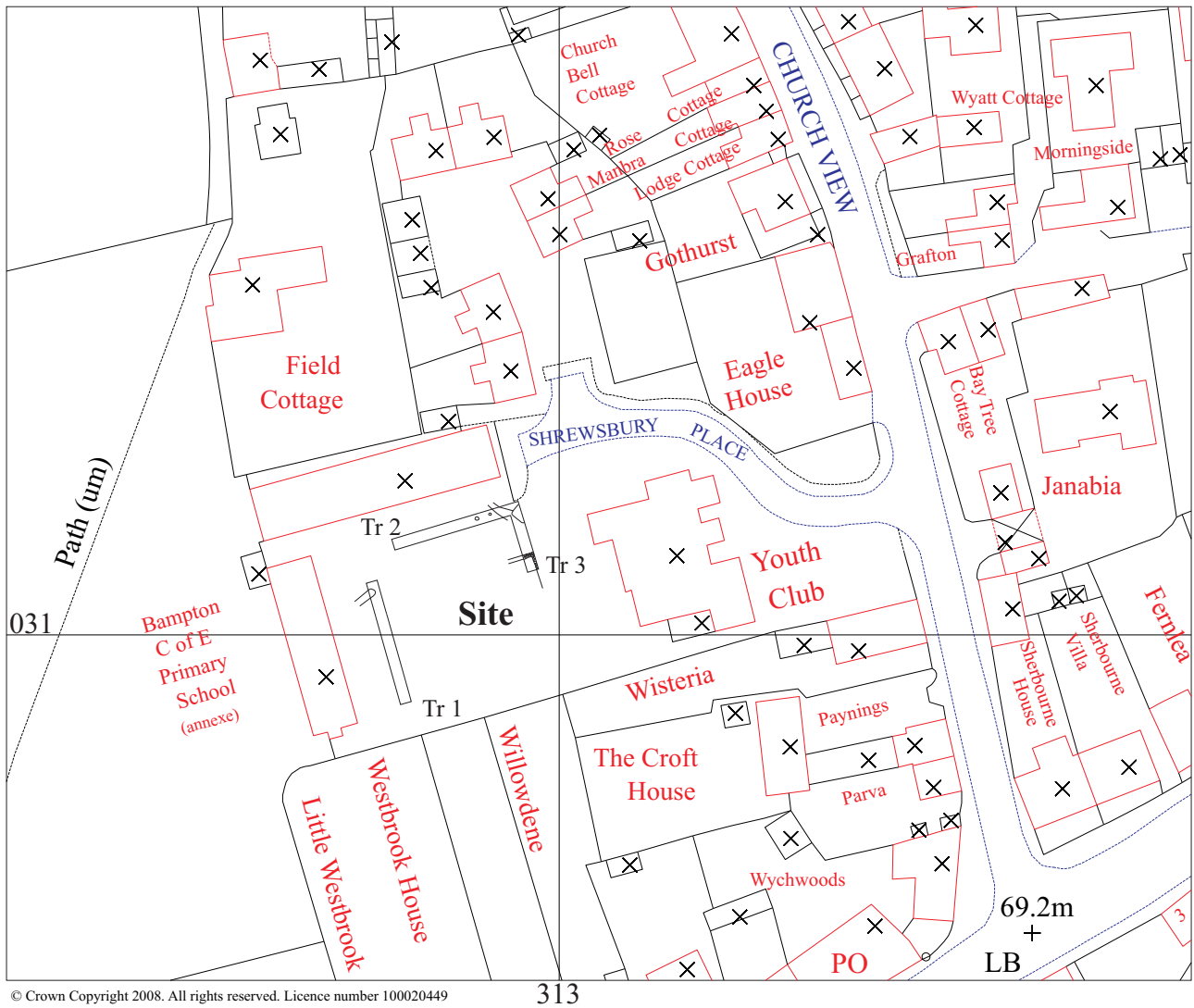


Figure 1. Site and trench location

- To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains.
- 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 prehistoric activity extends onto this site
- to determine whether there is evidence of Anglo Saxon activity on the site and what form it takes
- to determine what type of later medieval activity took place on the site

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* issued by OCAS, John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) prepared a scheme of investigation and carried out the work, which comprised the excavation of three trenches across the site (Fig. 1) on Thursday, 28th September 2008.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in a *Written Scheme of Investigation* agreed with OCAS. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

The trenching was in excess of the space available as the south side of the proposal site was dominated by a tree with Tree Protection Order. Trees were also present on the west side of the site.

Trenching was carried out to 'best-fit' within the available area, with the result that c. 46.5m of trenching was carried out.

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 Fieldwork

Trench 1 (Figure 2; S1 & S.2)

Trench 1 was located on the west side of the application site. The trench was oriented north by northeast/south by southwest, and measured 18m in length. The top of the trench was c. 70.7m OD; the base was at approximately 69.85m OD.

The natural (1/04) was loose, dirty yellow silty sand and gravel. The natural was cut by a feature [1/06]. The cut [1/06] extended beyond the edge of excavation and appeared to be a linear feature, although it is possible that it was oval or sub-rounded. The sides of the putative gully were concave with rounded base; the feature measured 1.2m wide at least 1.5m long and 0.3m deep (Fig. 2, S 2). It was filled with (1/05) and occasional small stone. This was overlain by a subsoil (1/03) with some small stone. A cultivation soil (1/02) sealed the subsoil. Hardcore and tarmac (1/01) sealed the buried cultivation soil.

No dating material was found from the trench.

Trench 2 (Figure 2; S3, S4, S5 & S6)

Trench 2 was located northwest of Trench 1. The trench was oriented west/east and measured 19m in length. The top of the trench was approximately 70.8m OD; the base was between 70.15m OD (west) and 69.82m (east) (S.3). The presence of service trenches at the west end of the trench meant that it was not excavated to full depth. The east end of Trench 2 and the north end of Trench 3 were joined.

The natural (2/04) was the same as (1/04). The natural was cut by two postholes [2/06] (S.4) and [2/08] (S.5), and a ditch [2/10] (S.6).

Both postholes were c. 0.5m diameter; with steep sides and concave bases. The cut [2/06] was the shallower at 0.24m deep; [2/08] was 0.4m deep. Both cuts were filled with similar friable dark brown clay silt to silty sand containing charcoal – (2/05) and (2/07) respectively. These were located 2m apart; no other postholes were observed, but it must be noted that these were in the centre of the trench. It was not possible to ascertain whether these were part of a structure. If they are indeed structural postholes, any possible building is aligned northwest/southeast.

However, to the east, the ditch [2/10] was on an east/west alignment. This linear cut measured at least 1.4m across and extended beyond the edges of Trench 2, as well as those of Trench 3; it was truncated on the northeast side by modern disturbance. The profile of the ditch was a rounded V-shape, with straight sides at c. 45-60°; it was c. 0.72m deep and was filled with (2/09) and peagrit gravel.

It is not clear whether the postholes [2/06] and [2/08] were related to the ditch as a fence or palisade structure or whether they stand apart and were part of a separate structure.

Sealing these features was a subsoil (2/03) which was the same as that observed in Trench 1. Overlying the subsoil was a cultivation soil (2/02), the same as in Trench 1, which yielded a sherd of pottery dated to the mid 16th to 17th century as well as a large quantity of bone. The cultivation soil was sealed by the hardcore and tarmac (2/01).

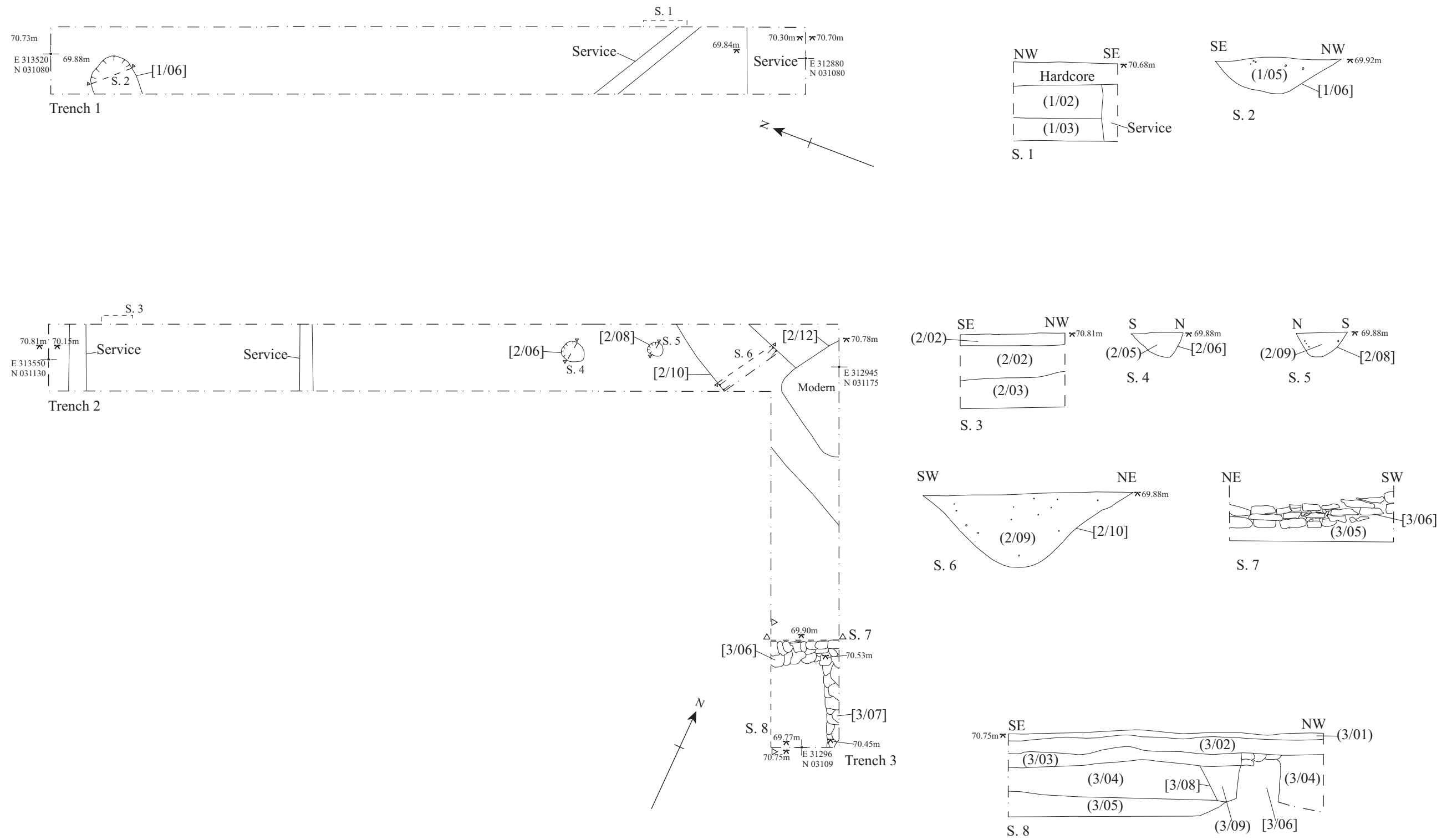


Figure 2. Trenches 1-3 and sections

Trench 3 (Figure 2)

Trench 3 was located south and east of Trench 2 and was oriented southeast/northwest, and adjoined the east end of Trench 2. The top of the trench was c. 70.75m OD; the base was approximately 69.8m OD although in the vicinity of the wall [3/06] it was marginally higher at 69.9m OD. The trench was 8.5m long.

The cut of the ditch [2/10] extended into this trench but was not renumbered. It was not investigated further. Modern disturbance was observed at the north end of the trench on the east side. The natural (3/10) was the same as seen in the other trenches and was cut by ditch [2/10] at the northern end. Sealing the ditch was the subsoil (3/05), which was the same as (2/03) and (1/03). The subsoil was sealed by a cultivation soil (3/04), which was the same as (1/02) and (2/02). This cultivation soil (3/04) was cut by the foundation trench [3/08], for the wall [3/06]. The foundation trench for the wall [3/07] was not investigated for reasons of time.

The two walls [3/07] and [3/06] were located at the south end of the trench and formed an internal right angle. These walls were part of the same structure. Wall [3/06] was 0.60m wide, standing to roughly four courses, c. 0.4m high. Wall [3/07] also stood to approximately four courses and a similar height. Its width is unknown, as its east face extended beyond the edges of the evaluation trench.

The foundation cut [3/08] was also filled with (3/09), which was disturbed cultivation soil (3/04). The cut [3/08] and the cultivation soil (3/04) were sealed by (3/03), a floor layer, within the right angle formed by walls [3/06] and [3/07]. All deposits were sealed by (3/02) and (3/01), the former the bedding layer for the latter, the tarmac.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The archaeological evaluation took place during largely dry and frequently overcast weather. External factors required the evaluation to be carried out and backfilled with some haste, which may have an outcome on the interpretation of the cultivation soil (2/02) which was only cursorily examined; however, all the bone from Trench 2 was recovered from the vicinity of [2/06], although c. 0.3m above where [2/06] was observed.

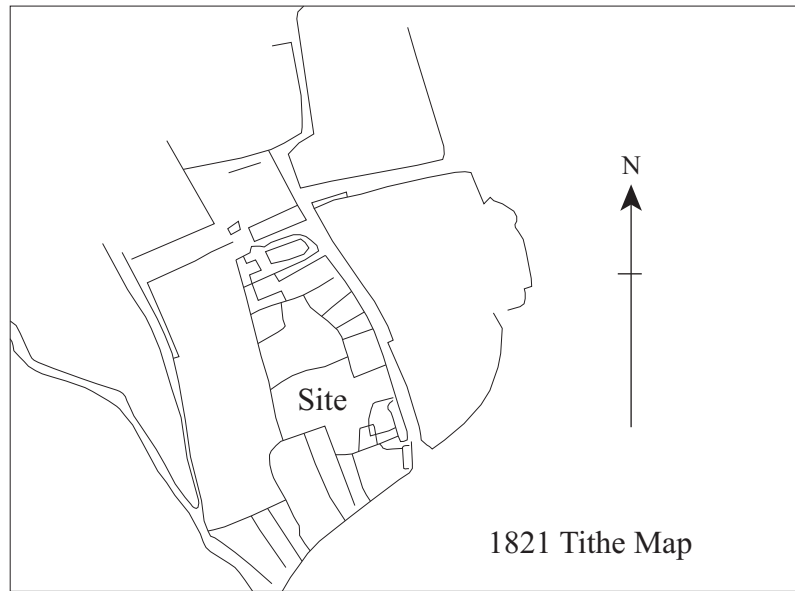
5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

5.1 Finds Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

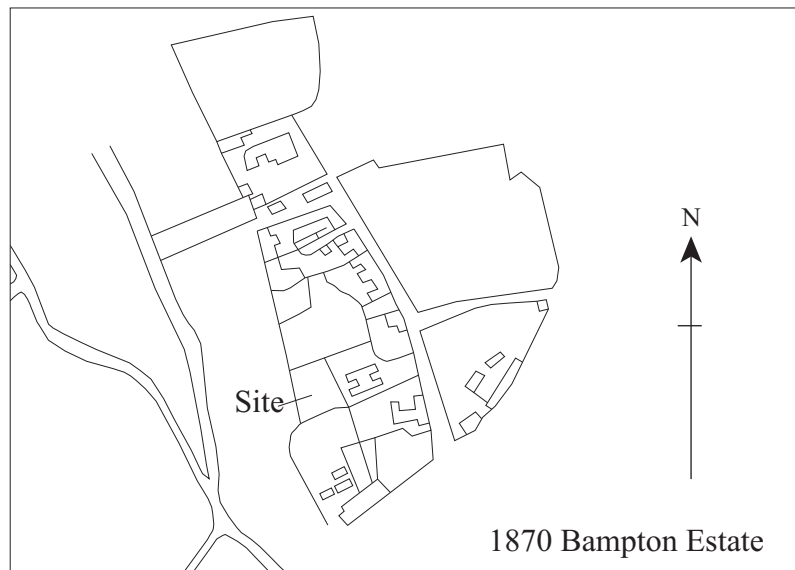
The pottery assemblage comprised 1 sherd with a total weight of 163g. It was unstratified. It is a rimsherd from a large bowl in Oxfordshire fabric OXDR, Red Earthenwares (Mellor 1984; 1994). It is most likely of mid-16th – 17th century date, and is a typical product of the tradition.

5.2 Animal Bone

The animal bone was weighed and counted. No further analysis was carried out. The results are presented in a table below.



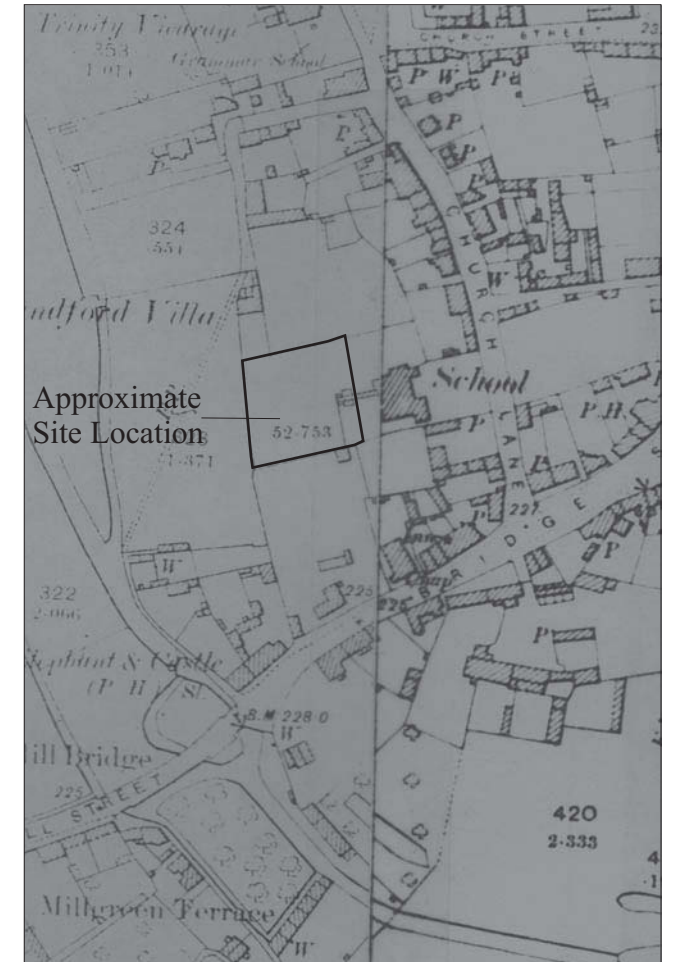
Not to scale



Not to scale



1876 1st Ed OS



1899 2nd Edition OS

0 m 100 m

Figure 3. Historic Maps

Context	Number of fragments	Weight (g)
(1/03)	4	115
(2/02)	37	570
(2/05)	1	10
(2/09)	17	410

5.2 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION (Figure 3)

The evaluation at Shrewsbury Place to the rear of Bampton Church of England School revealed two undated ditches and a pair of undated postholes, all sealed by a post-medieval deposit of cultivation soil. The cultivation soil was cut by a late building associated with the school.

The earlier archaeological evidence comprised a possible terminal in Trench 1. No corresponding terminal was observed to the northeast, although the terminal observed may well be at right angles to the length of ditch observed to the northeast in Trenches 2/3 with an entrance between the two.

It is possible that the postholes observed may be associated with the ditch, although it is equally likely that they are part of a separate structure. Given the limited view of the postholes it is not clear whether they are part of a free-standing structure or whether they are to be associated with the ditch, as consolidation for a bank, although this is unlikely given that they are at an oblique angle to the line of the ditch. The ditch may well be parallel to those observed in the 1999 Oxford Archaeological Unit excavation (Mayes et al, 2000), although given the limited view of it due to truncation it is not certain. These ditches were sealed by the post-medieval cultivation soil, which dated from after the mid 16th-17th centuries, so it is possible that these are contemporary with the medieval features observed to the north.

The building observed is an outbuilding of the school, visible on the 1st and 2nd editions of the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps for Bampton at 1:2500 (Figure 3). The building is not visible on the 1870 Shrewsbury Estate map of Bampton. The 1821 tithe map shows the land before the school was built; no structures are shown at all. The 1870 estate map shows the school and the field to the rear of the school, which continued to form the western extent of the school on the 1876 OS map. Interestingly, the school yard overlies an ornamental garden shown on the 1876 OS map; no evidence for this garden was observed in either Trenches 1 or 2. The plot boundary visible on the 1870 Bampton estate map was not observed as an archaeological feature. The walls observed are most likely to be the north-east return of the northern of the two outbuildings observed on the 1876 and 1899 OS maps. As a wall is visible extending to the east toward the school, we can assume that this probably divides the

boys from the girls, each having their own yard in which to play. The out-buildings observed during the evaluation were most likely part of a toilet-block.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Mayes A, *et al* 2000 The Excavations of Early Iron Age and Medieval Remains on land to the West of Church View, Bampton, *Oxoniensia* LXV 267-290

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APPENDIX 1 – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Interpretation
Trench 1						
1/01	Layer	Loose pale yellow silty sand with very fragmented stones	0.24m	>1.6m	>30m	Part of ground make-up for tarmac surface
1/02	Layer	Friable dark brown silt with very occasional small stones	0.25m	>1.6m	>30m	Topsoil
1/03	Layer	Friable mid orange-brown sandy silt with very occasional very small stones	0.28m	>1.6m	>30m	Subsoil
1/04	Layer	Loose mustard yellow silty sand, very frequent pebbles/gravel	Unk.	>1.6m	>30m	Natural
1/05	Deposit	Friable mid orange-brown gravelly silt with occasional small stones	0.3m	1.2m	>1.5m	Fill of terminal of linear
1/06	Cut	Linear terminal, round, concave sides and concave to flat base	0.3m	1.2m	>1.5m	Cut of terminal of linear feature
Trench 2						
2/01	Layer	Loose orange-yellow silty sand with pebbles and stones	0.08m	>1.6m	>30m	Hardcore
2/02	Layer	Friable dark brown silty clay, very occasional stones	0.32	>1.6m	>26m	Topsoil
2/03	Layer	Orangey mid-brown silty clay with occasional small stones	0.3m	>1.6m	>30m	Subsoil
2/04	Layer	Loose bright yellow silty sand with gravel	Unk.	>1.6m	>10m	Natural
2/05	Deposit	Fine grained, friable dark grey brown silty sand with charcoal	0.4m	0.5m	0.5m	Fill of post hole
2/06	Cut	Circular, concave hole	0.4m	0.5m	0.5m	Small post hole

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Interpretation
2/07	Deposit	Friable dark brown clayey silt, with small stones and occasional charcoal	0.24m	0.5m	0.5m	Fill of possible post hole
2/08	Cut	Circular concave pit	0.24m	0.5m	0.5m	Possible post hole
2/09	Deposit	Friable, loose dark to mid-brown silt with stones	0.7m	2m	Unk.	Fill of ditch
2/10	Cut	Linear	0.7m	2m	Unk.	Ditch
Trench 3						
3/01	Layer	Hard black modern tarmac	0.04m	>1.6m	>30m	Tarmac
3/02	Layer	Friable light orange sand	0.08m	>1.6m	>30m	Bedding layer for tarmac
3/03	Layer	Loose light orange silty sand gritty, with small stones	0.25m	>1.6m	>30m	Floor layer
3/04	Layer	Loose dark blackish brown sand with small stones	0.25m	>1.6m	>30m	Plough soil
3/05	Layer	Loose mixed mid reddish/orange brown gritty sand	0.25m	>1.6m	>30m	Subsoil
3/06	Wall	Wall with dry stone and yellow mortar, E-W, stones unfinished rough hewn	0.4m	0.6m	1.6m	Wall, floor level above it and adjacent (3/03)
3/07	Wall	Dry stones with yellow mortar wall, N-S, stones unfinished rough hewn	0.6m	0.6m	2.6m	Wall on north-south axis
3/08	Cut	Cut with vertical sides and flat base	0.3m	0.4m	Unk.	Cut for foundation trench
3/09	Fill	Loose blackish brown sandy silty, with occasional mortar	0.3m	0.4m.	Unk.	Fill of foundation cut
3/10	Layer	Loose bright yellow silty sand with gravel	Unk.	>1.6m	>30m	Natural