

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

54 OCK STREET, ABINGDON,

OXFORDSHIRE

SU 4939 9698

On behalf of

Edgestone Homes Ltd

SEPTEMBER 2009

REPORT FOR Edgestone Homes Ltd
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Abingdon
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological watching brief as a condition of planning permission for redevelopment at 54 Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire. The watching brief was successful in locating and recording a series of archaeological features dating from at least the 11th century onwards. The pottery assemblage recovered suggests the site to have been occupied between the 11th to the late 13th-14th century before probably being abandoned until the 19th century. The presence of a relatively large quantity of horncores hints at an industrial usage relating to tanning or horn working similar to those known at the Morlands Brewery site and 75 Ock Street nearby. Evidence was also recorded of a 19th century building occupying the site prior to the more recent example that was demolished to allow the construction of the new dwellings.

Deep trenching and the unusual foundation design hindered the investigation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located on the south side of Ock Street in Abingdon, west of Coopers Lane and north of the River Ock (NGR SU 4939 9698). The underlying geology is First Terrace gravel and the previous use prior to development was light industrial. The site lies at c. 52m OD. Slightly gravely sand with patches of clay and decayed chalk was observed during the investigation.

1.2 Planning Background

The Vale of White Horse District Council granted planning permission under planning application number 09/00282/FUL to convert and extend the existing frontage building to provide 2 x 2 bedroom flats and the redevelopment of the land to the rear, following the demolition of the existing building with 6 x 2 bed dwellings with undercroft car parking. Due to the potential of the site to contain archaeological remains a condition was attached requiring that a full archaeological watching brief be carried out during the period of construction works. This was in line with PPG 16 and local plan policies. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS), on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council, prepared a Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site is located in an area of known archaeological interest. The adjacent Brewery site (38-52 Ock Street) has been redeveloped for housing. Prior to construction works being undertaken extensive archaeological investigations were carried out (Anthony *et al* 2006). The area running south from the Ock Street frontage contained a number of medieval pits and two buildings. One building dated to the earlier 13th century while the other appears to have been in use, in a series of phases, from the 13th century to the 18th century. An area near the river contained a concentration of 15th and 16th century pits that appear to have formed part of an extensive tanning site. Similar

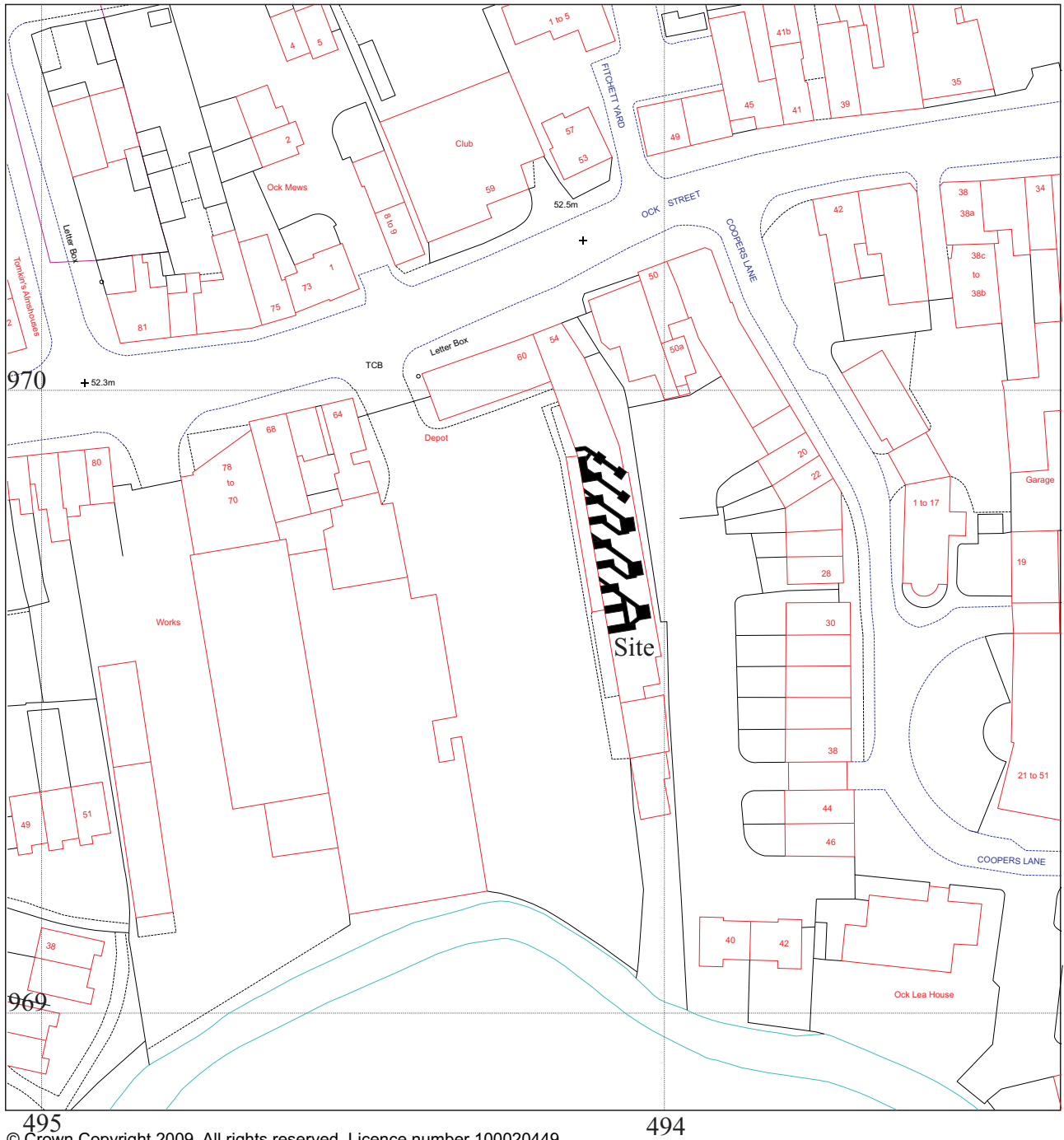


Figure 1. Site location

evidence of this activity has also been found to the north on the north side of Ock Street at No. 75 (ibid).

On both sites residual Mesolithic and Mesolithic to Bronze Age flints have been found. A few sherds of Iron Age pottery have also been recovered in addition to limited Roman features comprising ditches and pits. Some late Saxon pits and a possible ditch were found on the Brewery site.

2 AIMS OF THE 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 remains relating to prehistoric or Roman activity on the site
- To record evidence of remains relating to the medieval and post-medieval settlement

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

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

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

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of groundworks associated with the development. This involved monitoring the excavation for new foundation trenches. The ground reduction for the undercroft car parking were designed not to be deep enough to damage potential archaeology and was not monitored.

Any archaeological features revealed in plan were cleaned by hand where possible. All remains were recorded in plan and section as being excavated. All archaeological features or other remains were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record. All artefacts were collected and retained except for concentrations of building material where a representative sample would be kept if apparent. Finds ranging from pottery, tile, bone and slag were recovered.

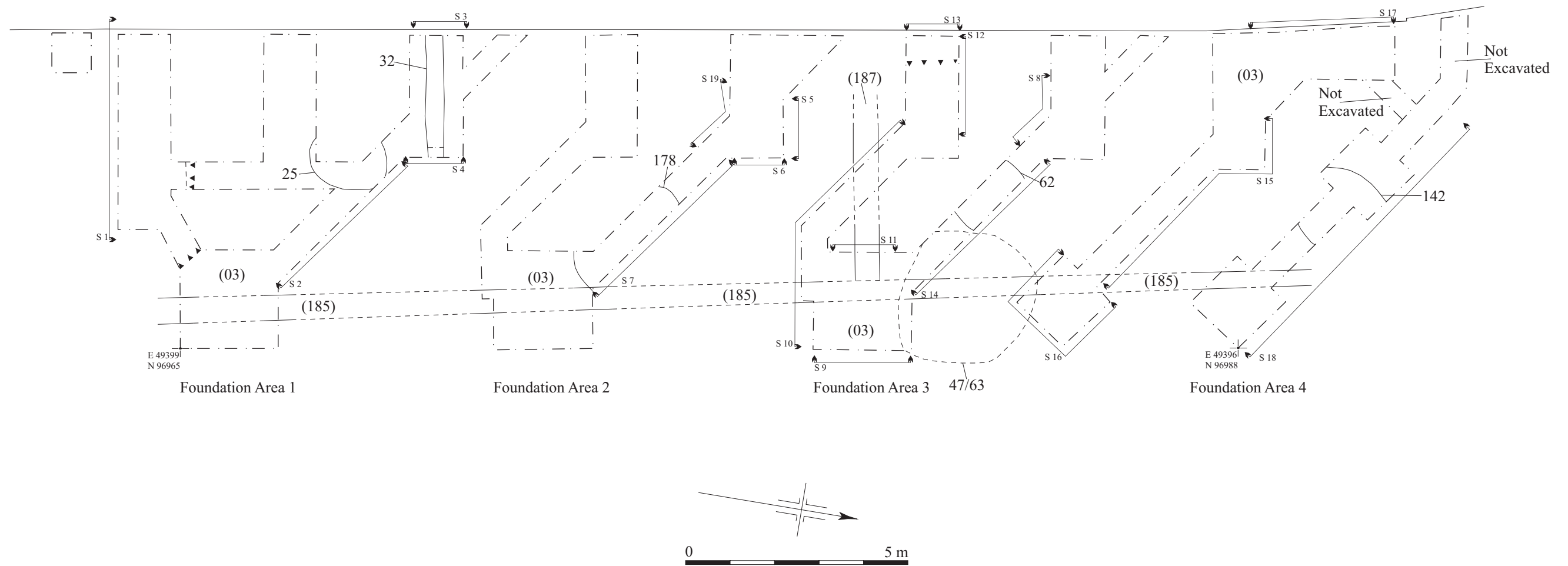


Figure 2. Plan of area showing features recorded in plan and the likely extent of large pit 47/63

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in () indicate feature fills or deposits of material. Those without brackets refer to features themselves.

4.1 Results (Figure 2)

An archaeologist was present during the excavation of all the foundation trenches associated with the new development. All the features encountered were recorded as best as the circumstances dictated. The earliest deposit encountered across the site was natural pale yellow slightly gravely sand with patches of decayed chalk and mid orange-brown clay (03). Where later features or deposits were not present, sealing the natural was a brown-grey clayey loam topsoil (02), (10), (36), (123), (125), (153), (162). This was in turn covered by the remnants of the former industrial structure recorded as (01), (99), (100), (101), (154) and (155) which previously occupied the middle section of the site prior to its recent demolition.

Earlier activity

Foundation Area 1 (Figure 3, Sections 1 - 4)

The foundation trench furthest south within this plot revealed a series of pits. Cutting natural sand here were pits 20, 21 and 22 (Section 1). Although no relationships could be established between them, they are likely to be contemporary and backfilled at the same time as they all contained a seemingly identical fills (16), (17) and (18) respectively. Pit 20 was at least 1.36m wide and at least 0.64m deep and contained fill (16), a dark brown-grey silty clay. To the west of this was pit 21 measuring at least 1.30m wide and 0.24m deep containing fill (17) identical to (16). Closest to the boundary wall was pit 22 measuring at least 1.20m wide and 0.60m deep. Unlike pits 20 and 21, this contained two fills. The earliest fill (19) was a dark grey-brown silty, sandy clay with a maximum thickness of 0.60m that that was partly overlaid by fill (18), identical to both fill (16) and (17) with a maximum thickness of 0.38m.

Overlying fills (16), (17) and (18) was deposit (15), a mixed dark grey-brown and dark orange silty clay 0.32m thick and 2.70m wide that was covered by deposit (23), a dark greenish grey-brown sandy, silty clay 0.32m thick and 2.60m wide as seen. Deposit (23) was overlain to the east by deposit (11), a mid grey-brown silty clay 0.50m thick and at least 1.00m wide. To the west deposit (23) was cut by pit 13 measuring 1.10m wide and 0.68m deep with fairly steep curving sides and a curving base. This was filled with a patchy mid yellow-brown and mid to dark grey-brown sandy, silty clay (12).

Overlying deposit (11) was a silty clay that was a mixed dark grey-brown in colour with patches of mid orange-brown (14) that was noted to be similar to deposit (12). It could be part of a continuation of feature 13 but this was not clear.

Towards the middle of Foundation Area 1 another three features were identified. Cutting natural sand (03) here were pit 25 and gully 26 (Section 2). Pit 25 was at least 1.60m wide and 0.70m deep, continuing below the depth of the trench (Fig. 2). Its fill

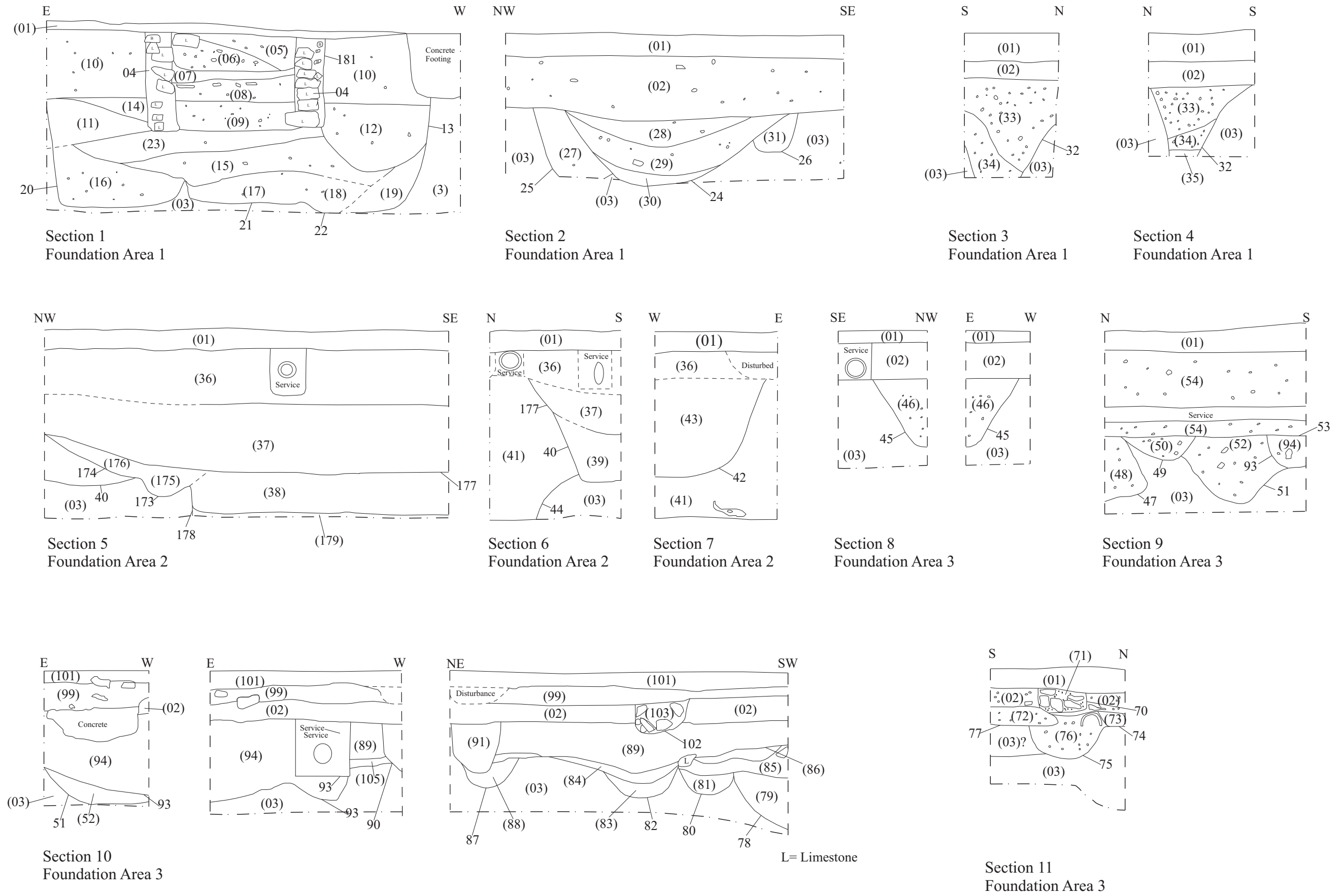


Figure 3. Sections 1-11

comprised a mid grey-brown clayey, sandy silt (27). Gully 26 was aligned approximately E-W and was 0.35m wide and 0.36m deep and was filled with a dark grey-brown silty, sandy clay (31). Both fill (27) and fill (31) were cut by pit 24. Pit 24 was 2.40m wide and 0.70m deep as seen. This pit contained three fills. The earliest was a dark brown-grey sandy clayey silt (30) containing three sherds of pottery dating from 1050-1500AD that was 0.12m thick and was overlain by a dark grey-brown clayey sandy silt (29) that was 0.30m thick containing six sherds of pottery dating from 1000-1300AD, suggesting the feature to have a late 11th to late 13th century date. Sealing this was fill (28) comprising a mid grey-brown clayey, sandy silt measuring 0.28m in thickness.

Further north within Foundation Area 1 and cutting through natural sand (03) was ditch 32 aligned N-S (Fig. 2 & Fig. 3, Sections 3 & 4). This feature was 1.10m wide, at least 2.70m long and at least 0.95m deep and contained three fills. The lowest fill (35) was a mixed mid orange-grey colour and was composed of silty gravel at least 0.08m in thickness. Above this was fill (34), a dark brown-grey clayey sand with a maximum thickness of 0.62m which in turn was covered by fill (33), a mid orange-brown clayey sand 1.00m deep.

Foundation Area 2 (Sections 5 - 7, 19)

Towards the NW part of this plot large pit 44 was observed cutting natural sand (03) (Sections 6 & 7). In section it appeared to be at least 1.20m wide and 1.50m deep and was not seen in the opposite section. Its fill (41) was composed of a dark black-grey clayey silt. A cow skull and a cow horn core were noted well set within the fill close to its base but were not removed for health and safety reasons. Cutting fill (41) were both pit 42 and pit 40.

Pit 42 was 1.02m deep and at least 1.10m wide. An attempt at drawing its full profile in section was not possible as the newly excavated foundation trench close to the property boundary in this area was roughly dug where it was set back. The pit was filled with a dark brown-grey clayey silt (43). It was uncertain whether the fill of this pit was sealed by the demolished remains of the former building or the former garden soil (36).

Pit 40 was at least 1.60m wide and 0.76m deep with a fill composed of light yellow-brown clayey silt (39) and was cut by pit 174 and pit 171. Pit 174 (Section 5) measured at least 1.00m in width and 0.50m in depth and was filled with a very dark grey-black silty clay with frequent ash and charcoal inclusions (176). Two sherds of pottery with a mid 11th to 12th century date were recovered from this fill. Cutting pit 40 in the NE / N facing section opposite was pit 171 (Fig. 4, Section 19). This had steep, straight sides curving onto a relatively flat base. It was 1.06m wide and 0.82m deep and was filled with a mid grey-brown clayey, sandy silt (172).

A relationship between pit 174 and pit 173 to the SE could not be established, as their fills (176) and (175) respectively appeared very similar, and could have been backfilled as part of the same event. Pit 173 was at least 0.52m wide and 0.14m deep and like fill (175) it also contained two sherds of pottery suggesting a mid 11th to 12th century date.

To the SE of pit 173 was large pit 178 measuring at least 2.70m wide and 0.48m deep that was seen to contain at least two fills and found to continue below the arbitrary depth of the trench. The lowest fill identified (179) was composed of a very dark black-grey ash deposit that was at least 0.04m deep as seen. Above this was a very dark grey-black silty clay with frequent ash and charcoal inclusions (38) similar to both fill (175) and fill (176). Again this could have been part of the same backfilling episode although it is possible that pit 173 was cut into this horizon. However, this was far from clear.

Truncating pits 173, 174, 178 and earlier pit 40 was feature 177 noted to be at least 5.30m wide and 0.72m deep with a moderately steep curving western edge and a relatively flat base. This was filled with a dark grey-brown clayey silt (37).

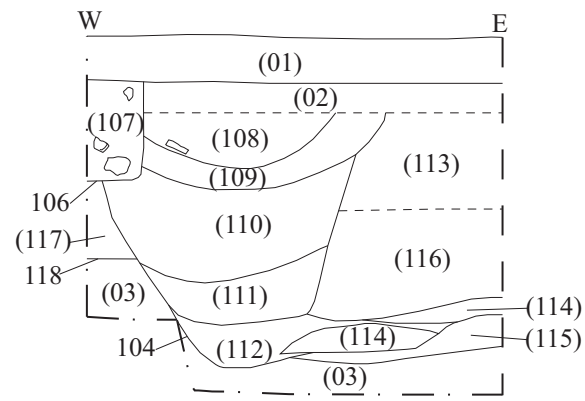
Foundation Area 3 (Sections 8–14)

Cutting natural sand (03) furthest west within this plot next to and running underneath the boundary wall was pit 118, a probable rectangular pit that was at least 0.90m wide and 0.38m deep with very steep sides with rounded corners and a flat base (Section 13). It was filled with a mixture of mid orange-brown clay and mid grey-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecking (117) and was cut by pit 104 (Section 12).

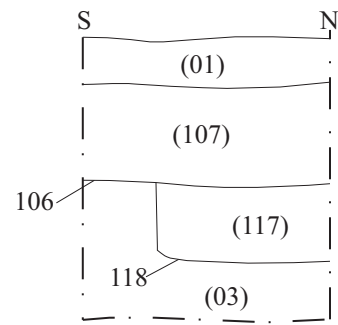
Pit 104 was 1.34m deep and at least 1.30m wide with steep sides curving onto a rounded base. This pit also contained five fills. The earliest fill (112) was a dark grey-black ash with frequent charcoal inclusions 0.22m thick containing a single sherd of pottery suggesting a mid 11th to 12th century date. This fill appeared to lens out beyond the feature into deposit (114) but this is likely to have either been caused by animal disturbance or leaching. Above this was a mid grey ash fill (111) containing moderate charcoal inclusions that was 0.24m thick that was overlain by fill (110), a mid brown-grey silty clay with moderate chalk and charcoal flecking 0.46m thick found to contain a single sherd of pottery also suggesting a mid 11th to 12th century date. Covering this was a mid yellow grey-brown sandy, silty, clay with moderate chalk and charcoal flecking (109). Finally, the latest fill of pit 104 was fill (108), a mid brown-grey sandy-silty clay 0.30m thick with moderate charcoal flecking and frequent burnt bone fragments towards its base.

Pit 104 cut deposit (113), a mid grey-brown sandy, clayey, silt with occasional fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) and charcoal flecking. 0.44m thick which in turn overlay deposit (116), a deposit that was 0.46m thick and which seemed almost identical to deposit (113) but appearing with a slight green hue and with no evidence of CBM. Deposit (116) sealed deposit (114), a mid orange-yellow slightly silty sand 0.16m thick thought to be a redeposited natural which in turn overlay deposit (115), a mid brown-grey sandy, silty clay 0.16m thick which sealed natural (03) in this part of the trench. Deposits (113), (114), (115) and (116) could be fills of pit 62 further NW but this is not certain.

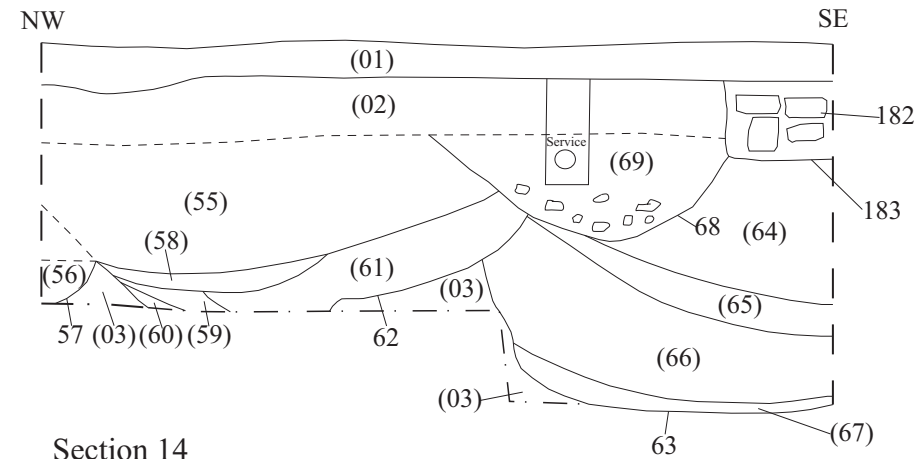
Slightly further SE and through much of the rest of the plot another series of features and deposits were identified. Stratigraphically, the earliest features identified cutting natural sand (03) here were pit 63 (the same as pit 47) and pits 51, 87, 82, 80, 78 and 75.



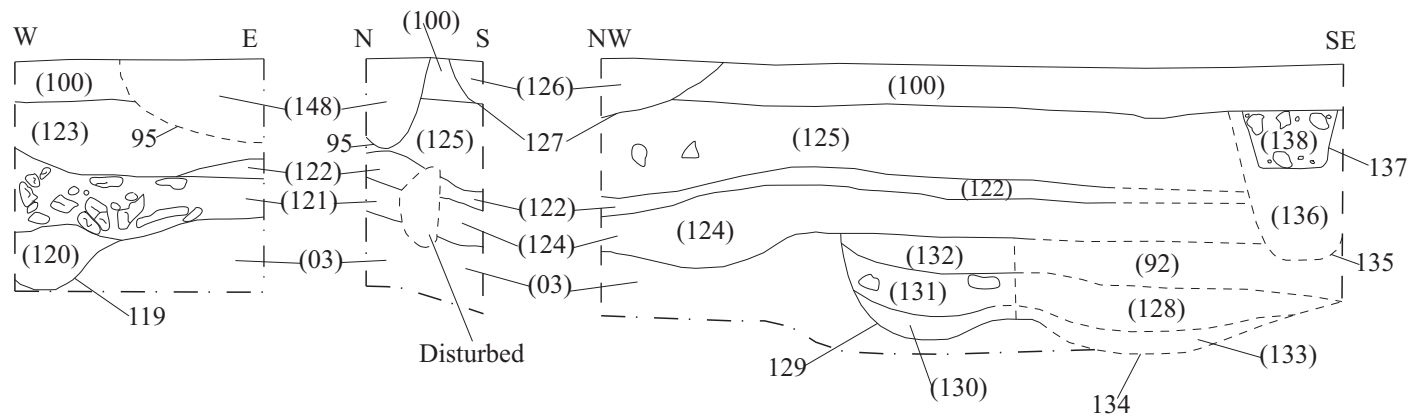
Section 12
Foundation Area 3



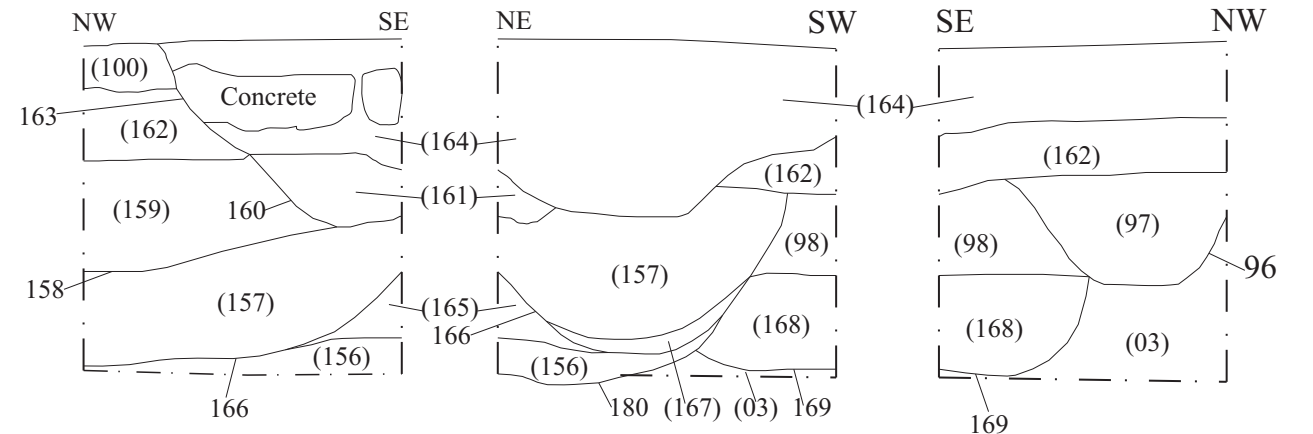
Section 13
Foundation Area 3



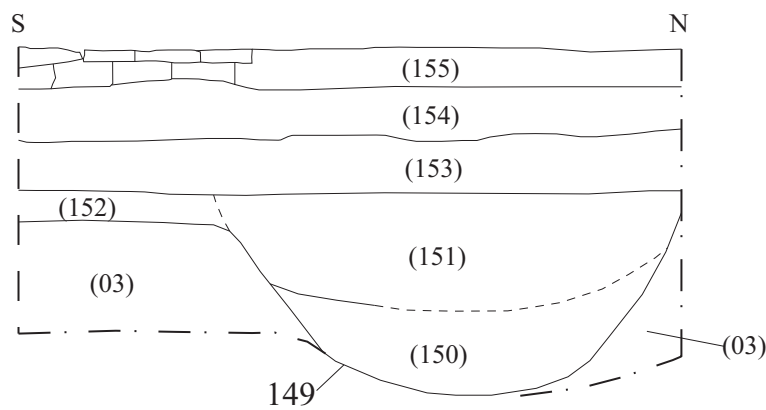
Section 14
Foundation Area 3



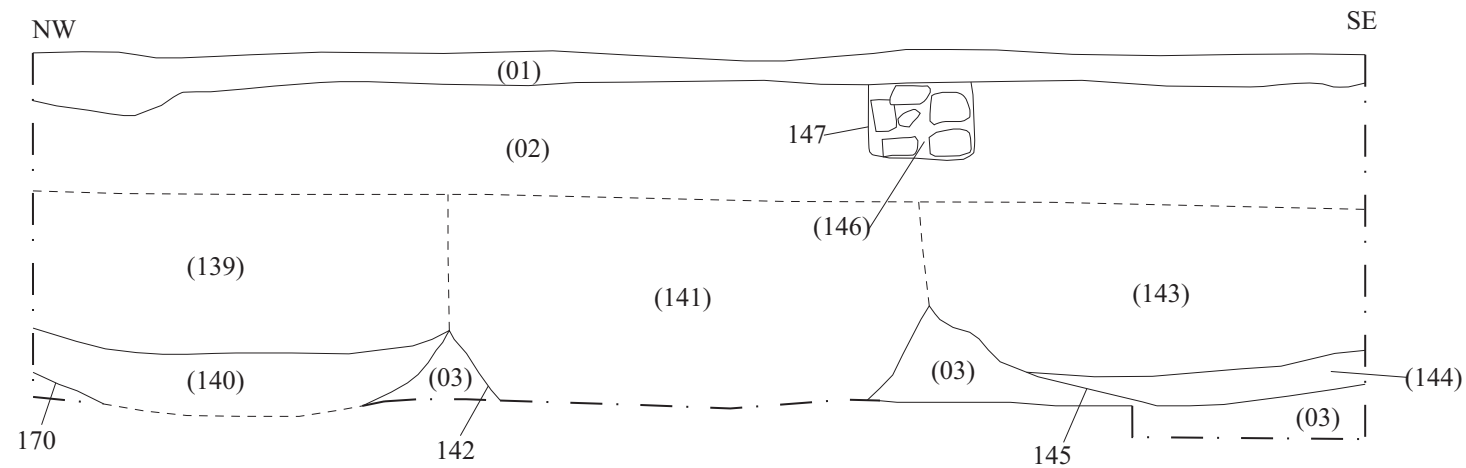
Section 15
Foundation Area 4



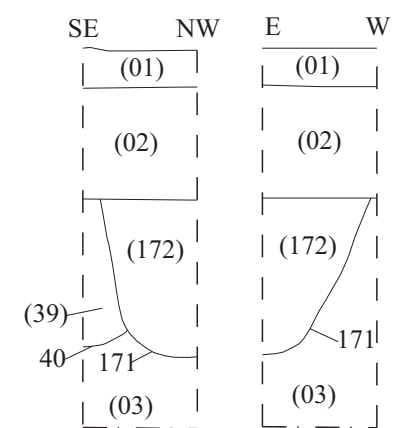
Section 16
Foundation Area 4



Section 17
Foundation Area 2



Section 18
Foundation Area 4



Section 19
Foundation Area 4



Figure 4. Sections 12-19

Pit 78 furthest west was at least 0.55m wide and 0.60m deep (Section 10). Next to this was pit 80 measuring 0.60m wide and 0.25m deep which was also adjacent to pit 82 revealed to be 0.80m wide and 0.25m deep. A very similar fill consisting of a mid brown slightly clayey, sandy silt, (79), (81) and (83) respectively, filled these pits. Slightly further SE was pit 87 measuring 0.65m wide and 0.35m deep, filled with a light yellow-brown sandy silt (88). A single sherd of pottery with a probable mid 13th to early 15th century date was recovered from this fill.

Sealing fills (79) and (81) was a light yellow-brown slightly clayey sandy-silt (85) with a maximum thickness of 0.10m. This is thought to be the same as deposit (84) sealing fill (83) with a piece of limestone separating the deposits in section.

Overlying deposit (85) was a dark brown-black silty clay with frequent charcoal flecking (86) 0.15m thick. This deposit was identical in composition and colour to deposit (105) overlying fill (88) further SE that was 0.10m thick. Sealing both deposit (86) and deposit (105) was a mid brown sandy silt 0.50m thick with occasional small to large angular stone inclusions (89).

Cutting through deposit (89) were a small pit/posthole 90 and another possible pit or area of disturbance 93. Pit 90 had a 'U' shaped profile that was 0.50m wide and 0.50m deep and contained a fill composed of dark brown clayey silty sand (91) and a single sherd of pottery dating from 1680-1750AD. Feature 93 however had an irregular profile and was at least 0.58m wide and 0.85m deep as seen with a dark brown-black sandy silt fill (94) with a residual sherd of probable late 11th century pottery. Pit 93 is thought to be evidence of later activity and was observed to truncate pit 51 slightly further north (Section 9).

Pit 51 was 1.30m wide and 0.70m deep with moderately steep curving sides and a curving base that was filled with a dark black-grey clayey sand (52). Like large pit 47 (the same as pit 63) it was cut by small pit 49 measuring 0.70m wide and 0.24m deep containing a light brown-grey clay-sand fill (50).

In the east facing section opposite to pit 49, the earliest feature encountered here was pit 75 with a 'U' shaped profile and was 0.80m wide and 0.42m deep (Section 11). It contained fill (76), a mid brown sandy silt fill and a large single sherd of pottery dating to the late 11th to 12th century. This pit was cut on its southern edge by an undercutting feature 77 that was 0.70m wide and 0.20m deep as seen, containing a fill composed of dark brown sandy silt (72) and on its northern edge by pit 74 noted to be at least 0.28m wide and 0.12m deep and to contain a mid brown silty sand fill (73) that was slightly lighter than (76). Pit 74 is thought likely to also cut pit 63, but this was unclear from section and thorough hand cleaning was not possible due to health and safety concerns.

Large pit 63 had steep, relatively straight sides curving onto a flat base (Section 14). This pit was at least 1.84m wide and 1.34m deep and contained four fills. The earliest fill (67) was a mid brown-grey slightly sandy, silty clay with occasional gravel and charcoal flecking 0.10m thick. This was covered by fill (66) (the same as fill (48)), a mid grey-brown sandy, silty clay noted to contain moderate gravel and chalk flecking with occasional charcoal flecking measuring 0.90m in thickness. Overlaying this was a much thinner deposit of mid grey-brown silty clay with occasional chalk flecking (65) that was sealed by a mid grey-brown sandy, silty clay layer containing moderate

chalk and occasional charcoal flecking (64). Three sherds of pottery from this fill were dated to the late 11th to 12th century. As well as being cut by pit 49, pit 63 was also cut by pit 62 to the northwest and possibly pit 74 to the west although this was not clear from the section.

Pit 62 was 2.60m wide as seen and at least 0.90m deep continuing below the depth of the trench with an uncertain relationship with pit 57 to the NW (Section 14). It appeared to have moderately steep sides with a break in slope noted along its SE edge where the side became steeper close to the base of the trench and contained five fills. The earliest fill was a mid grey-brown sandy silty clay (60) at least 0.10m thick. Above this was a mid orange/brown to light yellow sandy clay (59) also at least 0.10m thick. Covering this, deposit (61) composed of dark black-grey silty, sandy clay that was at least 0.30m thick containing a single sherd of pottery dating from the late 11th century or slightly later. Overlying this was fill (58), a dark grey-brown clayey, sandy silt 0.10m thick containing a single sherd of pottery initially thought to be from the mid 11th century but with a date range of 1050-1400 AD is more likely to be from the late 11th century onwards. This in turn was sealed by fill (55) comprising of a mid grey-brown clayey, sandy silt 0.70m thick.

Pit 57 to the NW of pit 62 had moderately steep curving sides onto a slightly curving base being at least 0.26m wide and 0.22m deep. It was filled with a mid grey-brown clayey, sandy silt (56) that appeared identical to fill (55) of pit 62.

Pit 68, measuring 1.60m wide and 0.56m deep cut pit 62. This pit had moderately steep curving sides and a curving base with a single fill (69) composed of dark grey-brown sandy, clayey silt with frequent pieces of quartz observed towards its base.

Furthest NW within this plot cutting natural (03) was possible pit/ditch 45, with a fairly steep, 'V' shaped profile and a curving base measuring 1.00m wide and 0.80m deep (Section 8). This feature could be a pit, although its shape suggested it to be a possible ditch on an approximate N-S alignment. Despite the fact it was not observed in the opposite section, it is conceivable that the trench cut through the features terminus. It was filled with a dark brown-grey clayey silty sand (46).

Foundation Area 4 (Sections 15 – 18)

Close to the eastern boundary the footing dug up against the wall was roughly excavated and was quickly shored allowing only a limited inspection. From this however, a mid brown clayey silt (152) 0.15m thick was observed overlying natural (03) (Section 17). Cutting through this was pit 149 with moderately steep curving sides and a rounded base that was 2.60m wide and 1.10m deep as seen containing two fills. The lowest, fill (150) was a dark black-brown clayey silt 0.40m thick that was overlain by fill (151), a dark brown sandy silt containing occasional charcoal and oyster shell pieces 0.70m thick.

Slightly further SE more features were revealed (Section 15). The earliest of these were pits 119, 129 and 134. Pit 119 was at least 0.60m wide and 0.35m deep and contained a mid brown clayey silt (120). Pit 129 and pit 134 further SE are likely to be contemporary with each other as their fills appeared identical and relationship between the two could not be found. Pit 129 was at least 0.95m wide and 0.50m deep whilst pit 134 was at least 1.50m wide and 0.60m deep. The lowest fill in pit 129 was

a mid green-brown silt (130) 0.10m thick that seemed the same as fill (133), the lowest fill within pit 134 also 0.10m thick. Above this was a dark black-brown clayey silt with frequent charcoal flecking and occasional angular pieces of quartz referred to as fill (131) in pit 129 and fill (128) within pit 134 with fill (131) both being 0.25m thick. Sealing this was a mid brown slightly clayey silt referred to as fill (132), measuring 0.15m thick in pit 129 and fill (92) measuring 0.25m thick in pit 134. As the fills were so similar, it is possible that this is simply one large pit with an irregular base.

Overlying both pit 129 and pit 134 was a mid brown sandy silt (124) containing a single sherd of pottery suggesting a 13th century date with a maximum thickness of 0.40m. This is thought to be the same as deposit (121) which also contained a single sherd of pottery with a suggested 13th century date, separated by a small area of disturbance in section seen covering (120), the fill of pit 119. Deposit (121)/(124) underlay a slightly lighter silty clay (122) 0.10m thick.

Further SE a series of inter-cutting pits were observed (Section 16). The earliest feature identified was pit 169. Pit 169 was at least 1.00m wide and 1.05m deep and contained two fills. This pit is possibly part of pit 63 (the same as pit 47) noted in Foundation Area 3. The lowest fill (168) was similar in colour and composition to fill (67) and was 0.50m thick whilst the secondary fill (98) was similar in colour and composition to fill (66) and was 0.55m thick.

Cutting into pit 169 were pit 180 and pit 96. Pit 180 was at least 1.20m wide and 0.55m deep and contained two fills. The lower fill (156) was composed of a dark black-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecking 0.20m thick containing a single sherd of pottery dating to the 11th century that was overlain by fill (165), a light brown slightly silty clay 0.35m thick. Pit 96 was 1.20m wide and 0.60m deep with a 'U' shaped profile and was filled with a mid brown silty clay (97) similar to fill (98) but slightly lighter.

Cutting into and truncating the top of pit 180 was pit 166 measuring 1.5m wide and 0.90 m deep. This pit was filled with a dark brown-black silty clay (167) 0.10m thick that was covered by a dark brown slightly clayey sandy silt (157) 0.80m thick containing three sherds of pottery dating to the 13th century.

Pit 166 was in turn cut by pit 158. Pit 158 was at least 1.30m wide and 0.60m deep. Its fill was composed of a mid brown slightly clayey, sandy silt (159) containing a single sherd of pottery thought to date from the early 13th century. Cutting this feature was pit 160 noted to be at least 0.80m wide and 0.40m deep containing one single fill comprising of a dark brown slightly clayey sandy silt (161). Two sherds of pottery recovered from this deposit were initially dated to the mid 11th century, however, the stratigraphic relationship between this fill in relation to earlier deposits (159) and (157) suggest a later date. With a pottery date range between 1050-1400 AD, a later 13th century date is more likely.

Due to health and safety concerns it was not possible to enter the trench furthest north and closest to the main road. From observations made from the surface, three potential large pits physically cutting through natural (03) and a wall were identified. Smearing from the bucket however could well have masked any subtle changes. Furthest NW was pit 170 containing two fills (Section 18). This pit appeared to have been bottomed

in section although this was not certain. The sides of the feature were also unclear as too was its relationship to pit 142 to the SE but it is likely to have a curving base and was at least 2.15m wide and 1.20m deep. Its primary fill (140) appeared to be a very dark grey-black silty clay with frequent charcoal inclusions and was 0.35m thick. This was covered by fill (139), a dark grey-brown sandy, silty clay 0.85m thick. Pit 142 did not appear to be bottomed. This was at least 2.5m wide and 1.10m deep and was filled by a mid grey-brown sandy, silty clay (141). A relationship could not be established with either pit 170 to the NW or pit 145 to the SE but it is likely to have had steep curving sides judging by the way it cut through natural (03). Pit 145 was 1.10m deep and at least 2.25m wide with a curving base. It contained two fills. Its primary fill (144) comprised of a dark green-grey sandy, silty clay that was 0.18m thick that was overlain by a mid orange grey-brown sandy, silty clay (143).

Later activity

Overlying all the above features and deposits was a dark brown/grey clayey to silty loam (02), (10), (36), (123), (125), (153) and (162) varying in depth from 0.60m in Foundation Area 1 to 0.18m in Foundation Area 3. This was thought to represent a buried garden soil that appeared to be present across all investigated site. Two sherds of pottery recovered from this horizon suggest a late 15th to mid 16th century date for this deposit.

Noted cutting the buried soil horizon was a wall aligned approximately NNE-SSW, labelled with construction cuts 183, 137 and 147 (Sections 14, 15, & 18), but collectively referred to as 184 where seen in sections which had not been disturbed. Construction cut 184 was dug for a wall constructed using roughly hewn limestone blocks with a pale yellow sandy mortar recorded individually as (182), (138), (146) respectively but collectively referred to as (185). This wall was typically c.0.50m wide with two courses present. This was observed towards the eastern side of the site and was seen throughout the investigation area. In Foundation Areas 1 and 2, the position of this wall was noted but the sections here were not drawn.

Within Foundation Area 3, another wall referred to individually in section as (71) and (103) (Sections 10 & 11) but collectively as (187) with construction cuts 70 and 102 respectively but collectively referred to as 186. This was of similar construction to wall (185) and was observed aligned approximately E-W within sections 10 and 11 at a right angle to it. These two walls are likely to have formed part of the same structure.

From looking at cartographic evidence of the site (OS 1874 onwards), these walls appear to be part of a large rectangular building occupying the middle of the site area dating from at least 1874. This building was joined to a smaller rectangular building which in turn joined the rear 54 Ock Street.

Further probable evidence of this construction could be seen in Sections 12 and 13 of Foundation Area 3. Here cutting through the buried soil horizon (02) underneath and following the same line as the modern boundary wall appeared to be a possible construction cut 106 backfilled with a dark grey-brown silty loam containing moderate limestone block fragments (107), thought possibly to be the remains of a robbed out wall. This was not clearly demonstrable elsewhere however either because the modern boundary wall had removed any further indication of this feature or

because the fill of the feature was very similar to the buried soil horizon it cut through with less limestone inclusions apparent. The depth of the sections hindered a thorough investigation.

Also cutting into the buried soil horizon in the N facing section furthest south within Foundation Area 1, recorded in here as deposit (02), was construction cut 181 for a stone built structure (04) (Section 1). This was made up of roughly hewn limestone blocks appearing poorly constructed with no sign of any bonding material. The limestone blocks however were noted to have been reddened through exposure to heat so it is likely that this feature is the remains of a fireplace. The feature also appeared to be open sided to the north with no clear evidence of an E-W wall being observed within the trench during machining to suggest an enclosed square shaped structure. The fireplace is likely to have served the 19th (?) century building noted earlier. This feature contained five fills. The lowest, a soft mid orange grey-brown ash (09) was 0.30m thick. Above this was a dark black-brown silty sandy ash containing frequent fragments of pottery (08). A representative sample of five sherds were recovered dating the deposit to the 19th century. Sealing this was another layer of ash, with a maximum thickness of 0.18m that was off white in colour and contained bands of dark grey-black ash (07). Overlying (07) was a pale yellow sandy gravel (06) with a maximum thickness of 0.38m. This was in turn covered by a dark black-brown slightly clayey sandy-silt (05) with a maximum thickness of 0.32m. Three sherds of pottery recovered from this deposit were dated to the 19th century.

A series of late post-medieval/modern services were also observed across the site cutting through the garden soil (02), (10), (36), (123), (125), (153), (162). These were noted in section but only one of these was issued with context numbers due to its position in relation to the trench section. In Section 9, within Foundation Area 3 a service cut 53 was observed cutting through all earlier deposits containing a ceramic foul water pipe and a light brown-grey clayey loam backfill (54). Other service trenches were not given context numbers because of their relatively recent date and function.

Completing the stratigraphic sequence were the remains of the former industrial building demolished to allow the construction of the new project typically recorded as (01), (99) and (100). Within Foundation Area 3, a flooring layer (101) of the demolished buildings was also noted (Section 10). Further to this, the presence of a concrete footing (153) for brick wall (155), which also formed part of the demolished building, was noted in Section 17 of Foundation Area 4. Indications of recent disturbance of these remains were evident as 95 and 127 in Section 15 and 163 in Section 16, presumably caused through disturbance associated by the excavation of the new foundation trenches. These contained modern backfills of (148), (126) and (164) respectively.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of the results has to be treated with an element of caution. The sheer depth of some of the trenches and their narrow width made recording them problematic due to health and safety concerns. The trench closest to the building fronting onto Ock Street for example was impossible to enter safely at all without shoring or battering the sides back. As these two options were not available, the trench was simply recorded from the surface as best as possible. The unusual trench

design also made judging the extent of some of the larger features difficult especially with the apparent complexity of some of the features encountered.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery (By Paul Blinkhorn)

The pottery assemblage comprised 45 sherds with a total weight of 1643g. The bulk of the material was medieval, with most dating to within the mid 11th – 13th century, although a few sherds of late-medieval and post-medieval material were also present, along with a single sherd of residual early/middle Saxon hand-built material. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 7 sherds, 533g.
OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050 – 1400. 11 sherds, 195g.
OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 2 sherds, 41g.
OXAG: Abingdon ware, mid/late 11th – mid 14th century. 7 sherds, 163g.
OXBB: Minety-type ware. Early 13th – 16th century. 1 sherd, 27g.
OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 5 sherds, 50g.
OXBG: Surrey Whiteware, mid 13th – mid 15th C. 1 sherd, 51g.
OXCL: Cistercian ware, AD1475-1700. 1 sherd, 11g.
OXDR: Red Earthenwares, AD1550+. 2 sherds, 144g.
OXEST: London stoneware, AD1680-1750. 1 sherd, 5g.
WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, 19th - 20th C. 7 sherds, 319g.

The following, not covered by the Oxfordshire type-series, was also noted:

E/MS: *Early-middle Saxon handmade ware*, AD450 – 850. Moderate to dense sub-angular quartz up to 0.5 mm. 1 sherd, 4g.

The range of fabric types is typical of contemporary sites in Abingdon, including in Ock Street (eg Blinkhorn 2006), comprising a fairly wide range of local and regional sources from areas to the north, east and west of the town. 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 single sherd of early/middle Saxon hand-built material is worthy of mention, as such pottery was not noted at previous excavations in Ock Street at no.75 (ibid.), nos. 83-88 (Whittingham 1997) and, adjacent to this site, nos. 38-52, the Morlands Brewery site (Blinkhorn 2005b). Large assemblages have been noted elsewhere in the town, such as at the Spring Road cemetery site (Blinkhorn 2008). The sherd from this site is residual and undecorated, and cannot be dated other than to within the broad early-middle Saxon period (AD450-850).

A small assemblage of late Saxon St. Neots ware pottery was noted at the brewery site, but none was present here. The bulk of the pottery dates to the mid 11th – mid/late 13th centuries, with very little material dateable to the 14th or 15th centuries, other than the single sherd of Cistercian ware from context [2], and the fragment of Surrey Whiteware, a rim from a bowl, from context [88]. It would appear therefore that the site was largely abandoned during the late 13th – 14th century, or was given over to a function which did not result in pottery being deposited there. This is

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

Cntxt	E/MS		OXAC		OXBF		OXAG		OXY		OXBB		OXAM		OXBG		OXCL		OXDR		OXEST		WHEW		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
2					1	11											1	11							L15thC
5																							3	144	19thC
8																			1	130			4	175	19thC
29					2	60	4	119																	L11thC
30					2	19							1	2											13thC
58					1	13																			M11thC
61							1	9																	L11thC
64			1	33			1	9	2	41															L11thC
76			1	423																					L11thC
88															1	51									M13thC
91																					1	5			L18thC
94							1	26																	L11thC
110					1	63																			M11thC
112			1	19																					M11thC
121													1	3											13thC
123													1	32					1	14					M16thC
124													1	10											13thC
156			1	2																					11thC
157			2	33									1	3											13thC
159											1	27													E13thC
161	1	4			1	9																			M11thC
175			1	23	1	4																			M11thC
176					2	16																			M11thC
Total	1	4	7	533	11	195	7	163	2	41	1	27	5	50	1	51	1	11	2	144	1	5	7	319	

supported by the relatively small amount of Brill/Boarstall ware which occurred (5 sherds, 50g), one of which was of later or early post-medieval date. At 75 Ock Street, around 50% of the pottery dating to the 13th and 14th centuries was of Brill/Boarstall type, so the small amount present here suggests that the site was certainly in decline by the middle of the 13th century.

The range of vessel types is typical of earlier medieval sites, comprising primarily jars, along with smaller quantities of bowls and jugs. Most vessels were only represented by one or two sherds, although the full profile of an OXAC jar occurred in context [76].

5.2 Animal Bone *(By Milena Grzybowska)*

An assemblage of animal bone was recovered from a variety of features including occupation layers and pits.

Methods

The assemblage was assessed in June 2009. All hand collected bone fragments were examined, with the number of potentially identifiable and unidentifiable bones being counted for each context, to provide a basic NISP (Number of Identified Specimens Present). Bones and teeth were identified using following references: Schmid (1972), Lasota-Moskalewska (1997), France (2009). The number of bones or teeth that could provide ageing or sexing information was recorded, and the presence of butchery was noted.

In order to estimate the potential of an assemblage to provide taphonomic information, the condition of the bone is graded on a scale of 0 to 5. That assigned to '0' is deemed to be in excellent condition, demonstrating little post-depositional damage whilst bone material classed as '5' has suffered severe surface erosion and can be identified only as 'bone'. The majority of the bones were assigned to grade '2' indicating that the general condition of the assemblage recovered from Abingdon Ock Street is good (Table 2).

Table 2. Taxa representation (NISP)/ Condition

Context number	Sheep/ goat	Cow	Bird	Pig	Cat	Deer	Unk	Total	Weight (gram)
Unstrat.		2						2	329
2		4					1	5	132
41	7	1		1		1	2	12	140
81	1			1				2	70
84							2	2	20
86	1	1	2				2	6	54
89	3	2	1				7	13	135
110	1							1	17
120							1	1	14
123	1				1			2	35
132		1						1	35
159							2	2	20
161							1	1	14
Total	14	11	3	2	1	1	18	50	540

Results

A total of 50 fragments of animal bone were recovered of which two-thirds are identifiable to taxa (Table 2). The material was recovered by hand collection.

Overall sheep/goat is the most frequent taxa, constituting over a third of identified fragments followed by cattle (Table 2). Bird, pig, deer and cat are also present.

Ageing data could be obtained from seven loose teeth or mandibles and maxillae of which belong to sheep/goat and deer (Table 3). None of the specimens could provide an indication of sex.

Table 3. Ageable specimens

Taxa	Numbers of ageable specimens
Sheep/goat	7
Deer	1
Total	8

Evidence for butchery, gnawing and burning was observed during recording.

Discussion

Part of this collection represents the domestic urban assemblage, with butchery and burning evidence noted. Relatively frequent horncores and skull fragments possibly constitutes waste from hornworking, hence it is inferred that a portion of the discussed assemblage derived from industrial processing. The vast majority of the bone retrieved from medieval contexts belongs to the major domesticated species such as sheep, cattle and pig.

The above finds are principally consistent with the results of the full analysis of an extensive osteological collection from Medieval Abingdon that was carried out by Sheila Hamilton-Dyer (*Anthony et al, 2006*). The nature of the narrow assemblage discussed here means that no firm conclusions can be drawn, although it is interesting to note the adverse ratio of sheep/goat:cattle fragments from this material when comparing to the collection studied by Hamilton-Dyer.

5.3 Ceramic Building Material (CBM)

A total of 13 fragments of CBM were retained weighing a total of c. 1680g. All of these except two were identified as tile, with one example containing evidence of a peg hole.

5.4 Shell

A total of five pieces of shell were retained from the watching brief weighing a total of 29g. This included four oyster shells and one fragment of mussel shell.

5.5 Metal

Three iron objects were recovered from the archaeological work. This included two badly corroded nails with probable square shaped heads from pit fills (41) and (49)

and a badly corroded single loop buckle either rectangular or possibly trapezoidal in shape from context (123). None of these objects were closely datable although the buckle was recovered from the cultivation soil dated to the late 15th to mid 16th century.

5.6 Slag

Six pieces of iron slag weighing 404g were recovered from context (86) and five pieces of iron slag weighing 502g were recovered from context (121). All appear to be examples of bloom slag and came from mid to late 13th century deposits.

6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief was successful in recording archaeological remains relating to the medieval and post-medieval settlement of the site. It is possible that some of the features identified without datable finds or obvious stratigraphic relationships to those features that were dated could be of Roman origin such as ditch 32 observed in Foundation Area 1 but this is only speculation.

It would appear from the investigation that although some degree of truncation has taken place, as observed in the eastern part of Foundation Area 3, many post-medieval and earlier features have survived, mostly as large pits.

Ock Street is known to be one of the original medieval routeways of Abingdon that was subject to gradual expansion. The site itself is probably located on the periphery of the medieval town, and is likely to have been sensitive to changes in both the economy and population of the town. Abingdon is one of the few towns in the region where there are sufficient medieval finds to give some indication of the extent of the town in different periods (Rodwell (ed) 1975).

The date range of the pottery collected suggests the site to have been occupied at least from the 11th century before being abandoned during the late 13th – 14th century until the 19th century or at least put aside to some activity which resulted in little pottery deposition after this period. The pottery assemblage from work carried out at 75 Ock Street on the opposite side of the road, suggested that the main focus of activity here was also from the mid/late 11th century to the late 13th century. However, the residuality in the pottery assemblage from the later 15th or 16th century suggested a significant phase of ground disturbance and implied change of use of the site at that time, and not necessarily abandonment in this period (Anthony *et al* 2006). The comparative lack of 15th and 16th century pottery at 54 Ock Street could be coincidental rather than symptomatic of the site as a whole and could therefore have been subject to similar disturbance. Nonetheless, the excavation at 75 Ock Street showed the site to have been abandoned for long period following this phase. The Morlands Brewery site located close to the east by contrast demonstrated a continuous sequence of occupation for a significant proportion of the site from the early 11th century through into late post-medieval times.

The bone assemblage from the site, with its relatively frequent occurrence of horncores and skull fragments, could constitute waste from a horn working industry. This would dovetail with the tanning sites located at the Morlands Brewery site and at

75 Ock Street. Horn working was closely associated with hide processing with the horns sometimes sold on by tanners to hornworkers (ibid 2006). A hornworking industry nearby would make sense. However, these bones could simply be the by-product of the tanning process itself rather than representing a separate hornworking industry.

The presence of iron slag points to some metal working on the site in the mid to late 13th century. The majority of slag from 75 Ock Street was from the 13th century although it was not a high amount (Anthony *et al* 2006, 38)

The limited nature of the watching brief and the depth of the foundations prevented a thorough investigation of many of the features revealed and it is possible that further features could have been missed. Issues relating to health and safety, as for any site with deep foundation trenches took priority.

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