

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**AT**

**AT 22 NORHAM GARDENS,**

**OXFORD**

**SP 5138 0753**

*On behalf of*

*Jonathon Baxter-Zorin*

**OCTOBER 2009**

**REPORT FOR** Mr J Baxter-Zorin  
22 Norham Gardens  
Oxford  
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**FIELDWORK** 30<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological evaluation by the excavation of two trenches at 22 Norham Gardens, Oxford between 30<sup>th</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009. The evaluation revealed five 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century pits and one 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century posthole. No earlier features were identified.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site is located at Norham Gardens, Oxford, NGR SP51380753. The site is the garden of a residential house. The information accompanying the application suggests that the level of the garden may have been raised 600mm by dumping. The underlying geology is the boundary of the 1<sup>st</sup> (Flood Plain) and 2<sup>nd</sup> (Summertown-Radley) Terrace Deposits

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning applications have been submitted for the erection of a garden building at (09/01928/FUL) and the erection of a single storey side and rear extension and extension to basement at rear (09/01907/FUL). Due to the site's potential to contain archaeological remains an archaeological evaluation is required prior to determination of the applications. The Archaeological Officer of Oxford City Council issued a Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation (Trial Trenching) for the work.

The archaeological evaluation was designed to establish the presence/absence and condition of any archaeological deposits thought to be present within the site in order to help formulate any future mitigation strategies, if necessary. This is in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The site lies within 50m of an inhumation/knife burial of possible Saxon date (County HER No 5775) recovered from the garden of No 10 Crick Road. The burial was reported in the Oxford Times in 1903 and is cited in Tania Dickenson's *Anglo Saxon Burial Sites of the Upper Thames Basin* (1972).

Evidence from aerial photographs and archaeological excavations indicates the presence of an extensive prehistoric ritual and agricultural landscape across this part of the Oxford gravel terrace, involving Neolithic/Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments, Iron Age /Roman agricultural field systems and subsequent Saxon settlement. An extensive cropmark complex recorded in the University Parks 150m to the south incorporates a possible Neolithic/Bronze Age linear barrow cemetery and later Iron Age/Roman agricultural enclosures. A Neolithic/Bronze Age henge monument and three Bronze Age ring ditches belonging to this complex have recently been excavated at Queen Elizabeth House, St Giles and at the Radcliffe Infirmary site (TVAS and MoLAS, forthcoming).

A Bronze Age burial was recorded 220m to the east of the application site during a watching brief in 2005 (JMHS, 2005; UAD No 1673) and another likely Bronze Age



Figure 1. Site and Trench Location Plan 2

burial was recorded in 1864 approximately 240m to the north (County HER No 3592). Furthermore an Iron Age pit was recorded 60m to the north of the application site at No 6 Crick Road in 1968 (County HER No 3593). The pit contained bones of an ox, red deer antlers and sherds of Iron Age pottery. More recent archaeological investigations to the east and south of the application site have produced ephemeral evidence for prehistoric activity. A gully of likely prehistoric date was recorded 50m to the south of the application site during an evaluation in 2005 at 15 Norham Gardens (TVAS, 2005; UAD No 1711). Furthermore an undated gully was recorded during at evaluation in 2007 at Lady Margaret Hall located 180m to the north-east of No 22 (Oxford Archaeology, 2007; UAD No 1708).

## **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 or absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- 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.
- To determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.

In particular:

- To determine whether any Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman or Saxon activity is present

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

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 for Archaeologists (2008), the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) and the requirements of Oxford City Council's Brief.

### **3.2 Methodology**

The excavation of two trenches took place with a 1.5 tonne excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. Mechanical excavation was taken down to the uppermost geological horizon under direct archaeological supervision. The machine excavation was used only for the removal of non-archaeologically significant material. The resulting surfaces were hand cleaned where appropriate and potential archaeological

features and deposits were sampled excavated by hand in order to meet the aims as defined above. All spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

The integrity of any archaeological features or deposits that might better be excavated in conditions pertaining to full excavation, or might warrant preservation *in situ*, was not compromised.

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.

## 4 RESULTS

The trenches were issued with a set of context numbers which, as per normal JMHS recording procedures, had the trench number preceding each context number issued. Context numbers in ( ) indicate feature fills or deposits of material. Those without brackets refer to features themselves. The topsoil observed as deposit (01) in Trench 1 for example was recorded as (1/01).

### 4.1 Excavation Results (Figure 2)

The trenches were located as close as possible to those positions indicated in the Written Scheme of Investigation. Due to site restrictions a pragmatic approach was adopted with respect to the excavation of Trench 1. This trench was shortened from the length stated in the agreed scheme but widened in compensation. The finds revealed in the features were noted but not retained due to their relatively recent date.

#### **Trench 1 (Figure 2)**

This trench measured 9.30m in length and 1.85m in width and was orientated approximately E-W. The natural geological deposit in this trench was composed of mid brown-orange sandy gravel (1/03). Overlying this and seen throughout the trench was a mid grey orange-brown sandy loam c. 0.30m thick containing occasional to moderate gravel inclusions and occasional charcoal flecking (1/02). Several sherds of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century white earthenware were observed within this deposit. Layers (1/02) and (1/03) displayed considerable root penetration and disturbance.

Cutting through this horizon were four rectangular shaped pits (pits 1/04, 1/06, 1/08 and 1/12). Pits 1/04 and 1/08 observed at the SW end of the trench were also noted to physically cut pit 1/06 in plan. All of these features were investigated but were not fully excavated.

The earliest feature revealed in this trench was rectangular cut pit 1/06 measuring 1.00m in width and 1.00m in length as seen. This pit was not fully excavated but was found have vertical sides and to be at least 0.20m deep. Its lowest fill was a pale yellow sandy gravel (1/07) thought to be a redeposited natural, that was capped with material very similar to deposit (1/02) only slightly darker with a higher charcoal content. This pit was cut by the two later pits 1/04 and 1/08.

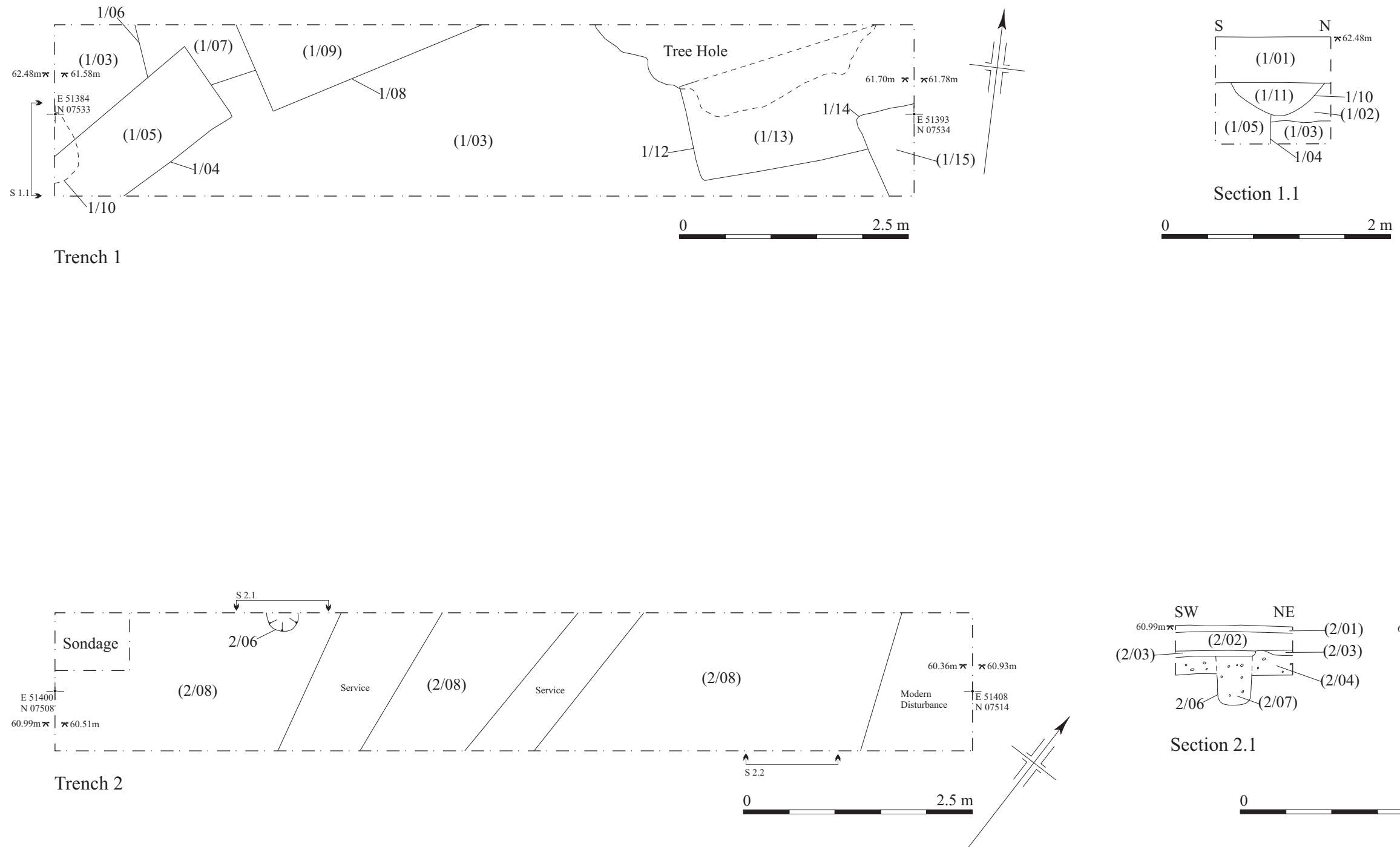


Figure 2. Trenches 1 and 2. Plans and Sections



Pit 1/04 was 1.00m wide and 1.8m long as seen and was at least 0.50m deep with near vertical sides. It was filled with a mid grey-brown clayey sand fill with occasional to moderate gravel inclusions and occasional fragments of tile, and coal and charcoal flecking. Several sherds of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century white earthenware pottery were noted within this fill.

In section pit 1/04 was cut by pit 1/10. This pit was 0.80m wide and 0.30m deep with moderately steep curving sides and a curving base. It was filled with a dark grey-black ashy loam with a high charcoal content and occasional gravel inclusions.

Pit 1/08 slightly further NE was 1.00m wide and 2.00m long as seen and was at least 0.10m deep with near vertical sides. Its fill was composed of a mid grey-brown clayey sand with occasional charcoal flecking and coal fragments. Several sherds of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century white earthenware pottery were also noted with the fill.

At the NE end of the trench pit 1/12 was 1.00m wide, at least 2.50m long and at least 0.20m deep with near vertical sides. It was filled with a mottled mid grey-brown and pale yellow clayey sand and gravel with frequent charcoal inclusions (1/13) which contained evidence of modern glass and fragments of brick and tile.

Pit 1/12 was observed to have been disturbed by root action from a probable tree throw hole along its NW edge and was cut by later pit 1/14. Pit 1/14 was 0.50m wide and 0.50m long as seen and was at least 0.20m deep with near vertical sides. Its fill was composed of a mottled grey-brown yellow sandy clay and gravel with frequent charcoal and ash inclusions. Fragments of glass and clay pipe were observed in this fill but like the other finds were not retained.

Overlying these features and completing the stratigraphic sequence was a dark grey-brown sandy loam topsoil (1/01) c. 0.50m thick.

## **Trench 2 (Figure 2)**

Aligned NE-SW, Trench 2 was 1.6m wide and 10m long. The geological deposit revealed here was a light yellow sandy gravel with pockets of mid brown-orange slightly silty gravely sand (2/08). Overlying this and mainly seen towards the NE end of the trench was a mid orange brown-grey sandy loam with frequent gravel inclusions and a maximum thickness of 0.20m (2/05).

Sealing (2/05) was a dark grey-brown sandy silty loam with moderate gravel inclusions, occasional fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) and occasional charcoal flecking measuring 0.16m in thickness (2/04). Cutting through this horizon towards the SW end of the trench was posthole 2/06. This posthole was 0.30m wide and 0.44m deep and was filled with a dark brown-grey sandy silty loam with moderate gravel inclusions and occasional charcoal flecking (2/07). Two fragments of glass and two fragments of mass produced 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century red earthenware pottery were recovered from this fill but were not retained. Further along the trench, this layer was also cut by modern services trenches aligned NW-SE and at the NE by a modern pit containing examples of brick and metalwork.

Overlaying posthole 2/06 and only seen in the SE facing section near to the SW end of the trench was a dark brown-grey clayey, sandy silt c. 0.04m thick (2/03). Sealing this deposit and seen throughout the trench was a 0.14m thick make-up layer composed of scalplings covered by a layer of bedding sand (2/02) for the light grey stone paving (2/01) measuring 0.06m thick which completed the stratigraphic sequence.

#### **4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results**

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The excavation of the trenches took place mostly during periods of sunshine and cloud with very occasional light showers.

### **5 FINDS**

No finds were retained from the evaluation.

### **6 DISCUSSION**

No archaeological features earlier than the late post-medieval/modern activity were identified. In particular no Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman or Saxon evidence was present.

The site was originally part of the Norham Manor Estate and was originally farmland belonging to St John's College, Oxford. It was developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and first occupied in 1873 (Banerjee, 2007)

The content of the fills of pits 1/12 and 1/14 indicate that they were probably dug to bury building debris associated with the construction of the Victorian house. These fills included sand, brick fragments, tile and ash deposits probably from the burning of waste materials. It is likely that pits 1/04, 1/06 and 1/08 served a similar purpose.

From the information gathered during the evaluation, it is unlikely that the proposed development will have an impact on significant archaeological deposits.

### **7 Bibliography**

Banerjee, J. 2007 <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/oxford/38.html>  
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English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects 2*

Institute for Archaeologists 2008 *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation*

John Moore Heritage Services 2005 *An Archaeological Watching Brief during a soil investigation for the Norham Manor Project 62-64 Banbury Road and 7-11 Bradmore Road, Oxford*

Oxford Archaeology 2007 *Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Archaeological Evaluation*

TVAS 2005 *15 Norham Gardens, An Archaeological Evaluation*

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
<b>Trench 1</b>								
1/01	Deposit	Dark grey-brown sandy loam.	c. 0.50	Tr.	Tr.	-	Topsoil	
1/02	Deposit	Mid grey orange-brown sandy loam.	c. 0.30	Tr.	Tr.	Pottery	Subsoil	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century.
1/03	Deposit	Mid brown-orange sandy gravel.	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural	
1/04	Cut	Rectangular cut.	0.50+	1.00	1.80+		Pit	
1/05	Fill	Mid grey-brown clayey sand.	0.50+	1.00	1.80+	Pottery CBM	Fill of pit 1/04.	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century.
1/06	Cut	Rectangular cut.	0.20+	1.00+	1.00+	-	Pit	
1/07	Fill	Pale grey-yellow sandy gravel.	0.20+	1.00+	1.00+	-	Redeposited natural. Fill of pit 1/06.	
1/08	Cut	Rectangular cut.	0.10+	1.00+	2.00+	-	Pit	
1/09	Fill	Mid grey-brown clayey sand.	0.10+	1.00+	2.00+	Pottery	Fill of pit 1/08.	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century.
1/10	Cut	'U' shaped pit seen in section.	0.30	0.80	-	-	Pit	
1/11	Fill	Dark grey-black ash-loam.	0.30	0.80	-	-	Fill of pit 1/10.	Modern
1/12	Cut	Rectangular cut.	0.20+	1.00	2.50+	-	Pit	
1/13	Fill	Mottled mid grey-brown to pale yellow clayey sand.	0.20+	1.00	2.50+	Glass CBM	Fill of pit 1/12.	Modern
1/14	Cut	Square cut.	0.20+	0.50+	0.50+	-	Pit	
1/15	Fill	Mottled grey-brown and mid yellow sandy clay with gravel.	0.20+	0.50+	0.50+	Glass Clay pipe CBM	Fill of pit 1/14.	Modern
<b>Trench 2</b>								
2/01	Deposit	Light grey paving stones	0.06	Tr.	Tr.	-	Paving	
2/02	Deposit	Mid yellow sand bedded on scalplings.	0.14	Tr.	Tr.	-	Make up layers for paving.	
2/03	Deposit	Dark brown-grey sandy silty loam.	0.04	-	c. 3.00	-	Layer	

2/04	Deposit	Dark grey-brown sandy silty loam.	0.16	Tr.	Tr.	-	Former topsoil?	
2/05	Deposit	Mid orange brown-grey sandy loam with frequent gravel inclusions.	0.20	Tr.	Tr.	-	Subsoil seen mainly in SW end of trench.	
2/06	Cut	Circular cur.	0.44	0.30	-		Posthole	
2/07	Fill	Dark brown-grey sandy silty loam.	0.44	0.30	-	Pottery Glass	Fill of posthole 2/06.	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century.
2/08	Deposit	Light yellow to mid brown-orange sandy gravel with pockets of slightly silty gravely sand.	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural	