



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

BURFORD PRIORY,

PRIORY LANE, BURFORD,

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 2496 1234

For

Mr M Freud

JANUARY 2010

REPORT FOR	Mr M Freud Burford Priory Priory Lane Burford Oxfordshire OX18 4SQ
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an evaluation of this site between 17th and 18th December 2009. Three trenches were excavated to the natural geology. To the west of the house were the remains of an undated building and stone built drain. To the south of this was a medieval pit and undated ditch. All other features recorded were 19th century garden features.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

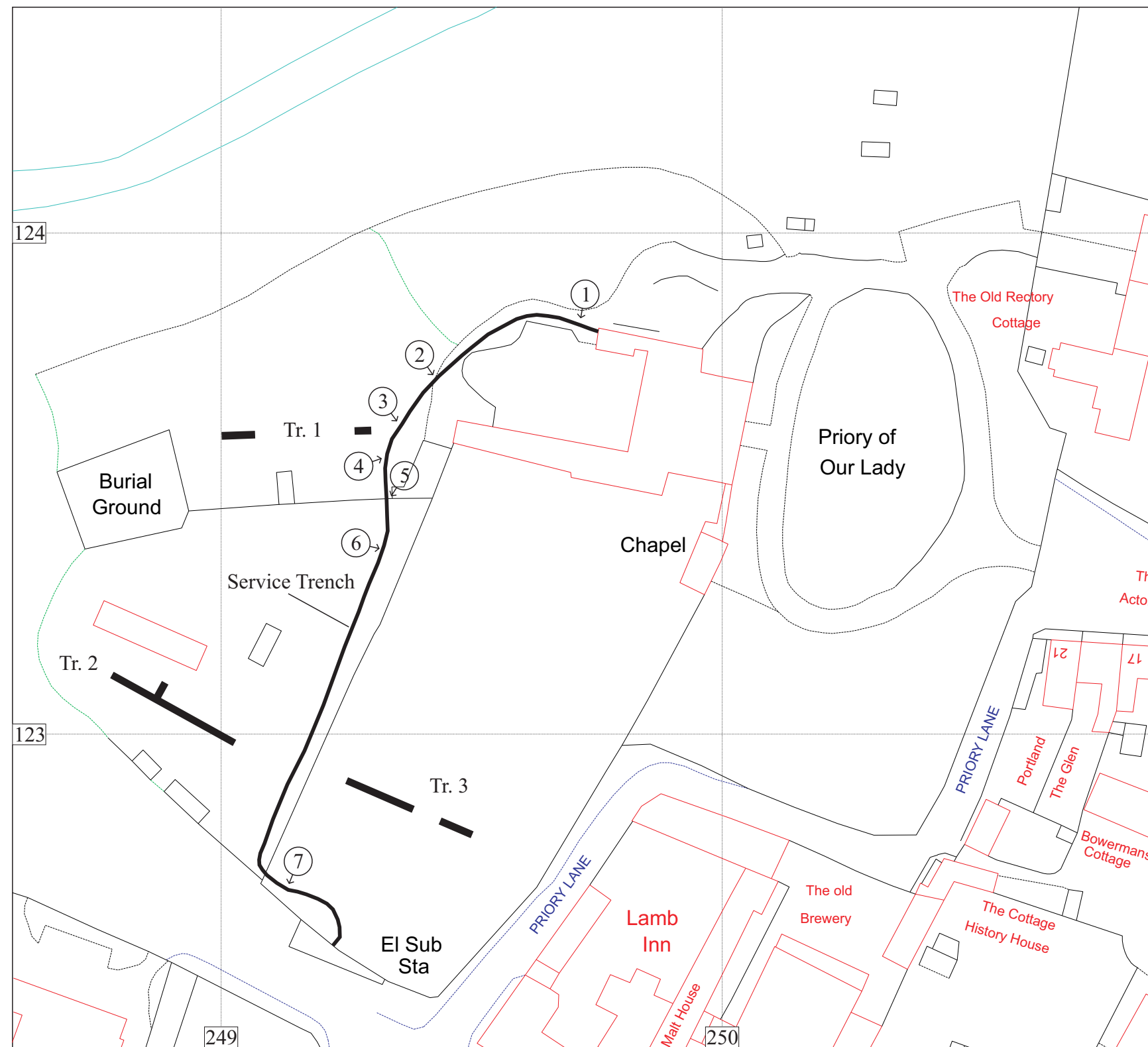
The site is located to the west of Priory Lane and south of the River Windrush in Burford (NGR SP 2496 1234). The underlying geology is Clypeus Grit and Upper Lias Clay (Geological Survey of Great Britain. Witney Sheet 236. Solid and Drift Geology 1:50,000). The site lies at approximately 105m OD and is within the existing garden.

1.2 Planning Background

In 2009 planning permission was sought from West Oxfordshire District Council to construct a tennis court, a new outdoor swimming pool and an indoor swimming pool/gym at Burford Priory (09/0991/P/FP). It was thought impractical to evaluate the site for potential archaeological remains prior to determination of the application. Accordingly it was agreed that a condition requiring a staged programme of archaeological investigation would be attached to the permission. Although permission has not been granted the applicant proceeded with the evaluation. Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Archaeology and Planning) states that local planning authorities can expect developers to provide the results of field evaluations as part of their planning applications for sites where there is good reason to believe there are remains of archaeological importance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The areas of proposed development are within an area of considerable archaeological potential. The Priory stands on the site of the former Hospital of St John the Evangelist that was founded by William Earl of Gloucester in the later twelfth century. The hospital probably consisted of a chapel and a hall and porch. These were probably in alignment with the current south wing and may have fronted onto the original road leading from Cirencester. A recent Time Team investigation did find foundations to the front of the house. The buildings were converted into a domestic dwelling by Edward Harman after 1541. In 1628 the property was purchased by Lawrence Tanfield who rebuilt it as a country house. Earlier activity on the site is suggested by the presence of hand-made middle Saxon pottery found to the rear of the present house during the Time Team investigation (P. Blinkhorn pers com). Part of a possible sleeper beam building presumed to date to the Saxon period was found in the kitchen garden. A large wall of 16th -17th century date was also found in the kitchen garden. This may have been part of an unfinished building (ibid).



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Figure 1. Site location

Romano British pottery and coins have been found west of the proposed pool but no details of these artefacts are available.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To establish whether there are any remains associated with the finds of Romano British date known in the vicinity
- To establish whether there are any remains associated with the suggested middle Saxon activity
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits. The forms in which such evidence may be present will be determined in accordance with the guidelines set out in English Heritage's *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* and *Geoarchaeology: Using earth sciences to understand the archaeological record*.
- To determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.
- To inform the need for, and scope of, further phases of work to mitigate the impact of the development

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (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 for Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

The trenching sample was to be achieved by three trenches each 30m in length (Fig. 1). Due to type and depth of deposits encountered Trenches 1 and 3 were not fully excavated. All trenches were 1.5m wide. A 3 tonne excavator excavated Trenches 1 and 2 and a 1.5 tonne mini-excavator excavated Trench 3, both machines were fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand.

A large service trench had been excavated. Archaeological features seen in section were noted.

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.

Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) monitored the work.

4 RESULTS (Figures 2 & 3)

All features were assigned individual context numbers. This number covered both the feature cut and the fill for pits, unless the feature was sample excavated by hand. Context numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 Excavation Results

Trench 1

Due to the nature and depth of the deposits encountered above the archaeological horizon this trench was excavated in two sections. One 6.5m in length at the west end of the proposed trench location and another 2.5m long to the east.

The natural geological deposit in the area was a pale green-grey clay containing some small stone fragments (1/04) and (1/14) that was related to the Upper Lias Clay formations in the area.

Eastern Section

Above the natural (1/04) was a 0.3m thick layer of grey-brown silt-clay (1/03) that contained rare charcoal flecks and a small quantity of small stone fragments (Fig. 2, Section 1.2). Over lying this was a 0.25m thick deposit of orange-yellow clay-sand (1/02) mixed with stone rubble. This also contained small quantities of tile and brick fragments.

The uppermost layer was a 0.07m thick tarmac surface that had been covered with 0.03m of peaty-loam and grass allowed to “grow-over” (1/01).

Western Section (*Figures 2 and 4 photo 8*)

Above the natural (1/14) was a 0.1m thick layer of mixed mottled mid brown-grey silt-clay (1/13) containing a very small quantity of stone fragments and flecked with charcoal.

Apparently cut 1/11 into this layer was a T-Shaped stone built drain (1/12). This was 0.6m wide with capping stones resting on stone built sides. Its central channel was filled with a mid grey clay-silt at least 0.1m thick and was not fully excavated.

Also apparently cut into this layer (1/13) was an L-Shaped cut 1/09 forming a foundation trench for a stone built wall (1/10). The foundation trench was 1.1m wide and the wall itself survived to at least 0.15m in height, although not fully excavated. The wall was constructed of roughly dressed stone on a rubble footing.

The area deemed to be the interior of the building formed by the L-shaped wall was not excavated but consisted of a deposit of firm grey silt-clay containing a very small quantity of small stones (1/08). This may well prove to be a trampled “dirty” natural layer that formed a floor.

Sealing both the wall and drain was a 0.3m thick layer of grey-brown silt-clay (1/07) that contained rare charcoal flecks and a small quantity of small stone fragments. Over lying this was a 0.25m thick deposit of orange-yellow clay-sand (1/06) mixed with stone rubble. This also contained small quantities of tile and brick fragments. The uppermost layer was a 0.07m thick tarmac surface that had been covered with 0.03m of peaty-loam and grass (1/05).

Layers (1/01), (1/02) and (1/03) in the eastern section equate to layers (1/05), (1/06) and (1/07) in the western section respectively.

Trench 2 (*Figure 2*)

The natural geological deposit in the area was a mottled dark grey-brown clay to orange-yellow sand containing large quantities of small stone fragments (2/03) that was related to the Clypeus Grit formations. Much of the mottling effects seen can be attributed to root penetration.

Towards to eastern end of the trench was a large pit 2/14, roughly circular in plan. It was not fully exposed in the trench but was approximately 1.6m in diameter. It was filled with a soft dark brown silt-clay (2/15) that was at least 0.3m thick. The pit had near vertical sides but was not fully excavated. The fill contained medieval pottery and fragments of daub.

Just to the west of the pit 2/14 was the terminal of a ditch 2/12. This ditch was not fully uncovered, but was at least 0.5m wide and over 5m long. It was 0.2m deep with sides at 45° and a flat base. The fill was a dark brown-grey sandy clay (2/13) containing charcoal flecks and small stones.

This ditch 2/12 appeared to be cut by a later linear feature 2/04 that was 0.6m wide and over 4m long. It was 0.2m deep with 60° sides, a flat base and filled with a friable yellow sand (2/05) with chalk fragments, the occasional stone and a piece of clay tobacco pipe stem.

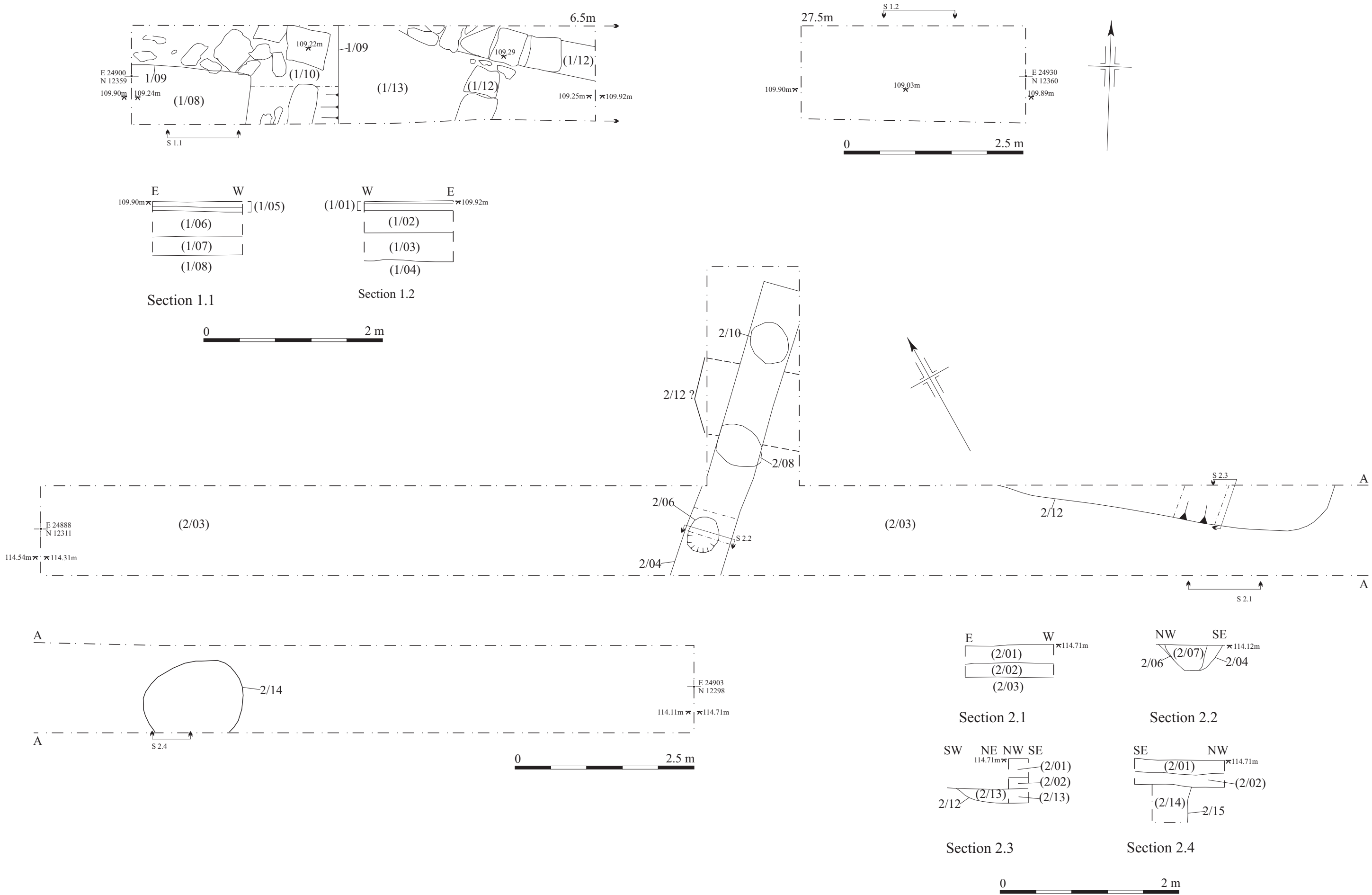


Figure 2. Trenches 1 & 2 Plans and sections

Cut into the fill (2/05) of this feature were three small pits. They appeared to be roughly evenly spaced along the line of it. The first pit 2/06 was 0.45m in diameter and 0.3m deep with 45° sides, an irregular base and was filled with grey-brown clay (2/07) with small stones and gravel. The sides of the pit showed considerable root penetration leading the excavator to conclude that it was a planting pit.

The other two pits 2/08 and 2/10 were both 0.5m in diameter and contained similar grey-brown clay with small stones and gravel; they were recorded as (2/09) and (2/11) respectively. These were not fully excavated, but appeared also to be planting pits.

Trench 3 (*Figure 3*)

The natural geological deposit in the area was a pale orange-yellow sand containing large quantities of small stone fragments (3/04) that was related to the Clypeus Grit formations. Above this was a 0.2m thick layer of mid orange-brown sandy clay containing large quantities of small stone fragments (3/02). This was a natural geological layer that had considerable amounts of root penetration.

Two large planting beds 3/03 and 3/08 had been cut into this layer (3/02). Each was 8m wide and 0.4m deep. These beds were 2m apart, with two rough stone walls (3/06 and (3/07) within each cut either side of this 2m division. These walls were 0.5m wide and survived to a height of 0.4m. Both appeared to have a small buttress or perhaps an L-shaped terminal that was not fully seen with in the trench.

The fill of both beds 3/03 and 3/08 was a similar dark grey-brown sandy-clay flecked with charcoal, recorded as (3/05) and (3/09) respectively. Pottery of 19th – 20th century date was recovered from fill (3/05).

It would appear that the 2m wide area, between the two large planting beds, was possibly raised as a pathway. It aligned perfectly with a set of steps to the north of the area.

Further ornamental planting beds were seen to the east of bed 3/08; these were also cut into layer (3/02).

Service Trench (*Figure 4*)

Prior to this evaluation work being conducted a service trench (Fig. 1) had been dug linking the house with and electrical sub-station. This was up to 1m wide in places and up to 1.2m deep.

Although not a requirement of the work the sections of this trench were quickly inspected and seven locations revealed archaeological remains or areas of interest.

1. Stone wall
2. Stone Drain
3. Stone Drain
4. Stone Drain and Natural geology first seen sloping up towards the south.
5. Stone Steps – at least 3 steps had been removed on the north side of the garden wall

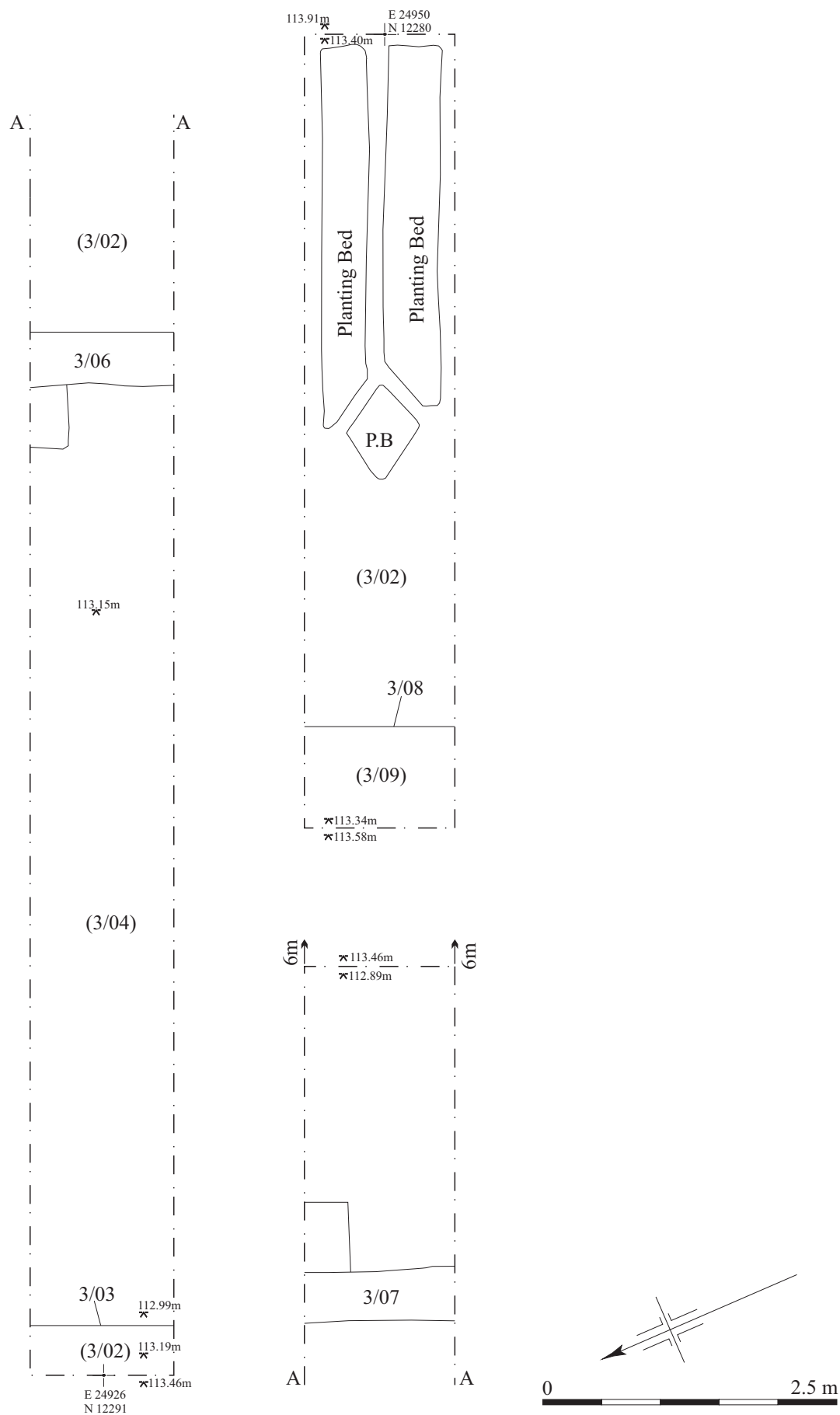


Figure 3. Trench 3 Plan

6. Stone Wall
7. Stone Drain

The northern section of the trench showed a deep sequence of made-ground, even at 1m plus deep the natural geology was not seen until location 4.

4.2 Reliability of Results and Techniques

The work was conducted after a period of heavy rain making conditions difficult, but the reliability of the results is still considered good despite this.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery (*By Paul Blinkhorn*)

The pottery assemblage comprised 17 sherds with a total weight of 325g. It consisted of a mixture of medieval and later wares, all of which are well-known fabric types in the region.

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. 4 sherds, 36g.
 OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherd, 2g.
 OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 4 sherds, 133g.
 OXCE: Tin-glazed Earthenware, 1613 – 1800. 1 sherd, 5g.
 WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, 19th - 20th C. 7 sherds, 149g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

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

		OXAC		OXAM		OXDR		TGE		WHEW		
Tr	Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
1	3					2	48	1	5	5	144	19thC
2	2	1	14	1	2					1	4	19thC
2	15	3	22									11thC?
3	5									1	1	19thC
3	9					2	85					M16thC
	Total	4	36	1	2	4	133	1	5	7	149	

5.2 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken due to the nature of the deposits encountered.

6 DISCUSSION

Although the remains of an undated building and stone built drain were located in Trench 1 it was not fully excavated due to the depth of deposits covering these features. The depth of impact of the proposed new Tennis Courts in the area were stated as only being 0.2m – 0.3m while the archaeological horizon was 0.65 – 0.8m below present ground level.

Activity either with the excavation of the drain or the robbing of wall made it difficult to see the entirety of the cut for the foundation and drain. It is possible that these features could be contemporary, as the drain appears to divert slightly north to miss the building. However, this slight diversion could be explained by the presence of the foundation caused it to be difficult to dig so the excavators diverted to miss the difficult spot.

The rough east-west line of the drain could be traced towards the house and it was seen within the service trench at Location 4. In Trench 1 this drain displayed a side drain feeding into it. The alignment of the drain at Location 3 within the Service suggests that it may feed into the drain at Location 2.

Trench 2 revealed a medieval pit and an undated ditch that may well be contemporary as it terminated before the pit. This ditch may well have continued on and been truncated by feature 2/04 but it was very difficult to identify.

The other feature in trench two was a linear cut 2/04 filled with sand that had regularly spaced pits cut into its surface. It would appear that this feature is related to the kitchen garden in the area. The sand in the trench would provide excellent drainage for plants grown in the small pits along its length. Among the ideas postulated are that it is for alkaline loving plants or that it is for raising certain plant types the sand would concentrate the root ball before re-planting elsewhere in the garden.

Trench 3 revealed that the area of the “Old Rose Garden” had been considerably disturbed by garden features and landscaping. No archaeological remains were located in this area.

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Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217



1. Wall at Location 1



2. Stone Drain at Location 2



3. Stone Drain at Location 3



4. Stone Drain and natural geology at Location 4



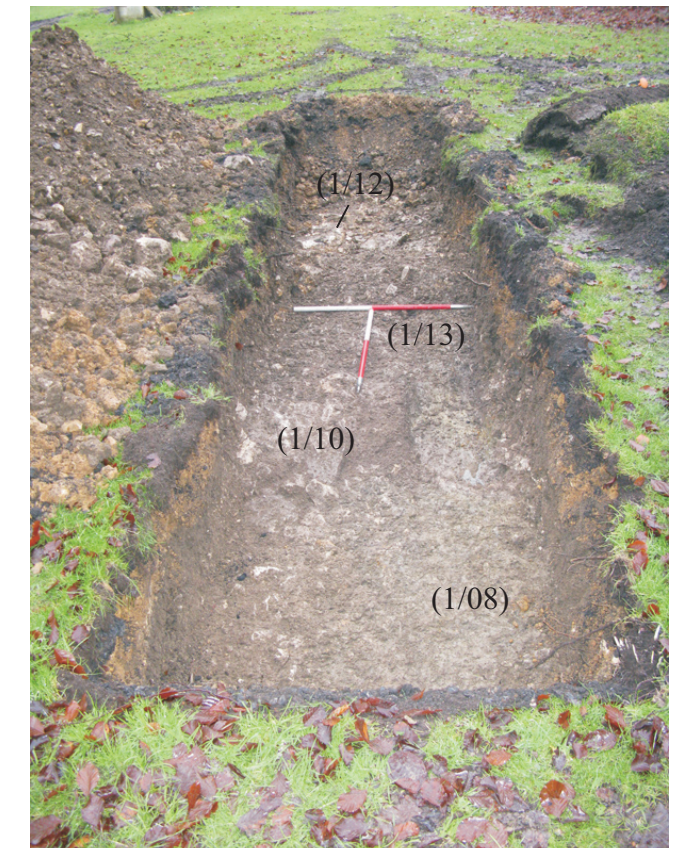
5 Area of removed Steps at Location 5



6. Stone Wall at Location 6



7. Stone Drain at Location 7



8. Trench 1

Figure 4. Photographs

APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 1								
1/01	Layer	Topsoil over tarmac	0.10m	1.40m	9.20m		Imported turf over old tennis court	Modern
1/02	Layer	Orange-yellow clay sand with stone rubble	0.25m	1.40m	9.20m	CBM and Tile	Levelling layer across the entire site	Modern
1/03	Layer	Mid grey-brown, silty clay. Rare charcoal flecks, some stone	0.3m	1.40m	9.20m	Pot, Bone, Glass		
1/04	Natural	Green-grey Clay					Natural	
1/05	Layer	Topsoil over tarmac	0.10m	1.40m	9.20m		Imported turf over old tennis court	Modern
1/06	Layer	Orange-yellow clay sand with stone rubble	0.25m	1.40m	9.20m	CBM and Tile	Levelling layer across the entire site	Modern
1/07	Layer	Mid grey-brown, silty clay. Rare charcoal flecks, some stone	0.3m	1.40m	9.20m	Pot, Bone, Glass		
1/08	Layer	Mid grey silty clay, not excavated, some small stones				Bone		
1/09	Cut	L shaped cut	0.15m as seen	1.1m	2.8m as seen		Foundation Trench	
1/10	Fill	Stone rubble in amid brown silty clay	0.15m as seen	1.1m	2.8m as seen		Rubble foundation/ robber trench. Not fully excavated	
1/11	Cut	Linear feature	?	0.50	3m		Difficult to define. Forms a T shape in plan for Drain	
1/12	Fill	Stone slab drain in a T shape.		0.50	3m		Stone Built Drain	
1/13	Fill	Mixed mottled mid brown-clay	0.1m	C 3.6	1.4m		Possible fill of 1/11, area around drain.	
1/14	Natural	Green-grey Clay					Natural	

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Findings	Interpretation	Date
Trench 2								
2/01	Layer	Dark grey-black, humic (?) loam	0.2m	1.2m	28m	Pot	Pot Unretained. Cultivation soil	17/12/2009
2/02	Layer	Very dark brown-grey sandy clay, some small stones and charcoal flecks	0.08m	1.2m	28m	None	Subsoil	17/12/2009
2/03	Natural	Mottled, dark grey-brown-orange yellow sand with large quantities of stone c 50%		1.2m	28m	None	Natural	17/12/2009
2/04	Cut	Linear cut	0.2m	0.6m	4m		Possible planting bed ?	
2/05	Fill	friable yellow sand with chalk fragments and the occasional stone	0.2m	0.6m	4m			
2/06	Cut	Circular Cut	0.3m	0.45m	0.45m		Planting pit	
2/07	Fill	Grey-brown clay	0.3m	0.45m	0.45m			
2/08	Cut	Circular Cut	0.1m	0.5m	0.5m		Pit? Not fully excavated	
2/09	Fill	Grey-brown clay	0.1m	0.5m	0.5m			
2/10	Cut	Circular Cut	0.1m	0.5m	0.5m		Pit? Not fully excavated	
2/11	Fill	Grey-brown clay	0.1m	0.5m	0.5m			
2/12	Cut	Linear cut, rounded terminal, flat base	0.2m	0.5m	0.6m		Ditch	
2/13	Fill	Dark brown-grey, sandy clay, charcoal flecks	0.2m	0.5m	0.6m		Ditch	
2/14	Cut	Circular Cut	0.3m +	1.6m	1.6m		Pit	Medieval
2/15	Fill	Soft dark brown silt-clay	0.3m +	1.6m	1.6m	Pottery		

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 3								
3/01	Layer	Dark Grey, silty clay, in places contains a layer of tarmac and gravel	0.02m	1.2m	22m	None	Topsoil	Modern
3/02	Layer	Mid orange brown sandy clay	0.2-0.25m	Tr.	Tr.		Natural layer	
3/03	Cut	Near vertical sides, flat base.	0.4m	8m	3.1m		Planting bed	c. C19th
3/04	Natural	Pale yellow sand & corn brash.		Tr.	Tr.		Natural	
3/05	Fill	Dark grey-brown, sandy clay, rare charcoal flecks.	0.4m			Pot, Glass	Cultivation/ Garden soil	c. C19th
3/06	Wall	Rough stone wall, 2 courses visible	0.4m	0.44m	1.2m		Wall, possible pillar at the western end	c. C19th
3/07	Wall	Rough stone wall, 2 courses visible	0.4m	0.44m	1.2m		Wall	c. C19th
3/08	Cut	Near vertical sides, flat base.	0.4m	0.8m	3.1m		Planting Bed	
3/09	Fill	Dark grey-brown, sandy clay, rare charcoal flecks.					Cultivation/ Garden soil	