JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

LAND ADJACENT TO 60 WATLING LANE,

DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES

OXFORDSHIRE

SU 5768 9394

MARCH 2010

REPORT FOR	Mr R Booth c/o RSA Architects The Dovecote Long Wittenham OX14 4QN
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Archive Location	The archive is currently held by JMHS and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

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Summary

A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services across the proposed footprint of the new building. The evaluation revealed both Roman and Post Medieval quarrying, and a series of Post Medieval pits.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location *(Figure 1)*

The site is located on the south-west edge of Dorchester-on-Thames, on the south side of Watling Lane and to the north of Bridge End (NGR SU 57677 93945). The underlying geology is First (Flood Plain) Terrace Deposits (Geological Survey of Great Britain. Henley-on-Thames Sheet 254. Solid and Drift Geology 1:50,000). The site lies at approximately 50m OD and is within an overgrown undeveloped plot.

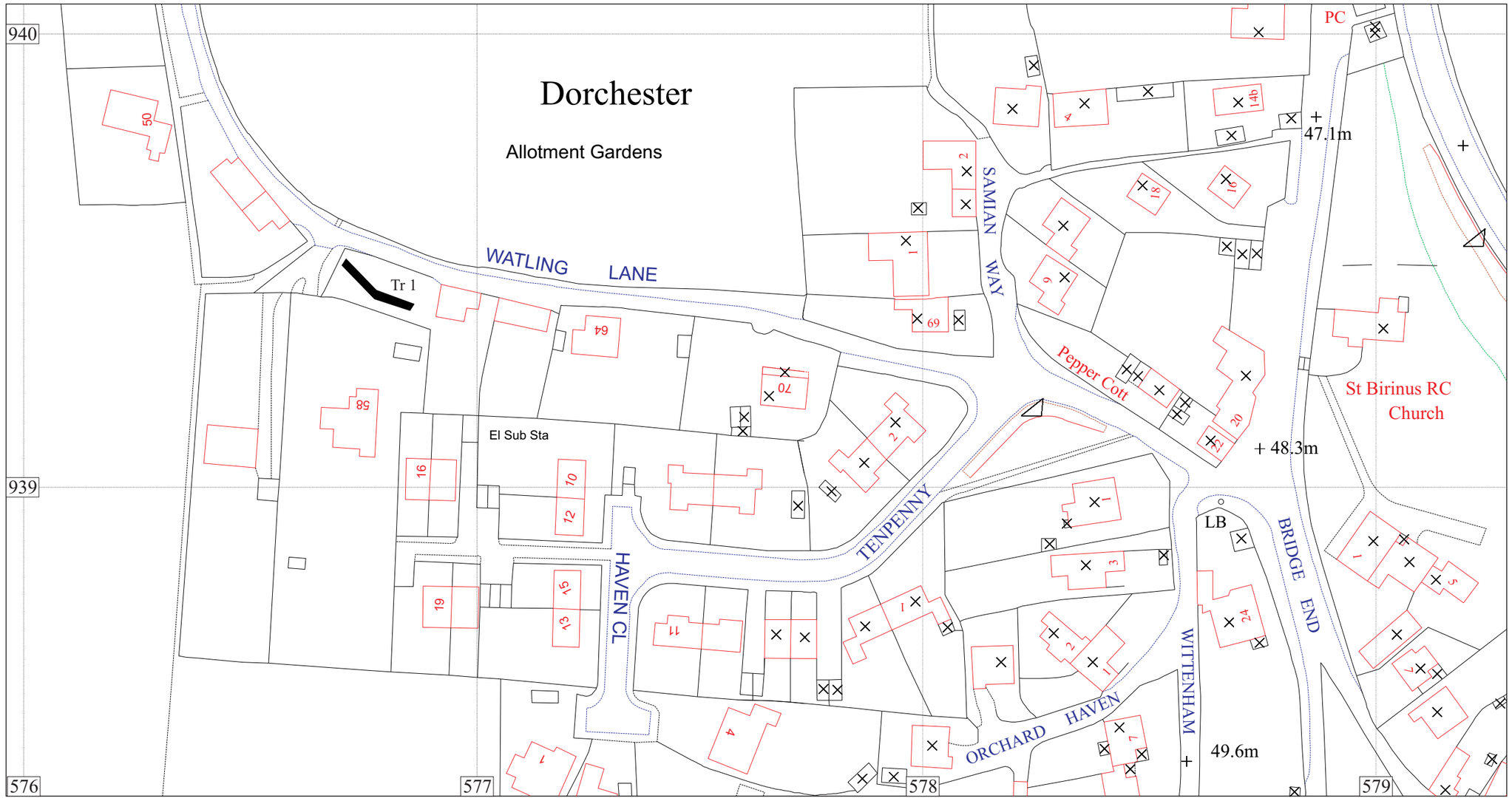
1.2 Planning Background

In 2009 planning permission was sought from South Oxfordshire District Council to construct a new dwelling and vehicle access (P09/W1146). This was refused and one of the grounds for this was the lack of information on the archaeological potential of the site as required in accordance with PPG 16 and the District Council's Local Plan policies. Accordingly the applicant has undertaken an archaeological evaluation as part of the consideration for the future of this site. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for the field evaluation. A *Written Scheme of Investigation,* which proposed a suitable methodology to satisfy the requirements of the Brief, was submitted to and accepted by OCAS.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The area of proposed development is within an area of considerable archaeological potential. The site lies 13m south of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Dorchester Roman Town (Sam OX116; SU 5768 9395) and is located immediately outside the south-west corner of the Roman defences. Roman habitation has been recorded south of the town just 50m south-west of the site where a number of Roman finds were found including pottery, building materials and the handle of a bronze spoon (County Historic Environment Record PRN 1983; NGR SU 5771 9390) and Roman pottery was recovered 115m south-south-west of the site (PRN 2854; SU 5779 9389). A number of linear features, probably relating to the Roman town, have been identified from aerial photographs adjacent to the application area with the closest being 50m west of the site (PRN 15363; SU 5760 9400). The pottery finds all date from the 1st century AD and it is likely that the site lies in an area that was occupied during the early development of the Roman town. A relatively large number of burials have also been recorded south of the town and approximately 150m south-west of the site (PRN 5530; 5783 9385 and PRN 26191; SU 5781 9382).

70m south of the site is another Scheduled Ancient Monument, the Iron Age Oppida of Dyke Hills (SAM OX17). The monument consists of a defended dense settlement and it is possible that further occupation to the north of its defences could have existed



0 50 m

Figure 1. Site and trench location

and therefore survive on the site. A series of linear cropmarks identified from aerial photographs 250m south-west of the application site have been interpreted as a possible conquest period Roman fort which may have formed the origin of Roman and modern Dorchester (PRN 17314; SU 5781 9374). This is located midway between the Iron Age defended settlement and the later Roman town and therefore it is possible that deposits and features related to this important period of change and development of the town could survive on the proposal site.

The above information has been obtained from the OCAS' *Brief*.

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 assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- In particular to establish whether there are any remains associated with the finds of Iron Age and Romano British date known in the vicinity

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Strategy

In response to the Brief issued by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS), a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed by OCAS on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of one evaluation trench.

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

3.2 Methodology

In order to achieve the aims of the investigation during the evaluation phase it was agreed to excavate one trench 1.6m wide and 17m long across the proposed footprint. In the event Trench 1 was excavated to a length of 18m and 1.8m width (Fig. 1).

Excavation took place with a 3 tonne excavator using a ditching bucket. Mechanical excavation took place down to the top of natural undisturbed geology. Deposits were sampled excavated by hand in order to meet the aims as defined above.

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 trench was backfilled after recording.

Richard Oram of OCAS monitored the work.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in ( ) indicate fills or deposits of material whilst numbers referring to features themselves are shown without brackets.

4.1 Excavation Results (Figure 2)

Trench 1 was 18m long and was aligned NW-SE. The natural geological deposit encountered was a loose light orange-brown sandy gravel (1/06). Cut into (1/06) was a quarry pit 1/14 which is considered to be Roman in date. It was at least 9.30m long and was cut by the edge of later quarry 1/15. It had concave edges, a flat base and the north edge was orientated along a ESE - WNW alignment. It was filled with a moderately dark grey-brown sandy clay silt containing 15% small gravel <0.02m (1/13).

Post medieval quarry pit 1/15 was at least 8.80m long and 1.80m wide as seen. The top of slope was around 40^{o} from the horizontal increasing to 70^{o} towards the base. It had concave edges, a flat base and was 0.70m deep. The primary fill (1/05), was a firm mid orange-brown silty clay 0.20m thick. It was overlain by (1/04), a firm mid grey-brown silty clay containing 5-10% small gravel and was 0.50m thick.

Overlying (1/04) was layer (1/03), a firm mid orange-brown clay containing occasional charcoal flecking and 10% small stone no larger than 0.02m. It was 0.60m thick. This extended across the whole of the trench.

Cut through (1/03) and into 1/14 were pits 1/08, 1/10 and 1/12. They were sub circular in shape, had concave edges and a flat base. The sides had a 70^{o} slope. The pits were filled with a moderate dark grey-brown sandy clay and contained 15% small gravel no larger than 0.02m (1/07), (1/09) and (1/11).

Overlying (1/03) was subsoil deposit (1/02) that was a moderately compact dark grey-brown silty clay containing 20% small stone no larger than 0.04m. It is possible that pits 1/08, 1/10 and 1/12 were cut from this level. Overlying this was the topsoil (1/01). It was a loose dark grey-brown clay loam with 20% small stone <0.06m.

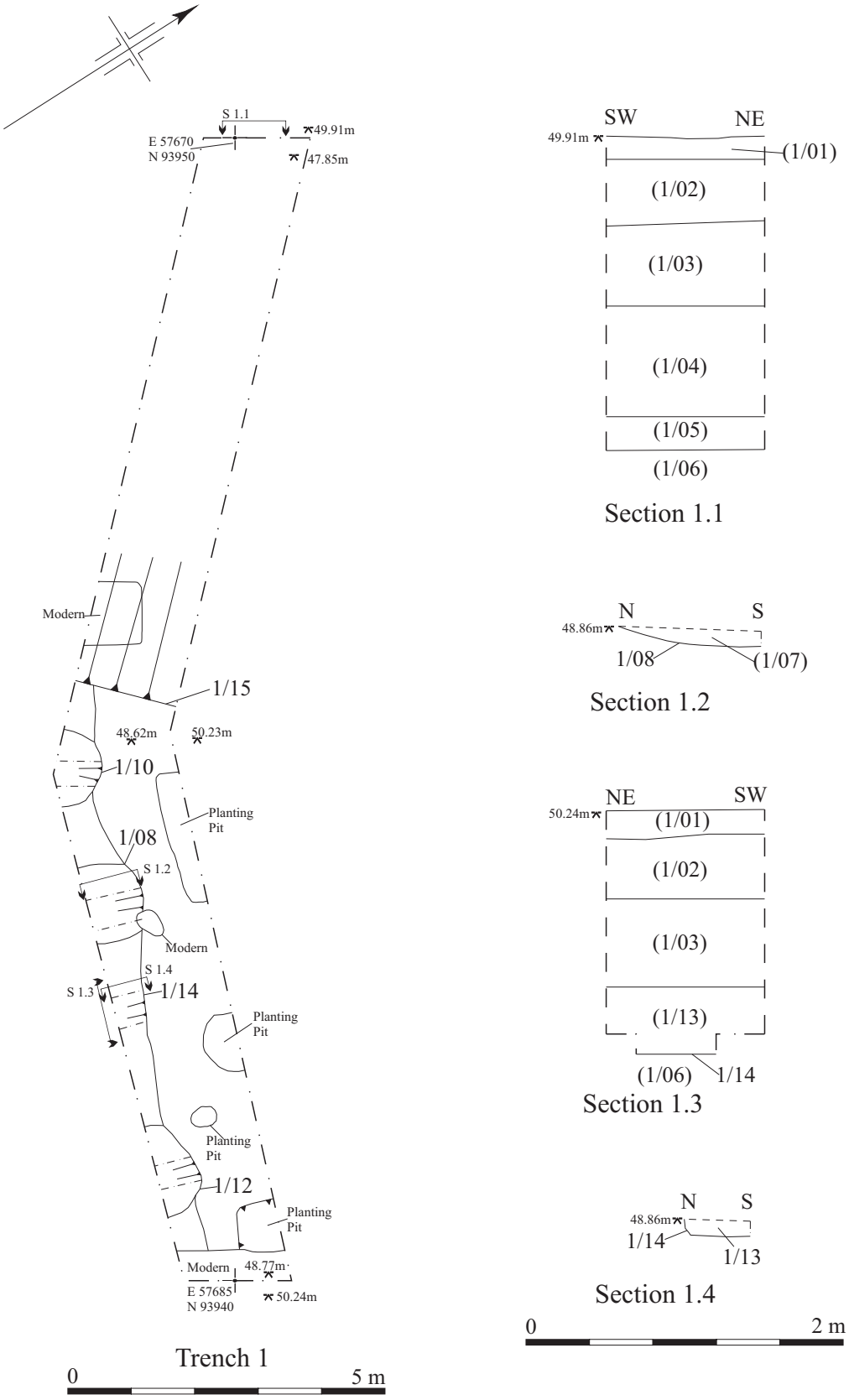


Figure 2. Trench 1 plan and sections

4.2 Reliability of results and methodologies

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The results can be assessed as reliable due to ideal weather conditions.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery *by J Moore*

The pottery assemblage comprised 19 sherds with a total weight of 357g. It comprised a mixture of Roman and Post-medieval wares. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXREWSL: Slipware, 17th century. 3 sherds, 139g.
OXDR: Red Earthenwares, AD1550+. 1 sherds, 35g.
WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, 19th - 20th century. 8 sherds, 70g

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. All the sherds of Post-medieval material are in good condition, indicating that they were well-stratified, and not subject to much transportation before deposition. The Roman greyware sherds from fill (1/13) of quarry 1/14 were small and the sherd of Oxford colour-coat ware from topsoil (1/01) was heavily abraded.

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

		RB		OXREWSL		OXDR		WHEW		
Tr	Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
1	01	1	27					3	14	19thC
1	02					1	35	1	50	19thC
1	03							2	9	19thC
1	04			3	139			3	47	19thC
1	13	5	36							RB
	Total	6	63	3	139	1	35	9	120	

5.2 Ceramic building material

Context (1/03) produced 3 fragments of roof tile and 1 one fragment of brick.

5.3 Bone

One fragment of animal bone was recovered from (1/13) fill of quarry 1/14.

5.4 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation revealed what has been interpreted as a quarry pit 1/14 probably dating to the Roman period from the sherds of Roman greyware in its backfill. The uneven edge of the feature is suggestive of a quarry although it being a ditch with locally eroded sides cannot be ruled out.

The large feature at the northwest end of the trench is without doubt a gravel quarry pit and must date to the 19th century as a quarry is not depicted on the early Ordnance survey maps and pottery of this date was retrieved from its backfill material. A similar quarry was found in the grounds of the former Chequers public house at Bridge End 175m to the east (JMHS 2006)

Pits 1/08, 1/10 and 1/12 were cut through (1/03) and probably from a higher level. Their fills were similar to (1/02) and therefore they may not have been identified at the level of (1/02) during machining. They most probably represent garden planting pits. Deposits (1/02 and 1/03) represent episodes of dumping that have left this plot of land higher than the level of the road and the house to the east.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* (revised 2008).

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ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 1								
1/01	Topsoil	Loose, dark grey brown clay loam.	0.25m	1.60m	18m	Pottery	Topsoil	Post Medieval
1/02	Subsoil	Moderately compact, dark grey brown silty clay.	0.40m	1.60m	18m	Pottery	Dumping	Post Medieval
1/03	Layer	Firm, mid Orange Brown clay.	0.60m	1.60m	18m	Pottery, CBM	Dumping	Post Medieval
1/04	Layer	Firm, mid grey brown silty clay	0.50m	1.60m	8.80m	Pottery	Back fill of gravel extraction pit 1/15	19th century
1/05	Layer	Firm mid orange brown silty clay	0.20m	1.60m	8.80m	None	Back fill of gravel extraction pit 1/15	19th century
1/06	Natural	Loose, light orange brown sandy gravel	1.80m	1.60m	18m	None	Natural	
1/07	Layer	Moderate, dark grey brown sandy clay silt	0.42m	1.20m	1.05m	None	Fill of Pit 1/08	Post Medieval
1/08	Cut	80-70 degrees concave sides, flat base	0.42m	0.60m	1.05m	None	Cut of Pit, filled with (1/07)	Post Medieval
1/09	Fill	Moderate, dark grey brown sandy clay silt	0.42m	1.20	0.70m	None	Fill of pit 1/10	Post Medieval
1/10	Cut	80-70 degrees concave sides, flat base	0.42m	1.20	0.70m	None	Cut of pit, filled with (1/09)	Post Medieval
1/11	Fill	Moderate, dark grey brown sandy clay silt	0.42m	1.40m	0.70m	None	Fill of pit 1/12	Post Medieval
1/12	Cut	80-70 degrees concave sides, flat base	0.42m	1.40m	0.70m	None	Cut of pit, filled with (1/11)	Post Medieval
1/13	Fill	Moderately dark grey brown sandy clay silt containing 15% small gravel <0.02m	0.42m	0.55m	9m	Pottery, bone	Fill of Roman Quarry Pit 1/14	Roman
1/14	Cut	Concave edges, a flat base and was orientated southeast – northwest.	0.42m	0.55m	9m	Pottery, tile	Cut of Roman Quarry Pit	Roman
1/15	Cut	Concave edges, a flat base and was orientated southeast - northwest alignment				Pottery, tile	Cut of Quarry Pit, filled with (1/04) & (1/05)	19th century