

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

EMMAUS COMMUNITY, 169 OXFORD ROAD,

COWLEY, OXFORD.

NGR SP 5441 0432

On behalf of

*Bugler Developments and
Cherwell Housing Trust*

AUGUST 2008

REPORT FOR Bugler Developments Ltd with Cherwell Housing Trust
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CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	3
4 RESULTS	4
4.1 Medieval Period	4
4.2 Post-medieval Period	8
4.3 Un-dated	8
4.4 Reliability of results and methodology	11
5 FINDS	11
5.1 Pottery	11
5.2 Animal bone	12
5.3 Metalwork	12
5.4 Environmental remains	12
6 DISCUSSION	12
7 ARCHIVE	12
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	13
FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site Location	2
Figure 2 Evaluation Trenches 4 and 5	5
Figure 3 Overall Plan	7
Figure 4 Sections	9

Summary

A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services during groundworks for a 2/3 storey building to provide residential and community facility for homeless with parking at rear.

The investigation revealed three phase of medieval activity dating from the late 11th century through to 14th century. The earliest phase comprised an enclosure and several pits, the second phase the corner of a building probably associated with the Templar preceptory and the third phase a field or paddock dating to after the establishment of the new preceptory in Sandford.

No evidence of activity was found thereafter until the late post-medieval period.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site was located immediately to the west of the United Reformed Church, which is situated on the corner of Oxford Road and Temple Road (NGR SP 5441 0432). The site was formerly the church hall. The site forms an 'L'-shaped area bounded by Oxford Road to the south, housing to the west, a library to the north and the church and Temple Road to the east. Access is from Temple Road, immediately to the north of the church. The site is situated at c. 70m OD and the geology is the edge of the Beckley Sand Member (BSG Sheet 237).

1.2 Planning Background

Oxford City Council granted planning permission for a 2/3 storey building to provide residential and community facility for homeless with parking at rear. Due to the potential of archaeological remains to be present on the site, a condition requiring the implementation of an archaeological programme of work was attached to the planning permission. As a first stage an archaeological evaluation of the site was undertaken. Medieval remains of the 11th and 12th centuries were found. A second stage of evaluation was carried out for engineering purposes to avoid impact on a medieval wall. A watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks. The work was carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxford City Council's Archaeologist.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Temple Cowley was a manor of the Knights Templar in the 12th and 13th centuries. The later manor house was in the angle of Hollow Way and Oxford Road, c.150m east of the site, (SP546 043, PRN 1322485) but the Victoria County History concluded that an earlier preceptory stood on Temple Road. Founded in 1136 by Queen Matilda, this was one of the most important Templar preceptories. After the foundation of a new preceptory at Sandford in 1240, its status was reduced to that of a camera. Excavations at St. Christopher's First School, c.450m north of the site revealed features which may be associated with the medieval manor (SP544 045, PRN 15946). A north-east south-west orientated ditch dating from the 12th century may mark a field



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Figure 1. Site Location

boundary associated with the manor and a 12th-13th century occupation layer was also recorded.

Large medieval pits were found on Temple Road, on the same site as a Roman kiln (SP5454 0441, PRN 15947). Late medieval domestic activity with pottery from the 14th-17th centuries was found at Between Towns Road c. 70m south of the site (SP5445 0425, PRN 14409) along with Roman pottery of 3rd-4th centuries. The 17th and 18th century building known as Temple Cowley Manor, c. 200m south-east of site, may have origins as a three-unit medieval building of hall-house or derived type (SP5458 0425, PRN 6265).

The evaluation found two pits and a ditch of probable 11th or 12th century date, a buried soil and an undated wall. It was considered that all the features may have represented activity associated with the Knights Templar preceptory (OA 2007).

2 AIMS OF THE RECORDING ACTION

The aims were laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation. The primary aim was to preserve *in situ* the undated wall revealed in evaluation trench 4 (OA 2007). The secondary aim was to preserve by record any other significant archaeological remains on the site where the development work would disturb or damage them.

Particular aims included:

- Attempting to understand the use of the area in the 11th and 12th centuries especially with regard to its association with the Knights Templar preceptory.
- To determine whether there was any activity on the site before the establishment of the preceptory in 1136. Are the Cotswold-type ware sherds from pit fill 405 11th century or could they be later?

The final aim was to make the results of the recording action available to all interested parties through publication of the results.

3 STRATEGY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Archaeologist for Oxford City Council. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record throughout, 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) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

Following the evaluation by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2007) a fifth evaluation trench was opened up by John Moore Heritage Services in order to determine exactly the extent of the wall found in Trench 4 in relation to the proposed foundations of the new build in order that an engineering solution could be formulated to avoid impact on the wall. In the event it was found that the wall lay just outside of the impact area.

During the development an archaeologist was present on site during all groundworks that had the potential to impact on the archaeological horizon. This included the excavation of all foundation trenches, and the deeper service trenches towards the Oxford Road end of the site. Ground reduction for the compound at the Oxford Road frontage was also recorded.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate cut or positive features i.e. ditches or drains; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. CBM refers to ceramic building material. The results of the Oxford Archaeology (OA) evaluation have been included with their contexts numbers being three digits.

All features were cut into (03), an orange sand with dark brown mottling (Beckley Sand Member). The depth of observed natural was between 0.28m and 0.70m thick, depending on the depth of the foundation. It was overlain by (02), a subsoil which had a medium compaction that was dark brown in colour and a sandy clay consistency. It varied in thickness between 0.30m to 0.60m. This in turn was overlaid by (01), a topsoil which had a reasonably loose compaction and was dark greyish brown, contained modern brick and plastics. It was between 0.38m and 0.78m thick. The last two had been disturbed in part during demolition of the previous church hall.

4.1 Medieval Period

JMHS Evaluation Trench 5 (Fig. 2) to the north of the new build contained a ditch [10] datable to this era, and other features that probably date to this period; ditch [08] walls [05] & [07] and pits [16] and [18]. Neither of the ditches were fully excavated, except in OA evaluation trench 4, as this was not an aim.

Ditch [10] ran NE-SW (continuing in OA Evaluation Trench 4 as [404]) and was at least 1.5m wide and contained fill (11) (OA 405). This was of medium compaction, dark brownish grey in colour and consisted of a silty sand with 10-15% charcoal flecking. Above this was fill (19), a medium dark brownish grey silty sand. Charcoal and CBM flecking were observed at around 5-10%. Fill (11) contained a sherd of pottery dating from the late 11th century at the earliest while the later fill contained a sherd dating from 10th to late 11th century. Pottery recovered from OA's work was dated to the 11th century (OA 2007). Therefore a late 11th century date is likely for the filling of this ditch. The relationship of this feature with ditch [08] could not be determined but see walls [05] & [07] below.

Linear ditch [08], as seen, was 2.90m long, 1m wide and ran in a northeast-southwest direction. It contained fill (09) that was a dark brownish grey silty sand of medium compaction, with charcoal and CBM flecking. It was 1m wide. The ditch was not seen further south in the foundation trench.

Ditch [08] cut two pits. The later pit [18] was at least 0.4m in diameter and at least 0.2m deep, filled with dark grey-brown silty sand (17). It cut pit [16] that was at least 0.30m in diameter and at least 0.2m deep. It was filled with medium grey-brown silty sand (15).

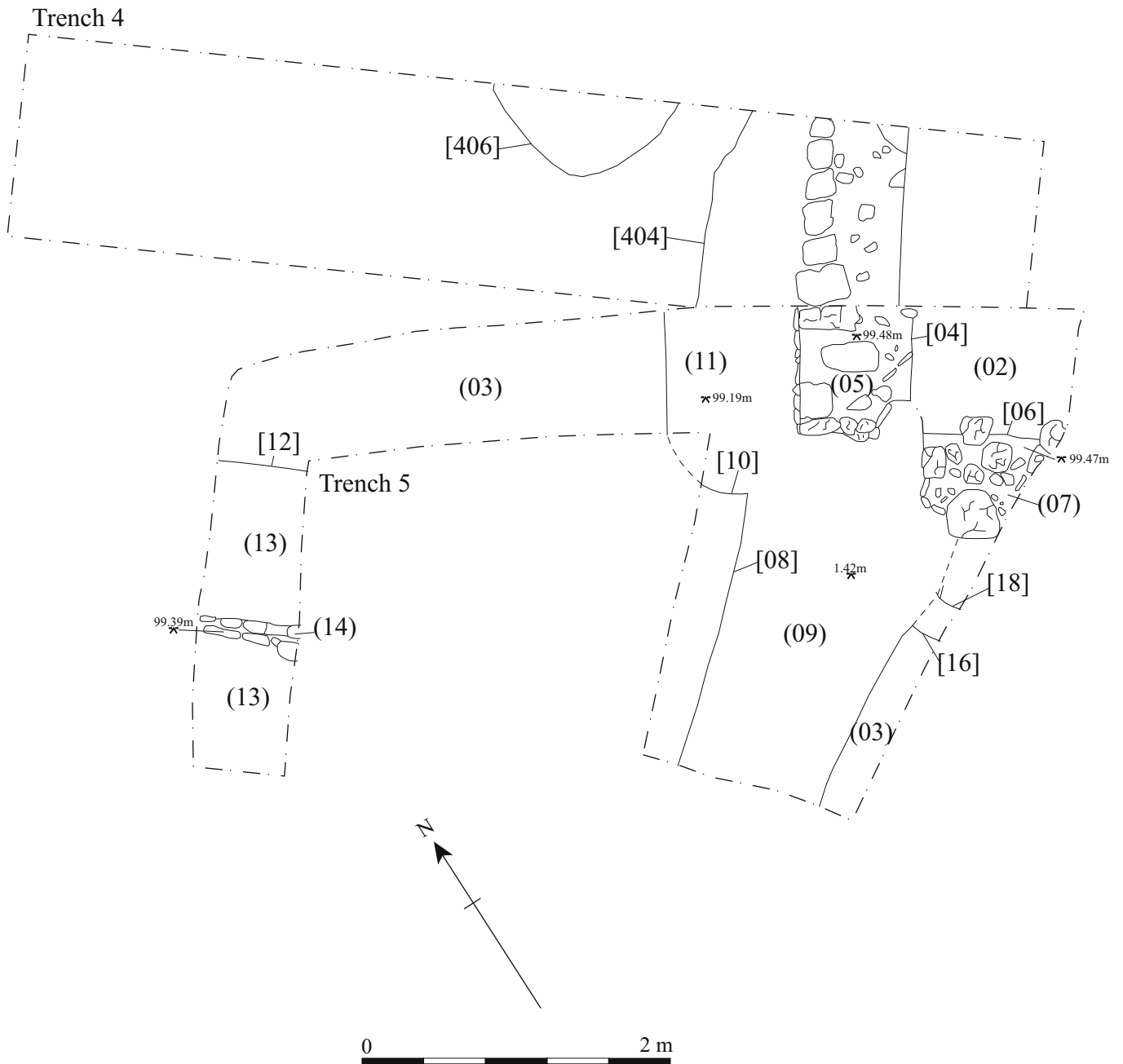


Figure 2. Evaluation trenches 4 and 5

Above the fill of ditch [10] was a corner of a building. The NE-SW wall (05) (OA 403) was comprised of angular limestone blocks, the largest being 0.30m long by 0.27m wide, and the smallest having a diameter of 0.06m. There were three courses surviving, 0.4m high, with the northwest (outer) side of the wall well-faced. There was no bonding material visible. It is presumed that the wall was of one build with wall [07], however the corner stones were missing. It is possible that ditch [08] was later than this building, terminating at, and truncating, the corner of the building.

Wall [07] was constructed of angular limestone blocks, the largest being 0.30m x 0.30m x 0.8m thick. Two courses survived however no bonding material was observed. Wall [05] was contained in a cut [04] that was cut into ditch fill (19) of ditch [10] and was 0.31m deep. This was numbered [06] for wall [07] but was only 0.13m deep. Wall [05] was 0.72m wide while wall [07] appeared slightly narrower at 0.64m. The depth of foundation for wall [05] was deeper, perhaps to compensate for being built over the backfill of ditch [10].

Although undated it is presumed that ditch [12] is associated with the above complex. Only the northeast side of this ditch was visible, which was at least 2m wide. It was filled with (13), which was a dark grey-brown silty sand with a loose-medium compaction and contained around 10-15% charcoal flecking. The fill lay either side of drain [14], which was constructed of small, angular fragments of limestone, the largest being 0.24m long by 0.08m wide and 0.10m thick. There was no finishing or bonding on the stones. The drain was 0.20m wide and was reasonably damaged. It is possible that the ditch was associated with ditch [10] forming two sides to an enclosure or similar with an entrance between them.

Within OA Evaluation Trench 4 a further pit [406] was 1.5m wide, 0.85m deep and filled by a dark silt (407) that contained fragments of bone and a corroded nail.

Further medieval features were found during the watching brief within the excavation for the foundation trenches (Fig. 3). Toward the southwest of the site was pit [32]. This was sub-circular/oval with a 1.20m diameter. It had a depth of 0.50m to the northwest side, opposed to 0.45m deep on the southeastern side. It was filled with (33) which was a loose orangey brown-grey silty sand, with small angular limestone fragments, the largest being 0.06m. Occasional charcoal flecking (5%-10%) was noted. Two sherds of St. Neots Ware pottery were recovered that date from 10th century until late 11th century.

Pit [32] cut pit [34] which means that it is of medieval date. It had a diameter of 1.04m, and a depth of 0.48m. The sides sloped to a rounded base at 35-40° it was filled with a pale yellow-grey silty sand, which contained moderate amounts of small to medium limestone and occasional charcoal flecks (35). Some small solid lumps of scorched earth were retrieved.

In the southeast part of the foundations was a linear ditch [38], which ran E-W. It was seen for 4m before it was truncated by a modern drain to the SW. The ditch was 1.20m at its widest. The feature was not fully excavated; at least 0.50m deep. It was filled by dark grey-brown silty sand which contained around 10% charcoal flecking and between 30-40% small rounded stone, the largest being 0.04m (39) & (42). As well as pottery dating from the late 11th century at the earliest, the fill (42) contained pieces of very corroded, fragmented metal.

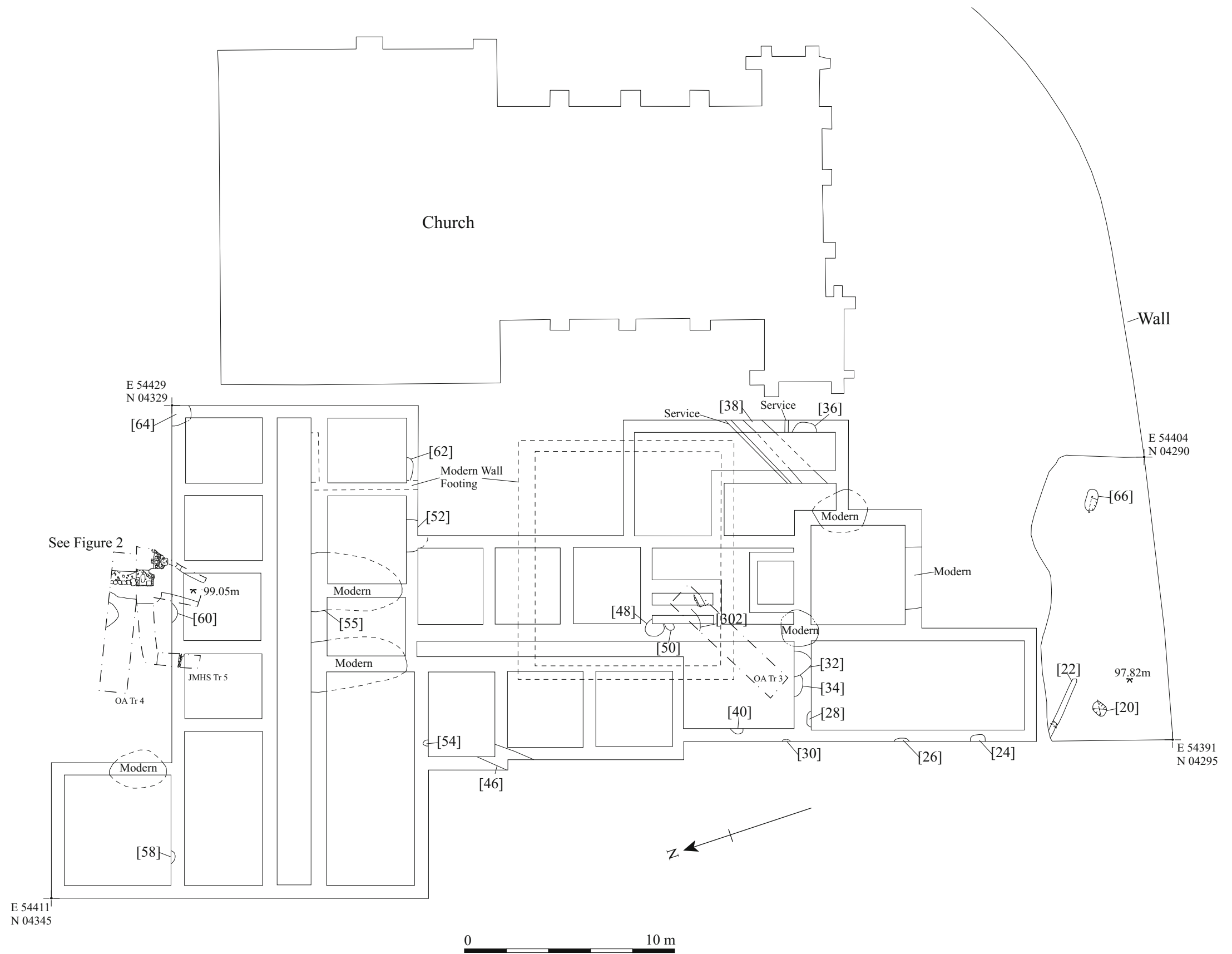


Figure 3. Overall plan

On the north edge of the new build was a small pit [60]. This pit was circular, was 0.21m deep, and protruded 0.20m from the south facing section. The dark black-brown silty clay had a friable consistency with occasional charcoal flecking (61). A sherd of St Neots Ware came from this feature.

A further pit [302] was seen in OA evaluation trench 3. This was more than 1m in diameter and 0.3m deep, and was filled by a dark clay-silt (303) that contained two sherds of 11th-12th century pottery and a probable tile fragment.

4.2 Post-medieval/ Modern

The foundations and remains of the redbrick church hall were visible in places just below the surface of the ground. At least four courses of brick bonded with very hard cement were present. Part is shown on Figure 3.

Associated with the recently demolished building were several modern features in the form of pits and service cuts. The pits contained modern plastics and rubbish. Pit (55) also contained modern material.

4.3 Undated

A number of undated pits were present. Pit [24] was located in the southwest area of the site. It had a 0.20m diameter and was 0.60m deep. The top of the sides was vertical before sloping at *c.* 60⁰ to a flat base. It was filled with a loose medium grey-brown, charcoal flecked (10%) silty sand (25).

To the north of pit [24] lay another pit [26], which measured within the trench 0.10m x 0.40m and 0.28m deep. It was filled with a loose medium grey-brown silty sand, which contained between 10-15% charcoal flecking (27).

To the northeast of [26] was pit [28] which measured within the trench 0.80m x 0.20m and 0.35m deep. The edges sloped into the flat bottom at a 70⁰ angle. It was filled with a loose, medium grey-brown silty sand with 5% charcoal flecking (29).

To the north of [28] lay a small pit [30], which was 0.40m x 0.20 within the trench. The sides sloped in at a 75⁰ angle to a flat base, and the pit was filled with a dark grey-brown charcoal flecked (15%) silty sand which had a loose compaction and small rounded stone, no larger than 0.08m in diameter (31).

Towards the southeast of the new build was pit [36], which appeared oval, measuring 1.20m x 0.66m within the trench and with a depth of 0.50m. It was filled with a loose dark grey-brown, charcoal flecked (10-15%) silty sand and 30% medium-sided fragments of angular limestone, the largest being 0.12m x 0.10m (37).

To the north of [30] was an elongated pit [40] which was 0.50m wide by 0.25m long within the trench, and was 0.40m deep with sides loping in at 70⁰ to a flat base. It contained a loose, dark grey-brown charcoal flecked (10-15%) silty sand and 10% small rounded stone no larger than 0.02m (41).

Towards the north of pit [40] was a linear ditch [46], which ran roughly parallel with ditch [38] and in line with ditch [08] to the northeast. It ran in a northeast-southwest direction, and measured at least 1.9m long by 2m wide and 0.64m deep while its sides

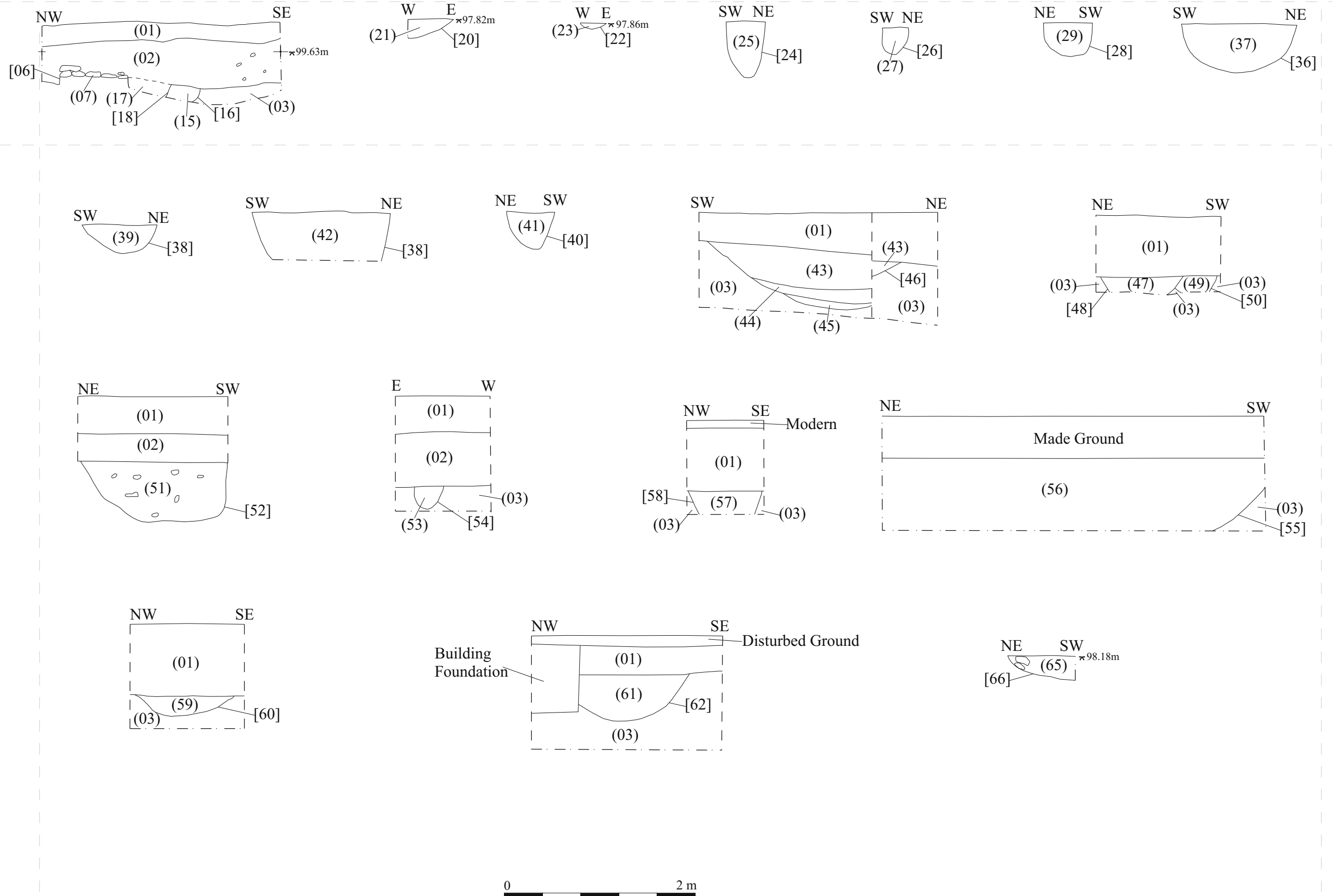


Figure 4. Sections

sloped in at 35° to a flat base. It contained three fills; the primary fill (45) was a friable charcoal flecked mid-dark white-grey sandy silt. It was 0.11m thick. The secondary fill had a loose consistency, was a friable mixed yellow-brown, white-grey sandy clay and contained fragments of corroded limestone and 10% charcoal flecking and was 0.17m thick (44). The tertiary fill (43) was a friable medium yellow-grey brown sandy clay with 5-10% charcoal flecking. It was 0.48m thick.

To the east of [46] was a medium sized circular pit [48] which was not excavated to its full depth. It had a 0.86m diameter and was excavated to a depth of 0.20m. It was filled with a loose medium brown-yellowish grey sandy clay with charcoal flecking of up to 5%.

Beside [48] was another smaller pit [50], which was also not excavated to its full depth. The pit was circular in plan, had a 0.48m diameter and was excavated to a depth of 0.19m. It was filled with (49), which was a friable brown-yellow-grey, charcoal flecked silty clay.

Towards the northeast of [50] was pit [52]. This pit measured 1.54m long by 0.60m wide and was 1.62m deep. The sides sloped in from the top at a 75° angle to a flat base. It had a loose dark grey-brown silty sand fill with 10% charcoal flecking and 5% medium sized rounded stone which was no larger than 0.16m.

A further pit [54] was recorded to the west of [52]. Its diameter was 0.25m and a depth of 0.30m. It had a shallow U-shaped profile. It was filled with a friable mid brown silty clay (53).

To the north of pit [54] was a pit [58], which had a 0.75m diameter and was 0.20m deep. The sides had a 70° slope, but the base was unknown, as it was not fully excavated. It was filled with a loose medium brown-yellow grey sandy clay with charcoal flecks (57).

Towards the northeast of the new build was pit [62], which was cut by a modern foundation. It appeared to be circular in plan, a 1.14m diameter and was 0.51m deep. It was U-shaped in profile with 50° sloping sides. It was filled with (61), a friable dark black-brown charcoal flecked sandy silty clay. It was heavily disturbed by root action.

In the northeast corner of the site was pit [64], which had a diameter of at least 1m and was 0.80m deep. The sides were near vertical and sloped down onto a flat base. It was filled with (63), a medium to dark brown-grey sandy silt of moderate compaction.

The area to the south of the new build, fronting Oxford Road, contained two small pits and one small gully. Pit [20] circular, had a 0.75m diameter. The sides sloped in at a 60° angle to a sloping base. The fill was comprised of a dark brownish grey silty sand which had a medium compaction. It was 0.20m deep. To the north of pit [20] was a small gully [22]. [22] was linear in plan, ran in an east-west direction and was 3m long, 0.29m wide and only 0.05m deep. It had a light brown sandy fill (23). To the east of the gully lay another small pit [66] that was circular with a 0.40m diameter. The top of slope was around 85 degrees, and sloped in at an 80-degree angle to a flat bottom. It was filled with (65), which was a loose, medium greyish brown silty sand. It contained around 10% small rounded stone, the largest being 0.02m.

4.4 Reliability of results and methodologies

The watching brief was carried out successfully with minimal disturbance to the contractors. The results can be assessed as reliable, carried out under the best conditions within the constraints of a watching brief. It is not always possible to distinguish each feature within a watching brief. In this situation deeper features were easily seen cut into the natural but shallower features may have been missed especially when the sides of the trench were smeared by the machine's bucket. Health and safety reasons prevented cleaning of some deeper lengths of the foundation trenches. Some features were obviously not seen as ditch [08/46] was not seen in two foundation trenches and the extent westwards of ditch [38] was not established.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 16 sherds with a total weight of 315g. The pottery from the OA evaluation (OA 2007) has been included. It comprised a mixture of Romano-British, late Saxon and medieval material, and was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXR: St. Neots Ware type T1(1), AD850-1100. 3 sherds, 70g.

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 5 sherds, 83g.

OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 2 sherds, 21g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherd, 15g.

In addition, 1 sherd (3g) of Romano-British pottery was also present.

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 Oxford. The presence of several large stratified sherds of St. Neots ware shows that there was late Saxon activity in the immediate vicinity of the site, doubtless related to the *burh* of Oxford.

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

Cntxt	RB		OXR		OXAC		OXY		OXAM		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
2									1	15	13thC
11							1	6			L11thC
19	1	3	1	5							10thC
33			2	65							10thC
42							1	15			L11thC
61			2	87							10thC
303							2	36			L11thC
405					5	83					11thC
Total	1	3	5	157	5	83	4	57	1	15	

5.2 Animal bone

A jaw bone was recovered the fill (42) of ditch [38] while a vertebra came from fill 9590 of pit [60].

5.3 Metalwork

An unidentifiable piece of iron came from the fill (42) of ditch [38].

5.4 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION

The results appear to show three phases of activity. The earliest is the ditch [10, 404] which is dated to the late 11th century. This ditch may be associated with ditch [12] forming the corner to an enclosure, paddock or field. Pits [32], [34] and [60] are associated with this phase of activity.

The first phase of activity pre-dated the founding of the Templar preceptory in 1134. The building [05] & [07] may well be associated with the preceptory being built over an earlier ditch. The drain [14] may have been associated with the building being built within the possibly earlier ditch.

It is not possible to associate pits [16], [18], [302], [406] or other ones further south with either of these phases but it is likely that they belong in one of this phases.

The third phase is evidenced by ditches [08], [38], [46], given that the first is later than the building. Pottery from ditch [38] dates this paddock or field from the late 11th to mid 14th century. Given the previous two phases of activity a date nearer to the end of this range is most likely. It is possible that it dates to after the founding of the new preceptory at Sandford in 1240 when the status of the Temple Cowley preceptory was reduced to that of a camera.

The lack of finds from the later medieval and earlier post-medieval periods seems to indicate that the area was either pasture or unused.

The sherd of Roman pottery recovered must be associated with the known activity at the pottery kiln site further along Temple Road.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report
Copy of OA's evaluation report
The primary site records

Finds contents list
Pottery report

Finds

Pottery
Metalwork

Animal Bone

The archive currently is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services. The archive will be transferred to: Oxfordshire Museums Resource Centre, Cotswold Dene, Standlake, Witney OX29 7QG.

The accession number for the site is: OCMS: 2008.17

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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