



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

WALLINGFORD LIBRARY, HIGH STREET,

WALLINGFORD, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 6051 8953

*On behalf of
Mouchel*

OCTOBER 2010

REPORT FOR Mouchel
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological watching brief during the groundwork for a new wall at Wallingford Library. The dismantled wall had been built on the foundations of an earlier, 17th century or later, wall that had re-used stone blocks that had likely originated in the Priory Church. No other archaeological features were recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development was undertaken to the north east of Wallingford Library, north of the High Street, Wallingford (SU 6051 8953). The geology is River Terrace Deposits and the site lies at approximately 48.8m OD.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission was granted by Oxfordshire County Council to dismantling and reconstruction of 8m of a listed wall to the rear of Wallingford Library (R3.0234/09). Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological deposits, a planning condition was attached to the permission requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained throughout the work. This was in line with PPS5 and Local Plan policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The wall concerned lies within an area of some archaeological interest located immediately south of the Saxon Town Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM OX182). The site is also immediately west of the site of the medieval priory at Wallingford (PRN 7785). A large chalk wall was recorded 44m SE of the site of this application which is thought to relate to the Priory (PRN 16938) and floor layers with traces of robbed out monastic tiles was recorded during test pitting 62m SE of the site. A number of fragments of decorated medieval tile were recorded during these test pits. A charnel pit (PRN 16500) and a number of medieval burials, both associated with the Priory Church, were also recorded along the High Street 110m SSE of the site (PRN 13812).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development.

In particular:

- to record any evidence relating to the Saxon and medieval occupation of the town.
- to record any burials related to the Priory Church.

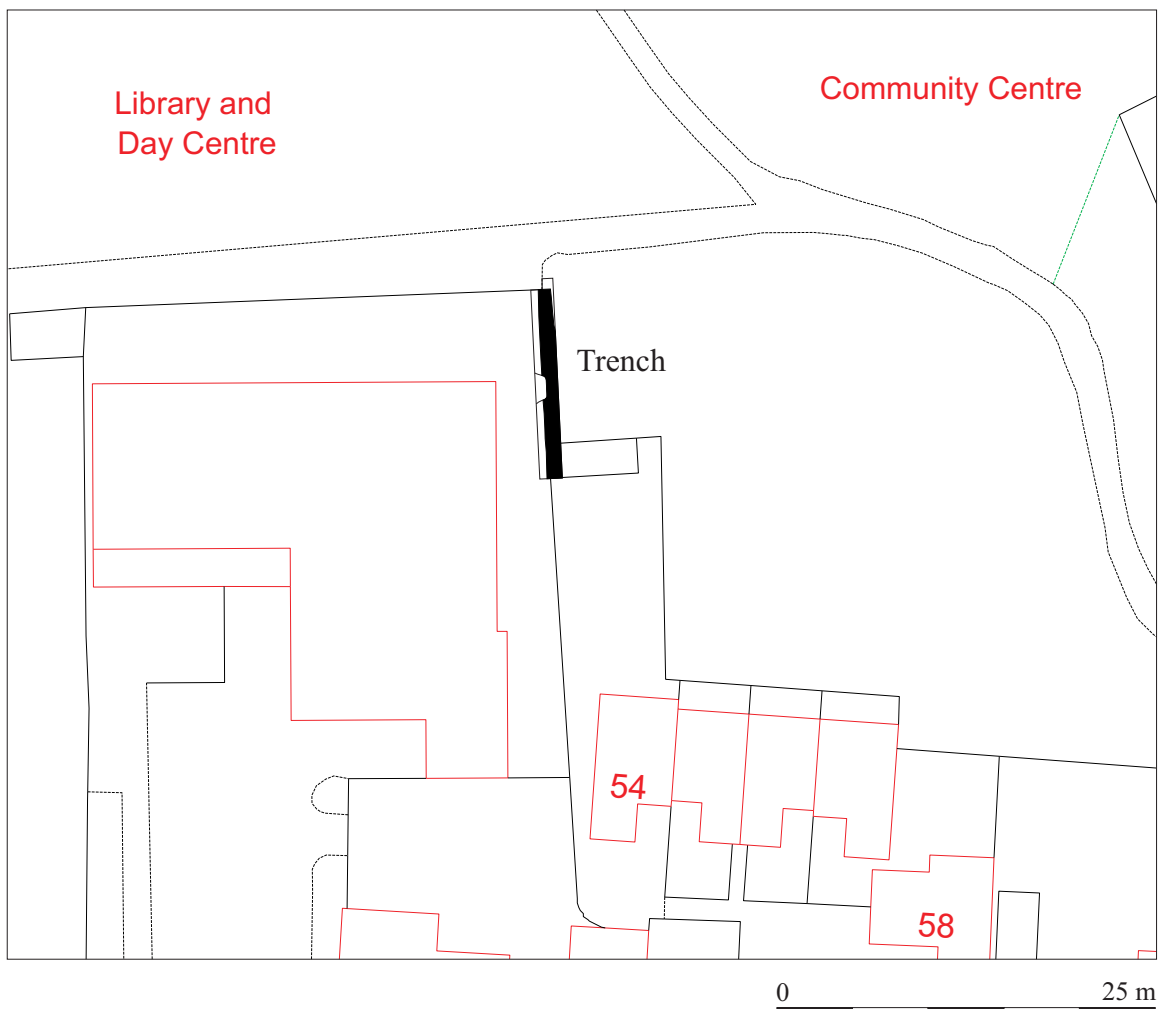
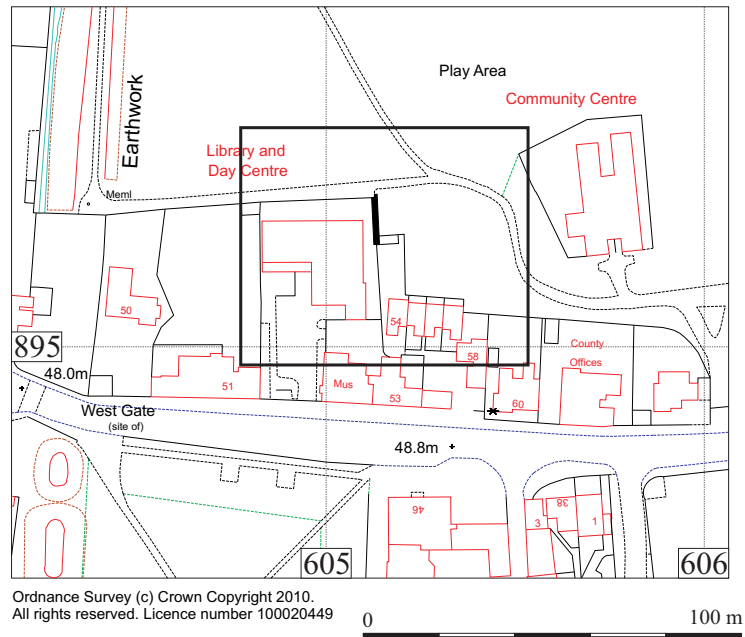


Figure 1. Site location

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).

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist monitored the course of all invasive groundworks that had the potential to disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

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. A photographic record was also produced.

4 RESULTS

All features were assigned individual context numbers. Numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. A general description of the contexts observed is given below.

4.1 Excavation Results

The lowest deposit encountered was a dark grey-brown sandy clay (07) with small stone fragments and rare small ceramic building material (CBM) pieces. It was not fully excavated but was at least 0.3m thick. This was seen to the west of the wall, a very similar deposit (08) to the east is thought to be a continuation of this layer.

Apparently cut into this layer (07)/(08) was the foundation trench for the wall (04). This cut 06 was linear and appeared to be over 1m wide in places. It was not fully exposed during the groundwork, but was at least 0.3m deep.

The wall (04) within this trench was roughly 0.4m wide, constructed of rough stone and flint with the rare brick and tile fragment included with a degraded sandy mortar. This wall survived to a height of at least 0.75m in places. Also included with in the wall were re-used dressed sandstone blocks and mouldings. The foundation trench had been back-filled with a mid brown sandy loam (09) with c. 30% stone fragments.

Above deposit (07) was a layer of mid-dark brown silty-sandy loam (03) flecked with charcoal and with rare fragments of CBM and flint pebbles. This was on average 0.3m thick. Above deposit (08), to the east of the wall, was a similar layer of mid-dark brown silty-sandy loam (05) that is thought to be a continuation of layer (03), this deposit contained a considerably higher quantity of brick and tile fragments.

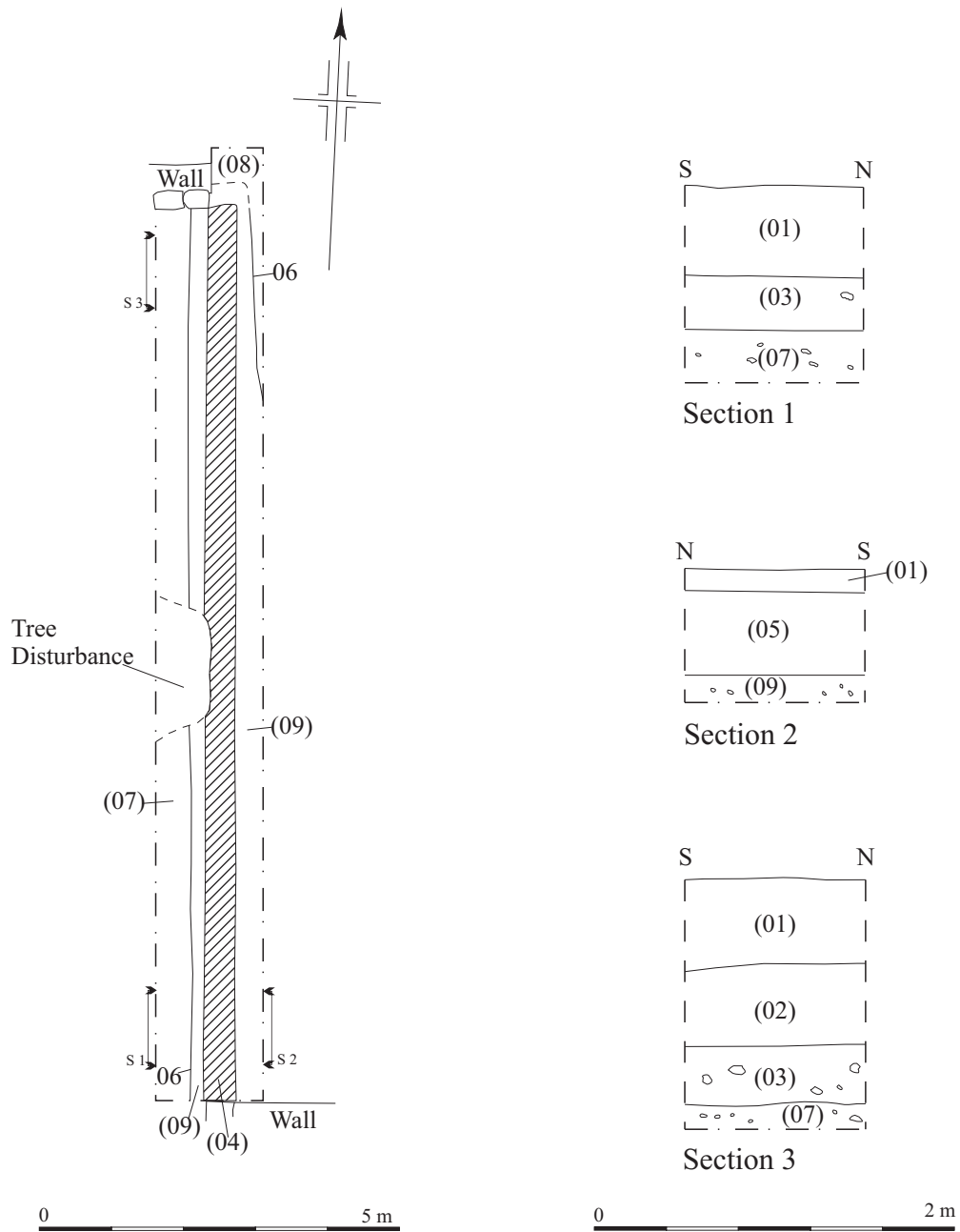


Figure 2. Plan and sections

Overlying layer (03) at the north end of the site was a deposit of mid-dark grey silt-loam (02) with c. 15% gravel and CBM fragments that was up to 0.4m thick. This appeared to have been dumped against the northern boundary wall.

The uppermost layer was a dark brown-grey sandy loam (01) that was up to 0.7m thick in places.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The results are considered to be good. The archaeologist was alerted to all invasive groundworks being undertaken on site and was given full access to the site. The work took place on dry days with excellent co-operation from the ground workers.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery

The post-medieval pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

Sherds of mid 19th – 20th century Mass-produced White Earthenwares (WHEW), Red Earthenware (OXDR), dated 1550+ and Creamware (CRM), dated late 18th – early 19th century were noted from contexts (01), (02) and (03). These were not retained.

5.2 Brick and Tile (*By Gwilym Williams*)

Two samples of post-medieval building materials were recovered from the wall during the watching brief. The brick was a large well-fired fragment clearly broken prior to incorporation in the wall fabric as mortar splashes were visible on one of the end breaks. It appears that some traces of glaze are also present on one of the edges and on one of the faces; this may well be due to the original firing comprising both brick and other ceramic objects – either pottery or roof tile.

A small corner of roof tile, which had previously broken, was also incorporated into the wall fabric. Mortar was present on five of six surfaces.

Both fragments are typically post-medieval and likely to date from the 17th to late 18th centuries.

Context Number	Frgs.	Weight	Dims	Fabric	Comments	Date
4	1	1555g	110mm x55mm x>130m m	Red, sandy fabric with occ ironstone inclusions	Middle section of brick, handmade glaze drips on one edge and possibly under mortar on one face; mortar present on broken end, indicating reuse	Post-medieval (17 th C+)
4	1	74g	68mm x50mm x13mm	Orange sandy fabric occ small stone inclusions	Fragment of tile with mortar adhering to five of six surfaces	Post-medieval (17 th C+)
Total	2	168g				

5.3 Stone

Several fragments of dressed sandstone blocks, quoins and mouldings were recovered from the fabric of wall (04). These pieces appear to be reused from the remains of the Priory that was dissolved in 1524-8 (VCH 1907). Representatives of the Wallingford Museum took these pieces prior to detailed recording.



5.4 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION

Layers (01), (02), (03) and (05) appear to be later deposits deliberately raising the level of the ground in the area. This appears to have occurred from the late 19th century onwards, certainly context (01) contains very recent material, such as plastic.

The stone built wall (04) contained reused fragments of brick and tile; samples of this material were dated to be the 17th or 18th century. The east-west orientated brick walls to the north and south were noted to butt against the stone wall (04).

The foundation trench for wall (04) was cut into layer (07)/(08), this is presumably the level of the old ground surface at the time of construction.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site records

Physical Record

The finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire Museum Resource Centre.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*.

VCH 1907 Houses of Benedictine monks: The priory of Wallingford, *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 2*, pp. 77-79