

WOODSTOCK (OX)

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WOODSTOCK FLETCHERS HOUSE

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**WOODSTOCK, FLETCHERS HOUSE
OXFORDSHIRE**

(SP 44401675)

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WOODSTOCK, FLETCHERS HOUSE OXFORDSHIRE

(SP 44401675)

INTRODUCTION

On 3rd, 4th, and 7th of February 1994 a watching brief was carried out at Fletchers House in Woodstock Oxfordshire (SP 44401675). The work involved the digging of pipe trenches and a soakaway to the east of Fletchers House. The building currently houses the County Museum.

The total length of the two pipe trenches was 13.60m and they were 0.50m in width and 0.50m in depth. The trenches fed into a soakaway 1.60m in diameter and 1.80m deep.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The town of Woodstock had a planned foundation of the late 12th century and the medieval plan is still preserved within the present town.

There have been limited opportunities for archaeological investigations within Woodstock. The designation of a conservation area has meant no large scale development has occurred within the medieval town (Rodwell 1975).

Little medieval pottery has ever been recovered from the town. A small amount from No.7 Market Place suggest a 13th to late 14th century date by analogy with Oxford fabric types. The town in the 13th century had a documented pottery industry (Hassall and Mellor 1976), for example in 1279 Agnes Siber rented a kiln at Woodstock (McCarthy and Brooks 1988).

The N side of Park Street, in the medieval period, was comprised of long plots or burgages stretching down to Harrison's Lane (in medieval times known as Frog Lane), which forms a typical back lane. The burgages can still be seen and the long boundaries are characterized by high large rubble walls.

In 1279 the burgages fronting Park St carried diverse rents reflecting division, amalgamation and encroachment during a phase of development and growth from the 13th to the early 14th century. This growth halted in the later 14th century, some properties becoming ruinous.

Quintrents imposed on the towns original burgages survived until the 1930s' so it is possible to trace the descent of many sites in Woodstock. In 1468-9 a large vacant plot in the area of Fletchers House extended down to Harrison's Lane. Some time before 1609 Alderman Thomas Browne bought a house on the site and in 1614 bought the two adjacent properties and built a 'great house' called Fletcher's. The earlier Fletcher's house seems to have survived at least up until the 17th century.

The remains of the new house of c. 1614 occupy the centre and W end of the existing building. The house was refronted and the E block built under a contract of 1795 (VCH Oxon 1990).

Bibliography

T.G. Hassall and M.Mellor, 'Medieval Pottery from No.7 Market Place, Woodstock', *Oxoniensia* *XLI* (1976) p.358.

M.R. McCarthy and C.M. Brooks, 'Medieval Pottery in Britain AD900-1600', (1988).

K. Rodwell (ed.) *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire* (1975) p.191.

VCH Oxford Vol XII (1990) p.335,p.342, p.350.

SUMMARY

The archaeological features identified E of Fletchers House consisted of two walls: 108 and 116. Wall 108 probably represents one of the main structural walls of a building. The slightly less substantial construction of wall 116 probably represents an internal wall of the same building. The level at which 116 survives indicates the likely survival of cellars within a building. No floor layers were seen which related to the building as they were likely to have been below the bottom of the soakaway. No direct dating evidence for the walls was recovered but the nature of their construction means a medieval date is possible.

RESULTS

Almost directly below the existing paving slabs, adjacent to Fletchers House, a foundation wall 105 was initially exposed, orientated at right angles to the Park Street frontage. The bottom course was offset with larger stones. The foundation wall was 0.32m in height and at the top the width was also 0.32m. The wall was constructed of flat coursed rubble limestone with a cream mortar.

Wall 105 had been constructed along the line of an earlier wall 108. Constructed of limestone the full width of the wall was not clear as wall 105 obscured the W side. The width exceeded 0.55m and the top of wall was located 0.50m below the present paved walkway. There were no floor layers in the trench to associate with the wall. A grey silt layer 107 was deposited over wall 108, but it produced no finds.

The bottom of both trenches consisted of greenish clay with occasional lumps of limestone 114. Only within the area of the soakaway was 114 excavated by the builders. The deposit 114 appeared fairly 'clean', only containing the occasional fleck of charcoal and burnt red clay, it exceeded 1.19m in depth.

At 1.30m below the present ground surface wall 116 was located. Orientated approximately E/W this wall was constructed from fairly flat lumps of coursed limestone rubble, with a reddish-brown silt bonding. The clay 114 both overlaid and abutted wall 116. A localised soil deposit 119 was only seen directly above wall 116. This deposit appeared partly incorporated into the clay layer 114. Three sherds of pottery were recovered from 119, examined by Lucy Bown, one sherd was fabric type OXAC (Oxford Early Medieval Ware) dated from late 11th-mid 13th century. The other two sherds were fabric OXAM (Oxford Late Medieval Ware) 13th to 15th century. These three sherds were the only medieval finds from the site.

INTERPRETATION

Wall 105

The dimensions of the wall 105 suggests it represents a boundary wall or garden retaining wall. Blue patterned white china was recovered from under the wall indicating a late date for its construction.

Wall 108

Although only a small part of the wall 108 was revealed in the trench the character of the wall suggests an early date, possibly medieval. The size of the limestone, typically 0.25m x 0.25 x 0.12m, would be consistent with that required for a main structural wall of a building.

Wall 116

The construction as revealed in the elevation appeared to be made from less substantial limestone (typically 0.14m x 0.14m x 0.06m) than that of wall 108.

Wall 116 appears to be at 90° to wall 108, and it is probably part of the same building. The implication is that wall 108 survives to a greater height as the dumped material, represented by the clay 114, was level with the top the surviving wall 108. This would infer that wall 108 exceeds 0.85m in height.

Although only a 0.50m length of wall 108 and a 1.20m length of 116 was exposed it can be conjectured that wall 108, due to its more substantial construction, represents the main structural wall of a building. Wall 116 due to the slightly less substantial construction indicates it was an internal wall. The depth of the clay deposit 114 and lack of any floor layers may indicate it is within a cellar.

A possible candidate for walls 108 and 116 is the earlier Fletchers House, purchased by Browne before 1609,

which was recorded on the site in 1526 and survived at least up until the mid 17th century. Its fate could have been sealed by the construction of the 18th century extension block.

Clay deposit 114

The character and quantity of this 114 suggests it had been dumped to raise up and level the site and/or infill an area.

No pottery was recovered from 114 but as the 18th century building stands on a raised terrace, the clay dumping could relate to the time of its construction.

IMPACT OF THE TRENCHES AND SOAKAWAY

The insertion of the pipe in the trench necessitated some disturbance of wall 105 and 108 although this was kept to a minimum required to lay the pipe.

The soakaway was enlarged to accommodate the concrete rings without any disturbance to wall 116.

A K Parkinson
OAU
14 February 1994

Table of contexts and finds

APPENDIX 1

WOODSTOCK, FLETCHERS HOUSE (WOFH 94)					
CXT	TYPE	WIDTH (m)	DEPTH (m)	COMMENTS	FINDS
101	Layer		0.07	Garden soil	
102	Layer		0.10	Make up for slabs	
103	Layer		0.07	Gravel spread	
104	Layer		0.22		
105	Wall	0.32	0.32	Boundary/ retaining wall	
106	Fill		0.19	Fill of 117	
107	Layer		0.07	Overlies 108	
108	Wall	0.55+		Structural wall at approx. 90° to Park St	
109	Layer		0.06	Disturbance of wall 105	
110	Layer		0.14	Soil	
111	Layer		0.33		
112	Layer		0.09	Charcoal layer	1 brick fragment 1 blue patterned white china
113	Layer		0.19	Mixed mortar soil and rubble layer	2 brick fragments
114	Layer		1.19+	Clay dumping	
115	Fill		Not known	Fill of 117	1 red tile fragment
116	Wall	0.29+	0.50+	Wall at 90° to 108	
117	Pit	1.40	0.23+		
118	Fill		0.04	Fill of 117	
119	Layer		0.51	Soil and limestone layer above 116	1 Pot sherd 11th-13th century 2 pot sherds 13th-15th century
120	Layer		0.11	Layer within 114	



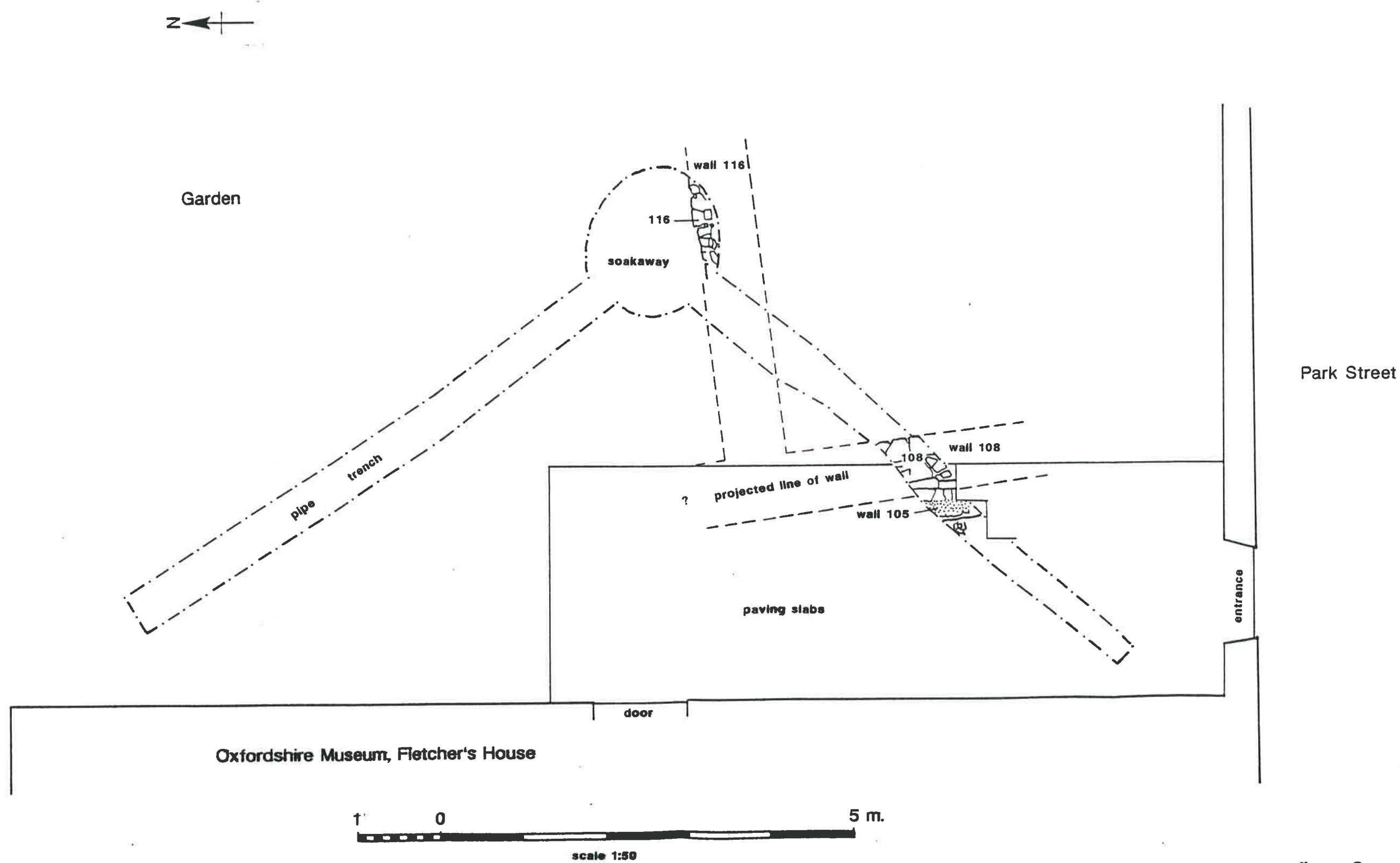


figure 2

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