

Olga Mowforth House  
Folly Orchard Road  
Woodcote  
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological  
Evaluation Report**

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1	Jacek Gruszczynski Supervisor	Steve Lawrence Senior Project Manager	Paul Booth Senior Project Manager	

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Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263800

e: oasouth@thehumanjourney.net

f: +44 (0) 1865 793496

w: oasouth.thehumanjourney.net

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Olga Mowforth House, Folly Orchard Road,  
Woodcote, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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## **Summary**

*In November 2009 Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation at Olga Mowforth House, Folly Orchard Road, Woodcote (NGR: SU 643 820) on behalf of Builders Ede Ltd. This was undertaken to inform the determination of the planning application by South Oxfordshire District Council.*

*Six evaluation trenches were excavated within the constraints of the existing physical barriers, tree cover and tree protection orders.*

*With the exception of a single undated posthole and a treehole or planting pit, the evaluation did not encounter any archaeological remains. All trenches revealed a deep accumulation of cultivated soil averaging in excess of 0.5 m suggesting that significant truncation, removing any potential remains, may have occurred across the site in the post-medieval period.*







## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between 18th and 20th November 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook a field evaluation within the grounds of Olga Mowforth house, Woodcote. This was commissioned by Builders Ede Ltd to fulfil a Brief set by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) designed to inform determination of a planning application (ref:P09/E0991) for the construction of twelve flats to replace Olga Mowforth House, along with the construction of ten houses and sixteen further flats with associated parking. The requirement for the archaeological evaluation is in accordance with PPG16 and South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan policies.
- 1.1.2 Prior to commencing the site investigation a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by OA and agreed with Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for OCAS, detailing how the requirements of the Brief would be met.
- 1.1.3 The proposed development site is located to the east of Folly Orchard Road and to the rear of Olga Mowforth House in the centre of Woodcote (centring upon NGR SU 643 820). The evaluation comprised the excavation of trenches within the c 1.17 hectares of grounds (Fig. 1).

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is situated on relatively level ground at approximately 163 m OD. The underlying geology is Clay with Flints and sand and gravels. The grounds were enclosed by mature trees with a mixture of maintained lawn and flower borders and open scrub at the time of the fieldwork.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The background to the site as presented in the Brief is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The site lies within an area of some archaeological interest located 100 m south of the medieval church of St Leonards (PRN 3936, SU 6437 8215). The church dates to the 12th century but was rebuilt on its existing foundations in 1846. This would have formed the focus of the medieval settlement. A listed 17th century farmhouse, Church Farm, is located 180 m north-east of the site.
- 1.3.3 The layout of the village has changed considerably over time and the Davis map of Oxfordshire of 1794 shows a NE-SW aligned road running through the application area with a number of houses located on either side. The date of these buildings is unknown, as is the date of the road, but it is likely that they date from the 17th century or earlier and could be the last remnants of the medieval settlement. Their exact location in relation to the current village arrangement cannot be accurately defined based upon the Davis map although they are believed to generally coincide with the development area.



## 2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims as identified within the WSI are repeated below:

- (i) To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of these.
- (ii) To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features where relevant.
- (iii) To establish the need for any mitigation strategy.
- (iv) To make available the results of the investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The WSI proposed the excavation of approximately 180 m of linear trench at 1.6 m wide equating to 288 m<sup>2</sup>. Eight trench locations were identified in the WSI to present the best coverage of the new build plans within the constraints of the existing physical barriers, tree cover and tree protection orders. In the event Trenches 1 and 5 were not excavated. Trench 1 coincided with the line of several live services between the street and the existing house frontages whilst Trench 5 could not be adequately excavated within the constraints of the surrounding tree protection orders. To mitigate the removal of these trenches the remainder were enlarged to provide a like for like percentage coverage of the site. The remaining six trenches totalled approximately 278 m<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.2 OA informed the Planning Archaeologist of these variations and the final trench layout was discussed and agreed on site to provide a satisfactory coverage. However, it was also acknowledged that the area between the standing building and Folly Orchard Road had not been effectively covered. The relative significance of this fact is discussed below in the results and discussion sections.
- 2.2.3 The six remaining trenches were machine excavated by a 4 tonne tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket operating under direct archaeological supervision. Excavation proceeded to the surface of the natural geology or the top of the first archaeological horizon dependent upon whichever was encountered first. Adjustments were made to the trench locations according to the physical constraints and the exact locations were surveyed following excavation. Care was taken not to damage potential archaeological deposits through excessive use of mechanical excavation.
- 2.2.4 Following machine excavation and where deemed necessary, each trench was cleaned by hand and the revealed deposits or features were sample excavated to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples where appropriate. Context recording was in accordance with established OA practices outlined within the WSI and all contexts were allocated unique numbers. Artefact assemblages were collected and identified by context.
- 2.2.5 Plans of trenches containing archaeological features were drawn at a scale of 1:50. Detailed plans of empty trenches were not made although dimension details were recorded. Section drawings of features and sample sections of all trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20.



- 2.2.6 A black and white and digital photographic record, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered, was maintained.
- 2.2.7 The project was carried out by a suitably qualified OA supervisor (Jacek Gruszczynski), under the overall direction of a Senior Project Manager (Steve Lawrence), and the OA Head of Fieldwork (Dan Poore). The evaluation was monitored by Richard Oram for OCAS.

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 Trenches 1 and 5 were not excavated as described above.
- 3.1.2 Features were encountered in Trenches 2, 6 and 7 and are described below. General trench details including the dimensions, orientations, depths of deposits and presence or absence of finds are recorded in Appendix A. This should be consulted for all basic details and forms the full record for Trenches 3, 4 and 8. Although significant artefact assemblages were absent a summary of those recovered during the fieldwork is presented after the trench descriptions. Illustrative sections and plans are included at the end of this report (Figs 3 and 4) showing the relative levels of each trench in m aOD.

#### 3.2 Soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soils and ground conditions encountered were reasonably consistent across the site. Within all trenches topsoil overlay a cultivated soil horizon. The dark humic topsoil was generally 0.3 m thick and the lighter grey brown buried soil was 0.2 to 0.3 m thick and slightly more clayey. Two humic 'topsoil' layers were present within Trench 6 overlying the lower soil horizon. The geology, comprising a bright orange sand and clay with gravel, was encountered within all trenches.

#### 3.3 Trench 2

- 3.3.1 Trench 2 was machine excavated to a depth of 0.66 m revealing the orange brown natural clay with flint gravel (204). Within the northern part of the trench a rectangular feature (202), measuring 2.43 m x 1.12 m, was revealed and sample excavated. This was filled with a compact greyish brown clayey silt with gravel inclusions (203) and closely resembled the subsoil (201), from which it could not be distinguished. The feature was 0.36 m deep and probably represents a planting pit or similar feature.

#### 3.4 Trench 6

- 3.4.1 Trench 6 was machine excavated to a depth of 0.60 m revealing the orange brown natural clay with flint gravel (603). This was overlain by a 0.22 m thick buried soil horizon (602) consistent with the description above. A rectangular pit (604) orientated NE-SW and with vertical long sides, sloped short sides and a flat base was cut through the lower soil horizon. This measured 2.69 m by 0.72 m and was approximately 0.50 m deep and was backfilled with a very mixed deposit of brownish grey clayey silt and orange brown gravelly clay (605). The backfill deposit appeared to derive from a mixture of the excavated natural and subsoil layers. This had the appearance of a machine excavated trench that had been immediately backfilled such as would be expected from a geotechnical test pit. The backfilled feature was sealed by the current topsoil layers.



### 3.5 Trench 7

3.5.1 Trench 7 was machine excavated to a depth of 0.51 m revealing the orange brown natural clay with flint gravel (704). Cut into this was an isolated posthole (702), 0.20 m in diameter and 0.29 m deep with vertical sides and a V-shaped profile. This suggests that the original post was pointed and driven into the ground. The posthole fill was sealed by the buried cultivation soil horizon (701) that contained a recognisably greater amount of large rounded gravel inclusions than was noticed within the other trenches.

### 3.6 Finds

3.6.1 The excavated trenches proved to be extremely sterile and no significant finds assemblages were encountered from any of the excavated deposits. Three sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from Trenches 7 and 8. The topsoil from Trench 7 (700) produced a single sherd (21 g) of glazed red earthenware dated to the 18th to 19th century. Two sherds of pottery were recovered from the topsoil of Trench 8 (800). These comprised a sherd (17 g) of 19th or 20th century flower pot and a sherd (9 g) of 19th century transfer-printed Staffordshire white ware. These fragments have been examined and subsequently discarded.

## 4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 Although the distribution of trenches was reduced by not excavating at two locations (Trenches 1 and 5), the results of this investigation can still be viewed as being representative of the potential for the site. The absence of Trench 5 is not considered as being particularly significant as this was in close proximity to three other trenches that produced negative results. The area surrounding Trench 1 was not investigated, but it is recognised that this is also likely to be the most disturbed part of the site with the existing house to the immediate east and numerous service trenches crossing the line of the proposed trench. These are likely to have caused considerable disturbance and truncation to any deposits. Likewise, the lack of positive results encountered across the site, both in terms of features and artefacts, strongly indicates a very low probability that significant archaeological features and deposits are present within the development boundary.
- 4.1.2 The evaluation did reveal that deep cultivation soils are present across the site. This suggests a long history of cultivation, probably in the form of open fields and gardens associated with historical and recent properties. The lack of artefacts within this soil is unusual if significant contemporary settlement was located nearby as it would be expected that more frequent occurrences of pottery and other waste items incorporated into the soil through manure spreads would be encountered. However, this may only reflect the cultivation techniques that were being applied here rather than anything else of particular significance.
- 4.1.3 The topsoil layer revealed in Trench 8 proved to be significantly darker and rich in organic matter. This was due to the recent use of the area, which is known to have served as a vegetable garden for the past 30 years.
- 4.1.4 No remains of a road and the houses shown in Davis' map of 1794 and anticipated within the investigation area were encountered.
- 4.1.5 The absence of archaeological remains in the investigation area suggests that the proposed development site has a very low archaeological potential.



## APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1		
<b>General description</b>  Not excavated at the request of the client due to the number of live services that were present associated with the existing occupation of Olga Mowforth House.	<b>Orientation</b>	-
	<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	-
	<b>Width (m)</b>	-
	<b>Length (m)</b>	-

Trench 2		
<b>General description</b>  No significant archaeological remains. A rectangular pit containing a single fill indistinguishable from the lower cultivation soil (subsoil).	<b>Orientation</b>	N-S
	<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.7
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2.4
	<b>Length (m)</b>	30

Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
200	Layer	-	0.32	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.34	Subsoil	-	-
202	Cut	1.12	0.36	Planting pit or treehole	-	-
203	Fill	1.12	0.36	Fill of 202	-	-
204	Layer	-	-	Natural Clay with Flints	-	-

Trench 3		
<b>General description</b>  No significant archaeological remains. Cultivation soils present overlying the natural clay and flints.	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
	<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.7
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2.4
	<b>Length (m)</b>	27

Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
300	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.34	Subsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural Clay with Flints	-	-

Trench 4		
<b>General description</b>  No significant archaeological remains. Cultivation soils present overlying the natural clay and flints.	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
	<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.55
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2.5
	<b>Length (m)</b>	10

Contexts						
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context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
400	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.24	Subsoil	-	-
402	Layer	-	-	Natural Clay with Flints	-	-

Trench 5		
<b>General description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	-
Not excavated due to the proximity of existing tree protection orders.	<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	-
	<b>Width (m)</b>	-
	<b>Length (m)</b>	-

Trench 6						
<b>General description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW				
No significant archaeological remains. Cultivation soils present overlying the natural clay and flints. A geotechnical pit penetrated the natural clay with flints to a depth of 0.5 m.	<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.6				
	<b>Width (m)</b>	4				
	<b>Length (m)</b>	4				
<b>Contexts</b>						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
600	Layer	-	0.18	Topsoil	-	-
601	Layer	-	0.2	Buried soil	-	-
602	Layer	-	0.22	Subsoil	-	-
603	Layer	-	-	Natural Clay with Flints	-	-
604	Cut	0.72	0.48	Geotechnical pit	-	-
605	Fill	0.72	0.48	Geotechnical pit backfill	-	-

Trench 7						
<b>General description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	N-S				
A single posthole was encountered sealed by subsoil. Cultivation soils present overlying the natural clay and flints.	<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.5				
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2.5				
	<b>Length (m)</b>	30				
<b>Contexts</b>						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
700	Layer	-	0.31	Topsoil	pottery	18th/19 <sup>th</sup> century
701	Layer	-	0.19	Subsoil	-	-
702	Cut	0.2	0.29	Posthole	-	-
703	Fill	0.2	0.29	Posthole fill	-	-
704	Layer	-	-	Natural Clay with Flints	-	-



<b>Trench 8</b>						
<b>General description</b>				<b>Orientation</b>		E-W
No significant archaeological remains. Cultivation soils present overlying the natural clay and flints.				<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>		0.6
				<b>Width (m)</b>		2.5
				<b>Length (m)</b>		10
<b>Contexts</b>						
<b>context no</b>	<b>type</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>comment</b>	<b>finds</b>	<b>date</b>
800	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	pottery	19th/20 <sup>th</sup> century
801	Layer	-	0.23	Subsoil	-	-
802	Layer	-	-	Natural Clay with Flints	-	-

## APPENDIX B. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Olga Mowforth House, Folly Orchard Road, Woodcote

**Site code:** WOOLMA 09

**Grid reference:** SU 643 820

**Type:** Evaluation

**Date and duration:** 18th to 20th November 2009

**Area of site:** 1.17 ha

### Summary of results:

In November 2009 Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation at Olga Mowforth House, Folly Orchard Road, Woodcote (NGR: SU 643 820) on behalf of Builders Ede Ltd. This was undertaken to inform the determination of the planning application by South Oxfordshire District Council.

Six evaluation trenches were excavated within the constraints of the existing physical barriers, tree cover and tree protection orders.

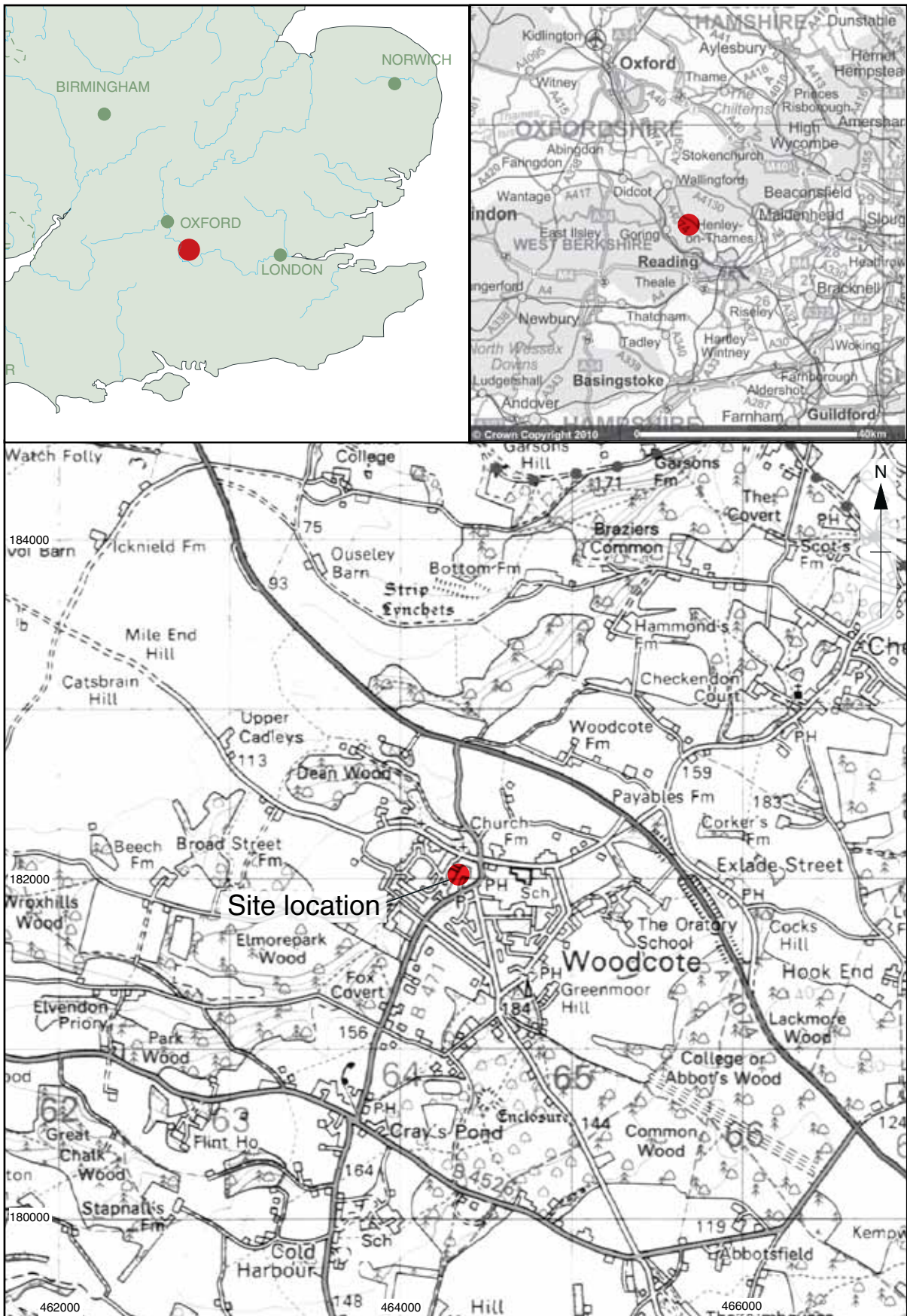
With the exception of a single undated posthole and a treehole or planting pit, the evaluation did not encounter any archaeological remains. All trenches revealed a deep accumulation of cultivated soil averaging in excess of 0.5 m suggesting that significant truncation, removing any potential remains, may have occurred across the site in the post-medieval period.

### Location of archive:

The archive is currently held at Oxford Archaeology, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the accession number OXCMS:2009.96.



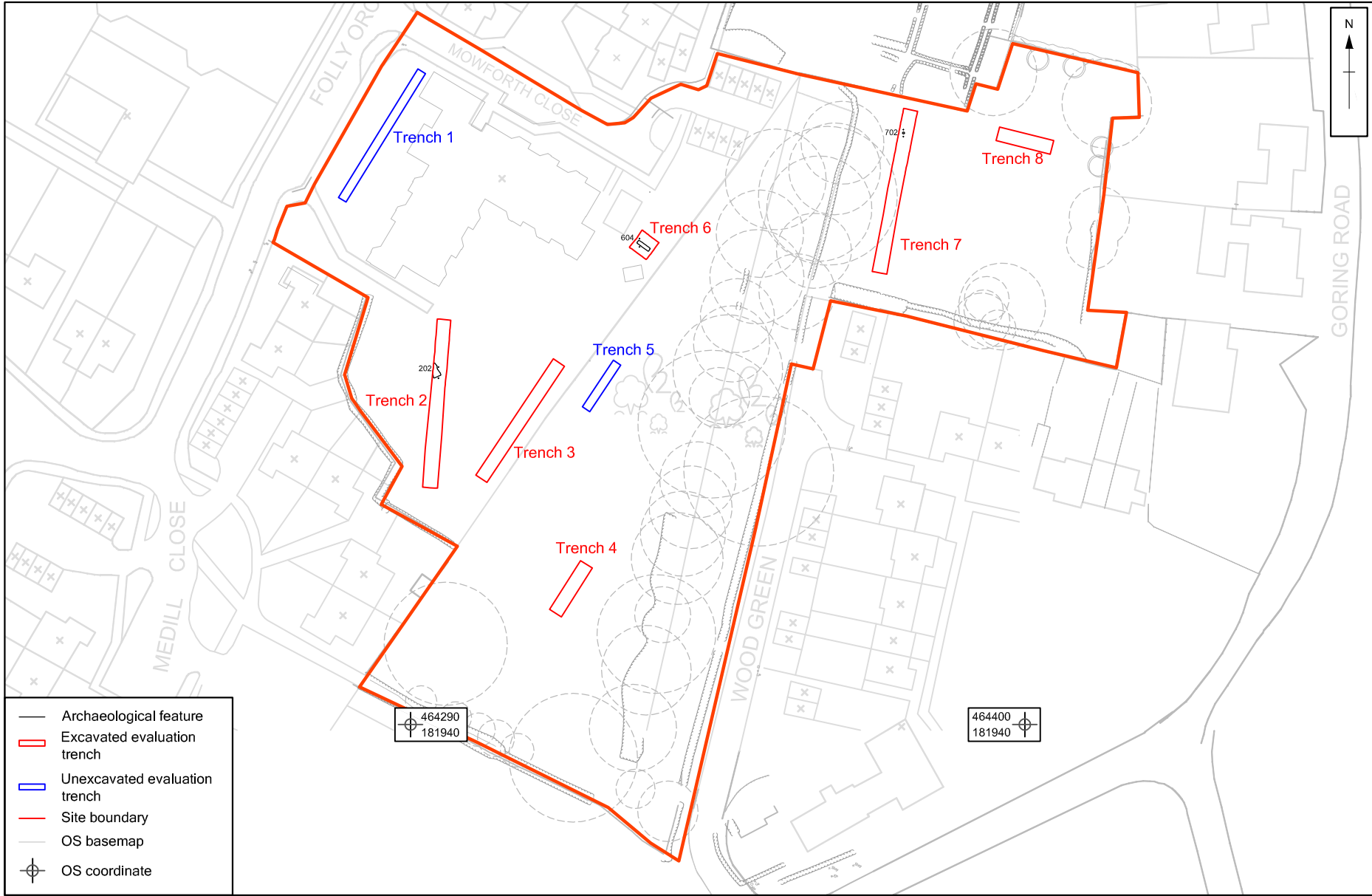




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Figure 1: Site location





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0 50 m  
Scale at A4 1:1000

Figure 2: Trench location plan



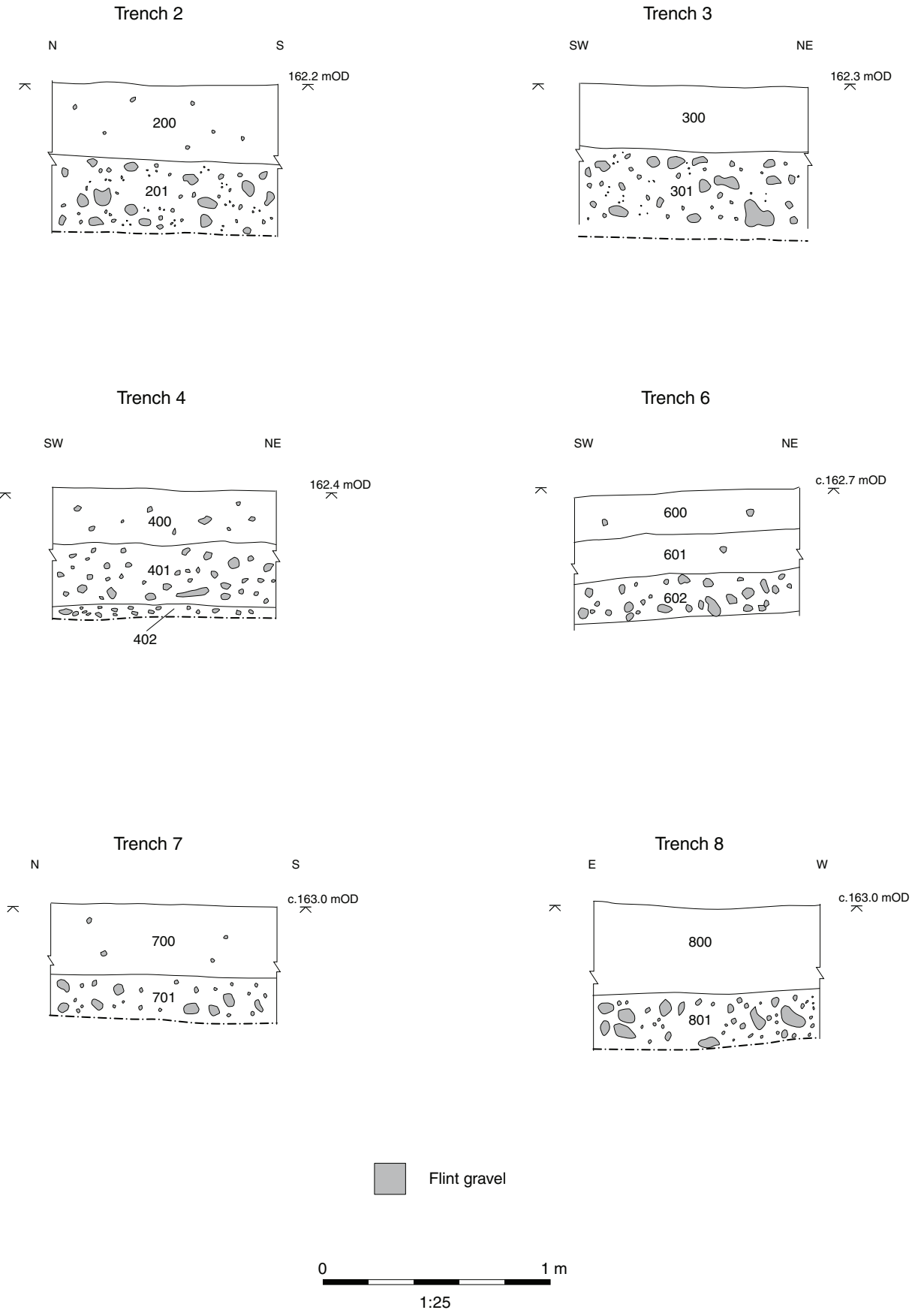


Figure 3: Sample sections



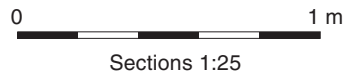
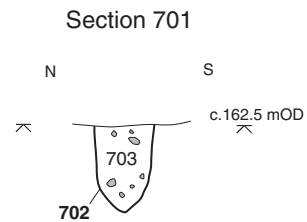
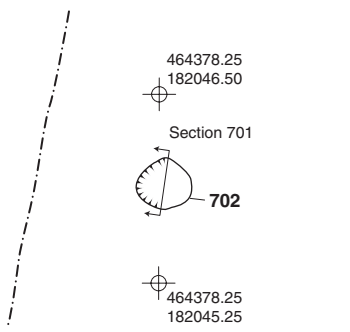
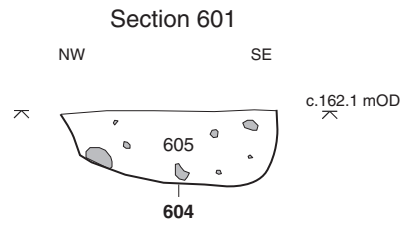
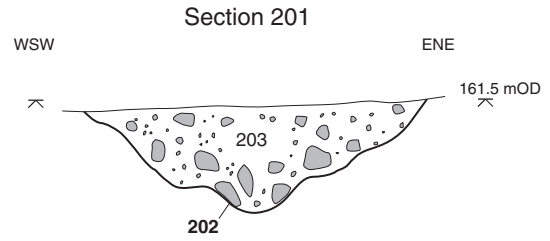
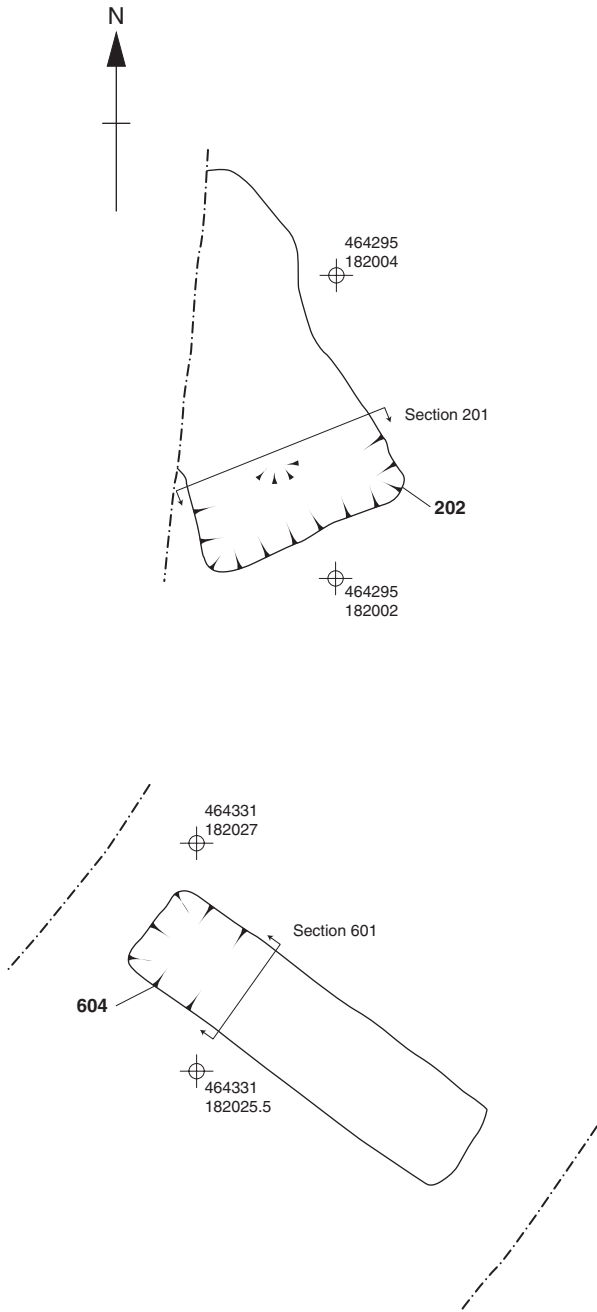


Figure 4: Feature plans and sections







#### **Head Office/Registered Office**

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800  
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496  
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk  
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

#### **OA North**

Mill 3  
Moor Lane  
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000  
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606  
e: oanorth@thehumanjourney.net  
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

#### **OA East**

15 Trafalgar Way  
Bar Hill  
Cambridgeshire  
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500  
f: +44 (0) 1223 850599  
e: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net  
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

#### **OA Méditerranée**

115 Rue Merlot  
ZAC La Louvade  
34 130 Mauguio  
France

t: +33 (0) 4.67.57.86.92  
f: +33 (0) 4.67.42.65.93  
e: oamed@thehumanjourney.net  
w: <http://oamed.fr/>

#### **OA Grand Ouest**

7 Rue des Monderaines  
ZI - Ouest  
14650 Carpiquet  
France

t: +33 (0) 249 88 01 01  
f: +33 (0) 249 88 01 02  
e: info@oago.fr  
w: <http://oago.fr>



**Director:** David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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