

# Watching Brief at The Spinney, Cross Lane, Brancaster, Norfolk



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



August 2013

**Client: Mr & Mrs R Duddin**

OA East Report No: 1497

OASIS No: Oxfordar3-155645

NGR: TF 7780 4402

## Watching Brief at The Spinney, Cross Lane, Brancaster, Norfolk

*Site Code:* XNF CLB 12  
*NHER No.* ENF:130397  
*Date of Works:* 1/7/2013-18/7/2013  
*Report No:* 1497  
*Excavator:* John Diffey. BA.  
*Client:* Mr & Mrs R Duddin  
*Report Date:* July 2013

## Table of Contents

<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Geology and Topography.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Archaeological Background .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Modern Intrusions.....	7
Site Stratigraphy.....	7
Archaeological Features.....	8
<b>Discussion and Conclusions.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Sub-heading.....	8
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>OASIS Report Form .....</b>	<b>9</b>

### List of Figures

- Fig. 1            Site location map  
Fig. 2            Plan of Site  
Fig. 3            Plan of trenches  
Fig. 4            Section 1 – West facing section of trench 1  
                      Section 2 – South facing section of trench 2

### List of Plates

- Plate 1           Site Overview from North East  
Plate 2           Feature **007** in Trench 2 from South



## Summary

*Between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2013, OA East carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Spinney, Cross Lane, Brancaster, Norfolk (TF 7780 4402). The monitoring was carried out during the addition of a double garage on to the northern extent of the current dwelling and conversion of the existing garage into living space. Works monitored included the excavation of foundation trenches, service runs and a soakaway associated with the current development. Two features were identified, pre-dating at least part of the hillwash profile that characterises deposits here, and possibly dating to the early Roman period.*

## GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The Site is situated 1.2km south of the current shoreline only 200m south of the edge of the saltmarsh that probably represents an earlier shoreline and sits at a height of 14m OD. South of the site the land rises 52m over 1.2km to a ridge at 63m OD.

The British Geological Survey Data sheets show the site to sit on a Chalk bedrock formed in the Cretaceous period overlain by a Superficial, Devensian deposit of Holkham Till (Morlock 2009). The Holkham Till Member is a dull reddish brown sandy clayey diamicton, which contains chalk and flint clasts together with Carboniferous and Triassic material and it also contains a variety of igneous and metamorphic rocks. Over much of the coastline the Holkham Till Member is overlain by a more recent deposit of Head or hillwash derived from slopes south of the site. On site the natural geology was recorded as a firm, light reddish brown clayey sand containing frequent small to medium sized sub-rounded flint stones.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (COMPILED BY KATE CLOVER)

A search of the HER was carried out on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2012, incorporating a search area of 500m around the watching brief site (the 'Site'). The Site lies approximately 250m west of Brancaster Roman fort - '*Branodunum*' and within its associated civilian settlement or *vicus* to the west. There is also a background of earlier activity as demonstrated by finds and features recorded from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age.

*Branodunum* (NHER 1001) was a 'Saxon Shore' fort which was probably constructed AD225 to 250 to replace an earlier fort on the same site. It was one of a chain of eleven forts between Brancaster on The Wash and Portchester in Hampshire and may have been more to do with trade than defence. The fort originally had stone walls which were demolished in the 18th century. Cropmarks indicate the locations of internal buildings, whilst finds indicate occupation during the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. Excavations were carried out here in 1846, 1935

and 1985. The fort is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (no. 208).

A Romano-British civilian settlement or '*vicus*' (NHER 1002) grew up to the west and south west of the Roman fort of *Branodunum*. The settlement is represented by cropmarks which have been mapped by the National Mapping Programme. Various linear features are visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs around TF 7795 4383. Two parallel ditches may represent some kind of road or trackway, presumably associated with Roman activity in this area. Further linear features are visible on an aerial photograph around TF 7823 4385. These would appear to be part of the *vicus*, known to be situated to the south of the fort. Two or three possible pits can also be seen in this area. Additional Roman period rectilinear enclosures and linear features are visible as cropmarks to the south-west of the Roman fort on oblique aerial photographs. There are the fragmentary remains of at least two rectangular enclosures or fields at TF 7801 4375. The features are aligned with their long axis in a north to south direction and each encloses an area measuring approximately 30m x 15m. These features are almost certainly a further part of the previously recorded Roman period activity within NHER 1002. In January 2004 an inhumation was recorded during a watching brief on a service trench. Two ditched features containing Roman pottery were found in close proximity. The site is situated within this area of cropmarks.

Areas of the *vicus* (NHER 1002) which are now below housing developments have been excavated. Excavations in 1977 by the Central Excavation Unit revealed that, besides Roman occupation, the site showed evidence of activity during the Neolithic, Beaker, Bronze Age and Iron Age periods.

NHER1004 - a Romano-British civilian settlement or *vicus* also grew up to the north of the Roman fort of *Branodunum* and is probably part of the same settlement as NHER 1002. The site is represented by cropmarks and finds. Excavations here have revealed this was part of the 3rd and 4th century AD planned settlement around the fort. The National Mapping Programme recorded a number of linear features showing on aerial photographs around TF 7813 4418. A crescent-shaped 'ditch' cropmark can be seen to the immediate north of Brancaster Roman fort (TF 7816 4415) and it seems likely that these linear features and ditches are contemporary, or possibly earlier. At TF 7809 4418, a double ditched linear feature, with a rounded corner is visible as a cropmark. It is possible that this may represent an earlier fort at this site, although it is difficult to be sure of an exact date from the aerial photographs.

To the north of the Site there are various findspots: two Roman coins and a seal (NHER1381 and 24224), a Roman mosaic (NHER 31152), Post-Medieval pottery (NHER 37175), Roman and undated ditches (NHER 50282) and small quantities of Roman pottery, late Saxon pottery and prehistoric worked flints (NHER 42759). Roman ditches, a pit, and a clay-lined flue to a possible corn drier were recorded during an evaluation in advance of residential development opposite the Site, on the other side of Cross Lane (NHER 58243). Several of the ditches are very likely a continuation of the trackways and enclosures recorded closer to the Roman fort of *Branodunum*. This may have been an area of agricultural

production or craft and light industrial activity on the periphery of the Roman settlement. Finds from the evaluation include a Roman bolt-head or missile-head from a catapult or ballista and unstratified Early Neolithic flint.

To the south of the Site, Medieval pottery was found during a watching brief (NHER 37375) and the HER also records a findspot of a Late Bronze Age socketed axe and Roman coin (NHER 29177).

## METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that monitoring should take place on all below ground disturbance including excavations, foundation trenches service trenches, drains and soakaways, pipeline and cable trenches and that all archaeological contexts or artefacts exposed be fully recorded and analysed to an appropriate level with the findings reported in line with the counties generic brief for the monitoring of works under archaeological supervision and control.

The area of investigation was located at TF 7780 4402.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Site conditions were dry with bright sunshine.

The Works Monitored included the excavation of foundation trenches 1 to 6 across an area 8.6m x 6.25m immediately N of the existing dwelling and the excavation of a rainwater soakaway (trench 7) and its associated pipe runs North of the foundation trenches and south of Cross lane.as seen on plan 1 (fig. 2).

## RESULTS

### Modern Intrusions

Excavations on site revealed there to be considerable modern disturbance within the new development's footprint. A number of modern service runs were identified. A 0.3m wide 1.3m deep cut for a sewer pipe ran west-south-west to east-north-east across the site from the centre of trench 4, through trench 6 to trench 1, crossing just south of its mid point. Two cuts for downpipe drains, 0.4m wide and 0.85m deep, we recorded running from the north-east and north-west corners of the existing dwelling through trenches 1, 4 and 6 to a soakaway thought to be situated beneath the centre of the new development area. A phone cable was recorded running south-west from the east end of trench 2 to the north end of trench 4 at a depth of 13.7mOD. Trench 7 suffered from serious modern disturbance with a modern garden wall running east to west across the south of the trench and a large modern sewer running east to west cutting through the north of the



trench at a depth of 1.3m . Despite the modern intrusions a consistent stratigraphy was observed across all the trenches excavated and is described in order from earliest to most recent below.

### Site Stratigraphy

The natural geology (Context 001) was only encountered in the centre of Trench 2 where a small investigative sondage was dug. It was recorded here at 12.95m OD and consisted of a firm light reddish brown clayey sand containing frequent small to medium sized sub-rounded flint stones.

All of the trench bases finished at a depth of 13.10m OD within context 002, which immediately overlay natural geology. This context comprised a c.0.5m thick layer of soft mid reddish brown sandy clay containing frequent small-medium sized sub-rounded flint stones and occasional charcoal flecks. A number of small abraded pot sherds were recovered from this layer including two very abraded sherds of Late Iron Age shell tempered pottery and a less abraded sherd of early Roman sand tempered Greyware, the latter providing a date after the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Centuries AD (S Wadeson, pers. comm.). This layer most likely represents a layer of hillwash from slopes to the south of the site while its upper horizon is thought to represent a buried subsoil beneath context 003, which appeared to be a buried topsoil.

Context 003, which immediately overlay 002, ranged in depth between 0.1m in the north-west corner of the site and 0.38m in the south-east corner of the site and consisted of a firm dark greyish brown clayey sand containing moderate amounts of small to medium sub-rounded flint stones. This context also contained frequent charcoal flecks, occasional small pieces of coal and ceramic building materials (CBM), pieces of slag and clinker and a small sherd of post-medieval glazed red ware pottery dating from the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries (C Fletcher, pers. comm.). It is thought that context 003 represents a plough-soil buried beneath modern construction layers, the latter formed during the construction of the existing dwelling in the 1970s.

Making up the upper stratigraphy of the site and overlying context 003 were a series of layers forming 0.5m of modern build-up which are described here in stratigraphical order. Context 004; a 0.1-0.3m thick compacted layer of mid greyish brown sand containing small flint stones, charcoal flecks, CBM and flecks of orange builders sand. Context 005; a 0.1-0.3m thick layer of mid greyish brown sand containing an abundance of builders' sand, concrete, CBM and other construction materials and finally Context 006; a 0.1m thick layer of imported garden topsoil.

### Archaeological Features

Two possible archaeological features were encountered during the monitoring of works with both remaining fairly much intact below the level of excavation.

The first feature cut **007** and its fill 008 was located in the NW corner of the site and extended into trenches 2, 3 and 5. Its shape in plan was indiscernible due to the small size of the trenches but the feature covered an area of 2.75m x 3.75m and extended out

of the development area to the north and west, with its eastern edge aligned north to south just west of the centre of trench 2, and its southern edge aligned east to west at the south end of trench 3. Although the majority of the feature remained *in situ* below the excavation limit two small investigative sondages were placed within the feature to try and ascertain its depth, function and date. The sides of the feature were sharply cut, concave and of medium slope and appeared to be cut from a point 0.2m above the natural geology 001, within the layer of hillwash 002. The author is aware that this does not make stratigraphical sense but no difference could be found between the material cut by **007** and that overlying it. Two possible explanations for this oddity are that either the feature was formed and filled during the hillwash formation process that created 002 or that the cut was originally made from the upper horizon of 002 but deep ploughing into the top of 002 removed evidence of the cut higher up. The feature was 0.75m at its deepest with a flat base and contained a single fill 008 which comprised a firm light reddish brown sandy clay containing frequent small rounded flint stones, occasional charcoal flecks and occasional large sub-angular lumps of flint. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature however its relationship with context 002 and the possible dating of that to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD may suggest a similar late prehistoric or, more probably, early Roman date.

The second feature **009** (with its fill 010) was located at the southern end of trench 4 with its northern edge running east to west across the midpoint of the trench and the feature extending out of the trench to the east and west and beneath the existing dwelling to the south. The cut of this feature was truncated by a sewer run and the extant services and small size of the trenches made further excavation impossible, however the fill 010 was comprised of the same material as fill 008 in cut **007**, which tentatively suggests the two features may be similar in their form, function and date.

The stratigraphical depth of these features and the lack of any finds may suggest a natural formation process for them although the sharpness of cut and regularity of the sides and base would usually suggest that they were man made.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The small size of the excavation area and trenches, combined with extensive modern disturbance, resulted in limited archaeological contexts features or material being affected by this development. The works carried out did, however, show that with a considerable depth of post-medieval and modern overburden there is potential for earlier contexts and features dating to the Late Iron Age and/or early Roman periods to remain intact beneath even the developed land within the local area.

The higher stratigraphic layers on site represent the more modern history of the locality with a change in land use from arable farming in the medieval and post-medieval periods to the development and expansion of the modern settlement of Brancaster as it is today.

The earlier stratigraphic layers and the artefactual evidence contained therein support the HER data that suggests the local area was occupied within the Late Iron Age and early Roman

periods and it is possible that features **007** and **009**, although unclassified in form or function, may date from a similar period. It is worthy of note that no firm evidence of the Roman *vicus* thought to be situated in this location was discovered however the site does lie on the periphery of the proposed extent of the settlement and as such less evidence of activity might be expected here, in comparison to areas closer to the fort that formed the central hub of the settlement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Mr & Mrs R Duddin who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Paul Spoerry.

The brief for archaeological works was written by James Albone, who monitored the watching brief.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Morlock 2009, BGS 1:50,000 Map and sheet explanation, British Geological Survey.

## OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

### Project Details

OASIS Number	Oxfordar3-155645		
Project Name	Watching Brief at The Spinney, Cross Lane, Brancaster		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	01-07-2013	Finish	18-07-2013
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	No

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	XNFCLB13	Planning App. No.	12/01419/F
HER No.	ENF:130397	Related HER/OASIS No.	

### Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

### Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

### Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
PIT	Uncertain	SHERD	Iron Age -800 to 43
	Select period...	SHERD	Roman 43 to 410
	Select period...	SHERD	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901

### Project Location

County	Norfolk	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	Kings Lynn & West Norfolk	The Spinney, Cross Lane, Brancaster, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE31 8AE	
Parish	Brancaster		
HER	Norfolk		
Study Area	60sq.m	National Grid Reference	TF 7780 4402

## Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	James Albone
Project Design Originator	Paul Spoerry
Project Manager	Paul Spoerry
Supervisor	John Diffey

## Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Norfolk Museum Service	OAE office BarHill	Norfolk Museum Service
ENF130397	XNFCLB12	ENF130397

## Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

### Notes:



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2013. All rights reserved. Licence number 10001998

Figure 1: Site location. Scale 1:10000



Figure 2: Plan of Site

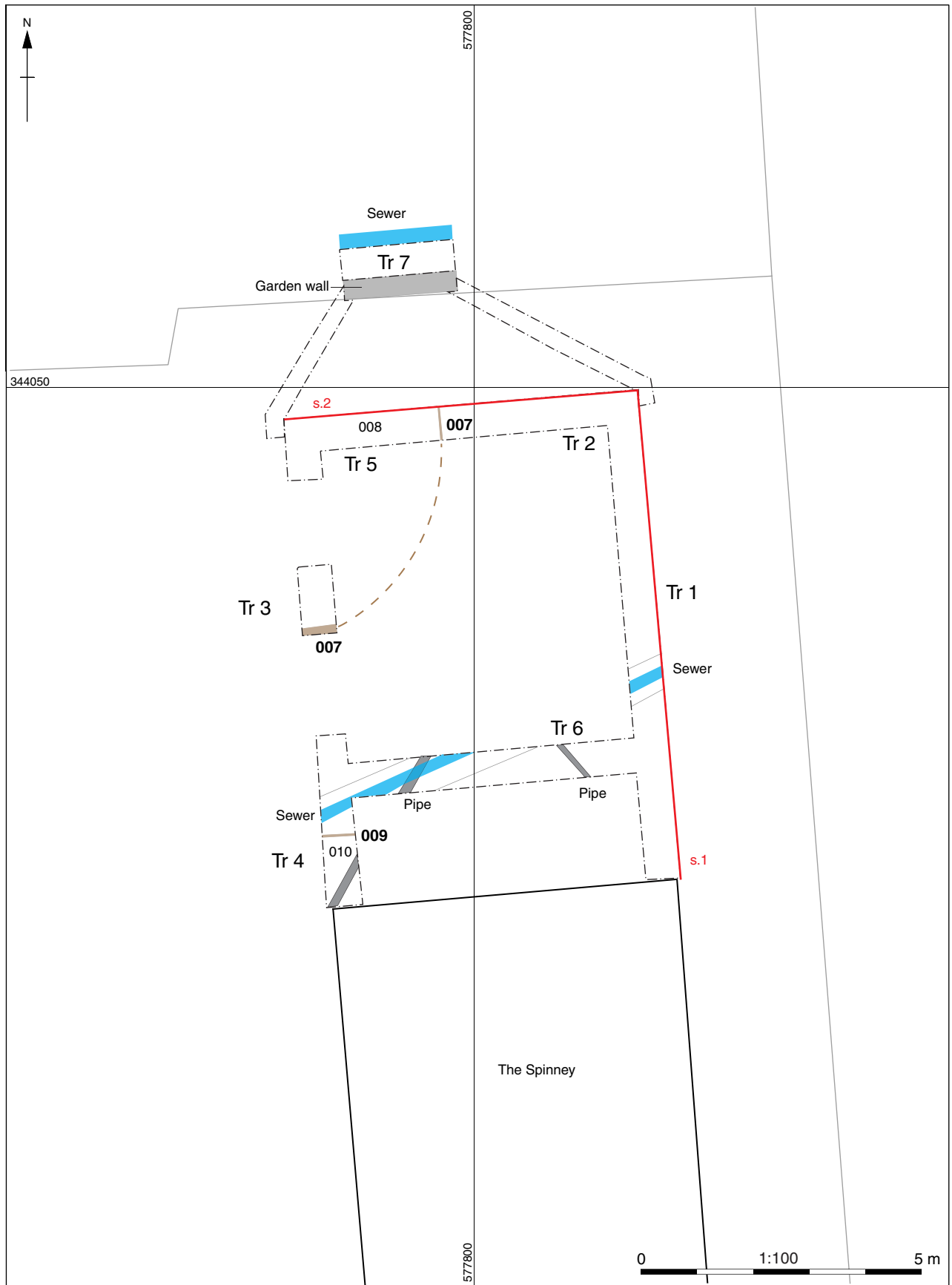


Figure 3: Plan of trenches, Scale 1:100



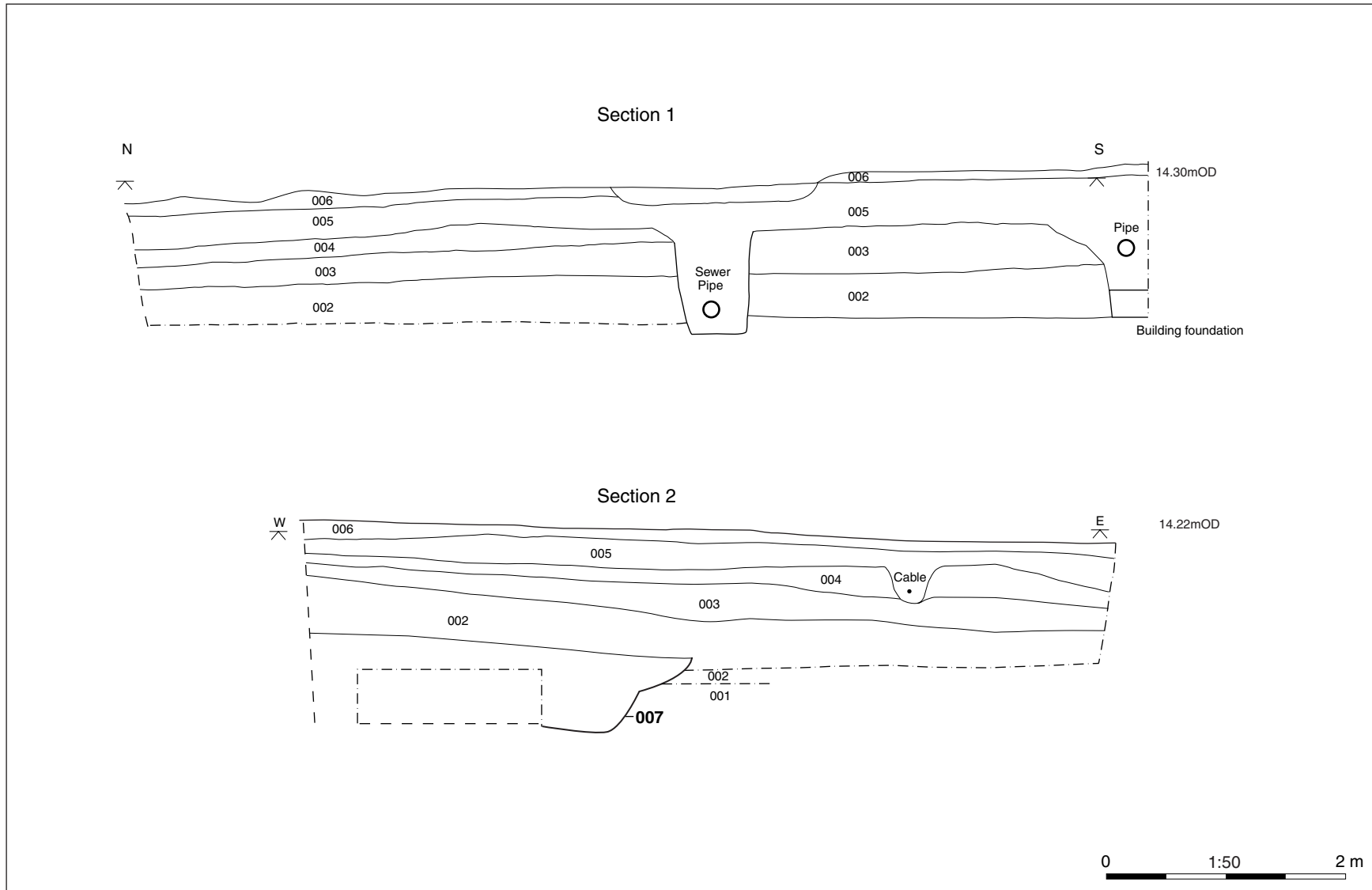


Figure 4: Sections 1 and 2, Scale 1:50



Plate 1: Site Overview from North East



Plate 2: Feature 007 in Trench 2 from South



**Head Office/Registered Office/  
OA South**

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800  
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496  
e: [info@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto:info@oxfordarchaeology.com)  
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

**OA North**

Mill 3  
Moor Lane  
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000  
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606  
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)  
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

**OA East**

15 Trafalgar Way  
Bar Hill  
Cambridgeshire  
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500  
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)  
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



**Director:** Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MIFA  
*Oxford Archaeology Ltd is a  
Private Limited Company, N<sup>o</sup>: 1618597  
and a Registered Charity, N<sup>o</sup>: 285627*