

Bury Garage Bury Lane Rickmansworth Hertfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



June 2008

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Issue No: 1

OA Job No: 3780

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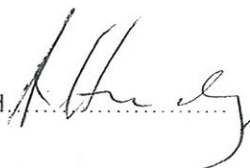
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary 2

1 Introduction..... 2

 1.1 Scope of work 2

 1.2 Location, geology and topography 2

 1.3 Archaeological and historical background 2

2 Project Aims and Methodology 3

 2.1 Aims..... 3

 2.2 Methodology 4

3 Results 4

 3.1 Description of deposits 4

 3.2 Finds 6

 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains..... 6

4 Discussion and Conclusions 6

Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory 7

Appendix 2 Bibliography and References..... 7

Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details..... 8

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
- Fig. 2 Site plan, plan of well 5 and sections

SUMMARY

In November and December 2007 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Former Bury Garage, Bury lane, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (NGR: TQ 05956 94304). The work was commissioned by KMC Urban Ltd in advance of the construction of new dwellings. The watching brief revealed evidence of earlier post-medieval buildings and made ground, including a 19th-century well associated with nearby housing. No other significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between November 2007 and May 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on the site of Bury Garage, Bury Lane, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (NGR: TQ 05956 94304). The work was commissioned by KMC Urban in respect of a planning application for the demolition of the existing structures and the construction of new dwellings (Planning Application No. 8/06/0632).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Andy Instone, the County Planning Archaeologist for Hertfordshire County Council (HCC 2007).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2007).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located in the south-west of Rickmansworth and is situated to the north-west of the junction of Bury Lane and Bury Meadows. The site lies on level ground at approximately 47 m above OD. The site was previously in use as a filling station complete with associated underground fuel tanks. The development area occupies approximately 2000 m². The underlying geology is recent and Pleistocene alluvium deposits (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no. 225).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2007) and is reproduced below.

The following sections are reproduced from the Desk Based Assessment (DBA) produced by OA in 2006 (OA, 2006) - a more detailed archaeological and historical background and full references can be found in that document

- 1.3.2 There are no recorded archaeological finds, features or deposits within the Site.
- 1.3.3 Within the study area covered by the DBA there are 82 recorded archaeological entities, 74 of which date to the post-medieval period. The medieval period is

represented by three buildings within the study area and the recovery of medieval pottery during an evaluation at 47 High Street (c 350 m to the north east of the Site).

- 1.3.4 Evidence of Roman activity is provided by a small collection of Romano-British pottery, found over a two year period near to the Parish Church on Church Street (c 230 m to the south east of the Site) Prehistoric activity has been suggested during two archaeological evaluations: work at 47 High Street recorded two residual flint flakes and a piece of burnt flake, and a struck flint flake and a piece of burnt flint were recovered during an evaluation at the Town Wharf (c .450 m to the east of the Site)
- 1.3.5 Examination of historic maps and documentary evidence, including the Rickmansworth Extensive Urban Survey, showed the Site to lie outside the medieval extent of Rickmansworth. Further analysis of historic maps showed that by c1839 the Site lay on the border of the expanding town and by c1898 was within the urban extent.

Archaeological Potential

- 1.3.6 The Site has the potential to contain hitherto undetected archaeological deposits of uncertain but potentially high significance. There is an uncertain, but low potential for the Site to include archaeological deposits of the prehistoric, Roman or medieval periods. The Site lies within the environs of the post-medieval expansion of the town and, by the late 19th century, lay within the extent of the town. There is an uncertain but medium to high potential for the Site to include archaeological deposits of the post-medieval period, due to the large number of post-medieval structures within the study area, although it is unlikely that any such deposits are of high importance or interest.

Previous Impacts:

- 1.3.7 The Site is presently occupied by a petrol garage. This would suggest that the land has been severely impacted by the construction of both the garage and the underground storage units used to hold petrol. It would also suggest severe land contamination. Previous Ordnance Survey and additional maps show there to have been a number of buildings on this Site since 1822. The construction of these various structures will also have impacted on the Site. It is therefore likely that any archaeological remains present on the Site will have been significantly affected by subsequent activity on the Site.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.

2.1.2 To preserve by record, any archaeological deposits or features that may have been damaged or destroyed during the course of any intrusive groundworks on the site.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during any works that may have intruded upon archaeological deposits. These works included the removal of the underground fuel tanks, grubbing out of the demolished buildings foundations, ground reduction and service trenching.

2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of the works was maintained at a scale of 1:100 and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations, features and recorded were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film and also using digital colour photography. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Eastern half of site

3.1.1 Within the area of the underground fuel tanks a layer of very dark grey clay silt (4) was encountered at a depth of 0.98 m below the current ground level (Fig. 2, Section 1). This deposit contained numerous fragments of brick and probably represents a layer of post-medieval made ground. This was overlaid by a 0.2 m deep concrete slab (3), possibly a raft foundation for one of the later buildings on the site.

3.1.2 This was overlaid by 0.6 m deep layer of light grey clay silt (2). This deposit contained numerous fragments of modern brick suggesting a probable layer of made ground, possibly 20th-century in date. This was sealed by a 0.15 m thick concrete slab (1), the garages original floor level.

3.1.3 During the construction of an access road along the northern edge of the site the top of a brick lined well was exposed immediately underneath the old yard surface.

3.1.4 The top of the underlying made ground, a very dark grey clay silt (9) was exposed after stripping off the overlying concrete roadway (10) (Fig. 2, Site plan). This deposit contained fragments of brick and lenses of lime mortar suggesting that it may be a construction layer possibly relating to the houses to the north.

3.1.5 Cut into this layer was a circular shaft 1 m in diameter (7). Constructed within this cut was a circular brick-lined well (5). This was built using a yellow hand made brick measuring 0.218 m x 0.1 m x 0.058 m. These were laid (without using any mortar)

tangentially around the edge of the cut. Backfilling the space between the brickwork and the cut was a dark brown clay silt (6).

- 3.1.6 A later salt-glazed pipe had been inserted into the north side of the well. This would suggest that the feature was later used as a soakaway once its original function as a well was no longer needed. When exposed the well had been backfilled by a dark grey brown clay silt (8), very similar to Layer 9. Upon excavation both the backfill 8, and the well lining 5 extended below 1 m in depth. It is presumed that the well lining extended down to the water table approximately 2 m below the current ground level.
- 3.1.7 The brick size suggests a late 18th or early 19th-century date, which would correspond with the post-medieval expansion of Rickmansworth.

Western half of site

- 3.1.8 This area had been previously occupied by a large garage workshop. After demolition of the building and the removal of the concrete slab floor (11), a layer of made ground composed of a mixture of dark grey-brown clay silt and crushed demolition debris (12) was exposed (Fig. 3, section 2).
- 3.1.9 After levelling the area, piles were used to construct the foundations for the new buildings. The excavations for the ground beams failed to penetrate Layer 11 and no further stratigraphy was exposed.

Southern Boundary wall

- 3.1.10 The southern boundary of the site is formed by a standing brick wall, approximately 7 m high at the south-east corner of the site, reducing in height down to 3 or 4 courses exposed above ground level at the south-west corner of the site (13). The eastern end of this formed the south wall of one of the original garage buildings and was retained as part of the new build.
- 3.1.11 During the excavation of a trench adjacent to the southern face of the wall a number of brick built foundations running perpendicular to the orientation of the standing wall were observed running away to the south, suggesting that the wall may have at one time formed the north wall of a probable row of terraced houses. The later addition of a single thickness brick skin to the south face of the wall made determination of this supposition difficult, however examination of the photos taken of the north face of the wall taken after demolition of the garage buildings showed that the walls forming the garage structure were butt jointed up to the north face of the standing wall. This suggests that originally any returns of the wall were outside the area of the development.
- 3.1.12 The bricks were a plain hand-moulded red brick measuring 0.225 m by 0.105 m by 0.072 m, and the method of construction used was English stretcher bond, using a lime mortar, suggesting a 19th-century building date which would correspond with the historic map research.

3.1.13 There was a possibility that the line of this wall may have reflected the alignment of the medieval town wall, although the full depth of foundations of this wall were not exposed during this phase of work and it was impossible to determine if the earlier medieval foundations had been reused.

3.2 **Finds**

3.2.1 All the finds recovered during the course of the watching brief including brick and tile fragments, were post-medieval in date. These were evaluated on site but were not retained.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 The watching brief showed that the area of the development site had been subject to a program of raising the ground level during the 18th, 19th and 20th-centuries. This was achieved by the deposition of made ground composed of a mixture of silts and demolition debris. Due to the presence of water channels to both the north and south of the site this was probably undertaken to prevent flooding.

4.1.2 The depth of this deposits (possibly in excess of 2 m) meant that all the intrusive groundworks undertaken as part of this development were confined to these deposits. The depth and composition of the original ground surface was not determined during this watching brief. Since any earlier significant archaeological horizons would have been sealed below these post-medieval deposits no indication of the full archaeological potential of this site could be made at this time.

4.1.3 The southern boundary wall probably represents the truncated remnants of the north wall of a row of 19th-century terraced houses. No evidence for the medieval town wall extending into this area was observed during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Depth</i> | <i>Width</i> | <i>Comments</i> | <i> Finds</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|---|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Layer | 0.15 m | - | Concrete garage floor layer | - | C20th |
| 2 | Layer | 0.6 m | - | Modern made ground | Brick | C20th |
| 3 | Layer | 0.2 m | - | Concrete slab, capping over underground fuel tanks | - | C20th |
| 4 | Layer | > 0.6 m | - | Made ground | Brick | C18th/ C19th |
| 5 | Structure | > 1 m | 0.9 m | Brick lined well | Brick | C18th/ C19th |
| 6 | Fill | > 1 m | 0.1 m | Backfill between well lining and well shaft | - | C18th/ C19th |
| 7 | Cut | > 1 m | 0.95 m | Well shaft | - | C18th/ C19th |
| 8 | Fill | > 1 m | 0.7 m | Later backfilling of well | - | C19th/ C20th |
| 9 | Layer | > 0.2 m | - | Made ground | Brick | C18th/ C19th |
| 10 | Layer | 0.15 m | - | Concrete hard standing/ roadway | - | C20th |
| 11 | Layer | 0.2 m | - | Concrete garage floor layer | - | C20th |
| 12 | layer | > 0.3 m | - | Made ground | - | C19th/ C20th |
| 13 | Structure | Up to 7 m high | 0.45 m | Truncated remains of north wall of row of terraced houses | Brick | C19th |

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- IFA 2001 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*
- OAU 1992 *Fieldwork Manual*, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)
- OA 2006 *Bury Garage, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire*
Archaeological desk-based assessment for Oxford Architects
- OA 2007 *Bury Garage, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire: Written Statement of Investigation for an Archaeological watching Brief*
- HCC 2007 *Bury Garage, Bury Lane, Rickmansworth: Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Bury Garage, Bury Lane, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

Site code: RIBUGA 07

Grid reference: TQ 0595 9430

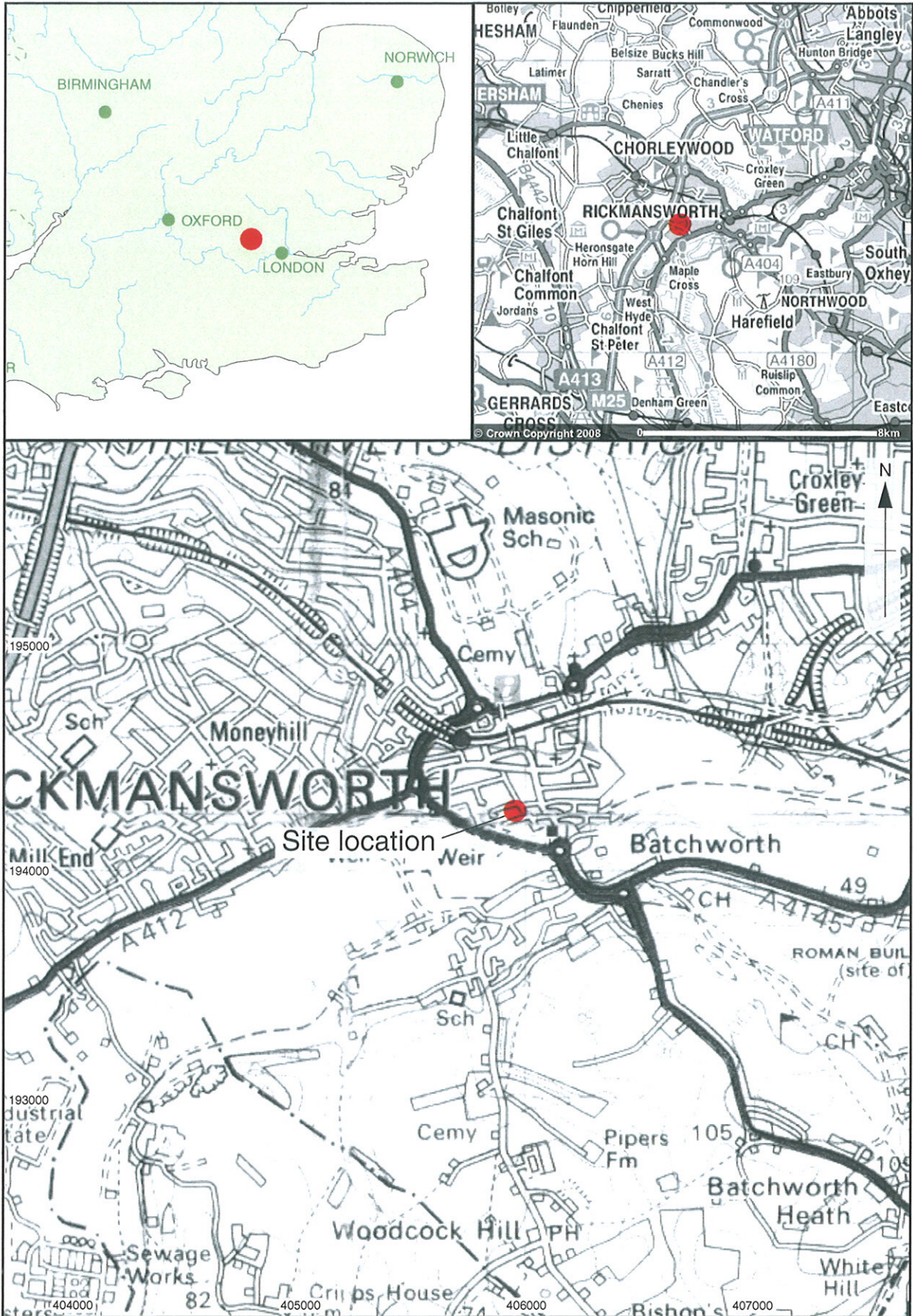
Type of watching brief: Machine clearance of site and excavation of service trenches

Date and duration of project: November 2007 to May 2008

Area of site: 2000m²

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed evidence of earlier post-medieval buildings and made ground, including a 19th-century well associated with nearby housing. No other significant archaeology was observed.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Three Rivers Museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

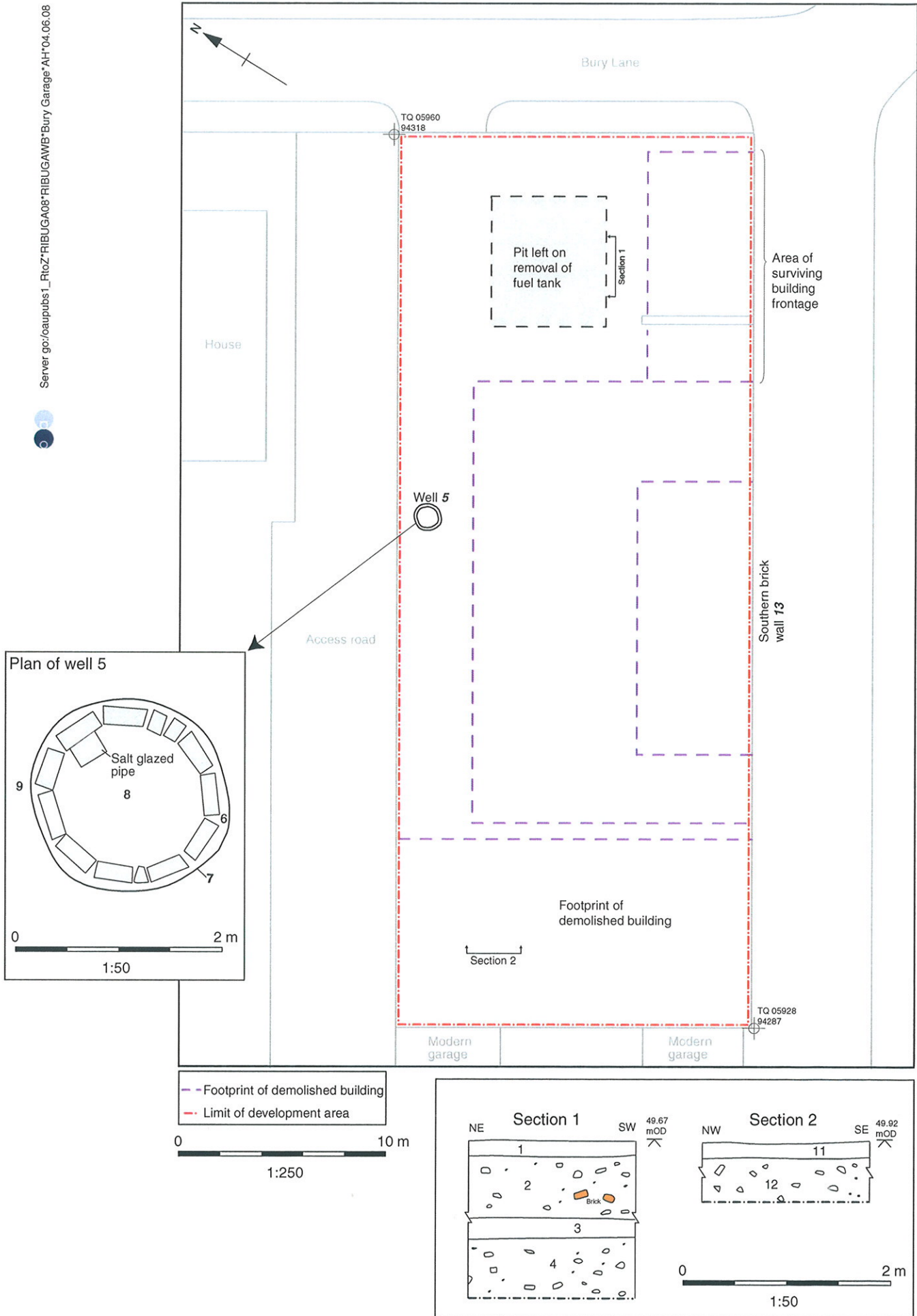


Figure 2 : Site plans and sections



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