

Priory Farm
Balscote
Banbury
Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology

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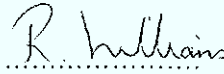
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Priory Farm, Balscote, Banbury, Oxfordshire***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Location and scope of work	1
1.2 Geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
1.4 Acknowledgements	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	2
2.1 Aims	2
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3 Results	2
3.1 Description of deposits	2
3.2 Finds	3
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains	3
4 Discussion And Conclusions.....	3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory	4
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references.....	4
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	4

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 OS Site location map
Fig. 2 Site plan of area of watching brief
Fig. 3 Plan of swimming pool area
Fig. 4 Section 1

SUMMARY

In June and July 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Priory Farm, Balscote, Banbury, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 7135 8057). The work was commissioned by Michael Robarts in advance of the construction of new tennis court and swimming pool. The watching brief revealed an undated stone-lined well which had been filled in during the late 19th century during alterations and improvements to the farmyard.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In June and July 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Priory Farm, Balscote, Banbury, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Michael Robarts in respect of a planning application for new tennis court and swimming pool (Planning Application No. 01/0224/F).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Paul Smith, the County Archaeological Officer.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development area is located at Priory Farm, Balscote. The underlying geology of the application site is ironstone covered by fine loam soils.
- 1.2.2 The site lies at about 138 m OD, and is currently a domestic dwelling with garden and a paddock.

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, 2002) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The development area is in the historic core of Balscote, first mentioned in Domesday in association with Bishop Odo of Bayeux. Priory Farm is believed to have been originally constructed for the priory tenants of Wroxton Abbey that owned property in Balscote in the 14th century.
- 1.3.3 Priory Farmhouse is Grade II* listed dating to and extended around 1500. Henry Dormer's plan of 1684 suggests the farm and its buildings were more extensive than those presently on site.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA extends its thank to Brian Cleland of Cotswold Sports Surfaces and Mike Jackson of Blue Water Pools for their assistance during the watching brief.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The work was carried out in two phases. The first being the construction of the tennis court, which involved the terracing and levelling out of the site with a mini excavator. The second was the stripping and excavation of the swimming pool and landscaping around it. This was carried out with a 360⁰ machine and material being spread out at the south end of the valley (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The groundwork in the area of the new tennis court required cutting a 1m deep terrace into the west side of the valley and stripping the topsoil from the base. The excavation removed a 0.2 - 0.4 m layer of dark greyish brown silty clay loam (1) topsoil. This overlay a natural of reddish brown silty clay loam (2) with sandstone fragments. No archaeological features were observed in the stripped area (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.2 In the area of the swimming pool a 12 x 5.6 m area was excavated to a maximum depth of 3 m max. A 0.3 m thick layer of topsoil (1) was removed, which overlay a 0.1 m thick layer of compact crushed stone (4). This was the former surface of the farmyard and trackway leading out to the fields (Fig. 4). Sealed below this was a circular cut well (5) with vertical sides that measured 1.4 m wide and 2.1 m deep, which had a rough sandstone lining 0.25 m in thickness. This had been filled by a dark greyish brown silty clay (6) with late 19th century pottery (Fig. 3).
- 3.1.3 Running north east to south west from the well ran a trench (7) measuring 5 x 0.4 x 0.5 m with vertical sides and flat base. It was filled with a dark reddish brown silty clay (8) that contained a lead water pipe. This ran to a rectangular brick culvert against the east wall of the farmyard. This pipe is thought to be for a pump in the farmyard and later reused as a drain (Fig. 3).

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 The finds recovered from the watching brief consisted of a fragment of 20th glazed ware and three fragments of late 19th century blue transfer ware from the topsoil (1). From the material (6) filling the well, nine fragments of blue transfer 'Willow Pattern' and a fragment of white ware was recovered. These dated also from the late 19th century.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The results from the watching brief exposed a stone lined well of unknown date, which had been filled in the 19th century. Also the pipe for a pump in the farmyard which was supplied by the well. It would appear that the farmyard was resurfaced and improved to its present layout in the late 19th century and has not changed. Beyond the farmyard no archaeological features or deposits were exposed. This suggests that land had only ever been used as pastureland.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.30 m			Topsoil	Pottery
2	Natural				Silty sand	
3	Natural				Iron stone	
4	Layer	0.10 m			Crushed stone surface	None
5	Cut	2.10 m	1.40 m		Well	
6	Fill				Material filling well	Pottery
7	Cut	0.50 m	0.40 m	5 m	Pipe trench	
8	Fill				Fill of trench	None

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 1992 Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

OA 2002 *Priory Farm, Balscote, Banbury, Oxfordshire* Written Scheme of Investigation

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Priory Farm, Balscote, Banbury, Oxfordshire

Site code: BAPYF 02

Grid reference: NGR SU 7135 8057

Type of watching brief: Construction of new tennis court and swimming pool.

Date and duration of project: Four site visits from 14/6/2002 to 16/7/2002

Area of site: Two areas, 35 x 18 m and 12 m x 5.6 m

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed an undated stone line well which had been filled in during the late 19th century during alterations and improvements to the farmyard.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: 2002.98



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

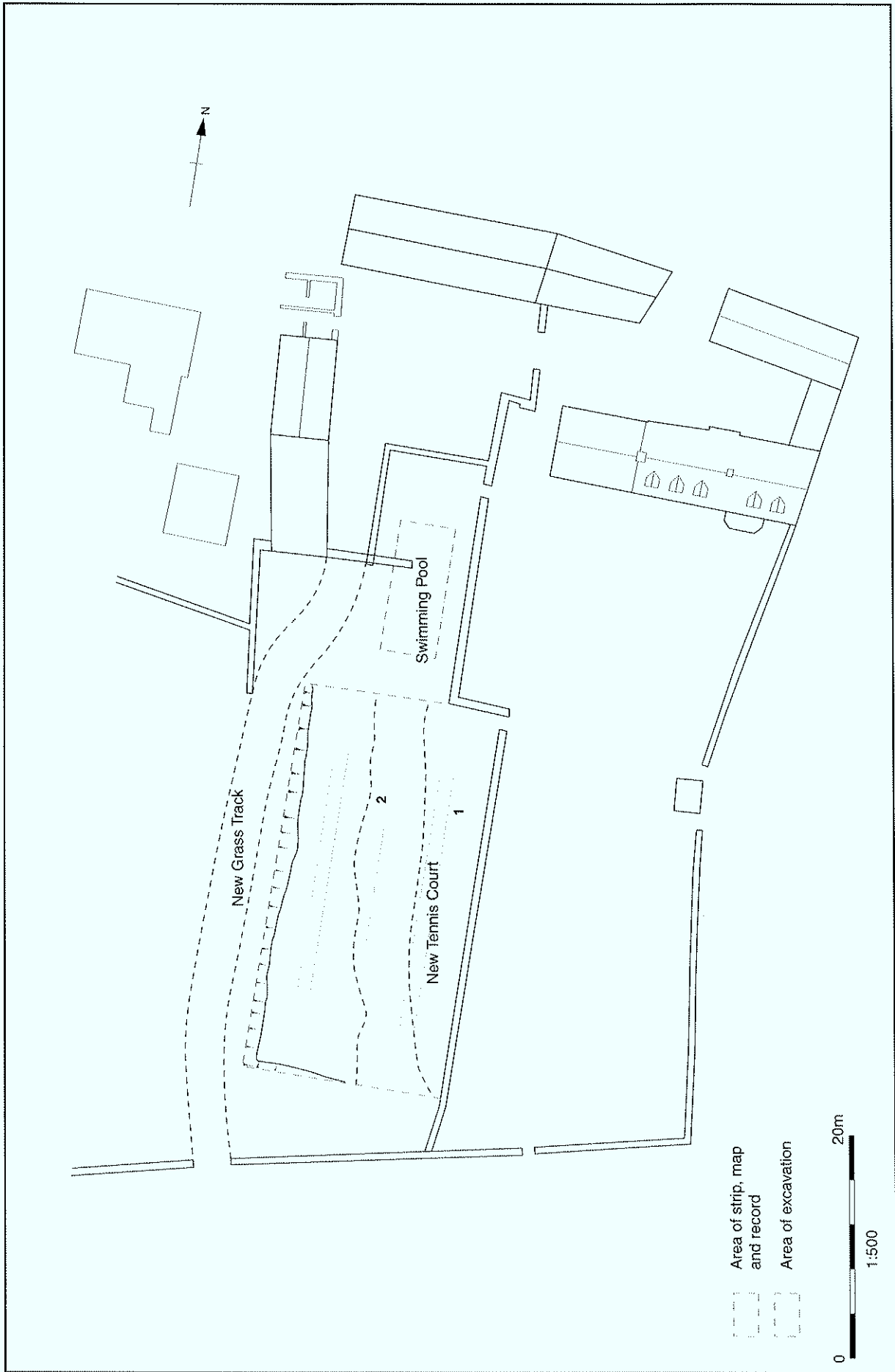


Figure 2: Site Plan of Area of Watching Brief

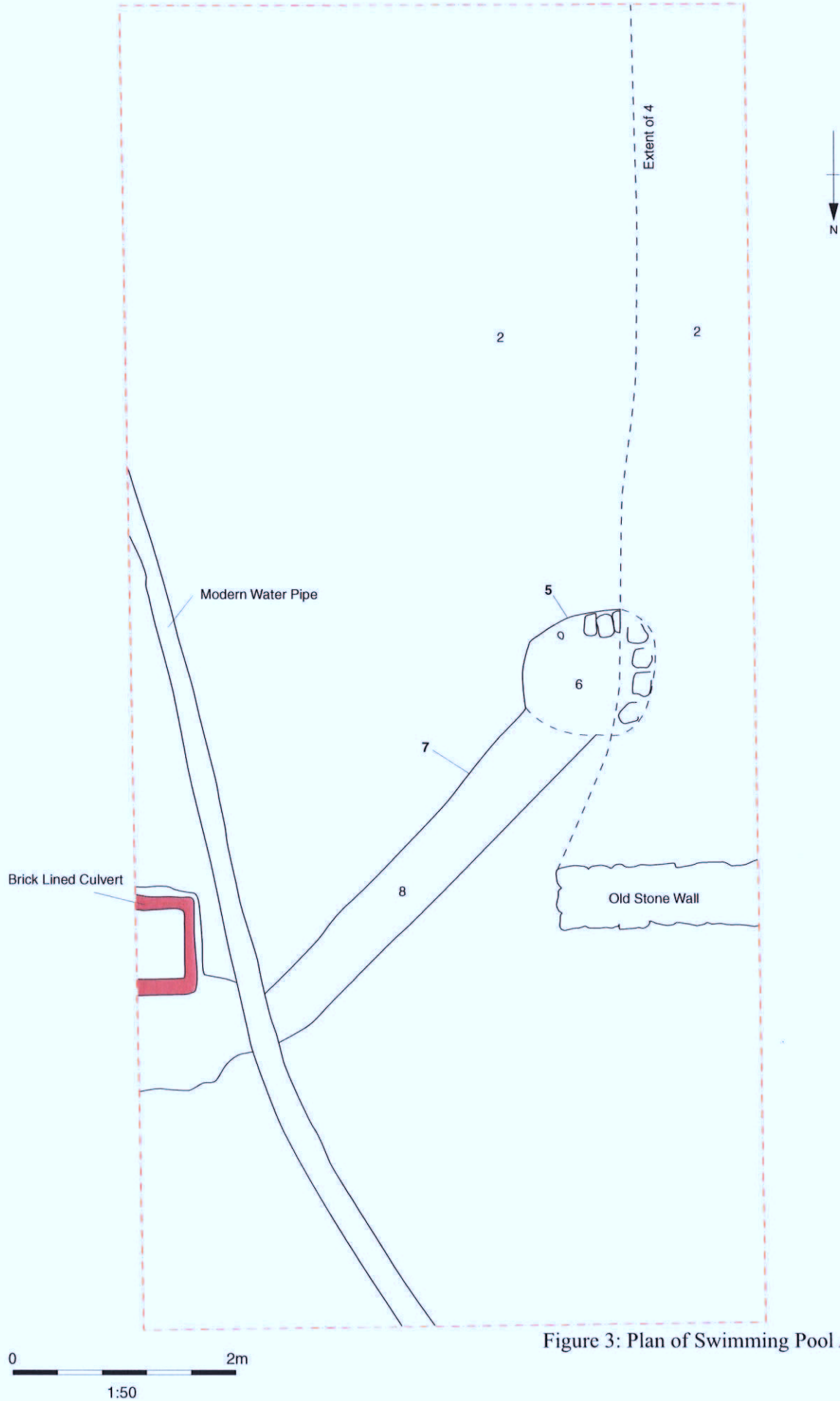


Figure 3: Plan of Swimming Pool Area

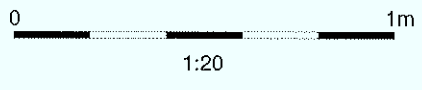
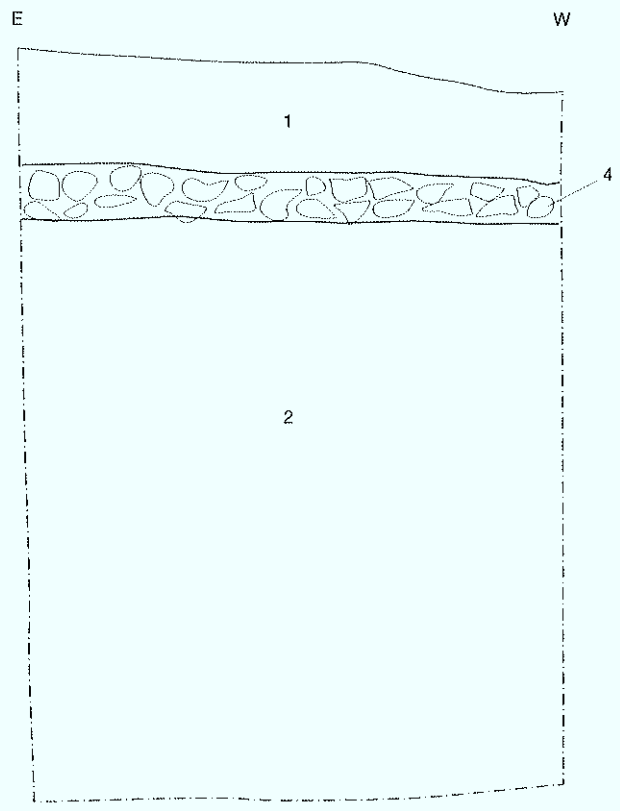


Figure 4: Section 1



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