

A.G. Palmer House Sandford Road Littlemore Oxford



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



October 2006

Client: Knowles and Son

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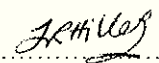
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Sandford Road, Littlemore, Oxford*****ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

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SUMMARY

In August and September 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at A. G. Palmer House, Sandford Road, Littlemore Road, Oxford (NGR: SP 5347 0253). The work was commissioned by Knowles and Son in advance of the construction of a new extension to the south side of A. G. Palmer House. The watching brief revealed layers of post-medieval made ground deposited over natural sands. No significant archaeology was encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 In September 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at A. G. Palmer House, Sandford Road, Littlemore, Oxford (NGR: SP 5347 0253). The work was commissioned by Knowles and Son in respect of a planning application for a new extension to the south side of A. G. Palmer House (Planning Application No. 04/01834/FUL).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was agreed with Brian Durham, the Oxford City Archaeologist and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would implement the requirements of the brief (OA, 2006).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 A. G. Palmer House is sited on the south-eastern edge of the Oxford conurbation (Fig. 1). The site is located in the east corner of Littlemore Hospital and is bounded to the south-east by Sandford Road, to the south-west and north-east by accommodation blocks and to the north-west by an access road. The site occupies approximately 1,400 m² at 72 m OD and is currently in use as a garden. The underlying geology is alluvium over Beckley Sand deposits (British Geological Survey sheet no. 237)

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, 2006) and is summarised/reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 A. G. Palmer House was constructed in the mid 1990s for the League of Friends of Littlemore Hospital. Under condition of planning consent at that time (1077/93), four trenches were excavated, but none on the site of the present extension (Clouston 1996).
- 1.3.3 The reported excavations added an important new element, pottery distinctive of a pre-Norman Conquest tradition known as St Neots Ware, named after the East Anglian

town where it is thought to originate. This is an unusual discovery anywhere outside urban areas such as 11th century Oxford.

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 features or deposits that may be disturbed or destroyed by any intrusive groundworks.
- 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 the period of intrusive groundworks. These included topsoil stripping, excavation of foundation trenches and excavation of service trenches, which were all accomplished using mechanical excavators.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the location and extent of these works was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 3). All excavations and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. 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

- 3.1.1 The stratigraphy observed was similar throughout the site and a general description can be applied throughout the site.
- 3.1.2 The underlying natural, a light green sand with outcrops of sandstone (4), was encountered at a depth of 1.3 m below ground level within the north-east corner of the site (Fig. 3, Section 1). Overlying this was a layer of dark green sand (3), up to 0.55 m in depth (Fig. 3, Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4). This was sealed by a layer of dark brown silt sand (2), measuring between 0.5 m and 0.8 m in depth. Its composition suggests that it is a layer of alluvium probably pre-historic in origin. Within the south-eastern edge of the site (Fig. 3, Section 2) this was overlaid by a 0.25 m deep layer of dark grey-brown sandy silt (5), which contained a quantity of 19th/early 20th century domestic refuse such as pottery, glass bottles, tin cans and ash, which may represent a period of domestic tipping prior to the construction of the hospital. Overlying this and Layer 2 within the remainder of the site was a layer of light brown sandy silt (1) measuring between 0.25 m and 0.5 m in depth, and which contained

modern construction debris. This may represent an earlier plough soil that had been disturbed during the course of the construction of the hospital. The site had previously been sealed by a 0.25 m deep layer of brown silt loam (6), a modern landscaping layer, which had been stripped prior to the excavation of the foundation trenches (not shown on sections).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 All the finds observed were of a late post-medieval date (19th to early 20th century) and were evaluated on site, but were not retained.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

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

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The stratigraphy observed shows that the area had been reduced in depth during its past history and that layers of post-medieval made ground had been deposited prior to the current landscaping of the site, probably during either the construction of A. G. Palmer House itself or possibly during construction of the nearby rail line. No significant archaeological features or deposits were 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	0.25 m - 0.5 m	-	Subsoil, possible base of an earlier plough soil ?	Brick, concrete, mortar	C20th
2	Layer	0.5 m - 0.8 m	-	Alluvial deposit, possibly pre-historic in origin	-	-
3	Layer	0.55 m	-	Layer of natural Greensand	-	-
4	Layer	> 0.25 m	-	Layer of natural Greensand	-	-
5	Layer	0.25 m	> 1.5 m	Post-medieval domestic refuse	Pottery, glass, metal	C19th/ C20th
6	Layer	0.25 m	-	Modern landscaping	-	C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Clouston, RPS 1996 *League of Friends Offices, Ashurst Clinic Site, Littlemore Client Report*

IFA 2001 *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological watching Briefs*

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

OA 2006 *A. G. Palmer House, Sandford Road, Littlemore, Oxford: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: A. G. Palmer House, Sandford Road, Littlemore, Oxford

Site code: OXPALM 06

Grid reference: SP 5347 0253

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of foundation and service trenches

Date and duration of project: 16.08.06 to 25.09.06, 5 site visits

Area of site: 0.14 hectare

Summary of results: Post-medieval deposits overlying undisturbed natural, no significant archaeology observed

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: OXCMS:2006.121

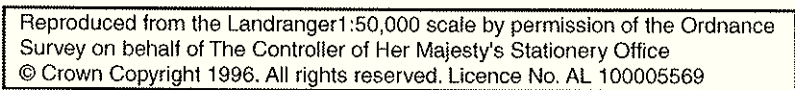
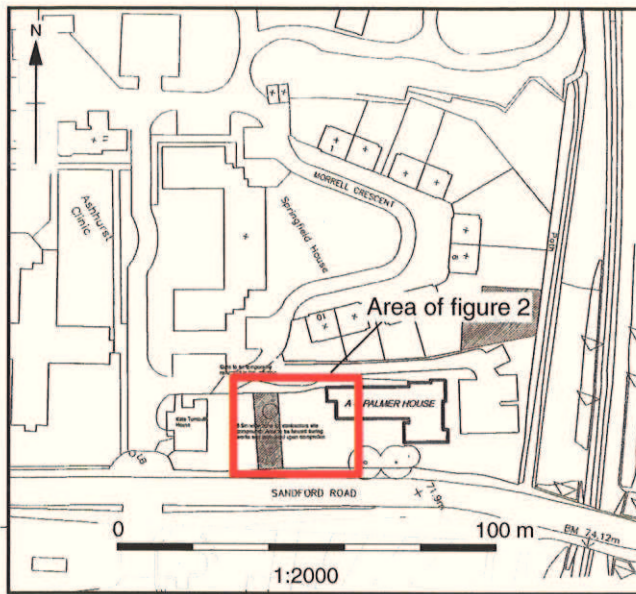
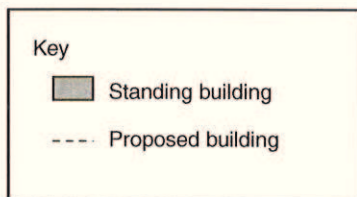


Figure 1: Site location



Access Road



AG Palmer House

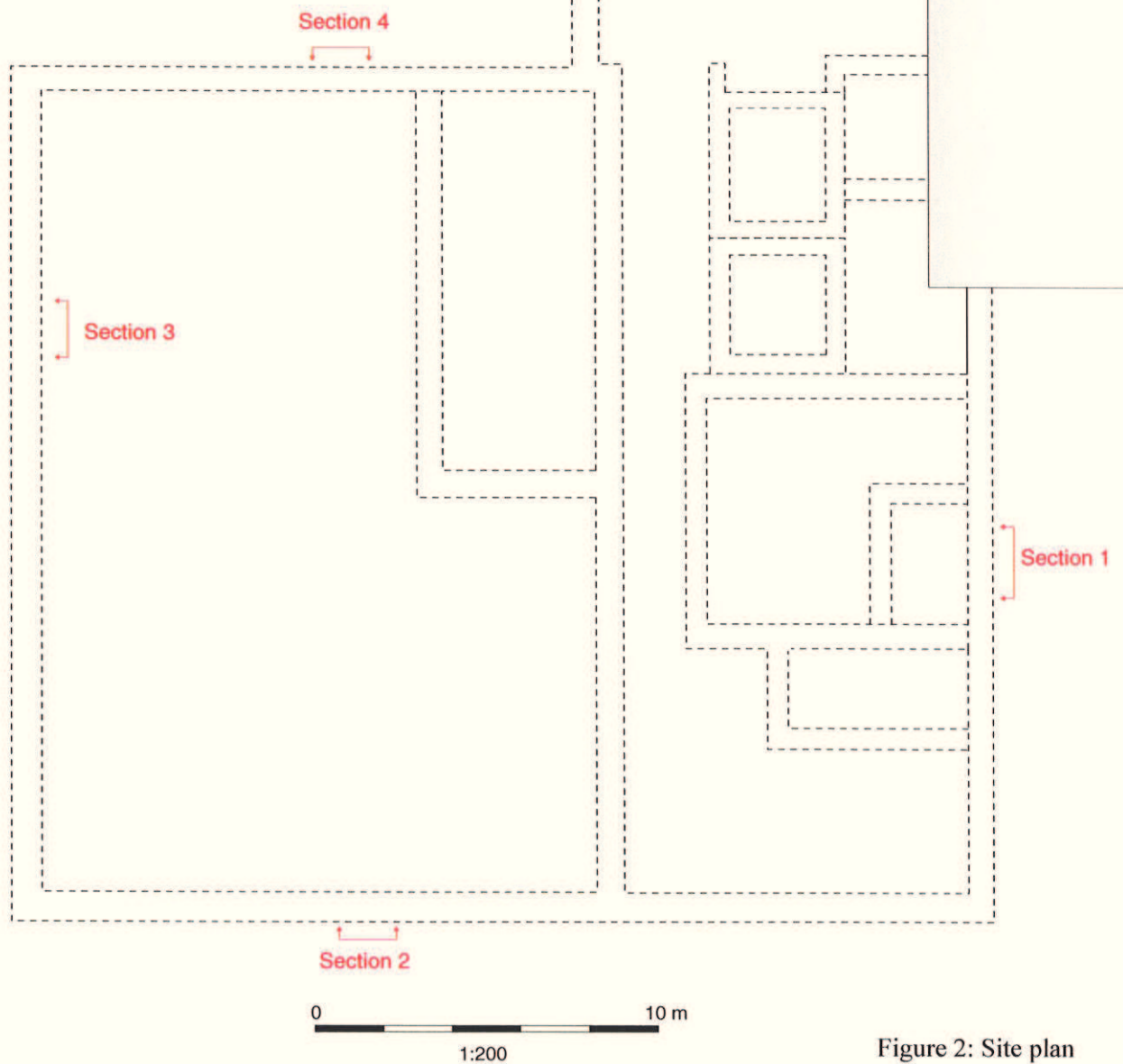


Figure 2: Site plan

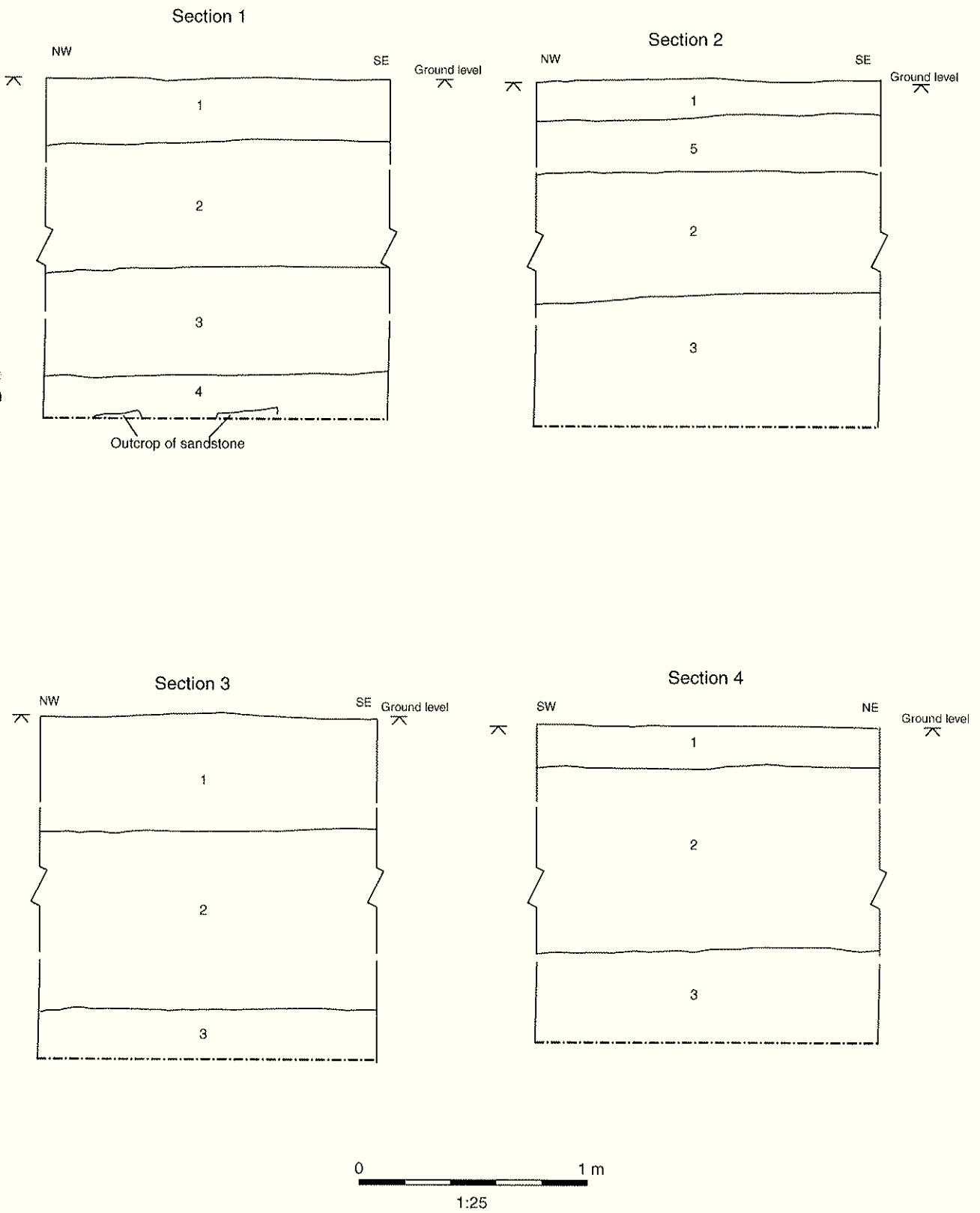


Figure 3: Sections 1-4



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