



Buildings 6 and 9, Whittington Barracks, Whittington, Staffordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Prepared by: Charlotte Howsam (Project Officer, Post-excavation)
Checked by: Joakim Thomasson (Senior Project Manager)
Edited by: Leo Webley (Head of Post-Excavation)
Approved for Issue by: David Score (Head of Fieldwork)
Signature:



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OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES

t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridge
CB23 8SQ

t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD

t. +44 (0)1524 880 250

e. info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w. oxfordarchaeology.com

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Director and Chief Executive
Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCITA
Private Limited Company, No: 1618597
Registered Charity, No: 285627
Registered Office: Oxford Archaeology Ltd
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Buildings 6 and 9, Whittington Barracks, Whittington, Staffordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Charlotte Howsam

*With contributions from Christopher Clark and illustrations
by Simon Batsman and Magdalena Wachnik*

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief at Whittington Barracks, Whittington, Staffordshire, in January 2020. The work was commissioned by Amey Defence Services Ltd and involved the monitoring of the groundworks associated with the demolition of Buildings 6 and 9 on site.

The buildings were demolished prior to the arrival of the monitoring archaeologist; the demolition area of Building 9 had also been removed of any structural remains and flattened. The watching brief monitored the clearance of the rubble from the demolition of Building 6, the removal of any remaining wall footings and the levelling of the area.

The monitoring of the groundworks within the area of Building 6 revealed a makeup layer of a mid reddish brown sandy deposit with rubble from the demolished building, c 0.35-0.40m thick; the natural deposits were not encountered.

No archaeological remains were identified during the monitoring works.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Mohammed Sadiq at Amey Defence Services Ltd for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Shane Kelleher who monitored the work on behalf of Staffordshire County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Joakim Thomasson. The fieldwork was directed by Christopher Clark. The figures were produced by Simon Batsman and the plates by Magdalena Wachnik.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Amey Defence Services Ltd to undertake a watching brief at Whittington Barracks, Whittington, Staffordshire. The fieldwork monitored the removal of structural remains and the levelling of the demolition areas of two buildings on site.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. 18/10674/DEMCON) to inform the Planning Authority in advance of submission of a Planning Application. A specification was set by Shane Kelleher, Archaeologist for Staffordshire County Council (SCC), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process (OA 2020). This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists guidance (CIfA 2014a; 2014b).

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies within Whittington Barracks to the south-east of Lichfield (NGR SK 15370 06872). The site is bounded to the south-east by Common Lane, to the south-west by Tamworth Road and to the north and north-east by Whittington Heath and woodland (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of Buildings 6 and 9 within the military complex of Whittington Barracks (Fig. 2).
- 1.2.3 According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 2020), the geology of the area is mapped as the Chester Formation sandstone and conglomerate bedrock formed during the Triassic Period. No superficial deposits are recorded.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in a previous historic building report (Tyler 2008) and is briefly summarised below.

Prehistoric and Roman

- 1.3.2 Evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity within the vicinity of the barracks is scarce with only a single find spot of a bronze flanged axe recorded c 950m to the NNW of the site.

Medieval and post-medieval

- 1.3.3 Medieval activity in the vicinity of the barracks is evidenced by the deserted settlement site of Packington, probably abandoned in the mid 16th century, and of Packington Hall Park, located c 1km to the south-east of the site. A number of listed buildings (all Grade II) are recorded within the vicinity of the barracks, including the

farmhouse, barn, granary and cart shed, and a stable and smithy at Horsley Brook Farm, located c 800m south-west of the barrack's entrance, all of which date to the mid-late 18th century. Just to the north of Horsley Brook, Ingley Hill Farmhouse and an associated barn again date to the late 18th century. Packington Hall, of 1840 by Benjamin Wyatt, and an early 19th century malthouse at Packington Hall Farm are located to the south-east of the barracks complex.

- 1.3.4 The enclosure map of 1839 indicates that the area of the barracks remained essentially as undeveloped heathland in the ownership of the Marquis of Anglesey until the later years of the 19th century.

The Barracks

- 1.3.5 The Whittington Barracks was one of 22 new 'localisation depots' constructed throughout Great Britain between 1872 and 1880, as a direct result of the 'Cardwell Reforms' initiated in the 1870s by Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for War, specifically the 'Regularisation of the Forces Act' of 1871. This act allowed for the decentralisation of the army structure and the division of Britain and Ireland into 66 districts for infantry regiments, 12 for artillery and two for cavalry. Central to the operation of this system was the concept of the 'depot', which combined home, training ground and recruitment centre within each division and, to this end, new depots were constructed and existing barracks converted and extended. Each depot was to function as the base for two linked battalions, one of which would serve abroad while one remained at home. Thus, the 38th and 80th Regiments became the 1st and 2nd Battalion South Staffords, while the 64th and 98th Regiments became the 1st and 2nd Battalion North Staffords, each moving their respective training depots to a new Type III 'double-depot' built at Lichfield.
- 1.3.6 Whittington Heath had traditionally been used for manoeuvres by the Staffordshire regiments, becoming an annual event after 1833. Following the Caldwell Reforms, an area of the unenclosed Whittington Heath was purchased by the War Department from the Marquis of Anglesey in 1875 for the establishment of the new depot on the northern side of the Lichfield to Tamworth Road (the modern A51), immediately to the south-east of the Whittington Race Course.
- 1.3.7 Works on a national scale were coordinated by the Inspector General of Fortifications, with two new Assistant Directors of Works for Barracks being appointed, while detailed architectural and planning works were undertaken by the Director of the Design Branch. The plans for the Lichfield depot were prepared in the Royal Engineers Office, Manchester, under the direction of Col. Edward Belfield, Commanding Royal Engineer of the Northern District, though no individual architect can be identified. Construction was undertaken by the Wolverhampton firm of Harry Lovatt and Sons with brickyards being set up locally; the garrison 'chapel-school' was the first building to reach completion in 1878 and the site was formerly handed over to the military on 29 October 1880. Kelly's Directory of 1880 records that 'the barracks now being erected on the Heath will hold 1200 men, exclusive of officers'.

- 1.3.8 The site comprises 40 acres. A detailed description of the barracks, then ‘approaching completion’, was given in an article in the Lichfield Mercury of 21 May 1880, which praised the first-class workmanship and materials used throughout.
- 1.3.9 The barracks were simple and straightforward in design, with ranges of buildings around four sides of a central, rectangular parade ground, the whole aligned at a slight angle to the Lichfield-Tamworth Road. The entrance was located at the northern, Lichfield end via paired gates (north and south gates) either side of an imposing, crenellated armoury (or ‘keep’, still extant) occupying the centre of the north-west site boundary. Soldiers’ accommodation was arranged in four blocks to the south-eastern, short boundary of the complex and in six blocks to the south-western long boundary. Opposite the latter, on the far side of the parade ground, lay the officers’ quarters (housed in the three-storey ‘Clocktower building’, demolished in 1984) and the Chapel-School. Married quarters were located in four blocks to the rear of the Clocktower building, while the barracks hospital, providing beds for 66 patients, an infectious disease ward and mortuary, was located in the south-east corner of the site. The whole site was bounded by a high, enclosing perimeter wall.

2 WATCHING BRIEF AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The project aims and objectives, as stated in the WSI (OA 2020), were as follows:
- i. To identify and record any significant archaeological remains revealed during the groundworks, with particular regard to remains of medieval and post-medieval date. Any remains will be interpreted with regard to the known history of the barracks.
 - ii. To mitigate the impact of the intrusive works through preservation by record.
 - iii. To make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The methodology specified for the archaeological work can be found in full in the WSI (OA 2020) and is summarised here.
- 2.2.2 The watching brief comprised the monitoring of groundworks associated with the demolition of two buildings on site. Buildings 6 and 9 were reduced to the level of the ground slab prior to archaeological involvement.
- 2.2.3 Prior to any grubbing out of any structural remains below slab level, the area was cleared of rubble and reduced to formation level using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.4 Standard OA recording methodologies were employed throughout, with all work carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA 2014b).
- 2.2.5 A full digital photographic record was compiled comprising general views of the monitored areas.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the watching brief are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the monitored areas. The monitoring work took place over three days from 13 to 15 January 2020.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The natural strata were not exposed during the monitoring of the groundworks. Within the demolition area of Building 6, the exposed stratigraphic sequence comprised a mid reddish brown sandy deposit with rubble from the demolished building.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the watching brief were generally good and the site largely remained dry throughout.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 No archaeological features were present within the monitored areas of the site.

3.4 Building 6 (Fig. 2, Plates 1-4)

3.4.1 Building 6 had been demolished and the process of removing the rubble and some foundations had begun prior to the arrival of the monitoring archaeologist on the 13 January 2020.

3.4.2 The clearance of the rubble from the demolition of Building 6 continued to be monitored on the 14 and 15 January 2020. The removal of foundations and pipes associated with Building 6 was also monitored.

3.4.3 On 15 January 2020, the grubbing out of the Building 6 demolition area was monitored and involved the removal of any existing structural remains and the levelling of a modern makeup layer comprising a mid reddish brown sandy deposit and rubble from the demolished building, with truncation going no more than c 0.35-0.40m deep. This process did not expose the underlying natural deposits; no archaeological deposits or residual finds were encountered.

3.5 Building 9 (Fig. 2, Plates 5 and 6)

3.5.1 Building 9 had been fully demolished, with the foundations removed and the area completely flattened, prior to the arrival of the monitoring archaeologist on 13 January 2020.

3.6 Finds summary

3.6.1 No archaeological finds were recovered during the archaeological monitoring.

3.6.2 No bulk soil samples were collected for environmental analysis or small artefact recovery, as no pre-modern deposits were encountered.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The weather during the investigation was largely favourable with the monitoring work conducted in generally sunny to overcast conditions. A bout of rain had no significant impact on the monitoring.

4.2 Watching brief objectives and results

4.2.1 The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains in order to mitigate the impact of the intrusive groundworks associated with the demolition of Buildings 6 and 9 within the barracks.

4.2.2 No archaeological features were identified during the monitoring of the groundworks on site. The natural deposits were not exposed during the removal of the structural remains of Building 6 and levelling of the area, with the groundworks revealing a modern makeup layer of mid reddish brown sandy deposit and rubble, c 0.35-0.40m thick.

4.2.3 The demolition, grubbing out and levelling of Building 9 had been completed prior to the arrival of the monitoring archaeologist; however, given the stratigraphy revealed in the demolition area of Building 6, it is unlikely that the groundworks associated with Building 9 had any significant impact on the below-ground heritage resource.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The monitoring of the demolition and clearance of Buildings 6 and 9 at Whittington Barracks confirmed the absence of archaeological remains within the monitored areas, although natural deposits were not encountered during the groundworks.

4.3.2 The results of the watching brief correspond with the agricultural nature of this area of the landscape during the medieval period, being located on the outskirts of the deserted medieval village of Packington, and the early post-medieval period as demonstrated by historic mapping.

4.4 Significance

4.4.1 Given the absence of any archaeological features or residual finds within the observed areas of the site, it is unlikely that the groundworks had any impact upon the below-ground heritage resource of this vicinity. The results of the watching brief therefore cannot inform on the nature of medieval and post-medieval land use on site.

APPENDIX A BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX B SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Buildings 6 and 9, Whittington Barracks, Whittington, Staffordshire
Site code:	WHITBA20
Grid Reference	SK 15370 06872
Type:	Watching Brief
Date and duration:	13-15 January 2020, 3 days
Area of Site	c 0.73ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent in due course, under the following accession number: STKMG:2020.LH.6.
Summary of Results:	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Whittington Barracks monitoring the groundworks associated with the demolition of Buildings 6 and 9. The demolition area of Building 9 had been removed of any structural remains and flattened prior to the start of the monitoring works. The watching brief observed the clearance of the rubble from the demolition of Building 6, the removal of any remaining wall footings and the levelling of the area. This revealed a makeup layer of a mid reddish brown sandy deposit with rubble from the demolished building, c 0.35-0.40m thick; the natural deposits were not encountered. No archaeological remains were identified.



 Site Area

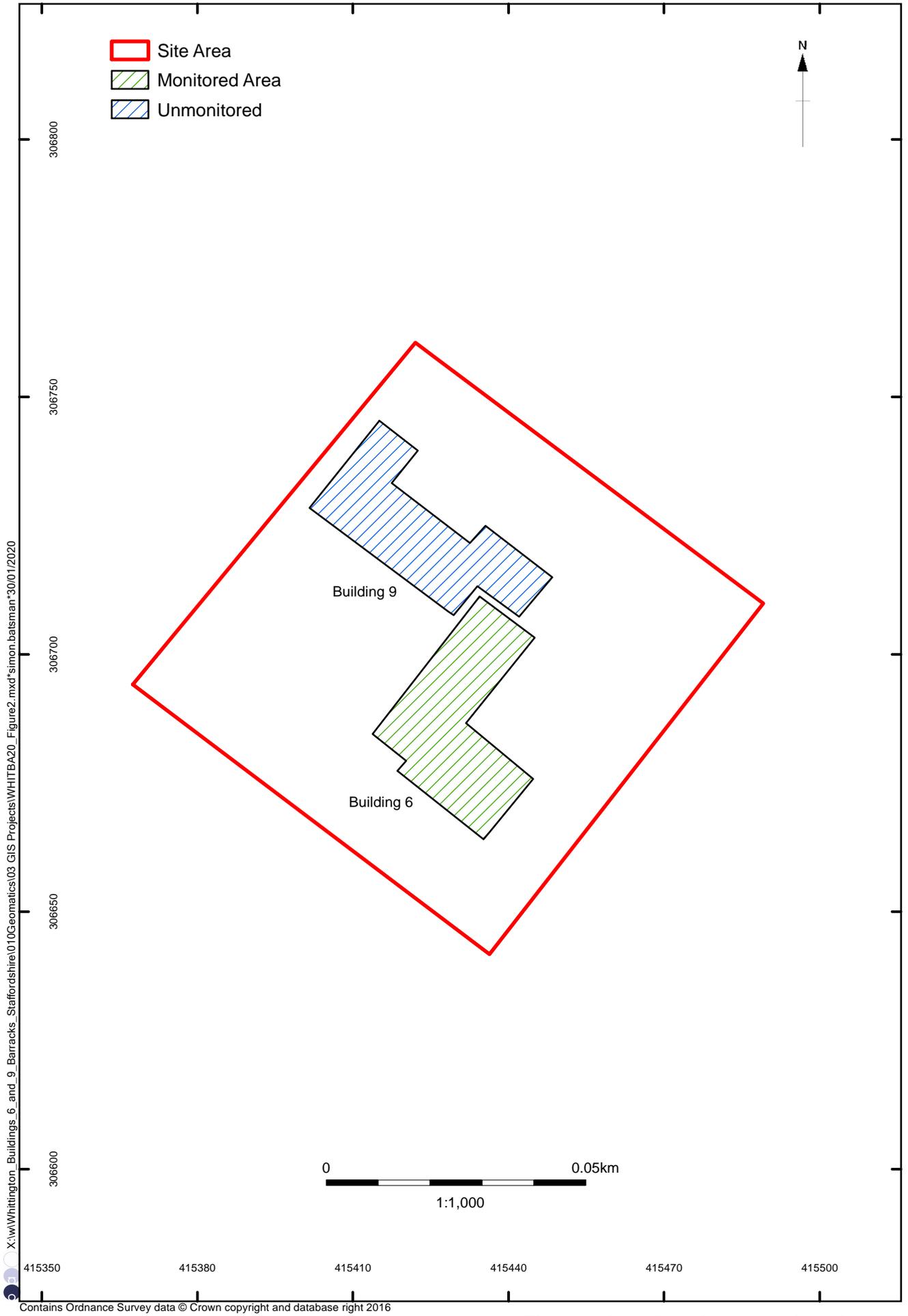


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Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016
 Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Figure 1: Site Location



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Figure 2: Location plan of monitored areas



Plate 1: Building 6 demolition rubble, looking north-west



Plate 2: Building 6 removal of demolition rubble, looking south-west



Plate 3: Grubbing out of Building 6 demolition area, looking north-west



Plate 4: Grubbing out of Building 6 demolition area, looking south-west



Plate 5: Building 9 flattened demolition area, looking north-west

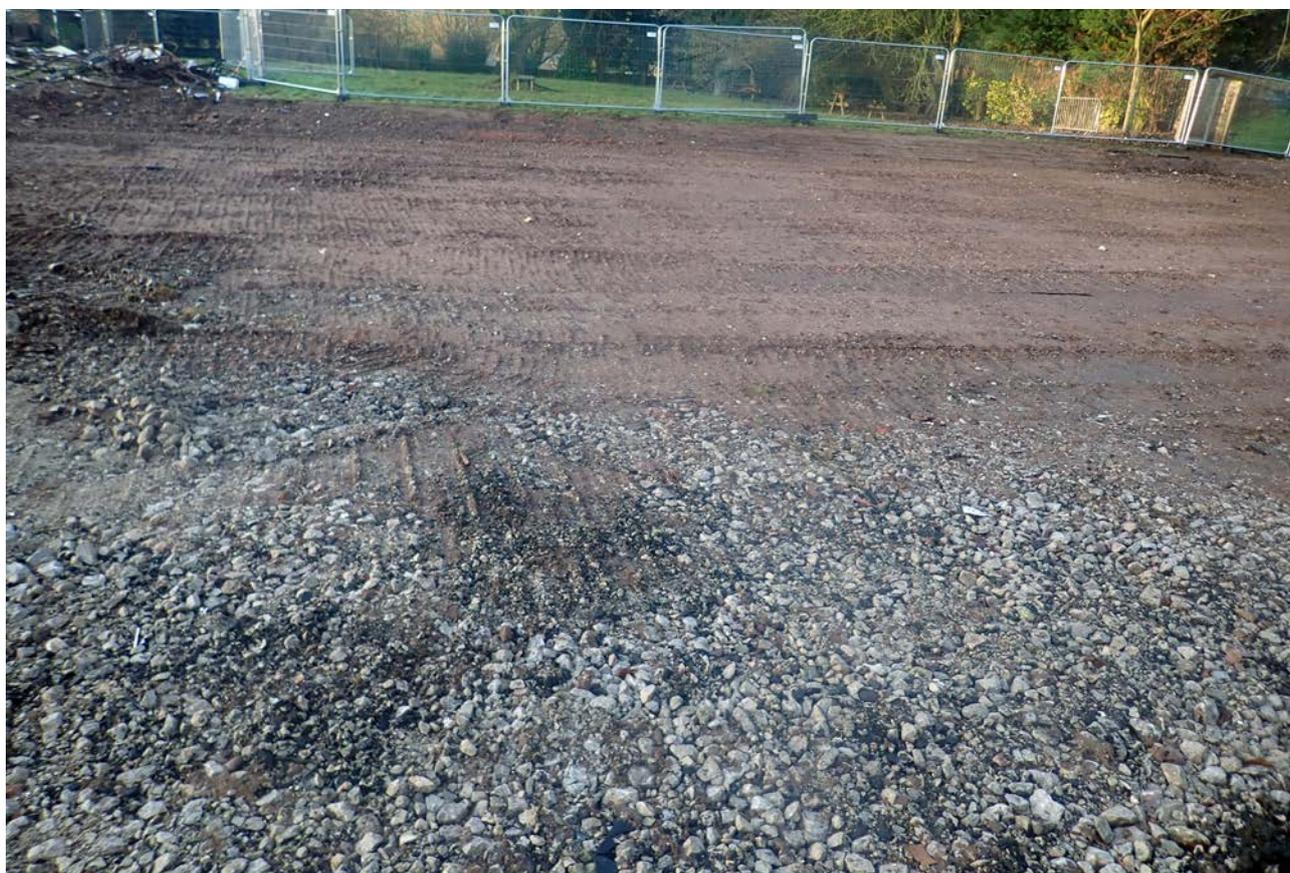


Plate 6: Building 9 flattened demolition area, looking south-west



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

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX20ES

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

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

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 MCIfA
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