

Morland & Co. Plc

**The George and Dragon, Stert Street,
Abingdon, Oxon.**

SU 49829711

Archaeological Watching Brief

Oxford Archaeological Unit
May 1995

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**THE GEORGE AND DRAGON, STERT ST, ABINGDON,
OXFORDSHIRE**

SU 4982 9711

INTRODUCTION

On 13th and 15th of February a watching brief was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) at the George and Dragon Public House, Stert Street, Abingdon. The work consisted of a diner extension at the rear of the George and Dragon. The work was carried out according to a brief prepared by the County Archaeological Services on behalf of the Vale of White Horse.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

The site lies within the bounds of the known Romano-British settlement. Recent excavations by the (OAU) in the former abbey vineyard have identified a substantial triple oppidum ditch dated to the late Iron Age/early Roman period.

In 1988-89 excavations by the OAU were carried out immediately E of the site, now occupied by the Vale of White Horse District Council Offices. These identified settlement from the Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and monastic medieval period as well as a Civil War cemetery.

The location of the George and Dragon is just outside the Abbey precinct. The stone wall which forms the back of the yard of the George and Dragon is generally indicated as the former Abbey precinct boundary which runs to St Nicholas' church and the main abbey gateway.

The town expanded into the area of Stert Street in the later medieval period. There is a reference to 'Street of Sterte' in 1316. In 1554 a survey identified 29 houses on the east side, between the Stert and the abbey wall (M. Parrington).

M. Parrington 'Excavations at Stert Street, Abingdon, Oxon' *Oxoniensia* (1979), 1-25

RESULTS (Fig. 2)

The original design involved a foundation trenches but was later revised to a rafted foundation. The only deep trench was dug by the contractors to renew waste water pipes and ran parallel with the back of the building. The trench measured 13.60 m in length c. 0.60 m in width and up to 1.10 m in depth. A number of layers were recorded in section and pottery was collected, mostly from cleaning the

earlier layers (context 7 & 9). Layer 7 was a dark grey sandy silt with 5% gravel and was in marked contrast to the gravelly deposits above. These layers were similar in character and the relationship between them was unclear and they may possibly represent the same deposit. The top of layer 7 formed the bottom of the trench for the northern 6 m. The top of layer 7 occurred at 0.96 m below the present yard surface. At the S end the top of layer 7 occurred at 0.74 m below the yard surface and consequently up to 0.30 m of layer 7 was removed. It was not clear from the section whether Layer 7 sloped away to the N or if the truncation was more severe in the N; the latter is most probable.

A stone feature 8 was located at the S end of the trench. Orientated approximately E-W it occurred in the bottom of the trench. Composed of rough limestone up to 0.20 m across and 0.04 m thick it did not form a well defined structure and due to the small area exposed the exact nature of this feature was unclear. Some of the stones were loose and on the N side the stones were angled. A buff to off-white mortar, 10, was observed adhering to some of the stones. It was overlaid by layer 9, which continued to the S end of the trench. No rubble or stone was noted anywhere else which might indicate any destruction associated with 8. The structure, if linear, would have occurred in the main foundation trench but the revised rafted design now precludes this.

POTTERY By Paul Booth (OAU)

Twelve sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the watching brief. The material was in good condition and though probably redeposited was little abraded. Sherd sizes suggest that any redeposition processes involved were of restricted events. All the sherds were in reduced coarse wares, probably originating within the Oxfordshire pottery industry and some perhaps from quite local sources. There was only one diagnostic sherd, a rim from a jar, but of a type which is not closely dateable. The overall date range of the material is from 2nd to 4th centuries, but the character of the sherds in context 7 (9 of the 12 sherds) subjectively suggests a late Roman date, broadly mid 3rd-4th centuries, for this material. The sherds from contexts 6 (2 sherds) and 9 (1 sherd) could have been of 2nd century date, however.

CONCLUSIONS

The pottery from the earliest deposits was all Roman in date. This would be consistent with the location within the Romano-British settlement at Abingdon and the majority of sherds broadly date to mid 3rd-4th century. The limited area exposed prevented any firm conclusions being made but the occurrence of layer 7 at c. 0.74-0.95 m below the modern ground level would be similar to that encountered in the OAU excavations immediately E of the site. That is to say, the layers above layer 7 and 9 can be considered post-medieval in date.

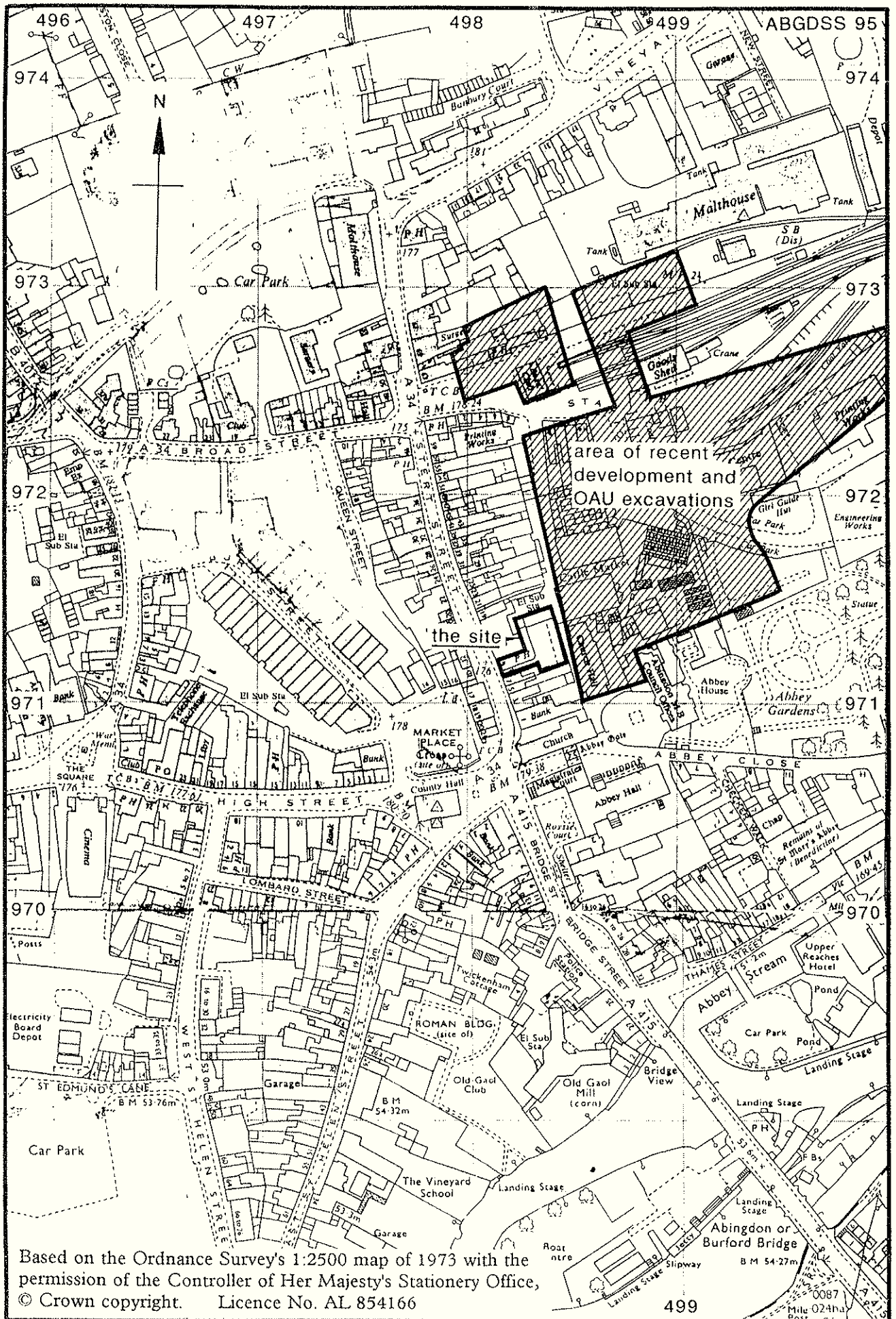
The only notable feature located was a stone feature, 8. Whether this represented

a wall, drain or isolated stone feature, or possibly an isolated dump of stone, was unclear. The location at the bottom of the trench allowed the stones to remain *in situ*. The OAU 1988-89 excavations to the E exposed a late medieval cess pit and wells, the cess pit probably associated with the former vicarage of St Nicholas'. The stones could represent the top of a similar type of feature.

Oxford Archaeological Unit
Andrew Parkinson
March 1995

APPENDIX 1: Table of Contexts and dimensions

THE GEORGE AND DRAGON, STERT ST, ABINGDON, ABGDSS 95					
Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comments	Findings
1	Layer		0.17-0.19	Tarmac of yard	
2	Layer		0.02-0.14	Make up layer	
3	Layer		0.14		
4	Layer		0.20-0.34		
5	Layer		0.13		1 red tile
6	Layer		0.20		2 roman pottery sherds
7	Layer		0.40		9 roman pottery sherds and 1 bone fragment
8	Stones	up to 0.70m		Stone feature	
9	Layer		0.42		1 roman pottery sherd
10	Mortar		-	Mortar sample taken	
11	Fill of 12		0.41		
12	Cut	0.80	0.41		
13	Layer		0.40		
14	Fill of 15		0.34		
15	Cut	1.14	0.70		
16	Fill of 15		0.38		
17	Layer		0.10		



scale 1:2500

site location

Figure 1

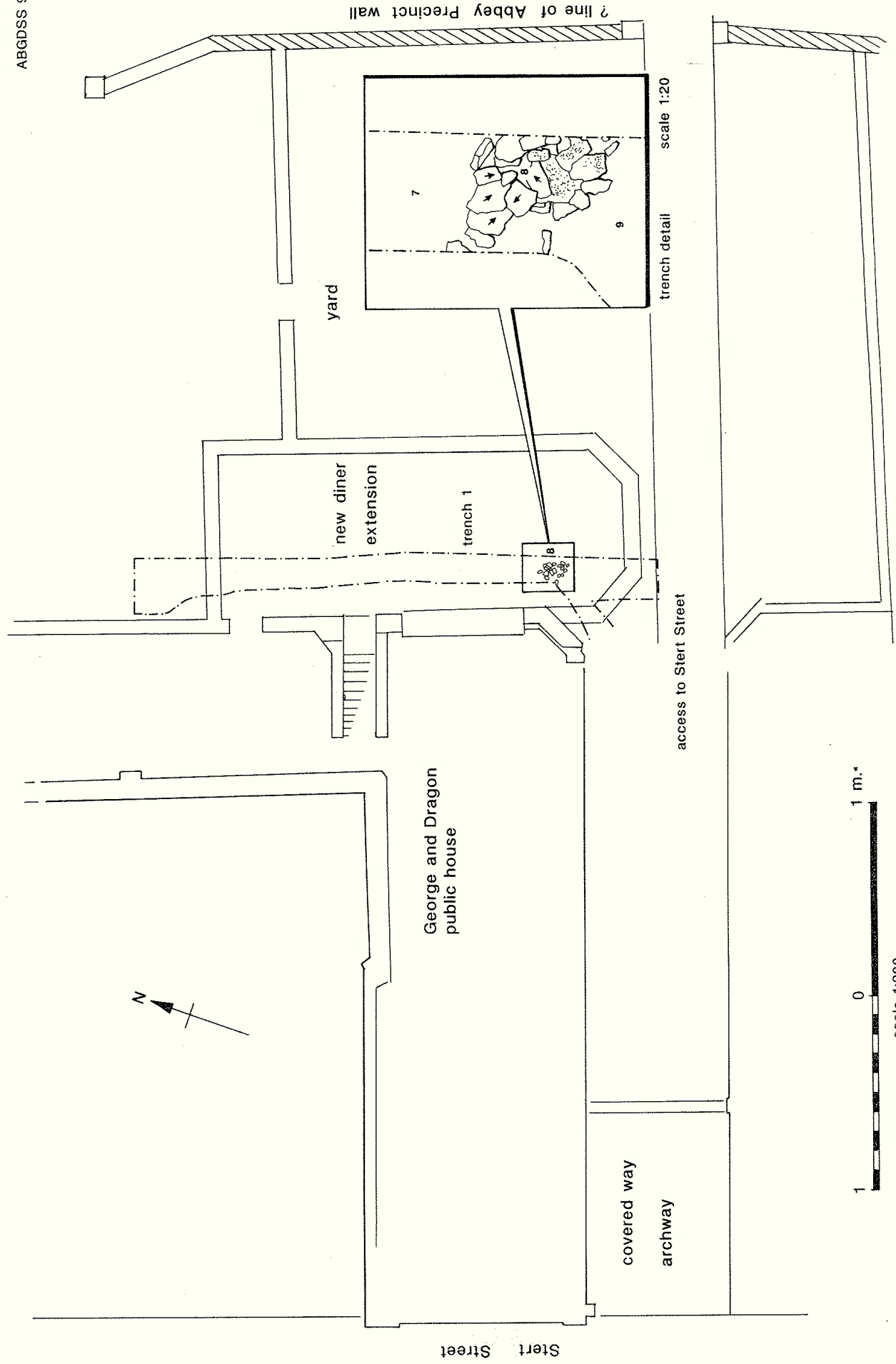


Figure 2