Austin House, Abingdon School, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Excavation Report

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Archaeological Excavation Report

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Summary

Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological excavation in February 2022 at the site of a proposed new extension to Austin House, Abingdon School, Oxfordshire. Preceding trial-trench evaluation in 2019 had established the presence of medieval and post-medieval remains, comprising ditches and pits. The excavated area, totalling *c* 0.07ha, was subsequently targeted upon these remains in the centre of the development site.

The majority of features encountered on site dated to the medieval and post-medieval periods, with only small quantities of residual Roman and late Saxon pottery suggestive of occupation in the wider landscape during these periods. Evidence of medieval activity comprised a group of ditches, suggesting a rectilinear arrangement of enclosures or fields, and a small number of pits alongside indicating associated activity. Also, a group of five postholes suggestive of a rectangular structure very probably belonged to the medieval phase of activity, as suggested by a radiocarbon date of cal AD 1035–1210 obtained from charred wheat grains. The pottery assemblage similarly demonstrates that medieval activity was confined to the period *c* 1050–1250 and the inter-cutting nature of the ditches indicates activity was not limited to a single phase. Together with the finds and environmental remains, it is probable that the medieval features represent small-scale occupation and agricultural activity on the west side of Bath Street at the edge of the medieval town of Abingdon.

The pottery and clay tobacco pipe assemblages suggest there was a hiatus in activity on site between the later 13th century and the mid- to late 17th century. The post-medieval features recorded during the excavation appear to have been 18th- to 19th-century in date and predominately related to quarrying and subsequent waste disposal. These quarries may have been related to the construction of Waste Court (now Austin House) itself, as they mostly predated the construction of Abingdon School in the later 19th century. A possible garden feature and levelling deposit were also identified.

A small number of features remain undated, though they probably related to the medieval phase of activity.

Acknowledgements

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The fieldwork was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Carl Champness and the post-excavation programme was managed by Tim Allen. The fieldwork was directed on site by John Carne, who was supported by Ines Matos Glover, Amber Hartwell-Brixton, Ben McAndrew, Francesca Gordon, Jeremy Briscombe, Mark Collins and Tamsin Jones. Survey was carried out by Caroline Souday and Ben Brown and digitising by Marjaana Kohtamaki and Charles Rousseaux. Charlotte Howsam wrote the descriptive narrative, briefed the figures and plates and pulled together the report, Tim Allen wrote the discussion.

Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Leigh Allen, processed the environmental remains under the supervision of Rebecca Nicholson and prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Ridge and Partners LLP on behalf of Abingdon School to undertake a programme of archaeological mitigation at the site of a proposed new extension to Austin House, Abingdon School (Fig. 1). Planning permission (planning ref: P19/V3211/FUL & P19/V3212/LB) for the development of the site was granted by Vale of White Horse District Council and the work was undertaken in accordance with an archaeological planning condition attached to planning consent. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced detailing the scope and methodology of the archaeological investigations necessary to discharge the planning condition (OA 2021).

1.1.2 An area totalling *c* 0.07ha located in the centre of the development site was subject to archaeological excavation in February 2022 (Fig. 2). This was targeted on archaeological remains revealed by a preceding phase of trial-trench evaluation (OA 2019a).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is situated within the grounds of Abingdon School to the north-west of the historic core of Abingdon, Oxfordshire, which prior to the 1974 boundary changes lay within the county of Berkshire (NGR SU 49444 97443; Fig. 1). It is located within the historic parish of Abingdon St Helens and within the administrative area of Vale of White Horse District Council.

1.2.2 The development site, which is approximately 0.39ha in size, is located in the eastern part of the school grounds, bounded by the B4017 to the east. The site covers part of the grounds to the west of Austin House.

1.2.3 The underlying bedrock geology is recorded as mudstone of the Ampthill and Kimmeridge Clay Formations, which is overlain by Summertown-Radley sand and gravel deposits (BGS 2022). This geology was confirmed during archaeological investigations undertaken at the site (Evans and Excell 1997; 1999; OA 2019a).

1.2.4 The site lies *c* 59m above Ordnance Datum. The River Stert is located *c* 0.30km to the east of the site and the River Thames is *c* 0.71km to the south-east.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The following archaeological and historical background is drawn from desk-based assessments (OA 2007; 2012; 2016) of the area and the results of archaeological fieldwork at Abingdon School (OA 2017; 2018; 2019a; 2019b; 2022).

Prehistoric

1.3.2 Struck flints of Mesolithic date were recovered from the Spring Road cemetery east of the Larkhill Stream, showing that Mesolithic hunter-gatherers visited this area (Allen and Kamash 2008). Pottery and struck flints of early and middle Neolithic date (4000–

2900 BC) and a late Neolithic pit (2900–2500 BC) were also found at the same site, showing activity by the earliest farmers in this area.

1.3.3 A Beaker burial of the Copper or earliest Bronze Age, dated 2450–2200 cal BC, was found at Spring Road in a grave that was not marked by a surrounding ditch or mound. A possible barrow cemetery of early Bronze Age date (2500–1500 BC), as suggested by four ring ditch cropmarks identified on aerial photographs, has been recorded in fields on the north and south sides of Faringdon Road, most in Barrow Field, now the sports fields of Abingdon School. The largest of these would have extended into the north-west corner of the school grounds, but this area has been completely quarried away. A fifth, smaller cropmark ring ditch, again probably indicating a former barrow, was identified within the north-eastern half of the school site.

1.3.4 Excavations at the larger barrow cemetery of Barrow Hills, Radley, north-east of Abingdon, have shown that the ditches that demarcated such barrows can contain burials, as well as any within the central mound area, and that additional burials or pits containing offerings often exist in a peripheral zone outside the ditches (Barclay and Halpin 1999).

1.3.5 Excavations were carried out in 1999 at Waste Court (now Austin House), both within and around the site. In Area 4 a rubble spread was revealed from which a Bronze Age barbed-and-tanged-arrowhead was recovered, though this was considered to have been residual. A residual Neolithic/early Bronze Age flint flake was also recovered during a watching brief carried out at Beech Court to the south of the site (OA 2018, 18).

1.3.6 The only evidence to suggest that the area immediately surrounding the site saw activity during the later Bronze Age and Iron Age (1500 BC–AD 43) was a residual pottery sherd of Iron Age date recovered during an evaluation carried out prior to the construction of the Yang Centre, *c* 190m to the north-west of the site (OA 2013). However, evidence of settlement of this date is known at Spring Road to the west and at Thornhill Walk to the north of the site, and cropmark enclosures some 200m north of the site may also represent a settlement of this period. To the south, Abingdon town centre was the site of a thriving settlement throughout the Iron Age (800 BC–AD 43). Abingdon has often been labelled the oldest continually occupied town in England, as multiple archaeological investigations have identified evidence of activity within the town from the Iron Age through to the post-medieval period (Allen 1990).

Roman

1.3.7 The Iron Age settlement in the area of Abingdon town centre continued to thrive throughout the Roman period (AD 43–410). Settlement appears to have extended northwards along what is now Bath Street to the north of the site (Ainslie 1995, 72-4; Wessex Archaeology 1992). Cemeteries were often placed at the periphery of such settlements and both cremation and inhumation burials have been found on the west side of Bath Street, including a coffin from within the school, to the north-east of the site. Further evidence of Roman activity is also known from Spring Road to the west and the cropmark enclosures to the north of the site may also be Roman in date.

1.3.8 Excavations in 1997, just south of the site, revealed an infant inhumation burial and a cist burial that had been disturbed and robbed out by later post-medieval activity (Evans and Excell 1997). A double row of stakeholes and a likely associated gully or ditch were also excavated. These features, running east–west, were interpreted to have been contiguous and may have delineated the possible extent of a burial ground (ibid.). The infant inhumation lay beyond the potential boundary, although this is not necessarily unusual.

1.3.9 The 1999 excavations carried out within Abingdon School also uncovered a rubble spread containing Romano-British finds and a pit, posthole and a possible hearth within excavation Area 4 (Evans and Excell 1999). Residual Roman finds were also recovered from later deposits associated with post-medieval/modern landscaping in Area 1. An inhumation burial thought likely to be Roman or Saxon in date was also found in the gardens of Austin House. No remains of Roman date, however, were uncovered during recent trial-trench evaluations at Austin House and at Crescent House to the west of the site (OA 2019a; 2019b). Watching briefs carried out at Beech Court to the south of the site recovered residual sherds of Roman pottery, and Romano-British settlement features and domestic refuse were found on the site of Amey Hall during construction (Chambers 1980, 167). A recent evaluation carried out at the proposed site of Beech Court Pavilion, located to the south of the site, revealed several ditches, one of which was of possible Roman date (OA 2022).

Early medieval

1.3.10 Areas of Anglo-Saxon settlement are known along Spring Road to the west and within Abingdon town centre to the south-east. Inhumation burials dating to the middle Saxon period have also been uncovered at the Horse and Jockey pub, *c* 300m to the south-east of the site (JMHS 2004), and immediately east of Spring Road. Evidence of activity dating between AD 900 and the Norman Conquest (1066) is limited and largely concentrated in the town centre, the closest evidence of late Saxon activity uncovered below the multi-storey car park just south of the inner ring road (Parrington and Balkwill 1975). No early medieval remains were identified during recent investigations carried out in 2019 in the area of Crescent House and Austin House, suggesting that nearby Anglo-Saxon burial activity did not extend into this area (OA 2019a; 2019b).

Medieval

1.3.11 Much of the late medieval settlement of Abingdon was focused on the present-day town centre to the south-east of the site and the area of the Fitzharris manor house and estate to the east. South of Abingdon School, medieval buildings still survive along Bath Street, which is likely to have been a medieval routeway, though the closest below-ground evidence of medieval occupation consisted of medieval pits excavated nearly 200m to the south-east at No. 64 Bath Street (Chambers 1980, 267; Ainslie 1995, 72-4) and at Nos 66/68 (Wessex Archaeology 1992).

1.3.12 A medieval cemetery at the junction of Spring Road and Faringdon Road to the west may have been the site of a chapel at a crossroads (Harman and Wilson 1981; Chambers and Fuller 1986, 93). The area of the site was probably used as arable or pastoral land during this period and possibly also for quarrying.

1.3.13 In 1998 archaeological excavations were also conducted within the site in 1998 (Evans and Excell 1999; Evans *et al*. 1999). A small trench excavated within the cellar of Waste Court (now Austin House) did not reveal any clear archaeological features but recovered a number of finds including late medieval pottery, tile and bone. The excavation of a former tree-throw hole on the upper lawn also recovered medieval pottery sherds. Residual medieval tile fragments were also recovered during a watching brief carried out to the north at the site of Beech Court (OA 2018, 17).

1.3.14 More recently, two evaluation trenches were investigated at the school in 2019 as part of the current proposed schemes at Crescent House and Austin House (OA 2019a; 2019b). No archaeological remains were identified in Trench 1 at Crescent House, but a concentration of medieval features was exposed in Trench 2 within the grounds of Austin House (OA 2019a), leading to the present excavation. Medieval pottery suggestive of nearby domestic activity was also recovered during an archaeological evaluation undertaken at the proposed site of Beech Court Pavilion (OA 2022).

Post-medieval and modern

1.3.15 Rocque's map of Berkshire in 1761 demonstrates that the site was located on what was then the northern periphery of Abingdon. It depicts buildings facing onto Bath Street (previously Bore Street) to the east, with garden plots and outbuildings to the rear. What appears to be cultivated land lies to the west of the site.

1.3.16 The Grade II listed Waste Court (Historic England List Entry 1368292), renamed in 2015 as Austin House, was constructed within the site in 1779 and was first illustrated on the 1843 tithe map of the parish of Abingdon St Helen's. The tithe map also illustrates a trackway/road running directly to the south of the building, along the southern boundary of the site. The northern edge of the trackway is consistent with the parish boundary between Abingdon St Helen's and St Nicolas' parishes, more clearly illustrated on the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map, and is shown to pass through the site. Two further buildings, situated within the north-east corner of the site, are also depicted on the tithe map.

1.3.17 The first edition OS map of 1874 shows an alteration to the footprint of Waste Court, which is thought to have been modified during the 19th century. The trackway/road to the south of the site also appears to have narrowed by this time. The remainder of the site appears to have comprised a garden area of lawn, paths and trees.

1.3.18 During the 1999 excavations at Abingdon School (Evans and Excell 1999; Evans *et al*. 1999), two, likely 18th-century, gullies were recorded within Area 3 along with finds of that period and a 17th-century lead token. In Area 5 the natural gravel subsoil was observed just below the surface, although residual post-medieval finds were recovered. Area 7 was heavily disturbed, though extensive evidence of an 18th-century working area associated with the construction of Waste Court was recorded.

1.3.19 A watching brief prior to the construction of the school swimming pool directly to the north of the site revealed extensive areas of quarrying and a single post-medieval pit (TVAS 2007). Two watching briefs at Beech Court directly south of the site also recorded evidence of post-medieval activity (OA 2016; 2017; 2018). Post-medieval features included a late 18th- to 19th-century stone wall and piers, a possible arcaded

structure, pits, a quarry pit and a brick surface of post-medieval date. Evidence of a known Second World War bunker was also identified.

1.3.20 An evaluation took place prior to the construction of the Yang Centre *c* 190m to the north-west of the site (OA 2013). The evaluation identified two pits of post-medieval date, a small number of undated features and areas of quarrying not previously identified from historic mapping. Evidence of post-medieval quarrying was also recorded during the recent evaluation at Austin House (OA 2019a) and Beech Court Pavilion (OA 2022).

1.3.21 A geophysical survey was conducted across parts of the school grounds in 1998, just to the west of the site (Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd 1998). Two 20m squares were surveyed to the west of Waste Court, and these were labelled as Area B. A NW–SE aligned linear anomaly was identified in the northern area and two further linear anomalies were identified in the north-east and south-west corner of the southern area. Six possible circular features, thought to form parts of small enclosures or house structures, and a possible rectilinear feature were also identified within the southern area. Evidence of disturbance from trees and ferrous debris were identified to the north. The anomalies identified suggested to the report's authors the presence of settlement activity and at least two separate phases of activity.

1.4 Aims and objectives

1.4.1 The general aims and objectives, as stated in the WSI (OA 2021), were as follows:

i. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;
ii. To determine the extent and character of the archaeological remains identified within the proposed development area;
iii. To collect appropriate environmental samples that will help to assess the overall presence and survival of ecofactual and environmental evidence (including animal bone, human bone, plant remains, pollen, charcoal, molluscs, soils, etc), its condition and potential, given the nature of the deposits encountered;
iv. To produce a site archive for deposition with the Oxfordshire Museum Service and to provide information for accession to the Oxfordshire HER.

1.4.2 The specific aims and objectives of the excavation were:

v. To determine the extent and character of the medieval and post-medieval remains identified during the evaluation;
vi. To determine whether the burials found in Waste Court to the south of the site represent part of a larger cemetery extending into this area;
vii. To investigate whether Roman settlement extended this far north from central Abingdon, and if so, to characterise and date this within the Roman period;
viii. To attempt to determine whether features of early or later prehistoric date are present within the areas to be excavated, as the residual finds from adjacent sites might suggest;
ix. To look for evidence of early medieval (Saxon) activity.

1.4.3 The programme of archaeological investigation was conducted within the general research parameters and objectives defined by the *Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas* (Hey and Hind 2014).

1.5 Fieldwork methodology

1.5.1 All works were carried out in accordance with the WSI (OA 2021) and in compliance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' standards and guidelines (CIfA 2014a; 2014b), the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: the MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Historic England 2015) and local and national planning policies (DCLG 2012).

1.5.2 The *c* 0.07ha excavation area was targeted upon features identified during the preceding 2019 trial-trench evaluation (Fig. 2; OA 2019a). The excavation area was stripped using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Overburden deposits were removed down to the first archaeological horizon or the surface of the natural geology, whichever was encountered first. On completion of overburden removal, the resultant surfaces were hand cleaned as necessary and a digital pre-excavation plan showing revealed features was produced using a GPS.

1.5.3 A sufficient sample of the revealed features was investigated by hand to establish their character and date, where possible. Approximately 20% of the exposed length of linear features were excavated. Where required, a 50% sample of all discrete features was excavated. All archaeological deposits and features were hand excavated and recorded on *pro forma* sheets in accordance with OA's recording system. All excavated features were planned by GPS. All sections were hand drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20, as appropriate. A full photographic record, illustrating both archaeological features and the works in general, was produced and comprised digital images.

1.5.4 All artefacts from excavated contexts were collected and retained for specialist identification and study, in line with the OA artefact collection policy. Bulk environmental samples were collected from a range of features that exhibited the potential to contain ecofacts. Environmental soil-sampling methodology, processing and recording was undertaken in line with current Historic England guidelines (Historic England 2011). Rebecca Nicholson, Environmental Manager at OA South, was consulted throughout the fieldwork to ensure that an appropriate sampling strategy was implemented.

2 STRATIGRAPHY

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Archaeological remains were encountered right across the *c* 0.07ha excavation area, with a slightly greater concentration of features in the western half (Fig. 2). Three broad phases of activity—medieval, post-medieval and modern—were identified on the basis of datable artefacts (predominately the pottery), stratigraphic relationships and spatial association and/or morphology of features. In addition, small quantities of residual Roman and late Saxon pottery are suggestive of occupation in the vicinity during these periods. While a small number of features were undated/unphased, they were probably associated with the medieval or post-medieval activity.

2.1.2 Other than quarry pits of post-medieval date, the archaeological remains within the site mainly comprised ditches and pits, as well as a small number of postholes, natural (geological) features and possible garden features.

2.1.3 Within the excavation area, almost all the recorded archaeological features were found underlying the topsoil and subsoil deposits and cutting into the natural geology, which comprised light yellowish brown sandy gravel. The topsoil/garden soil was a dark greyish brown sandy/clay silt and the subsoil/landscaping deposit an orange-brown sandy/silty gravel. Modern disturbance was noted in the north-east corner of the excavation area, where a levelling deposit of light yellowish brown silty sand and construction rubble was recorded below the topsoil/garden soil, overlying the subsoil/landscaping deposit.

2.1.4 The linear features typically contained single fills of mid- to dark greyish brown sandy/clay silt, often with stone inclusions. In contrast, the pits and postholes contained sequences of generally two to four fills (similar in composition to the ditch fills), though up to eight fills were identified within a small number of deeper pits. Notable deposits are described in more detail below, particularly where pertinent to the understanding of the nature/function of a deposit or feature.

2.2 Medieval

2.2.1 Evidence of activity during the medieval period comprised a group of ditches, some crossing at right angles and suggesting a rectilinear arrangement of enclosures or fields, with a small number of pits alongside indicating associated activity (Fig. 3). The inter-cutting ditches, although few, show that medieval activity was not limited to a single phase. The pottery assemblage demonstrates that medieval activity was confined to the period *c* 1050–1250.

Ditches

2.2.2 Perhaps one of the earlier features on site was ditch 1113, truncated by medieval ditch 1114 (Fig. 4, Section 1008). Ditch 1113 entered the excavation area from the west and continued eastwards for nearly 4m, ending in a rounded terminal. The ditch was 1.04–1.20m wide and up to 0.57m deep, with moderately sloping to steep sides and a generally flat base. It contained one to two fills from which a small quantity of medieval pottery was recovered, the majority comprising the base of a single cooking pot from

the basal fill (1056) of the ditch. Bulk soil sample 1, collected from fill 1056, yielded a further sherd of the cooking pot base, a single cattle bone with a butchery cut mark and a small assemblage of charcoal and poorly preserved charred plant remains (including wheat and barley grains and chaff and weed/grass seeds).

2.2.3 Slightly curved ditch 1114 cut ditch 1113 and (including ditch 209 found in the evaluation) was recorded over a distance of approximately 16.10m on a broadly E–W alignment. The central/eastern part of the ditch was obscured by overlying post-medieval deposit 1093 (see below), though a length of ditch on much the same line (209) was revealed in the evaluation trench (Fig. 3; Trench 2; OA 2019a). Ditch 209 apparently terminated within the trench on the west, so it is possible that there was originally a gap between ditches 1113 and 209, later blocked by ditch 1114. As the terminal was not excavated, however, it is possible that the ditch was simply cut away by post-medieval feature 211 at this point and was continuous with ditch 1114. The eastern terminal of ditch 1114 was also cut by medieval pit 1017. Ditch 1114 was 0.56–0.65m wide and 0.28–0.38m deep, with moderately sloping to steep sides and a slightly concave base (Fig. 4, Section 1008). Its single fill contained a sherd of medieval pottery and a fragment of animal bone.

2.2.4 Perpendicular to ditch 1114 was N–S aligned ditch 1115, which was recorded across the width of the site and continued beyond the limits of excavation. The central length of the ditch had been removed by post-medieval activity and so its stratigraphic relationship with ditches 1114 and 1116 remains unknown, though they were most probably related. Measuring 0.52–1.00m in width and 0.07–0.56m in depth, ditch 1115 had moderately sloping to steep sides and a concave base (Fig. 5). Four medieval pottery sherds and four fragments of animal bone were hand collected from the ditch's single fill. A small fragment of post-medieval ceramic building material (CBM) was also recovered from ditch 1115, but this is considered to have been intrusive. Bulk soil sample 2 collected from the ditch yielded four further medieval pottery sherds, as well as a small assemblage of charcoal and poorly preserved charred plant remains (similar to those in soil sample 1 from ditch 1113).

2.2.5 A further medieval ditch (1116) appears to have crossed the excavation area for *c* 17.40m on an ENE–WSW alignment before terminating, though much of its length and stratigraphic relationships with ditches 1114 and 1115 were obscured by inter-cutting medieval pit 1017 and post-medieval deposit 1093 (Fig. 3). Nevertheless, ditch 1116 was 0.40–0.50m wide, 0.24–0.40m deep and exhibited moderately sloping to steep sides and a flat base, where exposed (Fig. 4, Section 1009). A single sherd of medieval pottery and two fragments of animal bone were recovered from its single fill.

Pits

2.2.6 A series of pits of medieval or probable medieval date were revealed in the excavation area, all of which were located to the east of N–S aligned ditch 1115, suggesting that pits were deliberately concentrated here. Whilst there is no indication of the primary function of the pits, they were probably associated with agricultural activity, perhaps including small-scale quarrying, during the medieval period.

2.2.7 The largest of the pits was pit 1017, located towards the centre of excavation area, which truncated the eastern ends of ditches 1114 and 1116 (Fig. 4, Section 1001). The pit was sub-oval in plan, measuring 2.25m by 1.45m and 0.80m deep, and had moderately sloping to steep sides and a concave base. It contained a sequence of eight fills suggestive of natural erosion/slumping and infilling. A total of 17 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the pit, together with 45 fragments of animal bone (some with signs of butchery and gnawing) and a small quantity (8g) of unworked small quartz pebbles.

2.2.8 Four sub-circular pits of medieval date were located in the north of the excavation area. Pit 1077 was 1.50m wide, 0.84m deep and had steep sides and an uneven base (Fig. 6). It contained two fills, with three sherds of medieval pottery and six animal bone fragments (some with signs of butchery and gnawing) all recovered from its upper fill. Located 0.25m to the north-east was pit 1074, measuring 1.70m wide and 0.32m deep. It had moderately sloping sides and a concave base (Fig. 4, Section 1014). The pit contained a basal fill (1076) of mid blackish brown sandy gravel that appears to have line the base and sides of the pit; no finds were recovered from this deposit. Overlying this was a fill (1075) of yellowish brown sandy gravel from which nine pottery sherds of medieval date and 13 fragments of animal bone (including goat horn core and gnawed cattle bone) were retrieved.

2.2.9 Situated approximately 0.85m to the north was pit 1098, with pit 1094 less than 1m north of that (Fig. 7). Pit 1094 was only partially exposed, continuing beyond the northern limit of excavation. Pits 1094 and 1098 were similar in size and shape, measuring 1.19–1.73m wide and 0.47–0.50m deep, with moderately sloping to steep sides and flat bases (Fig. 4, Section 1019). Each pit contained a similar sequence of three fills of compositions typical of the site. Upper fill 1097 of pit 1094 contained two sherds of medieval pottery, a cattle bone with a butchery chop mark and a complete oyster shell; its lower two fills were devoid of finds. A total of 15 medieval pottery sherds were recovered from across the lower fills of pit 1098, which also yielded a single unidentified animal bone fragment; no finds were recovered from its upper fill. Bulk soil sample 3, collected from pit 1098, yielded small quantities of charcoal and poorly preserved charred plant remains (including wheat and barley grains and chaff, legumes and weed/grass seeds).

2.2.10 Two further inter-cutting pits (220 and 222) were recorded during the preceding evaluation of the site (Fig. 3; Trench 2; OA 2019a). They shared similar characteristics to those discussed above. Six sherds of medieval pottery dating to *c* 1150–1250 were recovered from pit 220. Stratigraphically earlier pit 222 was devoid of finds, though it was probably also of medieval date.

Posthole structure

2.2.11 A group of five postholes in the north-west of the excavation area, north of and roughly parallel to ditches 1113 and 1114, may have formed a structure (1112). The postholes formed two rows on an E–W alignment and were spaced *c* 0.87–1.63m apart (Fig. 8). Two of the postholes in each row formed opposite pairs; no sixth posthole was found, but the ground sloped down from north to south across the structure, and the southern postholes appear to have been significantly shallower than those on the

north, suggesting that this was due to later truncation, which may have removed a sixth posthole entirely. There was also a patch of soil in the natural over the point where a sixth posthole would have been, suggesting deeper disturbance here (Fig. 8). There was also a smaller possible posthole south-east of the western end of the northern line, but upon investigation this was found to be a variation in the natural.

2.2.12 All five postholes were of similar size and shape, measuring 0.28–0.42m in width and 0.12–0.30m in depth, all with steep/near-vertical sides and flat to slightly concave bases (Fig. 8, Section 1004). They generally contained two or three dark fills indicative of erosion and natural infilling, though a fourth fill suggestive of packing material was identified in larger posthole 1039. All five postholes were devoid of finds and shared no stratigraphic relationships with other features. Bulk soil sample 4 collected from posthole 1039 (fill 1042), however, contained a small quantity of charcoal and a few poorly preserved charred wheat grains, legumes, weed/grass seeds and a hazelnut shell fragment. Two of the charred wheat grains were submitted for radiocarbon dating and returned a date range of cal AD 1035–1210 at 95% confidence (Beta-644068; 920 ± 30 BP; Table 8), in the medieval period.

2.3 Post-medieval

2.3.1 The pottery and clay tobacco pipe assemblages suggest there was a hiatus in activity on site between at least the mid-13th century (if not earlier) and the mid- to late 17th century. The post-medieval features recorded during the excavation appear to have been 18th- to 19th-century in date (Fig. 9). However, a small quantity of residual 16th-/17th-century finds attests to low-level activity within the landscape during the earlier post-medieval period.

2.3.2 A ditch (1117) was recorded crossing the east of the excavation area on a NNW–SSE alignment for *c* 9.65m, ending in a rounded terminal (Fig. 11). The ditch was parallel with Austin House (constructed in 1779 and originally known as Waste Court). No ditch is marked in this position on Rocque's map of 1761 or the 1843 Tithe map of the parish of St Helens, but a track enclosing a lawn is shown just behind the house on the 1st edition OS map of 1874, and the eastern side of this is on the same alignment and in much the same position, and this may have been bounded by a ditch. Ditch 1117 was 0.66–0.90m wide, 0.21–0.35m deep and had moderately sloping to steep sides and a concave base (Fig. 10, Section 1023). Its single fill contained two fragments of clay tobacco pipe and eight fragments of roof tile, all dating to the late 18th–19th century.

2.3.3 Located in the south of the excavation area, *c* 13m south-west of ditch 1117, were sub-oval pits 1009 and 1012, spaced *c* 0.21m apart. Pit 1009 was 0.72m by 0.64m and 0.20m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a slightly concave base. Pit 1012 was slightly larger at 0.87m by 0.70m and 0.36m deep, with steep sides and a flat base. Two fills were recorded in pit 1009, while deeper pit 1012 contained a sequence of four fills (Fig. 10, Section 1000). No pottery was recovered from either of the pits, though both contained one to two fragments of post-medieval CBM. Pit 1009 also contained a small number of unworked quartz pebbles (10g).

2.3.4 A number of large sub-rectangular pits sharing similar characteristics were recorded on site, the majority of which were concentrated in the west of the excavation area

and are suggestive of post-medieval quarrying/gravel extraction. The finds recovered from the pits demonstrate the features were subsequently used for waste disposal.

2.3.5 A row of four rectangular or sub-rectangular pits was exposed, all of which continued beyond the north-west limit of excavation. All had their long axis on a NNW–SSE orientation, parallel with ditch 1117. Two of these pits were investigated. Pit 1022 was 2.45m wide and 0.46m deep, with steep/near-vertical sides and a largely flat base (Fig. 10, Section 1002). The south-east corner of the pit cut medieval ditch 1115. The pit contained two fills. No finds were recovered from its lower fill. However, its upper fill (1024) produced a range of mid-17th- to 19th-century finds comprising seven pottery sherds, five animal bone fragments (all with signs of butchery and/or gnawing), five clay tobacco pipe fragments, 14 pieces of CBM and two shards of glass. A residual medieval (*c* 1050–1250) pottery sherd was also recovered.

2.3.6 Located *c* 5.50m to the west-south-west, pit 1065 was 2.50m wide and 0.66m deep, with near-vertical sides sharply breaking into a flat base (Fig. 10, Section 1011). Like pit 1022, pit 1065 contained two fills, with finds concentrated in its upper fill. A small, mixed assemblage of post-medieval finds were recovered comprising nine pottery sherds, five fragments of clay tobacco pipe, 20 pieces of CBM, two shards of glass, an incomplete 19th-century iron handle, slag and two pieces of coal.

2.3.7 Small sub-circular pit 1068 cut the south side of pit 1065 (Fig. 10, Section 1011). It was 0.86m by 0.62m and 0.30m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. A pottery sherd dating to 1760–1830, 12 fragments of post-medieval CBM, a piece of late 18th-century bottle glass and slag were recovered from its single fill.

2.3.8 Located *c* 2m to the south-east of pits 1065 and 1068 was large sub-rectangular pit 1082, which was slightly more irregular in plan. It was 4.15m by 2.60m and 0.46m deep and had an irregular profile comprising moderately sloping/slightly stepped sides and a concave base (Fig. 10, Section 1017). As with other post-medieval pits on site, it contained two fills; however, no finds were recovered from the feature. Nevertheless, due to its similarity to the other four adjacent pits, this pit is also thought likely to have been of post-medieval date and (like the others) probably associated with quarrying/gravel extraction.

2.3.9 A further post-medieval quarry/extraction pit (213), *c* 3.50m south of pit 1082, was partially excavated in the evaluation (Fig. 9; Trench 2; OA 2019a). Like the other post-medieval pits, pit 213 appeared to be rectangular or sub-rectangular. It was 2.8m long and in excess of 0.24m wide, with near-vertical sides, and was at least 0.28m deep, but the base was not reached. A fragment of late 17th- to mid-18th-century clay tobacco pipe stem and a fragment of 18th- to 19th-century roof tile were recovered from its fill.

2.3.10 A large deposit (1086) was exposed in the south of the excavation area, covering an area *c* 8.20m by 2.26m (Fig. 12). This was a dark greyish brown sandy silt containing few stones. During the investigation, it was initially considered to have been a possible quarry pit and then, due to its shallowness (a maximum of 0.14m deep), a cut feature (1085) perhaps related to garden use. In section it had one steep side and a flat base (Fig. 10, Section 1018). Deposit 1086 contained seven pottery sherds dating to 1780–

1840, a fragment of late 17th- to 18th-century clay tobacco pipe and four pieces of CBM ranging in date from the 17th to 19th centuries.

2.3.11 Possible feature 1085 was believed to cut another deposit on the west side (1093), which was a dark brownish grey sandy silt with frequent stone inclusions, which was also revealed during the previous evaluation of the site (215) (Fig. 9; OA 2019a). It was recorded covering an irregular area measuring a maximum of 11.45m by 10.40m (Fig. 12). The deposit was 0.13m thick and contained three fragments of clay tobacco pipe dating to 1710–40, three fragments of animal bone (one with a butchery cut mark), six pieces of CBM (five of post-medieval date and one of medieval date), two complete post-medieval iron nails and a tiny fragment of slate. This deposit overlay medieval ditch 1115 and probable tree-throw hole 1091 (Fig. 10, Section 1018).

2.3.12 Deposits 1093 and 1086 were both of similar soil type and colour, and of very similar depth and date, and it is alternatively possible that, despite the greater quantity of stone in 1086, they represent parts of one deposit covering the natural and earlier features. It remains possible that these deposits filled a shallow cut, as medieval ditch 1087 was shallower here than its continuations further north and south, but the division between 1086 and 1093 is probably not genuine.

2.3.13 A possible ditch (211) of post-medieval date was also investigated during the evaluation (Fig. 9; OA 2019a). Its single fill, similar in composition to levelling deposit 1093, contained a pottery sherd dating to *c* 1720–80. Given the location and very shallow nature of this feature, together with its fill, it is probable that this feature instead represented a further area of later post-medieval disturbance rather than a linear ditch.

2.4 Modern

2.4.1 Continued occupation into the modern era was evidenced on site by a modern feature (1005) that was recorded within a representative section of the stratigraphy in the north-east corner of the excavation area (Fig. 13). Feature 1005 contained three fills (1006–1008) and was sealed by a subsoil (1001), which was in turn overlain by a levelling/landscaping deposit (1004) and topsoil/garden soil (1003). Other areas of modern truncation associated with the occupation of Austin House, including a soakaway and modern services, were concentrated in the east of the excavation area (Fig. 9). Although no finds were recovered from these deposits, the site stratigraphy demonstrates their recent date.

2.5 Undated/unphased

2.5.1 A small number of archaeological features were recorded that did not contain any diagnostic artefacts and shared no significant stratigraphic relationships with other dated features, and so cannot be phased with certainty. Nevertheless, it is probable that they were related to medieval or post-medieval activity. These features comprise a series of pits, postholes and a natural feature (Fig. 9).

2.5.2 Undated pit 1108 was located in the north of the excavation area. It was sub-circular in plan, measuring 1.35m by 0.98m and 0.15m deep. It had moderately sloping side, a flat base and a single fill that contained no finds. Pit 1108 truncated medieval ditch

1115 and may have been related to this phase of activity; however, a post-medieval date for the pit cannot be ruled out.

2.5.3 Partially exposed in the south-east of the excavation area was sub-circular pit 1072, which continued beyond the limit of excavation. Its exposed extent measured 1.45m in width and 0.40m in depth and exhibited moderately sloping to steep sides and a slightly concave base. No finds were recovered from its single fill.

2.5.4 A probable tree-throw hole (1091) was recorded in the south-west of the excavation area. It was irregular in plan, measuring 1.22m in width and 0.37m in depth, and had moderately sloping sides and a concave base. Its single fill was devoid of finds and was sealed by post-medieval levelling deposit 1093 (Fig. 10, Section 1018).

2.5.5 A small number of pits (203, 206, 208, 219)—some of which were inter-cutting—and a posthole (216) were investigated during the previous evaluation of the site (Figs 3 and 9; OA 2019a). No finds were recovered from these features, though a small quantity of charcoal, charred wheat grain and weed seeds, and animal bone were retrieved from pit 206. Posthole 216 was the only one for which some limits on dating exist, as it was cut by the probable continuation of medieval ditch 1114, so could also have been medieval, though an earlier date cannot be entirely ruled out. It is also unclear whether inter-cutting pits 206 and 208 were related to medieval or post-medieval activity. Despite their large size, the slightly irregular profiles of the two pits and the environmental remains from pit 206 may suggest a medieval date is more likely.

3 ARTEFACTS

3.1 Pottery by John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

3.1.1 The excavation produced a total of 99 sherds of pottery weighing 1399g. These totals include 16 rim sherds. They also include 10 small sherds (34g) from sieved samples. The preceding evaluation of the site in 2019 produced a total of seven sherds of pottery weighing 56g. These totals include four sherds (18g) from sieved samples and two rim sherds. A basic catalogue of all the pottery was constructed (in Excel). This includes the following fields of information per context and per pottery fabric: quantification by sherd count, weight and rim sherd count only. Additional details, such as vessel form, part and decoration were noted in a comments field, where appropriate. Full catalogue details are available in the project archive.

3.1.2 Medieval pottery fabric codes used here are those of the Oxfordshire type series (Mellor 1994), whereas post-medieval fabric codes are those of the Museum of London (MOLA 2014), which can be applied to most post-medieval types in South-East England. Roman fabric codes are those in Booth (nd). Condition is variable but overall quite fragmentary. A few fairly large and fresh rim sherds were present amongst the medieval cooking pots and the single Roman jar rim present. Given the small size and typical nature of the assemblage, none of the material has been illustrated.

Summary of assemblage

3.1.3 A breakdown of fabric types is presented in Table 1 below.

Fabric	Common Name	Date	Sherds	Weight (g)	No. Rims
R11	Oxford Roman fine sandy ware	AD 43-410	3	46	1
S	Samian ware	AD 43–250	1	1	
F50	Oxford Roman colour-coated ware	AD 150–410	1	44	
OXB	Late Saxon shelly ware (Oxon)	775–1050	1	4	
OXAC	Cotswold-type ware (from *c* 900+)	1050–1250	10	110	1
OXBF	Kennet Valley A ware (SW Oxon ware)	1050–1250	54	818	10
OXAQ	Kennet Valley B ware (East Wiltshire ware)	1150–1350	4	18	2
OXAG	Ashampstead-type ware (Berks) (cooking wares from *c* 1050, decorated jugs mainly *c* 1175+)	1175–1400	4	72	
PMR	Post-medieval red earthenwares (mainly local)	1550–1900	13	162	2
PMBL	Post-medieval black-glazed redwares (mainly local)	1580–1750	2	8	
WEST	Westerwald stoneware (Germany)	1590–1750	1	1	
BRSL	Brill post-medieval slipware	1650–1800	2	26	1
DERBS	Derbyshire stoneware	1700–1900	1	18	
SWSG	Staffs white salt-glazed stoneware	1720–1780	3	22	

Fabric	Common Name	Date	Sherds	Weight (g)	No. Rims
CREA DEV	Creamware (Staffs/Yorks)	1760–1830	2	4	
PEAR	Pearlware (Staffs etc)	1780–1840	1	4	
PEAR TR	Transfer-printed pearlware	1780–1840	1	1	
BONE	Bone china	1794–1900	1	32	1
ENGS BRST	English stonewares (Bristol-type glaze)	1835–1900	1	64	
TOTAL			106	1455	18

Table 1: Summary of pottery fabrics and quantities in approximate chronological order

3.1.4 Ordinary domestic pottery types are represented in all phases, all fairly typical of sites in the Abingdon area. The five sherds (91g) of Roman pottery were all residual in later contexts (four contexts). These include a fresh greyware jar rim (Fabric R11), a footring base from a dish/bowl in late Roman Oxford colour-coated ware (F50) and a small flake from a Samian ware vessel (S).

3.1.5 The bulk of the assemblage (*c* 70% by sherd count, or 73% by weight) is medieval in date and almost entirely confined to the period *c* 1050–1250. Aside from the five Roman sherds, the rest of the assemblage is post-medieval. The earliest post-Roman item is a small, residual sherd of coarse shelly ware—possibly late Saxon Oxford shelly ware (OXB, *c* 775–1050). The medieval pottery is all from the fills of ditches and pits—mostly just a few sherds per context. The highest concentrations are 14 sherds (238g) from pit 1098 (fills 1099 and 1100) and 11 sherds (330g) forming the sagging base of a single OXBF cooking pot from ditch 1113 (cut 1055, fill 1056). Excluding the possible late Saxon sherd, the medieval pottery comprises just four fabrics (see below), all of them unglazed coarsewares. Of the 12 medieval rim sherds, all but three are from cooking pots (their function evidenced by external sooting on most), the others being from bowls (OXAQ, OXAC and OXBF). The absence of glazed wares might suggest an early date within the two-century timespan of the medieval assemblage, or the plainness and functionality of the assemblage, or both.

3.1.6 The four small sherds of Ashampstead-type ware (OXAG, formerly known as Abingdon-type ware) are all coarse, grey, early-looking pieces (probably cooking pots), and there is no reason to suppose they are not contemporary with the two other medieval wares. At Oxford, OXAG mostly occurs in the form of oxidised, glazed and decorated jugs/pitchers that mainly date after *c* 1175. These, however, are absent from the current assemblage. The dominant medieval ware here is clearly Kennet Valley A ware (OXBF, *c* 1050–1250). Ten sherds of limestone-tempered Cotswold-type ware (OXAC) occur alongside the predominant OXBF fabric and are almost certainly contemporary. Although OXAC is present in Oxford, in small quantities, from as early as *c* 900, it only really became common after *c* 1050. At around this date it was joined by OXBF (in smaller quantities), and the two often occur together until the mid-13th century. At Silbury Hill in Wiltshire, however, OXBF (formerly known as Newbury A ware) was found amongst occupation debris from a short-lived fortification of the hilltop associated with a coin of *c* 1010. This indicated that the ware was probably current in the first half of the 11th century (Vince 1997, 64). A starting date for medieval activity

at Austin House could, therefore, be from around the middle of 11th century, but it is not possible to say whether this was from just before or after the Norman Conquest.

3.1.7 Four sherds of Kennet Valley B ware (OXAQ) are present within the assemblage (recovered during the evaluation), including an early-looking cooking pot rim with a plain flaring neck and a flat-topped rim with traces of widely spaced finger-tip decoration along the top. Kennet Valley A ware (OXBF) also occurs here in the form of jars/cooking pots with plain flaring (early-looking) rims, some with light thumb-impressed decoration on the rim. There is also a single thickened/flat-topped bowl rim with thumbed decoration. This is a widely dispersed 'ware tradition' along the Kennet valley from East Wiltshire in the west to Reading (Berks) in the east. It is a sandy ware with coarse angular flint and varying amounts of limestone (generally rare to sparse). The type present here sometimes has coarse rounded white limestone that appears to be a hard sparry limestone (Jurassic?) but not an oolitic limestone as in Cotswold-type ware (OXAC). It also contains rare greyish chalk or algal limestone. The rounded limestone is not common in the fabric found in Oxford a few miles to the north and may suggest a different production source for the OXBF in Abingdon.

3.1.8 OXBF vessels are normally handmade/hand-built, but the rims are sometimes tidied-up on a slow wheel or turntable. It is a surprise, therefore, to find three sherds (two vessels) in this fabric that appear to be competently wheel-turned. The use of the true potter's wheel (or at least the competent use of a fast turntable) seems only to date from the later 11th century in Oxford and neighbouring Berkshire (eg medieval Oxford ware, OXY, *c* 1075–1300, and Ashampstead-type ware, OXAG). These wheel-turned vessels include two joining body sherds (from pit 1077, fill 1078) from a sooted jar/cooking pot. This is further unusual in having multiple, but faint, horizontal bands/rows of rouletted decoration over a faint horizontal rilling/ribbing that covers the outer surface. It is sooted externally suggesting a cooking pot (or possibly a spouted pitcher?). Wheel-turning and rouletted decoration are not a feature of the Kennet Valley A ware from Oxford (Mellor 1994, fig. 14.1–9), but they do occasionally occur on Ashampstead-type ware, which may have also been made at centres along the Kennet Valley (ibid., fig. 24.16). A closer parallel for all these features occurs in the form of an oxidised flint-tempered jar sherd in an OXBF-related fabric (Berkshire sandy ware with flint, Fabric WA13/18) from recent excavations at Morrell Place, Wallingford: this is also wheel-turned and has rilled and rouletted decoration, as the sherd here (Cotter 2022). The Wallingford sherd is also a sole example and unmatched in local assemblages from the town or from other major towns in the vicinity (including Newbury and Reading). Another OXBF cooking pot from Wallingford is also wheel-turned and has decorative rilling (ibid.). The third wheel-turned sherd from Austin House is from the girth/shoulder of a jar or pitcher with bold decorative rilling externally (pit 1094, context 1097).

3.1.9 After the mid-13th century (if not earlier), there seems to have been a complete hiatus in pottery deposition, and perhaps occupation, until the mid-/late 17th century. The few sherds of this date (and some 17th-century clay pipe stems) seem to have been residual in 18th- and early 19th-century contexts. The few sherds of post-medieval pottery are not particularly remarkable, though they include a small sherd of an imported Westerwald stoneware mug/jug with blue glaze decoration (WEST, *c* 1590–

1750). In addition, there are some sherds of local post-medieval glazed red earthenwares (PMR, BRSL), tablewares in Staffordshire-type creamwares and whitewares and a fragment of a modern English stoneware spirits flagon (ENGS BRST, *c* 1835–1900). There is also a body sherd in Staffordshire white salt-glazed stoneware (SWSG), probably from a cylindrical tankard.

3.2 Ceramic building material *by John Cotter*

Introduction and methodology

3.2.1 The excavation produced a total of 69 pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing 2319g from a total of 10 contexts. A further fragment of CBM weighing 21g was recovered during the preceding evaluation. All of this is of post-medieval date, aside from a single piece of medieval tile. The assemblage is mostly in a very fragmentary and abraded condition, but some quite large and fresh pieces are also present, including a complete roof tile length.

3.2.2 All the CBM was examined in some detail and broad spot dates provided for each context. Each context group was quantified by fragment count and weight and recorded on a spot-dating spreadsheet, or basic catalogue, in Excel. Additional details, including identification of functional types (eg. brick, roof tile, etc), fabric descriptions and significant measurements, were recorded in a comments field where appropriate. Fabric codes have not been used, as these have yet to be properly established for post-medieval CBM from the Oxford region. Medieval tile fabrics and functional types from Oxford have been described in previous reports (Cotter 2006; 2008). The material is recorded in detail in the spreadsheet (Table 2) and is therefore only summarised below. None of the material has been illustrated.

Summary

Context	Spot date	No.	Weight (g)	Comments
214	18–19C?	1	21	Fairly fresh edge fragment from a flat roof tile (probably a peg tile). Fairly smooth, hard, orange-red fabric typical of late post-medieval roof tiles
1001	18–19C?	1	27	Fresh body fragment of flat roof tile (peg tile?) in fine sandy orange-red post-medieval type fabric (like London/Oxon pottery fabric PMR = post-medieval red earthenware, *c* 1580–1900)
1011	17–19C?	1	70	Brick. Angle fragment in sandy orange-brown fabric. Possibly 17–18C? Abraded
1014	17–19C?	2	7	Scraps abraded flat roof tile in red post-medieval fabric. Includes trace of corner
1021	17–19C?	1	6	Body scrap red post-med flat roof tile
1024	18–19C?	14	142	All abraded scraps. 1x red brick - shapeless. 13x scraps red flat roof tile including some in fine smooth post-med red fabric (18-19C?), latter include edge frags. 2 of these tile frags in a coarse fabric (1 with grey core) possibly 17C or earlier?
1067	18–19C?	20	299	Nearly all abraded frags and scraps. 6x shapeless scraps red brick (some in rough 'Tudor' fabric as in

Context	Spot date	No.	Weight (g)	Comments
				1069). 1x small frag from the corner of the base of a probable floor/quarry tile in fine post-med red fabric with evidence of knife-cut bevelled edges. The rest = red flat roof tile frags including 1 edge frag with trace of circular nailhole, in fine post-med fabric (18–19C?). Several other flat roof tile frags in same fabric as latter. Some in coarser fabric - possibly 17–18C?
1069	18–19C?	12	652	3x flat roof tile incl large fresh edge frag in smooth orange-red post-med fabric (12mm thick) probably 18-19C. Smaller frags flat roof tile incl 1 with grey core. 9x frags & scraps early post-med red brick. Latter incl 1x abraded corner frag (472g) of 'Tudor' orange-red brick (thickness = 52mm). Additional scraps of brick in soft light brown fabric with paler brown/cream clay pellets and swirls plus some fine shell inclusions - also Tudor?
1081	L18–19C?	8	802	Mostly 1x fresh peg tile side/edge frag (several joining frags) with a complete length of 255mm and a thickness of 12mm. Top left corner survives with a neatly made circular nail hole. Smooth red post-medieval fabric. Other frags in the same fabric
1085	18–19C?	4	118	Abraded body frags red flat roof tile. Includes 1 in smooth post-med red fabric (18-19C). Similar smooth frag with partial grey core. 2x frags in coarser fabrics—possibly 17C?
1093	18–19C?	6	196	3x flat roof tile incl 2 in smooth orange-red post-med fabric probably 18-19C. 1x larger body frag of abraded flat roof tile (15mm thick) in coarser sandy orange-brown fabric with abundant milky and clear quartz and sanded/gritty underside—probably medieval (13–14C?). 2x frags coarse orange post-med brick—possibly 16–17C incl trace of surface
TOTAL		*70*	*2340*	

Table 2: Description of ceramic building material by context

3.2.3 The assemblage is dominated by fragments of flat roof tile (48 pieces) in a limited range of red-brown or orange-red fabrics. These are probably all from peg tiles—flat rectangular tiles with a pair of circular nail holes (or peg holes) at the upper end. Circular nail holes survive on a few examples. Most roof tiles have a smooth or finely sandy texture typical of post-medieval tiles in the Oxford region. They are also quite neatly made and well fired. This combination of features suggests that these tiles date from the 18th and 19th centuries. Joining pieces from one peg tile of this date (with a circular nail hole) give a complete length of 255mm and a thickness of 12mm, but the width is incomplete (fill 1081, ditch 1117). No fragments preserve a complete tile width. A small number of tile fragments in a slightly coarser sandy fabric and sometimes with a grey core may date from the 16th or 17th centuries. One thicker fragment occurs in a coarse sandy fabric with a sand-gritted underside and is probably of medieval date, though residual in a later context (probable levelling deposit 1093).

3.2.4 At least 21 pieces of brick were identified (some little more than small scraps). These include a fairly large piece from the corner of a handmade brick of probable Tudor date (fill 1069 of pit 1068). Other, smaller pieces of brick probably date from the 16th–17th century and one piece possibly from the 17th–18th century.

3.2.5 A single example of a probable floor (quarry) tile was identified from upper fill 1067 of pit 1065, identified from a small basal fragment showing evidence of a knife cut or bevelled edges. This is also likely to be of post-medieval date.

3.3 Fired clay *by John Cotter*

3.3.1 A single piece of fired clay of unknown date was recovered and is described below.

3.3.2 Context 1000 (SF 3). Spot date: unknown but probably medieval or post-medieval. Description: 1 piece (weight 3g). Small flake-like fragment of curved/semi-circular cross-section. Max length: 29mm. Max thickness: *c* 10mm. Very fine, light grey-brown clay matrix with abundant very coarse organic inclusions. The latter probably fibrous grasses at various angles to each other but densely packed together and flattened into a 'corky' mat. No original surfaces surviving, but the flake itself is very fresh and rough.

3.4 Clay tobacco pipe *by John Cotter*

Introduction and methodology

3.4.1 A total of 21 pieces of clay pipe weighing 65g were recovered from six contexts during the excavation. A further three pieces weighing 8g were collected from the site during the preceding evaluation. These have been catalogued and recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. The catalogue records the following details per context: spot date, quantity of stem, bowl and mouth fragments, overall fragment count, weight and comments on condition and any makers' marks or decoration present. The minimum number of bowls per context was also recorded. Full catalogue details are available in the project archive. Pipe bowls can be paralleled with the local Oxford typology based on pipes from St Ebbe's Church (Oswald 1984).

Summary of assemblage

3.4.2 The pipes are generally in a poor and quite scrappy condition, although some individual pieces are quite fresh. The longest piece of pipe stem is only 55mm long and the three bowls survive only as small base fragments (no rims) with short lengths of stem attached. In total there are three pieces of pipe bowl (from the same number of pipes), no mouthpieces and 21 stem fragments. No evidence of decoration is present, but one stem bears a maker's mark. In view of the poor condition, none of the pieces have been illustrated. The contexts from which the clay pipe was recovered are mostly fills of post-medieval pits, a possible garden feature, a ditch and a subsoil/levelling layer. No more than five pieces were recovered from any context. Several pieces of 'chunky' early-style stems are of clearly 17th-century date but were all residual/redeposited in 18th-century or later contexts, dated in most cases by a combination of pipes and pottery.

3.4.3 The three bowl fragments (from three separate contexts) include two bases with prominent cylindrical heels that can most probably be identified as Oxford Type D (*c* 1750–90). The third base is too damaged to identify to type but is probably from a late 18th- or early 19th-century bowl (possibly another Type D?). A few fresh slender stem fragments are of late 18th- or 19th-century date, but most stem fragments appear to be of broadly 18th-century date. Some are burnished. The most interesting item is a slightly abraded stem fragment (14mm long) bearing part of a maker's mark on the upper surface. This came from context 1093, identified as the remnants of a levelling layer associated with a natural hollow. The only other datable material in the layer comprises two other 18th-century stem fragments. The mark is very faint and appears to be within a rectangular frame (of which the upper two thirds survive) and which would have been placed a short distance back from the bowl (the thicker end of the stem fragment). Traces of at least two lines of incuse lettering survive: the first line begins with a tall letter 'I' with a short horizontal crossbar and a small letter 'O' after this; the second line begins with a small faint mark resembling a '3' but is actually a letter 'B'. Though faint, enough of the mark survives to identify it as that of Joseph Barns (the first name appearing as 'Josh' in his marks) of East Woodhay, Hampshire. The mark is paralleled on a stem published by Higgins from the Abingdon Cinema site (Higgins 2007, 166, fig. 24.67). Joseph Barns is mentioned in parish registers from 1714–22 but was probably active *c* 1710–40 and possibly slightly later. His pipes have a wide distribution in Wessex and are also known from some Oxfordshire sites. The pipe is unburnished and has a fine white almost inclusion-free fabric typical of this important Hampshire production centre.

3.5 Metalwork *by Anni Byard*

Introduction and methodology

3.5.1 A total of four iron objects weighing 58.8g were recovered from three features during the excavation. The objects were weighed, identified and recorded into an Excel spreadsheet, the full version of which is available with the archive. A summary of the metalwork assemblage is presented in Table 3.

Context	Feature	Material	Count	Weight (g)	Object	Date
1001	Subsoil	Fe	1	21.2	Nail	L19C
1067	Secondary pit fill	Fe	1	31.5	Handle	19C
1093	Levelling layer	Fe	2	6.1	Nail	Post-med

Table 3: Metalwork assemblage by context

Discussion

3.5.2 A heavily encrusted nail of flat, rectangular section was recovered from the subsoil. The nail is possibly a brad, used for fixing floorboards and similar. Its regular form suggests it may be machine cut and is therefore of probable late 19th-century date.

3.5.3 The remnants of an iron handle with a curved arm (incomplete) at attachment end was recovered from the upper fill (1067) of a probably quarry pit (1065). The handle is

utilitarian in function and could have belonged to a variety of objects, including for example a bucket or door. It probably dates to the 19th century.

3.5.4 Two hand-wrought nails with rectangular heads were recovered from a levelling layer (context 1093) over a natural hollow. They may be small brads or masonry nails, but they could have been used in a variety of situations.

Conclusion

3.5.5 The metalwork assemblage is of later post-medieval date and likely dates to the 19th century. The assemblage comprises mostly nails plus a simple iron handle. The larger brad nail points to the construction or renovation/extension of a building in the area, possibly Austin House itself.

3.6 Glass *by Anni Byard*

Introduction and methodology

3.6.1 A total of seven shards of glass weighing 52.9g were recovered during the excavation. The seven shards derive from five objects, all of which were recovered from pit fills. The glass was weighed, identified and recorded into an Excel spreadsheet, the full version of which is available with the archive. A summary of the glass assemblage is presented in Table 4.

Context	Feature	Material	Count	Fragments	Weight (g)	Object	Date
1024	Upper pit fill	Glass	1	3	5.8	Window	19C+
1024	Upper pit fill	Glass	1	1	1.5	Bottle	Post-med
1067	Upper pit fill	Glass	1	1	0.6	Query	L19–20C
1067	Upper pit fill	Glass	1	1	30.1	Wine bottle	L18C
1069	Single pit fill	Glass	1	1	14.9	Wine bottle	L18C

Table 4: Glass assemblage by context

Discussion

3.6.2 All the glass was recovered from the backfills of probable quarry pits. An incomplete pane of weathered, opaque and broadly colourless window glass in three fragments, recovered from the upper fill (1024) of pit 1022, is of 19th-century date. The same fill also produced a small fragment of light green glass, possibly from a bottle of broadly post-medieval date.

3.6.3 The upper fill (1067) of pit 1065 produced a large, weathered shard of dark green or black glass, probably from a cylindrical wine bottle of later 18th-century date. A second small fragment of a colourless and transparent glass may be from a small bottle and is of later 19th- or early 20th-century date. It may have been intrusive within this context.

3.6.4 The single fill (1069) of pit 1068 produced a glass shard from the neck of a cylindrical wine bottle of later 18th-century style.

Conclusion

3.6.5 The glass is of broadly later 18th- to 19th-century date. The nature of the assemblage, comprising contemporary window glass and wine bottle fragments, is customary for an urban site with features of this period.

3.7 Stone and coal *by Ruth Shaffrey*

3.7.1 A total of three pieces of stone and two pieces of coal were recovered. These were examined by eye and are reported in full here.

3.7.2 The two small fragments of coal (3g) were recovered from fill 1067 of pit 1065. A tiny fragment of slate (4g) was found in possible levelling deposit 1093. Small quartz pebbles were found in fill 1026 of pit 1017 (8g) and fill 1011 of pit 1009 (10g). None of these stones are worked or show signs of use, and none are of any other significance.

3.8 Slag *by Tim Allen*

Introduction

3.8.1 Fragments of ferrous slag were recovered from two contexts: nine fragments weighing a total of 62g from context 1067 and four fragments weighing 61g from context 1069, fills of post-medieval pits 1065 and 1068 respectively.

Methodology

3.8.2 All of the material was brushed and wetted if necessary to remove dirt, dried and sorted using largely visual criteria (cf Historic England 2015). The material was sorted into different categories based on colour and surface morphology (and occasionally on an assessment of density and/or magnetic response). The categories of material identified (following Dungworth 2021) include the following (Table 5):

Slag cake (SC)	These are plano-convex (or concave convex) and approximately circular in plan. Slag cakes are usually identified as smithing slags (McDonnell 1991; Serneels and Perret 2003), although larger examples are identified as smelting slags (furnace bottoms).
Non-diagnostic slag (ND)	Most ironworking slag assemblages include a significant proportion of slag which lacks a diagnostic surface morphology that would allow the identification of the process(es) which produced them. In many cases, this is simply because the lumps of slag are small fragments of a larger whole; however, in some cases the lumps of slag are essentially complete but amorphous (Historic England 2015, Figure 18).

Table 5: Categories of slag and related materials present in the assemblage

Results

3.8.3 The slag from context 1067 is basically one lump measuring 40mm x 40mm x 35mm, from which the other eight small fragments had broken off. The lump is highly vesicular with irregular surfaces and is clearly a lump of smithing slag. One surface appears to be relatively flat, perhaps indicating the edge of the slag cake from which this fragment

had broken off, but the surface is too small to be certain of this. A small square fragment of coal was also recovered.

3.8.4 Three of the fragments from context 1069 have irregular surfaces, are highly vesicular and are consequently light in weight, characteristics of smithing slag. These include occasional small pebbles, indicating that they came from the lining of a smithing hearth. The fourth fragment is denser, still with the rounded bubbles, and the surfaces are smoother. This last fragment may be a small fragment of smelting waste, but it is very small, so need not imply smelting close by, but it could have been redeposited.

3.8.5 The slag is small in quantity and is what would be expected of small-scale waste connected with occasional repair of objects and building projects in the vicinity.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

4.1 Animal bone *by Adrienne Powell*

4.1.1 A small assemblage of animal bone, totalling 92 fragments, was recovered via hand retrieval from predominantly medieval features, although a negligible amount of bone came from post-medieval or unphased contexts. All fragments from the hand retrieved material and the single identifiable fragment from the environmental samples (sample 1) were recorded using the diagnostic zone protocol of Serjeantson (1996) with conjoining fragments counted as one. Identifications were made with the aid of the osteological collection held by OA and with reference to standard published criteria (Boessneck 1969; Getty 1975). Ribs and vertebrae other than atlas and axis were identified to size category only. Toothwear was recorded using the wear codes of Grant (1982) and measurements were taken according to Driesch (1976) and Davis (1992) and are available in the site archive. Gnawmarks were categorised as carnivore or rodent. Butchery marks and pathologies were noted and described where present.

4.1.2 The assemblage is in good condition and a high proportion of the bone from phased contexts has been identified (50%), although this still results in a very small assemblage (Table 6). Much of the bone (49%) shows carnivore gnawing, although this is generally superficial. Most of the medieval bone came from pits (number of identified specimens (NISP) = 32) and of this most came from pit 1017 (NISP = 20).

4.1.3 Cattle (*Bos taurus*) and sheep/goat (*Ovis*/*Capra*) bones, especially the latter, dominate the assemblage. The sheep/goat bones include all areas of the carcass, except hind feet, although forelimb elements are most common and the goat (*Capra hircus*) specimens are two horn cores, a segment from near the base of a right core and the tip of a left. The cattle material also includes cranial and post-cranial elements in no particular pattern. In contrast, the few pig (*Sus domesticus*) bones are mainly cranial elements, except for a single humerus shaft. The single dog (*Canis familiaris*) specimen is an incomplete mandible with worn teeth; comparison of available measurements with modern breeds suggests a medium to large animal (Grieve 2012).

4.1.4 Few bones provide ageing information: although adults and immature animals are represented, there is no evidence of very young or old animals in any of the species. With the exception of the goat horn cores, only two sexed specimens are present, both from medieval pit 1017 and both female: a sheep/goat pelvis showing disarticulation cuts and a pig mandible that was also butchered, showing a chopmark on the lingual surface at the diastema suggesting the head or jaw was split sagittally. Splitting of the skull was also evidenced on a cattle specimen as a paramedially chopped frontal that also shows oblique cuts that could be from skinning or defleshing. Three other cattle specimens show cutmarks consistent with dismembering and a second pig mandible shows a filleting mark.

4.1.5 Three examples of pathology were identified. This includes a complete sheep/goat maxilla in which the P_2 had been lost ante-mortem and the alveolus partially remodelled, and a pig maxilla with enamel hypoplasia on the M_1 in the form of a single line *c* 1.2mm up from the base of the crown on both cusps and a cluster of pits on the distal surface of the tooth. Hypoplasia represents a period of metabolic stress during

the development of the tooth and a line at this height on the crown of the M_1 in pigs has been linked to weaning (Dobney and Ervynck 2000). The post-medieval material produced a sheep metacarpal with an ossified ligament extending down the lateral-plantar edge from the proximal end.

4.1.6 This assemblage is too small to allow reliable inferences to be made regarding animal husbandry or site economy.

Taxon	Medieval		Post-medieval	Total
	Hand	Sieved		
Cattle	10	1	1	11
Sheep/goat	13		2	15
Sheep	2		1	3
Goat	2			2
Pig	5		2	7
Dog	1			1
Large mammal	2		1	3
Medium mammal			1	1
Unidentified	38		5	43
Total	*73*	*1*	*13*	*87*
Total Identified	*35*	*1*	*8*	*44*

Table 6: Animal bone from phased contexts

4.2 Shell *by Rebecca Nicholson*

4.2.1 Two oyster valves were recovered by hand from the excavation (Table 7). Both are right (upper) valves, complete and in good condition.

4.2.2 Oysters were widely consumed in the medieval and Victorian periods, even as far inland as Oxfordshire, but with such a low number of shells little else can be inferred.

Context	Context type	No. left oyster	No. right oyster	Weight (g)	Spot date
1001	Subsoil		1	12	19C
1097	Fill of pit 1094		1	41	*c* 1050–1250
Total			*2*	*53*	

Table 7: Shell assemblage by context

4.3 Charred plant remains *by Sharon Cook*

Introduction and methodology

4.3.1 Four bulk samples were collected during the excavation and were processed, primarily for the retrieval of charred plant remains, small bones and artefacts. The original samples comprised 10–40L of whole earth.

4.3.2 Due to the small size of the assemblage, the flot contents have been fully recorded (Appendix A, Tables A.1 and A.2). Most sampled features date from the medieval period, although posthole 1039, which formed part of structure 1112, is undated.

4.3.3 The bulk samples were processed in their entirety using a modified Siraf-type water flotation machine to 250µm (flot) and 500µm mesh (residue). The residue fractions were sorted by eye and all bone and artefacts removed, while the flot material was sorted using a low power (x10) binocular microscope to extract cereal grains and chaff, smaller seeds and other quantifiable remains.

4.3.4 Identifications were carried out using standard morphological criteria for the cereals (Jacomet 2006) and with reference to the *Digital Seed Atlas of the Netherlands* (Cappers *et al*. 2012; Cappers and Bekker 2013) for identification of wild plant remains, as well as comparison with modern reference material. Classification and nomenclature of plant material follows Stace (2010). A small number of mineralised seeds present were identified with reference to the Historic England guide to mineralised plant and invertebrate remains (Caruthers and Smith 2020).

4.3.5 The charred plant remains (Table A.1) are extremely fragmented and as such where an item is identifiable but incomplete these have been denoted on the table as 'f 'to ensure that there is no confusion regarding quantification. For nutshell fragments the weight of fragments has been given, as well as the fragment count. Chaff has been divided into quantifiable remains, ie rachis nodes, and non-quantifiable remains, ie fragments. Awns and charcoal fragments are calculated by abundance only, with this categorised as rare, occasional, common and abundant.

Assemblages

Medieval

4.3.6 Three of the samples were collected from features containing pottery dated to the medieval period. Samples 1 and 2 are both from ditches (1113 and 1115) that formed part of a rectilinear enclosure/field system, while sample 3 is from a pit (1098) situated slightly to the east of ditch 1115.

4.3.7 All three flots contain charred cereal grains in a clinkered and fragmented condition, with many fragments having a vitrified appearance. Unidentified vitrified material and anthracite is present in small quantities. Fine modern roots are abundant and modern burrowing snails (*Cecilioides acicula*) are present in all flots. Charcoal is not common and most fragments are <4mm in diameter.

4.3.8 At least some cereal grain has been identified as a free-threshing variety such as bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), although the majority are too badly fragmented to be identified further than wheat (*Triticum* sp.) or possible wheat (cf *Triticum*). Damaged grains that are likely to be barley (*Hordeum* sp.) are also present but are very degraded. Large grass seeds (Poaceae) in samples 1 and 2 are of an appropriate size to be oat (*Avena* sp.) but so badly damaged that they could not be identified beyond family.

4.3.9 Chaff is rare: three fragments have been identified as bread wheat and two are barley. Fragments of legume (Fabaceae) are present in all three samples. A small number are smaller vetches (*Vicia*/*Lathyrus*), but most are amorphous fragments with no indication as to original size or shape.

4.3.10 The two ditch samples contain almost no uncultivated seeds, with only vetches and grass seeds present. Sample 3 from pit 1098 includes a small, charred seed assemblage

containing stinking chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*) and a fragment of knapweed (*Centaurea* sp.), both of which are commonly considered to be crop contaminants together with dock (*Rumex* sp.) and sedge (*Carex* sp.).

4.3.11 A small, mineralised plant assemblage also came from pit 1098 (Table A.2), potentially indicating the presence of decaying faecal waste or anoxic and mildly acidic conditions (Carruthers and Smith 2020, iii). Most of the mineralised seeds are cabbage/mustard types (*Brassica/Sinapis* sp.), which are the most frequently mineralised type of plant remain (ibid., 20) and have little value for interpretation due to the difficulty in identifying further. The remaining mineralised plant seeds are similar to those in the charred assemblage, typical of waste and cultivated ground.

4.3.12 Samples collected during the previous evaluation of the site (OA 2019a) contain similar damaged and fragmentary plant remains from medieval pit 220 and undated pit 206. Most of these remains are unidentified due to their poor condition, but those grains that could be identified are wheat.

4.3.13 The fourth sample (Sample 4) is from a posthole (1039) that may formed part of Structure 1112.

4.3.14 The flot contains a small assemblage that is not out of keeping with the material present in the other samples and suggests that the sample is likely to be of a similar date. A single fragment of hazelnut shell (*Corylus avellana*) is very small and much abraded.

Conclusion

4.3.15 The excavation produced relatively sparse charred plant material, with free-threshing wheat being the most common cereal. Barley and possible oat are rare and at least some larger legumes are present, although the fragmentary nature of the remains means that further identification is not possible. The wild plant seeds are generally of species associated with cultivated fields or found in a wide range of habitats.

4.3.16 Mineralised remains in sample 3 (pit 1098) may indicate the disposal of faecal or midden material, although this is not always required for mineralisation to occur. The charred assemblage is likely to represent kitchen waste, its poor condition potentially related to abrasion and fire damage caused by sweeping the remains from the floor and throwing onto the fire for disposal.

4.4 Radiocarbon dating *by Rebecca Nicholson*

4.4.1 One sample, comprising two charred grains of wheat (*Triticum* cf *aestivum*) from sample 4, fill 1042 of posthole 1039 (structure 1112), was dated by Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) at the Beta Analytic radiocarbon dating laboratory (Table 8).

4.4.2 While charred materials in a posthole may derive from activity taking place later than the use of the building, it was felt that the nature of the archaeological remains meant that mixing of material was unlikely (Allen pers. comm.).

4.4.3 The reported result, 920 ± 30 BP, is a conventional radiocarbon age (Stuiver and Polach 1977), corrected for total fractionation effects.

4.4.4 The calibrated date, AD 1030–1210, was performed using BetaCal4.20 and the INTCAL20 curve (Bronk Ramsey 2009 with 2021 update; Reimer *et al*. 2020), with the end point rounded outwards to 10 years following the recommendations of the 1977 International Radiocarbon Conference.

4.4.5 Reported results are accredited to ISO/IEC 17025:2005 Testing Accreditation PJLA #59423 standards and all chemistry was performed in the Beta Analytic laboratory. When counting statistics produce sigmas lower than +/- 30 years, a conservative +/- 30 BP has been cited for the result. The reported δ13C value of -21.3‰ was obtained through separate measurement in an IRMS (isotope ratio mass spectrometer) and is within the acceptable range for the material.

Lab. code	Material	Context/ sample no.	δ 13C rel. to VPDB	RC Age BP	Calibrated Age 95.4% probability	Calibrated Age 68.2% probability
Beta-644068	Charred wheat grains: *Triticum* cf *aestivum*	1042 <4>	-21.3‰	920 ± 30	cal AD 1035–1180 (88.5% probability) cal AD 1188–1210 (6.9% probability)	cal AD 1045–1085 (31.5% probability) cal AD 1120–1166 (29.7% probability) cal AD 1092–1104 (7.1% probability)

Table 8: Summary of radiocarbon dating result (the calibrated age ranges were determined in BetaCal4.20 using the INTCAl20 curve)

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Feature survival

5.1.1 The extent of post-medieval quarrying and other disturbances across the site impacted on the level of information that could be obtained from the excavation. A similar level of quarrying was encountered in most of the investigations in adjacent areas, and to the north on the site of the swimming pool quarrying had virtually completely removed any former traces of activity (TVAS 2007). Despite the number of archaeological investigations across the east side of the school, therefore, the overall picture obtained of prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity in this area is fragmentary, and any interpretations can only be partial. Nevertheless, the distribution and date of the medieval features on this site offers a clearer picture of activity of this period than has been possible from previous work.

5.2 Relationship of the results to the geophysical survey

5.2.1 The geophysical survey carried out in 1998 included two 20m squares that included part of the site (Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd 1998, fig. 5 Area B). The interpretation of the results in the two squares was rather different, the northern square revealing no clear features due to ferrous debris, the southern square indicating two ditches at right angles on north-east and south-east alignments forming the corner of an enclosure on the east of the square and a sinuous line of six pits running from south-west to north-east (Fig. 14). The excavation area included the south-east corner of the northern square and the north-west third of the southern square. The possible enclosure lay just outside the south-east limits of excavation, but three of the anomalies suggesting pits lay within the excavation. While the correspondence between the excavated features and the survey was not exact, it is possible that one of the suggested pits corresponds to undated pit 1072 and a second further south-west either to pits 1009 and 1012 or to the unexcavated post-medieval feature just north of them. The third suggested pit lies within an area of post-medieval or modern disturbance that was not further investigated.

5.3 Roman and Anglo-Saxon

5.3.1 The earliest evidence of activity on the site consisted of five residual sherds of Roman pottery. Roman occupation has been identified previously during the trenching by Leicester University at Waste Court (now Austin House), which found a neonate burial in a pit and a cist burial believed to be Roman in date, together with much unstratified Roman pottery and tile (Excell and Evans 1997). Roman pottery was also found at Beech Court south of the site, one sherd in a gully possibly of Roman date (OA 2022), and further Roman pits and ditches were found on the site of Amey Hall prior to its construction (Chambers 1980, 167). The current site was therefore peripheral to an area of Roman settlement and burial focused further to the east and south.

5.4 Medieval

5.4.1 The medieval ditches running roughly N–S and E–W most probably indicate the junction of a group of rectilinear enclosures. Pits formed a linear arrangement east of

the N–S ditch (1115) that did not appear to extend further eastwards than the termini of the E–W ditch (1114) and the potentially later ENE–WSW ditch (1116). No medieval pits were identified south of ditch 1114, although it is possible that further pits were masked by shallow feature 1085, most of whose fill was not removed. The clustering of the pits suggests that a clearly defined zone was set aside for pit digging.

5.4.2 The fact that both ditches 1114 and 1116 terminated close to one another indicates that there was a definite gap or entrance east of the termini, but later disturbance prevented determining whether the system continued further eastwards. There was probably also a gap in the south-east corner of the north-western enclosure, as the earlier and larger E–W ditch 1113 ended 7m short of N–S ditch 1115. This gap was later closed by the digging of ditch 1114.

5.4.3 Structure 1112 very probably belonged to the medieval phase of activity. Although there was no artefactual dating from the postholes, structure 1112 was parallel with and *c* 0.80m north of medieval ditches 1113 and 1114, whereas it was at an angle to the line of post-medieval pits *c* 0.75m to the north. The charred plant remains from the sampled posthole were of similar character to those recovered from the medieval ditches and pits, and no similar material was seen amongst the fills of the post-medieval pits. This also supports a medieval rather than a post-medieval date, and charred grains from one of the postholes gave a date range of cal AD 1035–1210 at 95% confidence (Beta-644068; Table 8), ie spanning the same date range as the vast majority of the medieval pottery, which was dated to AD 1050–1250. While the charred material might conceivably have derived from the adjacent ditches to the south, there is no reason why soil from 3m away should have been brought to backfill around the posts of a later building, so the dated material more likely reflects the date of abandonment of the structure.

5.4.4 Assuming that a sixth posthole once existed, this might indicate a building 3m long and 2m wide. A building of this size is very small to have been for domestic occupation but may have provided shelter for animals or served as an outhouse. The east end of this building lay only just east of the end of ditch 1113, so it is possible that it was contemporary with this phase of the enclosures, but this is speculative.

5.4.5 The ditches were not very substantial, but it is possible that they were supplemented by banks or hedges alongside; a gap of at least 1.5m is evident east of the N–S ditch (1115) between it and the closest pit, and a bank or hedge may also have existed on the south side of the E–W ditch (1114).

5.4.6 No continuation of ditch 1115 was observed on the site of the school swimming pool to the north, nor in the Beech Court archaeological investigations to the south, although an undated N–S ditch recorded some 20m further east at Beech Court (OA 2018, 3.3.23 and fig. 1) could possibly have formed another element of this system.

5.4.7 Medieval tenements are known along the west side of Bath Street further south, including surviving elements of a 14th century building at No. 64, and limited medieval activity was also found at Nos 66/68 at the south end of the school. The area of Lacies Court between Nos 66/68 and the site was owned by Fitzharris Manor and was in the parish of St Nicholas, and it is possible that the manor may not have promoted medieval settlement here at this time. The reason for the absence of 14th-century and

later medieval activity, however, remains uncertain and may not be related to this. Activity on the current site certainly appears to have ceased long before the Fitzharris estate created a separate holding at Lacies Court in the 15th century, involving the building of a homestead and farm buildings (Preston 1929).

5.4.8 Although the ditches were nearly 50m west of Bath Street, it is perhaps of note that the orientation of these enclosures was not aligned with the road to the east, unlike the post-medieval ditch and pits on the site. The divergence between the medieval orientation and that of Bath Street at this point is considerable, approaching 30°. Rocque's map of 1761 shows the boundary of the plots along the west side of Bath Street as running N–S and the plots narrowing northwards, but the more accurate tithe map of 1843 and the 1st edition OS map of 1874 have the orientation as between NNW–SSE and NW–SE, suggesting that Rocque's boundary is a convenient simplification for a map of this scale. The line of Bath Street further north does lie east of the modern Wootton Road, but this would not compensate for the divergence, and it is possible that in the high medieval period Bath Street ran still further east.

5.5 Post-medieval

5.5.1 The post-medieval ditch (1117) at the east end of the site lies only 5m west of Waste Court (now Austin House), which was present on Rocque's map (ie by 1761). The size of the house at that time was, however, somewhat smaller than today. This ditch appears to have lain on the east side of a track or carriage turning circle surrounding a lawn or garden west of the house, access to which was at the north beyond the terminal of the ditch. This was not marked on the 1843 Tithe map of the parish of St Helens, Abingdon, but this map was concerned with land ownership and general land use, not with the details within individual land parcels. It is also not visible on Rocque's map, but the scale of this county map did not allow for the presentation of information in such detail. The late 18th- or early 19th-century finds from this ditch are consistent with it belonging to the original establishment of the house and its grounds, or to an early modification or embellishment prior to the founding of Abingdon School.

5.5.2 The line of quarry pits along the north edge of the site appears to have lain just south of a path or track marked along the north side of the garden on 19th-century maps. The finds from these are also of late 18th- or early 19th-century date and so earlier than the date of the construction of Abingdon School, which took place from 1866–70 (VCH 1907, 272). These quarry pits, and the others of similar date across the site, were probably made during the construction of Waste Court itself.

6 PUBLICATION AND ARCHIVING

6.1 Publication

6.1.1 Although evidence of medieval occupation has been recovered from the site, the limited nature of this does not merit detailed publication. It is therefore proposed that a summary be placed in *South Midlands Archaeology* to advertise the presence of this grey literature report, which will be uploaded both to the ADS (Archaeology Data Service) and will be added to the online OA library at https://library.oxfordarchaeology.com/6565/.

6.2 Archiving, retention and disposal

6.2.1 The pottery assemblage is small, but the medieval pottery should be retained both for its intrinsic value and for the potential for further study in conjunction with other assemblages from Bath Street and Abingdon in general. The post-medieval pottery may be discarded.

6.2.2 The clay pipe assemblage is small and fragmentary, although it does contain small fragments of three bowls from different contexts and a stem with a stamp (context 1093). The stem fragment with a stamp and the bowl bases should be retained; the rest of the assemblage may be discarded.

6.2.3 Apart from this, the finds assemblages are small and unexceptional, and may be discarded.

6.2.4 The animal bones, although mostly medieval, constitute a small assemblage, which has been recorded as far as is possible here. There is little further research potential, and the bones may be discarded.

6.2.5 The two oyster shells are unremarkable and may be discarded.

6.2.6 The four flots from the environmental samples comprise those from medieval pits and one sample from an undated posthole that may also be medieval. The sample from the posthole may include sufficient combined material to obtain a radiocarbon dating should this be wanted in the future. It is therefore recommended that the flots are retained in the archive.

6.2.7 Following the selection of material recommended for retention and disposal of the remainder of the finds, and the deposition of the digital archive with ADS, the finds and paper site archive, including that from the 2019 evaluation, will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Council Museum Services under accession number OXCMS: 2019.131.

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APPENDIX A ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLE DATA TABLES

Sample No		1	2	3	4
Context No		1056	1031	1100	1042
Feature		1055	1030	1098	1039
Group		1113	1115		1112
Description		Ditch	Ditch	Pit	Posthole
Date		1050–1250	1050–1250	1050–1250	cal AD 1035–1210
Phase		Medieval	Medieval	Medieval	Medieval
Volume (L)		40	40	36	10
Flot Volume (ml)		80	60	50	12
Proportion of flot sorted		100%	100%	100%	100%
Charcoal					
	>4mm	*	*	*	
	4–2mm	**	**	**	**
Cereal grain					
Triticum cf *aestivum*	free threshing wheat	3#	4#	4#	2#
Triticum sp.	wheat	7#	8#	2#	1#
cf *Triticum* sp.	probable wheat	9#	11#	3#	
cf *Hordeum vulgare*	probable barley	1#	1#	1#	
Cerealia	indeterminate cereal	14#	44#	5#	2#
Chaff					
*Triticum aestivu*m	rachis node		2	1f	
Hordeum sp.	rachis node			1#	
Hordeum sp.	rachis fragment	1#			
Triticum/*Hordeum*	rachis fragment			1#	
Nuts/Fruit etc					
Corylus avellana	hazelnut shell				1f (0.000g)
Fabaceae	vetch/pea/bean >5mm		1f	1f	
Fabaceae	vetch/pea/bean 4–5mm			1(1/2)#	
Fabaceae	vetch/pea/bean size unclear	5f	4f	1f	1f
Wild Species					
Vicia/*Lathyrus* sp. 2–4mm	vetch/vetchling/tare, etc	1# + 1f	1(1/2) + 1f	2#	1#
Vicia/*Lathyrus* sp. <2 mm	vetch/vetchling/tare, etc			1(1/2) + 1f	
Rumex sp.	docks (3 sided)			1	

Sample No		1	2	3	4
Centaurea sp.	knapweeds			1f	
Anthemis cotula L.	stinking chamomile			1	
Carex sp.	sedges (2 sided)			1	
Poaceae	grass seeds (medium)		1#		
Poaceae	grass seeds (large)	1#	1f		
Festuca/*Lolium*	fescues/ryegrasses	1			
Other					
Indeterminate	seed/fruit			1#	
Key: # item is very damaged f = fragment only * fragments rare ** fragments occasional *** fragments common (1/2) half only present					

Table A.1: Charred plant remains

Sample No		3
Context No		**1100**
Feature		**1098**
Group		
Description		**Pit**
Date		**1050–1250**
Phase		**Medieval**
Volume (L)		
Flot Volume (ml)		**50**
Proportion of flot sorted		**100%**
Wild Species		
cf *Rumex* sp.	docks (3 sided)	1
Brassica/*Sinapis* sp.	cabbage/mustard	8
Lithospermum arvense L	field gromwell	1
Other		
Indeterminate	seed/fruit	1f
Key: f = fragment		

Table A.2: Mineralised plant remains

APPENDIX B SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Austin House, Abingdon School, Oxfordshire
Site code:	ABAUH22
Grid Reference	SU 49444 97443
Type:	Excavation
Date and duration:	February 2022
Area of Site	*c* 0.07ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Services in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2022.17.
Summary of Results:	Preceding trial-trench evaluation in 2019 established the presence of medieval and post-medieval remains upon which an excavation area, totalling *c* 0.07ha, was subsequently targeted. The majority of features encountered dated to the medieval and post-medieval periods, with only small quantities of residual Roman and late Saxon pottery suggestive of earlier occupation in the wider landscape. Medieval features comprised several ditches, suggesting a rectilinear arrangement of enclosures or fields, and a small number of pits indicative of small-scale occupation and agricultural activity. The pottery demonstrates that activity was confined to *c* 1050–1250 and a degree of inter-cutting indicates activity was not limited to a single phase. Charred plant remains from a posthole structure also produced a radiocarbon date of cal AD 1035–1210. The pottery and clay tobacco pipe assemblages suggest there was a hiatus in activity between the later 13th century and mid- to late 17th century. The post-medieval features recorded appear to have been 18th- to 19th-century in date and predominately related to quarrying, probably for the construction of Waste Court, as they mostly predated the construction of Abingdon School in the later 19th century. A few features remain undated, though they probably related to medieval activity.

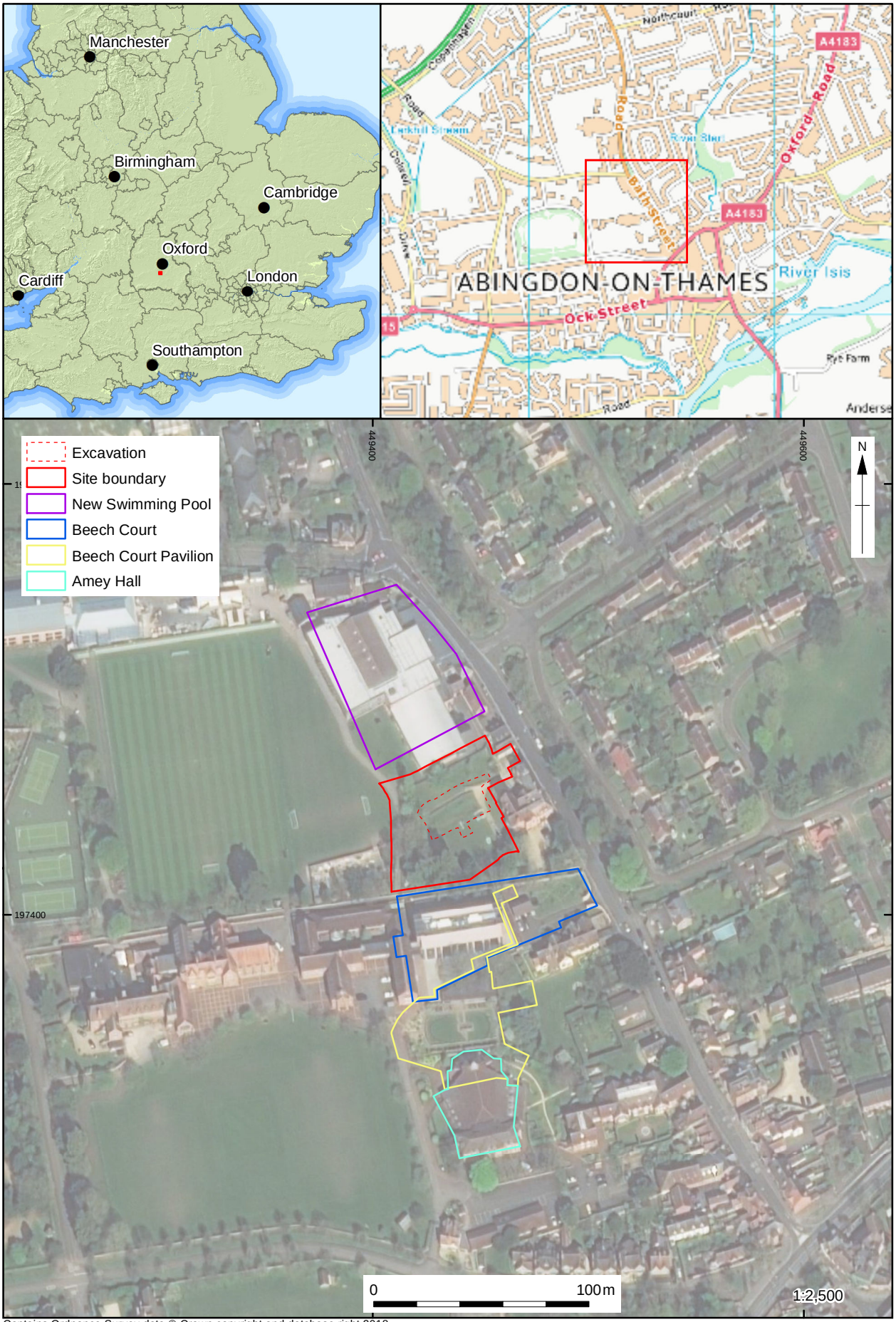

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Figure 1: Site location

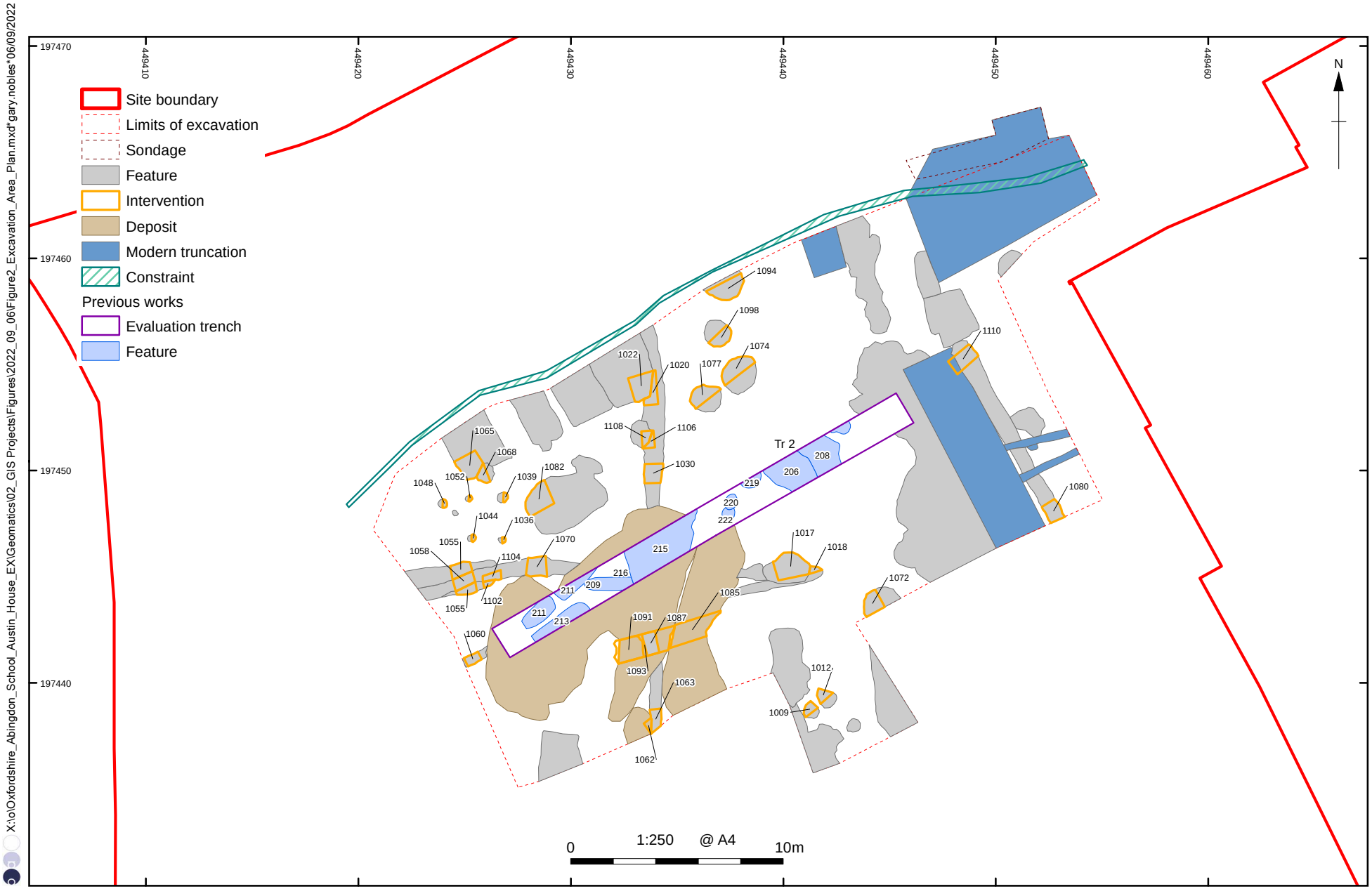

Figure 2: Site plan, together with evaluation trench, showing all features

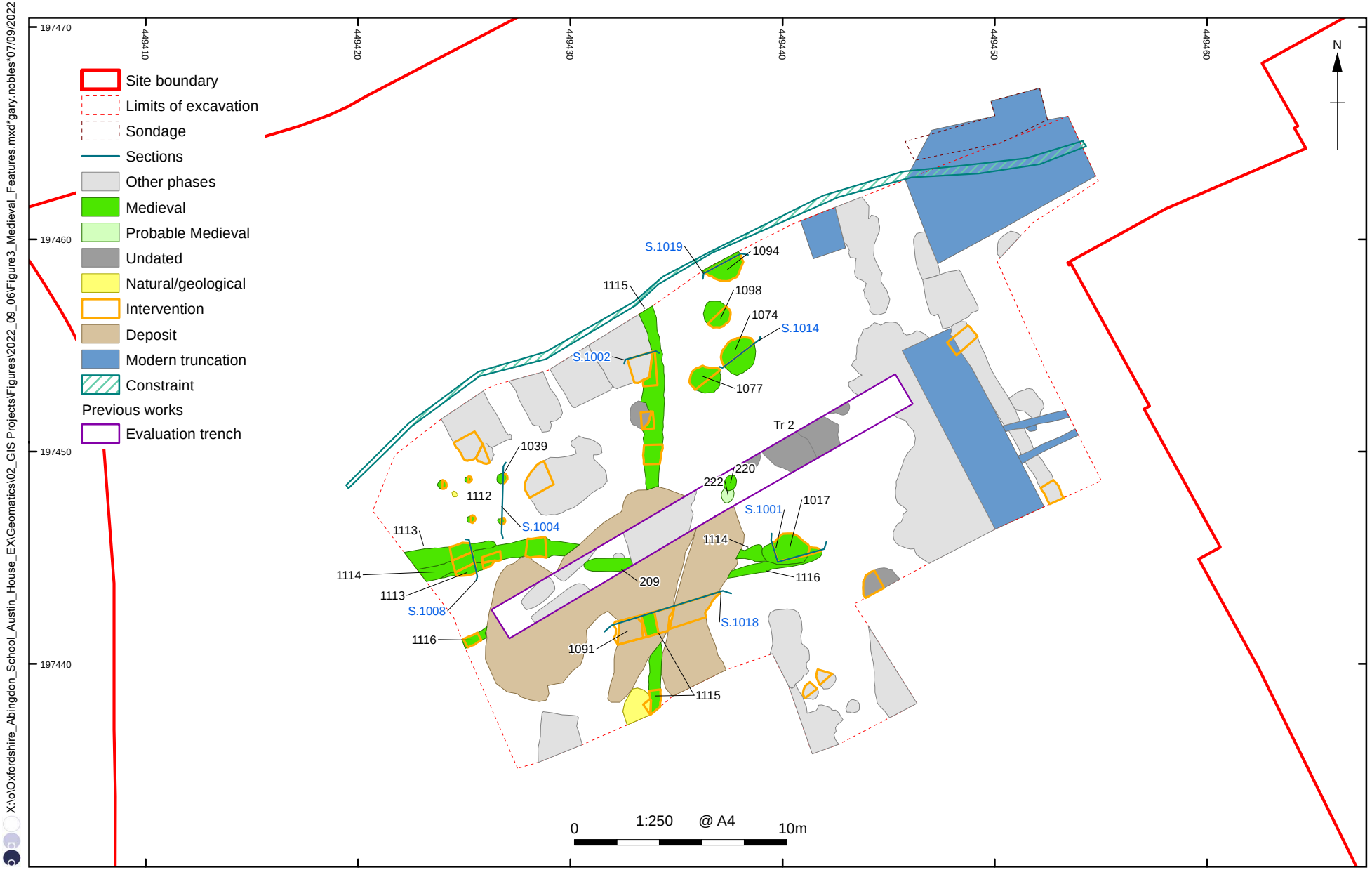

Figure 3: Phase plan highlighting medieval features

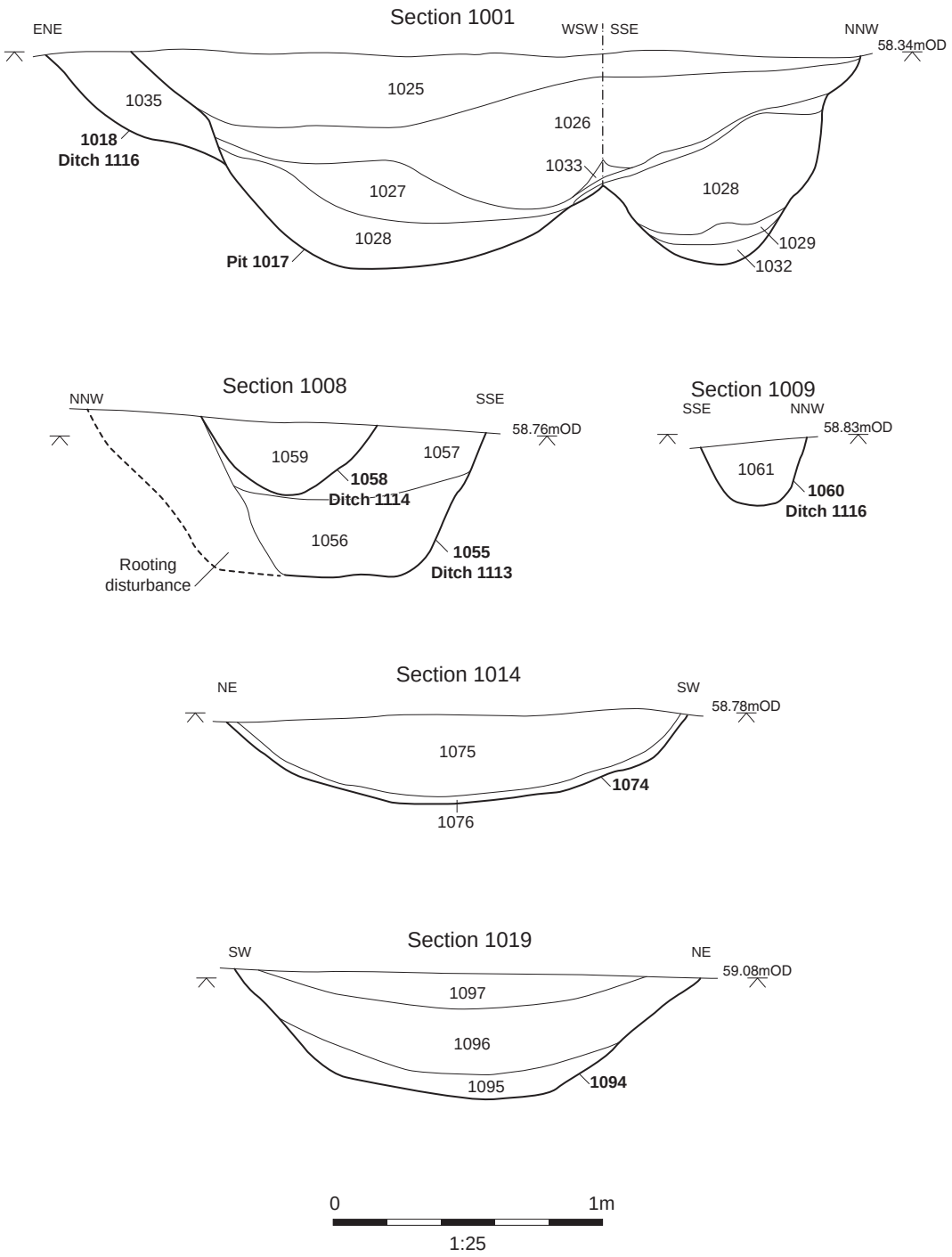

Figure 4: Sections of medieval pits and ditches

Figure 5: Medieval ditch 1115, looking north (1m scale)

Figure 6: Medieval pit 1077, looking south-south-east (1m scale)

Figure 7: Medieval pits 1094 and 1098, looking north (1m and 2m scales)

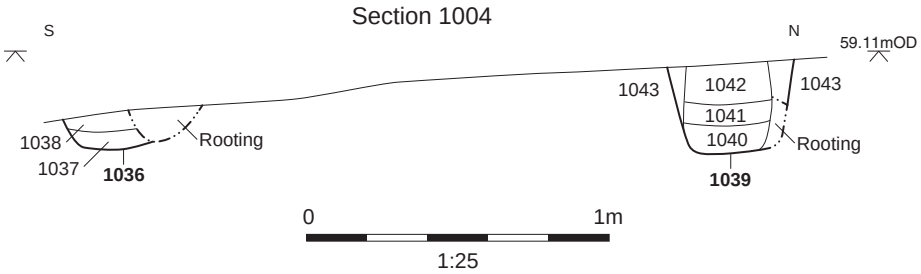

Figure 8: Medieval post-built structure 1112, looking west (1m and 2m scales)

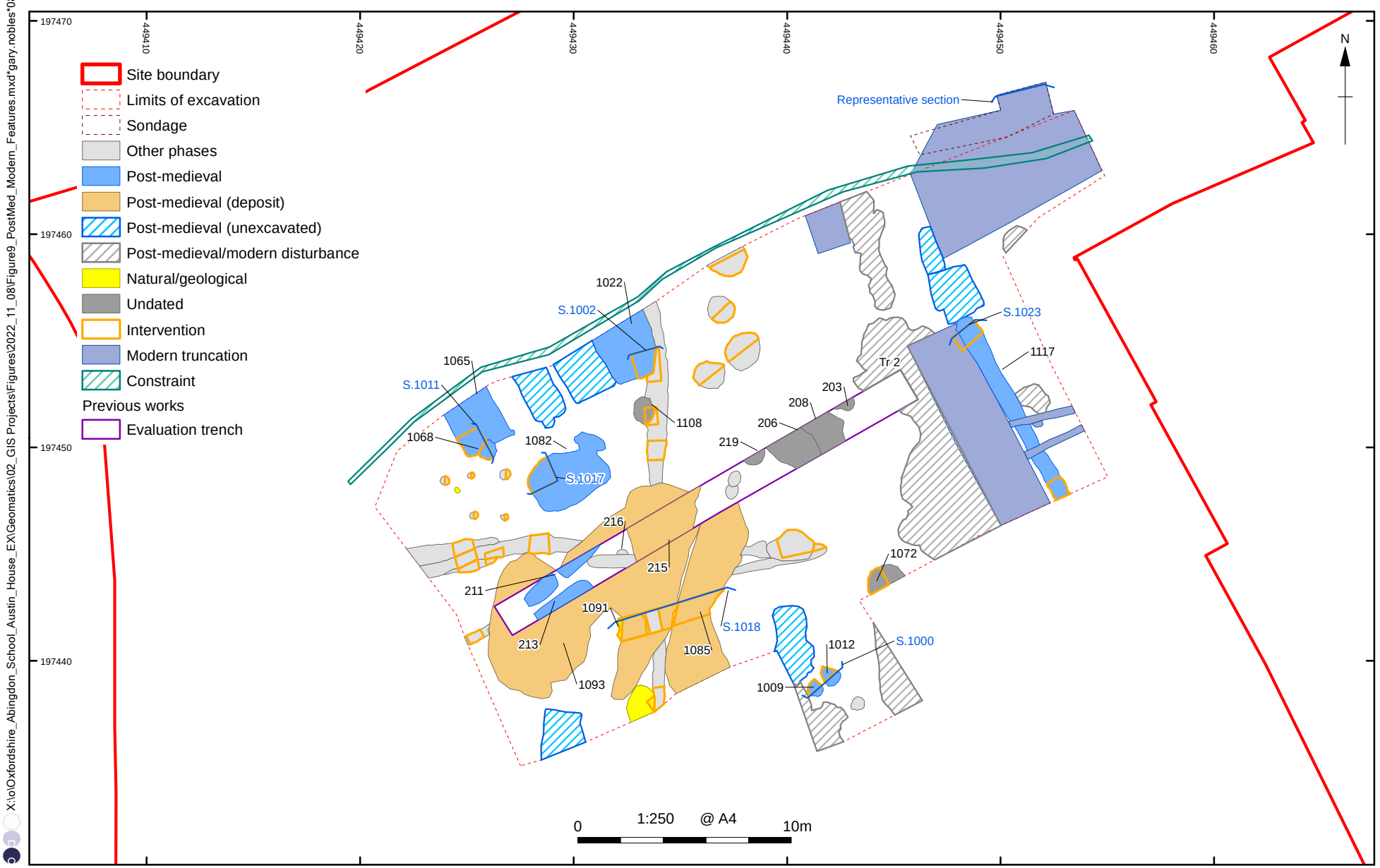

Figure 9: Phase plan highlighting post-medieval, modern and undated features

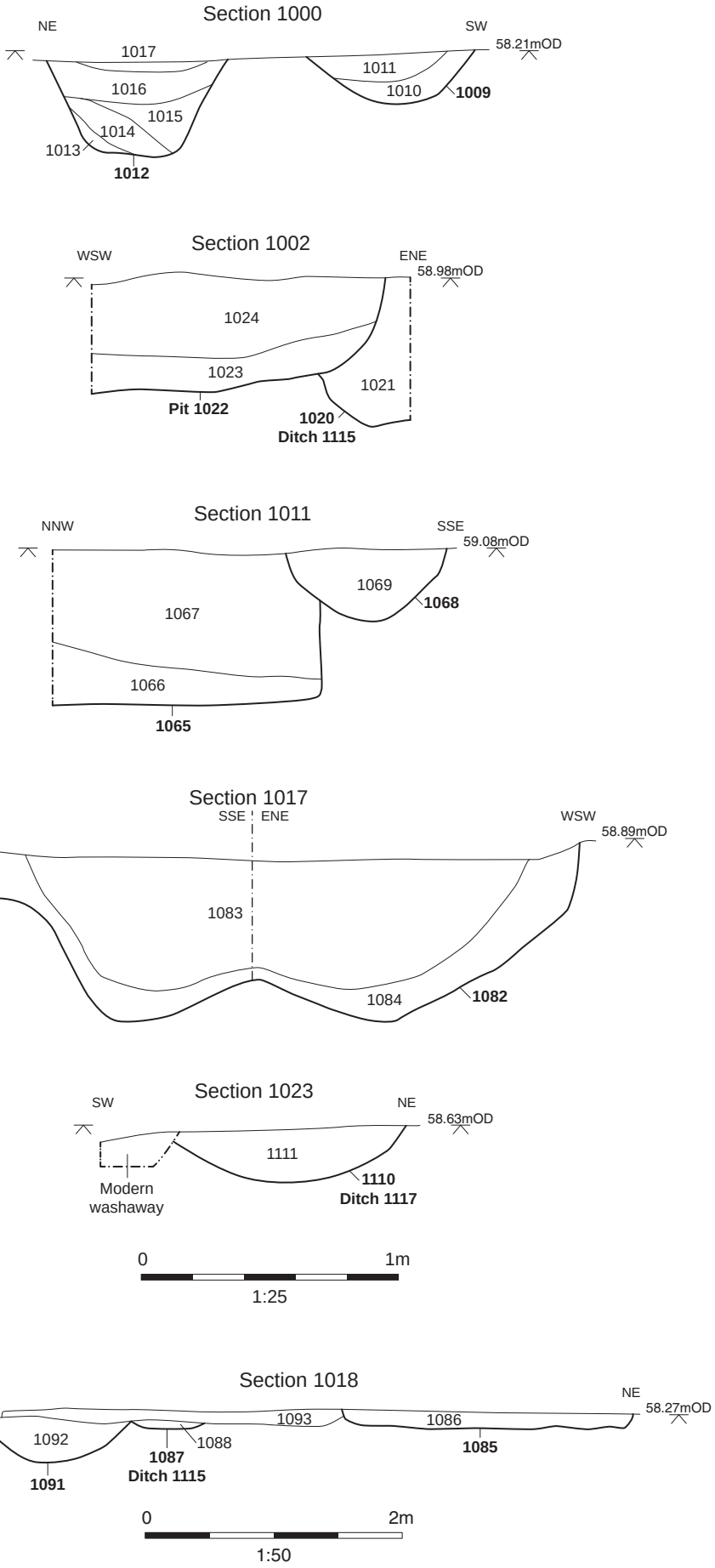

Figure 10: Sections of post-medieval features

Figure 11: Post-medieval ditch 1117 and modern truncation, looking north (0.5m scale)

Figure 12: Levelling deposit 1093 and possible garden feature 1085, looking north-east (2m scale)

Figure 13: Representative section of stratigraphy in north-east corner of excavation area

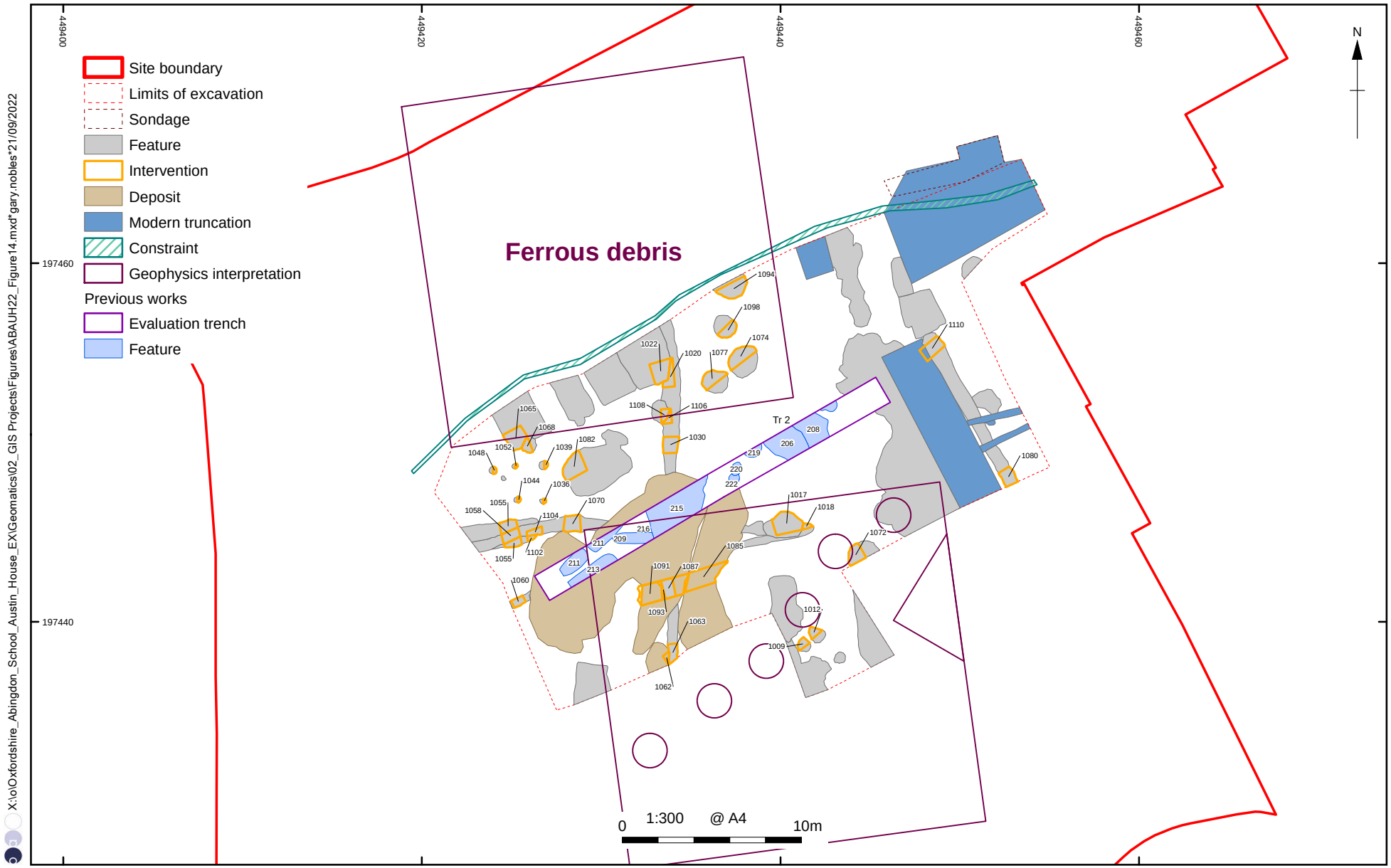

Figure 14: Plan of excavation in relation to interpretation of geophysical survey

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