

Balston & Company

Worton House, Over Worton, Oxfordshire

NGR SP 4321 2914

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. W97/0656, 0657

Oxford Archaeological Unit

February 1999

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Planning Ref. No. W97/0656, 0657

Prepared by: 

Date: 8/2/99

Checked by: 

Date: 22/2/99

Approved by: R. Williams HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date: 26/2/1999

Oxford Archaeological Unit

February 1999

Summary

In August 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Worton House, Over Worton, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4321 2914). No archaeological features were seen and no finds were retrieved.

1 Introduction

The development proposal (planning application no. W97/0656, 0657) comprised the construction of a new tennis court within the existing walled garden at Worton House. An archaeological watching brief was required in accordance with the planning consent granted under PPG 16.

The watching brief was commissioned by Balston & Company, Landscape Architects and Garden Designers, on behalf of Mr Axtell of Worton House. It was undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with the Deputy County Archaeologist.

2 Background

Worton House is located either on the site of, or in close proximity to, the location of an earlier medieval manor house. All of the available evidence would appear to suggest that the manorial estate was well established by the early medieval period, with a small but thriving settlement based around it. The medieval settlement began to contract from the 15th century onwards, and the overall size of the village shrank accordingly.

A series of earthworks to the north of Worton House and to the east of the church may be the surviving remnants of a part of the medieval settlement. The development is located within the central core of the medieval settlement, being close both to the original manor house and the associated settlement. The full extent of the manor complex remains unclear at this time, although it undoubtedly comprised other buildings apart from the manor house.

The site lies at approximately 132 m OD, and land use prior to development was as a domestic garden. The local geology is clay and marlstone.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

Archaeological monitoring took the form of separate inspection visits during the course of groundworks. All excavation and levelling was undertaken by a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and

monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil description utilises standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results

Approximately 0.20 m of topsoil (1) was removed across the area of the tennis court, with the underlying natural orange/brown clay (2) being truncated by a maximum of 0.30 m in order to level the natural slope of the site. The entire area of the tennis court was inspected both during and after levelling works; despite careful cleaning no archaeological features were seen, and no finds were retrieved from the topsoil.

6 Environmental results

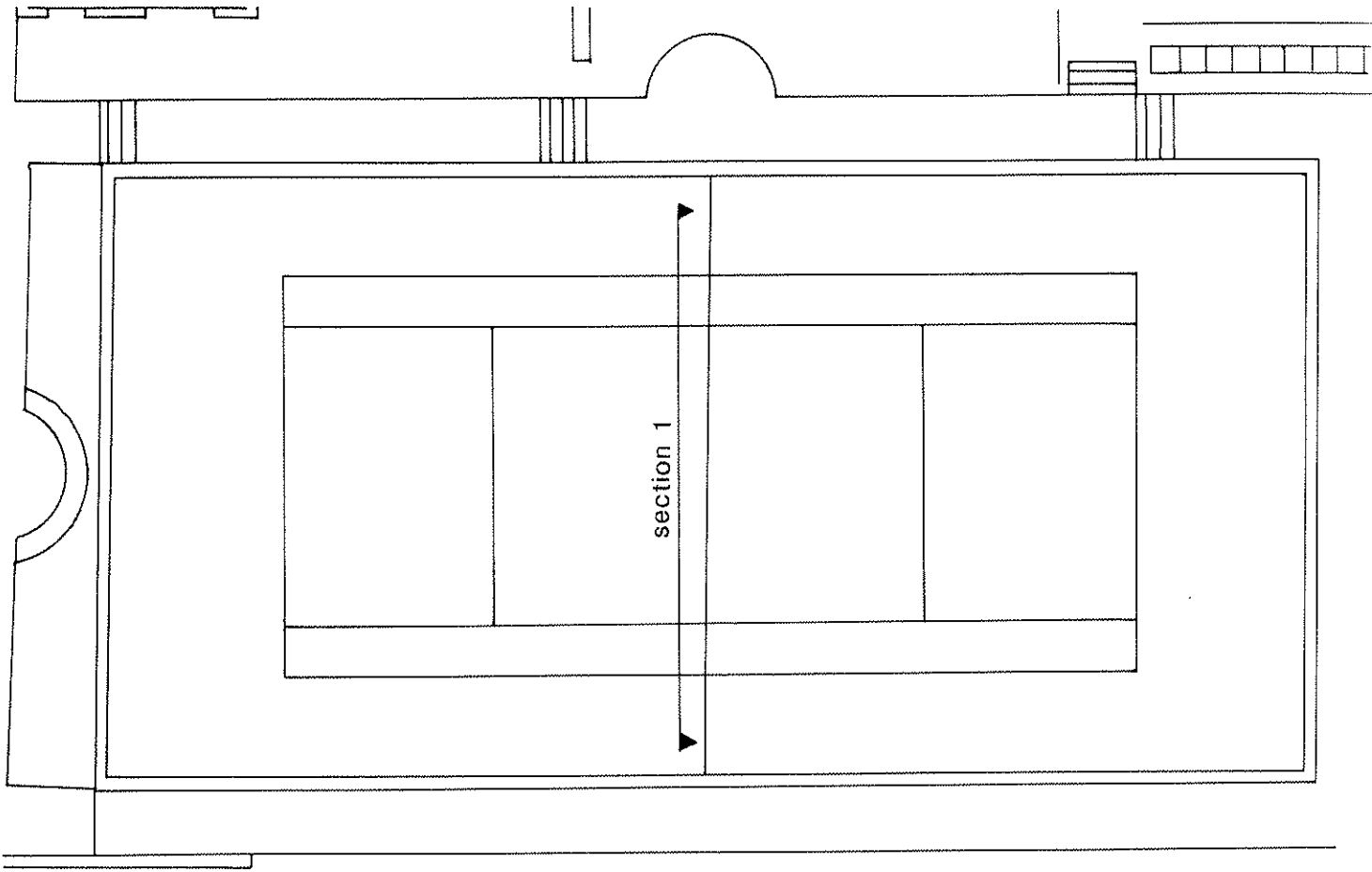
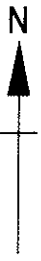
Due to the absence of significant archaeological deposits, no environmental soil samples were taken.

7 Discussion

Nothing was seen during the watching brief to indicate use of the site as anything other than a garden.

References.

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).



site plan

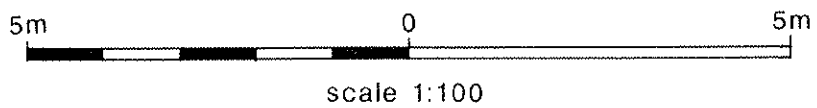
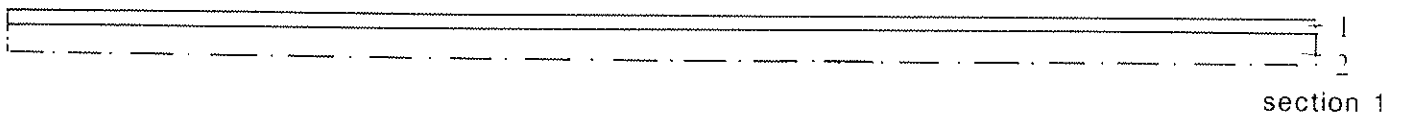
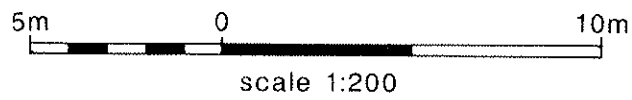


Figure 2: site plan and section



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