Knowles and Son Hertford College

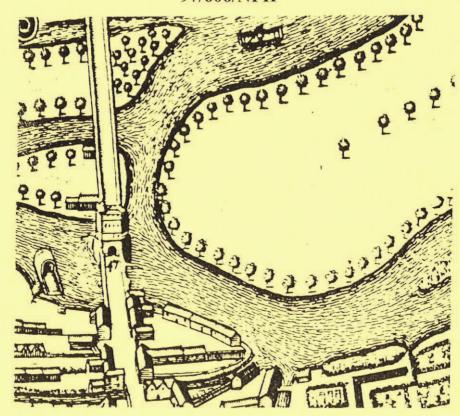
OXSALTE 134/97

Salter's Boatyard, Folly Bridge, Abingdon Road, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

NGR SP 5144 0550

97/606/NFH



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

January 1998

Knowles and Son

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Salter's Boatyard, Folly Bridge, Abingdon Road, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Salter's Boatyard, Folly Bridge, Oxford, for Knowles and Son Limited, on behalf of Hertford College. The evaluation revealed the remains of a building, dated to the 19th century or later by a small quantity of 19th century pottery and clay pipe fragments. The building was possibly associated with the 19th century timber wharf. Findings were otherwise limited to dumping and levelling deposits of 19th century date. These were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.25 metres and produced finds ranging in date from the 12th to the 20th centuries. The earliest deposit in Trench 1(100) produced a single sherd of Tudor Green ware and could potentially date from as early as the 16th century. However, the same deposit also produced a clay pipe stem, suggesting that a later date is perhaps more likely. The medieval material occurred in 19th or 20th century made ground deposits and need not derive from the site itself.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

In November 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at Salter's Boatyard, Folly Bridge, Oxford, for Knowles and Son, on behalf of Hertford College. The development site, which is located to the south of Oxford city centre, immediately to the west of Folly Bridge and Abingdon Road, is the subject of a planning application for a residential development (Planning Application No. 97/606/NFH). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with an Advice Note issued by Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service (OAAS) and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU). This report is intended to be read in conjunction with the recent Archaeological Desk-top Study of the site (OAU April 1997).

1.2 Geology, topography and land-use

The site lies on alluvial clays and gravels, overlying Oxford Clay, on the Thames floodplain, at c.57 m OD. The site consists of two islands in the River Thames, which are probably of natural origin, although extensively built up and surrounded by river walls. The Folly Bridge forms the western boundary of the site (Fig.1).

The proposal area has been used as a boat yard since c.1858, before which it was a timber yard (OAU April 1997).

1.3 Historical and archaeological background

The archaeological and historical background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desk study (OAU April 1997), the results of which are summarised below:

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Environmental evidence indicates that the course of the River Thames to the south of Oxford has undergone a series of changes since the last ice age. During the Neolithic and Bronze Age the development site probably fell within the river channel. A number of clay banks appeared in the early Saxon period, forming channels which remained stable into the mid-late Saxon period as a result of increased alluviation caused by a rise in the water table, and reclamation activity.

Evidence from archaeological excavations and observations over the last 25 years suggests that in the Saxon period the southern approach road to Oxford was carried across a series of streams and islands, initially by means of a ford and from the late Saxon period via a timber bridge. The stone causeway known as 'The Grandpont' is believed to have been built as part of the 'Great Bridge' constructed by Robert d'Oilly in the late 11th century. It ran from close to the southern end of Christchurch to South Hinksey, on the other side of the floodplain, a distance of c.1.5 miles (Scheduled Ancient Monument No.21757).

A gate tower with a drawbridge was built in the 13th century where the Grandpont crossed the main stream of the Thames. Repairs to the bridge are recorded in the 14th century. The gate tower or 'Folly' was finally demolished in 1779 and the bridge itself was rebuilt in 1825.

At the same time, a major redevelopment of the riverside facilities took place, including new wharves and streets constructed on the north side of the river, fronting a basin, while the navigation stream was diverted south through a pound lock (to the north of the development site).

The site could potentially have been occupied in the Saxon period. In the 16th Century, when the earliest cartographic source was produced, the site was either open land or was sparsely occupied.

The site itself has produced limited archaeological evidence. Several recent excavations and observations have been carried out in the immediate vicinity:

- (i) Rescue observation of the Telecom Tunnel beneath St Aldate's, across The Thames to the north of the site, revealed possible late Saxon or Norman occupation following the building of Grandpont, and filling a former channel. (Campbell, forthcoming)
- (ii) Also across the Thames to the north of the site, evaluation work at the 'Head of the River' produced some information about the process of medieval land reclamation (OAU 1994).
- (iii) Excavations at Whitehouse Road, 250 m to the southeast of the site revealed evidence of Middle Iron Age occupation on the lower gravel terrace (Mudd 1993).

2 EVALUATION AIMS

The general aims of the of the evaluation, as stated in the WSI, were as follows:

To determine the presence/ absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.

To determine the extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present within the proposal area.

To determine the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits discovered.

To make the results of the investigation available.

The OAAS Planning Advice Note recommends the following specific aims:

To investigate the river walls which frame the islands comprising the site.

To investigate claims that the islands have grown by extending progressively away from the Abingdon Road.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample size and scope of fieldwork

Three trenches (1 - 3) were excavated by machine to a maximum depth of 1.25m. The trench locations were limited by restricted working space and the presence of underground services. Trench 1 was 7.5m long, Trench 2 was 9m and Trench 3 was 5m long. All machine-dug trenches were 1.6m wide and were excavated using a toothless bucket under close archaeological supervision. A single 2m square trench (4) was excavated by hand (Fig. 2).

The trenches were excavated to a depth of 1.25m, in order that the immediate impact of the development could be determined with an allowance for a cushion between the groundworks and any archaeological deposits present.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve datable artefacts. All archaeological features were planned and, where excavated, their sections were drawn at a scale of 1:50. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

Artefacts from reworked and in situ archaeological deposits were collected and submitted for specialist examination.

3.4 Environmental data

No environmental samples were recovered during the course of the evaluation.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

The deposits encountered were generally similar throughout the machine excavated trenches (Trenches 1, 2 and 3), consisting of variable and well-drained made ground deposits of 19th and 20th century date.

The single hand excavated trench (Trench 4) was dug through alluvial clay, redeposited as made ground in the 19th century. Waterlogged conditions were encountered towards the bottom of the trench.

4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits

The only significant archaeological deposits encountered were the footings of the corner of a wall in Trench 1 (Fig. 2), dated by pottery to the 19th century or later, with an interior cobbled surface. Medieval and early post-medieval pottery sherds were recovered from Trenches 1, 2 and 3, but were all residual in later made ground deposits. The earliest made ground deposit in Trench 1 (100) produced a single sherd of Tudor Greenware and a clay pipe, suggesting a possible date in the 16th century, though the presence of the clay pipe suggests that a later date is more likely.

4.3 Presentation of Results

Section 5 includes context descriptions by trench. Archaeological deposits and features are described from earliest to latest in each trench. Context information is summarised in the context inventory (Appendix 1).

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

5.1.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

The earliest deposit encountered in this trench consisted of redeposited alluvial clay (100/101), lying at 55.7m OD. The deposit produced a single sherd of 19th century pottery and a clay pipe stem, indicating that it was a modern fill, although it also contained fragments of late 14th century pottery.

Overlying this deposit at the east end of the trench was a surface consisting of grit with some stones (123) and a structure consisting of the corner section of a stone wall footing (103) with an interior cobbled surface (104). The gritty layer (123) extended partially beneath the wall footing and cobbled layer (103, 104). The north-south aligned section of the wall survived to two courses. The east-west aligned section survived to a single course.

Also overlying Layer 100/101 was a thin lens of dark purple sandy grit (128). Overlying this and lying against the wall footing were a light yellow sandy layer (102) and a mixed clay loam layer (105). The cobbled surface (104) inside the wall was covered by a thin silt layer (106). This layer was cut by a sub-circular feature (107), perhaps a stone-robbing pit, which had cut away part of the wall footing and the cobbled surface. The lower fill of this feature was a mixed clay deposit (109).

Overlying all of the features at the eastern end of the trench, and filling the upper part of Feature 107, was a clayey sand layer containing mortar and brick (108), which may derive from the demolition of the stone wall (103). This layer was sealed by a series of seven clayey sand and gravel made ground deposits (110 -116), which raised the ground level by c.0.5m and formed the base of a sand and grit yard surface (117) which was continuous across the trench. Layer 115 formed the bulk of this levelling episode. The other layers were only present at the eastern end of the trench. Sherds of 19th century pottery were recovered from Layers 112 and 115 (Fig. 3).

The yard surface (117) was sealed by made ground deposits consisting of a thick orange-brown gravel (118) layer and a deposit of clinker and rubble (119), the latter yielding sherds of 19th century pottery. A service trench (120) cut across Trench 1 at a slight angle, on an almost eastwest alignment. It was filled with gravel (121) and capped by compressed sand and grit (122), and was cut through Layer 119. This feature was cut by a later north-south aligned service trench (123) with a gravel fill (124). The whole trench was sealed by a modern surface comprising a layer of compressed clinker (125), a fine gravel bedding layer (126) and a capping layer of concrete (127).

5.1.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

Made ground deposits in Trench 2 generally sloped downwards from west to east (away from Grandpont). The slope was particularly marked in the lower deposits (220, 219, 218, 215, 214, 213, 212). None of these layers formed definite surfaces. The earliest deposit encountered, at

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c.56.2 m OD, was a sandy clay layer (220), overlain successively by a mortar and rubble layer (219), a charcoal and sand deposit (218), and a layer of sandy gravel (215). Although several sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from these lower layers, and Layers 212 and 213 produced only medieval pottery, the underlying made ground deposits (218, 215) produced 19th century glass and 16th century pottery, proving that the medieval pottery is residual.

It is possible that some of the material used to build up the ground level on this part of the site in the 19th century was transported from an area of medieval occupation. However, the material need not have come from an immediately adjacent source, and is therefore not reliable evidence for medieval activity on the site.

Sealing all of the above deposits was a continuous red brown sandy clay layer (211), which yielded a single pottery sherd dating from the 16th Century+, but which must in fact be of 19th century or later date (see above). A thin layer of blue clay (210) overlay this to the east, and was itself overlain by a mixed sand deposit (209) and a slightly mounded gravel deposit (208), which may have formed the surface of a path. Layer 208 was overlain by a series of laminated made ground deposits of variable composition (207, 206, 224, 223, 205, 216, 204, 203,), which together built up the ground level by 0.9m at the eastern end of the trench and 0.4m at the western end, significantly reducing the natural slope of the ground in this part of the site.

A large 19th or 20th century feature, of unknown shape, extent and function (225), obscured the entire south facing section of the trench. It was cut from the level of Layer 203 and the lower part was filled by successive layers of mixed sand and clay (229, 230, 228, 227). The upper fills comprised a sand and clay layer (232; which produced a single sherd of residual 16th Century+ pottery and a clay pipe stem), a grey silty clay layer (226) and a substantial rubble layer (231).

The modern ground surface over most of the trench consisted of a concrete surface (200) based on a compact hardcore layer (202). In the south-west part of the trench, a surface consisted of sand and gravel rather than concrete.

5.1.3 Trench 3 (Fig. 4)

The earliest deposit recorded in Trench 3, was an alluvial clayey silt (321/322), which was possibly redeposited and was seen only at the western end of the trench. A large feature of unknown extent (327), was largely obscured by the limits of the trench and by later disturbance. It was cut through Layer 321/322, and was filled with two distinct rubble deposits (311, 307), separated by a compacted silt layer (323). The earlier rubble fill (311) produced 19th century pottery. The later rubble layer may have formed a surface as it was cut by a rubble-filled pit (306). These features (327, 306) were sealed by a deposit of laminated and compacted sand and gravel (304), probably also representing a surface. Feature 320, which was cut from this level at the north end of the trench, was filled by three rubble layers in a clayey silt matrix (330, 309 319).

Sealing all of the above, and uniform throughout the trench, was a thick layer of fine gravel forming a distinct surface (303). This was overlain by further variable made ground deposits, including a clay and rubble deposit (308), and a rubble layer (302), which formed the base of a thin chalky grit surface (317), which was worn away in places. The remains of a shallow-

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founded brick structure was laid on top of this surface (317). A further gravel layer (301) covered the surface and extended either side of the brick structure.

The present ground surface, which was based on the gravel layer (301) consisted of patches of sand, gravel, concrete and rubble (300, 314), disturbed in places by recent intrusions (316).

5.1.4 Trench 4 (Fig. 4)

Trench 4 was excavated by hand through a series of redeposited alluvial clays (407,406,405, 404) forming the present bank of the island. Layer 407 lay below the water table. Layer 405 produced a single sherd of 19th century pottery. The upper deposits in the trench consisted of sandy made ground layers (403 and 402), of which Layer 402 contained a 19th century sherd from the same vessel as that found in Layer 119 (Trench 1). This suggests that deposits 119 and 402, which lie at opposite ends of the site, form part of the same levelling episode. The made ground layers in Trench 4 were sealed by topsoil (400, 401).

5.2 Finds

5.2.1 Medieval and Post-medieval pottery (by Paul Blinkhorn)

The pottery assemblage comprised 68 sherds with a total weight of 1771g. The ware chronologies and Oxford Type Series equivalent codes are shown in Table 2. The pottery occurrence per context by number and weight (in g) of sherds by fabric type is shown in Table 1 (Appendix 2). The majority of the material was certainly redeposited in 19th or 20th Century contexts and this is certainly the case for Trenches 1, 3 and 4, although the range of wares present suggest continuous activity in the vicinity from the 12th to the 20th century. Layer 215 in Trench 2 produced three sherds of medieval pottery, with no later material. However, an earlier deposit in Trench 2 produced two fragments of 19th or 20th century window glass, proving that the medieval material is redeposited.

5.2.2 Animal bone (by Bethan Charles)

A total of 38 fragments of bone were collected by hand. All are in good condition, with only 21% post excavation damage and 34% butchery damage. All of the fragments of bone were counted. However, some of the fragments could be re-assembled and were counted as one for identification purposes, hence the difference in the total for Table 3 (Appendix 3). The majority of bones found were from cattle, sheep and pig. However, there was part of one fragmented red deer mandible and a tooth. The fragments probably represent domestic refuse of various date, incorporated into made ground material which may not derive from the immediate locality.

Two worked fragments from the same shaft of bone were found in context 307. It is probable that this may have been a handle, possibly from a knife. The fragments of bone were not identifiable due to their fragmentation.

5.2.3 Glass (by Cecily Cropper)

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A total of 28 fragments of glass were recovered, comprising 7 fragments of window glass, 4 fragments of bottle glass, 1 fragment from a vessel and fifteen fragments of a glass rod. All were of 19th or 20th century date. The glass occurrence per context is shown in Table 4 (Appendix 4).

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The sample size was sufficient to determine the extent and type of deposits on the site liable to be affected by the proposed development.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 Summary of Results

The evaluation revealed the remains of a building in Trench 1, consisting of a wall footing with a cobbled interior surface, and an exterior gritted yard surface. The building is dated to the 19th century or later by pottery and clay pipes found stratified beneath it. However, its function and identity remain uncertain, since no building is shown in that location on the site plan from the 1844 Sale Particulars or the 1876 Ordnance Survey. It is perhaps best interpreted as a short-lived extension of the unidentified building shown to the north of the dock on the 1876 OS map (OAU 1997).

Several of the earlier made ground deposits in Trench 2 contained only medieval or early post-medieval artefacts (215, 214, 213, 212, 211). However, they were stratified above a deposit of 19th century or later date (218). It is possible that the deposits used to build up the ground level in this part of the site were brought from a medieval occupation site. However, such material need not derive from the site or its immediate vicinity. The presence of the medieval pottery is therefore not a reliable indication of medieval activity on the site.

Otherwise, deposits identified in Trenches 1, 2 and 3 comprised layers of 19th and 20th century made ground, including a number of former ground surfaces.

Trench 4 examined part of the bank of the southern of the two islands forming the site. The deposits comprised mainly alluvial clay, redeposited as made ground in the 19th or 20th century. A sherd of pottery from one of the upper made ground layers in Trench 4 (402), was from the same vessel as a sherd recovered from Layer 119 in Trench 1. This suggests that the latest raising of the ground level was carried out across most of the site using material from a single source.

The evaluation has shown that the site has been substantially raised and levelled since the 19th century. No evidence was recovered which would shed light on the history of the site before its use as a timber wharf and boat yard in the 19th century. No evidence was discovered relating to the river walls or the pre-19th century extent of the islands.

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6.2.2 Significance

Little of archaeological significance was discovered in the evaluation. The wall footing discovered in Trench 1 is probably the remains of a building associated with the use of the site as a timber wharf and boat yard in the 19th century.

6.2.3 Impact of development

Apart from the foundation piles themselves, the primary below-ground impact of the development will be caused by the emplacement of ground-beams to a depth of c.1.0m. The 19th century or later wall footing encountered was at a depth of 1.05m, slightly below the proposed foundation level. The evaluation did not discover any other significant buried features within the development area. Even if important unknown features are present beneath the modern made ground, the depth of those deposits across the site suggests that the impact of the development would be minimal.

However, it is important that a maximum depth of disturbance for construction of the ground beams is agreed before construction begins. This should take account of the depth of any pile caps, and of any blinding to be laid below the pile caps or ground beams. Any impact from services or other excavated features will need to be considered and, if appropriate, mitigated.

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

Appendix 1: Archaeological Context Inventory

Trench	Ctxt	Туре	width (m)	thick.	Comment	Finds
1	100	layer		N/A	dark brown alluvium	pottery
	101	layer		N/A	dark grey alluvium	pottery
	102	layer		0.06	construction deposit?	pottery
	103	wall	0,45	0.20+	stone wall (and threshold ?)	
	104	layer	1.20+	N/A	cobbled floor surface	
	105	layer		0.08	mixed clay-loam	***************************************
	106	layer	1.20+	0.03	occupation/silting deposit	glass
	107	cut	0.70	0.22	sub-circular feature (stone	54400
					robbing ?)	
	108	layer		0.24	demolition layer; fill of 107	pottery
	109	fill	0.70	0.22	fill of 107	metal/CBM
	110	layer		0.14	mixed clay dump	
	111	layer		0.12	gravel make-up layer	
	112	layer		0.12	sand and gravel dump	pot/bone
	113	layer		0.06	mixed clay	
	114	layer		0.16	clay and gravel	
	115	layer		0.30	gravel levelling for 117	pot/bone
	116	layer		0.15	sand and gravel levelling	
	117	layer		0.07	former yard surface	
	118	layer		0.58	gravel make-up	-
	119	layer		0.40	coal and rubble make-up	pottery
	120	cut	N/A	0,46	modern service cut	
	121	fill		0.42	gravel fill of 120	
	122	fill		0.04	capping of 120	
	123	cut	0.60	0.46	modern service cut	
	124	fill	0.60	0.46	gravel fill of 123	
	125	layer		0.06	compacted coal surface	
	126	layer		0.04	sand and grit for 127	
	127	layer		0.09	modern concrete	
	128	layer		0.06	purple grit deposit	

Trench	Ctxt	Туре	width (m)	thick.	Comment	Finds
	129	layer		N/A	grit yard surface	
	130	layer		0.22	rubble and coal levelling	
	131	cut	1.94	0.88	construction cut	
	132	fill	1.94	0.88	sand/gravel/concrete fill	
2	200	layer		0.20	present concrete surface	
	201	layer		0.40	gravel track surface	
	202	layer		0.10	hardcore for 200	
	203	layer		0.10	levelling deposit	
	204	layer	1.2+	0.05	burnt dump layer	
	205	layer	3.8+	0.12	building dump deposit	
	206	layer	4.5+	0.20	building dump deposit	
	207	layer	1.5	0.05	clay lense	
	208	layer	4.2+	0.20	gravel surface ?	
	209	layer	2.5+	0.1	construction debris	
	210	layer	3.75+	0.05	clay	
	211	layer		0.25	levelling deposit	
	212	layer	2.5+	0.15	burnt levelling material	pot/bone
	213	layer	3.5+	0.10	grey sandy-clay	pottery
	214	layer	1.7	0.10	burnt building debris	
	215	layer	3.0	0.15	sandy gravel	pot/CBM
	216	layer	2.5+	0.10	pea grit sealing 221	
	217	_	-	-	deleted	
	218	layer	4.0+	0.20	burnt deposit	pottery
	219	layer	3.0±	0.10	mortar and rubble	pottery
	220	layer	1.5÷	0.10	sandy-clay	
	221	cut	0.50	0.25	cut of unknown purpose	
	222	fill	0.50	0.25	rubble fill of 225	
	223	layer		0.18	former gravel surface	
	224	layer		0.20	sand/gravel/clay	pottery
_	225	cut	9.0+	1.10	obscures N of trench	
	226	fill		0.50	mixed clay fill of 225	
	227	fill		0.20	redeposited gravel	

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Trench	Ctxt	Туре	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds
	228	fill		0.20	mixed clay fill of 225	
	229	fill		0.35	clay sand fill of 225	
	230	fill		0.60	mixed fill of 225	
	231	fill	7.0+	0.60	building material	
	232	fill		0.32	fill of 225	
3	300	layer		0.40	tarmac surface	
	301	layer		0.16	levelling for 300	
	302	layer		0.18	rubble make-up for 317	pottery
	303	layer		0.18	drainage surface ?	metal
	304	layer		0.12	laminated gravel surface	pot/bone
	305	fill		0.30	sandy-silt fill of 306	pot/glass
	306	cut	1.20	0.30	possible pit	
	307	layer		0.14	rubble dump/fill of 327	pot/bone/glass/metal
	308	layer		0.16	rubble and clay	
	309	fill	1.50	0.22	secondary fill of 320	pot/bone/glass
	310	ref.			reference no. for finds	pot/bone/metal
·	311	layer		N/A	rubble dump	pot/bone/CBM
	312	fill		0.22	rubble/gravel fill of 326	pottery
	313	layer		0.20	compacted surface	
	314	layer		0.16	levelling for 313	
	315	fill	0.52	0.20	sand and rubble fill of 316	
	316	cut	0.52	0.20	demolition cut?	
	317	layer		0.07	worn grit surface	
	318	cut	N/A	0.32	construction cut	
	319	ឥ៧		0.26	rubble fill of 320	
	320	cut	1.50	0.24	unknown purpose	
	321	layer		N/A	clay-silt alluvium	
	322	layer		N/A	similar to 321	
	323	layer		0.10	calcarious surface ?	
	324	layer		0.20	build-up above tarmac; 300	
	325	layer		0.20	levelling for 300	

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Trench	Ctxt	Туре	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds
	327	cut	N/A	N/A	unknown function	
	328	fill		0.12	upper fill of 318	
	326	cut	1.84	0.32	modern cut	
	329	fill		0.20	fill of 318	
	330	fill		N/A	lower fill of 318	
	331	fill	0.74	0.18	sole fill of 332	
	332	cut	0.74	0.18	pipe trench?	
4	400	layer		0.20	topsoil	pot/CBM
	401	layer		0.10	buried soil (and dump?)	metal/CBM
	402	layer		0.04	alluvial sand and grit	pottery
	403	layer		0.06	dumped building material	pot/CBM
	404	layer		0.35	alluvium -former riverbank?	СВМ
	405	layer		0.15	grey clay	pot/CBM
	406	layer		0.13	red-brown clay	
	407	layer		N/A	clay below water table	CBM

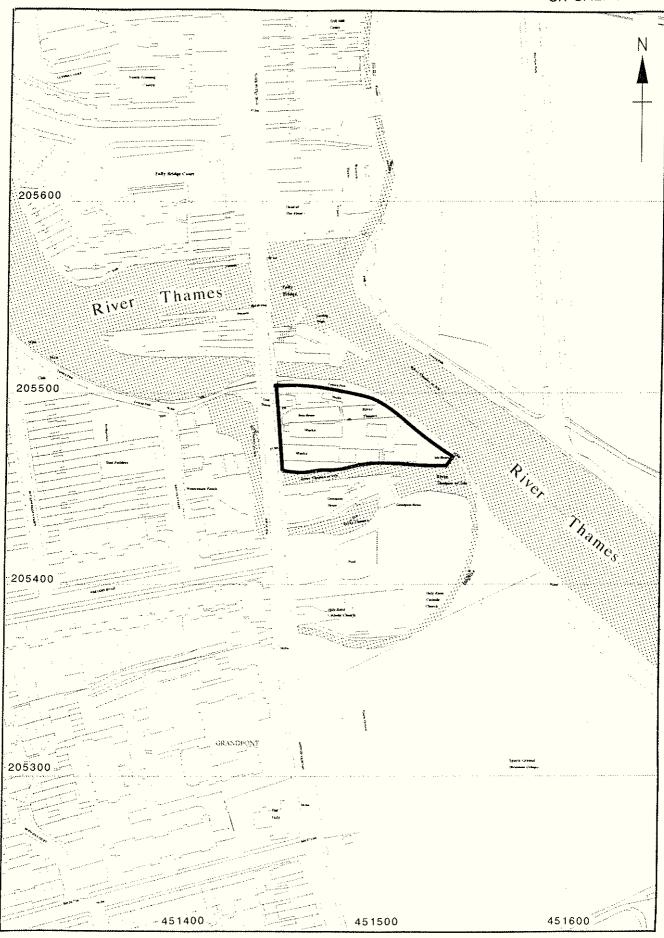
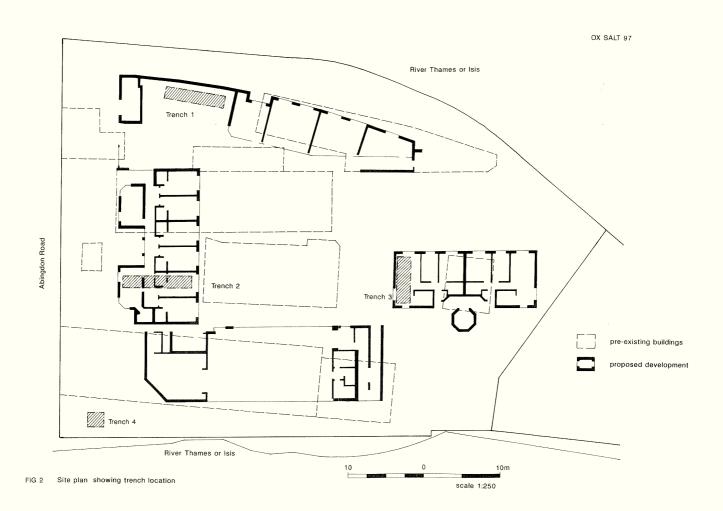
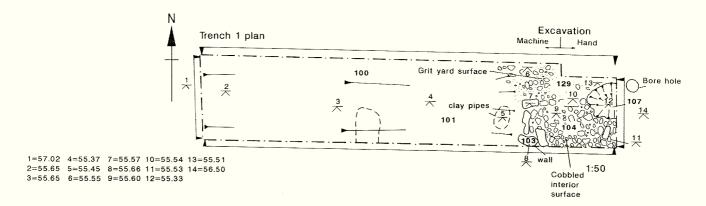


FIG 1 Site location plan scale 1:1250





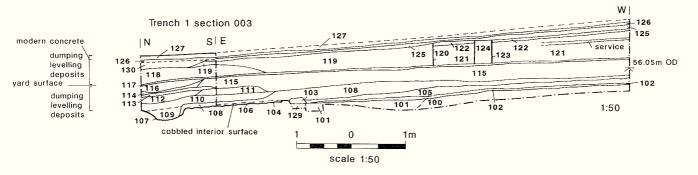
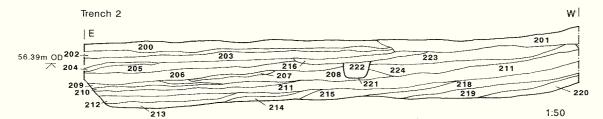


FIG 3 Trench 1 plan and sections

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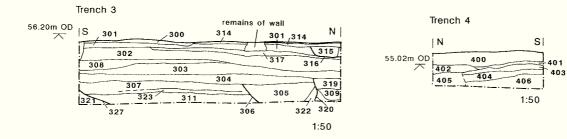




FIG 4



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