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**LAND BETWEEN 13 AND 13a MAGPIE LANE,  
BRACKLEY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**Planning Application No. S940128P**

**NGR SP 584366**

**Oxford Archaeological Unit**

**25 August 1994**

## **SUMMARY**

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a watching brief, following on from an evaluation (Hardy OAU 1994), on terracing for building and carparking at Magpie Lane, Brackley on behalf of P & M Construction Ltd. The evaluation had identified property boundaries which were interpreted as medieval. The watching brief identified four elements to the deposits. A medieval pit, identified in the evaluation, was clarified in plan and section as a shallow scoop filled with medieval material. The scoop was overlain by a post-medieval stone garden path which was seen in two places on the site. A modern garden wall had been pushed over onto this path and garden soil. The site had been prepared for carparking with imported material which had been dumped across the site. A concrete drive ran up the W of the site.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Brackley is mentioned in the Domesday Book. The Old Town is centred around the church of St Peter in the NE of the present town. A Norman Castle was built to dominate the Oxford to Northampton road and now lies in the S of the present town. A settlement associated with the castle and with its own church (St James) was founded. The castle and its suburb had a limited life, probably of only 100 years (information from I Meadows NAU). A new town with a market square was laid out between the castle and St Peters Church before 1173 and by 1202 had its own Assizes. Magpie Lane could lie within either the castle suburb or the New Town, possibly both. Lanes at right-angles to the Northampton to Oxford road (Bridge Street) have been identified in excavations by NAU. An archaeological evaluation of the site by the OAU identified the remains of several stone walls which were interpreted as representing the boundaries of medieval tenements fronting onto Bridge Street. The purpose of the watching brief was to determine the date and orientation of the medieval boundaries in order to understand the planning and evolution of the town in its formative years.

## **STRATEGY**

The levelling and terracing on the site was carried out under archaeological control. The machine used was a small 360° excavator (Kubota KH66) with a toothless bucket. The machinery was halted and the site hand cleaned when archaeological horizons were reached. The site was planned at 1:100 and sections were drawn of archaeological features where these were examined.

## **RESULTS**

### **Archaeology**

The results are described with reference to the earlier evaluation trenches (see Fig. 1 see also Appendix- Table 1 for deposit details)

In the area of Trench 2

A shallow pit (10) contained 12th- to mid 14th-century medieval pottery (in layer 8). This pit was seen in evaluation trench 2 (2/14). The upper fills of the pit were overlain by a path made of large flat pieces of limestone (13) with clay pipe within the matrix of the stones. In addition the matrix held medieval pottery similar to that seen in the fill of the scoop. A similar stone structure (16) was seen at the S limit of the terracing. The gardensoil (7 and 15 containing 19th-century finds) and the path were overlain by a layer of mortar and rubble dump (4 perhaps equivalent to 2/10). This was overlain by an area of rubble (2) for parking which was capped by modern garden soil (1). A fallen wall (12) over gardensoil (15) lay to the E of the site. This fallen wall may be equivalent to demolition layer 4 but this layer was not continuous within the area observed as it had been cut through by Trench 2. Fallen wall 12 was overlain by new gardensoil (3) which was covered by topsoil (1). A modern drive (6) retained by a wall (5) lay on the W of the site.

In the area of Trench 1

To the S of the site a modern (17) topsoil similar to 3 overlaid a layer of stones (18) which were not clearly defined in the watching brief and are still in place. The stones overlaid a dark olive clay (19). These layers may be equivalent to evaluation trench layers 1/2, 1/3 and 1/5 and watching brief layers 3, 12 and 9.

## **Finds**

### Medieval Pottery by Lucy Bown

Thirty five sherds (587gm) were recovered from the area of trench 2 and three sherds (134gm) from the area of trench 1.

The area of Trench 2

The 35 sherds found divide into three mid 12th to 14th century fabric types and two post medieval.

The majority of sherds are products of the Olney Hyde pottery industry and divide into 9 sherds of Olney Hyde Type A of mid 12th to late 13th and 20 sherds of Olney Hyde Type B of early to late 14th or 15th century (Mynard 1984). A small group of undiagnostic cooking pot sherds are present in Fabric Type A whereas the majority of sherds and diagnostic rims are found in the coarser gritted Fabric Type B. These cooking pot rims are of the most common form type 7 (Mynard 1984).

Three undiagnostic sherds of a fabric very similar to Oxford Fabric Type Y are in a fine wheel thrown quartz gritted fabric. Oxford Fabric Type Y is dated late 11th to mid 13th century.

One decorated jug sherd from the Brill/Boarstall industry can be dated as mid 13th to early 14th century by the elaborate application of rouletted alternating strips of red and white clay strips used as decoration.

Two sherds of Creamware are 18th century in date.

## The area of Trench 1

Three sherds ranging in date from mid 12th to 15th century were recovered from this area.

One large thumbled jug handle in Olney Hyde Fabric Type A is a typical example of its type with random stabbing all over the surface. This sherd can be dated as mid 12th to late 13th century and is found in the same context as a sherd of Potterspury-type Ware dating from the 14th to 15th century.

The third sherd is a crudely thrown sherd from a jug decorated all over with large applied scales and a copper green glaze. The coarse fabric and quality of this sherd indicate that it is a later product of the Brill/Boarstall industry dating from the 14th to 15th century.

## **Environmental**

Soil samples were not taken. There were no features which appeared to be suitable for environmental examination.

## **COMMENTS ON THE RESULTS**

### **Overall Interpretation**

The medieval scoop was the only feature not to contain post-medieval artefacts. The other deposits on the site are probably from 19th-century gardens. The medieval scoop was shallow and given the amount of residual medieval pottery in the later deposits this feature could also be post-medieval. The garden path overlay the pit/scoop and was covered in turn by demolition debris. The carparking material lay over the demolition debris.

The identification of layers seen in the evaluation is problematic, but it can be said with some certainty that the wall (2/7) seen in Trench 2 was cut into a layer of demolition debris (2/10), which equates with the material (4 and possibly 12) overlying the garden path. Layer 2/10 contained 9 sherds of pottery, 6 of which were post-medieval and were felt to be intrusive at the time of the evaluation. As the garden soils to either side of the path, which were overlain by the demolition debris, also contained modern material this recent date for the sequence of deposits is confirmed.

If all the deposits are post-medieval then the E-W wall (2/7) seen in the evaluation may not relate to medieval boundaries. However, the large amount of unabraded residual medieval pottery suggests medieval activity in the immediate vicinity.

The N-S alignment of the fallen wall and path does not suggest that the property on which they are aligned runs E-W. Wall 2/7 may be aligned E-W from an 18th-century shed still present to the E of the site (seen on the 1830 Enclosure Draft evaluation Fig. 4).

## **Conclusions**

Neither the alignment, date or development of medieval boundaries could be determined from the deposits on the site. The (post-medieval) linear features on

the site are aligned N-S off Magpie Lane. Wall 2/7 may relate to a property fronting onto Bridge Street or may be an internal division within the plot fronting onto Magpie Lane. The only medieval presence is signified by pottery dating from the 12th- to 15th-century which might indicate the chronology of this part of Brackley.

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16 September 1994

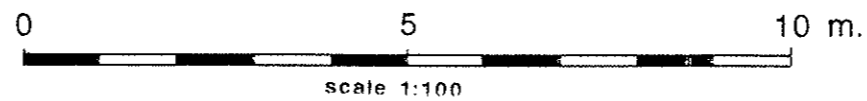
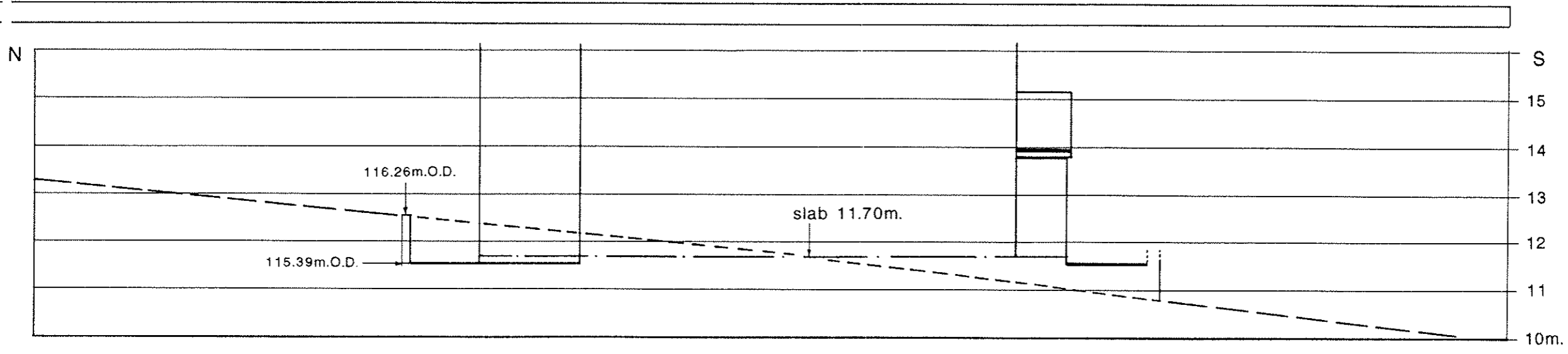
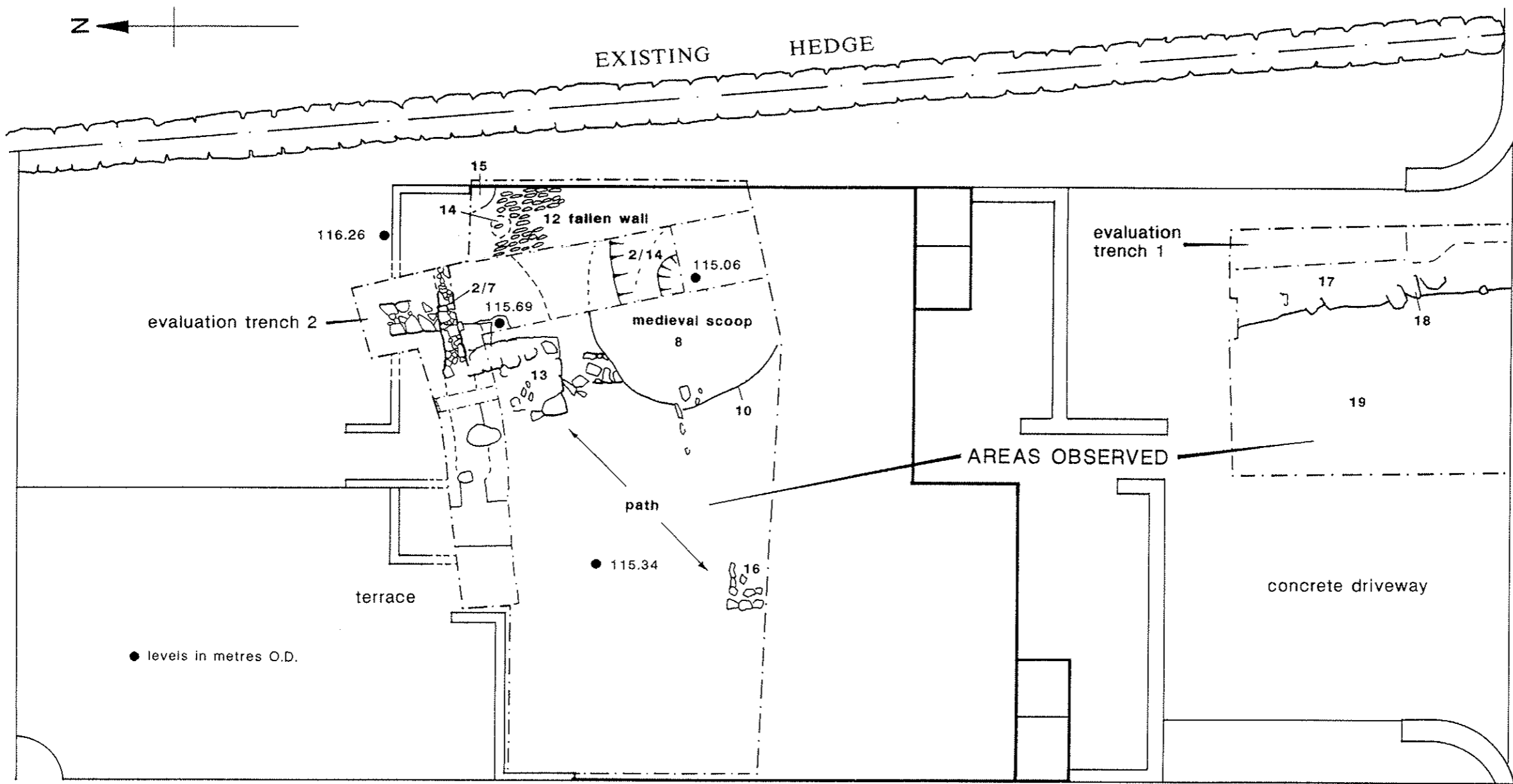
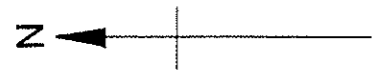
#### Bibliography

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Hardy A, 1994 Land between 13 and 13a Magpie Lane, Brackley, An archaeological Evaluation.

**APPENDIX  
TABLE 1  
CONTEXTS AND FINDS**

Trench 2 CTX	Description	width	depth	Finds (number and date)
1	modern topsoil			
2	car parking			Modern (1)
3	new gardensoil			
4	mortar/dump	3.5+	0.5 av.	
5	modern wall	0.3	0.5	
6	concrete drive	2		
7	old gardensoil (=15)	2.5	0.5 av.	medieval ? (1)
8	fill of 10			late 12th to mid 14th (17)
9	natural subsoil			
10	cut for pit (filled by 8 and 11)	2.6	0.24	
11	fill of 10			
12	fallen wall (coursed)	1.75+	0.2	
13	garden path	1.25	0.06	medieval (see 8) (13) clay pipe (1)
14	part of 15			
15	old gardensoil (=7)			18th-19th (2) rouletted Brill (1)
16	limestone path (part of 13?)	0.9		
Trench 1				
17	topsoil (=1)		-	Olney and Potterspury (2)
18	limestone blocks (=12?)		-	Medieval (1)
19	natural subsoil		-	



Proposed Dwellings at Magpie Lane, Brackley, Northants