

Air Balloon Public House Abingdon Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

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Prepared by: James Mumford

Position: Supervisor

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Checked by: Jon Hiller

Position: Senior Project manager

Date: 8th December 2003

Approved by: Nick Shepherd

Position: Head of Fieldwork

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Signed.....



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Oxford Archaeology

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Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

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Cover Plate: General view of the pub after site clearance from the southeast.

SUMMARY

From October to November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Air Balloon Public House, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 4896 9698). The work was commissioned by Thomas & Co in advance of the redevelopment of the site. The watching briefs revealed a number of undated and post medieval pits, soakaways and two wells were also uncovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 As a result of prior evaluation of the site, from October to November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Air Balloon Public House, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Thomas & Co in respect of a planning application for the redevelopment of the site (Planning Application No. ABG/4771/6).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Hugh Coddington the Deputy County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on First Terrace Gravel at 52 m above OD. The site is situated on the north side of Ock Street in Abingdon and on the west side of the junction with Victoria Road and is 0.12 hectares in area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2003) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 East of the proposed development site, archaeological excavations on the north side of Ock Street have established the presence of medieval buildings of timber-frame construction, with evidence for light industrial and domestic activities to the rear. Ock Street appears to have been an important thoroughfare in the medieval period but it remains unclear how far west along the street the medieval town extended.
- 1.3.3 Southwest of the development site is Ock Bridge that dates to the 15th century; a bridge is documented here from the 11th century and it was also the site of the medieval hospital of St Mary Magdalen.
- 1.3.4 To the north and the north-west there is evidence for extensive prehistoric and Romano-British settlement, and recent excavations at Spring Road, just north of Ock Street, suggest a small Saxon site with sunken featured buildings lies within the site of the municipal cemetery (OA, forthcoming).

- 1.3.5 An evaluation here by OA (2003) revealed a concentration of medieval pits, possible post holes and linear ditch feature dating to the early medieval period. Evidence of 19th century pottery in some pits is likely to have come from the Victorian garden soil overlying and sealing these features.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 After the outbuildings of the public house were demolished, the site was cleared and levelled and the foundations marked out (Fig. 2). These were then excavated with a 360° machine using a 0.7 m and 0.9 m toothed bucket. This was carried out in a number of phases under archaeological supervision. After the foundations had set and the first courses of brickwork were laid, the service trenches were excavated, also under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Foundations

- 3.1.1 The natural of the site was a compact yellowish brown sandy gravel (21). This had been cut by a number of features. These consisted of a number of post-medieval pits. The first pit (6) measured 2.2 m x 1.3 m x 0.6 m with very steep sloping sides and flat base. It was filled with mid brown silty sand (7) with bone and CBM fragments (Figs 3 and 4, Section 1). A sub circular pit (10) with steep sloping sides was also observed but not excavated as its base was below impact level. It measured 1.5 m x 1 m x 0.6m and was filled with a dark brown silty sand loam with a few sherds of pottery. A couple of inter cutting pits (12) were seen only in section with steep sloping sides and concave base. These measured 1.4 m wide and 0.4 m in depth and were both filled with dark brown silty sand loam (13) (Figs 3 and 4, Section 2).
- 3.1.2 A large cesspit (14) with a sharp concave profile was observed in section. It measured 2.8 m wide and 0.55 m in depth and was filled with a series of tips of dark brown, reddish brown and dark yellowish brown silty sand (15), from which fragments of a glass bottle were recovered (Figs 3 and 4, Section 2). A sub-circular

pit (16) was also identified with vertical sides and flat base, and which measured 1.4 m x 1.1 m x 0.6 m. It was filled with two fills the lower fill (17) was a very dark grey brown silty clay silting up in the base of the pit. The upper fill (18) was grey brown silty sand with patches of sand dumped in to fill the pit (Figs 3 and 4, section 3). Also seen was a shallow pit (19) was seen only in section. It had very steep sloping sides and a flat base measuring 1.75 m wide and 0.34 m in depth. Filling this was dark brown silty clay loam (20) with a few pottery sherds (Figs 3 and 4, Section 4).

- 3.1.3 These features were all sealed below a 0.2 - 0.4 m thick layer of cultivated ground make up of very dark grey brown silty clay loam (2). This had been cut by a number of features consisting of a large rubbish pit (31), which measured 3.5 m x 1.9 m x 0.7 m. It was filled by a mid brown silty sand loam (32) (Fig. 3). Also set into this layer was a large sub rectangular late 19th century soakaway (8) with near vertical sides and flat base. It measured 2.8 m x 1.6 m x 0.7 m and was filled by a loose dark grey brown silty sand (9) with a lot of brick and tile fragments (Figs 3 and 4, Section 2). Also two wells were uncovered cutting through this layer (2) (Fig. 3).
- 3.1.4 One of these was a dry constructed brick lined structure (23) measuring 1 m in diameter and tapering to 0.6 m in diameter and standing to 1.8 m in height. It was constructed in a large circular cut (22) with vertical sides; its base was not exposed. It measured 1.5 m in diameter and was 1.8 m in depth and had a fill of dark grey brown silty clay loam (24) between the sides of the cut (22) and the brick structure (23). The second was a robbed out limestone well (25). It measured 2 m in diameter and 2 m in depth with vertical sides and concave base and contained a fill (26) of loose limestone fragments in the base, with a series of dark brown and reddish brown silty sand layers filling in the well. Sealing all these features and deposits was a 0.2 - 0.3 m thick layer of dark grey silty clay loam (1) with building debris and hardcore from the demolition and clearance of the site. A sub rectangular soakaway for the earlier outbuildings on the site was also uncovered on the east side of the foundation.

Soakaways

- 3.1.5 A number of new soakaways were excavated at the rear of the new properties and consisted of drains from the storm drains to a stone filled soakaway. The soakaway cut into the natural (21). In the second soakaway, a pit (27) was partly exposed with steep sloping sides rounding to a concave base. It measured 2.3 m x 0.8 m x 1.2 m and was filled by a dark gray brown silty clay (28), which was sealed by make up layer (2). In the third soakaway a late 19th century soakaway (29) was partly exposed with a steep sloping side rounding to a flat base. It measured 1.7 m x 1.3 m x 1.4 m and was filled by a friable dark gray silty clay loam (30) with a lot of brick and stone rubble. These were all sealed below the demolition and construction layer (1) (Fig. 3).

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 A number of finds were recovered during the watching brief from a number of pit fills. These consisted of the following:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Context 7 | 2 fragments of animal bone (1 x cattle right manable, 1 x pig right scaphla). 1 sherd of 19th century Redware. |
| Context 11 | 1 x sherd of late 18th to 19th century blue glaze pattern ware. |
| Context 15 | 1 x the upper part of a cylindrical wine bottle with neatly formed single string-rim, the vessel dates to the late 18th/early 19th century. |
| Context 20 | 2 x sherd of late 19th century white glaze stone ware |

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The watching brief revealed a number of archaeological features during the ground works. These consisted of a number of rubbish and cess pits some of which were undated or from the post-medieval period. These were all sealed below a layer of cultivated soil. A stone lined well was exposed. This had been robbed of its stone lining and filled in. A number of late 19th century features were also uncovered and consisted of soakaways to the outbuildings on the site prior to the development and a bricklined well. No evidence of features or deposits from the medieval period was found during the watching brief. This confirms the interpretation in the evaluation report that the area was open with quarry work along the north side of Ock Street, until the area was developed in the 18th and 19th century during the expansion of Abingdon.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Depth</i> | <i>Width</i> | <i>Height</i> | <i>Comments</i> | <i>Finds</i> |
|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Layer | 0.2-0.3 m | | | Modern Demolition Layer | |
| 2 | Layer | 0.2-0.5 m | | | Ground make up Layer | |
| 3 | Cut | | | | Foundation trench | |
| 4 | Fill | | | | Backfill of trench | |
| 5 | Structure | | | | Wall | |
| 6 | Cut | 0.6 m | 1.3 m | 2.2 m | Pit | |
| 7 | Fill | | | | Fill of pit | 2 x Bone, 1 x Pottery |
| 8 | Cut | 0.7 m | 1.6 m | 2.8 m | Soakaway | |
| 9 | Fill | | | | Fill of Soakaway | |
| 10 | Cut | 0.6 m | 1 m | 1.5 m | Pit | |
| 11 | Fill | | | | Fill of pit | 1 x Pottery |
| 12 | Cut | 0.4 m | 1.4 m | | Pit or Pits | |
| 13 | Fill | | | | Fill of pit or Pits | |
| 14 | Cut | 0.55 m | 2.8 m | | Pit | |
| 15 | Fill | | | | Fill of pit | 4 x glass bottle fragments |
| 16 | Cut | 0.6 m | 1 m | 1.4 m | Pit | |
| 17 | Fill | | | | Fill of pit | |
| 18 | Fill | | | | Fill of pit | |
| 19 | Cut | 0.34 m | 1.75 m | | Pit | |
| 20 | Fill | | | | Fill of pit | 2 x pottery sherds |
| 21 | Natural | | | | Gravel | |
| 22 | Cut | 1.8 m | 1.5 m Ø | | Cut for well | |
| 23 | Structure | | | | Brick lining of well | |
| 24 | Fill | | | | Fill of well | |
| 25 | Cut | 2 m | 2 m Ø | | Cut for well | |
| 26 | Fill | | | | Fill of well | |
| 27 | Cut | 1.2 m | 0.8 m | 2.3 m | Pit | |
| 28 | Fill | | | | Fill of pit | |
| 29 | Cut | 1.4 m | 1.3 m | 1.7 m | Soakaway | |

| | | | | | | |
|----|------|--|--|--|------------------|--|
| 30 | Fill | | | | Fill of Soakaway | |
| 31 | Cut | | | | Pit | |
| 32 | Fill | | | | Fill of pit | |

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2003 *Air Balloon Public House, Abingdon, Oxon* Written Scheme of Investigation

OA 2003 *Former Air Balloon Public House, Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire*
Archaeological Evaluation Report

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Air Balloon Public House, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Site code: ABABPH 03

Grid reference: NGR SU 4896 9698

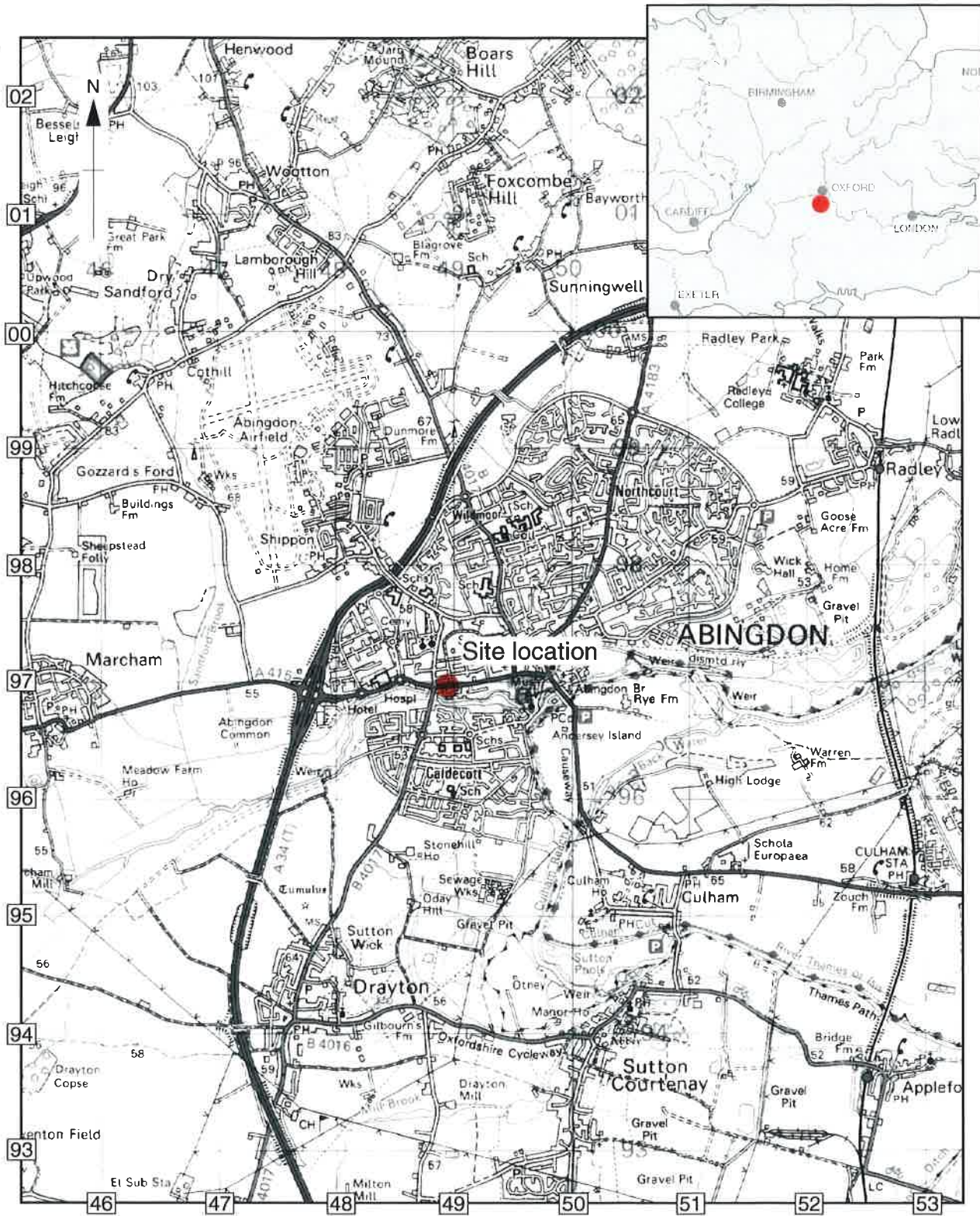
Type of watching brief: Excavation of foundations and services for new development.

Date and duration of project: A total of seven visits from the 8/10/2003 to 17/11/2003.

Area of site: 32 m x 32 m

Summary of results: A number of undated and post medieval pits, soakaways and two wells were uncovered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2003.67



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Area of development

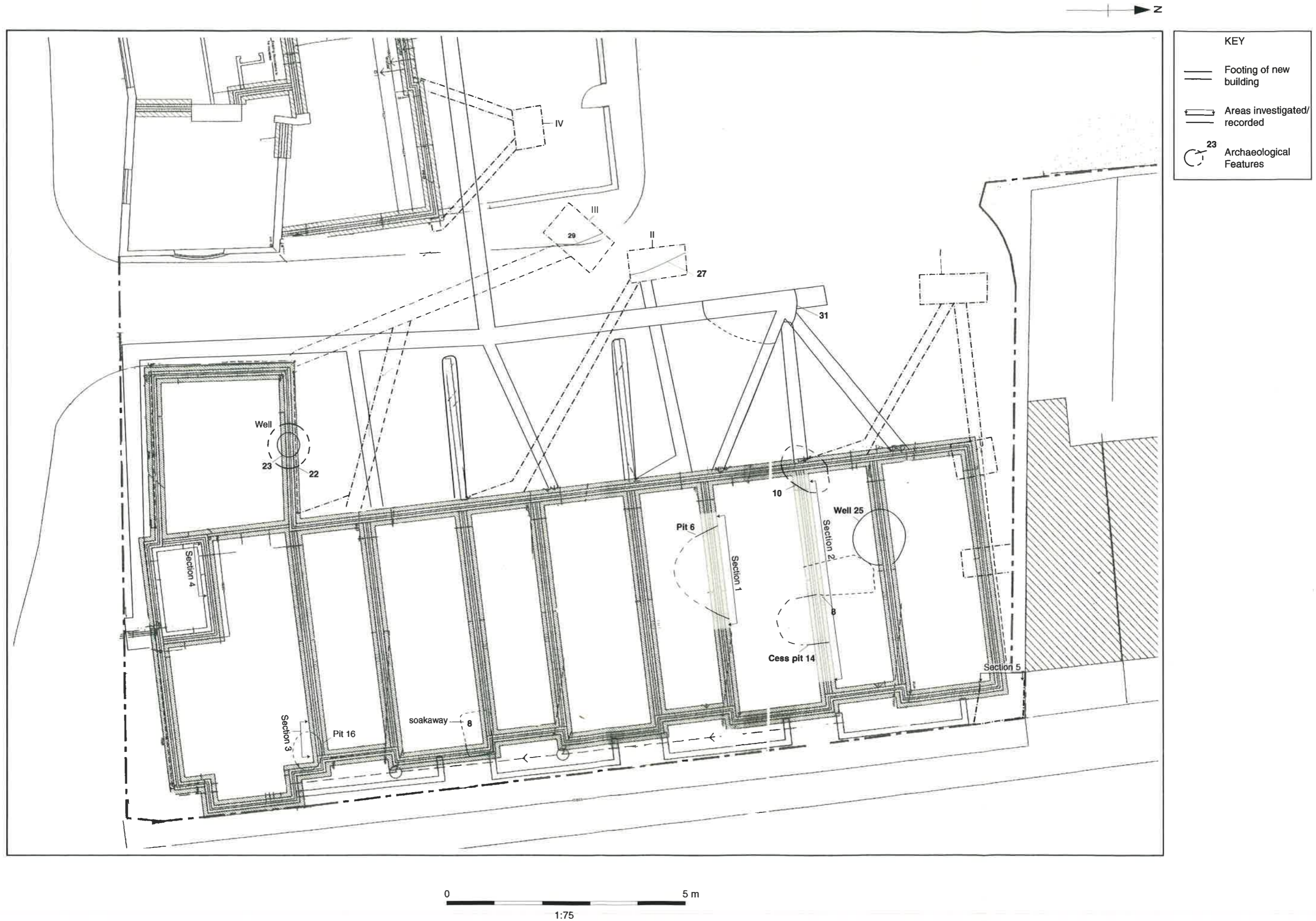


Figure 3: Site plan, showing new structure and archaeological investigation

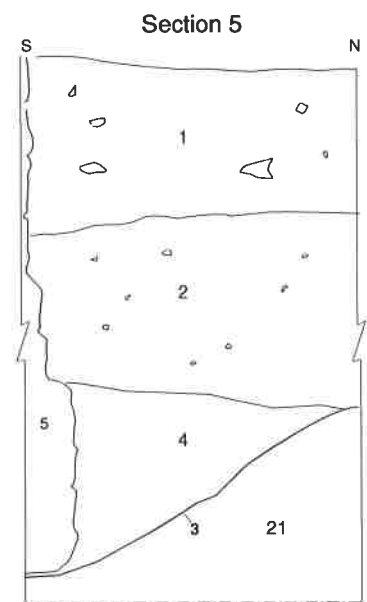
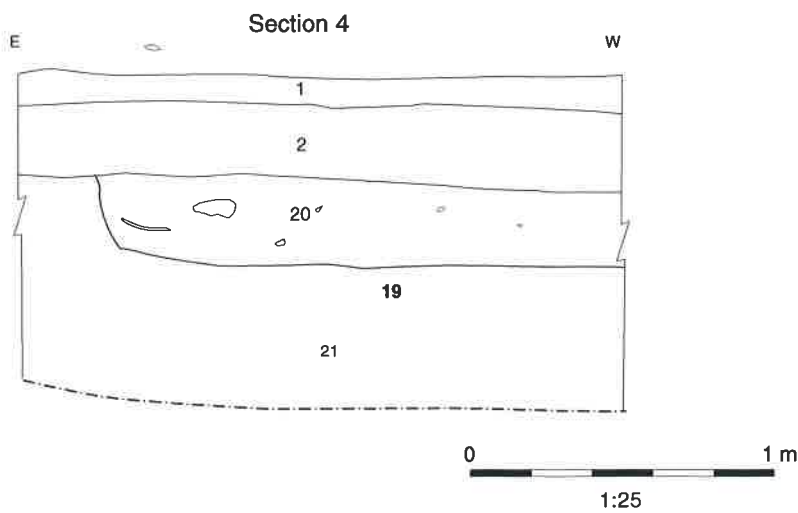
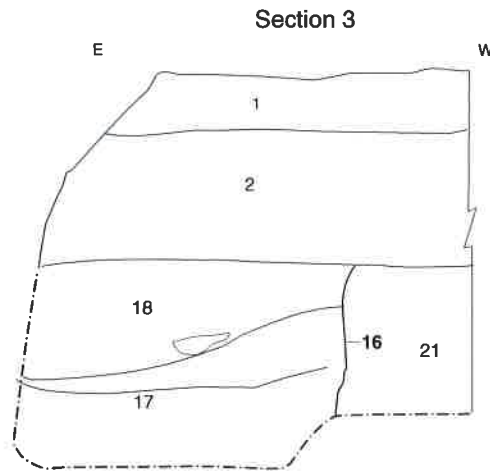
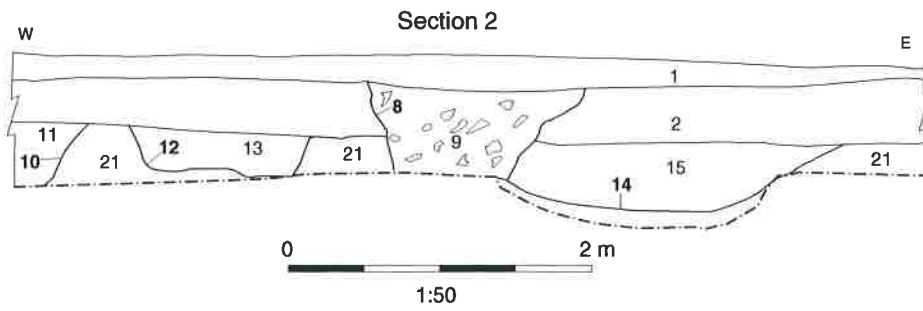
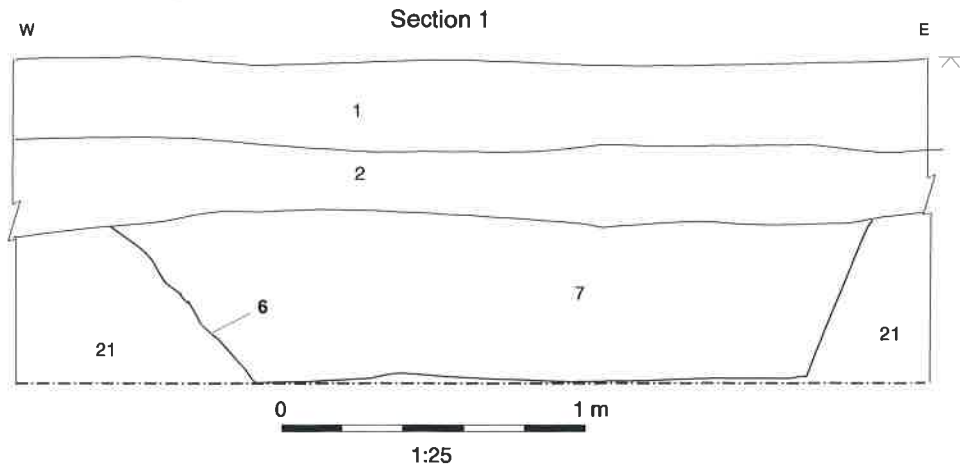


Figure 4: Sections 1-5



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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