

PLAYING FIELDS SITE, SINGLETON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, Lancashire

Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology North was commissioned by Lancashire County Property Group to undertake an archaeological watching brief on a proposed tarmacadam multi-use games area (Planning Application No. 05/03/0753), on land to the south of Singleton CE Primary School, Singleton, Lancashire (NGR SD 3830 3828). The watching brief was carried out to fulfil a planning condition on advice from the Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS). The work was undertaken during August and September 2004.

LCAS identified a building on the Ordnance Survey first edition map of 1847 within the area of the proposed development. However, no details are known regarding the origin or function of the building, only that by the second edition map of 1893 the building was no longer in existence. The site lies in an area of potential archaeological interest, with two Neolithic flint scatter sites located within 2km of the site, and a large number of Neolithic and Bronze Age sites located throughout the surrounding area.

A watching brief was maintained during the topsoil stripping of the development site and an access road, and also during the excavation of a field drains across the site. No evidence pertaining to the existence of the building was recovered. However, the groundworks were undertaken immediately behind the original location of the building from the 1847 Ordnance Survey map. Furthermore, observations suggest that the entire area has been cleared of the upper deposits and regraded since the demolition of the building, consequently removing any associated features.

The watching brief did not reveal any features of archaeological significance. However, the actual position of the known building appears to underlie an area of soft landscaping to the north of the multi-use games area. It is recommended, therefore, that any further intrusive work over the site of the building should also be carried out under archaeological supervision.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North would like to express its thanks to Jeff Culshaw of Lancashire County Property Group for commissioning the work, and to Tony Bradford of G Thornton Contracts Ltd for his assistance during the groundworks.

The watching brief was undertaken by Jason Clarke, Dave McNicol and Hannah Gajos. The report was written by Dave McNicol and Hannah Gajos, and the finds were examined by Jo Dawson. Drawings were produced by Emma Carter. The report was edited by Alan Lupton and Emily Mercer, who also managed the project.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Lancashire County Property Group submitted a planning application (ref 05/03/0753), to Lancashire County Council for a tarmacadam multi-use games area, with surrounding 6m high-welded mesh fence, on land at Singleton CE Primary School (NGR SD 3830 3828), Singleton, Lancashire.
- 1.1.2 The site was known to have been occupied by a building, as seen on the Ordnance Survey first edition map of 1847 (Fig 3). Due to the archaeological potential of the site Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS) recommended, as a verbal brief, that a watching brief should be undertaken during groundworks on the site. In response to this, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was requested to submit proposals for the required work (*Appendix 1*), which was undertaken during August and September 2004.
- 1.1.3 This report sets out the results of the watching brief in the form of a short document. This outlines the archaeological and historical background for the site and the findings.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design (*Appendix 1*) was submitted by OA North, in response to a request by the client, for an archaeological watching brief. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.2.1 A programme of field observation was undertaken during the ground works to record the location, extent and character of any surviving archaeological features and deposits that may be revealed during the ground disturbance.
- 2.2.2 The topsoil from the access road and development site was removed using a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket down to the level of the subsoil, under constant archaeological supervision. Further excavations included trenches for the land drains across the site (Plate 3). A monochrome and colour slide photographic record was maintained throughout.

2.3 ARCHIVE

2.3.1 A full archive has been produced to a professional standard in accordance with current United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC 1990) and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive will be deposited with the Lancashire County Record Office (Preston) on completion of the project. Copies of the report will be deposited with the Lancashire County SMR in Preston.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1.1 *Location:* the proposed development area lies to the south of Singleton CE Primary School, to the south-east of Singleton, which itself lies within the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain (Fig 1). The area was previously used as a grass playing field by Singleton CE Primary School. The village of Singleton lies approximately 2km to the south-east of Poulton-le-Fylde, and to the east of Blackpool and the coast, at around a height of 10m above mean sea level (Countryside Commission 1998, 86).
- 3.1.2 The underlying solid geology of the area consists of Permo-Triassic red mudstones, siltstones and sandstones, overlain by thick glacial and post-glacial deposits. The geological resource created a predominantly marshy landscape, giving rise to mosses and meres which dominated the landscape until relatively recently. The area is mainly laid to arable and pasture, with ditches keeping the land well drained (Countryside Commission 1998).

3.2 HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* the historical and archaeological background is principally compiled through secondary sources and is intended provide a context for the site.
- 3.2.2 *Palaeolithic to Mesolithic Periods:* the earliest evidence for human occupation in the area dates from the Palaeolithic period. This evidence comes from the discovery of an elk skeleton containing barbed points near Poulton-le-Fylde (Hallam *et al* 1973), 5km south-west of Singleton. Evidence of occupation in the Mesolithic period is less substantial with only a handful of sites being dated to this period, and the dating of these sites being based solely on their distinctive late Mesolithic/early Neolithic features of the lithic scatters (Middleton *et al* 1995).
- 3.2.3 *Neolithic to Bronze Age Periods:* the area directly to the south-west of Singleton "represents one of the most dense areas of Neolithic and Bronze Age activity within the North West" (*op cit*, 96). The majority of these sites are flint scatters of varying size, comprising mostly waste products; two of these flint scatter sites are located within 2km of the development site. The distinct lack of implements would seem to suggest that these sites were mainly used for the production of tools. The main evidence of Bronze Age activity comes from the excavation of a human skull, and the recovery of a mid Bronze Age palstave at Briarfield Nurseries, Poulton-le-Fylde, 5km south-west of Singleton (Middleton *et al* 1995).
- 3.2.4 *Romano-British Period:* there is little archaeological evidence of activity in North Lancashire during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. Artefactual evidence suggests that the earliest Roman activity in the area was at Kirkham, and was Agricolan in date (*c* AD78). The Roman fort at Kirkham,

to the south of the development site, appears to have been used only as a staging post, and was abandoned by the mid second century AD (Howard-Davis and Buxton, 2000). Environmental research and sea level studies suggest that the Fylde was largely inhospitable during the Roman period, much of it probably covered in raised bogs, with the Fylde coastline lying much closer to Kirkham than it does today; the area outside of Kirkham, would probably have been sparsely populated during the Romano-British period (*ibid*; Middleton *et al*, 1995).

- 3.2.5 *Medieval Period:* there is little evidence of the early medieval period in the archaeological record for the majority of the North West. Place-name evidence suggests that the villages within the surrounding areas were probably established by the eighth century, as names that bear the suffix '-ton' suggest a mixture of native British, and the newly arrived English speakers (Kenyon 1991). As well as Singleton there is Weeton, Plumpton, Eccleston, and Carleton nearby.
- 3.2.6 A burial dating to the Anglian period was excavated at Crossmoor, to the north of Singleton, in 1889. It consisted of an urn, in association with a sword and large dagger (Fishwick 1891). This burial is the "only archaeological evidence for pre-Conquest settlement" in the immediate area (Middleton 1993, 14).
- 3.2.7 The medieval use of the landscape is still visible within the area, in the form of ridge and furrow. Altogether there are seven fields of ridge and furrow within 2km of the development site. The furrows, mostly orientated north-south, range from 3m to 7m apart, and their boundaries respect the modern field boundaries, unless the boundary has been removed due to recent improvements (*ibid*).
- 3.2.8 The township of Singleton was originally formed as a farming community with "almost all the land ... under plough" (Farrer and Brownbill 1912, 184), and is said to have been home to the famous witch, Mag Shelton. The township was created mostly from Great Singleton (today known as Singleton), with Little Singleton and Singleton Grange forming the rest (*ibid*).
- 3.2.9 **Post-Medieval Period:** during the early twentieth century the land around Singleton changed from being arable land to pasture land, as the local farms changed into dairy farms (*op cit*). The whole of the area known as the Amounderness Plain has remained, "rural in character with isolated brick farmsteads, small villages and numerous manor houses located along the network of country lanes" (Countryside Commission 1998, 89), up until the present day.
- 3.2.10 The proposed development site is known to have been previously occupied by a structure. A building of unknown function or construction date was plotted on the Ordnance Survey first edition map of 1874 (Fig 3). However, the second edition map of 1893 shows the building was no longer in existence. The exact position of this building lies to the north of the multi-use games area, and according to the client's plan, under an area of soft landscaping.

Nevertheless, features associated with the building or its demolition would be expected during ground disturbance.

4. WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 RESULTS

- 4.1.1 The access road and development site were stripped of topsoil (Plate 1), which varied in depth across the site, to a maximum of 0.5m. Six land drains (Plate 3) were then excavated to a further depth of 0.5m and aligned northwest/south-east across the site.
- 4.1.2 The topsoil over the majority of the development area consisted of a mid greyish-brown silty-clay, with minimal sub-rounded pebble inclusions. The subsoil beneath this consisted of a mid orangey-brown clay, with patches of grey, and dark brown clay near the bottom of the land drains. However, there was a layer of mid orangey-brown clay overlying an apparent buried topsoil horizon on the eastern side of the development area. This suggests that the development area has been cleared and levelled in the past, truncating the original topsoil horizon down to natural subsoils. The area has subsequently been resurfaced with additional imported topsoil.
- 4.1.3 No archaeological features were uncovered during the watching brief, although several finds were retrieved from the imported topsoil layer (see *Section 4.2*). A small amount of brick fragments were also recovered from the topsoil, but these were not in any sufficient quantity to relate it to the building on the 1847 Ordnance Survey map.
- 4.1.4 Observations during the watching brief suggests that the area may have had the upper deposits removed at some time after the demolition of the building, and, consequently, regraded with imported topsoil to create the current playing fields under development. This would account for the lack of building debris found during the watching brief.

4.2 FINDS

- 4.2.1 In total, 39 artefacts were recovered during the watching brief, the majority of which was fragments of pottery, with small quantities of glass and clay tobacco pipe also present. All of the finds were retrieved from the topsoil, details of which are provided in *Appendix* 2. The artefacts appeared to date to the post-medieval period, with the exception of a single fragment of pottery which was tentatively dated to the fifteenth century. Details of the pottery are set out below, followed by a brief record of the other categories of finds.
- 4.2.2 **Pottery:** a single piece of green-glazed reduced ware was the earliest, and may date to the fifteenth century. The pottery fragments represent a small domestic assemblage, of which over half was from tableware vessels, with a date range that spanned the period from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. The oldest of these, dated to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a slip-coated buff earthenware cup or similar vessel, and a tin-glazed earthenware plate with a painted blue flower motif. Slightly later in date were two fragments of white salt-glazed earthenware, from a plate and a very finely

potted hollow-ware vessel. The most recent vessels, and also the most numerous, were the white-glazed white earthenwares, dated to the late eighteenth to twentieth century. They were mainly plates, with a small number of hollow-wares also present. Most were undecorated, but three were transfer-printed, and of these two patterns were identified: Broseley, which was used to decorate breakfast or tea services, and Willow, which was used to decorate dinner services. A rim from a blue-glazed blue earthenware saucer was also present, dated to the late eighteenth to twentieth century, and the base of a red-glazed red earthenware plate was similar in date.

- 4.2.3 In addition to the tableware vessels, coarsewares were also represented. Whereas tableware was subject to relatively rapidly changing fashions, coarsewares were more utilitarian, changed little, and are less useful for dating than tablewares in use during similar periods. Of the post-medieval coarsewares, three fragments two from a single wide, shallow bowl were dated to the late seventeenth to eighteenth century. They had fairly low-fired, light coloured fabric. The remainder of the coarsewares could not be dated more accurately than between the late seventeenth and early twentieth century. Joins were noted between some of them, and the vessels present included jars or crocks and also possible platters.
- 4.2.4 *Glass and clay tobacco pipe:* four glass bottle fragments were recovered, all of which were dated to the post-medieval period. They did not display any diagnostic features, such as mould seams, bases, or mouths, and so could not be dated more precisely. A single clay tobacco pipe stem was recovered, which was thick with a wide bore, and was dated to the eighteenth to nineteenth century.
- 4.2.5 *Conclusion:* the recovery of a range of domestic debris from the topsoil of a single field in Singleton indicates habitation in the area from the eighteenth century, or possibly the late seventeenth century onwards. In addition, the single pottery fragment dated tentatively to the fifteenth century indicates the potential for the discovery of medieval remains in the area.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 In addition to the known structure occupying the site at around and before 1874, there is also potential for archaeological remains relating to the prehistoric and medieval periods. The watching brief did not reveal any features relating to the known structure or its demolition. However, a number of finds were recovered from the topsoil associated with habitation from possibly the seventeenth century onwards.
- 5.1.2 There are two possible reasons for the lack of evidence relating to the previous building. The first is that the ground works carried out under an archaeological watching brief were positioned immediately to the south of the site of the building. Therefore, buried remains may still exist under the area outlined for soft landscaping fronting the road. The second possible explanation is that the area appears to have been regraded truncating earlier features. The finds identified may have been imported with the topsoil used for levelling, possibly for the playing fields.

5.2 IMPACT

5.2.1 The watching brief observed the groundworks through to the natural subsoils. Therefore, there will be no impact on below ground archaeological remains by the development. Should there be surviving remains associated with the building, as suspected, to the north of the multi-use games area and beneath the landscaping, these may be impacted upon by any further development in this area in the future.

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Plate 2: View of complete site topsoil stripped

Plate 3: Excavation of field drain



Figure 1: Location map

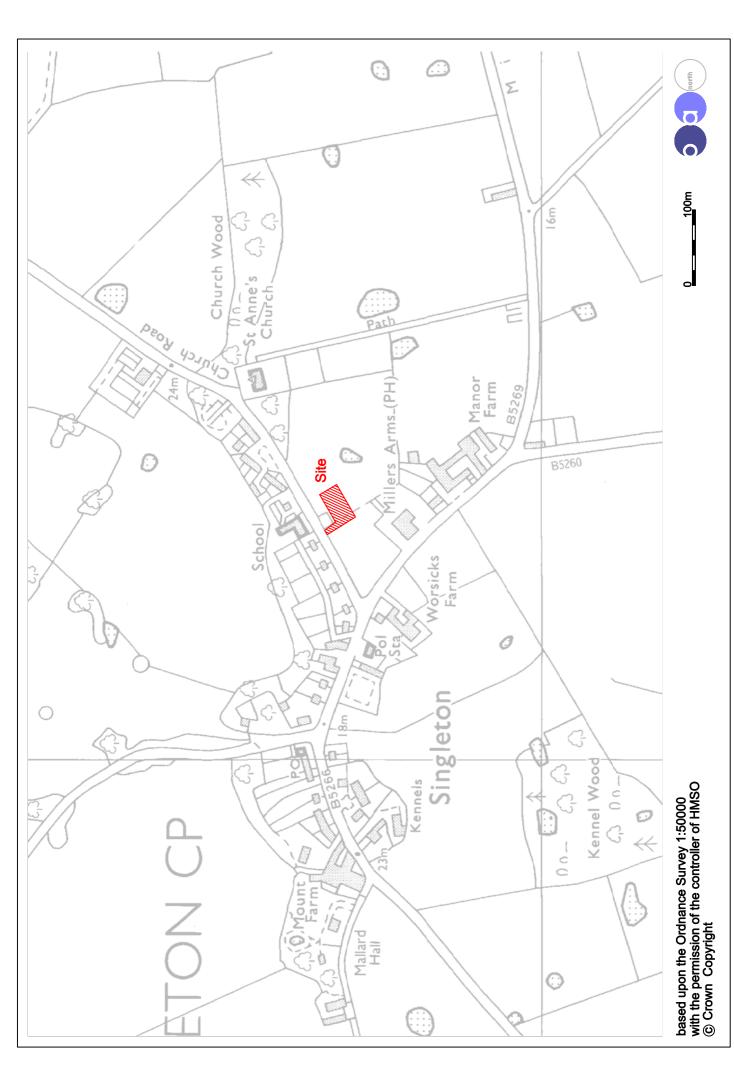


Figure 2: Site location plan

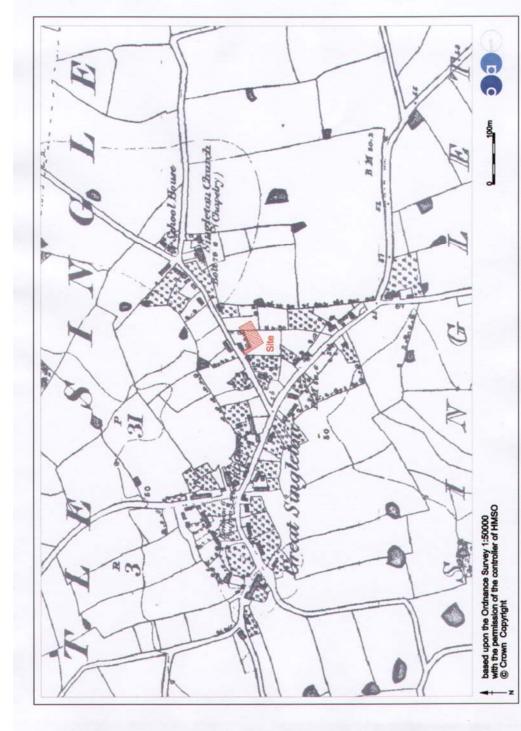


Figure 3: Extract from Ordnance Survey first edition map of 1847 showing the development site



Plate 1: Topsoil stripping of site



Plate 2: View of complete site topsoil stripped



Plate 3: Excavation of field drain

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

Oxford Archaeology North

June 2004

PLAYING FIELDS SITE, SINGLETON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, LANCASHIRE

WATCHING BRIEF PROJECT DESIGN

Proposals

The following project design is offered in response to a request by Lancashire County Property Group for an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a multi-use games area on Singleton CE Primary School detached playing field, Singleton, Lancashire.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Lancashire County Property Group (hereafter the Client) has requested Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals to undertake an archaeological watching brief of the groundworks for a multi-use games area on Singleton CE Primary School detached playing field site (NGR SD 383 383). This is in response to a planning condition imposed by Lancashire County Council (Planning Application Number 5/03/0753) for an archaeological investigation during groundworks due to the site having once been occupied by a structure in 1847. As a result Lancashire County Archaeology Service have advised that a watching brief is the most appropriate course of action.

1.2 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

1.2.1 Oxford Archaeology North has considerable experience of excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large scale projects throughout Northern England during the past 23 years. Evaluations, assessments, watching briefs and excavations have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables. OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an Institute of Field Archaeologists (**IFA**) registered organisation, registration number 17, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The following programme has been designed to provide for accurate recording of any archaeological deposits that are disturbed by ground works for the proposed development.
- 2.2 **Watching brief:** a watching brief, during associated ground disturbance, will determine the quality, extent and importance of any archaeological remains on the site across the whole of the proposed development area.
- 2.2 **Report and Archive:** a report will be produced for the client within eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork. A site archive will be produced to English Heritage guidelines (MAP 2) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990).

3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1.1 **Methodology:** a programme of field observation will accurately record the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits within the proposed ground disturbance. This work will comprise observation during the excavation for these works, including building foundations and service trenches and any other earth moving activities, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation.
- 3.1.2 Putative archaeological features and/or deposits identified by the machining process, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, will be cleaned by hand, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels depending on the subsoil conditions, and where appropriate sections will be studied and drawn. Any such features will be sample excavated (ie selected pits and postholes will normally only be half-sectioned, linear features will be subject to no more than a 10% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal).
- 3.1.3 During this phase of work, recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section, and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate). Features will be planned

- accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to a large-scale plan provided by the Client. A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously.
- 3.1.4 A plan will be produced of the areas of groundworks showing the location and extent of the ground disturbance and one or more dimensioned sections will be produced.

3.2 CONTINGENCY PLAN

3.2.1 In the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the watching brief, discussions will take place with LCAS as to the extent of further works to be carried out. All further works would be subject to a variation to this project design. In the event of environmental/organic deposits being present on site, it would be necessary to discuss and agree a programme of palaeoenvironmental sampling and or dating with the LCAS Archaeologist.

3.3 HEALTH AND SAFETY

3.3.1 OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1997). OA North will liase with the client to ensure all health and safety regulations are met. A risk assessment will be completed in advance of any on-site works.

3.4 ARCHIVE/REPORT

- 3.4.1 Archive: the results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition, 1991) and the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage (UKIC 1990). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the IFA in that organisation's code of conduct.
- 3.4.2 **Report:** one bound and one unbound copy of a written synthetic report will be submitted to the client, and a copy submitted to the County Archaeological Officer and to the Lancashire SMR as a paper copy and digital copy on CD within eight weeks of completion of fieldwork. The report will include a copy of this project design, and indications of any agreed departure from that design. It will present, summarise, and interpret the results of the programme detailed above.
- 3.4.3 **Confidentiality:** all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the Client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision.

4 PROJECT MONITORING

4.1 Monitoring of this project will be undertaken through the auspices of the LCAS Archaeologist, who will be informed of the start and end dates of the work.

5 WORK TIMETABLE

- 5.1 The duration of the archaeological presence for the watching brief is as yet unknown, being dictated by the schedule of works.
- 5.2 The client report will be completed within eight weeks following completion of the fieldwork.
- 6 STAFFING
- 6.1 The project will be under the direct management of **Emily Mercer BA (Hons) MSc AIFA** (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.

- 6.2 The watching brief will be supervised by either an OA North project officer or supervisor experienced in this type of project. Due to scheduling requirements it is not possible to provide these details at the present time. All OA North project officers and supervisors are experienced field archaeologists capable of carrying out projects of all sizes.
- 7 INSURANCE
- 7.1 OA North has a professional indemnity cover to a value of £2,000,000; proof of which can be supplied as required.

APPENDIX 2: FINDS SUMMARY

Context	Material	Qty	Description	Date range
Topsoil	Pottery	7	Brown-glazed red	Late seventeenth – early
_			earthenware	twentieth century
Topsoil	Pottery	2	Brown-glazed orangish-buff	Late seventeenth – eighteenth
			earthenware	century
Topsoil	Pottery	1	Speckled-beige-glazed buff	Late seventeenth – early
			earthenware	eighteenth century
Topsoil	Pottery	1	Red-glazed red earthenware	Late eighteenth – early
				twentieth century
Topsoil	Pottery	2	Dark-brown-glazed high-	Seventeenth – early twentieth
			fired purplish-red ware	century
Topsoil	Pottery	1	Slip-coated buff earthenware	Late seventeenth – early
				eighteenth century
Topsoil	Pottery	1	Tin-glazed earthenware	Seventeenth – eighteenth
				century
Topsoil	Pottery	2	White salt-glazed	Eighteenth – early nineteenth
			earthenware	century
Topsoil	Pottery	15	White-glazed white	Late eighteenth – twentieth
			earthenware	century
Topsoil	Pottery	1	Blue-glazed blue	Late eighteenth – twentieth
			earthenware	century
Topsoil	Pottery	1	Green-glazed reduced fabric	Fifteenth century?
Topsoil	Clay tobacco	1	Thick stem with wide bore	Eighteenth – nineteenth
	pipe			century
Topsoil	Glass	4	Green and turquoise	Post-medieval
			(bottles)	