

Archaeological Field Unit

**Post-Medieval Remains at Castle Farm,  
Castle Camps, Cambridgeshire:  
An Archaeological Evaluation & Monitoring Brief**

Stephen Macaulay

2000

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. A171

*Commissioned by Mike Hibbs (Architects)*

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Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation & Monitoring Brief**

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November 2000

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## **SUMMARY**

*Between the 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000, an archaeological evaluation and monitoring brief was undertaken at Castle Farm, Castle Camps, Cambridgeshire, by staff of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit. The work was carried out during re-development at Castle Farm, including the excavation of service trenches, and investigation of a proposed swimming pool and tennis court.*

*Six trenches were monitored and recorded across the site to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains. The subsequent investigation of the trenches revealed archaeological features in only one trench, located close to the modern farmhouse, which contained some of the wall foundations of an earlier 15<sup>th</sup> century brick building on the site at Castle Farm. No other archaeology was observed in any trenches and this appears to confirm that the top of the motte was demolished during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries ahead of the construction of the later medieval buildings. No traces of the medieval castle or fortifications survive.*

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An Archaeological Evaluation & Monitoring Brief  
(TL 6264 4244)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Between the 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000, an archaeological evaluation and monitoring brief was undertaken at Castle Farm, Castle Camps, Cambridgeshire, by staff of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit. The project was commissioned by Mike Hibbs (Mike Hibbs Architects) during the re-development of Castle Farm, which included the excavation of service trenches and the construction of a swimming pool and tennis court. The evaluation/monitoring work was undertaken in accordance with the Project Specification (SEP 231/00) drawn up by Stephen Macaulay in response to a Design Brief issued by the County Archaeology Office.

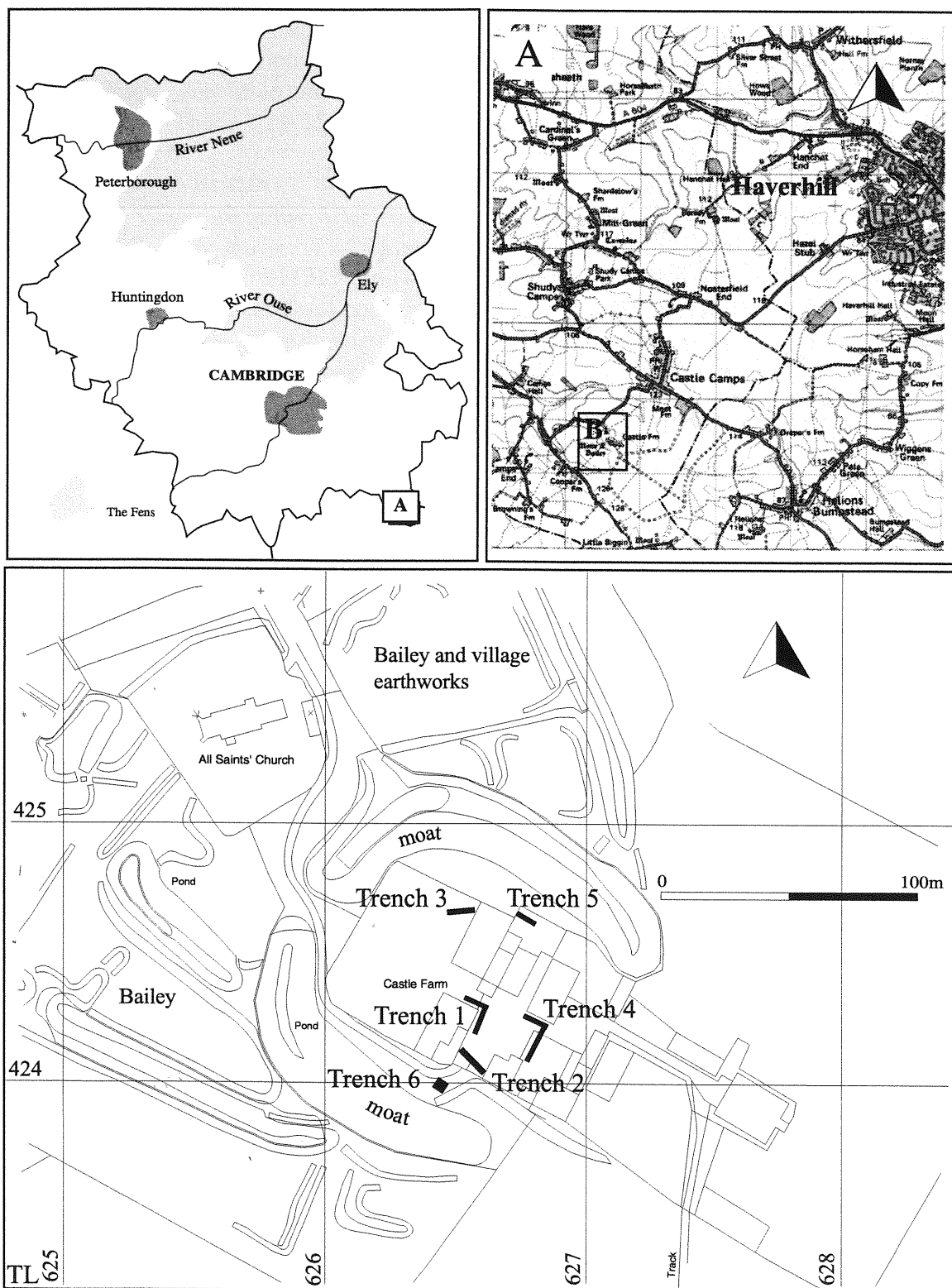
**2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The site is located to the southwest of the historic village of Castle Camps and importantly within the actual motte of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Camps Castle (SAM No: 46). The site is situated on the Chalky Boulder Clay within a rolling hilly landscape. The castle motte lies on a spur on the 120m OD contour, which was modified to create the motte and take advantage of the natural topography. The castle bailey has been in pasture for some considerable time, however the castle motte has been a working farm for over 100 years.

**3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**Prehistoric**

There is little recorded Prehistoric activity within the parish of Castle Camps. The Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record records a Neolithic polished axe (SMR No: 07357, CCS 7 – TL 625 427) found in 1969 immediately to the north of Castle Camps deserted medieval village earthworks. The most recent archaeological survey of the parish was undertaken by the Haverhill & District Archaeological Group in the 1990's. This work has discovered a number of other sites and finds spots. This includes a Mesolithic-Neolithic macehead (CCS 21 - TL 6224 4308), Mesolithic/Neolithic flint scatters, including waste material (CCS 42 & 43 - TL 6182 4278, CCS 35 - 629 429, CCS 79 – 631 425 & 84 – TL 631 428) to the northwest and northeast of Camps Castle (Jnl of HDAG A Field Survey of Castle Camps Vol 6, Part 3 1997). Overall within the



**Figure 1** Location plan and archaeological trenches (showing earthworks surrounding Castle Farm)

parish of Castle Camps there is evidence of Mesolithic and Neolithic activity, however there is no activity in the direct vicinity to the motte & bailey of Castle Camps. Neolithic and Bronze Age finds are concentrated to the northwest of the parish. There is no evidence to date of any Iron Age activity.

### **Romano-British**

The Cambridgeshire Sites & Monuments Record records a number of finds in the fields to the north of Camps Castle. These include the fragments of a lead coffin (SMR No: 11519) and bronze brooches, pins and coins (SMR Nos: 11505 & 11520). These finds correspond to a number of important Roman sites which have been recorded during the Haverhill & District Archaeological Group survey in the 1990's. This includes the discovery of a probable Roman Villa located within the arable fields directly to the north of Camps Castle (CCS – 020 TL 623 429). Other finds include small scale pottery scatters to the northwest (CCS 42 & 43 - TL 6182 4278), northeast (CCS 35 - 629 429, CCS – 627 428) and southwest (CCS 35 - TL 6165 4212) of Camps Castle.

### **Medieval (and Castle history)**

The proposed development lies within an the nationally important remains of the Norman motte castle of Camps Castle (SMR No: 01769, SAM No: 46). The castle has an unusual double bailey layout, within which lies the 13<sup>th</sup> century Church of All Saints (SMR No: 07369, Grade II Listed Building). Also within the bailey area are the remains (earthworks) of a deserted medieval village (SMR No: 07366), both are located to the north of the castle site. Recent surveys have indicated that the medieval settlement associated with the castle occupied a much larger area than that represented by the surviving earthworks (Jnl of HDAG A Field Survey of Castle Camps Vol 6, Part 3 1997). The Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record confirms this with finds of pottery, metal works and even 8 silver coins immediately to the north of Camps Castle (SMR Nos: 07701, 11520a & b).

Domesday records in 1066, that Wulfin, a king's thegn, held land of 2½ hides in the parish of Camps and by 1086 with other lands (presumably from the main Anglo-Saxon manor), The Camps were held by Aubrey de Vere. Camps Castle was located on a promontory of land roughly midway between the principal de Vere residence at Castle Hedingham (Essex) and the royal castle at Cambridge. The original castle and fortifications were designed as a motte and bailey castle in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century with the motte covering about 1 hectare and having initially a wooden keep. There is no evidence, documentary or otherwise, for the construction of an earthen motte but one was most almost certainly built. The motte, if one ever existed, was probably levelled during the post-medieval alterations to the site. It is likely a stone structure replaced the wooden keep, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century masonry was discovered described as "27 inches thick and of very solid construction", perhaps the only reference to the later medieval structure. Rubble from this period was still thought to be standing in the 1920's. In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century a four storey brick tower was built on the motte area, this presumably replacing the masonry structure and attached to which was a large house (where the dowager countess, Anne de Vere d.1559 dwelt). The tower is thought to have been intended as a defensive structure for the Earls of Oxford

during the last stages of the Wars of the Roses, however it did not see any action. The house (but not tower) was rebuilt in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The tower was ruinous but along with the house still standing in 1730 (Illustration 1730-1 SN Buck). In 1997 during the resurfacing of the modern concrete farmyard part of the foundations of the 15<sup>th</sup> century brick tower were recorded (Jnl of HDAG A Field Survey of Castle Camps Vol 6, Part 3;175, 1997).

After this time, Charterhouse constructed a smaller farmhouse facing north, incorporating a fragment of the earlier building in a back wing and thereafter the farm and castle were leased out.

#### **4 METHODOLOGY**

The investigation monitored the excavation of a cesspit, a wall foundation, 3 service trenches and excavated two 5m long trenches within the proposed areas for the tennis court and swimming pool. The trenches were opened using both a JCB mechanical excavator and mini-digger both with a toothed ditching bucket (0.6m wide). The trench sections were cleaned and all archaeological features were recorded. Features were excavated where possible. Trench spoil and the excavated surfaces of trenches were scanned by eye in order to obtain artefacts.

Archaeological trenches and features were recorded by hand, planned and added to the existing site architect's plans. Trenches that contained archaeological features were planned by hand. Archaeological features were recorded using the pro-forma recording sheets of the Archaeological Field Unit. All trenches excavated during the evaluation were described, giving details of topsoil and subsoil depths and the natural geology visible in the base of the trench.

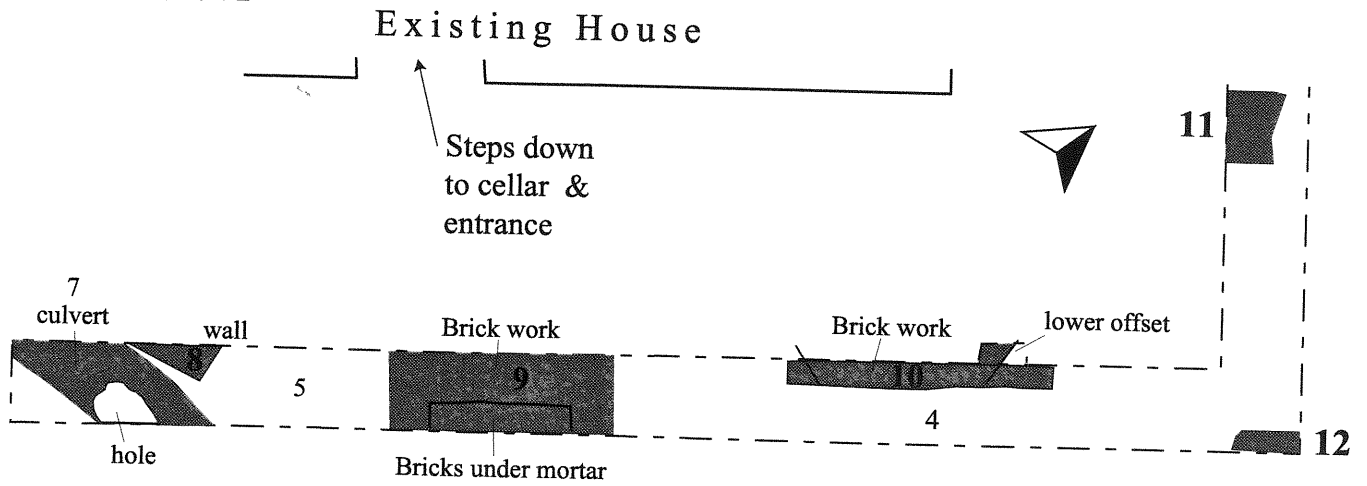
#### **5 RESULTS (see Fig 2)**

##### **Trench 1**

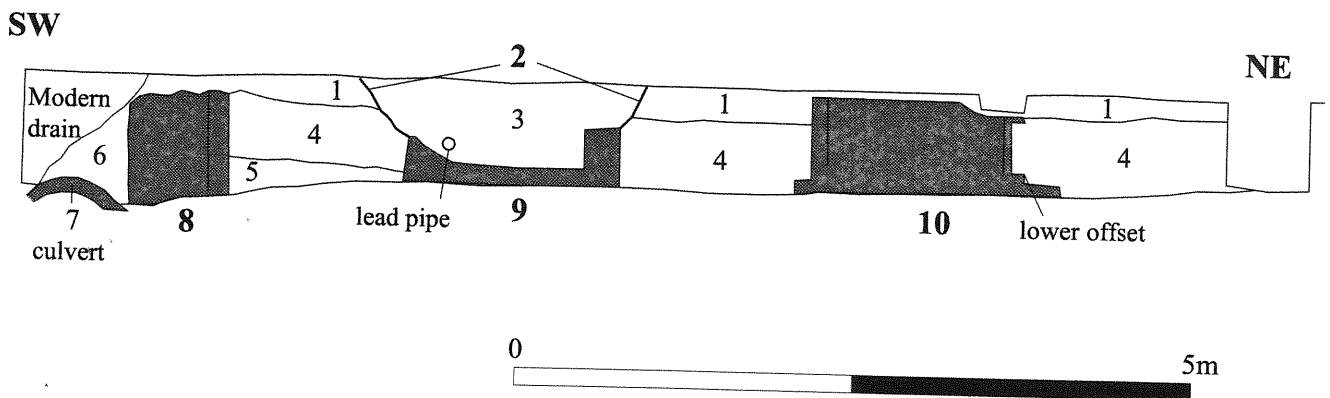
Trench 1 was 'L' shaped, located 2m away from the eastern and northern walls of Castle Farmhouse. The ssw-nne arm was 8.5m long and the wnw-ese arm was 6.8m long. The trench was 0.60m wide and 0.40m deep at the western end deepening gradually to 0.95m at the southern end. Topsoil (a dark greyish brown sandy silt with frequent small brick, mortar and chalk frags) was between 0.10-0.25m thick. This was cut, at the southern end of the trench by an extant drain which was re-used as part of the renovations works. The topsoil (1) was also cut by 2, which represents the demolition of steps 9 and/or the construction of the current cellar steps. Beneath the topsoil a thick layer (4) consisting of 0.40-0.55m of loose sand and flints, possibly representing the backfill of an extensive 'shard' construction trench, abutted a series of brick structures (8, 9, 10, 11 & 12). Of these (8) is additionally founded into the underlying chalk



## Plan of Trench 1



## Section of Trench 1



**Figure 2** *Plan and section of Trench 1*

flecked boulder clay natural (5). The others are likely to be similarly additionally founded, but layer (4) obscures this. Structures (9, 10, 11 & 12) are possible parts of the 15<sup>th</sup> century building, representing: steps into the cellar (9), base of a turret or bay window (10) and wall foundations (11 & 12). They all share a common alignment, differing fractionally from the present farmhouse. Structures (7 & 8) were a culvert and another wall foundation which, though constructed of similar bricks and mortar, have a different alignment. The culvert (7) is overlain by (6) a brick flecked re-deposited natural layer.

## **Trench 2**

Trench 2 was 11.40m long, 0.60m wide and 0.30-0.80m deep. It was located within the Castle Farm courtyard close to the present entrance. Aligned southeast-northwest its southeast end was the shallowest, deepening steadily to an extant drain, which is being re-used as part of the renovation. A thin layer of tile fragments and topsoil (0.15-0.20m thick) had accumulated around modern concrete hard-standing and indicates a recently demolished modern structure. Beneath this topsoil and concrete a similar layer to (4) in trench 1 was observed it was (0.30-0.35m thick) and overlay the natural chalk flecked clay. Further to the northwest of the trench this layer was not present, with topsoil directly overlying the natural. Towards the northwest end of the trench both topsoil and natural are truncated and gravel and rubble deposit (0.50m thick) forms the base of the current tarmac farm entrance. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## **Trench 3**

Trench 3 was 5.80m long, 0.60m wide and 0.70m deep, located towards the northeast corner of the walled garden area of Castle Farm to investigate the area of a new tennis court. Aligned east-west the trench cut through topsoil (0.20-0.25m thick) and 0.45m into loose sand and flints (= 4 in trench 1). This deposit, which contained a fragment of faced limestone, was not bottomed. No archaeological features were identified, although this trench may have been located close to the foundations of the 15<sup>th</sup> century buildings.

## **Trench 4**

Trench 4 was 'L' shaped, lying between two extant farm buildings, once part of the complex of working buildings of Castle Farm. The ssw-nne arm was 17.20m long and the wnw-ese arm was 7.50m long, the trench was 0.60m wide and 1-1.10m deep. The trench was excavated for a new wall foundation. Up to 0.18m of reinforced concrete overlay a hardcore rubble base (c0.40m thick). Below this was a chalky clay natural similar to that observed in other trenches. No archaeology was recorded.

### **Trench 5**

Trench 5 was located within an extant open sided barn to the north of the farmyard, this trench was positioned to investigate the area of the proposed swimming pool. The trench was 5m long and up to 2.30m deep. A layer (0.30m thick) of very compacted flints in a clayey soil matrix, formed the barn floor, beneath this lay the natural chalky boulder clay. This deposit was excavated for a further 2m to the approximate depth of the swimming pool. No archaeology was present.

### **Trench 6**

Trench 6 was located c5m southwest of the current entrance to Castle Farm, a very large sub-rectangular pit was excavated to remove the existing septic tank prior to its replacement. The opportunity was taken to record the sections. The trench was 3.5m long x 3.2m wide x 3.5m deep. Beneath a thick topsoil layer (0.40m) was a layer of compacted brick demolition rubble (comprised of the same brick and mortar type as the foundation observed in trench 1). This demolition layer was 0.60m thick and contained a fragment of plastered/rendered brickwork. Below this layer was the natural chalky boulder clay. No archaeology was recorded.

### **Additional**

A survey of the internal face of the back wall of an open sided barn was carried out, where part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century brick wall was incorporated within the 19<sup>th</sup> century barn wall. This was recorded at 1:50 scale and appears to be the northwestern wall of the 15<sup>th</sup> century tower constructed by the Earls of Oxford to protect the castle during the Wars of the Roses (see section 3).

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The full understanding and interpretation of the medieval and post-medieval activity on the site cannot be fully determined from results of such a small scale evaluation and the observation of narrow service trenches. However the results of the investigation have confirmed that the post-medieval re-development on the top of the motte appears to have entirely removed the earlier medieval remains. The only remains encountered of any antiquity were linked to the 15<sup>th</sup> century house and brick tower. Foundation walls, a possible tower base and the old alignment of the cellar steps/access were all observed within Trench 1. No other archaeology was recorded in any other trenches. It is clear that the demolition of the 15<sup>th</sup> century tower and continuing renovations to Castle Farm have removed any traces of earlier archaeology. Rubble layers lie directly above the natural chalk and boulder clay, no trace survives of the earlier medieval

motte deposits. The hypothesis that the upper part of the medieval motte was flattened to provide enough space for the later buildings appear to be correct.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The objectives of the project, as set out by the CAO Brief and Project Specification, were two fold; firstly to ensure that any archaeological features exposed during ground works were recorded and interpreted; and secondly to investigate the land where the proposed tennis court and swimming pool are to be located.

The project has been successful in achieving both of its objectives. All trenches excavated were observed and recorded, and as noted above only trench 1 contained any archaeological remains. These related to the 15<sup>th</sup> century occupation of the motte, no traces of the medieval settlement could be found. The absence of any motte remains raises the question of what has happened to these deposits, the location of which is at present uncertain. The two evaluation trenches opened to test the areas to be affected by the proposed tennis court and swimming pool (trenches 3 & 5) both demonstrated that no archaeological deposits survive. However Trench 3 contained a demolition layer (4) which suggests a proximity to the 15<sup>th</sup> century building foundations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Mike Hibbs who commissioned the work. Also the builders AHP for their co-operation on site. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay and Tony Baker carried out all the field work. Caroline Malim produced the illustrations. The brief for archaeological work was written by Andy Thomas, who also monitored the project.

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## Appendix A – Context List

CONTEXT	CUT	DESCRIPTION	FIND S	ABOVE	FUNCTION
1	n/a	dark grey-brown sandy sil with frequent small brick, chalk and mortar frags	p/med bricks		topsoil
2	2	sub-rectangular pit	n/a	4	stairwell construction
3	2	silty sand, chalk, bricks & mortar	p/med bricks	2	brick foundations
4	n/a	mid-pale orange-brown silty sand	p/med bricks	5	levelling layer
5	n/a	pale grey-brown clay with sandy & chalky inclusions	none	-	natural
6	n/a	pale grey-brown clay with sandy & chalky inclusions with small brick frags and mortar	p/med bricks	7	re-deposited natural
7	n/a	red brick and white mortar structure	p/med bricks	5	small brick built culvert
8	n/a	red brick and white mortar structure	p/med bricks	5	foundation/wall
9	n/a	red brick and white mortar structure	p/med bricks	5	cellar steps
10	n/a	red brick and white mortar structure	p/med bricks	5	turret base
11	n/a	red brick and white mortar structure	p/med bricks	5	foundation/wall
12	n/a	red brick and white mortar structure	p/med bricks	5	foundation/wall
13	n/a	very dark grey-brown silt sand	bricks/ mortar	14	topsoil
14	n/a	mid-pale orange-brown silty sand with frequent flint nodules		5	demolition layer



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