

Mrs Brenda Florey

Land adjacent to Cromwell House, Cheapside, Bampton

Oxfordshire

NGR SP 3140 0322

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Application No. W97/1375

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

FEBRUARY 1998

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Planning Application No. W97/1375

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16/2/98

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Summary

In November 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a Watching Brief during groundworks prior to the construction of a new house on land adjacent to Cromwell House, Cheapside, Bampton, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 3140 0322). The watching brief identified a large amount of modern intrusion on the site, due to its previous use as a bus garage. Several large cut features, which proved to be modern, occupied the majority of the site. Very little of the original ground surface remains. No finds were retrieved.

1. Introduction

In November 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief on the development site adjacent to Cromwell House, Cheapside, Bampton, Oxon on behalf of Mrs Brenda Florey in respect of a planning application for the construction of a new house (Application W97/1375) with a brief set by and a WSI agreed with the County Archaeological Officer. The development site is located within the historic core of Bampton, a settlement dating to the Anglo-Saxon period. In accordance with PPG 16, a watching brief was undertaken on groundworks for the proposed new building.

2. Background

Bampton was the site of a battle in 614, but there is no further reference to it until Domesday Book in 1086, when it was one of the richest places in the county, being valued at £80. The village today has a very simple plan; three main streets converging in a triangular market place fronting a network of lanes to the rear. There is no trace of medieval planning. This pattern may indicate the settlement's early growth and importance, but there is not enough evidence to estimate the size of the early medieval town. Similarly, very little is known of the origins, nature or extent of the town in the Saxon period, and the same is true of the Roman period. The OAU has dug at Calais Farm in the village, identifying evidence of Iron Age activity, and the Oxford University Archaeological Society has excavated in the churchyard. The church, which was once a Minster, is one of the largest in west Oxfordshire and now is largely a cruciform late Norman structure, remodelled in the 13th and 14th centuries. The tower has some Saxon herringbone masonry as part of its fabric and may possibly have been the western tower of an earlier church.

The development site lies south-east of the market place, to the rear of the street frontage at c.70m OD on terrace gravel overlying Oxford clay.

3. Aims

To record any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the proposed groundworks to previously established standards (OAU Fieldwork manual, First Edition, 1992). The ultimate goal being the preservation by record of any archaeology, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance.

4. Methodology

The foundation trenches were dug by a JCB mechanical excavator, and were inspected after excavation. Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits and features exposed in section and plan were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and black and white print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets.

5. Results

Three large, square features, [1], [3] and [5], were identified in section running east-west across the site (sections 1-3); all of these displayed modern brick linings which cut away the natural gravel to a depth of three metres. Their fills, (2), (4) and (6) were very similar, consisting of a very mixed and dirty mid-dark brown/gray clay loam, with 10% fine silt and 5% medium-coarse subrounded sand. Spread throughout this material in varying quantities was modern housebrick, concrete lumps, and white china. The other cut features on site comprised one soakaway [7] and one possible subterranean diesel tank [8].

The earliest deposit seen on site was (10), the natural gravel; mid yellow/white and medium-coarse with 2% fine subrounded silt. This was sealed by (9), a light-mid brown friable clay loam, with 5% fine silt. Both of these deposits were cut away by the cut features.

6. Discussion

All the trenches were inspected subsequent to their excavation. It is thought that the cut features seen relate to the development site's previous use as a bus garage. This was particularly evident in the three large east-west features, all of which had modern brick linings to a depth of c3 metres below modern ground surface.

The provenance of deposit (9) remains unknown at this time. It is possible that this represents an *in situ* deposit sealing the natural gravel. It did not appear to be any kind of surface, either domestic or industrial, and no masonry was seen in association with it. It is possible that it represents an old garden soil. Despite careful investigation it produced no finds, and remains undated at this time.

If the development site contained any archaeological traces of property boundaries or domestic/light industrial activity, as its location makes a possibility, then these have been removed by modern intrusion.

John Dalton
OAU
February 1998.

References

Wilkinson D (ed.) 1992, "Oxford Archaeological Unit Fieldwork manual", OAU.



Location of site

Scale 1:250,000

Figure 1

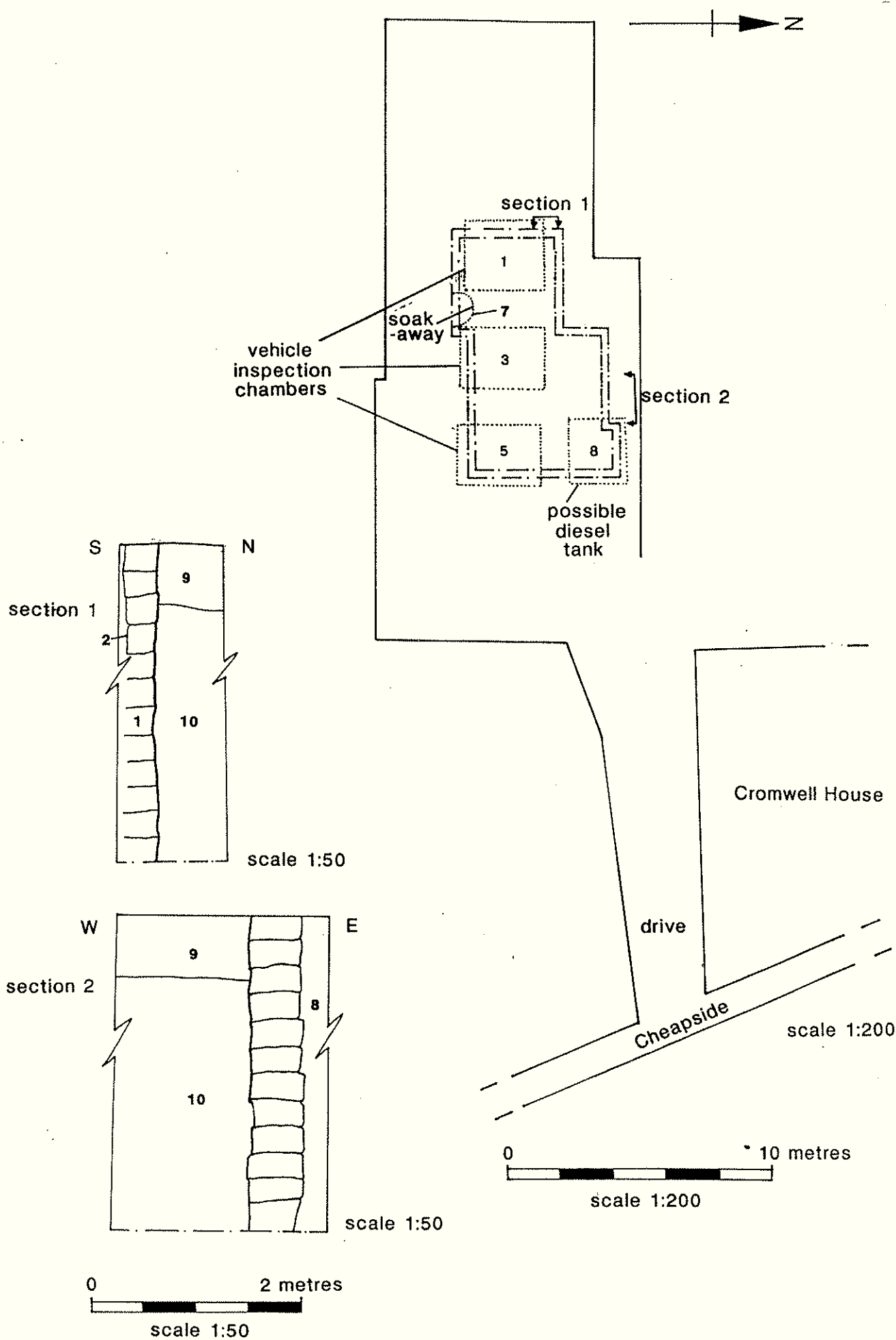


Figure 2



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