

# Lime Tree House, Bampton, Oxfordshire

NGR SP 3172 0324

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeological Unit

June 1996

**LIME TREE HOUSE, BAMPTON, OXFORDSHIRE**  
**NGR SP 3172 0324**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**1 SUMMARY**

An undated ploughsoil and part of a recent stone wall were observed during a watching brief at this site.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a watching brief at Lime Tree House, Bampton (Fig. 1), during excavations for the construction of a new swimming pool located in private grounds. The work involved the monitoring of foundation trenches for the swimming pool walls and the excavation of the pool trench. The groundwork was undertaken by Hopgood (Builders) of Southmoor, Oxon., under plans devised by architect Alan Drury of Oxford.

**3 BACKGROUND**

In December 1994 planning permission was sought from West Oxfordshire District Council to construct a garden room and swimming pool at Lime Tree House. Permission was subsequently granted with a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief during groundworks, in accordance with PPG 16.

The development site is located to the rear of Lime Tree House on the north side of the High Street in Bampton. The site is situated on the second gravel terrace and lies at approximately 68 m O.D. Until recently the major part of the development site has been a tennis court.

Late Iron Age and Romano-British features and finds have been recovered from the east of the town, and Bampton was also an important centre in the Anglo Saxon and early medieval periods. The existence of the town's market is recorded in the Domesday survey, which emphasises the regional importance of the town.

**4 RESULTS**

The foundation trenches for the retaining walls of the swimming pool were between 0.6 and 0.7 m deep, and were 0.8 m wide (Fig. 2). The earliest deposit identified was a layer of compact reddish-yellow sand and gravel (7) which was interpreted as the natural horizon. Above layer 7, and identified only in the extreme south-east of the excavation area, was a layer of tenacious reddish-brown clay loam (8) which contained frequent charcoal flecks (Fig. 3). This layer was 0.17 m thick. Above layer 7 was a layer of clean reddish-brown sandy loam (6), which was 0.13 m thick.

A stone structure, possibly part of a north-south aligned wall, was recorded in the east-west foundation trench at the south of the site (Fig. 4). The construction trench for the wall (5) was cut from the level of layer 6. Three rough courses of medium sized

limestone blocks (3) bonded with a yellowish-brown sandy mortar lay at the base of the construction cut. Above the stone blocks was a layer of compacted grey-yellow mortar, gravel and sand (4), which was 0.37 m thick, and was sealed by a layer of loose sand and mortar (2), 0.11 m thick. Above 2 and the adjacent layer 6 lay the present topsoil (1), which was a dark grey-brown loam with a variable depth of 0.15-0.24 m.

In the foundation trenches to the north and during the excavation of the trench for the swimming pool itself a different sequence of deposits was observed (Fig. 5). Above the natural layer 7 was a uniform layer of tenacious dark grey clay loam (11) containing 30% mixed gravel and stones, which was 0.24 m thick. Above 11 lay a 0.10 m thick layer of gravel (10) which was in turn covered by a thin layer of tarmac (9), 0.02 m thick. An east-west aligned ceramic drain pipe in a deep service trench (12) was observed to the centre of the swimming pool trench. The service trench was cut from the top of layer 11.

## 5 THE FINDS

Two sherds of glazed pottery were recovered from the spoil heaps. These were clearly of nineteenth or twentieth century date. Other modern finds such as glass were not retained.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The majority of the area investigated has clearly been recently affected by the construction of the tennis court. The homogenous nature of layer 11 and its appearance suggests that in order to build a solid surface for the tennis court, the former soil horizons were dug out and replaced with a more compact material. Gravel was laid upon layer 11, before the tarmac surface was put down.

To the south and away from the tennis court, it appears that the soil horizons have not been truncated. Layer 8 may be a former ploughsoil, although it contained no dating evidence. This layer was sealed by a recent garden soil. The portion of stonework was not dated, but appeared to have been of recent build as its' construction trench was cut from just below the level of the present topsoil. The ?wall may have been a garden feature. The northward extent of this possible wall was removed at the time of the construction of the tennis court.

No further archaeological features or structures were observed during the excavations. The presence of the possible ploughsoil (8) to the south of the excavation might indicate the continued use of the site for agricultural purposes as late as the medieval period, at which time the site appears to have been peripheral to the town. The absence of dating evidence, however, makes any such interpretation speculative.

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June 1996

## TABLE OF CONTEXT INFORMATION

CONTEXT	TYPE	DEPTH	WIDTH	COMMENTS
1	layer	0.15-0.24 m	-	garden topsoil
2	fill	0.11 m	1.0 m	upper fill of 5, sandy material
3	structure	0.28 m	0.6 m	limestone wall aligned north-south
4	fill	0.37 m	0.9 m	mortar and sand deposit above wall 3
5	cut	0.45 m	1.0 m	construction cut for wall 3
6	layer	0.13 m	-	recent garden soil
7	layer	-	-	natural sand and gravel
8	layer	0.17 m	-	?ploughsoil above the natural
9	layer	0.02 m	-	tarmac surface of tennis court
10	layer	0.10 m	-	gravel bed for layer 9
11	layer	0.24 m	-	thick clay and gravel deposit, make up for tennis court surface
12	service	0.60 m	0.70 m	east-west aligned modern drain pipe in construction cut

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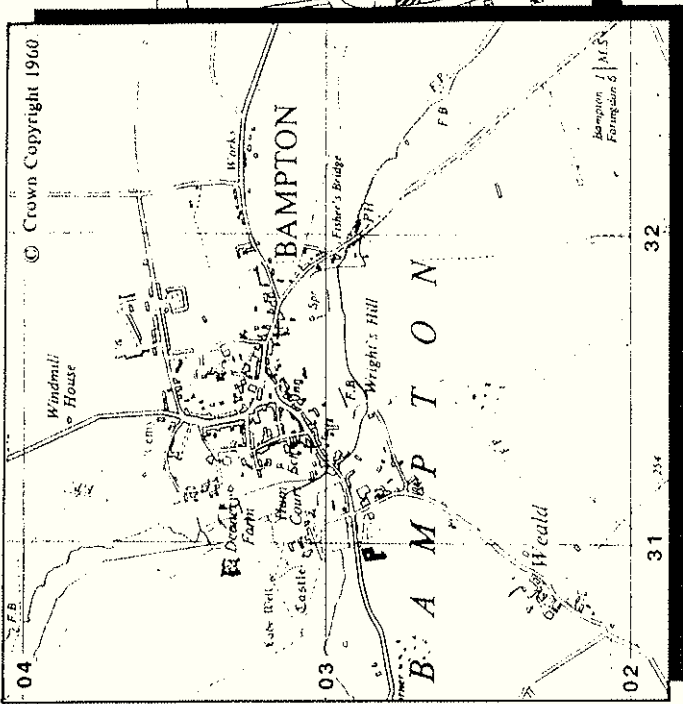
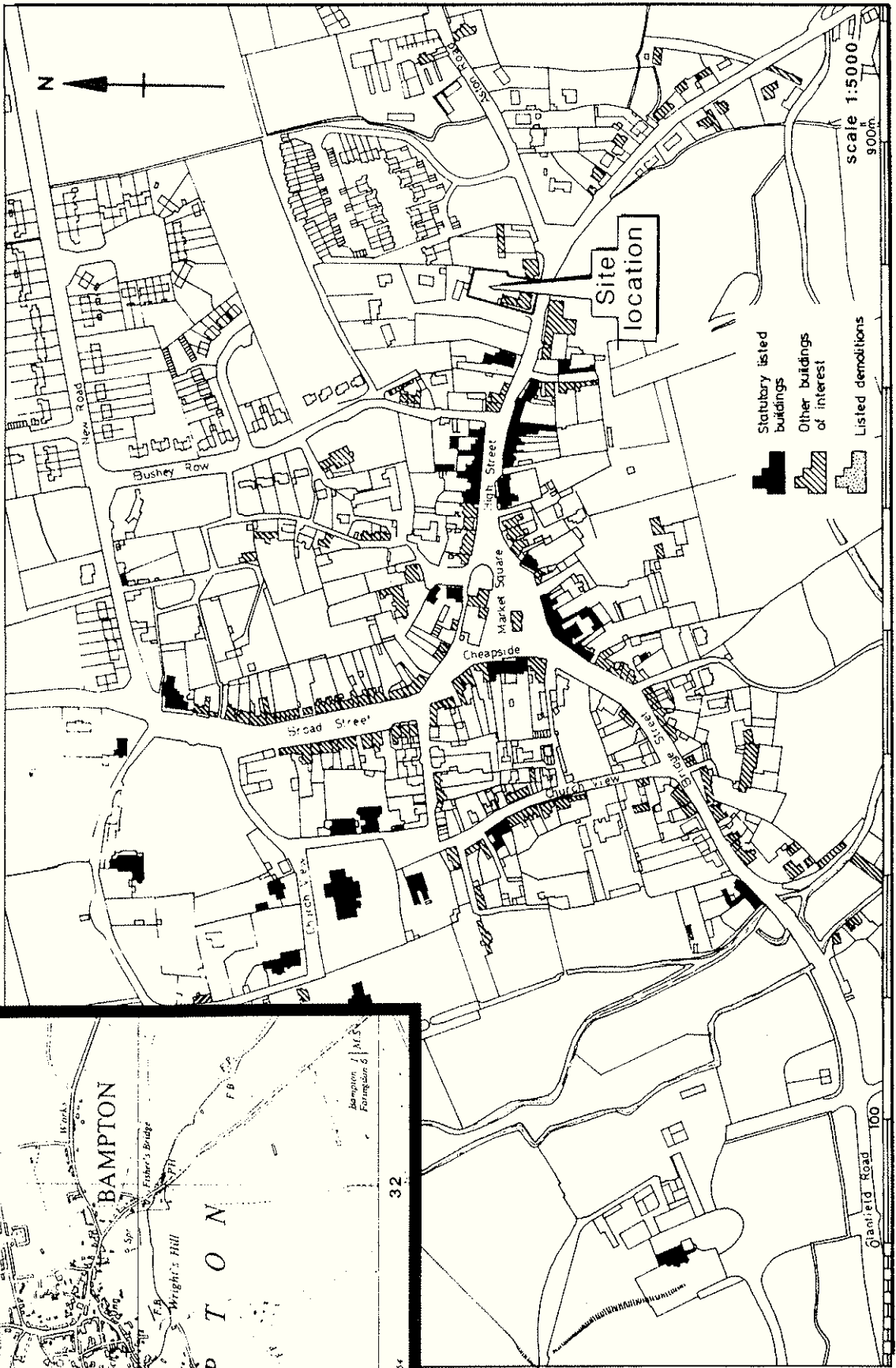


Figure 1

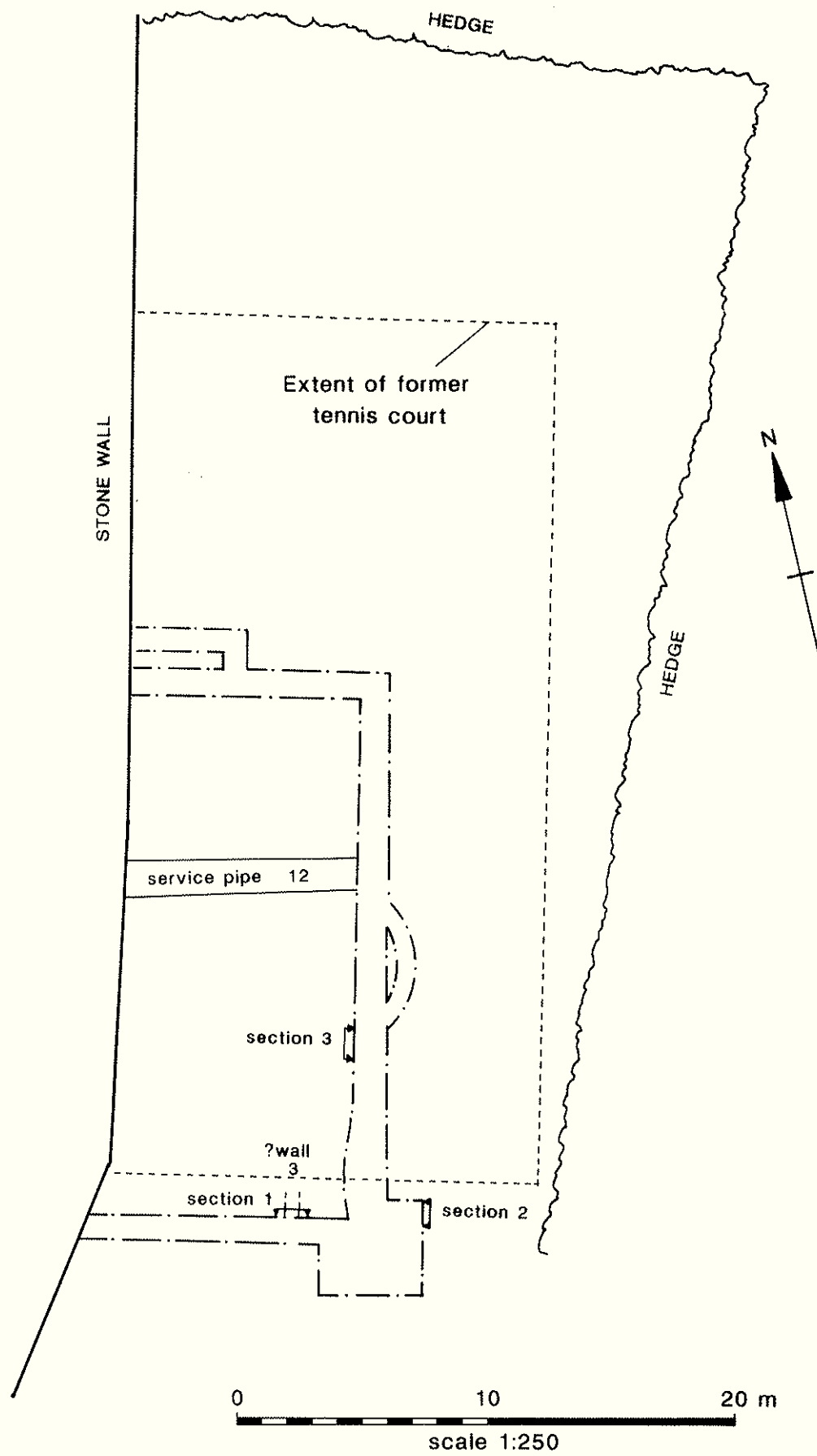


Figure 2

section 2

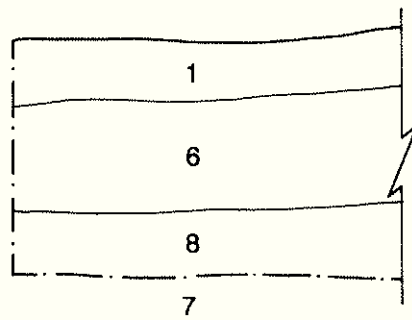


Figure 3

section 1

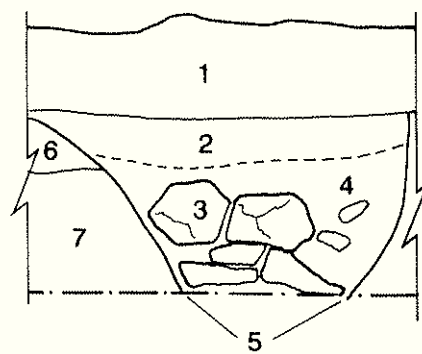


Figure 4

section 3

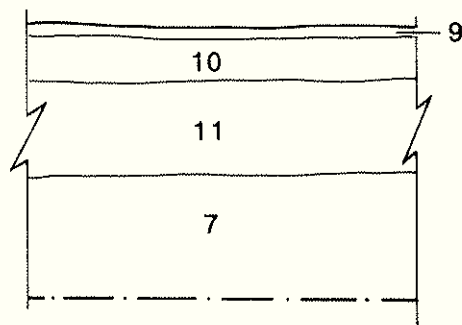
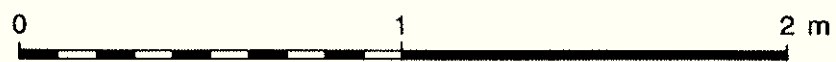


Figure 5



scale 1:20



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