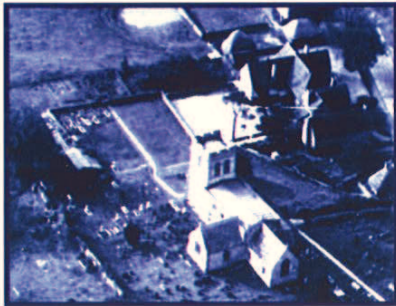


Cumnor Parish Cemetery Extension Cumnor Oxfordshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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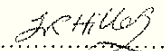
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Cumnor Parish Council

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SUMMARY

In October 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land adjacent to the existing graveyard of St Michael's Church, Cumnor, Oxfordshire (SP 459 041). The work was carried out on behalf of Cumnor Parish Council, in advance of a proposed extension to the churchyard. The proposed extension lies immediately to the west of the site of the Benedictine retreat of Cumnor Place, a quadrangular complex of the early 14th century, which succeeded an earlier grange held by Abingdon Abbey. Structural remains revealed during the evaluation may relate to the early foundation of the abbey grange. Evidence for 14th century groundworks associated with the later building was also recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work (Fig.1)

- 1.1.1 In October 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Cumnor, Oxfordshire (SP 459 041) on behalf of Cumnor Parish Council. An area of land adjacent to the western limit of the churchyard of St Michael's Church has been offered for donation as an extension to the graveyard. Prior to Planning Permission being sought, it was proposed to conduct an archaeological evaluation of the land.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on sand, to the west of a Corallian escarpment and is currently under pasture. The site is mainly flat, at c 114.50 m OD, with a sharp slope to the west and north to 112.9 m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Old Cumnor Place was built in the 14th century by the Abbot of Abingdon and served as a country house/guest lodgings and administrative centre for the abbey's holdings in the Hundred of Horner (VCH, 1924, 398-405). The domestic buildings included a chapel, great hall, buttery, pantry, and private chambers arranged around a central quadrangle. After the Dissolution the Place remained in gentry use until 1599, and continued to serve as the manor house, although increasingly altered and dilapidated, until its demolition in 1811.
- 1.3.2 The disposition and layout of the buildings of Cumnor Place have been considered by Lysons (1804), H.U Tighe (1821) and in the Gentleman's Magazine (1821). A study by Bartlett in the mid 19th century included a conjectural plan which remains essentially valid (Bartlett, 1850), although an extensive programme of exploratory excavation and survey, undertaken by Edward Impey, has refined the likely layout of the quadrangular complex (see Figure 5). The study has shown that wall foundations and occupation layers survive under substantial demolition material. To the south of the site lie the extant earthworks of what is thought to have been gardens attached to the House. To the north-west of the site lies a pond served by a natural stream, with a

stream leading to the south-west to the site of a flight of monastic fishponds. No intrusive investigation has taken place on the site itself.

- 1.3.3 An archaeogeophysical survey to the south and west of the existing churchyard (including the area of the current evaluation) was undertaken in 2001 (Bartlett, 2001). The purpose of the survey was to investigate an area containing earthworks that probably represent 16th- or 17th-century landscaping associated with the gardens of Cumnor Place. The survey confirmed that distinct linear earthwork features are present outside the area of surviving raised terraces. Additionally "*an area of strong resistivity anomalies to the north of the site (may) indicate structural debris*". The recent evaluation lay within the area of strong resistivity anomalies, although specifically within a sub-rectangular area of low resistance within the anomalies.
- 1.3.4 Abingdon Abbey maintained over a dozen manor houses on its demesnes. In the 1970s and 1980s, extensive excavations were carried out by Oxford Archaeological Unit (now OA) at Dean Court Farm, another of Abingdon's granges, to the north-east of Cumnor (Allen *et al.*, 1994).

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposed site and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation in the form of a report that will form the basis of any proposals for appropriate further archaeological action at the site.
- 2.1.4 To define any relevant research priorities if additional archaeological investigation proves necessary.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork (Fig. 2)

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of two trenches each measuring 5 m long x 2 m wide. The overburden was removed (under close archaeological supervision) by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching/grading bucket.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and, where excavated, their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black-and

white-print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 One deposit suitable for environmental sampling was encountered in sufficient quantity to obtain a sample (cxt 110).

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.1.1 Although a number of the deposits within Trenches 1 and 2 may well be contemporary with each other, establishing definitive relationships between them was problematic given the complexity of the archaeology, the small size of the trenches and the distance between the two. The interpretation of the results (see below Section 6), attempts to reconstruct a chronological sequence based on the stratigraphic and artefactual evidence presented below.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Trench One (Fig. 3)

- 5.1.1 Trench 1 was situated in the southern part of the proposed cemetery extension. Machine excavation was halted at the base of the present topsoil (c 114.40 m OD) at the interface between the topsoil and a spread of mortar through which an east-west aligned linear feature was cut (see 105 below). A box section was excavated to investigate this feature and to expose the deposits through which it was cut.
- 5.1.2 A 'cobbled' ragstone surface (111) was exposed at 113.78 m OD and was overlain by a 0.04 m thick deposit of compacted, dark grey, charcoal rich sandy silt (110). The high concentration of charcoal suggests that the cobbled surface represents an interior hearth, covered by a layer of accumulated ash, charcoal and small bones. An environmental sample was taken of this layer (see Appendix 3).
- 5.1.3 Overlying the charcoal rich deposit was a 0.2 m thick layer of orange brown silty sand (109) with concentrations of ragstone fragments and lenses of mortar throughout. This deposit was similar to those revealed within Trench 2 (cxt 202) and interpreted as early post-medieval demolition deposits or made ground/levelling layers. Deposit 109 produced a sherd of 11th-13th century pottery, although this may

well be residual. It is feasible that this layer represents the demolition/re-modelling of the structure(s) associated with surface 111.

- 5.1.4 Deposit 109 was cut by the construction cut (114) for a stone drain (112) on a roughly east-west alignment. The backfill of the construction cut (cxts 121 and 113) were overlain by a 0.07m thick layer of ashy, charcoal rich material (108) which produced 16th-17th century pottery. This deposit also overlay the 'made ground' (109) and is presumably contemporary with the use of the drain. Deposit 108 also included lenses of greenish brown staining which may be indicative of cessy material associated with the drain's function. The drain itself contained a fill of silty clay with high proportions of mortar fragments and stone rubble, evidently a dumped demolition deposit rather than an accumulation.
- 5.1.5 Deposit 108 was overlain by a layer of orange brown silty sand (106/107), c 0.15 m deep. It is possible that this represents a packed earth surface, although given its depth and composition it is more likely that it is a levelling deposit for the overlying mortar 'surface' (102/103). Deposit 102 (also numbered 115) comprised a mixed deposit of mid brownish grey sandy silt and mortar. In the north-east corner of the trench an overlying patch of finely surfaced mortar (103) was exposed, suggesting that layer 102/103 may be the remains of a bedding layer for a more substantial tiled or flagged surface, removed in the 19th century.
- 5.1.6 Deposit 102 was cut by the east-west linear feature (105) observed following machine excavation of the topsoil. This was almost certainly a robber trench, although it was not wide enough to rob out the 'walls' and base of drain 112. This suggests that it was dug to remove flagstones roofing the drain.
- 5.1.7 A second slot was excavated against the southern edge of the trench and revealed what initially appeared to be a similar sequence of deposits, with layers 120, 119 and 118 possibly equating to made ground deposit 109, and deposits 117, 116 and 122 being subdivisions within the ashy, charcoal rich layer 108. The comparative levels of these deposits also suggested a certain correlation (with the top of 109 corresponding with the top of 118).
- 5.1.8 However, if the above interpretation is correct, it would suggest that the ashy deposit (108) is considerably thicker and survives to a greater depth in at the southern end of the trench (see Figure 3). Given that deposit 120 produced a sherd of 16th- to 17th-century pottery - and assuming that the 11th- to 13th-century sherd from deposit 109 was not residual (as suggested above) - it is possible that these deposits (116-120 and 122) may represent fills of an ash pit, although no cut was established within the confines of the trench.

Trench Two (Fig. 4)

- 5.1.9 Trench 2 was situated in the north of the proposed cemetery extension, with the southern end of the trench located over the sharp break of slope evident in the

topography of the site. This revealed a number of ragstone structures and demolition/made ground deposits.

- 5.1.10 Natural sand (200) was encountered in slots excavated against the west face of structure 213/214, and within the structure formed by 206 and 207. Within the two slots the level of the surface of this deposit was consistent at 113.13 m OD, and was overlain by a mid-dark grey sandy silt deposit (218), loosely interpreted as a buried topsoil. This appeared to be directly overlain by the structures and varied in thickness depending on the depth of the wall footings (i.e. – where overlain by footing 213, layer 218 was 0.30 m thick, but where overlain by the deeper footing 206, it was only 0.10 m thick).
- 5.1.11 The structures revealed appeared to represent at least two phases of construction, with a further phase of demolition or levelling that may be contemporary with deposit 109 in Trench 1.
- 5.1.12 The earliest structural feature was a 0.62 m wide N-S aligned wall (214/216) of limestone rubble, that appeared to extend beyond both ends of the trench and had been constructed over a stepped footing (213), which itself seemed to have been constructed directly over the buried topsoil 218. This was abutted by the made ground layer (219), approximately 0.2 m thick and predominantly mid-pale silty sand with lenses of mortar and ragstone rubble, which may have provided a surface for the cobbles (208) to the east of the wall.
- 5.1.13 A cobbled surface (208) was exposed to the east of wall 214, and may have been contemporary with it. The surface was overlain by lenses of compacted gravel (209) and sand (210) which could represent packed earth surfaces or trample. The uppermost of these deposits (210) produced 3 sherds of 11th- to 13th-century pottery and was in turn overlain by a 0.05 m thick, friable, mid grey, sandy silt (211) with 5% charcoal inclusions and sandy lenses. This deposit may represent an occupation layer associated with the underlying 'surfaces'.
- 5.1.14 Deposit 211 was overlain by an east-west aligned stone feature (212/215) with scorching evident along its southern face. This measured 1.3 m x 0.3 m x 0.2 m and may represent the north wall of a fireplace. This was aligned at right angles to structure 214, although probably post-dates the north-south structure as it was constructed over the possibly contemporary surface(s) (208-210). Although the southern face of this structure was well defined, the northern face may have been damaged during machine excavation of the rubble rich overburden (204). A possible indication of the northern face was preserved by a large stone block (215) in the western baulk: the suggested original line of the north wall of feature 212/215 is indicated in Figure 4.
- 5.1.15 Possibly contemporary with 212/215 was the south-west corner of a square or rectangular structure formed by structures 206 and 207. Structure 206 was aligned east-west, at a right angle to 214/216, and measured 0.9 m long x 0.6 m wide x 0.7 m

deep. It appeared to truncate the cobbled surface (208) to the south, although no construction cut was observed.

- 5.1.16 Structure 207 was aligned north-south and measured 0.8 m long x 0.3 m wide x 0.5 m deep. The relationship between the structural elements (206, 207, 213, 214, and 222) in the northern part of the trench is considered further in Section 7.2.
- 5.1.17 The cavity defined by walls 206/207 was backfilled by a mid grey brown, sandy silt deposit (201) which contained c25% ragstone rubble, some of which was in the form of large blocks measuring as much as 0.60 m x 0.20 m x 0.15 m. This fill produced a single sherd of 11th- to 13th-century pottery.
- 5.1.18 To the south of wall 206, the cobbled surface 208 and its overlying trampled layers (209, 210, 211) were sealed by layer 203, a 0.23 m thick, mid grey sandy silt with lenses of mortar, orange brown sandy silt and concentrations of ragstone rubble. Layer 203 was partially overlaid by layer 202, a layer of mid-orange brown sandy silt with a few rubble inclusions; this layer extended to the north over the wall 206 and layer 201.
- 5.1.19 Sealing layers 202 and 203 was deposit 204, averaging 0.25m deep and comprising a predominantly mid orange brown silty sand with concentrations of mid orange brown silty clay, ragstone rubble and lenses of burnt stone and mortar. This was overlaid by modern topsoil (205).

6 FINDS

6.1 Assessment of the Post-Roman Pottery *by John Cotter*

Introduction and Methodology

- 6.1.1 The assemblage comprises a total of 14 sherds of pottery weighing 163g.
- 6.1.2 All the pottery was examined and spot-dated during the present assessment stage. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (eg. decoration etc.).

Date and Nature of the Assemblage

- 6.1.3 The assemblage consists almost entirely of smallish and undiagnostic body sherds, the only exception being a complete foot and basal fragment from a post-medieval tripod-footed pipkin (cooking vessel). The latter is probably of 16th- to 17th-century date and is probably the latest piece in the assemblage. Most of the sherds are from unglazed coarsewares, probably cooking vessels, of early medieval character (11th to 13th century), although a date-range of c1100-1250 would probably accommodate

most of these. The coarsewares comprise (a few sherds each) a calcareous/oolitic-tempered ware - a tradition common to west Oxfordshire, and a sandy ware with coarse angular flint inclusions which may come from east Wiltshire or Berkshire. The most distinctive pieces are two glazed and red-painted jug sherds of medieval Brill/Boarstall ware from central Buckinghamshire. This is the most common glazed tableware found on 13th- to 14-century sites in Oxfordshire. One or two sherds of late medieval and early post-medieval Brill/Boarstall-types wares are also present. The 16th- to 17th-century tripod pipkin is in a post-medieval red earthenware and is probably a fairly local product.

- 6.1.4 The poor condition and widely ranging dates of the pottery are suggestive of casual loss, or redeposition, rather than intensive rubbish disposal. They would seem to indicate rubbish disposal at the peripheries of human settlement.

Table 1: Pottery Spot Dates

Context	Spot-date	Sherds	Weight	Comments
108	16-17C	1	73	Post-med red e'ware, complete foot from tripod-footed pipkin, clear glaze int. Sooted ext. Poss 1550-1650?
109	11-E13C	1	9	Bodysherd oolitic-tempered OXAC
112	11-E13C	1	5	Bodysherd oolitic-tempered OXAC, worn
120	16-17C	1	16	Post-med Brill ware? Unglazed jug/jar bodysherd
201	11-13C	1	10	Sandy ware with coarse flint - ?E Wilts. Bodysherd
204	13-14C	2	11	Brill? Cook pot bodysherd, E. Wilts bodysherd
206	14-16C?	1	8	Late med Brill ware? Fine sandy jug/jar bodysherd with decayed int glaze
210	11-13C	3	22	Oolitic-tempered & ?Wilts/Berks sandy with flint
211	13-14C	2	7	Brill glazed jug bodysherds with red slip decoration
217	11-13C	1	2	?Wilts sandy with flint. Bodysherd
TOTAL		14	163	

Potential of the Material and Recommendations for further work

- 6.1.5 Given its poor condition and the small size of the assemblage the pottery appears to have little further potential for research.

6.2 Assessment of the Building Materials

by Cynthia Poole

The Ceramic Building Material

- 6.2.1 A total of 35 fragments of ceramic brick and tile weighing 3357 g was recovered. The material is fully recorded and described on an Excel spreadsheet.

Fabrics

- 6.2.2 Six fabrics were provisionally identified, all essentially sandy in character. No attempt has been made to tie them into any local type series, though fabric 6 is similar to a medieval pottery fabric.

- 1a: Sandy (medium-coarse quartz sand)

- 1b: Sandy with small grits of Fe sandstone, sandy white clay pellets (?grog) and red clay pellets. (Fabric 1a with coarser grits.)
- 2: Fine sandy
- 3: Coarse sandy (white sand: calcite?) clay
- 4: Laminated clay with cream clay pellets, frequent coarse sand
- 5: Coarse rounded quartz sand & grit
- 6: Pale whitish cream/light brown matrix; high density of medium-coarse quartz sand

Forms

6.2.3 The quantification of forms is summarised in Table 2.

Roofing

- 6.2.4 The majority of the fragments were roofing material, predominantly flat peg tiles, which came from eight contexts (112, 116, 119, 207, 210, 217, 219, 221). Most pieces were fairly roughly finished. No complete dimensions were obtained other than thickness, which ranged from 12-16 mm. Three fragments had remnants of glaze on the surface, but only one of these could be regarded as a deliberately applied brown glaze. The others were probably accidental: one was a very small patch on a corner and the second possibly an accidental 'ash glaze'. Only one fragment had a circular peg or nail hole *c.* 12 mm diameter.
- 6.2.5 Ridge tiles were recovered from three contexts (204, 211, 221) and all but one fragment were made with the distinctive fabric 6. No complete dimensions were obtained other than thickness which measured 8-12 mm. Most fragments had a dark green glaze or a mottled yellowish green glaze, apart from one small fragment with a dark brown glaze made in fabric 1b. The most complete fragment had a plain inverted V shaped profile although there was no evidence for any crests.
- 6.2.6 The characteristics of coarse fabrics, fairly rough finish and the glaze are all indicative of a medieval date somewhere in the range of 13th-16th century. The presence of mortar on some surfaces suggests reuse.

Table 2: Quantification of ceramic building material

Type	Nos.	Wt (g)	Fabrics
Roof	17	1109	1a, 1b, 5
Ridge	12	464	5, 6
Floor	2	981	1b, 3
Brick	2	695	1a, 2
Unid	2	108	1a, 4
Total	35	3357	

Floor Tiles

- 6.2.7 Two decorated floor tiles were identified. Complete dimensions of 117 x 144 x 23 mm was obtained for one (from ext 116) but only the thickness of 20 mm for the other (ext 204). Brown glaze survived on three of the sides of the more complete tile and some small patches of green glaze on the surface, but the pattern had been all but erased, though a general diamond shaped can be discerned. A more detailed examination may recover more detail and with further research it may be possible to link it with known types and sources. The second fragment was smaller, but the pattern in cream on the reddish brown base of the tile was better preserved. It was covered by an irregular greenish yellow glaze. The floor tiles are of 13th- to 15th-century date and most probably from later within that range.

Bricks

- 6.2.8 One fragment of brick (from ext 116), made in a finer sandy fabric than the roofing material, measured about 85 mm wide by 60 mm thick and was roughly finished with the top slightly domed surrounded by a narrow flat margin. It is likely to be post-medieval in date, dating probably to about the 17th century. A second fragment of brick 44 mm thick looked possibly Roman in character: both surviving side surfaces had been cut flat. If it is not Roman it is likely to be an architectural brick deliberately cut to a particular shape.

Stone Slates

- 6.2.9 Two fragments of stone roofing slates were recovered (from exts 120 and 221), both displaying 10 mm diameter peg holes. A shallow depression around one of the peg holes suggested that it may have been drilled, potentially with a spoon bit. It has been suggested that a drilled (as opposed to a punched) peg hole may indicate medieval provenance (Joep), although any implications that this may have regarding the date of the tiles should be treated with caution (Munby pers. comm.).

Conclusions

- 6.2.10 The majority of this material appears to be medieval in date, with only the bricks likely to be later in date. The floor tiles are of interest and could possibly be more closely dated with further research.

6.3 Assessment of the metalwork assemblage by Leigh Allen

- 6.3.1 Two iron objects were recovered, comprising a sickle (in three pieces) from context 108 and a nail from context 204. The sickle has a whittle tang (75 mm) and a long, tapering curved blade (250 mm). A sickle of identical proportions was recovered from Dean Court Farm, Cumnor (Allen 1994, 372-373, fig.90, No.114). The form of these implements has changed little through time due to the simple and efficient design.

6.4 Report on the animal bone

by Fay Worley

Introduction

- 6.4.1 Animal bone was recovered from nine contexts and included several domestic and wild taxa, many of which had been butchered. The contexts containing animal bone are all late medieval or post-medieval in date.
- 6.4.2 The assemblage is stored bagged by context in one small archive box (100 x 120 x 400 mm).

Methodology

- 6.4.3 Animal bone was recovered by hand collection and from wet sieved sample residues (processed using a 250 μ m flot mesh and 500 μ m residue mesh). The complete >10mm and 4-10mm residue fractions were sorted for animal bone. 16% (by weight) of the 2-4mm fraction and 1 % of the <2mm fraction were sorted for animal bone.
- 6.4.4 The animal bone was identified to taxa and element by comparison with textual and faunal reference material at OA. Each specimen was weighed, specimens weighing less than 1 g were recorded as 0 g. any evidence of butchery or pathology was described. The condition of each bone fragment was graded on a five point scale (1 indicating very good condition to 5 indicating very poor condition) and any occurrences of recent breaks or burning noted. The assemblage was recorded in a *Microsoft Access* database which is available with the site archive.

Results

- 6.4.5 16 fragments (weighing 368 g) of animal bone were hand collected from the excavation, a further 46 fragments (33 g) were recovered from sieved residues. The hand collected assemblage comprises cattle, horse, sheep/goat, large mammal, medium mammal and domestic fowl elements (see Table 3), with cattle being the most frequent taxa. No indicators of age-at-death data (bone fusion or tooth attrition) or sex of the individuals were present.

Table 3: Identified taxa from the hand collected assemblage.

Context	Data	Taxon						Total
		Cattle	Domestic fowl	Horse	Large mammal	Medium mammal	Sheep/goat	
108	Number of fragments					1		1
	Weight (g)					13		13
109	Number of fragments	1			1		1	3
	Weight (g)	69			6		7	82
110	Number of fragments		1			1		2
	Weight (g)		1			14		15
112	Number of fragments					1		1
	Weight (g)					6		6

116	Number of fragments	1			1	1		3
	Weight (g)	46			69	4		119
120	Number of fragments	1						1
	Weight (g)	15						15
204	Number of fragments				1	1		2
	Weight (g)				14	2		16
210	Number of fragments	1		1				2
	Weight (g)	61		39				100
217	Number of fragments						1	1
	Weight (g)						2	2
Total Number of fragments		4	1	1	3	5	2	16
Total Sum of Weight (g)		191	1	39	89	39	9	368

- 6.4.6 Animal bone was identified in the >10 mm, 4-10 mm and 2-4 mm residue fractions. The sieved assemblage contained 46 fragments (33 g) animal bone included fragments identified as large, medium, and small mammal, rabbit, *Turdus* sp., medium bird and frog or toad (see Table 4). Again, no indicators of age-at-death were present.

Table 4: Identified taxa from the sieved residue, sample <101>

Data	Species							
	Large mammal	Medium mammal	Rabbit	Small mammal	<i>Turdus</i> sp.	Medium bird	Frog/toad	Unident.
Number of fragments	1	21	2	2	1	1	1	17
Weight (g)	15	17	0	0	0	0	0	1

- 6.4.7 The condition of the faunal assemblage was very good to good (see Table 5) which allowed the recognition of butchery evidence. Butchery was identified on cattle, horse, large and medium mammal bones (see Table 6). This evidence is discussed by context below. There was no evidence of animal gnawing and only one fragment, recovered from occupation debris overlying an internal hearth, was burnt.

Table 5: Condition of the animal bone

Condition	Context								
	108	109	110	112	116	120	204	210	217
Total number of fragments	1	3	48	1	3	1	2	2	1
1 - very good	100%		35%		67%	100%	100%	100%	
2 - good		100%	65%	100%	33%				100%

Table 4: Prevalence of butchery marks

Context	Number of butchered fragments				Total number of fragments
	Cattle	Horse	Large mammal	Medium mammal	
109	1				3
110				4	48
112					1
116	1		1		3
120					1
204			1		2
210	1	1			2
Total	2	1	2	4	62

Context 108

- 6.4.8 A single fragment of medium mammal mandible was recovered from this context.

Context 109

- 6.4.9 The majority of a right cattle ulna and a large mammal long bone fragment were recovered from this context. The proximal end of the ulna had been chopped and then snapped off, possibly during disarticulation of the elbow joint.

Context 110

- 6.4.10 The hand collected assemblage from this context included a medium mammal rib fragment and domestic fowl sternum. The rib had a fine transverse knife cut on its convex face possibly inflicted during meat removal or carcass division. The rib also showed signs of infection, possibly periostitis, with active bone and bone extension on the convex face.
- 6.4.11 The sieved assemblage from this context comprised a rabbit scapula and cranial fragment, a frog or toad tibio-fibula, a *Turdus* species humerus, a charred large mammal rib blade, three medium mammal rib blades, cranial, long bone, and indeterminate fragments, two small mammal teeth, a medium bird cervical vertebra and 17 indeterminate fragments. The medium mammal rib fragments were all butchered, having been chopped at the end probable during division of the carcass into cuts of meat. The context was interpreted as occupational debris over an internal hearth, which may explain the presence of the charred fragment.

Context 112

- 6.4.12 This context contained a medium mammal rib blade fragment.

Context 116

- 6.4.13 This context contained a cattle atlas, large mammal cervical vertebra and medium mammal rib. The two vertebrae had been butchered. The cervical vertebrae had been chopped transversely just caudal to the cranial articulation, the caudal portion was present. This butchery probably occurred during division of the spinal column. The cattle atlas had also been chopped transversely caudal to the cranial articulation but this time the cranial portion was present. Two fine knife cuts were identified on the ventral face towards the cranial articulation. These butchery marks may represent slaughter by slitting the throat and then decapitation.

Context 120

- 6.4.14 A single cattle cuneiform carpal was recovered from in this context.

Context 204

- 6.4.15 A large mammal rib blade fragment from this context was very recent-looking with butchery marks suggestive of filleting off meat and dividing the ribcage. The context also included a fresh looking medium mammal-sized indeterminate fragment.

Context 210

- 6.4.16 A cattle distal femur diaphysis and horse metatarsal were recovered from this context, both had been butchered with their diaphyses chopped. The horse bone also showed signs of slight osteomyelitis with a sinus towards the foramen.

Context 217

- 6.4.17 A single fragment of sheep or goat mandible was recovered from this context.

Recommendations and Potential

- 6.4.18 No further work is required on this assemblage. Little can be concluded from a bone assemblage of this size, however, the good state of preservation indicates that any further animal bone recovered from this site has the potential to inform about animal utilisation from past occupation.

6.5 Palaeo-environmental remains
by Seren Griffiths and Rebecca Nicholson

Methodology

- 6.5.1 One environmental sample of 20 litres was taken to assess the preservation of charred plant remains and for the recovery of small bones and artefacts. The deposit sampled probably represented medieval kitchen waste deposited over a hearth base. The sample was processed by flotation using a modified Siraf-type machine, the flot being collected onto a 250 micron mesh. The samples were air-dried and the flots scanned under a binocular microscope.

Charred Plant Remains

- 6.5.2 The samples produced a reasonably sized flot of c 100ml. A range of ecofactual evidence relating to subsistence was present in the flot and residues. Charred cereal grains were abundant in the flot. Often these grains were fragmentary or high-fragmentary, but a range of taxa were probably present including ?*Hordeum* sp (barley), ?*Triticum aestivum* (bread wheat), and ?*Avena* sp (oat). A number of >2mm sized *Vicia/Pisum* spp. (bean/pea) were present in the flot, which might have represented a food resource, through the presence of wild vetch could account for some of these items. Weed seeds were present in low levels in the sample including a possible ?*Rumex* sp (dock).

Snails

- 6.5.3 Land snails were rather poorly preserved considering the large volume of sediment processed. The assemblage comprised approximately 25 identifiable individuals, excluding *Cecilioides acicula*. *C. acicula* burrows deeply into the soil and is of no

useful palaeoecological value. The assemblage was mixed and comprised the open country species *Vallonia excentrica* and catholic species *Trichia hispida* and *Cochlicopa* spp.. *Candidula* spp., considered to be medieval introductions to the Upper Thames Valley were also noted. The presence of Clausillidae apical fragments and a single zonitid shell however suggest more enclosed environments. Although small the assemblage suggests an environment with both open areas and areas where perhaps vegetation was denser with long grass or scrub.

Small bones

- 6.5.4 The fish assemblage was extremely well preserved and included bones from herring (*Clupea harengus*), eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), ling (*Molva molva*) and a flatfish. Fish scales from pike (*Esox lucius*) and possibly a cyprinid (Cyprinidae) indicate the utilisation of freshwater as well as marine taxa. Several unidentified small bird bones were also present.

Discussion

- 6.5.5 The relatively small, single sample from this evaluation produced remains from a range of plants and animals, almost all probably representing food items available to the residents. The quantity of fish remains was notable and indicates the potential of this site to produce a well preserved bone assemblage.
- 6.5.6 It is uncertain whether the volumes of legumes present in the flot represent a substantial part of the diet, or whether some of the items are in fact wild vetch, which could form part of an arable weed seed assemblage. Similarly it is unclear whether the *Avena* sp (oat) represents an economic species in its own right or is present in the sample as part of the harvesting for staples of wheat or barley cereal based diet.

Table 6 - a summary of the charred plant remains from sample 10

Cxt	Flot vol (ml)	Type of cxt	Grain	Chaff	Weeds	Other charred	Molluscs	Vol floated (litres)	Notes
110	100	kitchen waste deposit	++++	+	+ ?Rumex sp	++ Vicia/ Pisum sp	++	20	Fish bone and scales present in flot and residue

Key: +=present (up to 5 items), ++=frequent (5-25), +++=common (25-100) ++++=abundant >100

7 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

7.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 7.1.1 The stratigraphic and artefactual evidence recovered from both trenches suggested that the deposits and structures encountered represent predominantly early phases in the architectural history of the site. However, it is acknowledged that the reliability of the small artefactual assemblage in attributing dates to the various made ground/demolition deposits is open to question, so the suggested interpretative phasing should be considered with caution.

7.2 Interpretation

Phase i: Pre-11th century

- 7.2.1 Although the sandy deposit (200) revealed in Trench 2 was only seen within two small slots excavated against the structures, the top of the deposit was consistently at the same height (113.13 m OD) and was overlain by a deposit which was relatively uniform in composition (218). These deposits were loosely interpreted as the natural sand, overlain by a buried top or ploughsoil. The consistent level of the natural suggests that the pronounced N-S slope across which Trench 2 was sited is at least to some degree the result of building and/or demolition processes, rather than a natural terrace edge.

Phase I: 11th-14th century?

- 7.2.2 Where excavated, the buried topsoil appears to have been directly overlain by the earliest structures revealed within Trench 2 (213, 208). It is possible that deposit 219, which abuts the walls, and may underlie the cobbled surface 208, was a pre-construction levelling layer to create the platform, which was then cut through by the foundation trenches of the walls. Alternatively layer 219 may have been dumped against the wall to create an elevated platform after the walls' construction
- 7.2.3 The deposits immediately overlying surface 208 may represent different events. Although the compacted gravel (209) and sand (210) deposits were reasonably convincing as trampled/packed surfaces, deposit 211 (originally thought to be an occupation deposit) produced 2 sherds of 13th-14th century pottery and may represent the base of the overlying 'made ground' rather than a deposit associated with the surface(s) below.
- 7.2.4 Alternative interpretations are possible for the arrangement of stone features in Trench 2. It seems clear that N-S wall 213/214 is the earliest structure, extending the full length of the trench and bordered by the cobbled layer 208. One scenario sees the contexts 206, 207 and 216 as representing the SW corner of a structure built over wall 213/214. Alternatively context 216 is a continuation of wall 214, 207 is the

equivalent of stepped footing 213, and context 206 represents a later W-E wall butting 216.

- 7.2.5 The function of the cavity defined by contexts 206 and 207 is unclear. Its 'sunken' nature invites two possibilities, although neither are particularly convincing. It seems unlikely to have been a garderobe pit as there was no evidence of cess rich deposits, or staining of the lower courses of stone or the underlying sandy natural. An equally unlikely interpretation is that it was a cellar, as the wall footings were shallow (only 0.5 m below the cobbled surface 208) and there was no evidence of a floor. Perhaps the best alternative is that the north-east corner of the trench just represents the natural ground surface outside the building extending to the south and east.
- 7.2.6 Within Trench 1 the hearth base (111) appears to belong to the earliest phase of construction, particularly when the relative heights of surface 111 and surface 208 are considered (113.78 m OD and 113.74 m OD respectively). It is significant that layer 120, in the southern sondage, interpreted as possibly a fill of an ash or rubbish pit, is clearly at a lower level than the hearth. This suggests that somewhere between the two sondages lies an external wall, separating the internal hearth from the external pit fills.
- 7.2.7 No clear dating evidence associated with the earliest structures was recovered, although a relative date can be cautiously assigned based on the artefactual evidence from the overlying deposits. The overlying made ground deposits (see below) appear to have produced almost exclusively 11th- to 14th-century material, and it is therefore reasonable to suggest that the stratigraphically earlier structures probably relate to an abbey grange pre-dating the 1330s foundation. This line of logic presumes that the late medieval rubbish disposal regime was organised in typical fashion, disposing of material well away from the site of occupation or domestic activity. It would be reasonable to suggest that, were this not the case, a lot more late medieval domestic debris would have been found in the two trenches. Only the late medieval sherd in the surface of the fabric of wall 206 seems to contradict this scenario, but the fact that it was found in the surface of the part-demolished wall suggests that it is intrusive, and relates to the late medieval rebuilding.

Phase II: 13th-14th century?

- 7.2.8 Deposits 109 in Trench 1 and 201, 202 and 203 in Trench 2 may represent the demolition of the standing elements of the structures described above, and the levelling up of the site prior to the construction of Cumnor Place in the 1330's. The origin of deposit 204 is uncertain; although the artefactual evidence would suggest that it belongs to this phase of activity, that material may well be residual. The construction cut (114) for the drain (112) in Trench 1 truncates deposit 109, which would suggest that it post-dates the demolition of the pre-14th-century building and relates to the subsequent Benedictine complex. A post-medieval pottery sherd was found in layer 108, interpreted as a ground surface during the use of the drain. While this may suggest that the drain was later still in date, it is possible that the sherd is

intrusive. The high build quality of the drain strongly supports the idea that it is part of Cumnor Place, although it may be a later addition to the complex.

Phases III and IV: 15th-18th century?

- 7.2.9 The overlying surface (103) and associated made ground and bedding deposits (107 and 102 respectively) are presumably part of the final phase of activity at Cumnor Place, between the Dissolution and the eventual demolition in 1811.

Phase V: 19th century?

- 7.2.10 While it seems likely that the robber trench (105) in Trench 1 is contemporary with the demolition of Cumnor Place in 1811, the origin of deposit 204 in Trench 2 is less certain. It is possible that this too relates to the 19th-century demolition, although the artefactual evidence recovered was predominantly dated to the 11th-14th centuries. It is possible that deposit 204 forms part of the 14th-century demolition/levelling deposits associated with the construction of Cumnor Place (Phase II), although this would imply that no further impact has been made during the later occupation of the site. Without further excavation, the relationship between 204 and the post-medieval deposits in Trench 1 is uncertain.

7.3 General Overview

- 7.3.1 An additional geophysical survey was undertaken in the immediate area by Roger Ainslie following the backfilling of the present evaluation trenches (Ainslie, 2005). Whilst the results of this survey were similar to those produced by the earlier survey (ref. 1.3.3), the reinterpretation of these results can take into account the structural remains described above.
- 7.3.2 The sub-rectangular area of low resistance immediately to the west of the current western boundary of the graveyard was again apparent and, while acknowledging that this may be the result of a natural soil condition, Ainslie suggests that "*Areas of low resistance are sometimes caused by drainage being inhibited by floors and similar less permeable surfaces*". Given the results of the evaluation, it is therefore possible to suggest that the both trenches were located within a single N-S oriented range of buildings occupying this area of low resistance.
- 7.3.3 Evidence for at least three phases of construction and/or activity were revealed during the evaluation. The dating and characterisation of the structures was restricted by the limited scope of the evaluation and the relatively meagre artefactual assemblage. However, certain conclusions can be drawn as to the nature of the remains.
- 7.3.4 It seems likely, given the peripheral location of the structures in relation to the projected extent of the main range of Cumnor Place (and also based on the limited dating evidence), that the structures relate either to the earlier grange known to have existed somewhere in the vicinity, or to a late medieval range of buildings outside the main quadrangle of the later medieval complex. Little can be said on the basis of the

evidence so far about the buildings' dimensions, other than that the CBM and stone slates, along with the substantial footings uncovered, suggest large and potentially high status buildings.

- 7.3.5 As to these structure's functions, the presence of butchered animal bones and numerous fish bones - together with a fireplace in Trench 2 and the possible hearth in Trench 1 - make a reasonably convincing argument for a utilitarian function for these structure(s). It is possible that they represent a kitchen block, or service range. It is worth noting that the structural remains uncovered lie some 10-15 m to the west of the conjectural footprint of the western range of Cumnor Place (as determined by E. Impey - see Figure 5). This seems to be an excessive distance for an associated kitchen range, which, in a late medieval monastic context, would most likely be directly attached directly to the hall. The custom for a separate kitchen building had largely died out by the 14th century, especially in large and high status establishments.
- 7.3.6 As has been said, the general disposition of the buildings of the early grange are unknown. However, as Figure 5 indicates, the orientation of the later medieval complex and the earlier grange remains (if so they be) revealed in the evaluation are similar. This fact offers some support to the possibility that buildings of the earlier grange may have been retained (in whole or part) in the later medieval complex.
- 7.3.7 The connection between Cumnor Place and the grange at Dean Court (Allen, 439-40 & 447) is well known, in that the latter went through a number of stages of development, before being superseded by the foundation of Cumnor Place in the 14th century. Far more of the buildings at Cumnor Place would have to be investigated (and understood in detail) to allow any meaningful comparison between the two sites. However, it is important to note that if, as the evidence from this evaluation suggests, at least some of the remains excavated relate to the pre-14th century medieval grange, then such a comparison between the two sites would be of great value, shedding light on the Abbey's estate management practices

8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL IN RELATION TO OUTLINE RESEARCH DESIGN

8.1 Periods represented

- 8.1.1 While the majority of the deposits and structures appear to relate to the pre-14th century abbey grange and the subsequent construction and demolition of Cumnor Place (14th-19th centuries), there was also evidence that the pre-existing ground surface (11th-12th century?) is still extant, at least to the west of the 14th-century building.

8.2 Character of archaeological remains

- 8.2.1 The evaluation has established that structural remains survive beneath the later demolition deposits.

8.3 Range and preservation of finds

- 8.3.1 Although the majority of the finds were recovered from general spreads of demolition rubble/levelling deposits, there is potential for a greater assemblage from deposits more directly associated with the structures encountered. The range of finds included building materials and a small pottery assemblage.

8.4 Range and preservation of palaeo-environmental deposits

- 8.4.1 Although only one suitable deposit was encountered in sufficient quantity to obtain a sample, there is potential for further environmental evidence to be recovered from possible occupation layers associated with the structures revealed.

8.5 Summary of anticipated significance/ potential

- 8.5.1 Although previous investigations have shown that structural elements relating to Cumnor Place survive to the east, it was not certain whether structural remains associated with the pre-Benedictine foundation had survived. It seems likely that the structures encountered during the evaluation relate to this phase, and there is significant potential for reconstructing the early architectural history of the site.

APPENDICES

9 APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds (•)</i>	<i>Date</i>
Trench 1							
	100	Layer		0.25	Topsoil		Mod
	101	Layer			Subsoil		Mod
	102	Layer		0.1	Bedding dep. for 103?		P. med
	103	?Surface		0.05	Surface		P. med
	104	Fill			Fill of robber trench		P.med
	105	Cut			Robber trench		P.med
	106	Layer		0.25	M.Ground (s.a 107)		P.med
	107	Layer		0.15	M.Ground (s.a 106)		P.med
	108	Layer		0.07	?Occupation	•	P.med
	109	Layer		0.18	?Demolition	•	L. med
	110	Layer		0.05	?Occupation	•	Med
	111	Surface			Floor surface		Med
	112	Structure			Drain	•	L. med
	113	Fill			Fill of construction cut for drain		L. med
	114	Cut			Construction cut for drain		L. med
	115	Layer			Same as 102		P. med
	116	Layer			Part of 108?	•	P. med
	117	Layer			Part of 108?		P. med
	118	Layer			Made ground? (part of 109?)		L. med
	119	Layer			Made ground? (part of 109?)	•	L. med
	120	Layer			Made ground? (part of 109?)	•	L. med
	121	Fill			Lower fill of construction cut 114		L. med
	122	Layer			Part of 108?		P. med
Trench 2							
	200	Layer			Natural sand		
	201	'Fill'			Backfill of structure 206/207	•	L. med
	202	Deposit			Demolition deposit/made ground		L. med
	203	Deposit			Demolition deposit/made ground		L. med
	204	Deposit			Demolition	•	L. med

				deposit/levelling		
	205	Layer		Topsoil		Modern
	206	Structure		E-W wall		Med
	207	Structure		N-S wall	•	Med
	208	Surface		Cobbled surface		Med
	209	Deposit		?compacted gravel surface		Med
	210	Deposit		?compacted sand surface	•	Med
	211	Deposit		Occupation/demolition?	•	L. med
	212	Structure		E-W wall (N wall of fire place)		Med
	213	Structure		Stepped footing for 214/216		Med
	214	Structure		N-S wall		Med
	215	Structure		N face of 212??		Med
	216	Structure		N continuation of 214?		Med
	217	Deposit		?demolition	•	L. med
	218	Deposit		Buried top/plough soil		Med
	219	Deposit		Made ground/construction cut fill	•	Med
	220	Deposit		Demolition horizon??		L. med
	221	Deposit		Demolition/made ground	•	L. med
	222	Structure		Poss N continuation of 213??		Med

10 APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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Bartlett, A D, 1850 *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Cumnor Place*

Bartlett, A D, 2001 *Cumnor Hall Gardens: Report on Archaeogeophysical Survey*

VCH, 1924 *Victoria County History of Berkshire Horner Hundred; Cumnor* 398-405

Wilkinson, D, 1992 (ed) *OAU Fieldwork Manual*

11 APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Cumnor Parish Cemetery Extension

Site code: CUMCE'05

Grid reference: SP 459 041

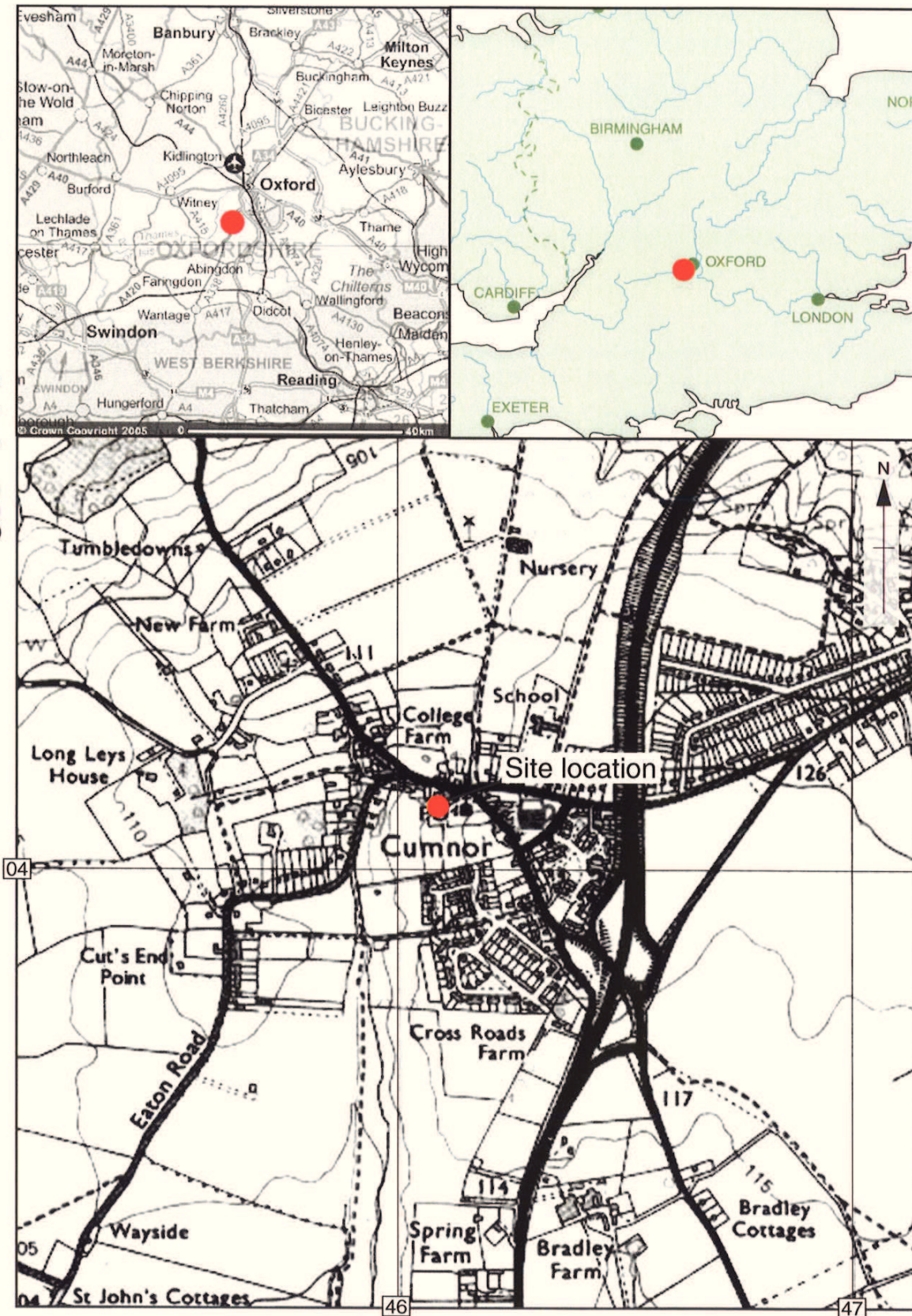
Type of evaluation: Trenched

Date and duration of project: 3rd – 7th October 2005

Area of site: 2 x 5m x 2m trenches

Summary of results: Structural remains and demolition deposits associated with Cumnor Place and its predecessor

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.



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Figure 1: Site location

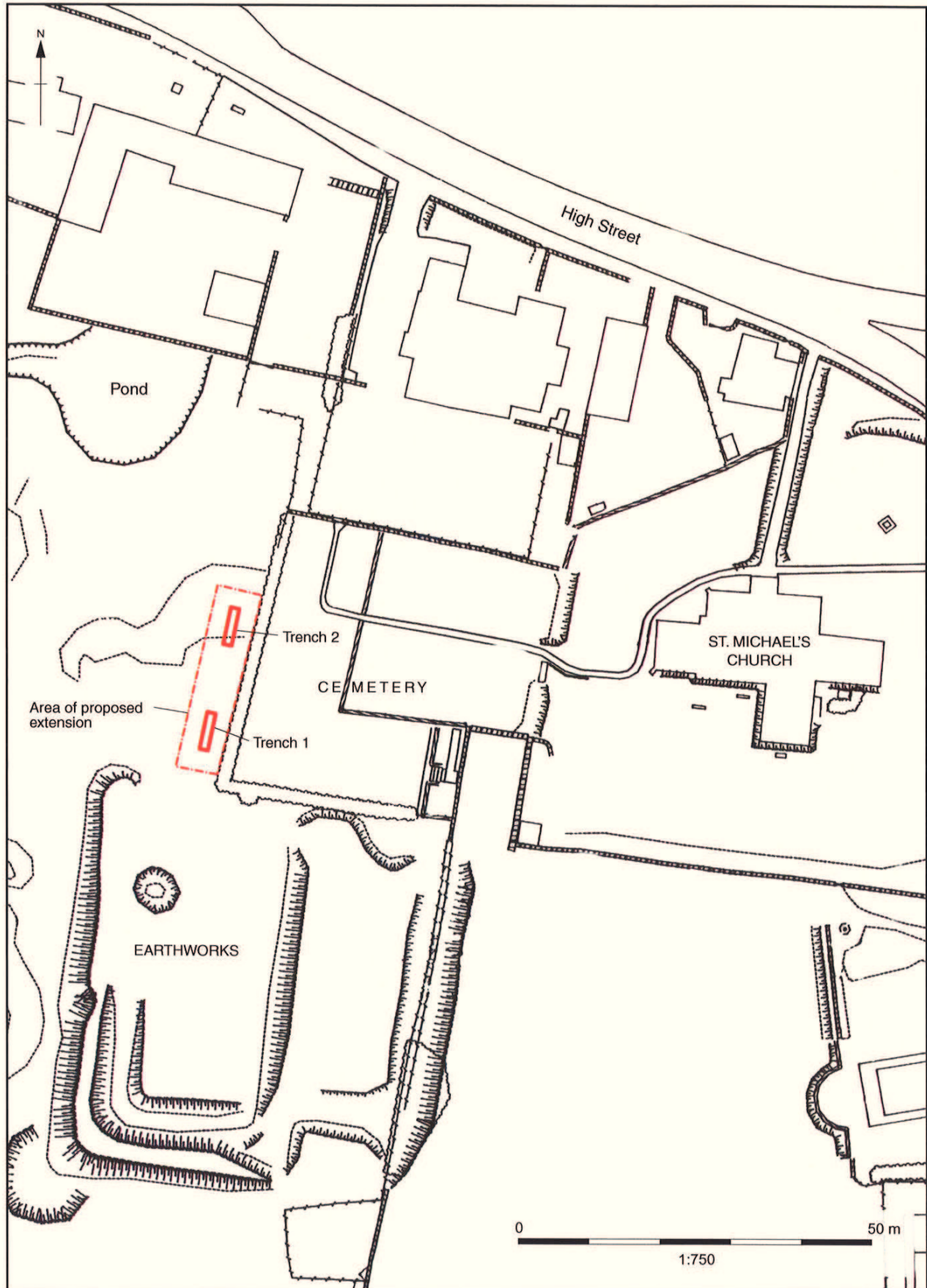


Figure 2: Trench locations

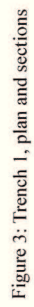
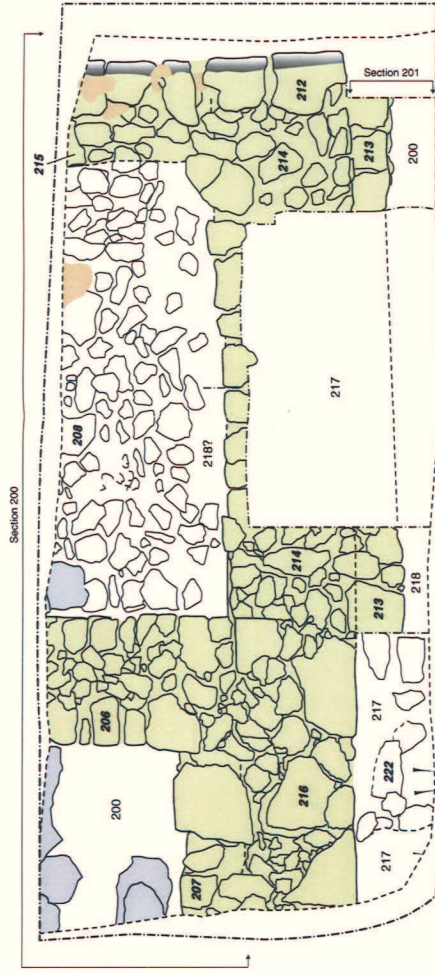
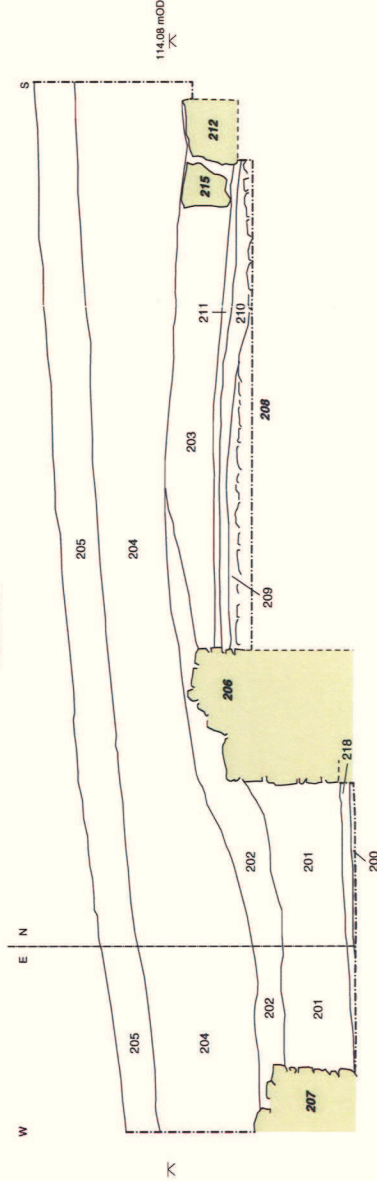


Figure 3: Trench 1, plan and sections

Trench 2 Plan



Trench 2 Section 200



Trench 2 Section 201

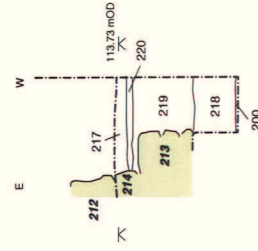
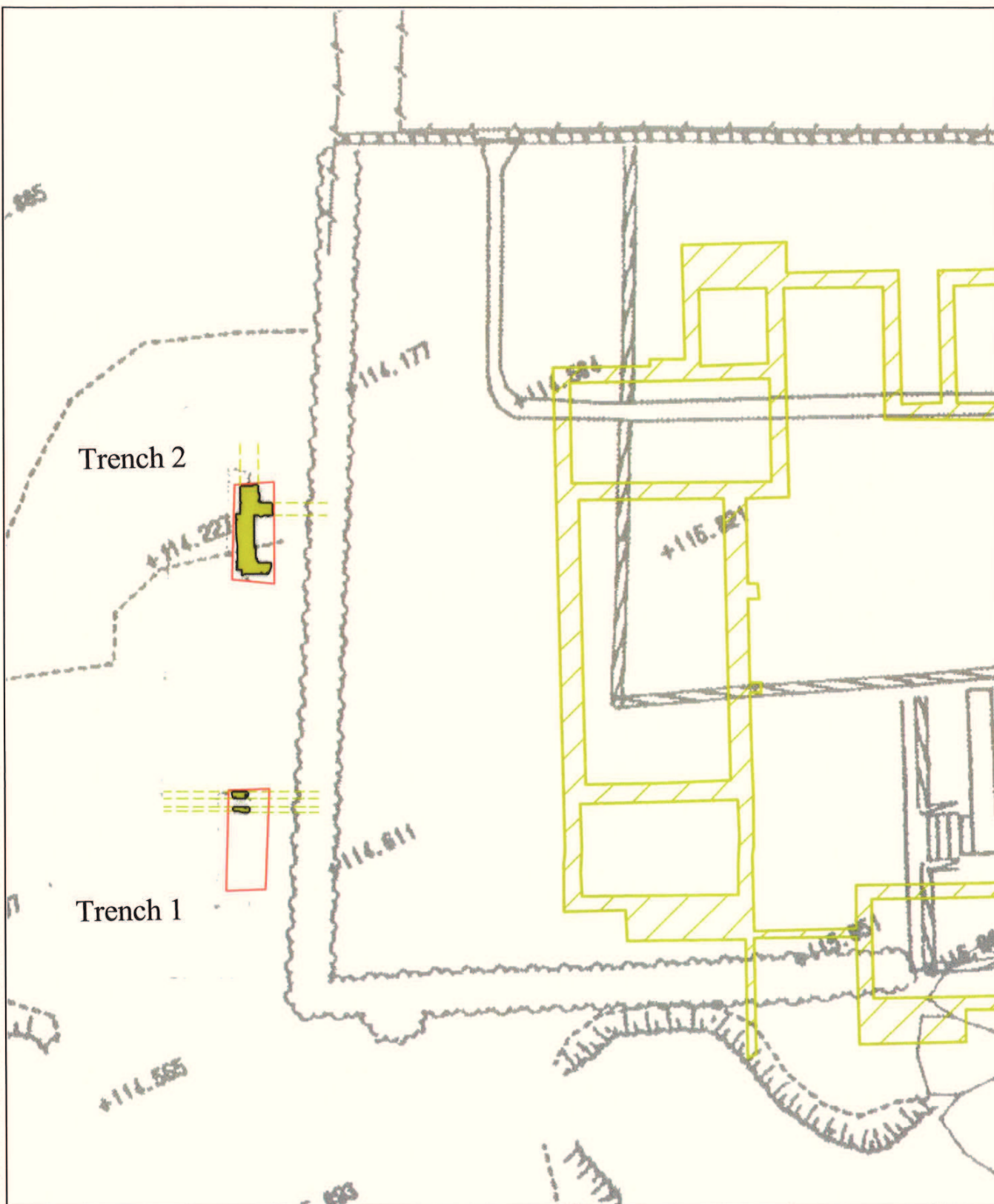


Figure 4: Trench 2, plan and sections

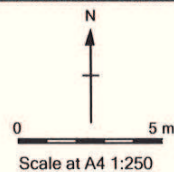


- 2005 Evaluation Trenches
- West Range of Cumnor Place, projected from interpretation by E. Impey
- Wall Footings
- Extrapolated Feature
- Basemap

Survey Data supplied by :
OA

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web: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



CUMCE05 CUMNOR CHURCH

Drawing No.	OA2
Date printed	21 Dec 2005
Drawing title	

Figure 5:
Archaeological features
in relation to West Range
of Cumnor Place



Plate 1: Aerial view of Cumnor Church and environs (5.10.35)



Plate 2: Trench 2 looking south



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