

Archaeological Watching Brief Oakhurst, Bourton Road, Frankton Warwickshire

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Report 1006

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Summary

Archaeological trenching in advance of groundworks for a replacement dwelling and a new driveway at Oakhurst, Bourton Road, Frankton revealed no significant archaeological deposits or materials.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Rugby Borough Council for the erection of a replacement dwelling, garage and garden store at Oakhurst, Frankton (Ref R10/2233/PLN). The proposed development site lies in an area of archaeological sensitivity, in close proximity to undated cropmark enclosures. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of the archaeological observation of the removal of topsoil within the footprint of the proposed building and the new driveway, in accordance with a Brief prepared by the County Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority, was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out in June 2011. The methodology was revised during the work when it was established that over 500mm of topsoil covered the site, which precluded the stripping of the footprint. An alternative scheme comprising the digging of a series of trial trenches was therefore adopted.

1.3 The principal aim of the project was to form an understanding of any archaeological deposits or materials that may have been disturbed or destroyed by the development. Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code FO11.

2 Location

2.1 Frankton village lies in the parish of the same name, with the River Leam forming the southern boundary thereof. The historic village stands on a well-marked hill about 110m a.o.d in the centre of the parish. The site is located on the south-east side of Bourton Road at National Grid Reference SP 4292 7047. The area is currently a private garden (Fig 1).

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is a Quaternary deposit of Dunsmore Gravel which overlies Jurassic period Blue Lias clay of the Lower Lias Group (British Geological Survey 1984).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Frankton parish contains surprisingly little evidence for past human interaction compared to the other parishes on Dunsmore. However, this may be a reflection of the low levels of modern development and therefore opportunity to reveal archaeological sites and

finds. Evidence for considerable later prehistoric and Roman period settlement survives across much of Dunsmore (Palmer 2002, 2007a, 2007b).

3.2 In 1999 work on a gas main which passed through the parish revealed a small late Iron Age D-shaped enclosure and an annular Roman enclosure near Larch Spinney (not on plan). These features were thought to have had a ceremonial; function based on the absence of domestic finds (Palmer 2010).

3.3 Oakhurst lies near two cropmarks recorded on the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record. MWA 3174 is a small, three sided enclosure with a spur to the south-east which backs onto a recently removed field boundary. Ostensibly this appears to be morphologically prehistoric although it remains possible that is a modern feature associated with 'inclosure' of the area in the 17th century (see below). The second cropmark site MWA 3175 immediately adjacent to Oakhurst, is more enigmatic and there is reason to suppose that it is a geological phenomenon.

3.4 The earliest historical reference to Frankton comes from the foundation charter of Coventry Priory in which Frankton is granted by Earl Leofric along with other lands in 1043. These lands were probably seized by Early Roger of Shrewsbury after the Norman conquest, although they were returned later, certainly by 1267, when Leofric's charter was confirmed. Frankton was stated to be in the barony of the Prior of Coventry in 1316 (VCH 51, 92-4).

3.5 Domesday records 5 hides (land sufficient for 5 plough teams) in Frankton and aside from the four belonging to Coventry Priory, a further hide was held before 1066 by Chentwin, and after by Ralf of the Count of Meulan (ibid).

3.6 Aerial photographs clearly show the earthwork remains of shrunken village at the south-west end of the present village (MWA 8311 and MWA 8312), whilst the late 19th century Ordnance Survey would suggest that the medieval village was quite expansive (MWA 9515).

3.7 The church of St Nicholas dates from at least the early 13th century as represented by the lower stage of the tower. The rest of the church was rebuilt in the 14th century, and in the 15th century the upper part of the tower was rebuilt.

3.8 Frankton parish was inclosed in 1656 and in 1678 two thirds of the former common fields were said to be very large pastures exhibiting ridge and furrow (VCH 1951, 92-4).

4 Observation

4.1 The photographs depicting the cropmark MWA 3175 were studied before visiting the site and it was concluded that it was morphologically characteristic of a geological structure.

4.2 A series of five trial trenches was excavated using a 14 tonne tracked excavator using a 1.8m wide ditching bucket. Four of the trenches were linked to form a large rectangle, positioned over the proposed new footprint. The fifth trench was aligned along the proposed new driveway, inside the site street frontage.

4.3 Geological natural gravel (1) and clay (2) was achieved some 0.3-0.5m below current surface levels in the rectangular trench, the difference relating to the amount of recent truncation, rather than historic land use or soil formation. Natural gravel (1) was 0.5m below the current surface level in the linear trench.

4.4 In each of the trenches the natural was covered by topsoil (3), 0.3-0.5m deep. In the most southerly trench the topsoil was overlaid by 0.20m of recently laid gravel surface (4), whilst in the western trench the topsoil was sealed by a concrete surface (5).

4.5 Modern services and foundation were found across the area but were not recorded.

5 Conclusion

5.1 The trenching exercise at Oakhurst was successful in establishing that no archaeological deposits would be disturbed by the construction of the replacement dwelling and its associated driveway.

5.2 The cropmark MWA 3175 located immediately adjacent to Oakhurst is probably a geological phenomenon.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	Natural clay	Wolston Clay and Blue Lias Clay (Olive, bluish-grey and reddish-yellow patches with occasional gravel patches)
2	Natural gravel	Dunsmore gravel
3	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown sandy clay loam
4	Gravel surface	0.20m of recently laid gravel surface
5	Concrete	Concrete surface

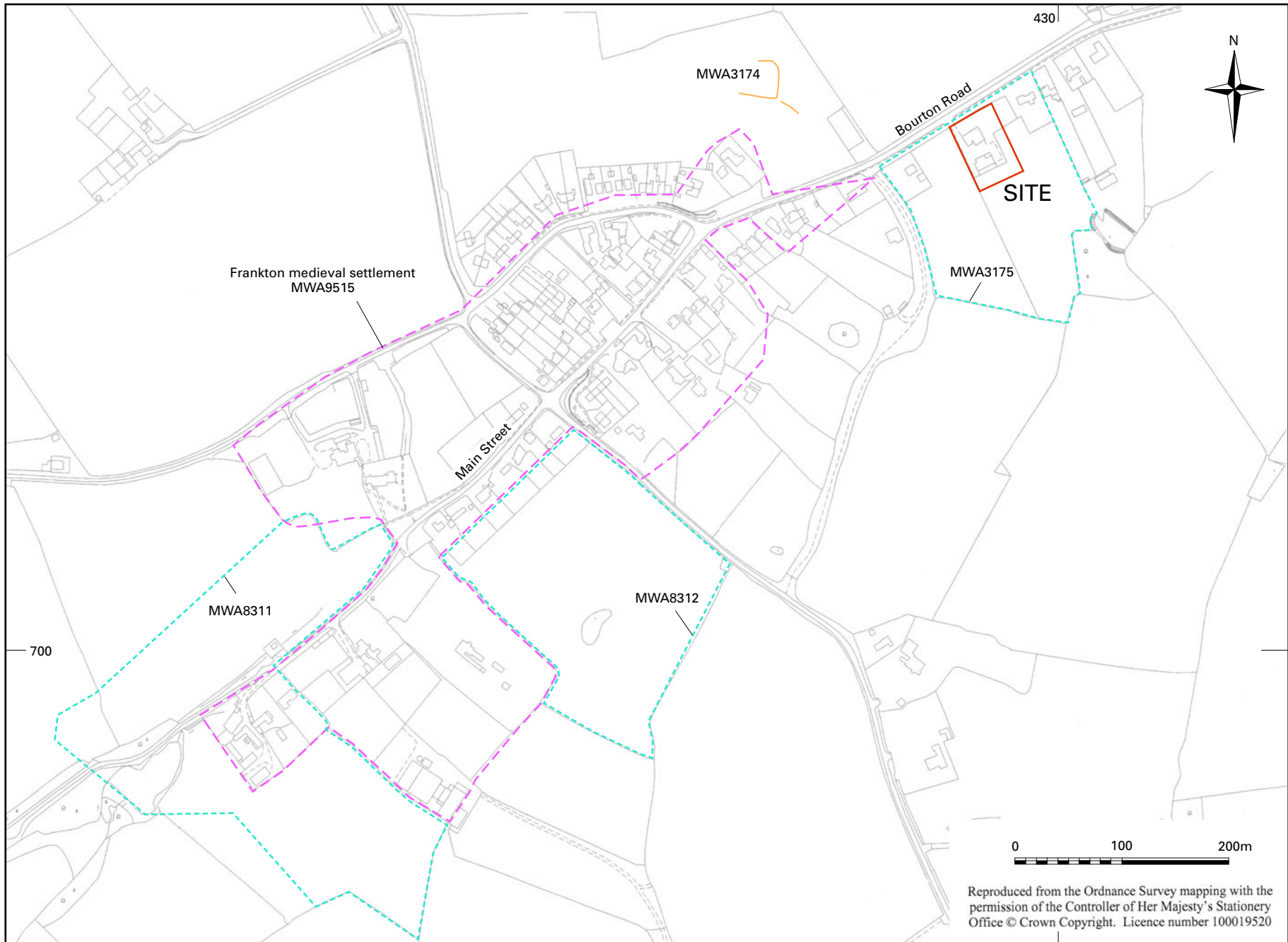


Fig 1: Site location



Fig 2: Trenches excavated

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Fig 3: The site (taken on arrival)



Fig 4: The site (taken whilst leaving)



Fig 5: The east arm (rectangular trench)



Fig 6: The north arm (rectangular trench)



Fig 7: The south arm (rectangular trench)



Fig 8: The west arm (rectangular trench)



Fig 9: The linear trench