

Wheelwright House, Long Compton, Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1507
JANUARY 2015



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project:	Watching Brief
Commissioned by:	Dick Shacklock
Project Report No.	1507
Site Code:	LW14
Planning Reference:	S11/02330/FUL
National Grid Reference:	SP 2903 3184
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Date:	January 2015
Report reference:	Rann, C, 2015 <i>Wheelwright House, Long Compton, Warwickshire: Archaeological Watching Brief</i> , Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1507.

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief carried out during the groundworks phase of a five dwelling development in an area where medieval activity was established by evaluation, did not encounter any significant archaeological deposits. Several medieval pottery sherds were recovered and stonework, possibly relating to a former pigsty, was observed.

The new dwellings were constructed using concrete ring beams on pile foundations. This method when combined with very wet conditions had the cumulative effect of presenting very little opportunity to determine if archaeological deposits were being disturbed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission was granted by Stratford on Avon District Council for the erection of five dwellings and the provision of vehicular access at Wheelwright House, Old Road, Long Compton (S11/02330/FUL). A condition of that planning permission required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Planning Authority.

1.2 An archaeological evaluation of the development site was carried out in September 2012 which determined that some significant archaeological remains, dated between the 11th and 14th centuries, survived on the site.

1.3 On the advice of the Warwickshire Planning Archaeologist Anna Stocks, in her capacity as archaeological advisor to the planning authority, the applicant took account of the findings of the evaluation and designed the development to minimise the disturbance to the archaeological resource. Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake a Watching Brief during the groundworks phase of the development which was carried out between January 2014 and January 2015. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under temporary accession number T/1320.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The development site is located on the west side of the main road through the parish at map reference SP 2903 3184.

2.2 The underlying geology is alluvium and first and second terrace river gravels (British Geological Survey 1968).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The full archaeological background to the site has been described in the evaluation report. Of interest here is the summary of the evaluation results:

Wheelwright House is a stone-built structure of probable 17th-century date positioned on the former street frontage of the main road to Oxford (Old Road). An archaeological evaluation consisting of 85m of trial trench, divided into six trenches, exposed significant archaeological remains dated between the 11th and 14th centuries.

Trench 3 contained a single narrow stone wall, what appeared to be the remains of a 11th-13th century stone drain and partially robbed stone walls. These possibly contemporary features may have been associated with a house or perhaps outbuildings in the rear of a medieval property at the southern end of the medieval village. Immediately south of the site, earthworks of house platforms were visible in 1965, but have since been largely ploughed flat. A soil layer in Trench 5 contained a significant amount of medieval pottery of mostly 12th or 13th century date. This pottery was not abraded and therefore probably derived from very close by. A small amount of mid-11th century pottery, which is rarely been found during archaeological work in south Warwickshire, may attest to the relatively high value given to Long Compton shortly after Domesday.

Medieval pottery was recovered in small numbers from all of the trenches except Trench 4. Such finds are suggestive of a low level scatter of debris from a nearby occupation focus. These finds, along with a few sherds of post medieval pottery suggest that the area was in use, in varying degrees of intensity, during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the present work was to record any archaeological remains disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination.

4.2 The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.

4.3 The objective of the work was a programme of controlled excavation to development formation levels, or the geological natural, whichever the higher.

4.4 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with the WSI.

5 RESULTS

5.1 The new dwellings were constructed on concrete ring beams over pile foundations. This necessitated the excavation of the topsoil and overburden across the site followed by the sinking of piles and then the excavation of individual ground beam slots (Fig 3). This construction method is not ideal for the identification of archaeological deposits or cut features. In addition, severe wet weather caused trenches to fill with water immediately after excavation and the water table to be artificially raised during the groundworks phase (Fig 4).

5.2 The ground reduction for an access road, soakaways and a cable trench were also observed. The foundation for plot 1 was not observed after agreement with the planning archaeologist on the basis that it was unlikely to be worthwhile.

5.3 A consistent deposit sequence was observed across the majority of the site. Geological natural grey clay (6) was observed in the soakaway excavations and the cable trench (Figs 5, 6).

5.4 Sterile layer (3) overlay the natural and was some 0.3m to 0.4m deep.

5.5 Layer (5) was noted to the south of the access road within Plot 3. A fragment of oolitic medieval pottery (11th to early 13th century) and two fragments of animal bone were recovered from this layer (Fig 7).

5.6 Within Plot 5 the top of a possible wall was revealed (4). No bonding material was apparent in the Cotswold stone feature (Fig 8).

5.7 Layer 2, overlying wall 4, was up to 0.56m deep and sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered from it along with fragmentary animal bone.

5.8 Topsoil (1) was 0.3m deep.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Only one definite archaeological feature was recorded across the site. This was a wall of uncertain character and function.

6.2 Medieval and post-medieval pottery fragments were found near to where archaeological features were identified in the evaluation trenches.

6.2 The construction method did not allow for the easy observation of archaeological deposits and the high water table made it impossible to examine the excavations.

6.3 Significant archaeological deposits could therefore survive on the site preserved below the construction depths and between the buildings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Dick Shacklock for commissioning the work and for the cooperation of Redlime and Avoncroft Homes on site.

REFERENCES

British Geological Survey 1968 *Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales), Solid and Drift Geology, Stratford-upon-Avon Sheet 218.*

Gethin, B, 2012 *Wheelwright House, Old Road, Long Compton, Warwickshire: Archaeological Evaluation*, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1236.

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment/details</i>
1	Very dark greyish brown clay loam	Topsoil
2	Dark yellowish brown clay loam	subsoil
3	Yellowish brown clay loam	Layer
4	Possible wall foundation	Cotswold stone
5	Mid yellowish brown silty clay	Layer
6	Grey and yellow clay	Geological natural

B List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
2	Pottery	3	1 medieval quartz tempered (13th/14thC?), undiagnostic 2 proto-stoneware – probably Midlands Purple with dark glaze, ?17thC
2	Animal bone	2	1 large mammal rib fragment, 1 small mammal long bone fragment
5	Pottery	1	1 oolitic tempered, 11th-e.13thC
5	Animal bone	2	small fragments of long bone

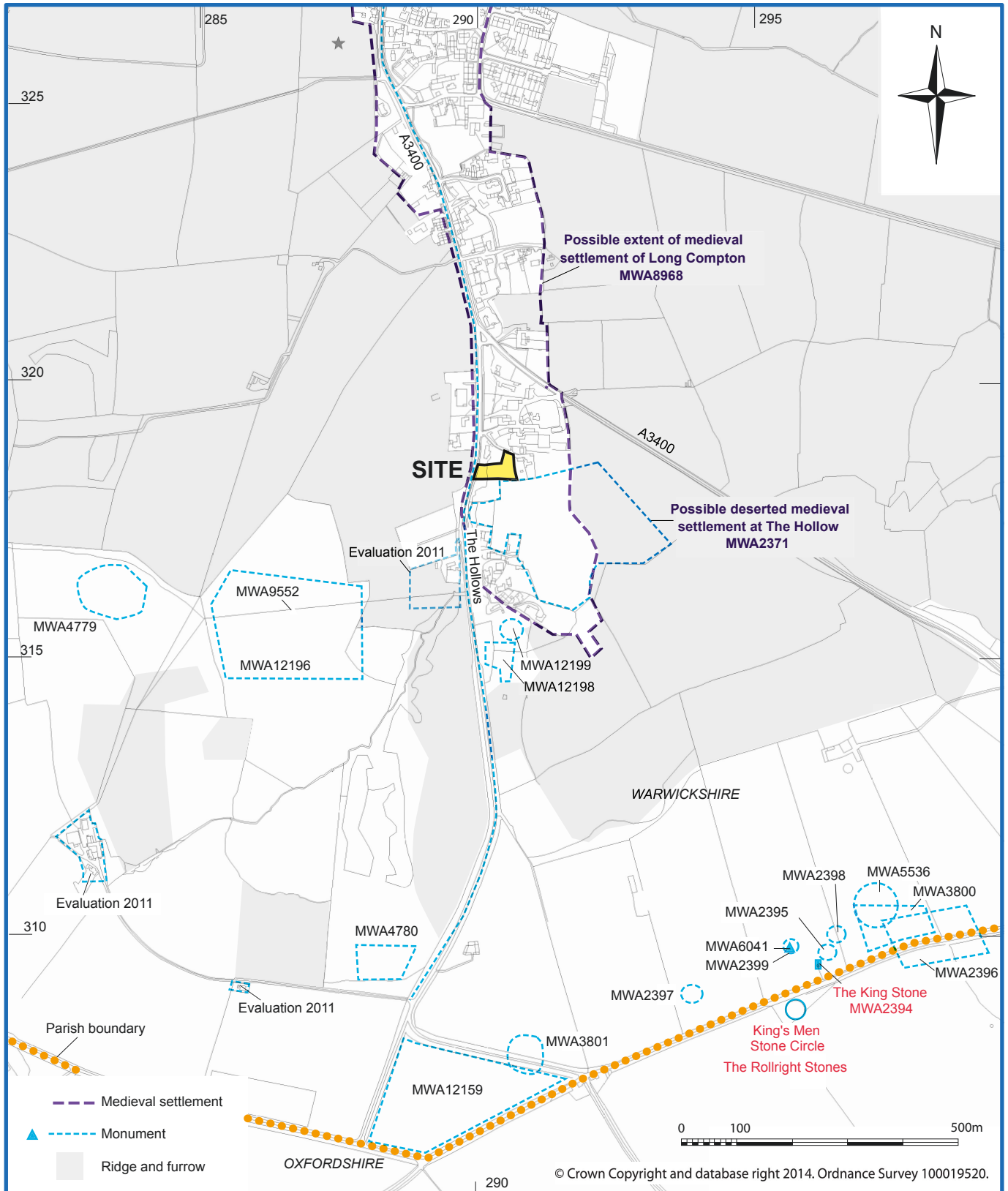


Fig 1: Site location showing archaeological sites in the vicinity

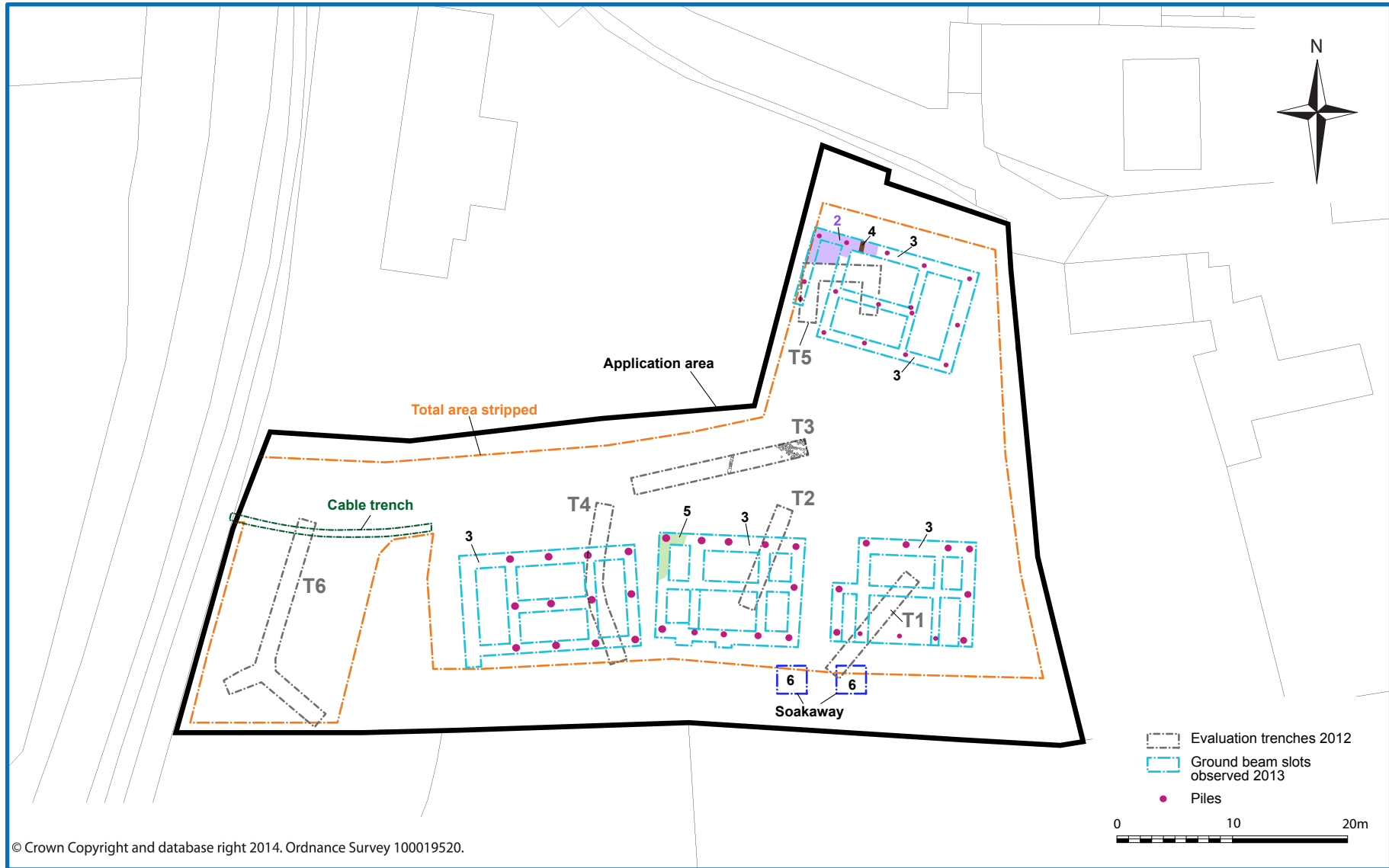


Fig 2: Areas observed



Fig 3: Ground beam trenches



Fig 4: Ground water on site



Fig 5: Soakaway



Fig 6: Cable trench



Fig 7: Layer 5 in section



Fig 8: Top of wall 4