



**A Programme of Archaeological
Monitoring, Investigation and Recording on land at
Yew Tree Farm, Launton, Oxfordshire
May - July 2014**

Report No. 15/25

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Illustrator: Amir Bassir



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS: MOLANORT1-203788	
Project name	A programme of archaeological monitoring, investigation and recording on land at Yew Tree Farm, Launton, Oxfordshire		
Short description	A programme of archaeological monitoring, investigation and recording was undertaken by MOLA (formerly Northamptonshire Archaeology), on behalf of CgMs Consulting acting on behalf of their client Vanderbilt Homes, between May and July 2014 during groundworks for the construction of a new residential development on land at Yew Tree Farm, Launton, Oxfordshire. An undated ditch and a number of tree holes were recorded.		
Project type	A Programme of Archaeological Monitoring, Investigation and Recording; Planning application No: 14/00026/DISC		
Site status	None		
Previous work	Archaeological evaluation		
Current Land use	Former agricultural		
Future work	No		
Monument type			
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Oxfordshire		
Site address	Yew Tree Farm, Launton, Oxfordshire		
Study area (sq metres)	1800m ²		
OS co-ords	SP 6093 2285		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton (formerly Northamptonshire Archaeology)		
Project brief originator	County Archaeological Officer, Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Supervisor	David J Leigh		
Project Manager	Anthony Maull		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting on behalf of Vanderbilt Homes		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	May 2014		
End date	July 2014		
ARCHIVES	Location	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical			
Paper	Oxfordshire Museums	Watching brief forms (6) Photographic record sheets (3) Black and white photographs (25) Digital photographs (58)	
Digital		Report text and figures	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	A programme of archaeological monitoring, investigation and recording on land at Yew Tree Farm, Launton, Oxfordshire		
Serial title & volume	MOLA Northampton report 15/25		
Author	David J Leigh		
Date	February 2015		

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A Programme of Archaeological Monitoring, Investigation and Recording on Land at Yew Tree Farm, Launton Oxfordshire May - July 2014

Abstract

A programme of archaeological monitoring, investigation and recording was undertaken by MOLA (formerly Northamptonshire Archaeology), on behalf of CgMs Consulting during groundworks for the construction of a new residential development on land at Yew Tree Farm, Launton, Oxfordshire. An undated ditch and a number of tree holes were recorded, no archaeological artefacts were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological monitoring, investigation and recording was undertaken by MOLA (formerly Northamptonshire Archaeology) between May and July 2014 during groundworks for the construction of a new residential development on land at Yew Tree Farm, Launton, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 6093 2285; Figs 1, 2, and 3). The work was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting acting on behalf of their clients Vanderbilt Homes and was carried out following a request for a programme of archaeological monitoring, investigation and recording as required by the County Archaeological Officer, Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services.

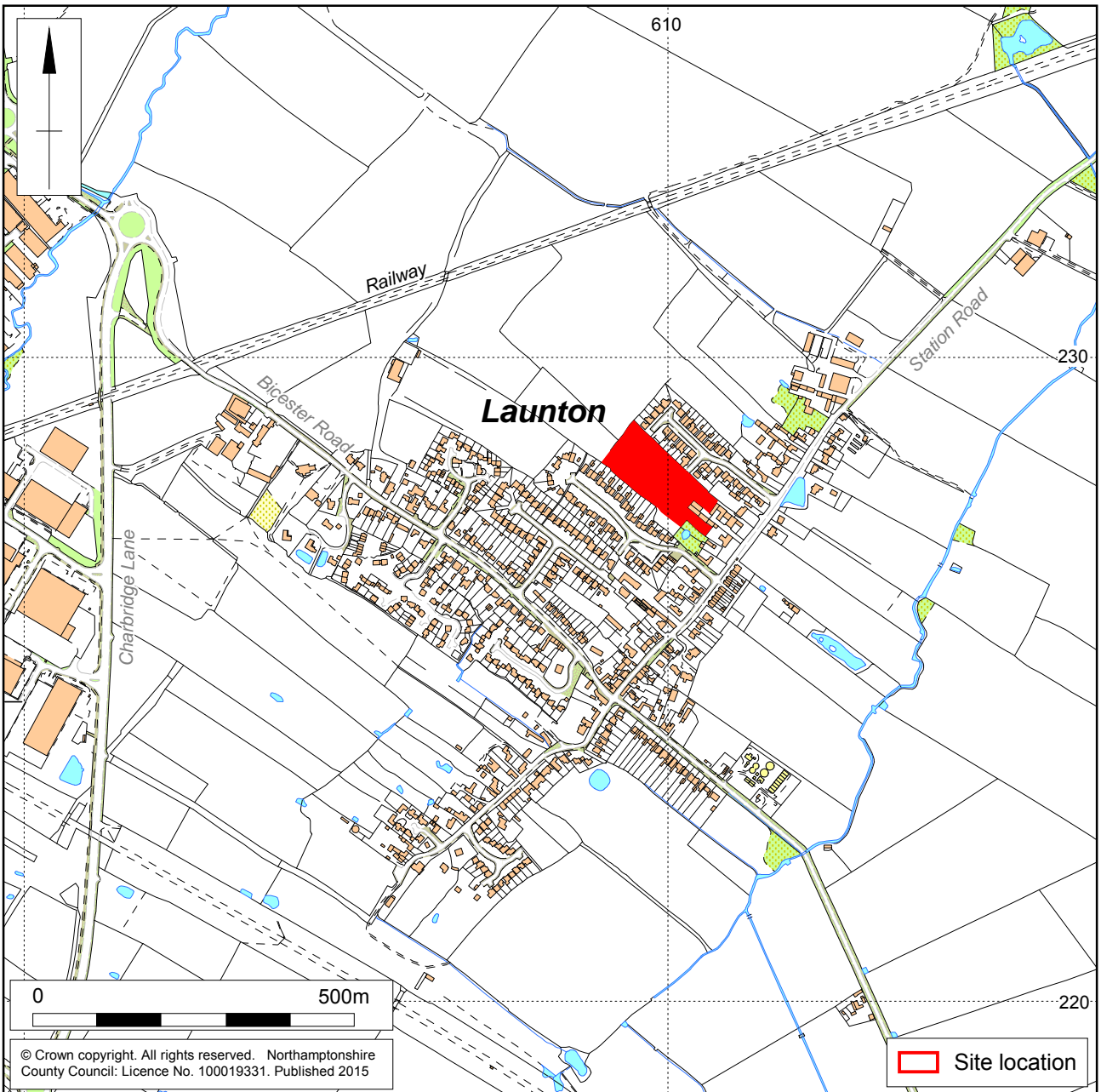
It adhered to the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG2012) and followed a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by MOLA (Leigh 2014) and the procedural document MoRPHE issued by English Heritage (EH 2006) along with the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

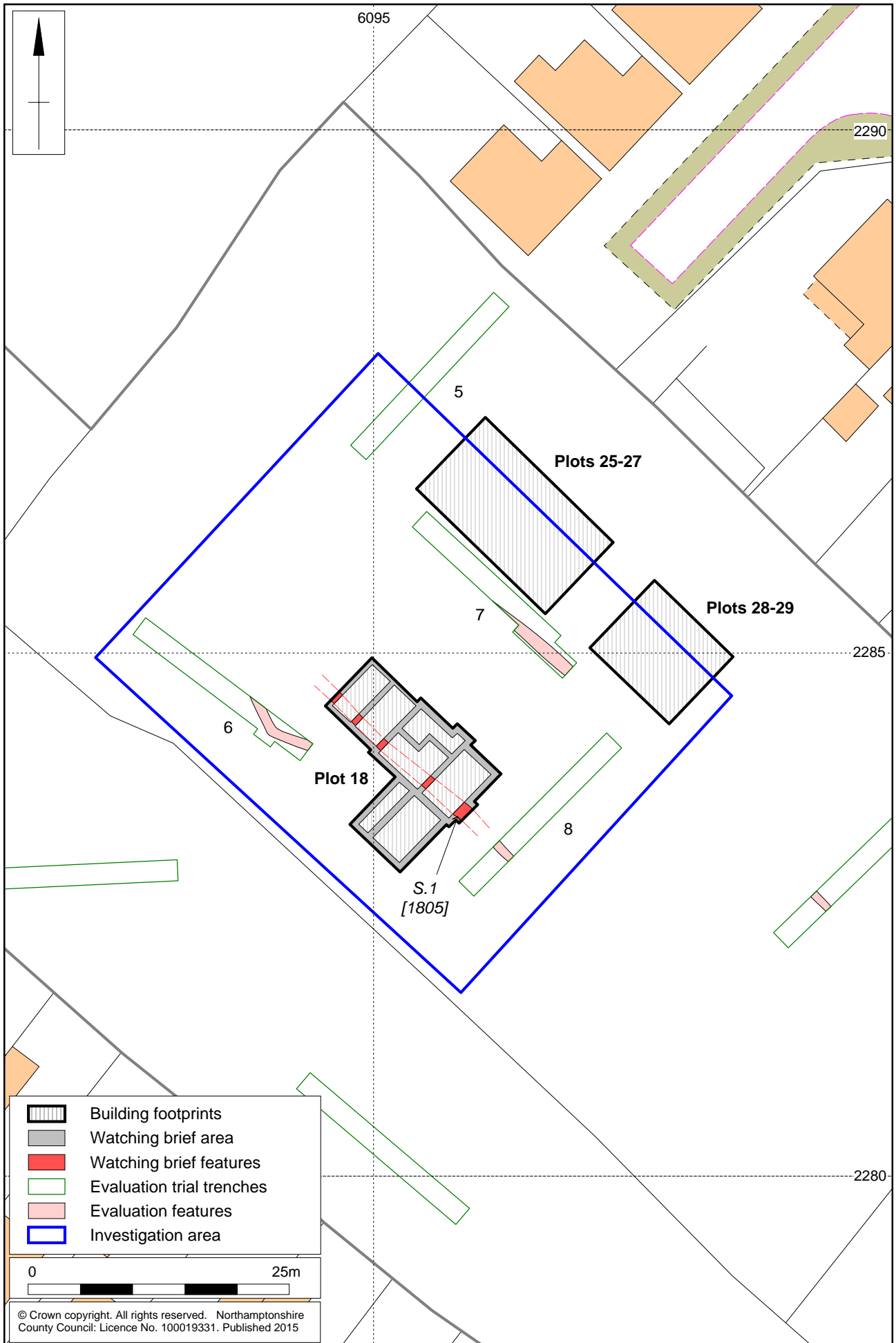
The village of Launton is located on the slope of a broad tributary valley, lying to the east of Bicester. The area of investigation lies within the village, north-west of Yew Tree Farm on relatively level ground at a height of approximately 65m aOD. It is bounded to the north-east and south-west by modern development.

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey as comprising Peterborough Member Mudstone (BGS Geoindex <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>).



Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1



Scale 1:500

Fig 2

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2.2 Historical background

The site lies within an area of archaeological interest and within the historic core of the village of Launton.

Several sites of Iron Age and Romano-British date are recorded within the Oxfordshire HER. One such site lies c500m west of the investigation area (Dawson 2011), and another has been excavated further to the south, at Bicester Park (Westgarth and Carlyle 2008).

The site forms the back plot (or croft) of Yew Tree Farm, which has been identified as possibly containing the remains of outbuildings, yard surfaces and other features of archaeological interest (Dawson 2011, 13-14). The farm has potential for medieval origins, although the earliest secure evidence for Yew Tree Farm dates from the early 17th century (Dawson 2011, 13-14, 26).

Previous archaeological investigations recorded as having been carried out in the development area, comprise archaeological assessment undertaken as part of the present application (Dawson 2011) and geophysical survey (MOLA 2012) which recorded weak anomalies of uncertain archaeological significance (Walford 2012). The features comprise two linear positive (ditch) type features as well as areas of magnetic disturbance.

A trial trench evaluation (Upson-Smith 2014; Fig 2) identified a number of undated ditches in four of the evaluation trenches. Of these, ditches in trenches 6, 7 and 8 were identified as being of particular interest and the area in which they were situated formed the basis of this investigation (Fig 2).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the archaeological investigation were to:

- ◆ Observe the groundworks for the new residential development within the area defined by the preceding archaeological investigation and to record all archaeological deposits uncovered;
- ◆ To attempt to determine the function and date for the archaeological features identified during the preceding archaeological evaluation;
- ◆ Determine the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts;
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

A photographic record in both black and white negative and digital format was kept. The written record used MOLA pro-forma sheets, (MOLA 2014). The programme of archaeological monitoring, investigation and recording was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA2008).

The fieldwork was undertaken between May and July 2014 during groundworks for the construction of the new residential development. The groundworks were carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a combination of toothed and toothless buckets (Fig 4).



General view of the investigation area Fig 3



The groundworks in progress, looking west Fig 4

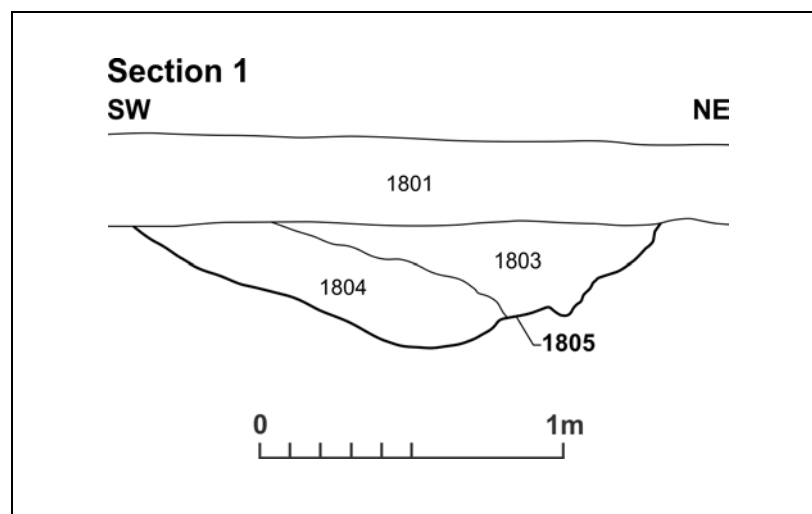
4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.30m below present ground level and comprised mid grey silty clay with orange mottling, with a number of tree holes cutting it. The natural was overlain by grey-brown clay loam subsoil, up to 0.30m thick (Fig 5). Residual remains of the topsoil were occasionally noted, this having been removed prior to archaeological observation, and comprised grey-black sandy loam, containing occasional irregular stones and fragments of modern ceramic building material.



The stratigraphic sequence in the foundation trenches Fig 5

Observation of the foundation trenches within plot 18 revealed a single ditch [1805]; (Figs 2 and 6), cut into the natural clay. The ditch, which was aligned north-west to south-east, had a shallow V-shaped profile, 1.50m wide by 0.42m deep, with a probable recut on the northern side. The primary fill was of mixed yellow clay, redeposited natural, and light grey silty clay, while the probable recut had a fill of homogeneous grey silty clay.



Ditch [1805]; Section 1, looking north-west Fig 6

5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	6
Photographic record sheets	3
Black and white photographs	25
Digital photographs	58

The project archive will be consolidated and prepared for deposition with Oxfordshire Museums.

6 CONCLUSIONS

A ditch and a number of tree holes were recorded within the investigation area. No evidence for function or dating was recovered for the ditch, however, it lies along the line of an existing tree lined boundary and it is probable that it was a continuation of this feature.

The absence of any artefactual evidence suggests that no significant archaeological deposits are present in the immediate area of investigation.

The watching brief was carried out in favourable conditions in those areas of archaeological observation and the results are considered to be reliable.

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