



**Archaeological observation, investigation and
recording of land at The Old Manor House,
Cholesbury Lane, Cholesbury, Buckinghamshire
June 2016**

Report No 16/108

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Illustrator: Olly Dindol



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1- 255118	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording of land at The Old Manor House, Cholesbury Lane, Cholesbury, Buckinghamshire, June 2016		
Short description	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording was carried out by MOLA Northampton, during groundworks on land at The Old Manor House, Cholesbury Lane, Cholesbury, Buckinghamshire. A modern brick-built septic tank, with associated structures was identified.		
Project type	Watching Brief		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Garden		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Modern		
Significant finds	None.		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Buckinghamshire		
Site address	The Old Manor House, Cholesbury Lane, Cholesbury		
Easting Northing	SP92990 07100		
Area (sq m/ha)	36m ²		
Height aOD	186m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Senior Archaeology Officer, Bucks CC		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Tim Sharman (MOLA Northampton)		
Project Manager	Amir Bassir (MOLA Northampton)		
Sponsor or funding body	Ms R Walton		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	08/06/2016		
End date	08/06/2016		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical		None	
Paper		Watching brief forms, permatrace plans	
Digital		Client report PDF	
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Archaeological observation, investigation and recording of land at The Old Manor House Cholesbury Lane, Cholesbury, Buckinghamshire June 2016

Abstract

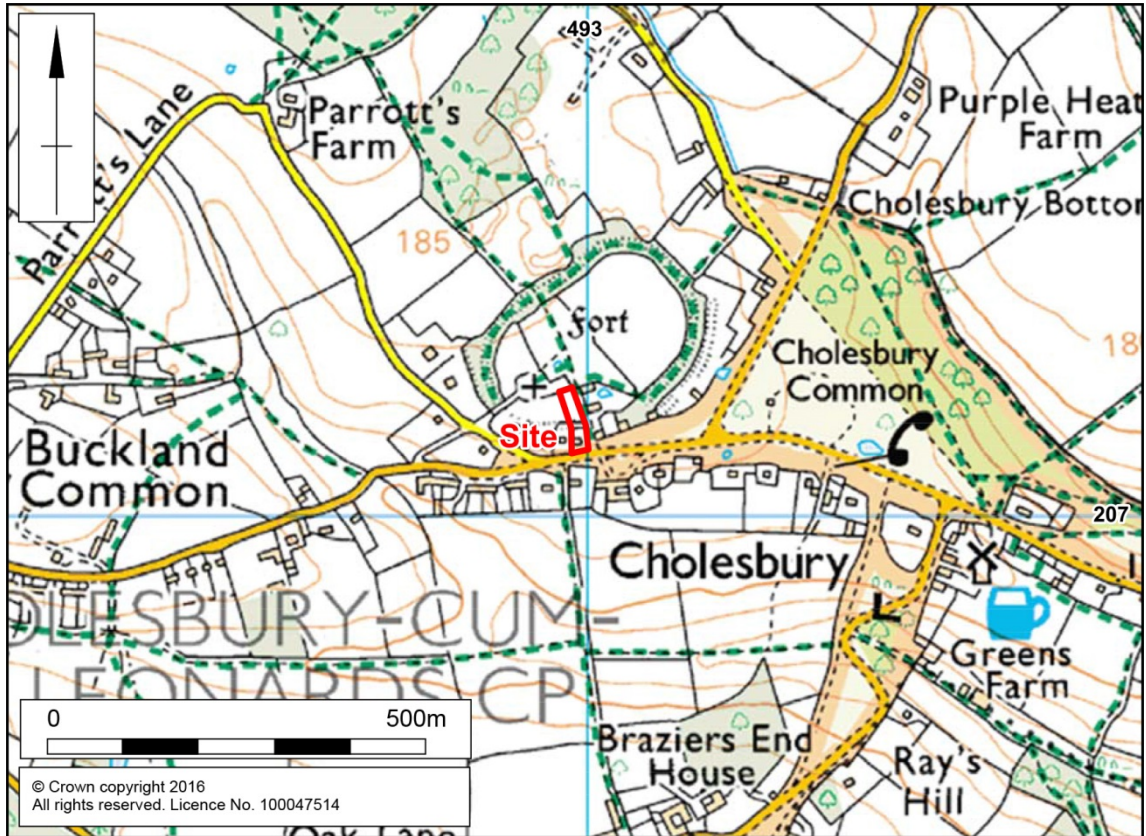
Archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was carried out by MOLA Northampton, during groundworks on land at The Old Manor House, Cholesbury Lane, Cholesbury, Buckinghamshire. A modern brick-built septic tank, with associated structures was identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA Northampton had been commissioned by Ms Rebecca Walton to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land at The Old Manor House, Cholesbury Lane, Cholesbury, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 92990 07100, Figs 1 & 2). A planning application has been approved for the construction of a single 'garden room' building to the rear of The Manor House (CH/2015/1807/FA). Condition 3 of the approved application, Chiltern District Council (CDC) requires a programme of archaeological works undertaken in compliance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation.

The archaeological monitoring works were to ensure that any archaeological remains within the area of the groundworks were appropriately located, defined, characterised and recorded. Works were undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014a), and to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).

MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) registered organisation. This report has been prepared in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance: for archaeological watching briefs* (CIfA 2014a) and the Historic England (HE) procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015). The work complied with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2016).



Site location Fig 1

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

Cholesbury is a small linear village running along a ridge of the Chiltern Hills, between Chesham and Wendover, in Buckinghamshire. It lies on the border with Hertfordshire, about 6.4km east of Wendover. The Old Manor House is situated in the centre of the village, adjacent to the village hall. The Old Manor House is a Grade II Listed Building, believed to have been originally constructed around 1580. It may be the only surviving part of a larger building. The historic two-bay cottage was enlarged with the addition of an out-building in the 19th century and in 2010 was significantly further extended.

A Scheduled Monument known as Cholesbury Camp, an Iron Age multivallate hillfort, (SM: 1015585) lies to the north of Cholesbury Lane within the village. The rear garden of the Old Manor House and the location of the proposed construction lie within the confines of this monument. Historic England granted Scheduled Monument Consent (Ref: S00131994) for the works to proceed, subject to a number of conditions, including a condition for archaeological works (Condition b).

The development occupies a small area lying 186m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The geology is described as Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel of the Clay-with-flints Formation (BGS 2016).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The site lies within the boundary of Scheduled Monument 1015585 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1015585>. This is identified as an Iron Age hillfort, constructed between 300 and 100BC, roughly oval in plan, measuring 310m north-east to south-west by 230m north-west to south-east, with a level central area. The hillfort was partially excavated in the 1930s (Kimball 1933), and works in the central area produced evidence for well-preserved buried remains from the period of occupation, and evidence of hearths and metal-working (Smith 1997; Kimball 1933). The earthen ramparts, a large ditch flanked by internal and external banks, lie mostly within a wooded belt which encircles the hillfort to the east, north and west.

The development site lies to the south of the hillfort in an area where the banks and ditches have been mainly obscured by houses and gardens. A survey for the Royal Commission in 1912 (prior to the construction of present houses) suggests that some of the ditches and banks continued across the southern perimeter at this time (RCHME 1912 106-108). An excavation undertaken in 2002 at the Old Vicarage around 100m to the west of the site identified the inner ditch of the hillfort, which was excavated to a depth of 1.20m (Lightfoot 2002).

One of the two short sections of the main ditch which survived as narrow ponds in 1912 are recorded in the Historic England listing as remaining still visible to the rear of Moat House and The Old Manor House. The Listing also records that the inner scarp of the ditch can be detected to the rear of the gardens between here and the drive leading to the church from the west. Small excavations were undertaken at Moat House in 1992 (Carstairs 1993) and in advance of an extension to the Village Hall in 1997 (Parkhouse 1997), immediately to the west and east of the site. Neither excavation found any trace of southern ditch or the outer bank, despite being along the projected line. No archaeological remains were identified by later watching brief at Moat House (Hunn 2004). The multivallate fortifications may have been discontinued in this area, and the buried remains of the main ditch and the known area of the external bank represent the original defences across this section (Parkhouse 1997).

The Old Manor House is a Grade II Listed Building (1124868; HER 1241200000). Its Historic England listing gives the following description:

House. C16 timber framed with C18 brick casing. Old tiled roof. Two storeys. Modern gabled porch in centre, two modern casements to each floor. Wallplate to front elevation has mortices for wall posts and window mullions. Brick chimney stack at west end of old thin bricks, modern stack at east end. Interior: ground floor, large central cross beam and chamfered spine beams; chamfered joists in western room. On first floor cambered tiebeam with arch braced collar in roof space, all main timbers chamfered on east side. Curved windbraces to purlins. Old rafters. May be cross wing of a larger house (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1124868>)

Other archaeological remains within a 1km radius of the site are primarily scattered spotfinds, such as a Palaeolithic handaxe found in Brown's brickpit found to the north-west of the hillfort, and two Iron Age coins; a gold quarter stater found to the west of the site, and a Bronze of Cunobelinus found to the east of the village (Historic England's PastScape resource). The village contains various historic buildings, including The Church of St Lawrence (The List Entry Ref: 1332512), an 1863 tower mill (Ref: 1124877), The Bury (1309409), The Old Vicarage (Ref: 1309323), Home Farm House (Ref: 1332506), Fox Barn (Ref: 1124869), Bunbury Quiet Corner (Ref: 1332507) and High Chimneys (Ref: 1124870), all of which are Grade II Listed Buildings (Historic England's Listings).

A medieval church dedicated to St Lawrence was constructed within the hillfort in the 13th century, and partially re-built in the 14th and 19th centuries (RCHME 1912; HE

Listing Ref: 1332512). A watching brief at the site of a new house on Parrot's Lane south of the church and west of the development site did not produce archaeological finds, suggesting the main area of medieval activity lay further to the east (Wallis 2007).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area the main objective of the investigation was to determine and understand the nature, function, and character of an archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting. More specifically, the work has:

- Identified, investigated and recorded all archaeological deposits exposed during the excavation of the house footprint and access road, plus associated below groundworks;
- Determined and recorded the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Created a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

3.2 Methodology

All works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents Historic England's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance: Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA 2014a) and *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014b). Where appropriate the research frameworks were borne in mind (Hey, G, and Hind, J, 2014).

The observation work (strip, map and sample) took place on 08 June 2016 in good weather conditions. The groundwork areas were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features, where present.

Recording followed standard MOLA Northampton procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (MOLA 2014). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. Modern finds were not retained. The photographic record comprised digital images.

The observation area was within relatively flat land, mostly given over to turf, in the garden to the north of the Old Manor House. Within the observation area, an open trench, encompassing the footprint of the new garden room, measuring 9m long by 4.3m wide and aligned east to west was excavated to formation level at c 0.15m below the surface at the western end and c 0.1m in the east. The turf and part of the topsoil were stripped using a 360° mini-mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.9m bladed bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

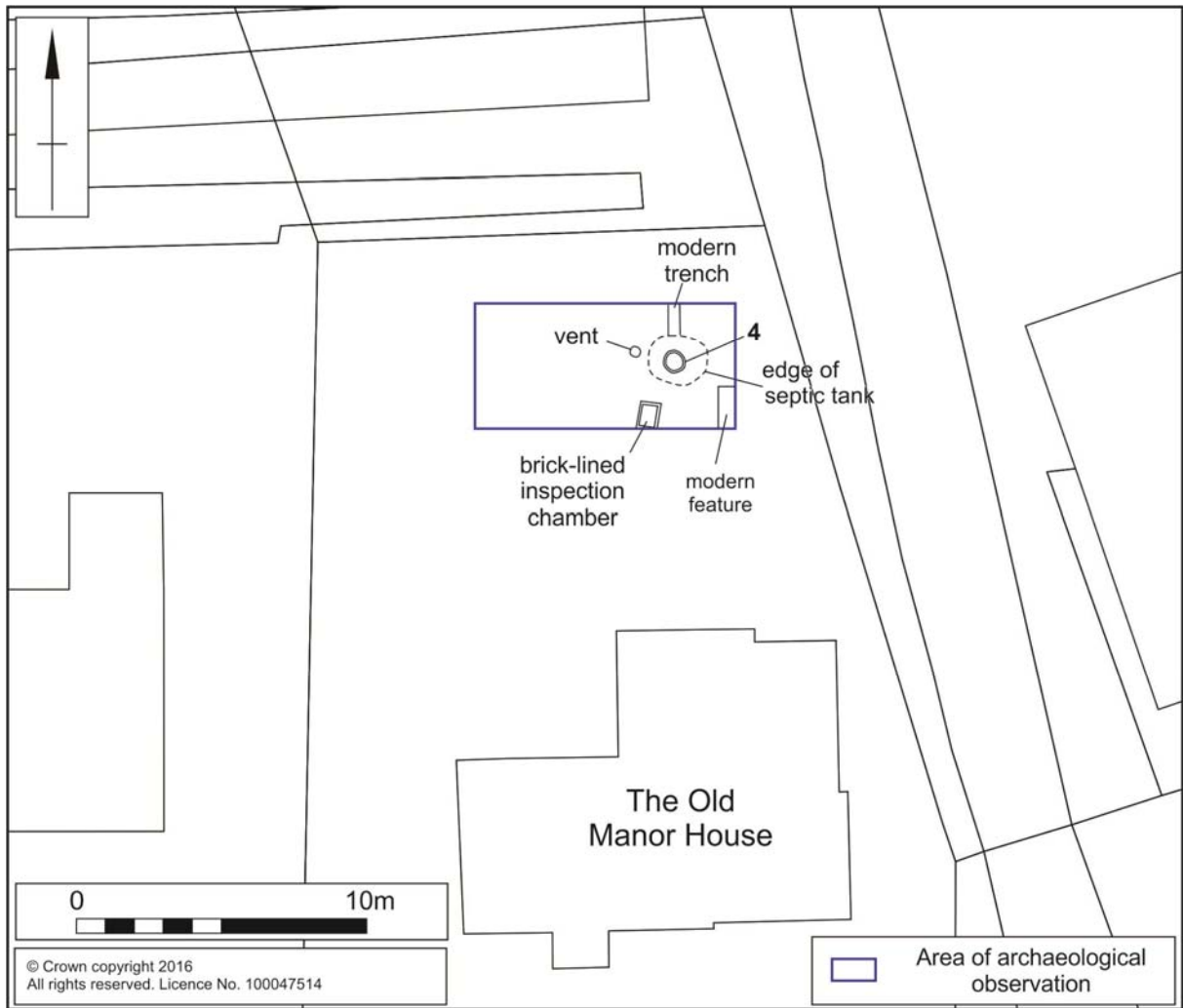
4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

Due to the shallow nature of the excavated trench, the natural substrate was not observed. At the western end of the observation area, a layer of firm dark yellow-brown sandy clay loam (2) of unknown depth with frequent inclusions of coal, post-medieval and modern brick, tile, glass and pottery (not retained) was noted (Fig 3). Overlying this was a thin layer of topsoil (1) consisting of loose dark grey-brown loam with occasional small pebble inclusions. Layer (2) was not visible at the eastern end of the observation area due to the shallower nature of the excavation work and modern disturbances (see below).

Approximately 2m from the eastern end of the trench, a circular, brick-lined inspection chamber capping a modern septic tank [4] was revealed (Figs 2, 4 and 5). The septic tank appears to have been circular in plan with a domed, slightly corbelled, roof sloping upwards and narrowing to the circular brick-lined inspection chamber. It was not possible to ascertain the depth or diameter of the tank due to the structure having been backfilled with a spoil fill (3) consisting of a mixture of grey or orange-brown clay with fragments of building rubble. It is possible that the tank may have had a maximum depth and diameter of 2.5m.

Approximately 1.5m to the south-west of the septic tank a rectangular, brick-lined inspection chamber was revealed (Figs 2 and 4). The chamber measured 1.0m long by 0.7m wide and was aligned roughly north to south. It was probably constructed above a former foul-waste outflow pipe running northwards from The Old Manor House.

Approximately 1m to the north-west of the septic tank inspection chamber, a small UPVC vent pipe was revealed (Figs 2, 4 and 5).



The area of archaeological observation Fig 2



Observation area, layer (2) during turf removal, looking east Fig 3



Septic tank [4] and associated structures, looking west Fig 4



The plugged septic tank [4] inspection chamber and vent pipe, looking west Fig 5

5 DISCUSSION

Although the observation area was located at the edge of Cholesbury Camp Iron Age hillfort, no features or artefacts from that period were found due to the shallow nature of the excavated trench. It is possible that archaeological, possibly Iron Age features are present on the site, but are considerably deeper than the formation level of the current development and as such, are likely to remain buried and undisturbed.

The observation work, however, identified a backfilled, modern, former septic tank in a garden containing a soil contaminated with large quantities of post-medieval and modern debris. It is possible the subsoil may have been part of a make-up layer perhaps associated with raising the level of the garden, or alternatively, it may simply be a former garden soil which had been subject to episodes of composting and the spreading of domestic waste over a long period.

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MOLA Northampton

20 June 2016

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment			
Observation area	9m long x 4m wide East to West			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts
1	Layer	Loose, dark grey-brown loam with occasional pebble inclusions	0.1m thick	-
2	Layer	Firm, dark yellow-brown sandy clay loam with frequent inclusions of post-medieval/modern brick, tile, glass, pottery and coal	Unknown	None retained
3	Fill of [4]	Loose, mixed grey and orange brown clay spoil with some building rubble	Unknown	-
[4]	Structure	Brick-lined, circular, disused septic tank with associated inspection chambers and vent pipe.	Unknown	-



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