



Priory Cottages

Priory Road, Heythrop, Oxfordshire

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Archaeological recording

SP 33077 28292

Site code: PCH16

OASIS ID: 110archa1-289205

Sean Cook BA MCIfA

Illustrations by Jill Atherton MCIfA

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one ten archaeology

6 Elm Close, Pebworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 8XL

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Front cover entrance to Priory Farm and the site of the medieval priory

SUMMARY

Archaeological recording was carried out in November 2016 at Priory Cottages, Priory Road, Heythrop, Oxfordshire during the creation of a menage and stables with access road. The work was carried out due to the proximity of the development site to Cold Norton deserted medieval village and a mid-12th century Augustinian Priory associated hospital.

Priory Cottages were a pair of dwellings built sometime between 1881 and 1900 along the side of Priory Road, probably for labourers. Development was in the northern half of a field lying on the west side of the cottages and resulted in the excavation of two stepped areas. The northern third of the site was excavated initially to the surface of the natural substrate, but no archaeological deposits were observed in association with this layer. The central area of the site was reduced to the surface of the relict subsoil layer whilst the remaining area to the south was left unexcavated. The results, supported by an absence of finds indicate little evidence of earlier human activity within the site before the occupation of Priory Cottages.

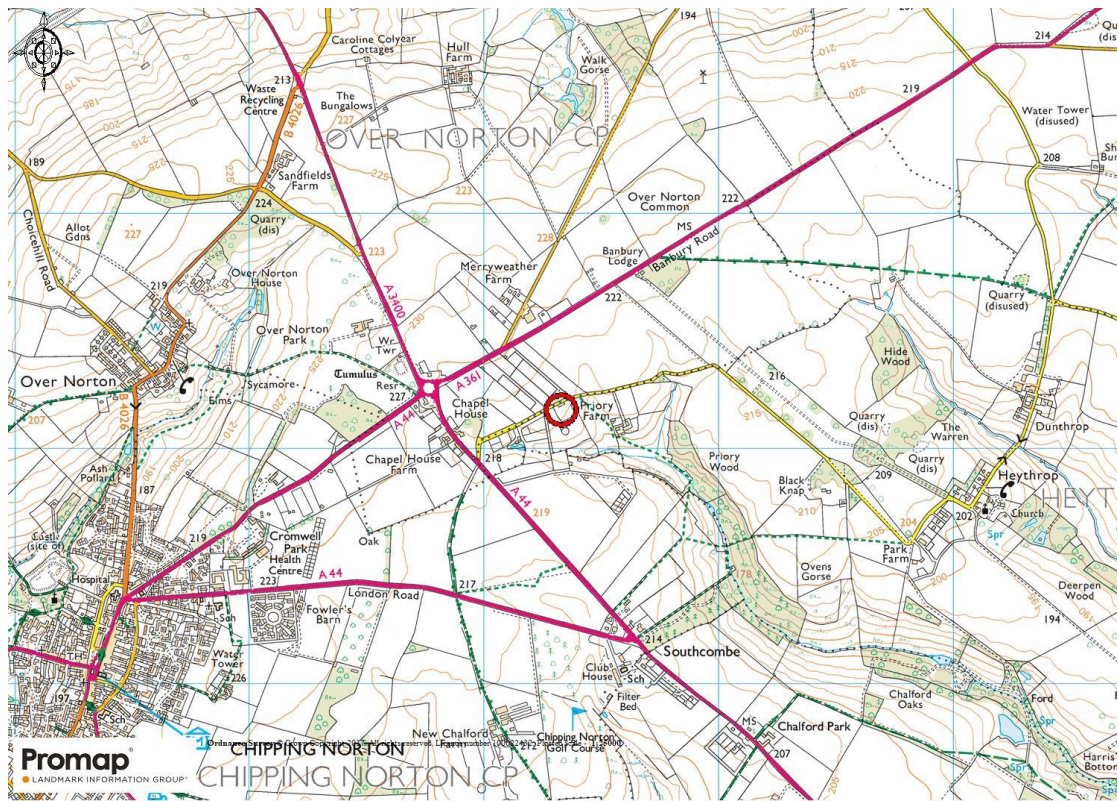


Fig. 1; site location (circled in red)



Fig. 2; area of study (outlined in red)

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of works (Figs. 1 & 2)

This document sets out the results of archaeological recording ('watching brief') carried out during 22nd and 24th November 2016 at Priory Cottages, Priory Road, Heythrop, Oxfordshire, OX7 5TA during the creation of a menage and stables with access road on the site. The development site was located south of Priory Road, north-east of Chipping Norton at approx. 215m OD. It was recognised that the site had considerable archaeological potential due to its proximity to a series of archaeological sites. To the south is the Cold Norton deserted medieval village and to the south-east is the Augustinian Priory of St. John the Evangelist and the associated hospital of St. Giles, founded between 1148 and 1158. The extent of both sites is unknown.

The archaeological recording was required in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and was carried out as a condition of planning permission granted in respect of an application (Ref: 14/0416/P/FP) to West Oxfordshire District Council and was undertaken in accordance with a brief issued by Joanne Robinson (11th Sept. 2014).

Geology and topography

Heythrop is a village and civil parish just over 2 miles east of Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire which also includes the hamlet of Dunthrop. The stream dividing them also marked the former hundred boundary before the census of 1811, when Heythrop, formerly in Chadlington hundred, joined Dunthrop in Wootton. The parish has an elongated shape. Its short northern boundary follows the river Swere and streams mark the boundaries on the south-east, south, and south-west. Part of the north-eastern boundary lies along an ancient lane bordering Little Tew. Elsewhere the parish boundaries follow the lines of field boundaries. The land rises from c. 150 m. in the south-east to c. 213 m. in the north-west and east. It lies mainly on Chipping Norton limestone edged by Lias clay and Middle Lias Marlstone and silt in the southern part of the parish. There are beds of Upper Lias clay north-east of Heythrop village and in the north-west end of the parish.

Heythrop lies in the centre of the parish 18 miles north-west of Oxford and 3 miles east of Chipping Norton. It overlooks the small, steep valley of a tributary

of the river Glyme to the north. The development site, situated between Heythrop and Chipping Norton was represented by an area of approx. 3,900m² of open grassland on the south side of Priory Road, west of Priory Cottages.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A total of 26 monument records are identified from the Historic Environment Record (HER) within a 1km search area centred on the study site. A summary of the more significant information is outlined below.

Prehistoric

15586 - MOX3354; Neolithic Lithic Scatter (Near Priory Lodge). Flake and scraper found by OAHs in 1959. No other information

16431 - MOX11266; Find Spot. Flint Blade at Over Norton

1279 - MOX280; Bronze Age round barrow. Barrow occupies prominent position overlooking landscape; measures 22m in diam and up to 1.2m high. Infilled quarry ditch. Known as 'Druid's Barrow' in C19 when a landscape feature in Over Norton Park. It was constructed of dry stone rubble and earth. Surrounding the mound, but no longer visible at ground level.

1274 - MOX3266; Bronze Age Barrow (Over Norton Park)

Possible barrow, surface trace. Two large oolite limestone stones were found at NGRs SP 3201 2860 and SP 3169 2830. These have been postulated to represent the remains of a circular barrow with stonework on its E side

13771 - MOX3348; Possible Bronze Age Round Barrows (NNE of Chapel House)

2 possible barrows; visible on APs.

1275 - MOX3267; Prehistoric Square Enclosure (Over Norton Park)

A double ditched earthwork approximately 50 yards square with possible remains of wall within, revetting? Ditches thought too inconsiderable to be made for defence. No more details

28123 - MOX24652; Possible Later Prehistoric Rectilinear Enclosure

Located within Over Norton park and is defined a ditch on three sides.

Saxon/early medieval

8861 - MOX809; Oxford Ridgeway

Known as Grundy's 'Road 2', a branch of the Cotswold Ridgeway to Oxford. From Oxford, it is represented by the modern Oxford-Banbury road; an early origin is indicated by its appearance in several Saxon charters: as 'Portstraet' in Cutslow (1004), 'Straet' in Shipton-on-Cherwell (1005) and 'Portstraet' in Whitehill (1004). These names imply that some stretches had been "made" in Roman times.

Medieval

4862 - MOX3295; Site of Medieval Priory and Fishpond

Local tradition of a fishpond - no earthworks remain at site of priory. Bones and human skeletons reported in garden of Priory Farm.

5497 - MOX3299; Cold Norton Deserted Medieval Village

No trace of earthworks now visible.

9265 - MOX3311; Site of St Giles Medieval Hospital

Connected with Cold Norton Priory (PRN 4862); only hospital in Oxon in list drawn up c.1200 by Gervase of Canterbury. No remains known.

28119 - MOX24648; Possible Medieval field boundary

Visible as cropmark on aerial photographs taken in 1947. The field boundary is located to the north of Chapel House and is defined by an L-shaped bank.

4860 - MOX3294; Site of Pre-Reformation Chapel

A chapel outside the priory precinct maintained for the neighbouring laity. In disuse by C16.

Post-medieval

24962 - MOX21716; Priory Farmhouse

Farmhouse. Probably C16 and C17, possibly incorporating medieval elements; altered C19 and C20

Modern

28113 - MOX24642; Site of Second World War ammunition and/or bomb storage along the Banbury Road. Visible as small rectangular piles of bombs or ammunition placed at regular intervals along the verge.

28115 - MOX24644; Second World War ammunition and/or bomb storage
Visible as small rectangular piles of bombs or ammunition placed at regular intervals along the road which extends past the farm towards Heythrop Park.

28116 - MOX24645; WWII ammunition and/or bomb storage along the side of London Road (A44). Visible as small rectangular piles of bombs or ammunition placed at regular intervals along the road's verge between Southcombe and Chipping Norton. They may have had camouflage netting or a more robust structure covering them. The ammunition storage would have been associated with an Ordnance Depot, probably that based at nearby Kingham. The roadside storage was removed by 1946.

28234 - MOX24766; WWII ammunition and/or bomb storage
Site of WWII ammunition and/or bomb storage along the side of B4026 road, between Choicehill Farm and Fairacres.

28235 - MOX24767; WWII military camp
Site of WWII military camp is visible on historical aerial photographs.

Undated

9414 - MOX3314; Undated Sub-Rectangular Enclosure
Site in Over Norton Park. Nothing visible on 1961 APs. Sub-rectangular enclosure and other linear ditches. Possible trackway to S, aligned SW-NE, not leading directly to enclosure.

28236 - MOX24768; Undated Linear Feature
Defined by a narrow ditch which is located northwest of Southcombe on the west side of the A44 road.

RESULTS (Fig. 3)

Method and nature of the excavation

Archaeological recording was undertaken to obtain a record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed during excavation of the site. Excavation, was carried out by machine using a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision and comprised the removal of topsoil over the northern two thirds of the site which was followed by the excavation of the subsoil to the surface of the natural geology within the northern third of the site.

Description of deposits

Context 102 (Natural substrate); context 101 (relict subsoil layer) & Context 100 (topsoil layer)

The surface of the geological horizon (context 102), comprising a light yellowish-brown fragmented limestone (cornbrash) within a sandy matrix was exposed throughout the northern part of the excavation (see plates 1 & 2) at a level height of approx. 218.90m AOD. No archaeological deposits were observed overlying or cut into this layer. Overlying the natural substrate to depth of about 0.35m across the excavated area was an undated relict subsoil layer (101) comprising a mid-yellowish-brown sandy-silt. It was sealed by the modern topsoil (100) to a depth of 0.20m.

FINDS

No finds were recovered during the excavation.

Environmental data

None of the deposits exposed during the excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

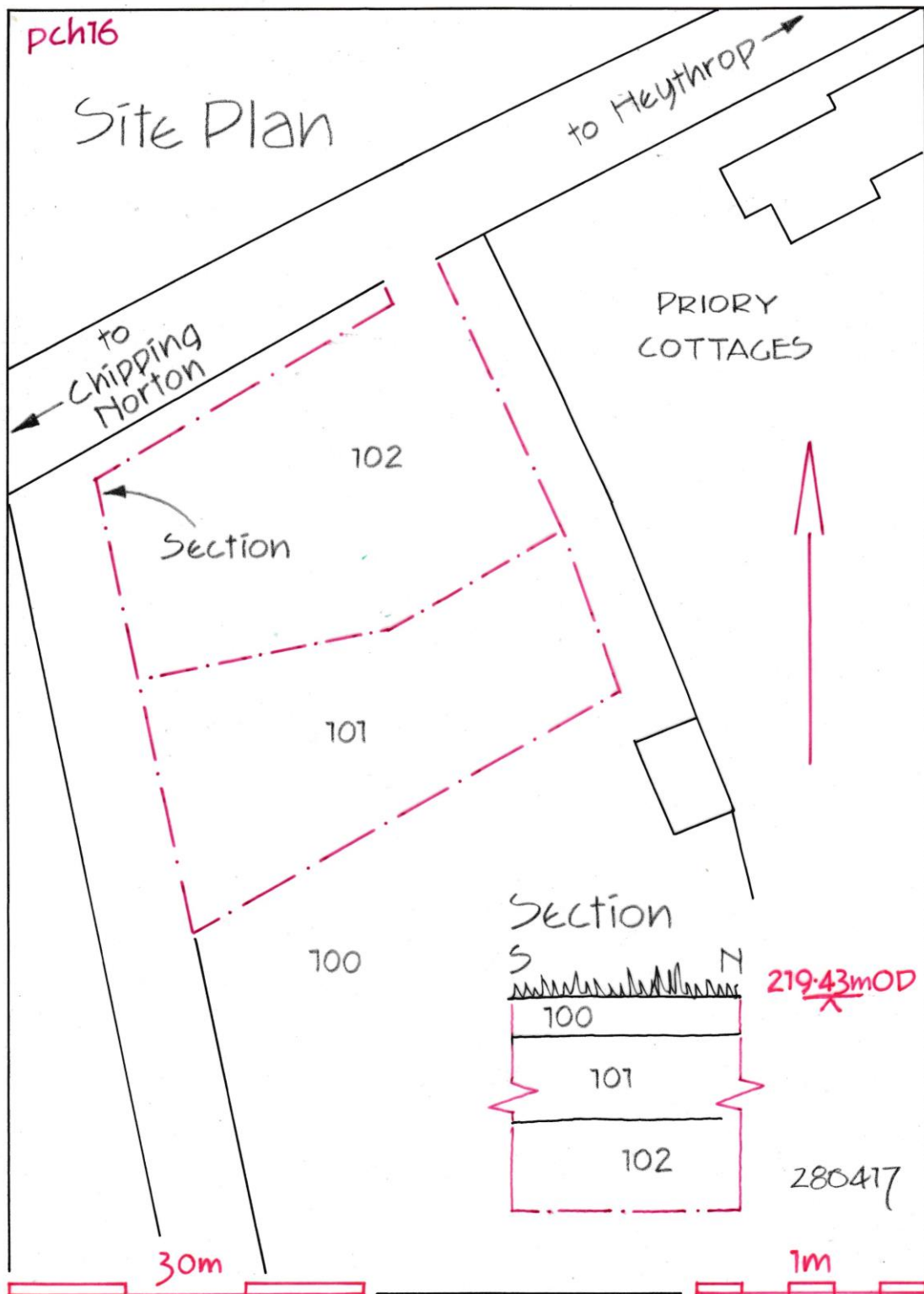


Figure 3; site plan & section showing area of excavation and detail of deposits at the north end of the site.



Plate 1; western half of the excavation showing the surface of the natural substrate, view north



Plate 2; eastern half of the excavation showing the surface of the natural substrate, view north-east



Plate 3; section 1a

DISCUSSION (Fig. 4)

The Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the study site lies in an area rich in prehistoric remains. A Neolithic flint scatter (HER15586) is located approx. 700m north-east of the study site near Priory Lodge. At Over Norton Park to the north-west there a series of monuments including a Bronze Age round barrows (HER1274 & HER 1279), a flint blade find (HER16431) and probable prehistoric enclosures identified from aerial photographs show a prehistoric square enclosure (1275) and a possible later prehistoric rectilinear enclosure (HER28123). Two possible Bronze Age barrows (HER13771) have also been identified north-north-east of Chapel House.

North of the study site is the Oxford Ridgeway (HER8861) and an early origin for this route-way is indicated by its appearance in several Saxon charters with names implying that some stretches had been created in Roman times.

Heythrop, whose Anglo-Saxon name means high farm or hamlet, lies in the centre of the parish overlooking the small, steep valley of a tributary of the river Glyme to the north. Its listing in Domesday confirms that an early settlement had been established here before the Norman Conquest.

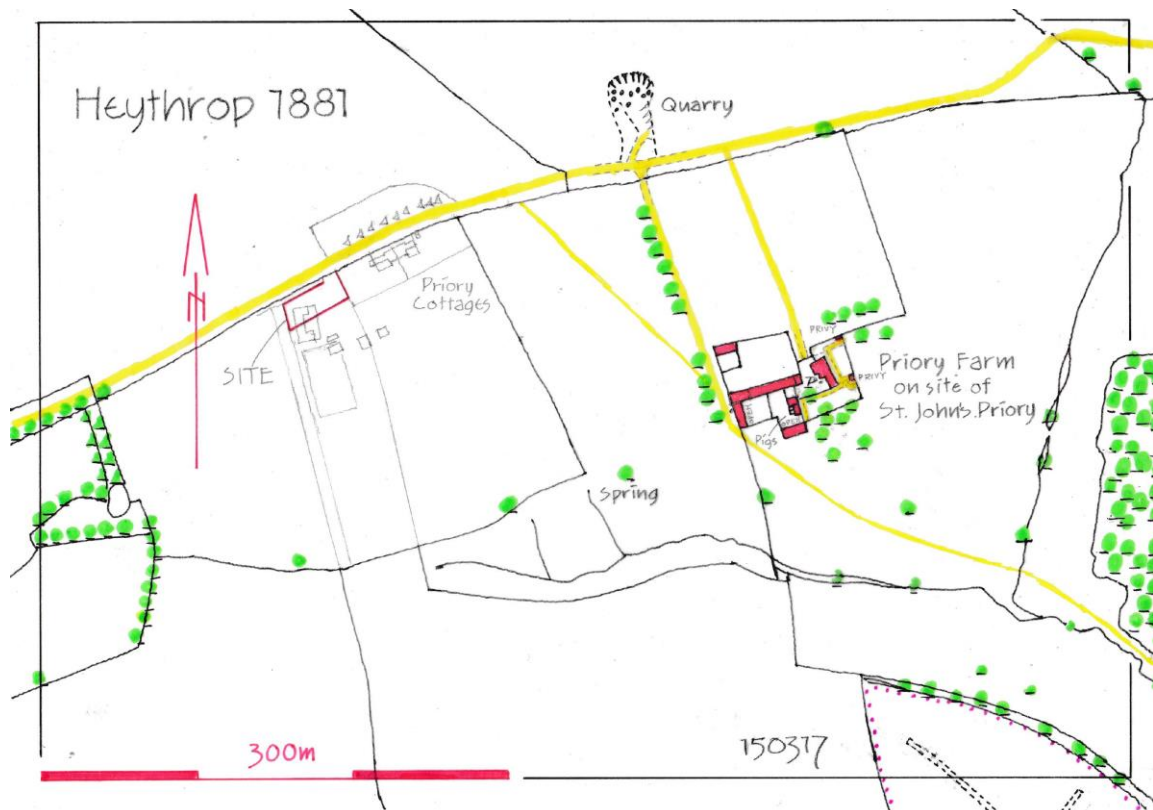


Fig. 4; historic environment based on OS 1881

Lying 250m to the east of the site is the remains of the small Augustinian foundation of Cold Norton Priory (HER4862) and St Giles Medieval Hospital (HER9265) established during the mid-12th century. Priory Farm house (HER24962) which is on the site of Cold Norton Priory is probably 16th and 17th century, possibly incorporating medieval elements. The HER also records Cold Norton Deserted Medieval Village (5497) approx. 150m to the south of the study site focussed around a series of watercourses at the foot of a slope. North of Chapel House is the site of a possible medieval field boundary (HER28119) visible as cropmark on aerial photographs defined by an L-shaped bank.

Documentary sources also show that the depopulation of Heythrop in the 14th century reduced the village to a church, manor house, and a few cottages. By the mid-17th century the cottages numbered only three. The building of Heythrop House in the early 18th century at the opposite end of the estate did nothing to regenerate the village, which still had only four houses in 1801. In 1852 there was reputedly no village at all apart from the church and old manor house. Priory Cottages were built sometime between 1881 and 1900 probably as labourers' dwellings, possibly connected with Priory Farm.

Development in 2016 was in the northern half of a field lying on the west side of the cottages and resulted in the excavation of two stepped areas. The

northern third of the site was excavated initially to the surface of the natural substrate (102). No archaeological deposits were observed overlying or in-filling cut features associated with this layer. The central area of the site was reduced to the surface of the relict subsoil layer (101) whilst the remaining area to the south was left unexcavated. There was no evidence to suggest that any unobserved archaeological deposits that may be present beneath these layers do not extend into the area of exposed natural along the road frontage. The results, supported by an absence of finds indicate little evidence of earlier human activity within the site before the occupation of Priory Cottages.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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A P Baggs, Christina Colvin, H M Colvin, Janet Cooper, C J Day, Nesta Selwyn and A Tomkinson, 'Parishes: Heythrop', in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 11, Wootton Hundred (Northern Part)*, ed. Alan Crossley (London, 1983), pp. 131-143.

'Houses of Augustinian canons: The priory of Cold Norton', in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 2*, ed. William Page (London, 1907), pp. 95-97.

Archive Location

A digital (pdf) copy of the report (referenced with OASIS) will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service. A pdf copy of the report will also be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER). The documentary archive will, if necessary, be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service.

APPENDIX 1: OASIS

Project name	Priory Cottages, Priory Road, Heythrop, Oxfordshire; archaeological recording
Project dates	Start: 22-11-2016 End: 24-11-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	PCH16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition
Country	England
Site location	OXFORDSHIRE WEST OXFORDSHIRE HEYTHROP Priory Cottages, Priory Road
Postcode	OX7 5TA
Study area	3900 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 33077 28292 51.951703771017 -1.518653157453 51 57 06 N 001 31 07 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 218.9m Max: 218.9m
Name of Organisation	one ten archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	one ten archaeology
Project director/manager	sean cook
Project supervisor	sean cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Physical Archive recipient	county museum
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Paper Archive recipient	county museum
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes","Report"
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title	Priory Cottages, Priory Road, Heythrop, Oxfordshire; archaeological recording
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cook, S
Date	2017
Issuer or publisher	one ten archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Warks.
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