

HOME14



**Home Farm, Wicken, Northamptonshire:  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

*Prepared for Ruth Edmondson*

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

HA Job no.: HOME14-001  
NGR: SP 7426 3925  
Parish: Wicken  
Council: South Northants  
OASIS ref.: headland4-177898

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*Date:...17 July 2014*

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# HOME FARM, WICKEN, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

## Archaeological Watching Brief

*Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd undertook observation of groundworks for the construction of an access route, a garage and the connection of utilities in preparation for the conversion of a barn at Home Farm, Wicken Northamptonshire. This observation was designed to record, and to enhance the understanding of, any significant remains which may have been affected by the development. Boulder Clays and diamicton tills of the Oadby group were uncovered within the development area; an artificially enriched garden soil dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup> / early 19<sup>th</sup> century was identified, along with a cobbled yard surface abutting the eastern end of the barn, no other archaeological deposits or finds were recovered.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The client had been granted consent (planning reference S/2013/1491/FUL and S/2013/1492/FUL), for a residential development at Home Farm.

Northamptonshire County Council's Assistant Archaeological Advisor (AAA), who advises the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on archaeological matters, advised that the development site was situated within a landscape that had previously produced archaeological remains dating to the medieval period. Under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the development area (DA) was considered to have the potential to impact upon heritage assets with archaeological interest.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlining the observation strategy and methodology was prepared by Headland Archaeology (2013) on behalf of the client, and was subsequently approved by the AAA.

### 2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The proposed development site is situated within the former farmyard at Home Farm half of which is currently incorporated into a formal garden, the other half in a pasture field. Home farm is located on the south side of Wicken, adjacent to Leckenhamstead road and is centred on NGR SP 7426 3925. The site lies at an elevation of around 95m AOD, on high ground which overlooks the River Great Ouse.

The site is underlain by boulder clays and diamicton tills belonging to the Oadby Group, dating to the Quaternary

period, at which time the local environment was dominated by fluvio-glacial processes. The limestone bedrock was formed with mainly marine sediments and was deposited in shallow seas during the Jurassic (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/> - accessed 02/07/2014).

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The village of Wicken is a combination of two medieval estates: Wick Hamon and Wick Dive. The village is thought to have initially existed as a single pre-Domesday manor subsequently divided into the two separate entities (parishes) prior to 1086. The two were rejoined in 1587 by Sir John Spencer as the extant parish of Wicken (Wessex 2008).

The DA lies adjacent to Wick Hamon, which contained the parish church of St James. The church purportedly stood from 1263 to 1619. Evaluation of the area by Time Team in 2006 identified the remains of the church (comprising walls and floors) and its associated graveyard (Wessex 2008). The remains of the church building are located immediately to the west of the barn to be converted.

The earthwork remains of a track way/hollow way are also present, connecting the barn to Leckenhamstead Road.

The barn which will be converted as part of this development dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has been subject to an archaeological standing building survey as part of this planning permission application (ABRS 2013).

Any archaeological remains located within the DA were likely to relate to agricultural practices around the post-medieval farm, consisting of midden material, yard surfaces or farm structures. Alternatively remains relating to St James church may have been present including walls, floors and graves.

## 4 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 In general the purpose of the investigation was to record and enhance understanding of the significance of heritage assets before they are lost (NPPF para 141). This has been achieved by determining and understanding the nature, function and character of remains encountered on the site, in their cultural and environmental setting.
- 4.2 The national research context is provided by English Heritage (1991 and 1997) and regionally by Cooper (2006) which refers to the need for more research into medieval rural settlements, supplemented by Knight, Vynner & Allen (2012).
- 4.3 Specifically the aims of the investigation included:
- Establishing the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site.
  - Establishing the relationship of any remains to the surrounding contemporary landscapes.
  - Recovering artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region
  - Recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.
- 4.4 More specific research aims could have included:
- Suspected lost church sites are a particular priority, both to enhance understanding of medieval parochial provision, and for the higher potential they offer for undisturbed deposits (Cooper 2006, 214).
  - Human remains represent the only direct evidence of medieval life. Analysis of human remains should be a priority when these are discovered (Cooper 2006, 214).

To facilitate access for future research and interpretation for public benefit, the resulting archive (finds and records) will be retained by Headland Archaeology until such time as a suitable storage facility becomes available.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken over the course of two days on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May and the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2014. The area was stripped using a rubber tracked 360°

excavator, fitted with a flat bladed ditching bucket. In all areas machine stripping was undertaken in shallow spits, under the supervision of a professional archaeologist, until either the required formation depth was achieved or clean natural subsoil was observed.

### 5.1 Recording

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). All contexts were given unique numbers and stratigraphic relationships were recorded. Recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological standards.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was compiled. The site plan was accurately tied in to the National Grid and a scale version is shown in Illus 1.

A digital photographic record was taken and a metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs.

Finds were recovered predominantly from the topsoil, and as such they were recorded on context sheets but not retained.

### 5.2 Reporting and Archives

The results of the works are presented below. A summary report has been prepared for submission to the OASIS database (headland4-152506). Deposition of the archive will be organised once a receiving body becomes available, and any other matters relevant to the long-term curation of the archive. The costs for archiving have been included in the project estimate. Guidance provided in *Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedfordshire* (1998) will be followed. All archive preparation will be undertaken in accordance with guidelines published by the IfA on behalf of the Archaeological Archives Forum (July 2007).

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 Discussion

The technical detail of contextual information can be found in our Appendices. The following narrative is designed to interpret that technical detail and attempt to categorise its significance. The areas under monitoring are outlined in the illustrations at the end of this report (see Illus 1-4).

Monitoring revealed that the topsoil across the DA carried a large amount of midden material, all of which

dated from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The bulk of this material consisted of blue and white transfer printed earthenwares, pearlwares and comb decorated slipwares, with the occasional salt glazed stoneware sherds, pipe bowls and stems, animal bone, a large fragment of an iron ploughshare, and elements of a horse harness. Finds were recorded on context sheets, but not retained.

A deposit of demolition material consisting of fragments of limestone, brick other 19<sup>th</sup> century midden waste was observed lining the base of the hollow way. Exploratory excavations through this layer at the eastern end, and adjacent to the barn revealed that the rubble had a uniform depth of around 0.5 meters. Such a thickness of made ground is indicative of a purposeful upgrade, rather than intermittent re-surfacing. No evidence to support the existence of an early medieval hollow way was recovered during monitoring.

Removal of topsoil in the area immediately adjacent to the east end of the barn revealed a hard surface, comprised of stone cobbles, surrounded by a kerb of large flat stones, and smaller edge-set stones positioned perpendicular to the cobbles. The cobble surface was observed abutting the wall stones, suggesting that the cobbles post-dated the wall construction. A void at the north eastern corner of the surface suggested the presence of a timber upright, which may have supported a flat or lean-to roof.

To the west of the barn, the area for the garage was stripped down to clean geological deposits. Stripping removed a well-developed garden soil with a maximum depth of 0.48m. Throughout the garden soil column the watching brief officer continued to observe fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics, suggesting that the soil had been actively improved with midden material.

Table 1: Significance of Heritage Assets

Description of Heritage Asset	Trench Number	Feature Number/s	Significance of heritage asset on Local, Regional, National, International scale
19 <sup>th</sup> century cobbled surface	-	-	Low significance of Local importance

## 6.2 Conclusion

Monitoring has revealed a small cobbled surface, which appears to be contemporary with the late 19<sup>th</sup> century barn. The map regression section from the standing building survey undertaken in 2013 (ABRS) shows that the barn was constructed at some point between 1881 and 1900. The second edition Ordnance Survey sheet

(ABRS report, Figure 5) shows that the barn had a small ancillary structure abutting its southern end. This smaller structure is singled out on with a line of map legend which describes it as a cattle pen. The balance of probability therefore suggests that the rough cobbled surface encountered in the watching brief is the floor of this cattle pen. No direct evidence for a surface, or any substantial dating evidence, was recovered from the hollow way during monitoring. This lack of evidence does not completely negate the interpretation of this feature as a medieval or post medieval road, rather that, if a compacted earth or metalled surface had existed as the base of this feature, it was certainly destroyed during an upgrade at some point during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. No archaeological remains were found relating to the nearby church; however it should be borne in mind that the sample was a very small sample of the local landscape and that it is not unusual for archaeologically sensitive areas to contain areas where no cut features are located. The surrounding area remains a sensitive one archaeologically, though the specific part of the 'site' being impacted by the proposals is located in an area of relatively blank ground within that sensitive area.

Table 2: Impact on Heritage Assets (HA)

HA	Development impact	Significance of heritage asset on Local, Regional, National, International scale	Impact of development on heritage asset (None, Low, Medium, High)
n/a	Conversion of farm building and construction of access road	Low Significance of Local Scale	None

## 7 REFERENCES

### Bibliographic sources

ABRS (2013) *An Archaeological Standing Building Survey, Home Farm, Wicken, Northamptonshire*

BGS Website accessed 23/1/2012 - <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/>.

Communities and Local Government 2012 National Planning Policy Framework, Government National Planning Policy

Headland Archaeology Ltd, 2013. *Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Works at Home Farm, 8 Leckenhamstead Road, Wicken, Northamptonshire*, Unpublished Client Report

IfA Standards and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation (revised October 2008).

## 8 APPENDICES

## 8.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers

**Context Register**

Context no.	Area	Description
001	1	Topsoil. Mid red-brown silty sand with frequent 19 <sup>th</sup> century ceramic fragments, bone and CBM Max Depth = 0.35m
002	1	Made ground, crushed limestone with occasional fragments of brick Max Depth 0.55m
003	1	Putative cut for made ground 002, max depth 0.55m
004	1	Cobbled surface, located within construction cut 006. Average size of cobbles= 0.20m x 0.02m. Surrounded by a mix of larger stones laid flat, and edge laid cobbles set perpendicular, forming a kerb. Abuts 19 <sup>th</sup> century barn structure. 6.0m x 5.80m
005	1	Sandy clay, dark red brown, cut by 006 – truncated by cut for made ground - 003
006	1	Construction cut for surface 004 -

**Photographic Register**

Frame no.	B/W no.	Direction	Description
001		SE	Test pit 1 showing depth of made ground 002
002		W	Shot of surface 004 mid excavation
003		E	General view of hollow way after topsoil strip
004		W	General view of hollow way after topsoil strip
005		SW	Skip store after topsoil strip
006		E	General view of E end of site after topsoil strip
007		S	Garage area stripped to formation
008		N	Test pit 2 showing depth of made ground in drive
009		N	Test pit 3 showing depth of made ground at E end of hollow way
010		S	Telecomms trench post-excavation
011		W	Detail of surface 004
012		W	Detail of surface 004
013		W	Detail of surface 004
014		W	Detail of surface 004
015		S	Detail of surface 004
016		W	General Site Shot
017		N	Electric Service Pipe Trench Section
018		SW	Aerial shot of 004
019		SW	Aerial shot of 004
020		SW	Aerial shot of 004
021		SW	Aerial shot of 004
022		SW	Aerial shot of 004

023		SW	Aerial shot of 004
024		SW	Aerial shot of 004
025		SW	Aerial shot of 004
026		SW	Aerial shot of 004
027		SW	Aerial shot of 004
028		SW	Aerial shot of 004



ILLUS 2

Elevated view of surface 004



ILLUS 3

Rectified photograph of surface 004



ILLUS 4

West facing view of hollow way



ILLUS 5

Southeast facing view of garage strip

