

**MILL HOUSE,  
7 CHURCH WALK,  
ASHTON KEYNES,  
WILTSHIRE.**

**NGR: 404335 194200**

**Accession Code: DZSWS:40-2021**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING**

March 2022  
Report No. 1473



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES**

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**Quality Assurance**

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## **CONTENTS**

Summary

Glossary of Archaeological Terms and Abbreviations

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND
- 3 AIMS
- 4 METHODOLOGY
- 5 RESULTS
- 6 DISCUSSION
- 7 CONCLUSION
- 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## **APPENDIX LIST**

Appendix 1: The Ceramics

## **FIGURE LIST**

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Site Plan

## SUMMARY

On 6<sup>th</sup> July and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2021 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Mill House, 7 Church Walk, Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire (NGR: 404335 194200). The project was commissioned by the landowner, Nick Plummer.

The archaeological works comprised the monitoring of the excavation of a geo-technical test pit, as well as subsequent groundworks associated with the construction of a garage.

The archaeological monitoring recorded Post-medieval or later soil make-up layers, which were probably related to garden landscaping, at depths of around 0.50m below the Modern ground. A single residual sherd of Medieval pottery was the only evidence for earlier activity. No archaeological features were present within the monitored area.

## GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

### Medieval

The period between AD 1066 and AD 1500.

### Natural

In archaeological terms, this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

### NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

### OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (aOD above Ordnance Datum).

### OS

Ordnance Survey.

### Post-medieval

The period between AD 1500 and AD 1900.

### Prehistoric

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,500 BC to c. 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,000 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

### Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

### Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on 6<sup>th</sup> July and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2021 at Mill House, 7 Church Walk, Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire (NGR: 404335 194200). The project was commissioned by the landowner, Nick Plummer.
- 1.2 The archaeological monitoring and recording was conducted in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2021), as well as the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 1.3 The Cifa code of conduct was adhered to throughout.

## 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning permission (**Application Number: 21/00010/LBC**) was granted for the demolition of an existing outbuilding and the construction of a garage, along with ancillary accommodation, including a terraced area at Mill House. The archaeological officer for Wiltshire Council required a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during associated intrusive groundworks.
- 2.2 The site is located on the northwest edge of Ashton Keynes, immediately north of the River Thames or Isis. It is bounded to the east and northeast by Church Lane, to the northwest by a residential garden and to the west by a scheduled Medieval moated site, at Church Farm (Scheduled Monument: 1013356).
- 2.3 At the time of the fieldwork, the site comprised a residential garden and gravel access track/parking area, with outbuildings and garden walls. It is situated on flat land, at approximately 85.5m aOD and the underlying geology is recorded as *Oxford Clay Formation* – mudstone, overlain by *Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member* – sand and gravel (BGS Online Viewer).
- 2.4 The Scheduled Monument includes a large rectangular moated site surrounding Church Farm. The site is orientated north-south and has maximum external dimensions of 175m north-south by 125m east-west. The island has dimensions of c.140m by 100m and is surrounded on all but the west side by a ditch, which is 15-20m wide and between 1 and 1.5m deep. During the summer, the moat is partly dry (to the east and north) and partly damp (to the south), although it does fill up in winter. Parallel and external to the south side of the moat, but for only two-thirds the length, is a linear depression similar in construction to the ditch; this is considered to be a fishpond. Numerous casual finds, including pottery and metalwork, have come from the interior of the site confirming occupation during the Medieval period.

Sixteenth century documents suggest that the site was a possession of Tewkesbury Abbey. It is believed that the site was the head of the manor of Ashton, left by King Alfred to his daughter, from where it passed on to Tewkesbury Abbey. It has also been suggested that Church Farm was the site of a Nunnery, although except for the association with Tewkesbury Abbey, there is little to support this idea. Certainly, the remains of the monument are more typical of a manor than a nunnery.

- 2.5 Neolithic and Bronze Age worked flints have been found within 1km of the site and an Iron Age settlement was situated approximately 1km to the north at Bradleys Gravel Pit. Roman settlement is known, to the north, west and east of Ashton Keynes, and Saxon evidence is recorded from within the village itself.
- 2.6 The site is also located approximately 500m to the southwest of Hall's Close (SM 1013197), a Medieval ringwork and bailey located close to a tributary of the River Thames.
- 2.7 The Church of the Holy Cross is located just over 200m to the northwest of the study area. The church is Grade I listed and dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.8 Mill House itself is a Grade II Listed Building and is located within the Ashton Keynes Conservation Area.
- 2.9 The site therefore contained the potential for archaeological features and deposits, predominately dating from the Saxon period onwards. This did not prejudice the works against evidence relating to other periods.

### 3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological monitoring were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains; as well as to make recommendations for management of the resource, including further archaeological works if necessary.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
  - i) to record, prior to their destruction, any identified archaeological deposits within the monitored areas, and date these where possible;
  - ii) to attempt to characterise the nature and preservation of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning and extent of features present within the monitored areas;
  - iii) to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence which will attempt to determine the complexity of the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy present, and to recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;

iv) to define any research priorities that may be relevant should further field investigation be required.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The penetrative groundworks associated with the construction of the garage were undertaken whilst under constant archaeological observation. Mechanical excavations were undertaken by use of a 360° excavator, equipped with either a toothed or toothless grading bucket, as appropriate.
- 4.2 The **first phase** of works consisted of the excavation of a geo-technical test pit in order to test ground conditions and soil depths down to the expected level of development impact. The **second phase** of works comprised the excavation of the garage foundation trench, along with the reduction of the associated interior area.
- 4.3 All archaeological investigation, excavation and recording was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Test Pit

- 5.1.1 The test pit was located approximately centrally within the area of the proposed garage, as shown in Figure 2. It measured 1.3m long by 0.30m wide and up to 0.90m (approximately 84.50m aOD) in depth. The lowest revealed deposit consisted of a grey brown soft clay silt (104), up to 0.25m thick, which contained occasional limestone fragments and occasional to frequent charcoal flecks, as well as six sherds of **17<sup>th</sup> century or later Post-medieval pottery**. Deposit (104) was sealed by a layer of tan soft clay silt (103), up to 0.50m thick, which contained occasional small stones and occasional to frequent charcoal flecks, along with eight sherds of **17<sup>th</sup> century or later Post-medieval pottery** and a fragment of brick. A residual sherd of **13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century Medieval Minety ware pottery** was also present within this layer. Deposit (103) was overlain by a layer of Modern crushed stone and tarmac fragments (102), up to 0.08m thick, which was, in turn, sealed by a layer of light beige gravel (101), up to 0.07m thick. *No archaeological features were present within the test pit.*

### 5.2 Garage Foundation Trench and Area Reduction

- 5.2.1 The foundation trench was located around the perimeter of the proposed garage, which was 12m long by 7m wide. The trench itself was 0.90m wide and extended for a total distance of 34m.



- 5.2.2 The southern part of the trench was excavated to an average depth of 0.58m (average 84.96m aOD) below the Modern ground. The lowest revealed deposit consisted of a grey brown firm silt sand clay (107), up to 0.12m thick. This was sealed by a layer of light grey brown firm silt sand clay (106), up to 0.16m thick, which contained occasional fragments and blocks of limestone, as well as six sherds of **17<sup>th</sup> century or later Post-medieval pottery**. Deposit (106) was subsequently overlain by a brown silt sand clay topsoil (105), up to 0.30m thick, which contained a single sherd of **18<sup>th</sup> century or later Post-medieval pottery**.
- 5.2.3 The northern part of the trench was excavated to an average depth of 0.38m (average 85.02m aOD) below the Modern ground. The lowest exposed deposit consisted of a grey brown firm silt sand clay (109), up to 0.11m thick, which was similar to deposit (107) at the south. This was sealed by a layer of variable dark brown to brown gravel, clay and CBM fragments (110), up to 0.13m thick, which was in turn overlain by light beige gravel (111), up to 0.14m thick.
- 5.2.4 The interior part of the garage was reduced to an average depth of 0.34m (85.13m aOD) below Modern ground. The reduction penetrated into, but not below, the height levels of deposits (103), (106) and (109), which were recorded during the excavation of the test pit and foundation trench.
- 5.2.5 The limestone foundations of a northeast – southwest aligned Modern garden wall were present within the area of the garage. These penetrated below the level of the foundation trench. A limited amount of Modern / garden disturbance was also noted within the reduced area. *No archaeological features were present within the foundation trench or the reduced area.*

## 6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The excavations related to the construction of the garage penetrated into, but not below, soil layers which appeared to be dumped material and/or made ground. Where associated with artefactual material, these deposits could be confidently dated to 17<sup>th</sup> century or later, which suggested that they were likely to be related to Post-medieval and later garden landscaping activity. A single residual sherd of 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century Minety ware pottery represented limited evidence for Medieval activity in the vicinity of the site.

## 7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The archaeological monitoring recorded Post-medieval or later soil make-up layers, which were probably related to garden landscaping, at depths of around 0.50m below the Modern ground. A single residual sherd of Medieval pottery was the only evidence for earlier activity. No archaeological features were present within the monitored area.

- 7.2 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology but will be deposited in due course with Wiltshire Museum, under Accession Code DZSWS:40-2021. An OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Neil Adam of Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service and Nick Plummer, the landowner, for their help during the course of the project.

## APPENDIX 1: The Ceramics

By Roy King

The pottery assemblage consisted of 22 sherds weighing a total of 392g. The assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight and assigned, where possible to local or regional fabric types; the very limited number of rims meant that no EVE assessment was relevant in regard to this assessment. Standard pottery quantification forms were used for the assessment which follow *A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology* (MPRG et al 2016).

Common names are attributed to the fabric types where possible.

The pottery assemblage is in a fragmentary state with varying levels of abrasion. No sherds exhibit traces of burning and there is no evidence of sooting and/or burnt food residue on any sherd.

The Medieval pottery assemblage comprises a single residual sherd with a total weight of 22g and is a product of the North Wiltshire/South Cotswolds (NWSC) tradition, which probably originate from the kiln site at Minety.

The Post-medieval assemblage comprises fifteen sherds of red glazed earthenware weighing 283g, all products of the kilns at Ashton Keynes. A total of five sherds of transfer printed 'chinaware' weighing a total of 51g and dating from no earlier than the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A single sherd of English stoneware weighing 36g was also recovered.

### Ceramic Building Material

The ceramic building material assemblage comprises a single stratified fragment of Post-medieval brick weighing a total of 179g. The fragment is not large enough to provide detail as to what size or shape the brick originally was, which hampers any analysis. Post-Roman brick-making started in England during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but is broadly restricted to southeast England during this period. It is unlikely that these fragments are earlier than 17<sup>th</sup> century in date, given its association with the red glazed earthenware also recovered from context (103), but it is worth noting that a single sherd of residual Medieval pottery was also recovered from this context and a pre-17<sup>th</sup> century origin for the brick cannot be entirely ruled out.

### Discussion

The earliest pottery recovered from the site comprises a single sherd of Medieval pottery recovered as a residual sherd in context (103). Its presence is indicative of Medieval activity in the vicinity, but is entirely consistent with finds that might be expected from this part of Wiltshire.

The Post-medieval assemblage contained Ashton Keynes wares in the form of red glazed earthenware of C17+. The sherds all fall into local traditions and are not uncharacteristic of the period in this locality.

The assemblage itself is mundane and is entirely typical for a site in this part of Wiltshire. The entire assemblage comprises coarsewares with no evidence for finewares and represents a typical low status rural assemblage with a *terminus post quem* of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Other pottery/ceramic included transfer printed chinaware and an English stoneware bottle sherd.

The assemblage is too small for further conclusions and has no apparent research value. It is consequently recommended that the assemblage is marked for dispersal.

Table 1

Context	Description	No	Weight (g)	Kiln	Date
103	Wheel turned rim sherd. Limestone tempered	1	22	Minety ware	C13-14th
103	Wheelthrown. 2x rim, 6x bodysherds	8	177	Ashton Keynes	C17+
103	Brick fragment	1	179	Local manufacture	C17+
104	1x rod handle, 5x bodysherds	6	82	Ashton Keynes	C17+
105	Bodysherd	1	8	Transfer printed ware	C18+
106	Bodysherd	1	24	Ashton Keynes	C17+
106	3x rim sherd, 1x bodysherd	4	43	Transfer printed ware	C18+
106	Bodysherd	1	36	English stoneware	C19+

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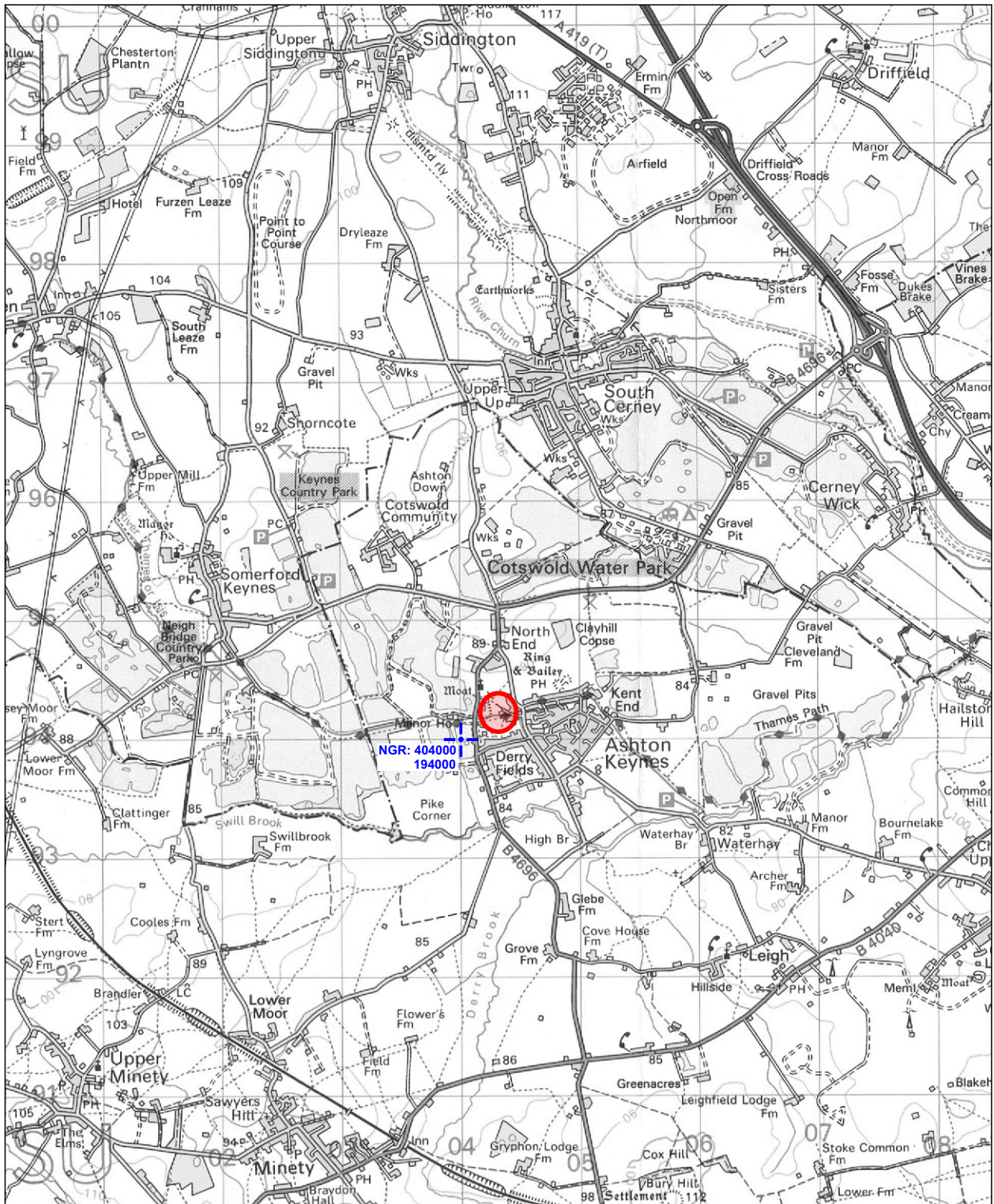
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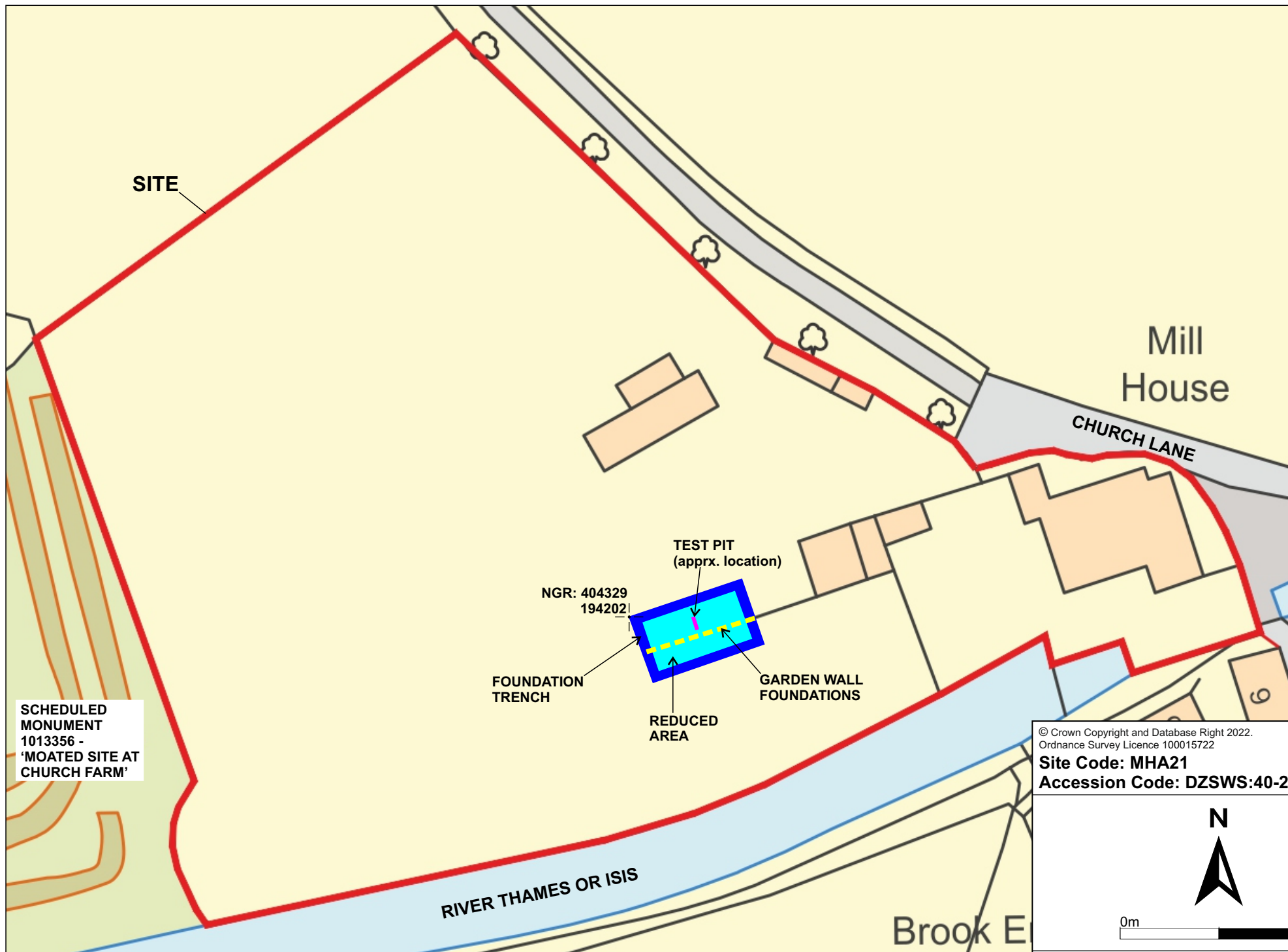
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**Site Code: MHA21**  
**Accession Code: DZSWS:40-2021**

N

0m 2km

**FIGURE 1: Site Location**



SCHEDULED  
MONUMENT  
1013356 -  
'MOATED SITE AT  
CHURCH FARM'

NGR: 404329  
194202

TEST PIT  
(apprx. location)

FOUNDATION  
TRENCH

REDUCED  
AREA

GARDEN WALL  
FOUNDATIONS

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Site Code: MHA21  
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FIGURE 2: Site Plan