

Land adjacent to the Village Hall Steeple Aston Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



August 2007

**Client: Steeple Aston
Parish Council**

Issue N^o: 1
OA Job N^o: 3739
Planning Ref N^o: 06/1026/F
NGR: SP 4770 2615

Land Adjacent to the Village Hall, Steeple Aston, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Scope of work.....	1
1.2 Location, geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology	2
2.1 Aims	2
2.2 Methodology	2
3 Results	2
3.1 Description of deposits	2
3.2 Finds	3
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains	3
4 Discussion and Conclusions	3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....	4
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References.....	4
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	4

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
 Fig. 2 Extent of excavations
 Fig. 3 Sections

SUMMARY

On the 6th August 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land adjacent to the village hall, Steeple Aston, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP4770 2615) during the excavation of a new service trench. The work was commissioned by Steeple Aston Parish Council in advance of the construction of a multi purpose gaming area and a BMX track. The watching brief revealed that the centre and southern end of the site had been truncated during the installation of temporary classrooms previously on the site, and the material used to level the northern end of the site. Undisturbed stratigraphy was only encountered within the northern end of the site. No significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On the 6th August 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land adjacent to the village hall, Steeple Aston, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 4770 2615). The work was commissioned by Steeple Aston Parish Council in respect of a planning application for the construction of a multi purpose games area and a BMX track, together with associated hard standing and a covered seating area (Planning Application No. 06/1026/F).

1.1.2 A project brief was set by, Richard Oram, the County Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, which required that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken during the period of intrusive groundworks (OCAS, 2007).

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2007).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The village of Steeple Aston lies approximately 9 km north-west of the town of Bicester (Fig. 1). The site is situated on the northern edge of the village and consists of a terraced site on a gentle north facing slope, which had previously been used as the site for four temporary classrooms. The development area occupies an area of 0.21 hectare and the upper part of the site lies at a height of 117 m above OD. The underlying geology is Clypeus Grit overlying clay (British Geological Survey, sheet No 218).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2007) and is reproduced overleaf.

- 1.3.2 An inhumation burial, along with a Roman coin and bracelets was uncovered on the site of the proposed BMX track in 1875 ahead of the then new infant school (PRN 1708). Another Roman coin was found at about the same time in a garden immediately north of the burial, now on the northern edge of the proposed BMX track (PRN 1707). Although the area for the BMX track is unlikely to affect any possible archaeological deposits, the associated ground reduction and works for the rest of the proposal could disturb other surviving archaeological deposits.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological deposits or features that may be destroyed or disturbed during the course of the groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 All excavation was undertaken by a tracked excavator fitted with a 0.5 m wide trenching bucket. These excavations comprised a total length of 100 m of trenching varying in depth between 0.9 m and 1.4 m and the site of 3 inspection chambers.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of the excavations was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scales of 1:20. All excavations and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The underlying natural, a light yellow-brown silt sand (2) was encountered throughout the length of the trenching at a depth of between 0.25 m and 0.45 m below ground level (Fig. 3, Sections 1, 2 and 3). At the southern end of the site this was overlaid by a 0.45 m deep layer of grey-brown sand loam (1), a modern layer of made ground, a probable landscaping deposit.
- 3.1.2 In the centre of the site Layer 2 was overlaid by a lens of light brown clay silt (5), in excess of 0.55 m deep (Fig. 3, Section 2). This deposit represents a layer of colluvium, and is probably pre-historic in origin. Overlying this was a 0.25 m deep layer of orange brown silt clay (4), mixed with lenses of grey-brown clay silt. This deposit also contained examples of modern finds such as plastic suggesting that it was

a layer of modern made ground. This was sealed by a layer of very dark grey-brown silt loam (3), a landscaping layer of redeposited topsoil.

- 3.1.3 At the lower, northern end of the excavations a 0.55 m deep layer of light green-grey silt clay (6) was observed overlying the natural sand, Layer 2 (Fig. 3, Section 3). This was overlaid by a 0.18 m deep continuation of layer 4, which in turn was overlain by a 0.2 m deep continuation of Layer 3.

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 All the finds recovered during the course of the watching brief were 20th century in origin. These included fragments of brick and salt glazed pipe, plastic and bottle glass. The presence of these artefacts was recorded, however they were not retained.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 The watching brief showed that the development area had been previously subject to a large degree of disturbance including truncation.
- 4.1.2 The original topsoil sealing the site appears to have been stripped prior to this truncation and later used to landscape the area. The southern third of the site has been reduced in depth with the material removed used to terrace the central area of the site, with the surplus used to level the northern end of the site. All this activity was related to the construction of the foundation plinths for the temporary classrooms which previously occupied the site.
- 4.1.3 No evidence for any earlier archaeology, such as truncated deeper features or residual finds were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.45 m	-	Modern made ground	Plastic, brick, bottle glass	C20th
2	Layer	> 0.55m	-	Natural sand	-	-
3	Layer	0.2 m	-	Topsoil, modern landscaping deposit	Plastic, brick	C20th
4	Layer	0.2 m	-	Modern made ground, levelling deposit	-	C20th
5	Layer	> 0.5 m	10 m	Lens of prehistoric colluvium	-	-
6	Layer	> 0.55 m	-	Natural clay	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 Standards and Guidance for archaeological watching Briefs

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson)

OA, 2007 Land Adjacent to Village Hall, Fir Lane, Steeple Aston - Written scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological watching Brief

OCAS, 2007 Land Adjacent to Village Hall, Fir Lane, Steeple Aston - Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land Adjacent to Village Hall, Fir Lane, Steeple Aston, Oxfordshire

Site code: STAVHA 07

Grid reference: SP 4770 2615

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of drainage trenches

Date and duration of project: 6th August, 2007, one day on site

Area of site: c0.2 hectare

Summary of results: The watching brief showed that the area of the site had been subject to disturbance including truncation during the installation of the 4 temporary classrooms previously on site and that no evidence for any earlier archaeology was encountered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number:



Reproduced from the Landranger 1:50,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 1974. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 10000569

Figure 1: Site location

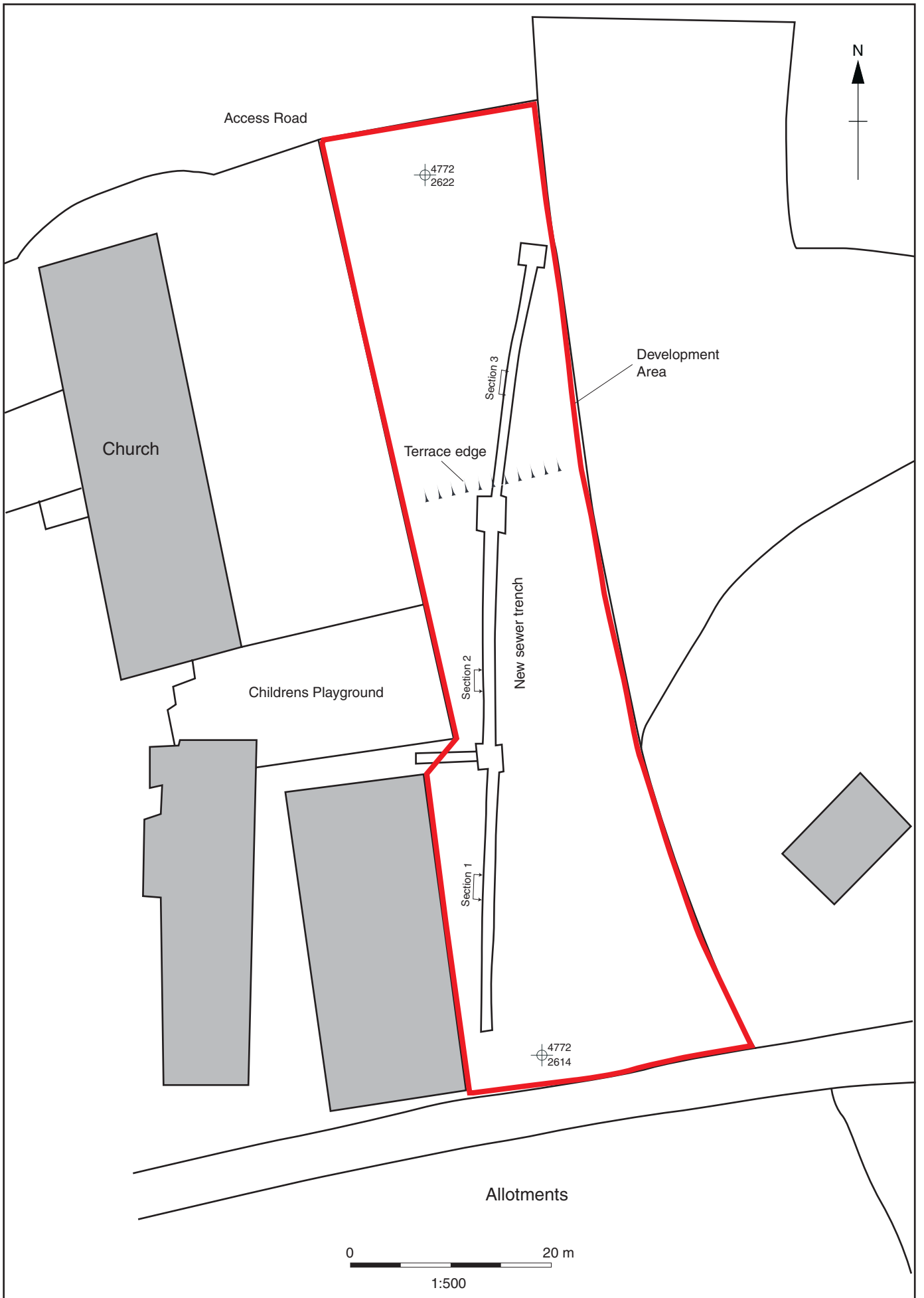


Figure 2: Extent of excavations

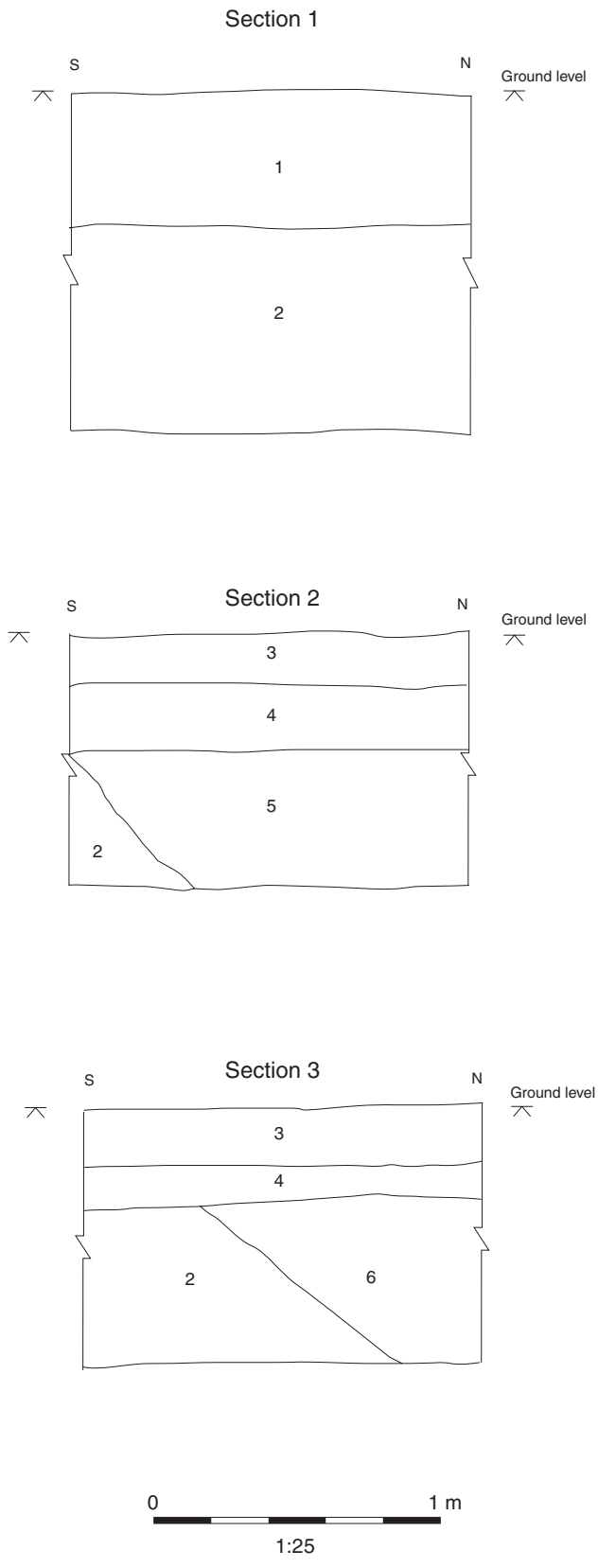


Figure 3: Sections



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.thehumanjourney.net



Oxford Archaeology North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.thehumanjourney.net



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

Oxford Archaeological Unit is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627

Registered Office:

Oxford Archaeological Unit
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES