



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT  
CHURCH STREET, CHIPPING NORTON,  
OXFORDSHIRE**

**NGR 4312 2272**

*On behalf of*

*The Clancy Group Ltd*

**December 2010**

**REPORT FOR** The Clancy Group  
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**Site Code** CNCS 10  
**JMHS Project No:** 2313  
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief during the excavation of service holes in connection with the replacement of a water pipe at Church Street, Chipping Norton (Centred: NGR 4312 2272). A total of three site visits were made over the period from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and nine service holes were monitored. The ground works involved initial handstanding removal by pneumatic drill followed by further reduction using 360° excavator and/or hand tools. The existing water main was usually found at a depth of c. 0.30m from the present ground surface at which point excavation ceased. The surface of the natural geology was seen in some of the larger service holes but no archaeological features seen. The earliest finds were early post-medieval pottery sherds found in Service holes 3, 4 & 5.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The development site was located in the centre of the historic town of Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire (NGR 4312 2272). Church Street runs westwards to the church from the junction of Spring Street and Market Street. It is approximately 165m in length and rises from 175m OD at its western end to 190m at its eastern end.

The underlying geology according to the British Geological Survey Sheet 218 (1:63 000) is sand and gravel on the cusp of 1<sup>st</sup> Terrace deposits and just to the east Chipping Norton Limestone. The Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services' Brief states the geology to be Mudstone and the JMHS Written Scheme of Investigation lists the geology as Upper Lias Clay. During excavation the geology was seen to be heavysset grey clay in the centre of the road and blue clay at the western end of the street.

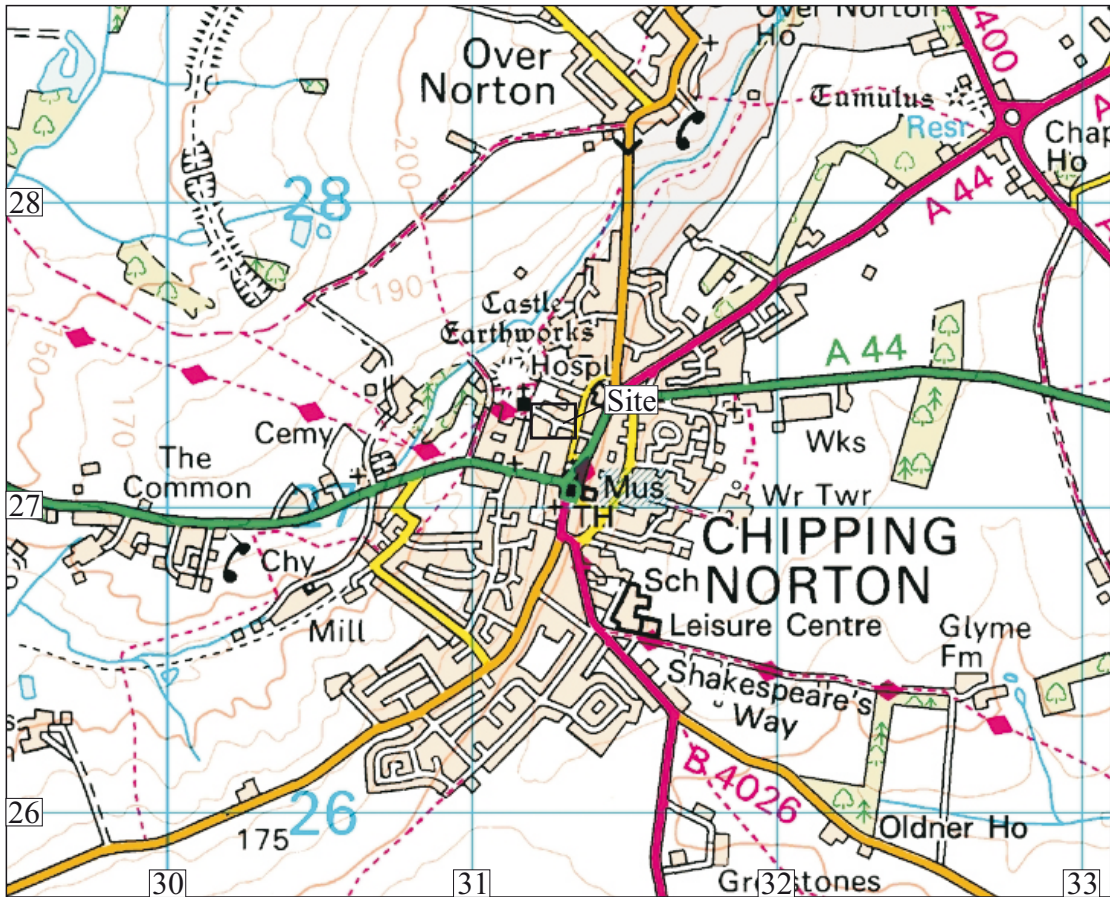
### **1.2 Planning Background**

The Oxfordshire County Archaeological Officer required a watching brief to be maintained on all ground works associated with the insertion of a new water main along the route of Church Street, Chipping Norton.

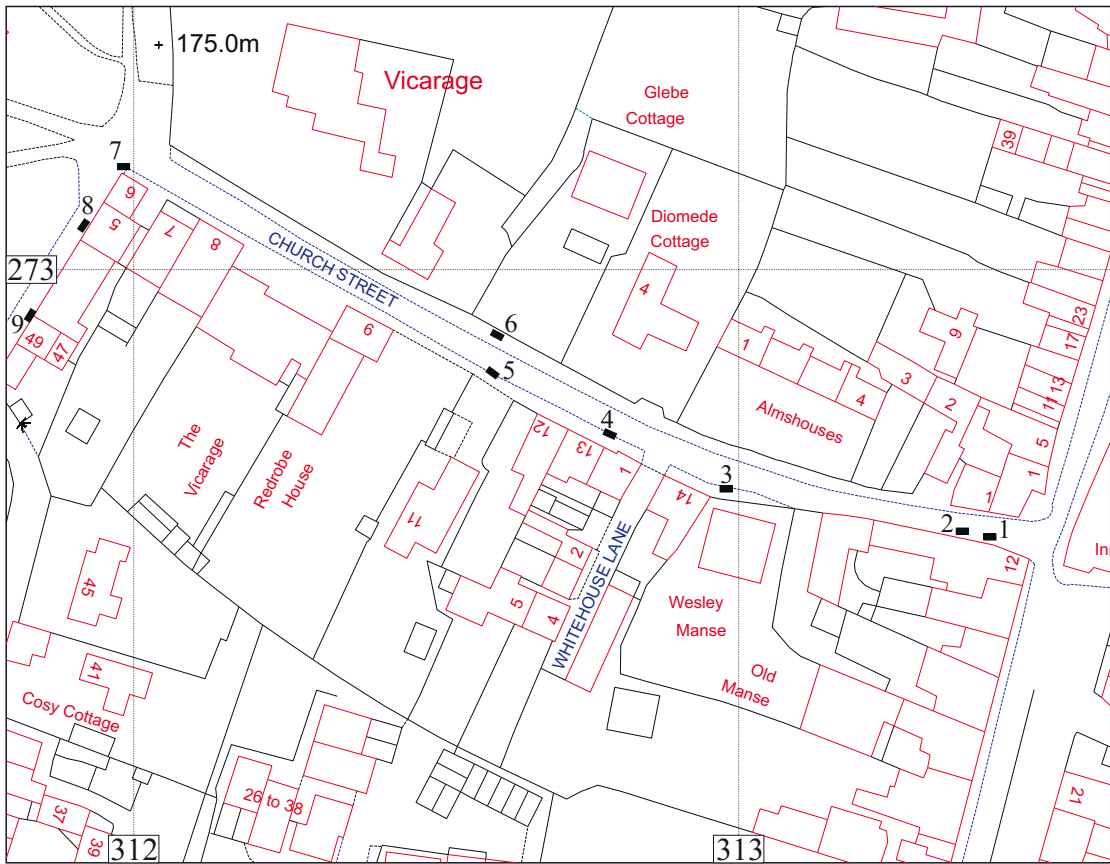
Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for the archaeological work on which a detailed site-specific specification was produced by John Moore Heritage Services. The *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) outlined the method by which the watching brief was carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance. The first part of the document was site specific while the appendices detailed John Moore Heritage Services' standards and general procedures.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Church Street is within the historic medieval core of Chipping Norton. There is evidence of early medieval activity on the frontage of Market Street. The development site was located within an area of considerable archaeological potential. Chipping Norton Castle lies to the north-west and dates to the early 12th century. It was a motte and bailey castle and seems to have survived until the later medieval period. Documentary evidence states that it was in a ruinous state by the reign of Elizabeth. The 12th century Parish Church of St Mary lies to the west of Church Street. However Chipping Norton is listed in the Domesday Survey of 1087 suggesting that a settlement existed at that time if not earlier and that there was an earlier church. It is possible that the graveyard was previously more extensive than its current definition. Medieval and earlier churches historically formed a focal point for settlement and



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Figure 1. Site location

there is documentary evidence of a school being established at the western end of Church Street in 1450.

Remains of a building constructed after 1550 was found adjacent to Redrobe House in Church Street (JMHS 2006). There are various listed buildings along the road.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

### **2.1 Project Objectives**

The main and general project aims outlined in the WSI (JMHS 2010) was to:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- In particular to record any evidence associated with the medieval and early post-medieval town.

This report sets out to fulfil these highlighted aims and objectives.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994). The Oxfordshire County Archaeology Service (OCAS) prepared *Brief* and John Moore Heritage Services *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2010).

### **3.2 Methodology**

An archaeologist was present on site during all ground works for the excavation of service holes along the line of Church Street. All ground reduction was achieved using a combination of 360° tracked excavator fitted with a narrow ditching bucket or by use of hand tools.

A journal, recorded on specially designed record sheets, was maintained which detailed times and durations of site visits as well as notes on areas monitored by the archaeologist. Deposits (overburden) were recorded on context recording sheets. A general photographic record of the work was kept and will form of the part site archive to be submitted to the Oxfordshire County Museum.

## **4 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Field Results**

Individual context numbers were assigned on site to deposits encountered during the ground reduction. Context numbers in () indicate deposits of material.

The lowest geological horizon attained was clay. The geology was heavy grey and blue clay (003). The depth at which this horizon was attained varied slightly across the site but was generally around *c.* 0.50m from the current ground surface.

Table 1; Summary of service holes and contexts

Service Hole No.	Deposit	Description	Depth (m)	Findings
1	003	Yellow/orange clay silt	0.35	None
2	002	Mid brownish grey clay silt	0.30	Late medieval jug handle
3	002	Mid brownish grey clay silt	0.30	None
4	003	Yellow/orange clay silt	0.30	None
5	006	Dark brownish orange silty clay	0.30	Post medieval
5	007	Dark brownish grey clay silt freq stones	0.25	Post medieval
5	008	Mid-Dark grey clay silt (natural)	/	None
6	006	Dark brownish orange silty clay	0.30	None
7	004	Mid greyish brown clay silt	0.40	None
7	005	Dark grey blue clay silt (natural)	/	None
8	009	Mottled brownish grey silty clay with stones	0.20 (min)	None
9	009	Mottled brownish grey silty clay with stones	0.20 (min)	None

The results of the test pits are summarised in the above table. All contexts described are beneath context (001), which was the existing modern tarmac road surface.

Only two service holes showed a stratigraphic sequence above natural. Service hole 5 provided a section undisturbed by previous groundworks. The earliest deposit was the natural mid brown-grey clay silt (008). This was overlain by 0.25m thick dark brown-grey clay silt with frequent crushed stone inclusions (007) with one glazed 16<sup>th</sup> Century pottery sherd. The latest deposit was 0.30m thick dark brown-orange silty clay (006) with a broken hand made brick of 18<sup>th</sup> /19<sup>th</sup> Century AD date and two broken animal bones and animal teeth.

Service hole 7 revealed natural thick blue clay at the base (005) overlain by a c.0.40m thick mid brown-grey clay silt made of recent origin with stone fragments throughout (004). This service hole was heavily truncated by water and gas mains. No archaeological features were seen cut into the natural clay.

#### 4.2 Reliability of Results

The watching brief was carried out in wintry conditions with good co-operation from the contractor carrying out the groundworks. As the work involved uncovering existing water mains the ground had mostly already been disturbed when the original pipe was inserted. However, in some instances areas undisturbed by the original pipe were impacted upon, with potential for archaeology.

It was decided by the contractors that the best way to insert the new water mains was by drilling technique. This method did not involve open cut trenches and the pipe could be inserted without causing any damage to possible below ground archaeology. The only hand

excavation needed was to open small window holes where the new main pipe would need to be connected to the smaller pipes.

After consultation with Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Archaeology Service it was decided that due to the lack of archaeological finds and features it was no longer necessary to monitor the small window holes needed to connect the mains with the individual properties along the street.

The methodology employed during groundworks was commensurate with the Brief (OCAS 2010) and WSI (JMHS 2010) and a confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved within small sized excavations.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery (*By David Gilbert*)

The post-medieval pottery assemblage consisted of four sherds weighing a total of 139g and was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

Red Earthenware (OXDR), dated 1550+

Context	OXDR		Date
	No	Wt	
002-SH3	1	35g	mid C16th +
002-SH4	2	35g	mid C16th +
007-SH5	1	69g	mid C16th +

A body sherd from (002-SH3) had a dark brown glaze and displayed an external handle scar. The other sherd from this context was an abraded rim of indeterminate diameter with attached handle stub. This sherd had traces of a light brown glaze, as did the rim sherd of a large bowl/basin from context (007-SH5). The sherd from context (002-SH4) was an unglazed handle.

### 5.2 Environmental Remains

No features were considered to warrant environmental sampling.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological watching brief at Church Street, Chipping Norton was successful in proving that no archaeological features existed at the site. The natural clay geology was seen within two of the larger excavated service holes (7 & 5) with no archaeological features.

Service hole 7 was closest to the graveyard of St Mary's Church and potential for skeletal remains was thought high as the medieval graveyard could have extended beyond the limits of the present graveyard. Truncation by modern services was extensive at this location with water mains, gas and foul drains present. The natural blue clay geology was seen at the base of the excavations with no archaeological features or grave cuts. The lack of any skeletal remains would suggest that the medieval graveyard did not extend into this area, perhaps as this area was on the original medieval route to the church or the clay was considered simply too heavy for removal prior to burial. Lower down the slope within the present churchyard the



geology was softer lighter coloured grey clay (seen within an open trench cut for a foul drain which was not part of this watching brief).

The only finds of archaeological interest were early post-medieval pottery sherds. Finds such as this are expected within the centre of historic medieval towns.

Disturbance of the original ground surface by the existing water main was extensive within the service holes monitored during this watching brief. However, within service hole 5 a clear section was apparent outside the cut for the original water pipe. This section was useful as it showed deposit (007-SH5) with early Post-medieval pottery sherd and frequent stone inclusions directly on top of natural clay. Only a small undisturbed area was seen but the deposit may have been a degraded or previously disturbed road surface. The 'keyhole' nature of the excavations meant it was not possible to fully understand this deposit.

## 7 ARCHIVE

### Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

#### Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
Pottery and animal bone	

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the County Museums Service.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<b>Site Name:</b> Church Street, Chipping Norton	
<b>Site Address:</b> Church Street, Chipping Norton, OX7 5NT	
<b>Summary:</b> <i>John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief during the excavation of service holes in connection with the replacement of a water pipe at Church Street, Chipping Norton (Centred: NGR 4312 2272). A total of three site visits were made over the period from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and nine service holes were monitored. The ground works involved initial hardstanding removal by pneumatic drill followed by further reduction using 360° excavator and/or hand tools. The existing water main was usually found at a depth of c. 0.30m from the present ground surface at which point excavation ceased. The surface of the natural geology was seen in some of the larger service holes but no archaeological features seen. The earliest finds were Early Post medieval pottery sherds found in Service holes 3, 4 &amp; 5.</i>	
<b>District/Unitary:</b> Oxfordshire	<b>Parish:</b>
<b>Period(s):</b> Modern	
<b>NGR (centre of site: 8 figures):</b> 4312 2272	
<b>Type of archaeological work (delete)</b> Watching Brief	
<b>Date of Recording:</b> 23 <sup>rd</sup> to 25 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	
<b>Unit undertaking recording:</b> JMHS	
<b>Geology:</b> Upper Lias Clay	
<b>Title and author of accompanying report:</b> An Archaeological Watching Brief at Church Street, Chipping Norton, OX7 5NT  Prepared by Paul Riccoboni BA (Hons) Arch AIFA	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)</b>  No archaeological features. One early Post medieval jug handle and deposit, which may have been related to a previous road surface but too difficult to define within the limits of the excavations.	
<b>Location of archive/finds:</b>	
<b>Contact at Unit: :</b> <i>Paul Riccoboni</i> <i>jm@jmheritageservices.co.uk</i>	<b>Date:</b> 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2010