

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
ON LAND ADJACENT TO ROSEBANK,
CHAPEL STREET, BLOXHAM**

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 4319 3593

On behalf of

Chervale Builders

JULY 2011

REPORT FOR Chervale Builders
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out a two-trench evaluation on land adjacent to Rosebank, Chapel St, Bloxham. An undated soakaway and part of the Victorian wall were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site location (Figure 1)

The application area is located within the historic core of Bloxham, on the south side of Chapel Street (NGR SP 4319 3593). It lies at approximately 75m OD and the geology is Middle Lias Clays. The site is currently in domestic use.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission was granted by Cherwell District Council for the construction of a new dwelling on the site (11/00562/F). Due to the potential disturbance of any below ground archaeological remains Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) advised that a condition be attached to the planning permission requiring a staged programme of archaeological investigation. This evaluation formed the first phase of any staged investigations. This is in line with PPS5 and Local Plan Policies. OCAS prepared a *Brief* for the first stage of the programme of archaeological work, namely a field evaluation. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* proposing the methodology by which the archaeological evaluation was to be carried out by John Moore Heritage Services to satisfy the requirements of the Brief was prepared, and agreed with the client and OCAS.

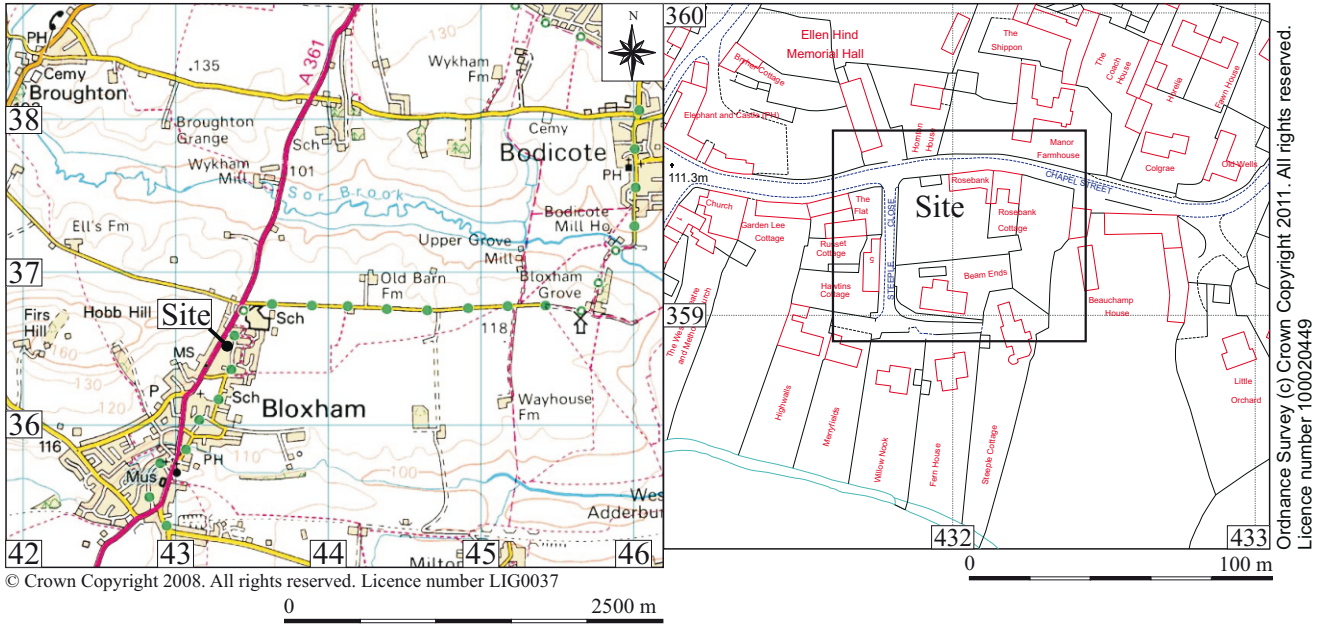
1.3 Archaeological Background

The site lies within an area of some archaeological interest located on the periphery of the medieval core of the settlement. The site is located adjacent to a grade II listed building thought to date to the 17th century (PRN 11794). A second 17th century cottage is located 50m to the west (PRN 11796) while a 14th century farmstead is 50m northwest of the site, on the opposite side of the road. It is not unlikely that further medieval and early post-medieval houses might have existed in the area. The Davis map of 1797 shows Chapel Street populated on each side with houses and it is probable that these date from the late medieval or early post-medieval period. It is therefore possible that this development will encounter archaeological deposits associated with the back plots of these houses as well as other features relating to the medieval development of Bloxham.

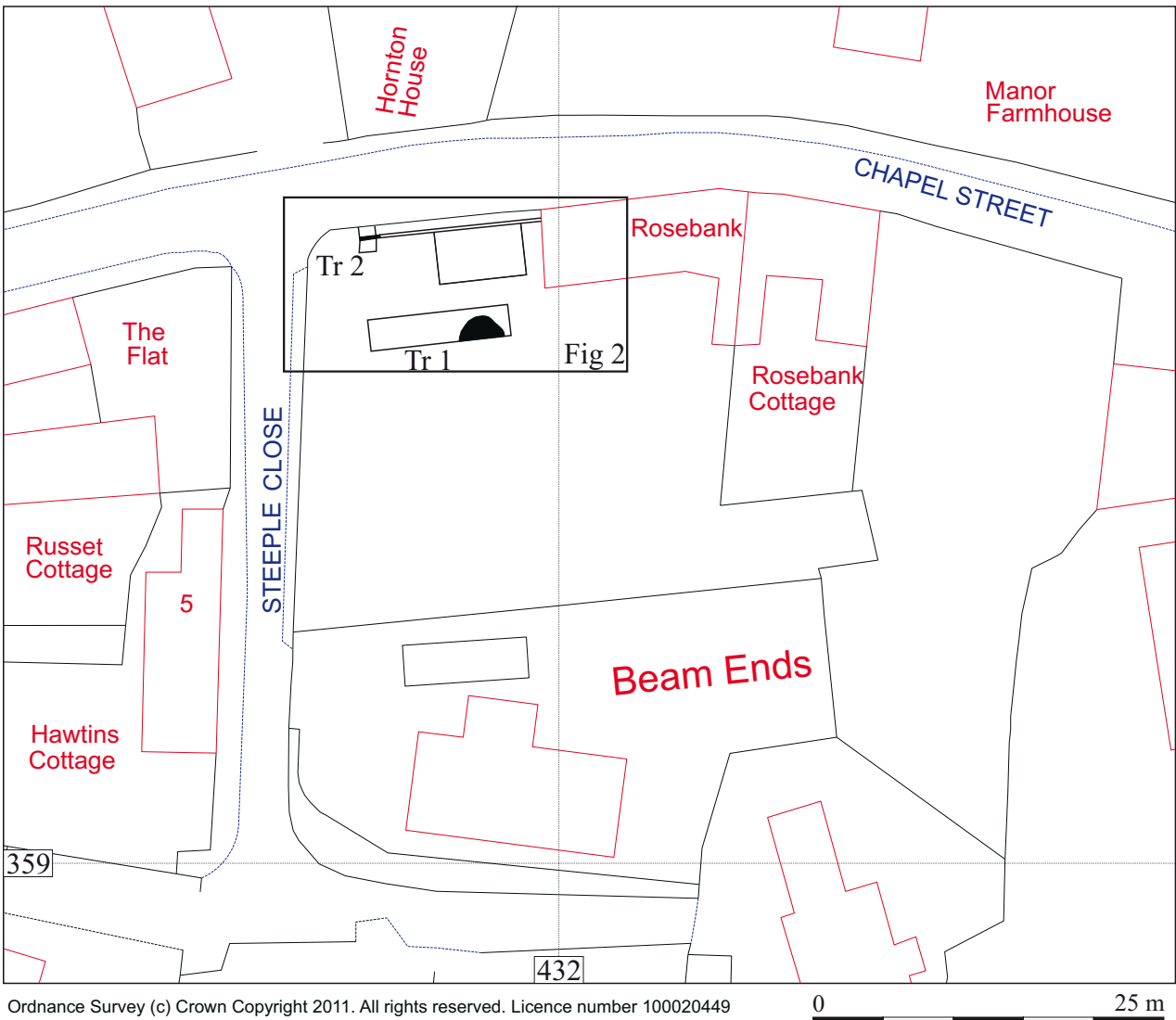
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the site.



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Figure 1. Site location

- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- In particular to establish whether features related to the medieval and early post-medieval settlement survive in the area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a Brief issued by OCAS, JMHS carried out the work, which comprised the excavation of two trenches within the proposal area (Fig. 1). Originally, 20m of trenching in a T-shape were proposed, but due to site constraints excavation of the trenches was modified. The existing garage had not yet been demolished, where the proposed trenching was to be located. The east/west aligned arm of the trench was moved south; as a consequence the north/south arm of the trench was limited to an exploratory intervention at the kerbside of Chapel St. As a consequence of the results obtained during the evaluation, the County Archaeologist indicated that further trenching would not be required.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in JMHS's *WSI* agreed with the Planning Archaeologist for Cherwell District Council at OCAS.

3.2 Methodology

The investigation involved the mechanical excavation of two trenches, one measuring 10 × 2m and the second measuring 1.5 × 1m, by a 3.5-tonne excavator equipped with a ditching bucket, supplemented by hand investigation of the revealed deposits.

Site procedures carried out followed IfA guidelines. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results (Figs. 1 & 2)

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. All contexts numbers are preceded by trench number and /. Details of individual trenches are in Appendix 1 – the context inventory – at the rear of report.

Trench 1 was oriented east by northeast/west by southwest and measured 10m long and 2.2m wide. Its depth was between 0.8m at the west end and 1m at the east end.

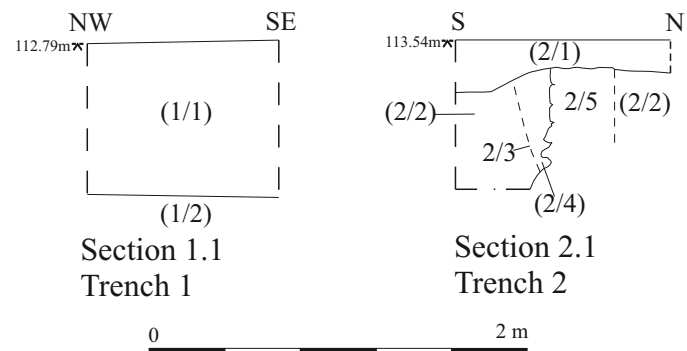
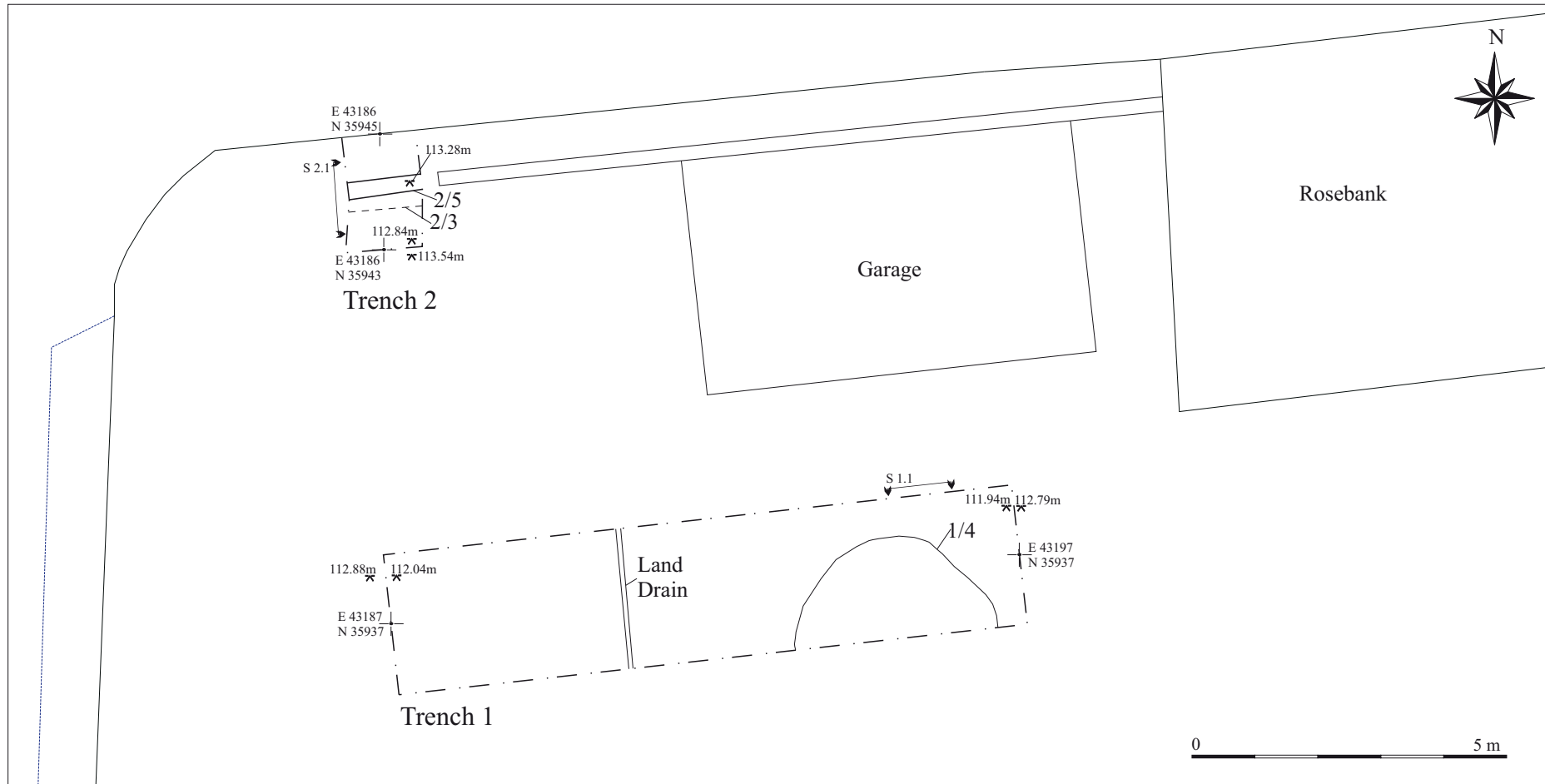


Figure 2. Trenches 1 & 2 plans and sections

The trench was excavated to the top of the natural (1/2), a red brown silty clay.

An undated soakaway 1/4, which extended beyond the south edge of the evaluation trench, was present at the east end of the trench. This was sealed by deposit of topsoil (1/1) up to 1m deep, which yielded three sherds of pottery – red earthenware and creamware – as well as a fragment of glass bottle, indicating a date after the 18th century for the working of the double-dug soil horizon, which probably represents an orchard or kitchen garden of Rosebank.

Trench 2 measured 1.9m in length and *c.* 1m wide, oriented north/south. The trench was excavated onto natural clay (2/2), although extensive rooting and the associated cut 2/3 of wall 2/5 meant that within the constraints of the trench visibility was extremely limited. Cut into (2/2) was the linear cut for the wall 2/5, which was the below ground extension of the wall of the walled garden. The footings were rough ironstone. All was sealed by the topsoil (2/1).

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The archaeological evaluation took place in clement conditions. Richard Oram, of OCAS, the Planning Archaeologist for Cherwell District Council, monitored the work.

5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

5.1 Finds by Gwilym Williams

Pottery

The pottery assemblage comprised 3 sherds with a total weight of 27 g. This assemblage consists largely of 17th to 19th century domestic ceramic food related types. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994). The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Two sherds of mass-produced white earthenwares were recovered from the topsoil in Trench 1. They date to *c.* late 18th-20th century. Both non-conjoining sherds are creamware, and are heavily chipped, undoubtedly a result of the previous use of the garden.

A single sherd of post-medieval redware, fabric OXDR was also recovered from the topsoil in Trench 1. This dates from *c.* mid 16th-18th century. The body sherd recovered from context (1/01) has a light brown lead glaze on the interior; the glaze and fabric is chipped, due to the same reasons as the creamware sherds, above.

Context	No. of sherds	Wt (g)	Fabric	Date
(1/01)	1	17	OXDR	16 th -18 th C
(1/01)	2	6	CRM	1760 – 19 th C
Total	3	23		

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Animal Bone

Seven fragments of animal were recovered from the topsoil in Trench 1, weighing a total of 121 g. Some fragments showed evidence of knife marks, having been split and removal of marrow. The species has not been identified, but is a large mammal.

Glass

A single sherd of bottle glass, weighing 55 g, was recovered from topsoil context (1/01). The glass was 11mm thick and slightly degraded. This was the kick of a wine bottle, with a date range in the 18th to early 19th centuries.

Ceramic Building Materials

The ceramic building materials were limited to brick, which were examined on-site, during the dismantling of 2/5. The bricks, which were a generally even dark red colour, measured 75 × 110 × 230mm and were not frogged. They were reasonably well fired, although some were notable for being oxidised in the middle; there were a number of inclusions largely small peagrit-type gravel and haematite, although coarsely crushed clinker c. 5 × 5 × 5mm was also present. Although the bricks could not be directly compared, apart from dimensions and surface treatment, with those in the garden wall to the east, and that south of Rosebank, they were undoubtedly the same manufacture. No bricks were retained.

The bricks were from the wall of a walled garden, although there was no evidence for nail holes or associated modifications of the surface usually present on bricks which have been used for training plants in walled gardens.

5.2 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken as the potential of the deposits was not felt to be sufficient to warrant sampling.

6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation at Rosebank revealed a soakaway from the 18th or 19th centuries, located within the walled garden of the house. The extensive double-digging of ground sealing the soakaway indicates the walled garden was undoubtedly used for cultivation, whether as an orchard or as a kitchen garden. The finds from the topsoil seem to indicate, however, that it was only in use for cultivation for a relatively short period as there are no late 19th or 20th-century remains. Equally, there was no evidence for any activities predating the 18th century.

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Appendix 1: Archaeological Context Inventory

Context	Type	Description	L (m)	B (m)	D(m)	Finds	Date	Interpretation	
Trench 1									
	(1/01)	Layer	Soft mid red brown clay silt humus; occ. small stone	>10	>2	0.8-1	Yes	Modern	Topsoil
	(1/02)	Layer	Soft dark red brown to paler red brown clay silt	>10	>2	Unk.	No	Natural	Natural
	(1/03)	Fill	Loose grey brown clay silt and stone (100 × 150 × 200mm)	3	>1.5	Unk.	No	Post-med	Fill of soakaway
	1/04	Cut	Subrounded, sharp BoS @ top; not excavated so sides and base unk.	3	>1.5	Unk.	No	Post-med	Cut of soakaway
Trench 2									
	(2/01)	Layer	Soft mid brown clay silt humus; occ. small stone, comminuted CBM	>1	>1	0.3	No	Modern	Topsoil
	(2/02)	Layer	Soft yellow brown clay silt	>1	>1	0.3	No	Post-med	Fill of quarry pit
	2/03	Cut	Linear; BoS or edges not clear due to heavy rooting	>1	c. 1	0.4	No	Post-med	Fill of quarry pit
	(2/04)	Fill	Soft yellow brown clay silt, edges not clear due to heavy rooting	>1	c. 1	Unk.	No	Unk.	Natural
	2/05	Wall	Brick 75 × 110 × 230mm; flemish garden wall to east, where upstanding	>1	0.3	Unk.	No	Post-med	Quarry pit

BoS = Break of slope