



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**BRIARWOOD, PLECK LANE,**

**KINGSTON BLOUNT**

**NGR SU 7393 9952**

*On behalf of*

*Mr Y. Josef*

**FEBRUARY 2012**

**REPORT FOR** Mr Yaniv Josef  
Briarwood  
Pleck Lane  
Kingston Blount  
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**FIELDWORK** 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2012  
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## Summary

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief on ground works at Briarwood, Pleck Lane, Kingston Blount on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2012, during the removal of topsoil and the reduction of two areas for extensions to the existing residential building. Only one recent surface of re-used tile and stone was identified.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Site Location

The groundwork took place on land (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') occupied by Briarwood on the western side of Pleck Lane and to the north of High Street, near the centre of Kingston Blount village (NGR SU 7393 9952; Figure 1). It is bordered to the east by Pleck Lane and to the west, north and south by existing residential properties.

The Site is situated on relatively flat ground at approximately 120 metres above Ordnance Datum (OD), and the underlying geology is Lower Chalk. The ground on the Site slopes from the east-facing front of the bungalow gently towards Pleck Lane to the east, and rises to the west of Briarwood bungalow itself. The building work involved the reduction of topsoil and other layers to the west and north of the existing house, and the machine excavation of footing trenches for these extensions.

### 1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for construction work at the existing bungalow at Briarwood in order to add an upper floor, and single storey side and rear extensions (P09/E1375). Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological remains, a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission by the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS), who also prepared a *Design Brief* for the archaeological work programme. The *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2560/01) was prepared in response to the Design Brief, and outlined the methodology by which the watching brief was carried out.

### 1.3 Archaeological Background

The Site is situated within an area of some archaeological interest close to the core of the historic village, and just 60m to the north-east of the location of two Iron Age cremation burials that were found in 1975 whilst workmen were digging a sewer trench. These burials were found within two undecorated ceramic jars, one small and one large, which in addition to cremated human remains also produced an Iron Age bead (Historic Environment Record PRN 9505; NGR SU 7391 9946). Very little archaeological investigation work has been carried out in the vicinity, however.

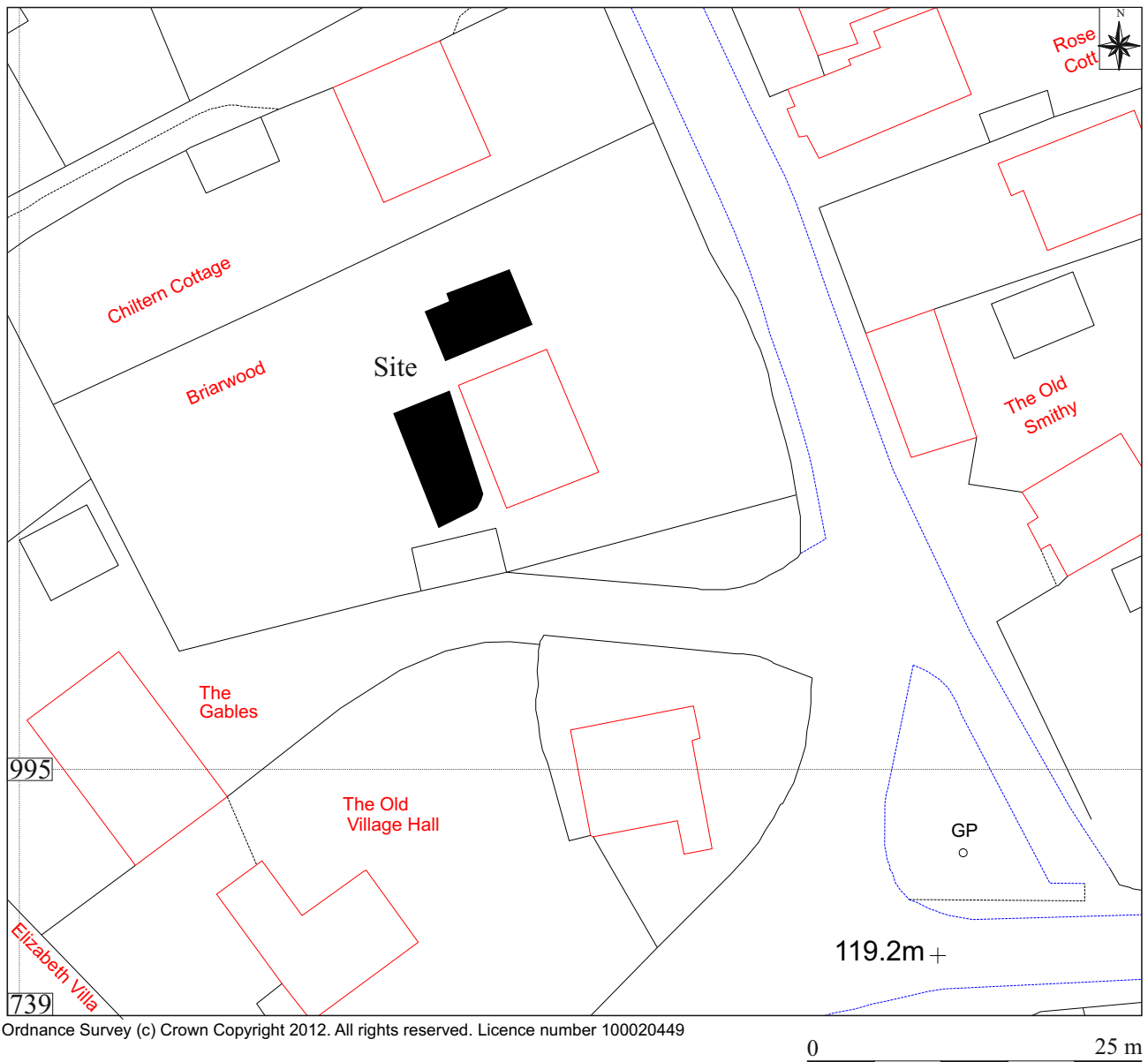
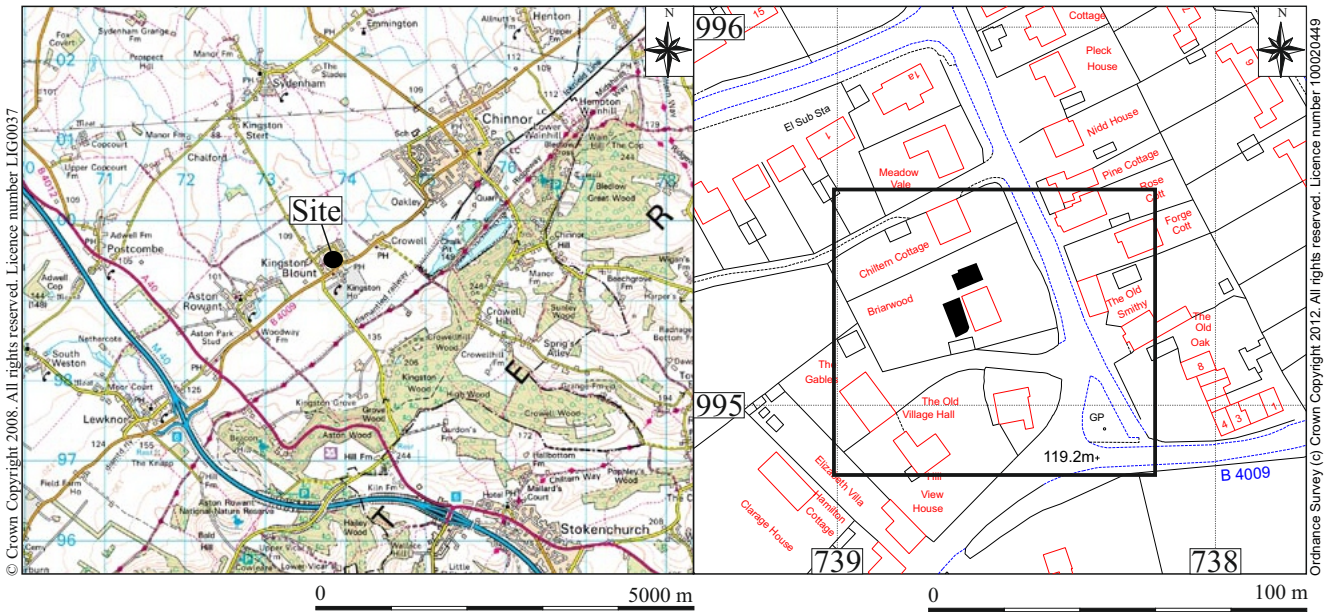


Figure 1. Site location

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

- 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 Iron Age remains in the vicinity.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

An archaeologist would be present on Site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains, including any reduction in ground level, excavations for foundations and services and any additional intrusive works.

Any archaeological deposits and features revealed would be cleaned by hand and recorded in plan before being excavated and recorded at an appropriate level. Archaeological features or other archaeological remains such as a concentration of artefacts would have written, drawn and photographic records made of them. Where archaeological features were exposed during any reduction in ground level but were otherwise unaffected, these would only be recorded through written descriptions and plans, whilst any surface finds would be retained. Where archaeological features or remains would be impacted by any groundwork, they would be sample excavated. Any variations to this would be agreed with the County Archaeological Services.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

### **3.2 Methodology**

An archaeologist monitored all the invasive groundwork; and all resulting surfaces were then inspected for any significant archaeological features.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings produced where appropriate.

## **4 RESULTS**

An archaeologist was present on Site to monitor the removal of topsoil and the machine reduction in levels for the two new extensions. This work was undertaken

using a small tracked 1.5 tonne 360-degree mini-digger with a 1m wide toothless bucket. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

On the west side of the bungalow, ground reduction took place immediately west of a 0.5m wide area of paving and flint rubble walling alongside the west-facing wall of the house. An area approximately 9m long and 4.5m wide was excavated. Beneath the turf there was a layer of redeposited soil (1/100) consisting of dark grey-brown sandy silty loam topsoil mixed with yellow-orange and light grey sand up to 0.40m thick. This spoil contained modern brick and tile fragments along with lengths of angle iron, and had been used to build up the level of the garden behind the house. The ground reduction was 0.70-0.80m in depth at the west of this excavated area, and up to 0.20m in depth on its eastern side nearest the bungalow.



Figure 2. Machine excavation of the western area of the Site.

The redeposited material was situated above the buried topsoil, a layer of very dark grey-brown silty loam up to 0.35m thick (1/101). This too contained modern brick and tile fragments, some subangular limestone fragments, charcoal, and several sherds of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century porcelain, in addition to just one sherd of probable 16<sup>th</sup> century Rhenish Stoneware. None of this unstratified material was retained. The natural subsoil (1/102) consisted of mottled greenish grey sandy clay with limestone fragments. It was truncated by several cut features or areas of disturbance, but these contained very dark grey-brown loamy fills similar to the buried topsoil, as well as modern brick and tile. The additional footing trenches that were to be dug along the edges of the reduced area were not observed, but would not have disturbed any archaeological remains.

To the north of the bungalow, ground reduction took place to the north of additional paving and the line of a concrete covered drainage culvert. An area approximately 7m long and 4.5m wide was excavated. The topsoil was up to 0.20m thick, and consisted of very dark grey-brown sandy silty loam with modern brick and tile fragments, charcoal and extensive root disturbance from a felled cherry tree.





Figure 3. East-facing section of the western area of Site, with redeposited mixed material above the original topsoil. The natural subsoil is visible at the bottom of the section.



Figure 4. Modern external surface 1/104, showing re-used ceramic tiles, bricks and tabular limestone fragments built directly onto topsoil.

In addition to root action, the area to the north of the bungalow also featured extensive early modern or modern disturbance, and very little undisturbed natural subsoil was visible. Immediately adjacent to the concrete rubble covered drainage culvert, the remains of a rough external surface (1/104) were identified, at least 3m long and 0.80m wide. It was formed from tabular limestone fragments up to 0.45m long,



0.30m wide and 0.08m thick, and re-used late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century bricks and floor tiles. The latter were approximately 0.18m square and 0.05m thick, and some of their surfaces still retained traces of the original mortar. Many of the tiles were worn and had evidence of past damage. In places two layers of tiles had been laid on top of one another. This crude surface was not bonded, and had actually been built directly onto 0.10m depth of topsoil. The tile, brick and stone was clearly re-used building material, probably from a 19<sup>th</sup> century structure on the Site that pre-dated the bungalow. The function of this small external surface was unclear, but may have formed a small extension to the paved path extending along the north-facing wall of the bungalow. The tile and brick was not retained.

Any further groundwork in this area would only affect ground already considerably disturbed by early modern building footings and tree root action.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

Only features and deposits of relatively recent date were recorded during the watching brief. The only artefacts identified were unstratified topsoil finds.

The approximate position of the Briarwood bungalow is labelled as a smithy on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1: 2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1881, and the 1898 1: 2500 map. The only building shown on the western side of the southern end of Pleck Lane is the infant school. Otherwise, the general area of the Site seems to have been orchards. It is only on the 1921 Ordnance Survey 1: 2500 map that an actual smithy building is shown, at the same approximate location as Briarwood. Nevertheless, it is likely that the traces of the demolished structure that were identified during the watching brief to the north of Briarwood bungalow were the demolished footings of this smithy.

## **6 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Institute for Archaeologists 2008. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

John Moore Heritage Services 2011. Written Scheme of Investigation: Briarwood, Pleck Lane, Kingston Blount. JMHS 2360/01.