



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF AT CROOKED CHIMNEY
COTTAGE, SHOGMOOR LANE, SKIRMETT,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RG9 6TB**

NGR: SP7769 8989

On behalf of

Mr David George

April 2012

REPORT FOR Mr David George
Crooked Chimney Cottage
Shogmoor Lane
Skirmett
Buckinghamshire
RG9 6TB

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) conducted an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a new extension at Crooked Chimney Cottage, Skirmett, Buckinghamshire (Site Centred (NGR: SU 7769 8989) (Planning Application Reference: 10/06001/FUL). The excavations involved 1m deep footing trenches and the installation of a new soakaway with new connecting services. Two postholes were encountered in the new footing trench, cut into the surface of the natural geology, indicating the presence of a suspected lost medieval or early post-medieval building in this area. One pit was seen in the section of a new soakaway. No dating evidence was recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location and Geology (Figure 1)

The site is located on the south side of Shogmoor Lane (NGR SU 7769 8989) in the village of Skirmett, parish of Hambledon in Buckinghamshire. The site lies near the centre of the hamlet at the bottom of the Hambledon Valley, nestled in the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The village has no central focus but has developed along the road through the village. The Geology of the site is Middle Chalk.

1.2 Planning Background

Wycombe District Council (WDC) granted planning permission for erection of single storey extension. Due to the potential for archaeological remains to be present on the site a condition had been attached to the permission requiring an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the new construction. Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a generic brief for a watching brief for this development site. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by JMHS, which outlined the method by which the archaeological watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance (JMHS 2012).

1.3 Archaeological Background

The County Historic Environment Record lists 18 monument records and 11 listed buildings in a 250m radius of the site. The other listed buildings in the village range in date from the 16th century onwards. The site lies within a Conservation Area and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Crooked Chimney Cottage is a grade II listed building of 16th century origins with 20th century additions (DBC5959). The timber frames of the building are exposed and the rare cruck trusses at the gables can be seen. The infill is of whitewashed brick, flint and plaster and there is an old board door to the front (Fig. 3). The old tiled roof has flanking chimneys with crooked shafts. The chimney top to the right was rebuilt to replace the original in 1990 (WDC 1997).

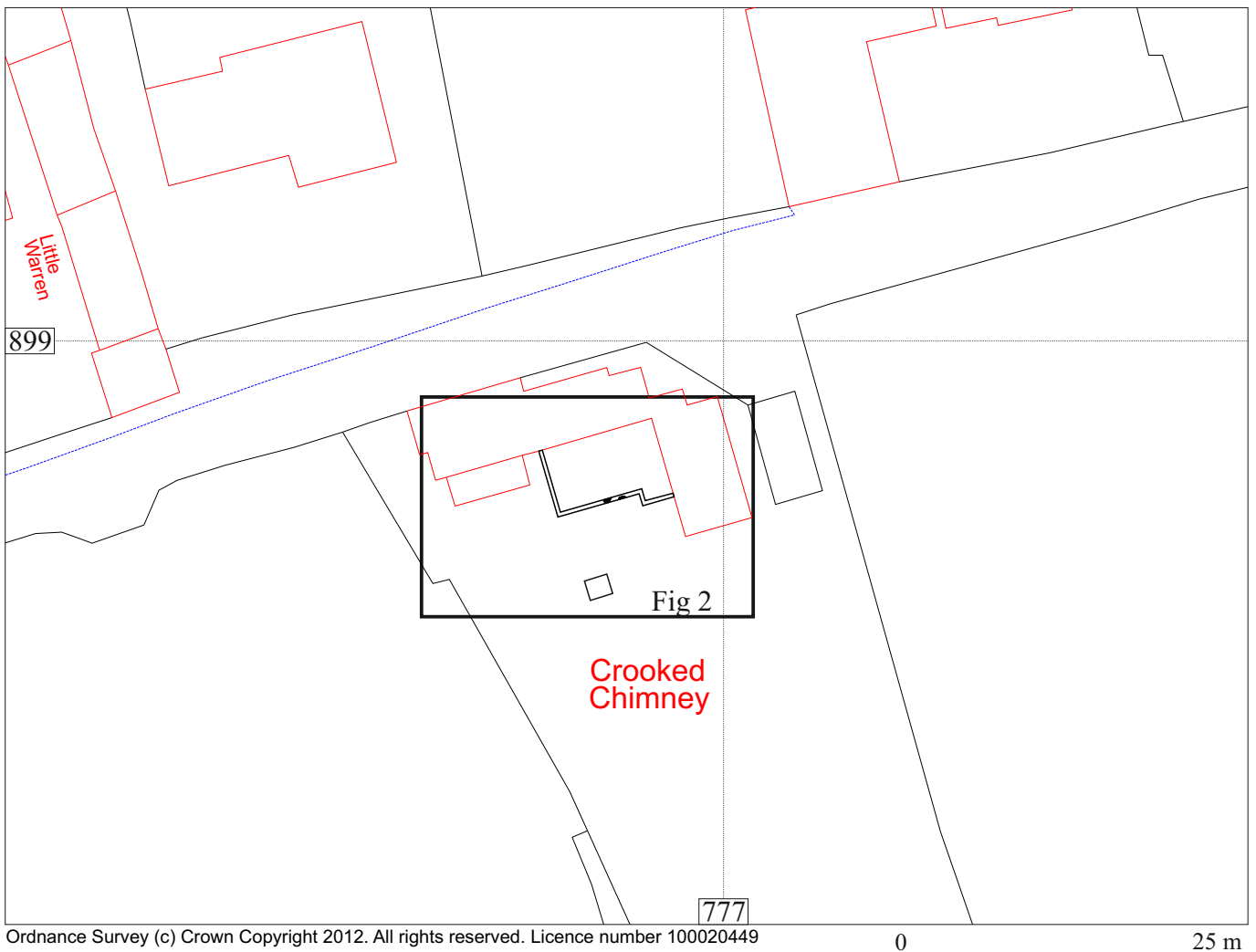
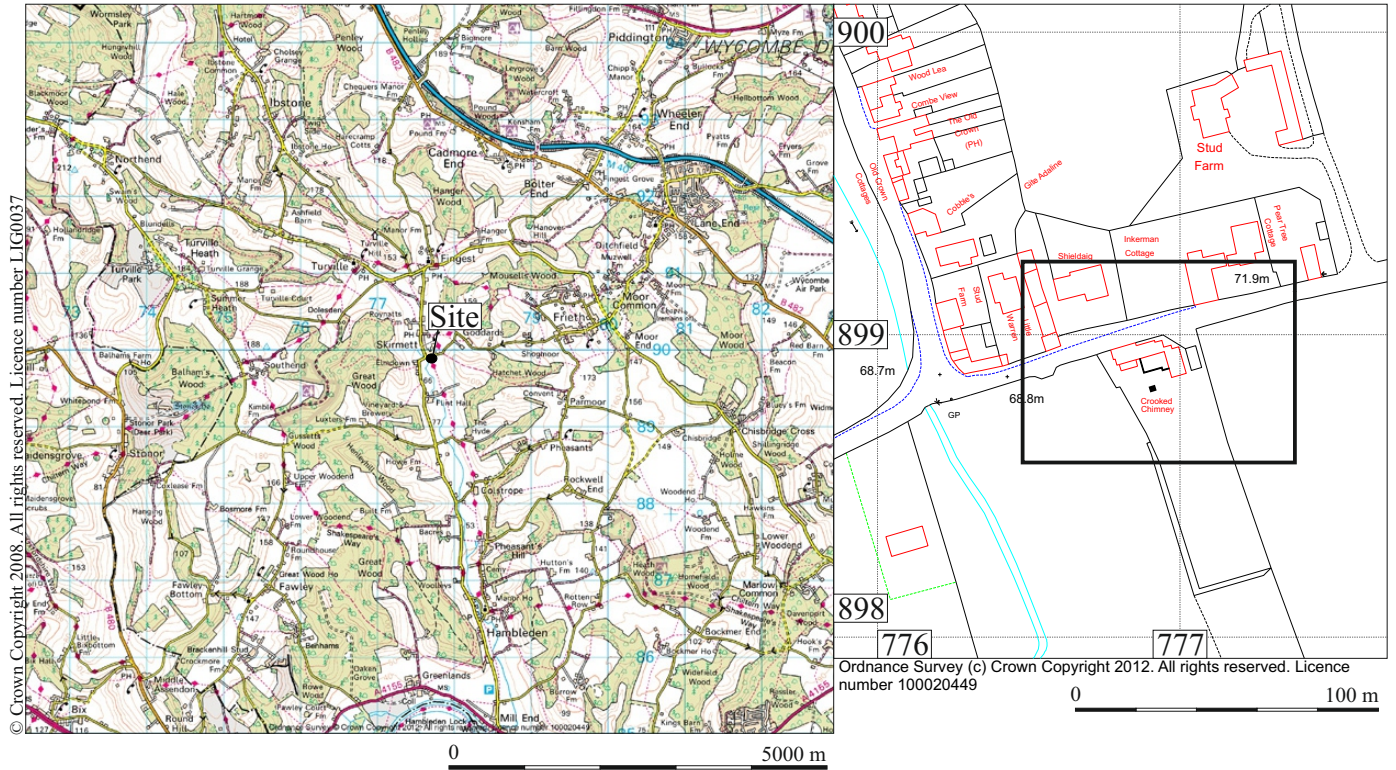


Figure 1. Site location

A Lower to Middle Palaeolithic flint artefact (Historic Environment Record 00896) has been found in Skirmett as has a Neolithic flint axe (HER 0089601). A possible Neolithic or Bronze Age ring-ditch has been recorded on an aerial photograph just to the east of the site (HER 04346; NGR SU 77758 89884). Two Neolithic flint flakes were found at the Orchard adjacent to Poynetts in the north of the village (HER 04525).

Skirmett is a medieval to modern hamlet. The Hambleden parish Tithe map of 1845 (BCRO 294 – AR 130/91) depicts Cooked Chimney Cottage as a small L-shaped building with a garden behind rented by Martha Austin. To the east was a garden belonging to the adjacent property owned by Thomas Hufsey. This garden forms part of the proposed development area. Cooked Chimney Cottage is shown as a longer rectangular building with a small extension at either end on the OS 1:2,500 map of 1876, the garden areas are shown to contain trees. The cottage remains the same on the OS 1:2,500 map of 1898, however the buildings previously belonging to Thomas Hufsey to the east have been demolished.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

To identify and record any archaeological remains revealed in the groundworks by any ground reduction and the excavation for foundations and any new services.

In particular to record any evidence of medieval occupation on the site and to recover any evidence relating to the post-medieval use of the site associated with the present cottage.

A ring-ditch is known to exist just to the east of the site and other prehistoric artefacts have been found in the village and therefore there is potential for such remains to be present on this site.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

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 (1999) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of all excavations that could potentially disturb or destroy archaeological remains. This involved the observation of surface works and the excavation for new foundations and service runs to a new soakaway.

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

4 RESULTS

4.1 Excavation Results (Figure 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.

4.1.1 The Footing Trenches

Overburden

The stratigraphic sequence (Fig. 5) seen in the footing trenches was very shallow consisting of the following contexts (earliest to latest). The natural chalk was the earliest deposit encountered (03). Overlying the natural was 0.20m thick grade 1 material (02) covered by paving slabs (01).

Features

Two postholes were encountered during excavation of the main east-west trench.

Posthole 05 was 0.50m wide and 0.10m thick with shallow concave side and a flat base (Figure 2; Section 1.2). It was filled by dark greyish brown silty clay with chalk flecks (04).

Posthole 07 was 0.55m wide and 0.25m deep with sharp concave sides and a gently rounded base (Figure 2; Section 1.1, Fig. 4). It was filled by light-mid cream brown with chalky silt and chalk flecks (06).

A c. 0.40m thick deposit of flints and chalk was seen close to the existing house in the section of the new footing trench. This was a compact deposit with no finds probably created during construction of the original cottage.

4.1.2 The Soakaway

Feature

A sub-circular shaped feature was noted from the side of the trench. Cut 10 was c. 0.50m in depth and c. 0.80m wide with sharp concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by dark greyish black silty clay (09) with large flint nodules throughout (Figure 2; Section 1.3).

Overburden

The feature was sealed by 0.30m thick topsoil (11) with one sherd of post medieval pottery.

4.1.3 The Reliability of Results

A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved with full co-operation from the contractor (which is gratefully acknowledged).

5 FINDS

One sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil over the area of the new soakaway.

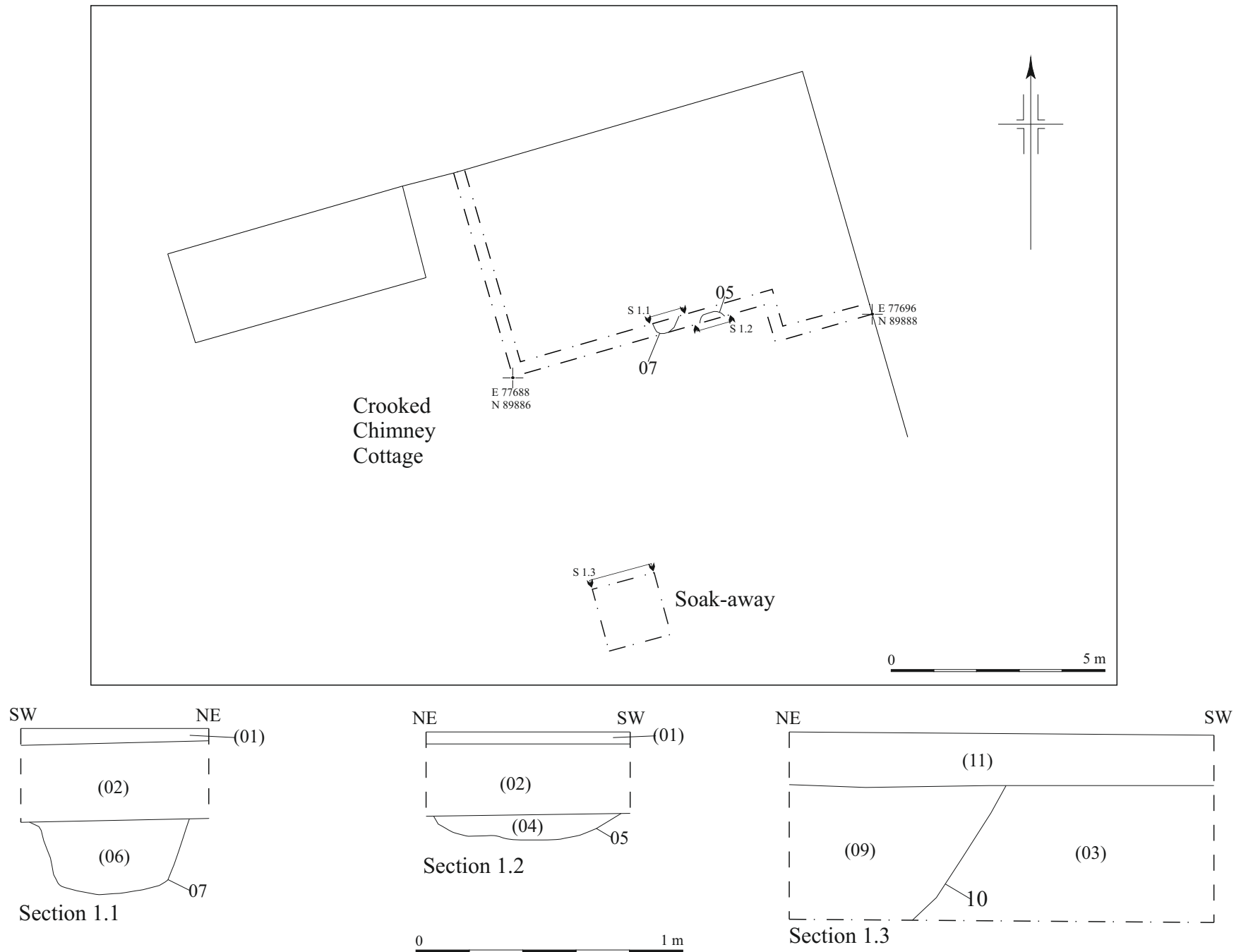


Figure 2. Plan and sections

6 DISCUSSION

The Watching Brief at Crooked Chimney Cottage, Skirmett was useful in determining the presence of possible structural remains immediately adjacent to the existing 16th century cottage. Two postholes were discovered which suggest that a medieval or early post-medieval building once occupied this area, not present on any historic maps. There was one sherd of post-medieval pottery recovered from topsoil over the area of the new soakaway. Beneath the topsoil a possible pit was seen in section only with no dating evidence.

The depths below ground level reached by the contractors trenches were generally *c.* 1m and the natural chalk was reached just beneath the present hardstanding or topsoil.

A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved.

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
The drawn records	All finds

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service under accession number: awaited

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) 1994. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief*

JMHS 2012 Crooked Chimney Cottage, Skirmett, Buckinghamshire; Archaeological Watching Brief; Written Scheme of Investigation. Unpub JMHS Doc.

Wycombe District Council; Planning, Transport and Development 1997 Conservation Area Character Survey, Skirmett.

Figure 3; Crooked Chimney Cottage



Figure 4; Posthole 1/07



Figure 5; General View of Footing Trench excavation



HER Summary Form

Site Name: Crooked Chimney Cottage, Skirmett, Buckinghamshire	
Site Address: Crooked Chimney Cottage, Shogmoor Lane, Skirmett, Buckinghamshire	
Summary: <i>John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a new extension at Crooked Chimney Cottage, Skirmett, Buckinghamshire (Site Centred (NGR: SU 7769 8989) (Planning Application Reference: 10/06001/FUL). The excavations involved 1m deep footing trenches and the installation of a new soakaway with new connecting services. Two postholes were encountered in the new footing trench, cut into the surface of the natural geology, indicating the presence of a suspected lost medieval or early post-medieval building in this area. No dating evidence was recovered.</i>	
District/Unitary: Buckinghamshire	Parish: Hambledon
Period(s): Post med/ Modern	
NGR (centre of site: 8 figures): SP 7769 8989	
Type of archaeological work: Watching Brief	
Date of Recording: 6 / 8 March 2012 & 22 March 2012	
Unit undertaking recording: JMHS	
Geology: Middle Chalk	
Title and author of accompanying report: An Archaeological Watching Brief at Crooked Chimney Cottage, Skirmett, Buckinghamshire. Prepared by Paul Riccoboni BA ARCH AIFA	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) Unknown (cont. on attached sheet)	
Location of archive/finds:	
Contact at Unit: <i>Paul Riccoboni</i> <i>info@jmheritageservices.co.uk</i>	Date: 5/04/12