

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF AT LYNDEN CLOSE, BURCOT,
OXFORDSHIRE**

NGR: SU 5644 9593

On behalf of

Mr M. Putman

APRIL 2012

REPORT FOR Mr M Putman
Lynden Close
Abingdon Road
Burcot
Abingdon
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief during ground reduction in advance of a new development at Lynden Close, Burcot, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 5644 9593). A total of eight site visits were made intermittently over the period from 13th January to 2nd April 2012. The monitored groundworks involved initial service trenching, followed by excavation of a narrow trench for de-watering, plus the ground reduction for a new basement and swimming pool (P11/W0966).

During the excavation for the new basement a late Iron Age/early Romano-British ditch was discovered orientated on an approximate north-south direction traversing the length of the new basement.

The service trenching at the front of the property revealed a series of possible pits in section only. No features were observed in the service trench from the pond at the south end of the garden or beneath the area of the new swimming pool.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located on the southern side of Abingdon Road, Burcott (NGR SU 5644 9593). The site lies at approximately 53.2m OD and is currently in domestic use. The underlying geology is First Terrace Gravels close to the junction with Lower Greensand.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission was granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the demolition of the existing dwelling and construction of a new dwelling (P11/W0966).

Due to the high potential of the site to contain buried archaeological remains a condition was attached to the planning consent requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during all groundworks. Oxfordshire Archaeological Services (OCAS), the Archaeological Advisor to South Oxfordshire District Council, prepared a *Brief* for the archaeological work. Based on the brief A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by JMHS (JMHS 2011). This document outlined the method by which the watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

The planning condition stated that:

A full archaeological watching brief shall be carried out during the period of construction works by a professionally competent archaeological organisation in accordance with details which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before development commences. The brief shall include the recording of any archaeological features revealed, limited archaeological excavation and the retrieval of artefactual evidence. Reason:

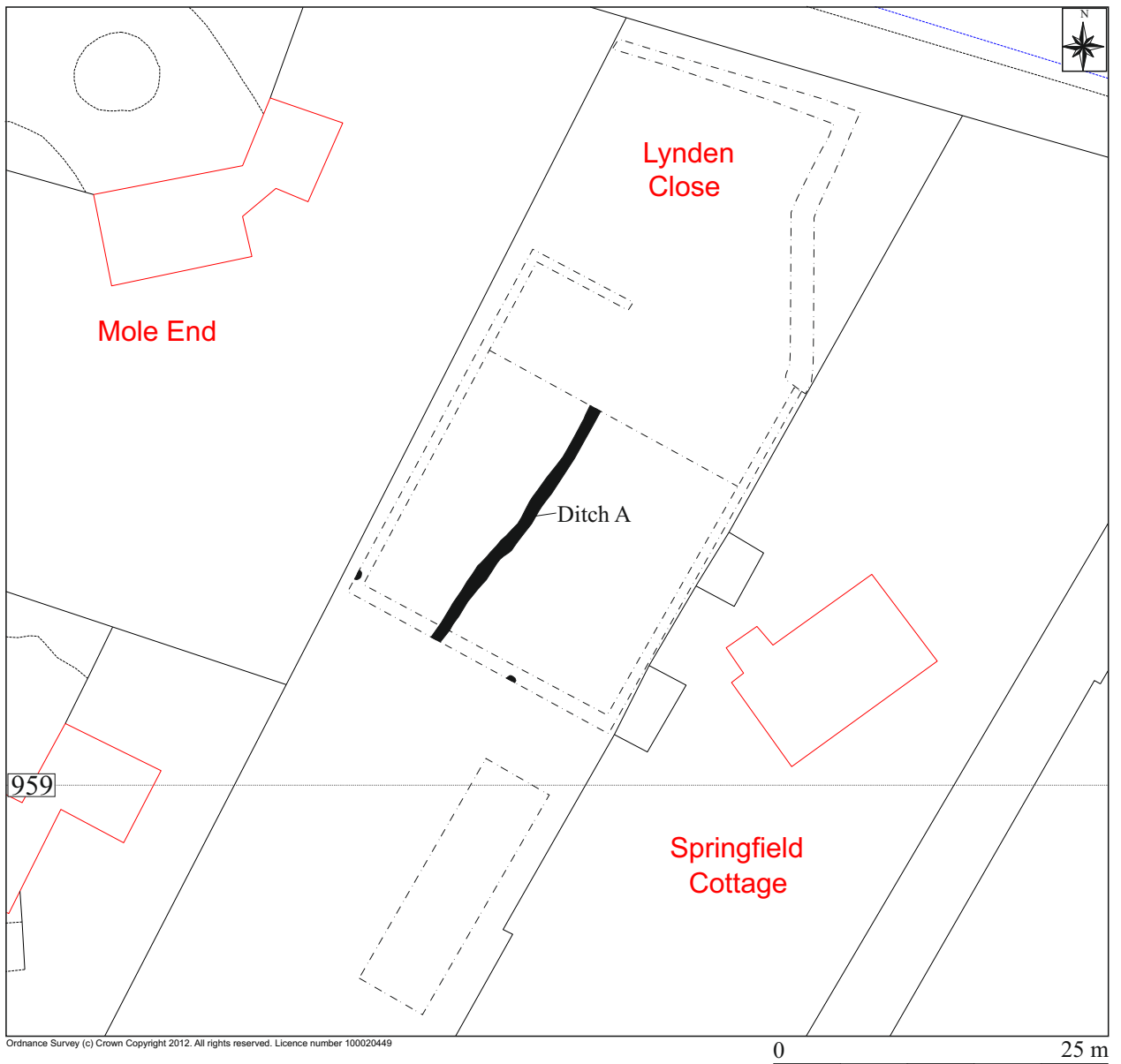
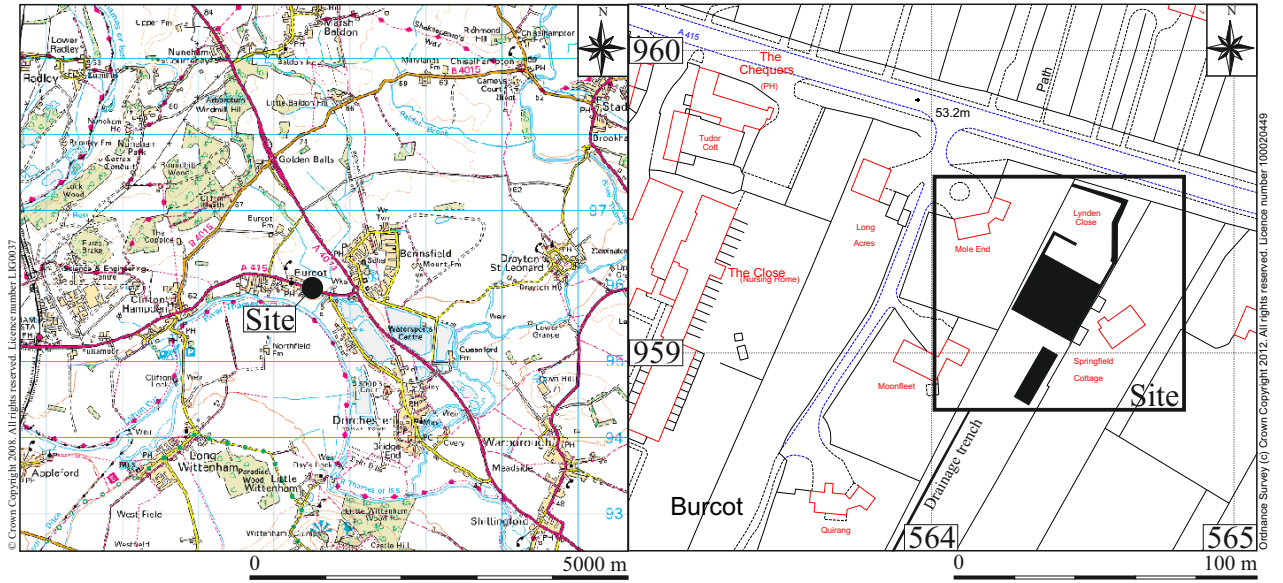


Figure 1. Site location

To secure the protection of and proper provision for any archaeological remains in accordance with Government advice set out in PPG16 'Archaeology and Planning' and in accordance with Policies CON11, CON13 and CON14 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011

The Brief (OCAS 2010) was prepared with regard to the new guidelines of PPS5 due to the presence of known heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the development proposals and in accordance with the Local Plan Policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The development site lies within an area of archaeological interest located to the east of the historic core of the settlement. A Saxon inhumation cemetery was discovered in 1863 just 250m to the east of the site (County Historic Environment Record PRN 5782). This is thought to be associated with the larger Neolithic ritual complex immediately to the east (PRN 15323), which consists of a Neolithic henge, cursus and causewayed cemetery as well as a large number of enclosures and associated pits. This site has been removed through gravel extraction. Prehistoric field systems have been recorded to the north west of the site as cropmarks seen on aerial photographs (PRN 15324). These features are likely to extend into the area immediately to the north of the site.

The site is located 420m north of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Northfield Farm Settlement Complex (SAM OX 180) which lies south of the river.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

2.1 Project Objectives

The main and general project objectives outlined in the WSI (JMHS 2010) were 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 prehistoric, Romano British and Saxon remains in the area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994), the 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 reduction connected to the de-watering works, the new basement, swimming pool and service trenches. All ground

reduction was achieved using a 21 tonne 360° tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket or narrow bucket with a flat blade.

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.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded in accordance with all accepted professional standards set out by the Institute for Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance* for archaeological watching brief and by John Moore Heritage Services general excavation procedures set out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2011).

A photographic record of the work was kept of colour transparency, black and white and digital record, which will form part of the site archive to be submitted to the Oxfordshire County Museums Service.

4 RESULTS

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

4.1 The Service Trench (Figure 2)

The service trench at the front of the house revealed features in section only. A series of pits were seen cut into the surface of the natural clay. Pit 04 was 1.30m wide and 0.50m deep with concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by dark greyish brown silty clay (05) with no finds (Figure 2; Section 6).

Two further intercutting pits were also seen in section 06 & 08 both of similar dimensions 1.5m wide and minimum c. 0.50m deep (base not reached by excavations). They were filled by mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional gravels (07) & (09) and no finds (Figure 2; Section 6).

4.2 The De-watering Works (Figure 2)

A slit trench was excavated around the perimeter of the new building for the insertion of de-watering pipes. The trench was c. 1m deep and 0.50m wide. Two features considered to be postholes were recorded in this trench.

Posthole 11 was 0.50m wide and 1.50m deep with almost straight sides and a rounded base. It was filled by mid brownish grey silty clay (10) with no finds (Figure 2; Section 1).

Posthole 23 was 0.45m wide x 0.40m deep of circular shape with concave sides and gently rounded base. It was filled by dark orange brown silty clay with no finds (22) (Figure 2; Section 2).

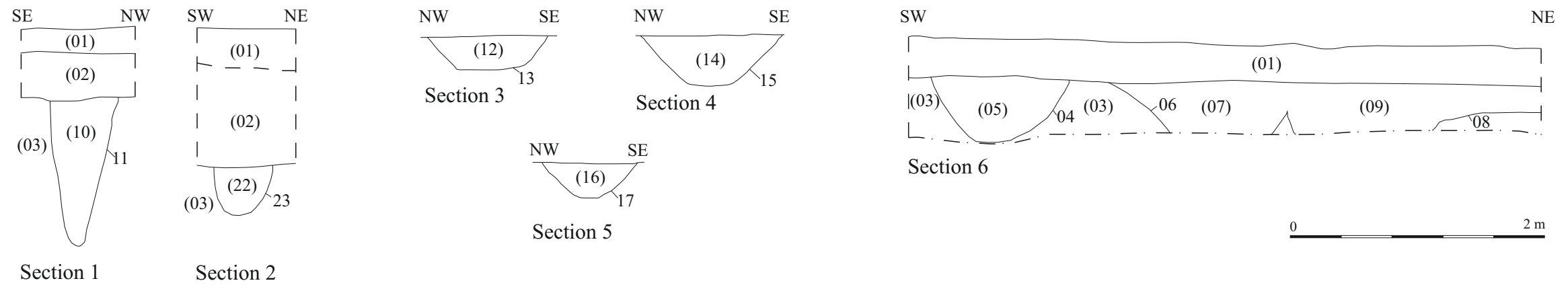
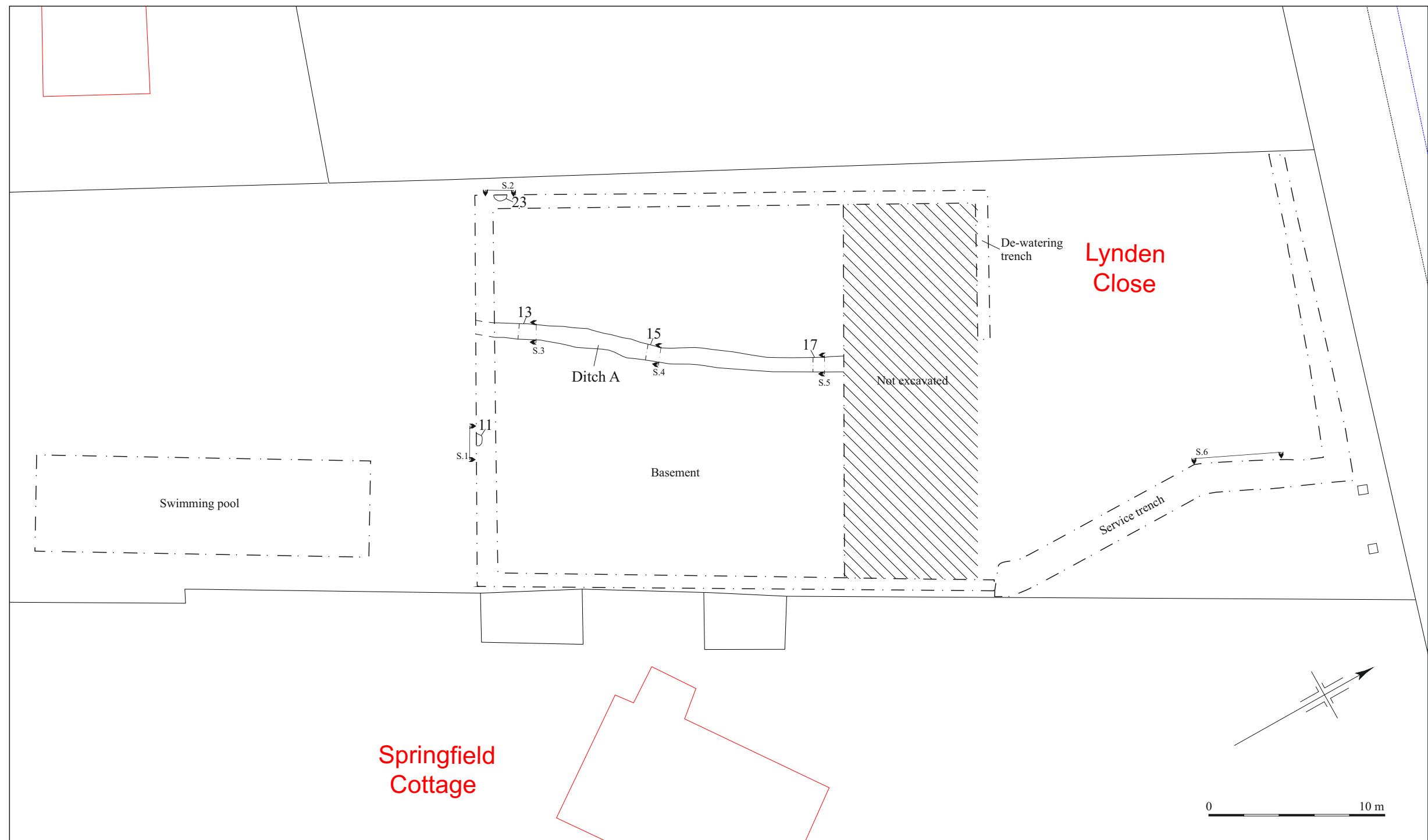


Figure 2. Plan and sections

4.3 The Basement Excavation (Figure's 1 & 2)

A ditch (Ditch A) was orientated north-south across the centre of the excavation area a minimum of 20m in length. The ditch had three sections placed across it: [13], [15] & [17]. Section 17 (Figure 2; Section 5) was representative of the shape and form of the ditch. It was 0.90m wide and 0.30m deep with concave sides and rounded base. It was filled by friable dark brownish grey silty clay (16) with two pot sherds dated to the late Iron Age/early Roman period.

4.4 The Swimming pool excavation (Figure 2)

The swimming pool excavation revealed a simple sequence of natural clay alluvium (03) overlain by a thin layer of subsoil (02) and *c.* 0.30m thick topsoil (01).

During the ground reduction across this area one prehistoric flint scraper was recovered from the subsoil (02). No other finds or features were recovered from this area of the site.

4.5 The Drainage Trench (Figure 1)

The trench which traversed the length of the garden revealed the typical sequence of overburden seen across the development site. No archaeological finds or features were observed.

4.6 Reliability of Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good with excellent co-operation from the project manager and ground workers during the course of all excavations.

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

5. THE FINDS

5.1 The Pottery by Paul Riccoboni

The watching brief produced four sherds (23 g) of late Iron Age/ early Roman pottery. The pottery was scanned rapidly and notes of key characteristics were made using codes from the Oxford Archaeology later prehistoric and Roman pottery recording system. This information is summarised by context in the table below. The sherds vary considerably in size but all shows signs of abrasion

CONTEXT	NOSH	WT	FABRICS	DATE	COMMENT
12	1	1	BWGR	1 st C BC- 1 st C AD	One very small abraded sherd of handmade oxidised or reduced coarse shelly ware pottery
14	1	1	GYCA	1 st c AD	One very small fragment of local grey ware
16	2	21	BWGR OXF OX	1 st C BC- 1 st C AD	1) One sherd of abraded coarse black burnished shelly ware 2) an orange red rim sherd of early Roman form

5.2 The worked flint

One worked flint (10g) was recovered from the excavation within subsoil layer (02). It was a pale grey blue flint scraper with retouch.

5.3 Other finds

One fragment of daub (3g) was discovered within context (12) fill the ditch. The presence of daub in late prehistoric or Roman contexts is not unexpected, and is indicative of the presence of structures in the vicinity. As daub comprises clay, frequently horse manure and straw and is unfired, it is an archaeologically unstable material.

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological watching brief was useful in ascertaining the archaeological activity of the north side of the River Thames immediately adjacent to the scheduled prehistoric settlement site on the south side of the River (Northfield Farm Settlement Complex; SAM OX 180).

During the late Iron Age / early Romano-British period fields were divided into systems usually sub-rectangular in shape. The ditch seen traversing north-south across the area of the new basement was spot dated to the late Iron Age/early Romano-British period. This would fit a broadly similar date to the Northfield Farm settlement. The discovered ditch at Lynden Close was probably connected with a farmstead on the north side of the River, yet to be discovered. The gentle profile and shallow depth of the ditch suggest it was not defensive, but more likely represents the remains of a field boundary ditch. Perhaps the ditch had a bank on one side (no longer present), which may have supported a hedgerow.

There was only evidence of one ditch cut indicating the boundary was in use for a short time unless it was carefully cleaned out over a longer time period. The ditch occupied the higher ground away from the River meaning the area was less liable to flooding. However, the fill of the ditch was consistent in all three hand excavated sections meaning it may have been filled quickly with flood water silt.

As only two postholes were recorded close to the ditch it is probable that they were once part of a fence line rather than as part of any structure. Ditches of this period are often lined with fence posts or post markers.

The paucity of archaeological features would suggest that the site is located between two late Iron Age/early Romano-British fields, with the centre of the site the boundary between the two fields. The field may have been used for agriculture or pasture. The lack of any plough marks would suggest pasture, although ancient ploughing often does not leave any noticeable plough marks due to the shallow depths reached by the wooden ard, often pulled by oxen.

The recovered evidence is useful as it is the first archaeological evidence of the continuation of early Romano-British land use on the north side of the River adjacent to the known settlement of Northfield Farm. The limited nature of the excavation

means we do not know how dense the settlement was north side of the River, but we now know the area was used by the native Iron Age people which likely continued into the Roman period, perhaps with the same Romanised natives utilising the land. We still do not know how dense the settlement was but the fact a field boundary was discovered would suggest that it was fairly dense across this general area. More archaeological investigation over a larger area would be needed to confirm this theory.

A confidence rating is high that the best 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 including animal bones

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service under accession number 2010.49.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

OCAS 2011 *Lynden Close, Burcot; Brief for Archaeological Works*. Unpub Doc.

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Figure 3; Ditch A; Section [15] (1m scale)



Figure 4; General Shot of Stripped Area to archaeological horizon over new basement



HER Summary Sheet

Site Name: Lynden Close, Burcot, Oxfordshire	
Site Address: Lynden Close, Burcot, Oxfordshire	
Summary: <i>John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief during ground reduction in advance of a new development at Lynden Close, Burcot, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 5644 9593). A total of eight site visits were made intermittently over the period from 13th January to 2nd April 2012. The monitored groundworks involved initial service trenching, followed by excavation of a slip trench for de-watering, plus the ground reduction for a new basement and swimming pool (P11/W0966).</i> <i>During the excavation for the new basement a late Iron Age/early Romano-British ditch was discovered orientated on an approximate north-south direction traversing the length of the new basement.</i> <i>The service trenching at the front of the property revealed a series of possible pits in section only. No features were observed in the service trench from the pond at the south end of the garden or beneath the area of the new swimming pool.</i>	
District/Unitary: South Oxfordshire	Parish: Dorchester
Period(s): late Iron Age/early Romano-British	
NGR (centre of site: 8 figures): 5644 9593	
Type of archaeological work; Watching Brief	
Date of Recording: 13-01-2012- 02-04-2012	
Unit undertaking recording: JMHS	
Geology: First Terrace Gravels overlain by alluvium	
Title and author of accompanying report: Prepared by Paul Riccoboni BA (Hons) Arch AIFA	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) late Iron Age/early Romano-British	
Location of archive/finds:	
Contact at JMHS: <i>Paul Riccoboni</i> <i>info@jmheritageservices.co.uk</i>	Date: 04/04/2012