JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

MANOR FARM,

BARFORD ST. JOHN, OXFORDSHIRE

SP 4393 3305

On behalf of

Mr W Butterworth

SEPTEMBER 2005

REPORT FOR	Mr W Butterworth Manor House North Newington Oxfordshire OX15 6AF
PREPARED BY	John Moore
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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of sewerage trenches through the moat of a medieval moated site and an associated fishpond. Fills of these features were recorded. Although the lowest fills are waterlogged and well-preserved organic material is present the potential for palaeoenvironmental information may be limited to pollen analysis.

The settlement appears to have started during at least the 13th century. The fishponds are probably later additions as medieval pottery was found in the associated bank material. The negative earthworks are well preserved with the original moat protected by late 18th -19th century partial infilling. There are indications that the lower foundations of buildings may survive on the platform.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located immediately to the south of Manor Farm on the south-eastern side of the village of Barton St John (NGR SP 4394 3308). The site is located at approximately 98m OD and the underlying geology is Lias close to the boundary with the Oolitic series.

1.2 Planning Background

In August 2001 planning permission was sought from Cherwell District Council for the conversion of barns from equestrian/agricultural use with flat to 2No. dwellings with 1No. detached double garage. Subsequently the original planning application was amended to include a new sewerage pipeline running north-east to south-west from the farmyard to an existing pipeline in the neighbouring field. Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological deposits a condition was attached to the planning consent that required the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during the course of the excavation of the sewerage trenches in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The development lay within an area of well-preserved earthworks representing a trapezoidal moated site (SMR 1144) with an associated fishpond and water channel (SMR 4118). The moated site and fishpond indicate an earlier manor house to the current 18th century manor house which lies further to the north. This earlier manor house is thought to have been the residence of the St Valery Family who owned part of the manor of Barford St John in the 13th century. The moated site has recently been reviewed as part of English Heritage's Monument Protection Programme and a proposal has been submitted to English Heritage for the consideration of the Secretary of State to grant statutory protection (Scheduled Status) to the monument. The proposal was to disturb deposits within the moated site and the fishpond immediately to the south.

The moated site consists of a single island enclosed by ditches on all four sides with the moat surviving to a depth of 2.3m on its northern and western sides. This has

been reduced by ploughing to a depth of 500mm on its southern and eastern arms. The southern moat ditch forms part of a continuation of a fishpond to the west and a water channel to the east. The moated island measures 78m east to west and 50m north to south and is accessed by a causeway across the northern moat ditch. The causeway is 18m wide at its widest part.

To the west of the moat are the well preserved earthworks of an irregular shaped fishpond roughly 90m by 34m with a maximum depth of 2.3m. The pond is connected to the southern arm of the moat at its south-eastern end. A further north to south aligned earthwork 25m by 16m with a depth of 1.6m forms part of the same pond. The fishpond is banked on its north and south sides, which are 10-12m wide. At the the south-western end of the fishpond is a banked supply leat 3m by 400mm aligned north-east to south-west, that was fed by springs to the west that would have provided a constant supply of water to the ponds and moat.

To the east of the moat a series of low earthworks define an overflow leat to the River Swear from the south-eastern corner of the moat.

The earthworks relating to the moat and fishponds survive in good condition and are likely to contain archaeological and environmental evidence relating to their construction and use. The above information has been taken from the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services' (OCAS) Brief.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out 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 for the construction of the earthworks and associated structures
  - to record any evidence for the use of the site including the recovery of artefacts and environmental evidence that will supply information on the daily life of the inhabitants
- To make the results of the investigations public.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

OCAS issued a Brief for the work, which John Moore Heritage Services carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with OCAS, on behalf of the local planning authority. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed

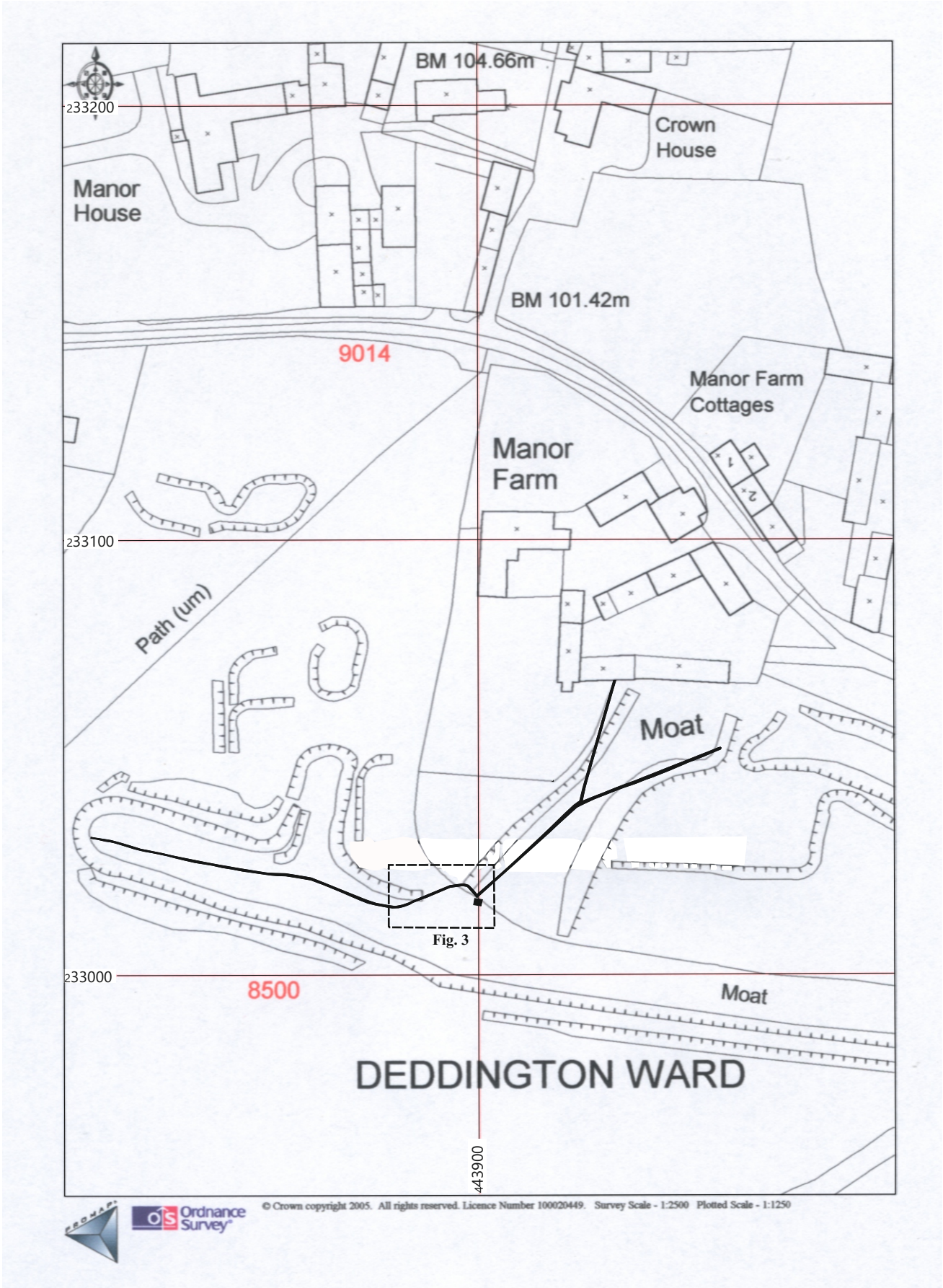

Figure 1: Site location

throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist continuously monitored the excavation of the sewerage trenches through the edge of the island, the moat and the fishpond. In addition a 40m length of the trench was inspected after excavation in the field immediately to the west of the west end of the fishpond. The recording of the trench from the moat through the fishpond was partly recorded during a violent thunderstorm.

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.

4 RESULTS (Figs 1 and 2)

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

There is a slight discrepancy between the OS mapping and the surveying of the pipeline and chamber. This is most noticeable on Figure 3 where the chamber for the pumping station should lie north of the NW/SE field boundary. Here there is a discrepancy of 2m.

Moat

The lowest deposits seen were loose grey slightly silty gravels (25) over orange silty gravels (26). Both of these were natural deposits and the top of them was 1400mm below the present base of the moat.

The lowest moat fill was pale grey and dark grey (black in places) clayey silt with organic material (24). This was *c.* 250mm thick with the top recorded at 95.17m OD. Overlying this was a deposit of pale grey-brown, mottled orange-brown, clayey silt (3 & 23) containing dumps of 19th century pottery. This pottery was only sampled. This last deposit was *c.* 250mm thick and merged with the lower deposit (24). These deposits were only seen in the extreme south west part of the north/south trench in the moat where the trench was deeper than that further north.

Above deposit (23) was a deposit of mid orange-brown loam containing 20-25% by volume of small, medium and the occasional large (180x140x70mm – 200x80x80mm) pieces of limestone (2 & 18). This varied in thickness between 170mm in the middle of the moat to up to 600mm on the sides. Sealing the moat fills was topsoil comprising mid brown-grey clayey loam with 1-2% medium sized pieces of ironstone with grass on top (01). The topsoil was 180mm thick on the sides of the moat and 270mm thick in the centre.

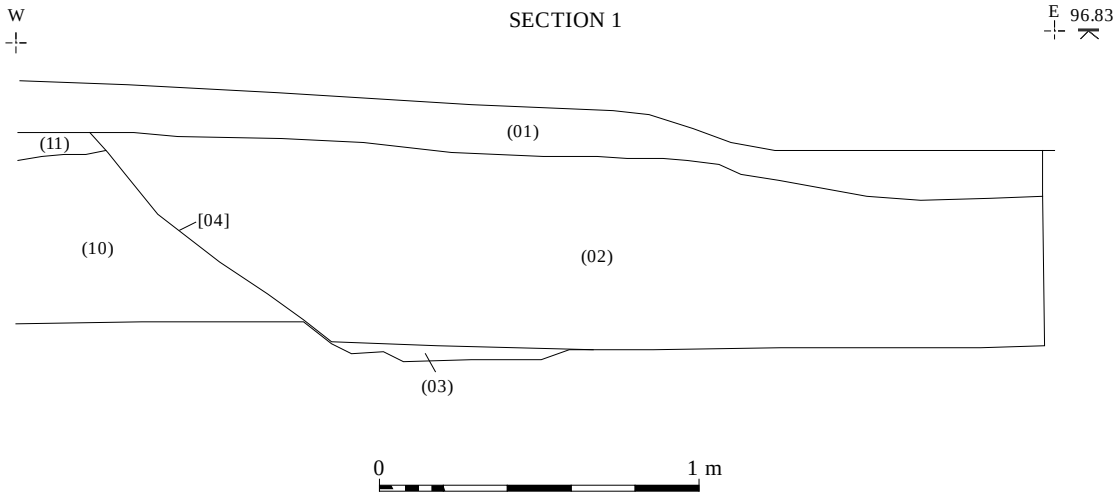

Figure 2. Section through west side of west arm of moat

The west side [04] of the moat was at an angle of 45^0 for the top 600mm (Fig. 2) and was sealed by the topsoil (01). The east side of the moat [17] was sectioned obliquely by one of the trenches and the angle could not be estimated.

In the east side of the moat, where it was exposed by the north-east/south-west trench, the uppermost fill was a pale grey and pale orange-brown (70:30) silt (19). This was overlaid by eroded platform material (15) on the east side (see below) and by late moat fill (18) nearer the centre of the moat where the north-east/south-west trench joined the north/south trench.

Platform

The lowest deposit seen on the platform was natural pale orange-brown slightly silty clay (16). Lying above this was very clean mid orange-brown clay loam (15) which was up to 850mm thick where the trench cut through it. The upper 360mm appeared slightly different but this was due to it being slightly drier. Part of this material had eroded down into the moat. Above (15) on the platform was a layer of small limestone with the occasionally larger piece (350x150x100mm – 90x100x80mm). This deposit (14) was on the north-west edge of the platform. As it extended westwards there were more of the larger stones with less small stone and it became more mixed with material similar to deposit (15). This layer was generally 150mm thick although it decreased to 80mm in one place. This last deposit was covered by 150mm of topsoil (01).

Across the north moat arm is a causeway formed from up to 700mm of large limestone pieces, blocks of concrete and gravelly earth (20). This overlies platform material (15) to the south.

East/West Fishpond

The lowest deposit exposed in the fishpond was mid grey, mottled purple-brown, clay with very decayed organic material in the top (09). It had a higher organic content opposite the north/south pond on the north side of the east/west fishpond. Lying above this deposit at the west end of the pond was a sequence of deposits with the lowest being very pale blue-grey, mottled orange, slightly gritty clay (08) with a

maximum thickness of 380mm 10m from the west end of the moat. Above this deposit was a layer of clean pale yellow-grey loam (07) 120mm thick increasing to 140mm at 8m from the west end of the pond and then decreasing to 0mm at 10.5m from the west end. Above this was a deposit of pale-mid yellow-grey clay loam with the occasional medium sized cobble (06), 110mm thick decreasing to 100mm at 8m from the west end and to 0mm at 10.5m. Above the last and across the whole length of the pond was very clean pale yellow-grey slightly clayey loam with the very occasional stone (05). This was 400mm thick at the west end of the pond decreasing to 300mm at 8m from the west end and increasing to 330mm at 10.5m and further east. This was sealed by 150mm of topsoil (01).

Area between moat and fishpond (Figure 3)
The lowest deposit exposed was a pale grey-brown silty clay (12), which was at least 120mm thick. This was only 3m wide and existed in the area of the fishpond north bank although it did not extend the full extent northwards of the bank. Lying above this was a deposit of pale-mid orange-brown friable silty clay (10) generally 650mm + thick but only 600mm thick in the position of the bank. It was cut to the north by the west edge of the western arm of the moat [04] (Fig. 2). Overlying the eastern part of

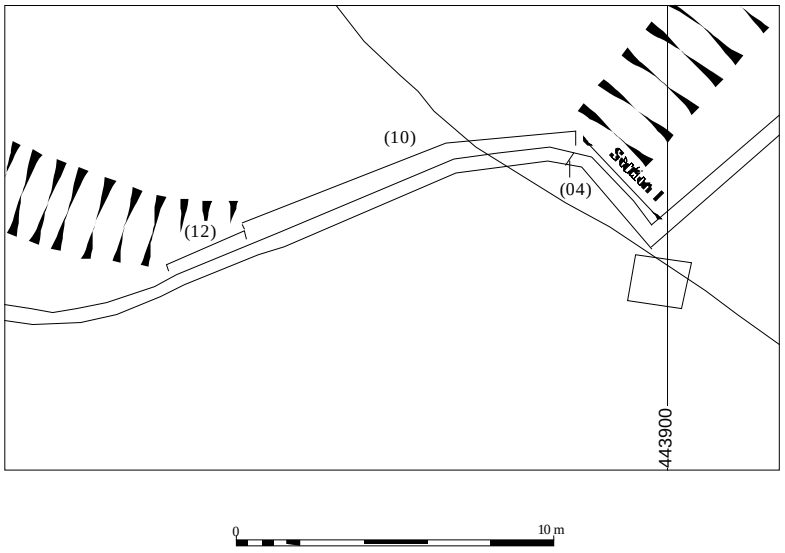

Figure 3. Area between moat and fishpond

this last deposit was entrance material of pale-mid orange-brown friable silty clay (similar to deposit 10) and 50% content of medium sized pebbles (11). This layer was 50-70mm thick and had been laid at an entrance between two fields. Deposit (10) is partly material excavated during the creation of the fishpond which was deposited as a bank and subsequently spread northwards through erosion or later ploughing and partly as natural subsoil. There difference could not be distinguished.

West Trench through moat
The northern 5m of the trench only disturbed 300mm of topsoil deposits (01). Further south was a layer of orange-brown slightly clayey loam with 5% small stone and, in places, medium-large ironstone pieces (13). Only the upper 100mm of this last

deposit was excavated and it was the same both within the moat and on the west side of it.

Field west of fishponds
In this field the topsoil (01) was 150mm thick overlying an old ploughsoil of friable yellow brown silty loam with the occasional sandstone throughout it (21). There were areas that contained ironstone at the interface with the topsoil. This old ploughsoil was 250mm thick. The natural subsoil was compact orange-brown dry crumbly clay-like material (weathered clay). This (22) was 300mm + thick.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery *by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage submitted for analysis comprised 31 sherds with a total weight of 1,151g. It mainly consisted of late 18th – 19th century material, although four sherds of medieval pottery were also present, indicating that there was activity at the site during the 12th and 13th centuries.

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*.

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

	OXY		OXBK		OXAM		OXDR		OXFG		CRM		WHEW		
Context	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
2									9	220	3	10			L18thC
10	2	101	1	5											12thC
14					1	58									13thC
18							1	36					5	175	19thC
23							2	185					7	361	19thC
Total	2	101	1	5	1	58	3	221	9	220	3	10	12	536	

The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 2 sherds, 101g.
OXBK: Medieval Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1350. 1 sherd, 5g.
OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherd, 58g.
OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 3 sherds, 221g.
OXFG: Manganese Glazed ware, 18th century. 9 sherds, 220g.
CRM: Creamware, mid 18th - early 19th C. 3 sherds, 10g.
WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19th - 20th C. 12 sherds, 536g.

6 PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

Two samples, one from the lowest moat fill (24) and one from the fishpond fill (09), were examined by Dr Mark Robinson. His comments were that while the state of preservation of organic material was good there was very little material of

significance. Only the very occasional seed was present. The only snail noticed was one that lived in open damp grassland which would be consistent with the edge of a fishpond.

Dr Robinson's conclusions were that the potential for results from these waterlogged deposits may only lie with pollen analysis.

7 DISCUSSION

The sherds of medieval pottery indicate settlement from at least the 13th century. The stone/rubble layer (14) on the platform is either a surface or demolition rubble from a building. From the very small part exposed it is impossible to decide which it is. This layer contained a sherd of pottery dating from some time in the 13th century to 15th century.

The moat was partly filled in the late 18th -19th century with material including large dumps of rubbish (3, 18, & 23). This filling included making the sides of the moat less steep with deposits (2 & 18).

The east/west fishpond appears to have been formed after settlement on the site started as two sherds of pottery dating from at least the 12th century, but probably later, were found within the north bank material (10).

While the moat and fishpond contain well preserved waterlogged material the potential for significant information appears to be limited to pollen analysis, although this still has to be proved.

The negative earthworks survive in an excellent state and have been partly protected by late 18th – 19th century infilling of the moat. The stone/rubble layer on the platform suggests that surfaces or demolition material survive. If surfaces survive then there is a very good chance that foundations for buildings survive as well. If the material is demolition material then the lowest foundations of buildings may survive protected by surrounding demolition material.

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