JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

ORCHARD HOUSE, SCHOOL LANE,

STADHAMPTON, OXFORDSHIRE

SU 5995 9866

On behalf of

Mr. R. Gould

MAY 2006

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REPORT FOR	Mr R Gould Orchard House School Lane Stadhampton Oxfordshire OX44 7Tr
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FIELDWORK	27 March 2006
REPORT ISSUED	15 May 2006
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Site Code;	SDOH 06
JMHS Project No:	1630
County Museums Accession No.	2006.13

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A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of foundations for a new extension. A burial was found and although un-dated is thought to be related to the known prehistoric monuments in the area.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located in the western outskirts of Stadhampton off School Lane (NGR SU 5995 9866). The site lies at about 53m OD and the underlying geology is 1st (Floodplain) Terrace Deposits of the river Thame. The existing land use was a house and garden.

1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the demolition of an existing conservatory and the erection of a single storey side extension. Due to the archaeological potential of the area, a condition was attached to the planning consent that required the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during the course of groundworks in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The western end of Stadhampton has produced evidence of an extensive Neolithic and Bronze Age ritual and funerary complex covering several hectares. This includes an early Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure (HBSMR15322.01), and a Neolithic Long Barrow (HBSMR15322.05) located respectively to the north and south-west of Orchard House. In addition, in the 1980's, the fragmentary skeletal remains of two individuals were found in the footings of Orchard House (HBSMR13278). Although they could not be dated, and were simply referred to as being 'pre-medieval', it is possible that the burials were associated with the prehistoric complex.

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 relating to the prehistoric complex
    - to record and attempt to date and further burials

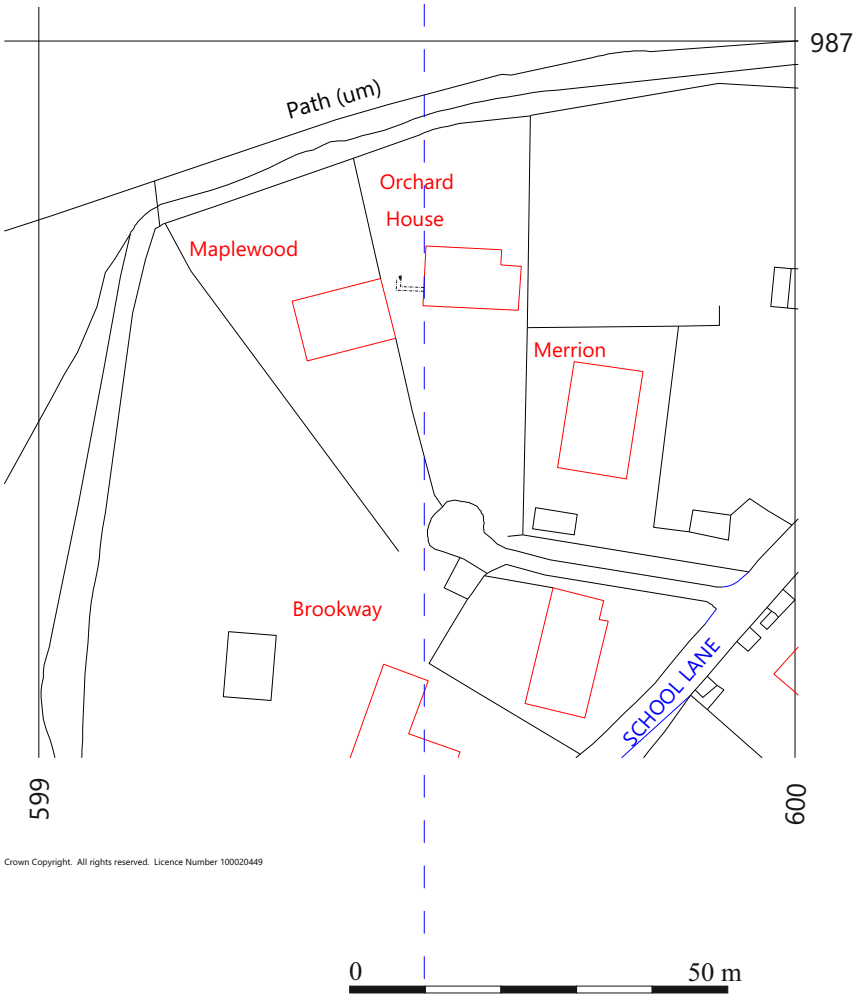


Figure 1: Site location

- The results of the investigations will be made public.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (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 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 monitored the excavation of the trenches for the new foundations.

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.

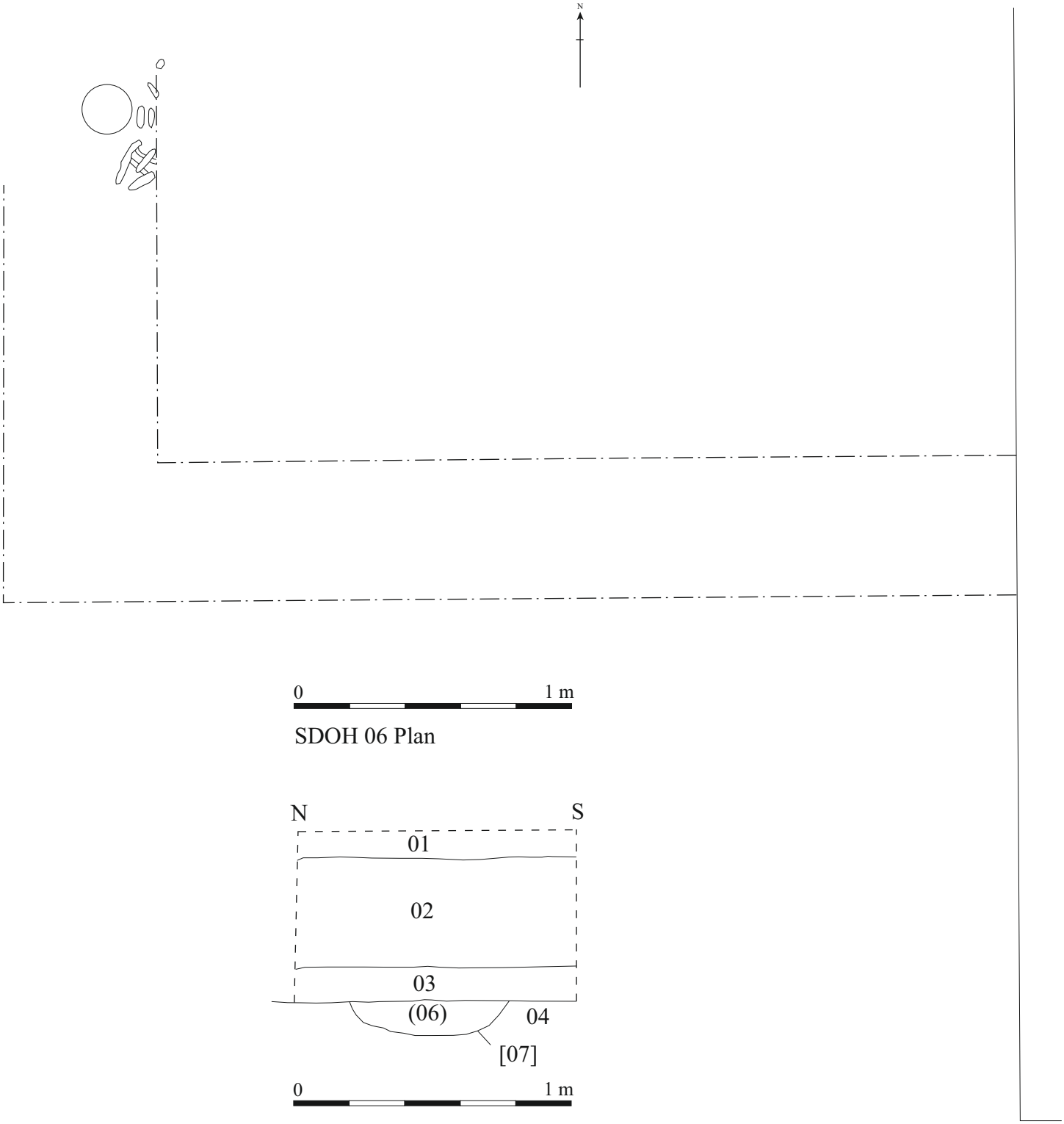
The burial was excavated under Licence no. 06-0036 issued by the Department for Constitutional Affairs.

4 RESULTS (Figure 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.

The natural comprised yellow-orange sand and flint gravel in a mid grey silty sand (04). This was covered by 200mm mid grey-brown very sandy silt with 40% large gravel (03), which in turn was covered by *c*. 400mm of topsoil composed of compact dark grey-brown sandy silt with 2% small and medium sized gravel (02). External to the footprint of the extension the uppermost deposit was formed from paving stones set on make-up material, in total 100mm thick (01). Internally the uppermost deposit, after removal of the former floor of the demolished conservatory, was hardcore and sand (01). The top of the last was level with the ground level in the front garden and *c*. 200mm below the level of the back garden.

Cut into the top of the natural sand and gravel (04) was a grave [07]. Only part of the grave extended into the trench and the machine removed it before identification. From the section the burial only penetrated into the natural by 180mm. The grave appeared to be orientated NW/SE with the head (approximate position shown by dotted lie) to the NW. The body was lying supine with the right arm across the chest.



SDOH 06 Plan

SDOH 06 Section

Figure 1: Plan and Section

The body (05) was 600mm below modern ground surface. The grave had been backfilled with moderately compact pale-mid grey-brown very sandy silt (06).

5 FINDS

5.1 Human Remains *by Linzi Harvey*

Nature of the sample

The partial remains of a single individual (05) were recovered from a distinctive grave cut and fill (contexts 07 and 06 respectively). Only the uppermost part of skeleton 05 was disturbed by the trenching observed and it is this material that has been collected for examination. Skeleton 05 was discovered supine and most likely oriented NW/SE, with the head towards the NW. The exact position of the skull cannot be determined due to its accidental removal by mechanical digger. The right arm of the individual was positioned across the chest.

Two animal bone fragments, one of which shows signs of butchery, were discovered in close proximity to the remains.

5.1.1 Methods

Skeletal remains were examined macroscopically and data recorded onto paper record forms following both IFA and English Heritage standards and guidelines (Brickley & McKinley 2004, Mays & Brickley *et al* 2004 respectively). As skeleton 05 is obviously adult in age, only methods concerning the analysis of adults have been outlined below.

Preservation and completeness
An assessment was made of the state of preservation of the inhumed remains: from 'good' (1) to 'poor' (3).

1) 'Good' Bone surface is in good condition with no erosion, fine surface detail such as coarse woven bone deposition, if present, would clearly be visible to the naked eye.

2) 'Moderate' Bone surface is in moderate condition, with some post-mortem erosion on long bone shafts, but the margins of the articular surfaces and some prominences eroded.

3) 'Poor' Bone surface is in poor condition with extensive post-mortem erosion, resulting in pitted cortical surfaces and long bones with articular surfaces absent or severely eroded.

A skeletal inventory and full fragment count of the inhumation was undertaken.

Age at death
Age at death estimation in this case was based on just two aging techniques. Skeleton 05 was aged using epiphyseal fusion data (Schwartz 1995) and cranial suture closure (Meindl & Lovejoy 1985).

Aging techniques associated with the pelvis could not be used in this sample as no lower body remains were recovered. Similarly, since no dental remains were recovered, many commonly used aging techniques could not be used.

Sex estimation
Estimation of sex was based on macroscopic observation of key skeletal landmarks in the cranium following descriptions in Buikstra & Ubelaker (1994) and Bass (2005). A number of sexually diagnostic features were marked on a five point scale as follows; 1 = male, 2 = possible male, 3 = intermediate, 4 = probable female and 5 = female.

Sex estimation techniques associated with the pelvis could not be used in this sample as no lower body remains were recovered.

Metrical data
Where preservation and completeness allowed, measurements were taken of a number of cranial and post-cranial features, using landmarks identified in Brothwell (1981) and Bass (2005). Stature and handedness could not be determined as no intact long bones were collected.

Non-metric traits
Where preservation and completeness allowed a number of cranial epigenic traits were examined (Brothwell 1981) and scored as '1' present, '0' absent or '9' unobservable if the area was damaged or absent. Post-cranial observations were not conducted due to the paucity of complete post-cranial material in this sample.

A cursory examination of musculo-skeletal stress markers was carried out according to definitions described by Hawkey & Merbs (1995).

Palaeopathology
Pathological changes were recorded using guidelines set out by the British Association of Biological Anthropologists and Osteologists (Roberts & Connell 2004). Basic pathological information was obtained from Roberts & Manchester (1995) and Roberts & Cox (2003) with additional references as required.

Since no dental remains were recovered, no dental pathologies could be identified in this individual.

5.1.2 Results

Preservation and completeness
As noted, only the disturbed remains of individual 05 were recovered and examined. The remains below approximately the level of the sternum and proximal humerus were left in section and were not collected. Thus, individual 05 is largely incomplete. The state of preservation is variable, but all bones have some degree of post-mortem erosion or joint surface damage, indicating a preservation score of 2 (moderate).

Minimum number of individuals
There was a total of one adult individual represented in this sample, contained within one grave-cut and fill.

Two fragments of animal bone (possibly sheep or goat), one displaying evidence of butchery, were recovered along with the skeleton.

Age at death
The age at death of skeleton 05 could only be assessed using proximal humerus epiphyseal fusion, medial clavicle fusion and skull suture closure. Since the clavicle fuses between the ages of 25 – 28 years and the humerus before this, 25 years should be considered the youngest possible age for skeleton 05. Most skull sutures remain open, indicating that this individual is at most 50 years of age, and more likely in his early to mid-30s.

Sex estimation
The biological sex of skeleton 05 was assessed as male. Out of ten sexually diagnostic features observed, five were assessed as definitely male, three as probable male, one as uncertain and one as probable female.

Metrical data
No teeth and few complete post-crania were present to measure. The following tables (Table 1 and 2) outline all of the metric data obtained in millimetres for skeleton 05, a '/' indicates that the measurement was not possible to take.

Description	Measurement (mm)
Maximum length	198
Maximum breadth	146
Maximum height	144

Table 1: Cranial metrics

Bone	Description	Measurement (mm) RIGHT
Clavicle	Maximum length	147
	Maximum breadth	21
Humerus	Length	/
	Shaft circumference	29
	Head diameter	54
	Bicondylar width	/

Table 2: Postcranial metrics

Non-metric traits
Several non-metric traits were observed in the cranium of skeleton 05. These include several sutural ossicles and supraorbital / parietal foramen. A full list of traits observed can be found on the skeletal recording sheets.

It was additionally observed that the proximal muscle attachments for the right humerus were 'strong' in terms of robusticity, with one very strong stress lesion or cortical defect in the upper shaft. The right clavicle is moderately robust.

Palaeopathology
No pathology (disease or trauma) was observed in skeleton 05.

5.1.3 Summary table

A summary of the osteological data can be observed in the following table (Table 3).

Skeleton no.	Elements preserved	Fragment count	Condition of bone	Age (years)	Sex	Pathology
05	Skull, scapulae, right clavicle and proximal humerus, sternum fragment, three vertebrae and several fragmented ribs.	52	Moderate to poor	Range: 25-50 Mean: 30.5 Standard deviation: 7.5	Male	None

Table 3: Summary of osteological data

5.1.4 Discussion

Individual 05 is largely incomplete and is moderately well preserved. The individual has been assigned as male. He is a prime age adult, and his age at death is likely to have been between 25 – 38 years of age. There are no dental remains from which to assess the individuals diet or oral habits. Similarly, the lack of disease and trauma prevents any evaluation of the individuals health.

The asymmetry of the collected material, with more right skeletal elements preserved than left, has meant that analysis of handedness is impossible. Without complete long bones stature is also impossible to estimate. The very well developed muscle attachments on the right humerus and clavicle could indicate that 05 had a moderately stressful or active lifestyle, but without more data this cannot be substantiated. As this sample consists of one individual at present, the metric and non-metric data is of limited informational value.

6 DISCUSSION

A further burial has come from the extension of Orchard House. The number known in this area is now three. The exact location of the other two is unknown. None of the burials have been dated. The close proximity of the prehistoric monuments suggests that the burials are related. It is possible that the burials were within a barrow that has since been ploughed flat. The level of this burial in relation to the top of the natural gravel deposits suggests that the burial could have been a secondary burial within an existing barrow.

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