

**JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
OF THE  
CHARLBURY FWFAS PAS 36JF/G3,  
CHARLBURY, OXFORDSHIRE.**

**SP 3562 1918**

*On behalf of*

*Thames Water Utilities*

**OCTOBER 2005**

**REPORT FOR**

Thames Water Utilities  
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## **Summary**

*A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the ground work for a new offline sewer. The investigation revealed numerous modern service trenches and plough marks, but no archaeological features.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site of the proposed work is located to the west side of Grammar School Road, south west of the junction with Park Street in Charlbury (NGR SP 3562 1918). The geology is Clypeus Grit and Chipping Norton Limestone and the site lies at approximately 98m OD. The development area was previously a field.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Thames Water Utilities have proposed construction of a new offline sewer in Charlbury, Oxfordshire. After consultation with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services it was agreed that an archaeological watching brief take place during all the periods of invasive ground work (HC/0868).

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The development site is located in an area of archaeological potential. To the south west of the site at a distance of 500m is a Bronze Age barrow (SP 3530 1875), 600m west is an earth work recorded as an Iron Age Settlement (SP 3520 1880), and 800m to the south east is a well preserved section of Grim's Ditch an important Iron Age Linear feature (SP 3595 1850).

Significant amount of Romano-British artefacts, especially pottery, have also been recovered in the area. During the medieval period Charlbury was held by Eynsham Abbey and in 1216 Henry III granted a weekly market. It has been suggested that the Abbey attempted to take advantage of this new status to increase its revenues by creating a series of burgages in Charlbury.

## **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 of Romano-British activity

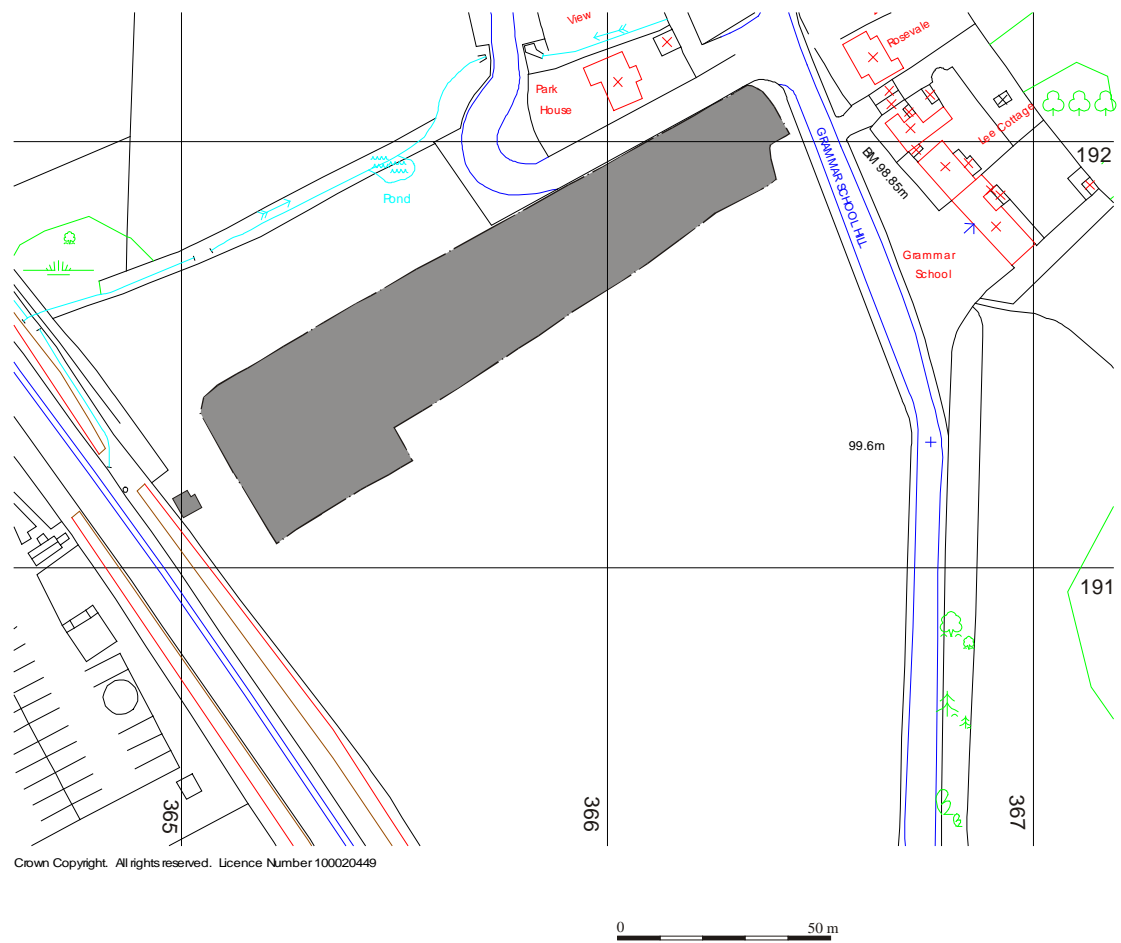


Figure 1. Site location.

### 3 STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. 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 and possible.

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

#### 3.2 Methodology

The striping of the topsoil down to the natural geology was monitored. This work was conducted using a tracked 360° excavator.

### 4 RESULTS (*Figure 2*)

All features were assigned individual context numbers. This number covered both the feature cut and the fill for pits, unless the feature was sample excavated by hand. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material. A general description of the feature fills is given.

The topsoil (01) across the entire area was a dark brown loam this varied in depth from 0.05m to 0.1m. In the eastern end of the area this covered a layer of dark grey-brown silty clay (02), which contained large quantities of pottery and CBM. This layer varied in depth from 0.15m to 0.25m. It was confined to about 50m from the eastern end of the investigated area. It lay directly on the natural, a yellowish brown-grey clay with 50% stone (04). However in places it lay on a light yellow-brown silty clay (03), to which it entirely gave way to in the west. This layer varied in depth from 0.05m to over 0.4m in the extreme west of the site in *area A*.

It is possible that the eastern area covered by (02) that contained large amounts of building material, may have been previously striped of topsoil for ground works.

Several linear service trenches were identified [06], [09], [10] and [11]. All were backfilled with a mix of topsoil (01), subsoil (02) & (03) and natural (04). In some cases this backfilling with made it difficult to the exact line of the trenches. These service trenches the previous sewer [09], and an electrical line [06] so recent that the up-cast of its excavation was visible on the surface.

*Area A* was a 5x5m area excavated in the west of the site to locate a sewer manhole. This located the continuation of cut [10], which included a concreted section and a brick built square structure.

There were three indistinct linear cuts [05], [08] and [12]. These could only be traced on the ground for a short distance, and all lie outside the line of the proposed sewer.

Cuts [05] and [08] were filled with a mixed matrix like the other linear cuts, however cut [12] was filled with a blue-grey clay (13), this was hand sampled to a depth of 0.4m. The sides were vertical and the base was not located. It appears to have been originally machine excavated and is probably associated with services. There was a very indistinct possible continuation of the cut to the east.

A land drain [07] aligned east to west was located. It was traced for a length of approximately 30m. It contained a pale cream ceramic pipe that had been replaced in two places by lengths of 3 1/2" plastic pipe. The fill around the pipe was a dark brown clay with large quantities of ash and coal (14).

In some places plough marks had been scored into the upper surface of the natural (04). Sometimes these marks could be seen higher in the subsoil (03). These marks appeared to be in two groups on separate alignments (figure 2).

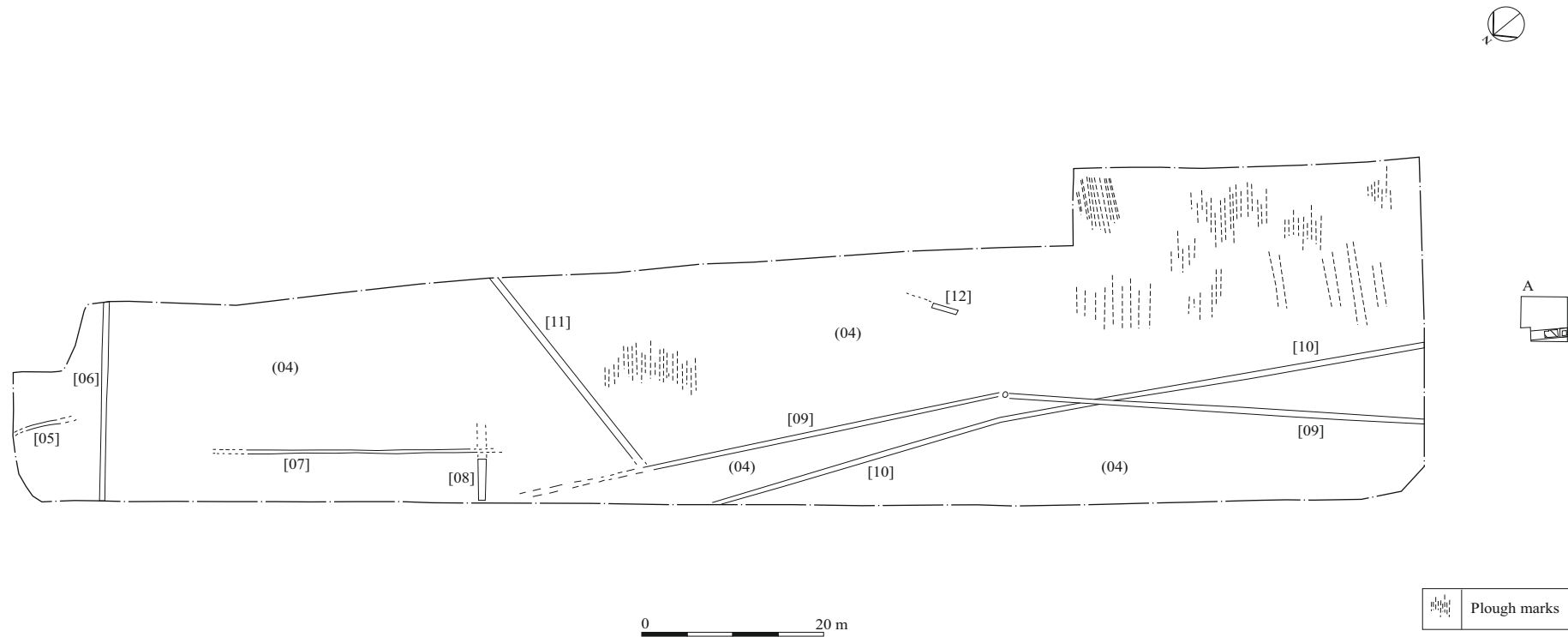


Figure 2: Plan



## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 42 sherds with a total weight of 900g. The bulk of the material is post-medieval or modern, although two sherds of Romano-British wares and three sherds of early medieval material were also noted. They were all redeposited in post-medieval contexts. The assemblage was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 3 sherds, 31g.

OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 13 sherds, 346g.

WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19th - 20th C. 24 sherds, 510g.

In addition, two sherds (13g) of abraded Romano-British pottery were also present. 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

Context	RB		OXAC		OXDR		WHEW		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1			1	5	2	21	13	99	19thC
2					8	137	8	79	19thC
3	2	13	2	26	2	119			17thC
8							1	42	19thC
14					1	69	2	290	20thC
Total	2	13	3	31	13	346	24	510	

The pottery types are all typical of the region. In addition to the pottery, context 3 produced five fragments (208g) of medieval roof tile, 3 of Cotswolds type and 2 of Brill/Boarstall type.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief uncovered no archaeological features. The only features located were modern service trenches, a land drain that was still in use judging by its fairly recent repair, and plough marks many of which appear to belong to the last ploughing of the field.

It is interesting to note that the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century pottery was concentrated towards the modern town, while the earlier material was distributed towards the west of the site. The presence of the two abraded Romano-British sherds may indicate that this area was under cultivation during that period.

## 7 ARCHIVE

### Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

#### Paper record

The project brief	The primary site records
Written scheme of investigation	Finds contents list
The project report	Pottery report

#### Finds

Pottery	Animal Bone
Metalwork	

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services. The archive will be transferred to:

Oxfordshire Museums Resource Centre, Cotswold Dene, Standlake, Witney OX29 7QG when an accession number is assigned.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*. Revised Sept 1999

Mellor, M, 1984 A summary of the key assemblages. A study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century in TG Hassall, CE Halpin and M Mellor, Excavations at St Ebbe's *Oxoniensia* **49**, 181-219.

Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217

**APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
01	Deposit	Dark Brown loam	0.05 - 0.1	tr.	tr.	pot, glass, metal, CBM	Modern Topsoil
02	Deposit	Grey-Brown silty clay loam	0.15 - 0.25	tr.	50 +	pot, glass, bone, metal	-
03	Deposit	Light yellow-brown silty clay	0.05 - 0.4	tr.	tr.	pot, glass, bone, metal	-
04	Natural	Yellowish brown - grey clay with 50% Stone	-	tr.	tr.	-	Natural
05	Cut	Linear Cut	-	0.6	4 +	-	Modern
06	Cut	Linear Cut	-	0.6	40 +	-	Modern
07	Cut	Linear Cut	0.1 +	0.3	20 +	-	Modern
08	Cut	Linear Cut	-	1.0	5 +	-	Modern
09	Cut	Linear Cut	-	0.6	100 +	-	Modern
10	Cut	Linear Cut	-	0.6	80 +	-	Modern
11	Cut	Linear Cut	-	1.0	30 +	-	Modern
12	Cut	Linear Cut	0.4 +	0.6	2.5	-	Modern ?
13	Fill	Blue-grey clay	0.4 +	0.6	2.5	-	Modern ?
14	Fill	Brown clay loam with ash & coal	0.1 +	0.3	20 +	-	Modern