

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

1 ELSFIELD ROAD, OLD MARSTON,

OXFORD

NGR SP 5265 0882

On behalf of

Mrs. J Fletcher

February 2013

REPORT FOR Mrs J Fletcher
1 Elsfield Road
Old Marston
Oxford
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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the ground works at 1 Elsfield Road, Old Marston, Oxford. Two undated pits and an undated ditch or garden feature were recorded. Map evidence suggests that these could be post-medieval in origin.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located at 1 Elsfield Road, Oxford (NGR SP 5265 0882). The site is a residential house and gardens. The underlying geology is 2nd (Summertown-Radley) Terrace Deposits.

1.2 Planning Background

Oxford City Council has granted planning permission for the removal of the existing porch and erection of single storey extension with a dormer window. A condition of the permission states that an archaeological watching brief should be carried out during the work. The Oxford City Planning Archaeologist provided a Brief for the work. This was in line with NPPF and Local Plan policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site lies within the historic core of Marston. The first documentary evidence for a settlement at Marston is from 1122 when the church is mentioned. Subsequently the hundred roll of 1279 lists 46 unfree tenants, a vicar and 2 freeholders (VCH 1957, 216). During the later medieval period Marston was a hamlet of Headington.

The settlement has not been the subject of extensive archaeological study, however recent work 60m to the north of the application site, on Mill Lane, has provided evidence for the laying out of a plot fronting the road in the Norman period (Williams 2011). A recent excavation behind the Bricklayers Arms, Butts Lane, located 140m to the north-east, and an evaluation just to the north at 31 Church Street produced evidence suggesting the contraction of the settlement in the 14th century (Lewis and Preston 2012, Platt 2012). Old Marston appears to be a planned medieval village built along a main street (Oxford Road), however the evolution of the hamlet is currently poorly understood.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To identify and record any archaeological and historic remains exposed during the course of building operations or construction works on the site.

In particular to determine whether any medieval settlement remains are present and whether the date and character of the early settlement can be further established.

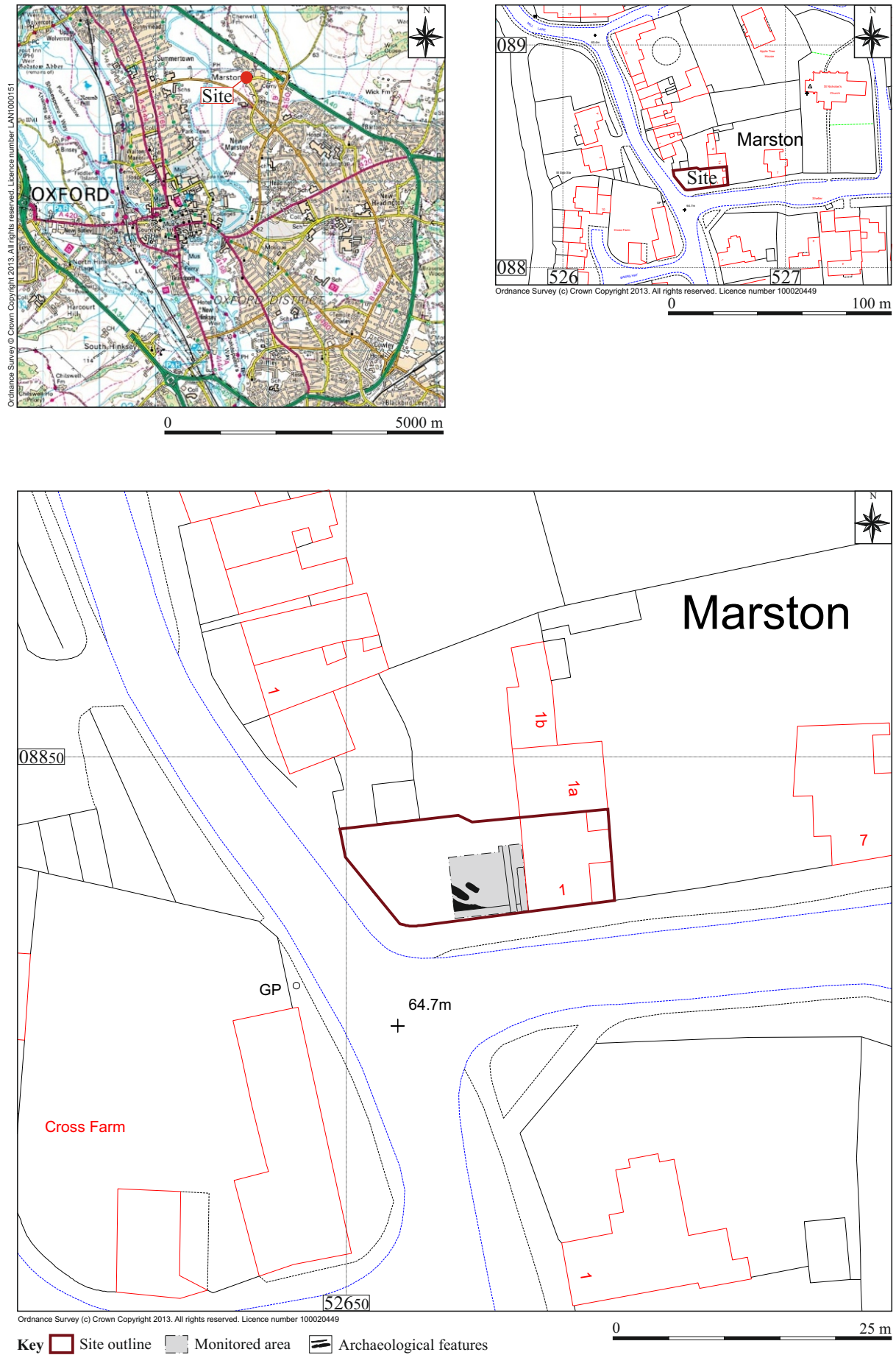


Figure 1. Site location

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Oxford City Planning Archaeologist. 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 for Archaeologists (2008).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist visited the site to clean and record the exposed sections in the area of the recent ground disturbance. The exposed new level of the area was also cleaned and the archaeological remains recorded.

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 () show feature fills or deposits of material.

The natural geological deposit in the area consisted of gravels in a matrix of orange-brown sand (03) and is related to the 2nd (Summertown-Radley) Terrace Deposits.

Cut into the natural were three undated features. The first was a small pit 04 that was 1.3m long, 0.5m wide in plan and filled with a brown-grey-orange sandy clay with stones and charcoal flecks (05). The terminal of a ditch 06 was aligned roughly north-west to south-east. It was 0.65m wide and over 2m long. It had near vertical side and a flat base and was filled with a mid grey sandy clay (07) flecked with charcoal. The third feature was a large pit 08 that was irregular in plan, although its total extent was not seen. This was filled with a mid grey sandy-clay (09) also flecked with charcoal. This pit appears to predate the construction of the garden wall, but could be part of its construction process.

Above these features was a garden soil of mid orange-brown sandy-clay (02) containing small quantities of gravel. This layer was 0.3m thick on average.

The uppermost layer was a dark brown-black sandy loam topsoil (01) that was between 0.1 and 0.2m thick.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery

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

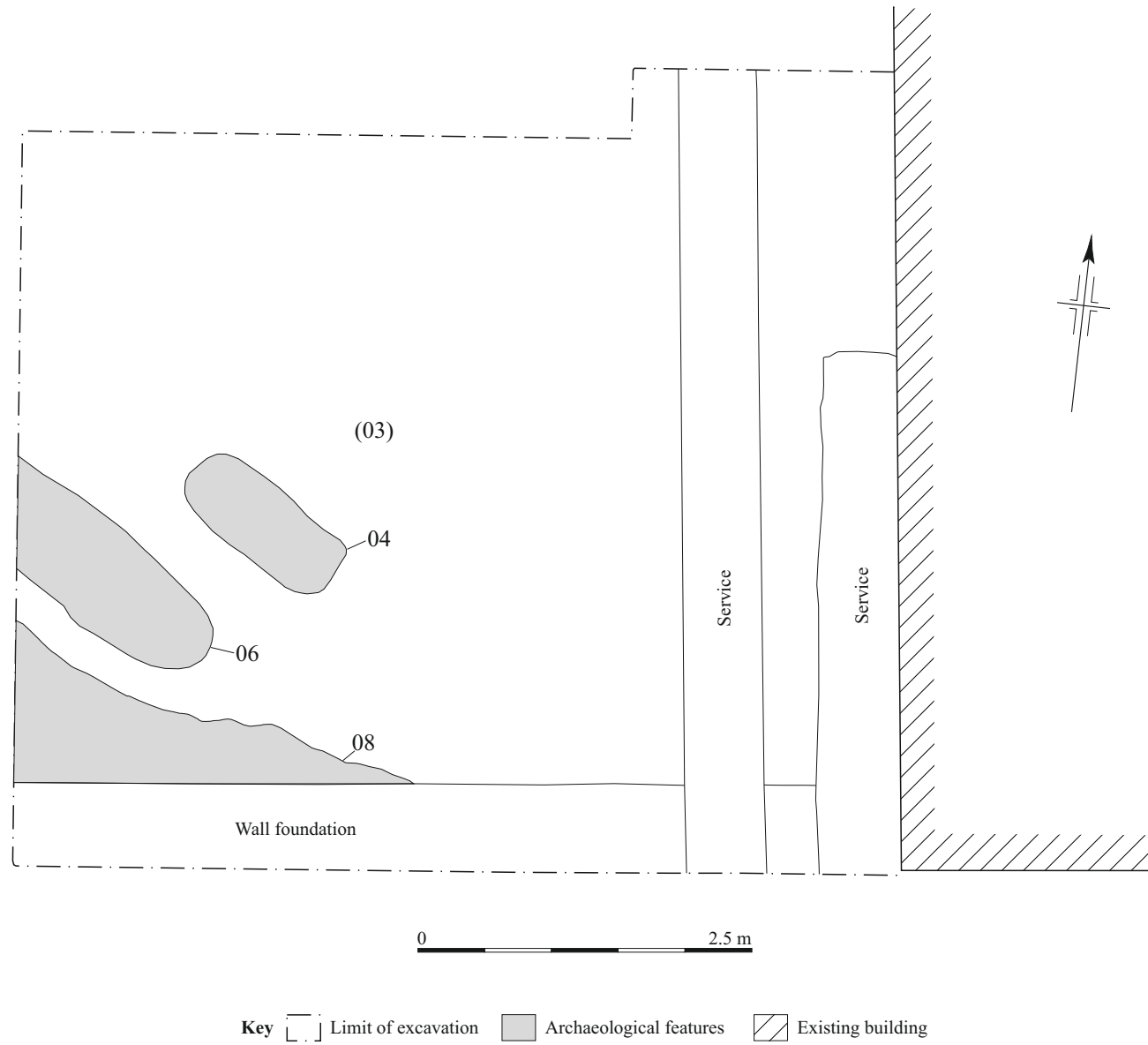


Figure 2. Plan

A single sherd of mid 19th – 20th century Mass-produced White Earthenware (WHEW) was noted from the topsoil (01). This was not retained.

5.2 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken due to the nature of the deposits encountered.

6 DISCUSSION

Pit 08 appears to predate the construction of the garden wall. This wall is depicted on the 1:2,500 OS map of 1880, the boundary appears the same on the Tithe map of 1843. The road layout in the area was the same in 1605 and is depicted on a Corpus Christie estate map (ORO MPC744, 745 1605), however an exact date for its construction is unknown.

The 1:2,500 OS map of 1880 shows a path across the garden area aligned north-west to south-east. It is possible that ditch 06 is a planting feature related to this path.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the County Museums' Store.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*.

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